



New in the Cellars

Fitapreta and Antonio Macanita, Rising Stars of the Alentejo Region, Portugal



FITAPRETA VINHOS

We are pleased to introduce wines from Fitapreta Vinhos, from the Alentejo region in southern Portugal. The leader and winemaker of Fitapreta, Antonio Macanita, is one of the most sought-after wine professionals in Portugal. We asked Takenori Beppu, a leading Portuguese wine expert in Japan, to guide us through the unique features and emerging trends of Portuguese wine market.



Fitapreta Winery Antonio Macanita

There is a lot of energy in the Portuguese wine scene right now. Emerging producers are utilizing the tradition of indigenous varieties, mixed varietal field plantings, extended aging, and 'talhas' (clay pot amphoras), while embracing modern philosophies like sustainability and low intervention. But a cut above the rest, is Antonio Macanita. He has won both a 'Uniqueness Award' from Grandes Escolha wine magazine and 'Winemaker of the Year' from Revista de Vinhos magazine in 2018, and is one of the most sought-after winemakers in Portugal.

◆ Major changes in old-fashioned production regions

Alentejo is located in southern Portugal. The hot, dry, hills are dotted with vineyards, as well as wheat, olive and cork fields. The region has a long history of winemaking predating Christianity, and the tradition of amphora wine (called Vigno de Talha in Portugal) is one of the oldest in the world, second only to Georgia. It is a well-established wine region associated with indigenous varieties such as Aragonés (Tempranillo), Trincadeira and Roupeiro.

However, Alentejo's wine industry hasn't been prosperous in the recent past. Government policy established in the early 20th century forced the region to switch from grapes to grains production, and wine production was greatly reduced. After overthrowing the autocratic regime in 1974, Portugal joined the European Community (now EU) in 1986, and most wineries focused on growing international varieties such as Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon for export. They made powerful, high-alcohol wines that were popular with the masses, and because of the region's proximity to Lisbon (the capital), also continued to produce low-priced wines for daily consumption.

Only since the beginning of the 21st century, has a meaningful change started to take place. As is the case in other countries, the making of heavy, Robert Parker-favoured wines, came to an end. Subsequently, the era of respecting the individuality of each country, region and producer began. There was a move back from global to indigenous varieties, and from vinification in new barrels to concrete tanks and amphoras. The natural wine movement spread, and different approaches were trialled to explore wine expressions.

Even within Alentejo, the focus shifted to relatively cool sub-regions that could produce wines with high acidity, such as the high-altitude Portalegre in the north and the maritime-influenced Vidigueira in the south. The French-born varietal, Alicante Bouschet, which retains higher acidity and adapts well to the hot, dry climate of Alentejo, attracted interest. This varietal, which is only used for house wines elsewhere in the world, became widely-known for making beautiful wines in Alentejo, and became a varietal to represent the region. In the midst of the return to tradition,

amphora wines were again recognized, and the world's first designation of origin for amphora wines, DOC Vigno de Talha, was created.

◆ Antonio and Fitapreta unlock the potential of Alentejo

Antonio Macanita, who was born in 1981, took Alentejo to another level. Internationally trained at wineries like Rudd Estate in Napa Valley and d'Arenberg in Australia, before returning to Portugal to begin his winemaking career, Antonio's philosophy is clear – respect the regional traditions, and support it with a scientifically proven modern wine making techniques, where it adds to the quality of the wine.

At Fitapreta, Antonio actively utilizes once-important, now-forgotten indigenous grape varieties like Trincadeira-das-Pratas, Tinta Carvalha, Castelao, and so on. He produces fantastic wines from mixed varietal vineyards in the region, of which there are only few left. He was also an early adopter of amphora wines, and these were highly praised.

But he is not blindly returning to the past. Fitapreta's winery is completely gravity flow. The whites are mostly whole bunch pressed, and the fruit is hand-picked at night to avoid daytime heat. While fermentation is primarily with indigenous yeast, the flavours are pristine. The resulting wines have clarity with no over-ripe nuances, and oak is used with precision. The essence of Fitapreta is a modern revival based on Alentejo tradition. Antonio isn't just touting traditions like varieties and amphoras, but uses them to elevate wines to a high-quality that impresses everyone who drinks them. This is what makes his wines truly unique.

Under Antonio's leadership, Fitapreta won the 'Winery of the Year 2020' from Revista de Vinhos, Portugal's leading wine magazine, and has become one of Portugal's leading producers. When I interviewed him, he talked passionately about winemaking and the region. He then took a brief moment to laugh about how he can't stop talking, then carried on talking more. With each word, with new ideas, insights and information emerging - the hallmark of a great winemaker. I'd like you to discover how wonderful Portuguese wine is by drinking some of his wines. In the Alentejo region he has awakened a sleeping giant.



Takenori Beppu

Representative of Wine in Motion

J.S.A. sommelier, WSET-certified Diploma. After working in a restaurant, for a wine importer, and in wine stores, he became an independent consultant and a wine instructor at seminars for producer groups in different countries. Vini Portugal (Wines of Portugal) International Personality of the Year 2018 for Asia, Knight of the Brotherhood of Port Wine.



NEW from Portugal

CODE 11958

Fitapreta White 2020

Region : Alentejano IGP, Portugal
Variety : Roupeiro/Rabo de Ovelha/Arinto/Tamarez(Trincadeira das Pratas)
Alicante Branco(Boal de Alicante)/Antao Vaz Alc. 12.9%

RRP ¥2,700

Aromas of lemon, citrus and wet stone, it shows the complex flavours that come from Portuguese characteristics such as indigenous varieties, mixed varietal field blends, and vine age, with a minerality and high acidity that tightens the palate and keeps it in balance. It expresses the characteristics of the producer well, and although it is an entry range, you can feel the high technology and quality, and it is very reasonably priced.



CODE 11964

Fitapreta Tinta Carvalha 2020

Region : Alentejano IGP, Portugal
Variety : Tinta Carvalha 100%
Alc. 11.6%

RRP ¥7,500

Light coloured, with aromas of fruits including pomegranates mixed with animals and earth notes. The tannins are a little pungent, but overall are serene with a long-lasting umami. Tinta Carvalha is a long-standing varietal in Alentejo, and the single vineyard of Chão dos Eremitas has been cultivated for winemaking since the 14th century. This is the only 100% Tinta Carvalha wine in the world.

