

## In Portugal's Historic Tejo Wine Region, Traditional Celebrations Commemorate Completion of the 2015 Harvest

*-- Defined by a River. Refined by Tradition --*

(New York, NY, November 2, 2015) – With the conclusion of the harvest in Portugal's historic Tejo region, where winemaking dates back to 1170, the completion of work on October 15 has led to the area's traditional festivities: *Dia da Adiafa* (or Adiafa Day), the celebration of the harvest for all Tejo wine producers. The events and festivities embody an age-old custom that continues to commemorate Tejo's unique culture.

### A Welcome Harvest

There is much to celebrate about the region's 2015 yield. This year, Tejo's harvest began during the second week of August – approximately one week ahead of normal – and completed on October 15, one week later than usual, essentially due to the warm and dry year. This early start to the season put vintages in a strong position. The season's drier conditions also eased disease pressures, so that vineyards were in good condition going into the harvest.

In some cases, harvest was delayed slightly to allow the grapes additional time to reach maturity, which was achievable even during the dry season. Harvest began with the wine producers in the Charneca area, ending later with the harvest in Campo and Bairro. It is anticipated that production will result in a volume of about 578,000 hectoliters, similar to last year's yield.

### Seasonal and Climate Influences

The vintage began with a cold and relatively dry winter, followed by warmer-than-average spring and summer temperatures (with the month of May being one of the hottest in recent years). While much of central Europe saw extreme summer heat affecting vineyards, the cool Tejo River valley moderated the Tejo region's climate. The fall harvest was conducted amidst dry weather and mild temperatures, yielding grapes of good alcoholic content and acidity, and in excellent plant health. With the onset of harvest one week earlier than usual, the earlier ripening white varieties such as Fernão Pires and Chardonnay arrived first, followed by Arinto, Verdejo, and other whites. The red grape harvest also began a week ahead of schedule with Castelão, Trincadeira and Merlot among the first grapes to come in.

### Community Harvest Traditions of Tejo Endure

Tejo's long history of wine making is evident in the traditions that remain at the heart of the region's vineyard and cellar practices. While every wine region is characterized by its own local harvest, in Tejo, most of the grapes continue to be **hand-harvested by local women** from surrounding villages. On any given day during the harvest season, visitors will hear traditional folk songs being sung.

Among the most enduring Tejo customs is that of **foot-treading**. Using what are referred to as *lagares* (large shallow stone or concrete tanks), the grape harvest becomes a community affair at many wineries in Tejo. The tradition of crushing the grapes by foot is regarded as a more gentle way to process the fruit. It is said that the flavor of the wine can be compromised if the bitter seeds of the grapes are crushed with the pulp – something that is avoided through foot-treading.



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## **Celebrating Tejo's Bounty**

After the end of harvest, when all work is done, come the traditional Tejo celebrations. As is the case each year, on the last day of the harvest -- *Dia da Adiafa* (known as *Adiafa Day*) -- is commemorated by all. Derived from the Arabic "addyafa" the festival includes feasting after the field work is complete and takes place in mid-October, on different days according to the harvest of each wine producer. Celebration of the Tejo harvest is characterized by a festive social gathering and a special luncheon. Historically, the luncheon was derived from a share of the contribution of each worker; today, the luncheon is hosted by the wine producers. Customarily, the workers complete the harvest in the morning, stop to enjoy a community lunch, and then participate in an afternoon of dancing and conviviality.

*Adiafa Day* also includes the tradition of placing the *Adiafa* flag on the last basket of the harvest, marking the "official" end of the harvest. Tradition maintains that this flag, made in a glossy and silky fabric, should include floral embroidery designs and even popular verses alluding to the commemoration. Even older is the *Adiafa* grape treatment to be completed by the cellar man, in which men enjoy a fish stew and display the flags considered most beautiful. Today, the festivities of *Adiafa Day* are celebrated with beautiful parties that integrate the traditions of the region, each with its own particular expression.

## **Corking the Bottles**

When bottled, Tejo wines are sealed using the native, natural and sustainable Portuguese cork from the neighboring cork forests. Native to Portugal, cork trees thrive in the country's hot, dry climate and account for nearly half of the world's cork production. The Tejo region has over 30,000 acres of cork forests and the municipality of Coruche in the Sanatrem district is the single largest cork producing area in all of Portugal. Cork is harvested by hand, as it has been for centuries. Workers strip off the bark of each tree about every 10 years, allowing the bark to regenerate for the next harvest. It is only after the second or third harvest (about 25 years) that the cork quality will be high enough for use in wine production.

Even before the founding of the Portuguese kingdom, the Tejo region was producing some of the most unique wines in Europe. Tejo boasts some of the oldest, continuously operational wine estates in Europe, as well as those bridging tradition and modernity, and including the esteemed producers Quinta da Alorna, Casa Cadaval, Casal Branco, Fiuza & Bright, and Quinta da Lagoalva de Cima. Pulsing with a rich heritage, Tejo today claims a bounty of historical treasures, from Roman ruins and Gothic castles, to Manueline monasteries and medieval hilltop villages. To the Portuguese, Tejo is known as the land of vineyards, olive groves, cork forests and the famous Lusitano horses.

*Comissão Vitivinícola Regional do Tejo (CVR Tejo), known in the United States as Wines of Tejo, is an organization that oversees the viticultural and vinification practices of over 80 producers from the region. Nestled in the heart of Portugal along the banks of the Tejo River, which stretches from just beyond the Spanish border to the Atlantic Ocean at Lisbon, the Tejo region has been producing wines from native Portuguese varietals since the Middle Ages. The Tejo River's breadth and strength elementally impact the soil and climate of the region, deeply defining the region's terroir. These wines embody the enthusiasm, commitment and collaborative nature of its producers, and reflect the unique terroir and winemaking heritage of the Tejo region.*

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