

Casal Figueira António Branco



Marta Soares, of Casal Figueira (VR Lisboa outside of Lisbon), is a winemaker and spirit of incomparable strength and resilience. Following the sudden death of her husband António in 2009, Marta took the reins of their winery as the harvest was coming into the winery from the vineyards. With no formal enological training, and as a matter of necessity with two young children and no other source of income, Marta taught herself (with the help of some neighbors) to make wine. Now she sees herself as a medium through which her husband can speak from the beyond – and as such, takes a completely minimal interventionist approach to her winemaking. Before founding their winery, Marta and António scouted the Serra de Montejunto on foot in search of their vineyards, eventually befriending the locals who showed them four hidden limestone plots planted with 50-100 year-old semi-abandoned Vital vines. The climate, the soil, the vines, the view — they were all perfect here and Casal Figueira was born. Marta's wines today are a raw, unmitigated picture of the terroir of the hills outside Lisbon, and a testament to her devotion to her husband's memory and the work he left behind.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: The word "unique" applies here in a literal way. António Augusto Carvalho (1967-2009) was the first and only winemaker to make and bottle 100% varietal Vital, the 2008 "Casal Figueira Vinhas Velhas." After he passed away, his widow Marta kept the project going and, in his memory, renamed the wine "António."

RATING HISTORY: 2016 91 IWR; 2013 95 D; 2011 "Top 50 Portuguese Wines" by Jancis Robinson

GRAPE: 100% Vital. Vines planted from 1932-2000 Tended in limestone soil at 200 -450 m (656-1,476 ft) altitude. It is an indigenous grape variety from the region of Lisbon, unfortunately almost extinct. It has been used almost exclusively by the locals, who have made and enjoyed homemade wine for generations.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: This is a wine meant for bounty of the sea. Fluke Crudo, Roasted Branzino, Oysters Rockefeller, Salt & Pepper Shrimp.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Hand harvested by friends, family and volunteers in 15-kilo (33 lbs.) baskets, the fruit from four plots is vinified separately, showing clear differences in terroir. Gently pressed after settling, the wine is put in 200-liter French oak barrels for 9 months. Light battonage. Wild yeast fermented, with no chemical correction. Light filtration prior to bottling. The wine has been farmed biodynamically since 2007.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Vineyards located on the northern slopes of the Serra de Montejunto, north of Lisbon, where Vital, the Atlantic climate and the soil are perfectly married. The limestone soil gives the wines an exceptional freshness and minerality.

TASTING NOTES Intense aromas of white flowers, fresh tarragon, green and yellow apple, pear and vanilla. On the palate, intense and bright, with silky texture and a rare combination of weight and elegance Orchard fruit, flowers, spice box and bright citrus lead to a long, intense finish with lilting tones of green herbs and minerals.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 11.5%

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