

Thomas Jefferson 10 years



Just one short decade after launching Fitapreta Vinhos in sunny Alentejo, António and two other partners founded the Azores Wine Company on the island of Pico (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) after becoming inspired by their shared work recovering the indigenous Terrantez do Pico varietal—not to mention António's many childhood trips to his father's Azorean homeland.

The initial bottling of Terrantez do Pico made a splash in the wine world, receiving a top score from Wine Spectator, and a mention in their article “Breaking the Mold” in 2016. António and his partners own 100 hectares of extremely low-yield, walled vineyards (primarily on Pico) and purchase fruit from an additional 30 hectares across the archipelago, from regions such as DOP Graciosa, São Miguel, and others. These sites range from sea level to 500 meters in altitude, with the oldest vines averaging up to 80 years. It is from this stony volcanic terroir that according to Antonio, “these singular, saline wines are born, or should we say, erupt.” On cold and wet Pico Island, vines struggle to escape the volcano's rain shadow grasping for sunlight along the island's edge, where 500-year-old volcanic stone walls (known as currais) are all that stand between the plants and dangerously salty Atlantic winds. Making wine on Pico, according to António, is a constant “battle between the sea and the mountain” and he is one of very few who have succeeded in achieving ripeness in red grapes here.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: The Pico fortified wine, a staple in the Americas for 200 years, was beloved by figures like Thomas Jefferson and enjoyed by Russian czars. Production suffered greatly from oidium and phylloxera in 1853, reducing output drastically. This wine, inspired by historical texts and rare finds, aims to revive this important Portuguese wine.

RATING HISTORY: NV 93WA

GRAPE: Arinto dos Açores, Verdelho, Terrantez do Pico.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: The DO Pico 10-Year-Old liqueur wine pairs beautifully at the start of a meal, especially with foie gras. On a cheese plate, it complements aged hard cheeses. It also shines at the end of a meal alongside desserts that aren't too sweet, particularly those featuring dried fruits, raisins, toffee, and orange flavors. We recommend storing the wine at 46°F, serving it at 54°F, and enjoying it at 57°F.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: The vineyards are situated at the base of Pico's volcanic mountain in the Atlantic, where they grow in rock crevices close to the sea, absorbing the warmth and sun. Protected by stone walls (currais) from the strong, salty ocean winds, the vines benefit from this unique terroir. The wine is aged for an average of 10 years, with some batches containing wines over 30 years old.

PRODUCTION: 600 bottles of 375 mL

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Pico, in the Azores Islands, is about 1,000 miles off the coast of Portugal—nearly halfway to New York City! It is dominated by the volcano of the same name, which is Portugal's highest peak. The vines are planted in the black basalt rock cracks at the foothills of the volcanic mountain which puts enormous stress on the vines, lowering yields. Vines are the only crop to speak of on Pico, as other plant life has a difficult time surviving. Temperature averages 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit, with rainfall averaging 47 inches a year.

TASTING NOTES Golden amber in color, this wine offers an intense nose with notes of sea air, and salt, reflecting its Azorean origins. Aromas of crystallized orange and orange peel are complemented by warm oxidative hints of toffee, raisins, toasted almonds, and coffee beans. On the palate, it delivers a full, concentrated attack with mid-palate flavors mirroring the nose. A slight sweetness is balanced by vibrant acidity, leading to a long, persistent finish.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 18.5%

