

A Portela Mencia 2015



A unique wine produced with the rare Mencia grape (pronounced Men-THEE-ah). Mencia only grows in northwest Spain. In this case, A Portela comes from Valdeorras, which is one of the most inland wine regions of Galicia. During Roman times, Valdeorras was known for its gold, hence its name, "the valley of Gold". The vines are tended in granite and slate soil. The high elevation of this precious small part of Galicia produces Mencia grapes that are different from other Galician wine regions, flavors tend to be more uplifted, more floral, brighter and very pretty! A Portela signifies the doorstep to heaven. It is also the name of the high elevation hill of 5 hectares (12 acres) located in the town of Larouco (province of Ourense), where the Mencia vines that make this profound mineral wine come from. A Portela is a joint venture between the Sharon family and Vinos Atlántico. The Sharon family possesses the largest holdings of vineyard land in the Valdeorras appellation.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: This wine is a superb value made from estate-owned grapes from the best 20% of the vineyard land of the Sharon family. The grapes come from the specific high elevation site of A Portela. The mineral character of A Portela gives the wine a special identity.

RATING HISTORY: 2015 93JS; 2014 91JS; 2013 92W&S; 2012 90IWC; 2011 93RP; 2010 90RP

GRAPE: 100% Mencia. Vines planted from 1976 - 1990. Tended in clay, granite and slate soil from 500 - 700 m (1,640 - 2,625 ft) elevation. This is a vegan wine.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: Herb-roasted chicken, pork loin, sautéed mushrooms, or even salmon would be divine.

VINIFICATION AND AGEING: After harvest, the skins mix with the unfermented juice for five days at 45F. This pre-fermentation "cold soak" enhances the wines aromas, color and flavor. Once fermentation has taken place, the skins spend another 10 days in tanks to extract all beneficial colors and tannins. The wine is aged 12 months in stainless steel tanks plus another 8 months in French oak barrels.

PRODUCTION: 1,691 cases

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: The vineyards are located in the autonomous region of Galicia, in far northwestern Celtic Spain, within the Valdeorras DO (Zone 1) in Valdeorras district and within Ourense province. The vineyards are in the mountain town of Larouco, at 500 meters (1,640 ft) elevation. The soil is composed of slate and granite topsoil with a thin clay subsoil. This soil profile is poor in organic matter and the vines yield 2.5 kg (about 6 pounds) of grapes per vine, compared to the average of 7.5 kg (around 17 pounds) per vine in Valdeorras. The surface of the granite and slate soil is warmed by sunlight during the day and provides heat to the roots, which encourages the grapes to continue ripening during the cool nights. Lower yields result in more concentrated grapes providing more intense aromas and flavors in the wines. The area's climate has an average temperature from April-October of 64.4F, among the lowest average temperatures in Spain, with 32 inches of yearly rainfall. Being one of the lowest levels of precipitation in the region helps prevent overnight frost. The cool temperatures of this Atlantic-influenced climate (Zone 1) provide a longer ripening period, which results in bright wines with great aromatic expression.

TASTING NOTES Fragrant crushed-rose and lighter cherry aromas here with a very fluid, even and plush palate. Fine, yet powerful tannins. Dark stones and spices. Plenty of detail. -- James Suckling

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 13.5%

UPC CODE: 8437008409399



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