



Portugal: The Freak Vintage Is Pretty in Red (2017 Tintos), Plus 2018 Brancos & Other Releases

featuring Herdade do Rocim
reviewed by Mark Squires

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2018 Branco

The 2018 Branco, the estate white, is a blend of 60% Antão Vaz, 30% Arinto and 10% Viosinho, unoaked and coming in at 12.5% alcohol. Showing good concentration for the level, better structure and nice grip on the finish, this is nicely done. There is a reductive nuance, though, which some might call minerality (the winemaker did, not me). This might shed that in a few months, but in any event, it does not destroy the wine. That is very well done. It should hold well for a few years. **(88 points)**

2018 Branco Reserva Olho de Mocho

The 2018 Branco Reserva Olho de Mocho is all Antão Vaz (65-year-old vines in the Vidigueira subregion) aged for five months in a 60/40 mixture of new French oak and concrete tanks. It comes in at 12.5% alcohol. The oak marks this strongly, but the power even more so. It's beautifully structured and rather fresh too. The wood impact will get much better in time. Even now, there is no vanilla and the fruit rises above the wood as the acidity strikes back. It has more of an old-wood demeanor. This is very nice and it should age well, perhaps better than anticipated. **(90 points)**

2017 Reserva Olho de Mocho

The 2017 Reserva Olho de Mocho is a 60/40 blend of Alicante Bouschet and Trincadeira aged for 16 months in new French oak. It comes in at 14% alcohol. Showing lovely mid-palate finesse and enlivening freshness, this follows on to provide fine flavor. A little sweet oak shows, but that will fade with time, overwhelmed by the fruit and structure. In regards to that structure,

this is pretty intense, with fine power on the finish. This sophisticated red should age beautifully and acquire more complexity in time. This will certainly continue to improve over the next several years. **(93 points)**

2017 Terracotta

The 2017 Terracotta is a blend of 40% Alicante Bouschet, 30% Trincadeira, 20% Petit Verdot and 10% Tannat, aged in 140-liter clay amphorae for 16 months. It comes in at 14.5% alcohol. This was co-fermented and then foot-trodden. Elegant in the mid-palate, this has finesse to spare. The moderate tannins easily support the fruit and make this just a little tight right now. The intensity of flavor is admirable too. Overall, this is very successful, another nice effort in the continuing trend to use amphorae. This is not, however, said winemaker Pedro Ribeiro, the old-style Talha wine. Here, the clay pots are small, mimicking a barrel, and there is that foot treading. In any event, this works great. I've come to think these will age better than originally anticipated. Let's start here. **(90 points)**

2017 Tinto

The 2017 Tinto (the estate red with just Herdade do Rocim on the label) is a blend of 40% Touriga Nacional and 30% each of Aragonez and Alicante Bouschet aged for ten months in 40% new French oak. It comes in at 14% alcohol. This adds a layer of depth to the monovarietal Touriga, plus better structure. It retains the intensity of flavor, and the supporting freshness lifts the fruit nicely. Approachable now, this might still be better this time next year. It should hold well for a few years, but it is made to drink young. Probably, few will find out how long it ages. It will be drunk up fast. In Portugal, it is only ten to 12 euros, a fine value. **(89 points)**

2017 Touriga Nacional

The 2017 Touriga Nacional was aged for nine months in 40% new French oak. It comes in at 14% alcohol. Wonderfully fresh, this is reasonable in mid-palate concentration, certainly for its level, and it has ripe tannins and good acidity for support. Beautifully constructed, and rather fruit-forward, this rises above its level. It is still one to drink young, which won't be a problem since the delicious fruit is in control. It's never jammy, though, because it is very fresh. I liked this a lot as a value for everyday drinking. Drink it young for best results. **(88 points)**

