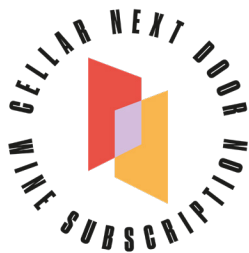


DAO FOCUS



We're very happy to present this month's feature on the Dao region in Portugal and two of the most exciting winemakers in the country, if not Europe!

We always like to think these cases are full of beautiful wines, but this month we think we've kicked it up a notch. Both of these wines offer tremendous value and come from two winemakers who are relatively new in their careers, but mark our words, they will be future classics – the quality of farming and attention to detail is just off the charts.

THE DAO

- Located in the north of Portugal and inland, it takes its name from the river that runs through the heart of the region.
- Dao is essentially a granite plateau – unsurprisingly, granite dominates the soil in the vineyards, giving the wines a firm structure.
- The vineyards lie at 400-800 meters above sea level, providing a good range in day and night temperatures. This means the region produces ripe grapes, but the cool night time temperatures help to lock in freshness and acidity to the wines.
- Nestled between two mountain ranges, the Dao is relatively protected from the extremes of the Atlantic, providing a unique microclimate, perfect for growing grapes.
- The grapes used in Dao are all native to the region, giving the wines a distinct personality and sense of place. Many varieties are permitted, but for reds, the focus is mainly on Tinta Roriz and Touriga Nacional, while the finest whites are based on Encruzado.

ANTONIO MADEIRA

We've featured Antonio's white in CDV before in last year's 'Portugal Focus,' but we couldn't do a Dao focus without including that beautiful wine again. And the red takes Dao to a whole new level of deliciousness!

Antonio epitomizes the modern approach taken by the new generation of Portuguese winemakers – looking forward while seeking answers in the past. He uses biodynamic practices in the vines, horses for all ploughing, and has secured parcels of super-old vineyards in the region's best sites. Antonio believes Dao to be the 'grand cru' of Portugal and, alongside his old vineyards, is planting new vineyards to heritage varieties. The results are beautiful, authentic wines that are, without question, some of cellar's all-time favourites.

DAO BRANCO, ANTONIO MADEIRA

In this blend, Encruzado acts as the backbone, providing tension and freshness. Bical brings roundness and aromatics, and the old vine field blends fill in between the gaps, adding various additional layers of flavour. Apple skins, white flowers, and mineral salinity embody this wine. Expressive and ripe, yet with a tension running through its core.

DAO, ANTONIO MADEIRA

Here we have Antonio's take on Dao red. Traditionally, the reds were big, unwieldy sorts of wines with rough tannins and lots of extraction. But Antonio here creates a more juicy, supple, and pure-fruited rendition of Dao. In many ways, this wine reminds us of a Cru Beaujolais like Morgon or Brouilly – which makes sense when you consider that Dao and Beaujolais share the same granite soils. The wine is richly fruited yet retains a firm line of acidity and ripe, but firm tannins, giving seriousness and weight to the juicy fruit core.

CASA DE MOURAZ

Most winemakers don't have websites; they are too busy planting, pruning, and worrying about the weather – but we found this little bio on Casa de Mouraz online and thought it summed it all up pretty well:

"In 2000, we left our secure jobs in Lisbon and immersed ourselves in what has become a family adventure, our version of sustainable viticulture and authentic winemaking. The transition from our urban lifestyle was as natural as we could expect.

Mouraz, situated in the heart of the Dao region, is Antonio's birthplace, where his family has farmed vineyards in a holistic and ecological way for many generations. This is also a place where the landscape and terroir are shaped by its people and geography, old and new vineyards coexisting with pine, oak, chestnut, and cork trees in a wild forest. This diversity reveals itself in the personality and complexity of the CASA de MOURAZ wines and reflects our own love of the place.

All the vineyards that are part of CASA de MOURAZ gained ECOCERT's Organic certification in 1997. In 2006, we began working with Biodynamic preparations and practices."

Although a relatively young project (in winemaking terms, 20 years is a young project!), the Casa de Mouraz wines shimmer with energy. There's a purity to the wine, a vibrancy that sets them apart from their peers. These are wines where you just can't wait to take another sip.

NINA, CASA DE MOURAZ

Nina is a 'field blend' of many different varieties found in the local vineyards – old vineyards in the region were not traditionally planted with one variety; rather, they were planted with a huge mix of varieties. Here it's a mix of about 50/50 white and red varieties and the blend is thought to contain up to 20 varieties in total. The wine is crunchy, fresh, and vibrant for a red – with herbal aromatics, pomegranate, and fresh cherry. It's remarkable that it's so light on its feet, but so full of flavour. Allow to breath to show its full potential and serve lightly chilled - not fridge cold – but half an hour in a fridge and it will be perfect.

DAO BRANCO, CASA DE MOURAZ

Another field blend from Mouraz, with over 20 varieties in the mix. This is a different take on Dao compared with Antonio Madeira. The wine here is aromatic and fresh – really vibrant - whereas Antonio's wine is a little more textured and savoury. White flowers, fresh peaches, and a delicious mineral edge. Think of this as one for the aperitif – and Antonio's as one for the table.