



DOMINGOS
SOARES FRANCO

José Maria da Fonseca

PORTUGAL | SETUBAL

The Soares Franco family sustains ancient wines to produce its complex, sunny and fresh Moscatel de Setúbal.



IN THE 19TH CENTURY, JOSE MARIA DA FONSECA brought castelão vines across the Tagus River to plant near Azeitão, at a property he'd purchased on the Setúbal peninsula, Cova de Periquita. He was already bottling Moscatel de Setúbal when he released his first vintage of Periquita, a red wine, in 1850. Six generations later, brothers António and Domingos Soares Franco believe it was the first table wine bottled in Portugal—and it is their best-selling wine today. It's followed by Lancers, a rosé launched for the American market in 1944, and then Alambre, the fortified Moscatel de Setúbal wines that landed JM da Fonseca its ninth Top 100 award. Domingos is fascinated by technologies both old and new, and works with everything from spinning cones for a line of alcohol-free wines to clay pots to ferment his Alentejo reds at J. de Sousa Rosado Fernandes. His cellars for Moscatel tie the family's wines to old Portugal. Once part of a thriving fortified-wine trade with Brazil, much of Setúbal's vineyards have been developed as housing, with varieties such as moscatel roxo and bastardinho becoming rare—though you will still find some in JM da Fonseca's cellar. These fortified wines are treasures of Portugal, well worth exploring.

—J.G.

FOUNDED: 1834

OWNERS:

The Soares
Franco family

WINEMAKER:

Domingos
Soares Franco

VITICULTURIST:

Paulo Hortas

ACRES OWNED:

1,650

ANNUAL

PRODUCTION:

1 million cases

ESTATE GROWN:

65%

IMPORTER:

Palm Bay Int'l,
Port Washing-
ton, NY

Moscatel de Setúbal 20 Years Alambre (\$70, 93

points) Moscatel grown in the clay and limestone soils of the Setúbal Peninsula sustains its freshness over long aging in casks. A blend of younger and older lots, this is a sunny Alambre, with luscious peach and yellow-plum flavors. Its gentle length and persistent sweetness would match a savory course of pork rillettes or foie gras as readily as it would Queijo Serra da Estrela served at the end of the meal.

Moscatel de Setúbal 40 Years Alambre (\$150,

93 points) This wine's delicacy carries remarkable concentration and vibrancy. It layers apricot and nectarine over zesty clementine scents; age adds darker shades of bergamot, caramel and salted nuts to contrast the cool, brisk fragrance of the fruit. It's clean and fresh, lasting with more stamina than most 40 year olds possess.

Moscatel de Setúbal 30 Years Alambre (\$120, 90

points) Balancing aged character and fresher notes of apricot jam and jasmine tea, this is fully mature, showing some edges of alcohol along with a lovely orange-blossom scent. It's rich, smoky and sweet, to sip with a cheese course.