

Portugal's Historic Tejo Region Celebrates "Feliz Natal" with Holiday Traditions and Authentic Wines

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

(New York, NY, December 18, 2015) – As Americans prepare to enjoy Christmas and New Year celebrations, in Tejo, locals also are in the midst of holiday preparations. Located in the very heart of Portugal along the banks of the famed Tejo River and just a short drive from Lisbon, warm with hospitality, friends and family take pleasure in time-honored Christmas traditions that include specialty Christmas foods and vibrant wines produced by some of the oldest, continuously operational wine estates in Europe.

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. In Portugal, Tejo is known as the land of vineyards, olive groves, cork forests and the famous Lusitano "dancing" horses. Excellent, affordable wines and compelling traditions ensure appealing, authentic holiday vacation experiences.

During the holidays, and especially on Christmas Eve, families and visitors alike are awed by impressive nativity scenes decorating shops and clubs, and often gather around decorative Christmas trees and crèches. Many attend midnight Mass ("Missa do Galo") followed by a typical supper ("Ceia de Natal"). Christmas Eve supper ("Consoada") includes salt cod (bacalhau) with boiled potatoes and cabbage, and traditional fried desserts ("filhoses" or "filhós") made of fried pumpkin dough; "rabanadas" (similar to French toast); "azevias" (round cakes filled with chick peas, sugar and orange peel; and the highly popular "Bolo Rei" (King Cake) – a fruit cake of brioche pastry with port wine, filled and topped with dried and crystallized fruit -- now served both at New Years and during the Christmas holiday. Within the cake are two surprises: a small gift, or a raw bean; whoever receives the bean is responsible for purchasing the "Bolo Rei" in the coming year.

Gifts brought by Father Christmas ("Pai Natal") are opened either at Midnight on Christmas Eve, or else the morning of Christmas Day, with some families placing a shoe of each child next to the chimney (instead of a stocking). Stuffed turkey is now often served as the preferred main dish, followed with traditional desserts on Christmas Day. Holiday lights, nativity scenes and Christmas trees decorate the towns and villages of the picturesque Tejo region, with festivities continuing until January 6, the Day of Kings ("Dia de Reis").

Accompanying the traditional holiday foods of Tejo are the region's many wines that offer a diverse array of styles appealing to all tastes -- highly affordable, authentic reds and whites, with a focus on quality and balance. Tejo's native red grapes include the bold Touriga Nacional – Portugal's most famous varietal – as well as Trincadeira, Castelão and Aragonez. The aromatic Fernão Pires and the lively Arinto produce some of the region's most refreshing white wines. These indigenous grapes thrive in the Tejo region's warm climate and complex soils to produce balanced wines with bright fruit characteristics.

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



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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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