

# Dominó

## Profile

Vitor Claro started Dominó in 2010 as a tiny side project when he was still a chef. What began as a personal challenge to produce against the trend of high alcohol, high extraction wines has evolved into a full time pursuit spanning grapes from all over Portugal.

Vitor fell in love with wine over shared bottles with friends and patrons at the numerous places he worked in over the years. In 2008, he found himself head-chef of an extremely successful hotel/restaurant/winery in Portalegre, a part of the much broader Alentejo region. His work there led him to harvesting two years in a row, befriending the head winemaker and taking his own interest in the actual transformation of grapes into wine. Inspired by the low intervention wines he'd fallen in love with over the years, he wondered if they could do such a thing locally.

*"Let's just crush some grapes and make a simple wine".*

He searched, found and fell in love with a small parcel of old vines in Portalegre, bought grapes from it and produced two barrels of white and two barrels of red. This was essentially the entirety of the Dominó project until 2015; that year he started working the entirety of the vineyard part-time with his wife Rita. And through a consultancy in the Beira Interior, he began producing a wine there ( *Colmeal*). Some experiments with dry Muscat from Setúbal were made as well.

All of the wines were being made and stored in their respective regions while Vitor was running his own restaurant in Lisbon, the eponymous Claro. After deciding that a warehouse was necessary, Vitor and Rita found one 30 minutes out of the city... with an abandoned 1.5 hectares of vines behind it! Naturally, they rented the warehouse and started farming them.

With wine becoming an ever consuming endeavor for the couple (Rita was working full time as an architect), dissatisfaction with the restaurant life and a very promising 2016 vintage, they decided to change lives and make Dominó a full time project. In 2017 they expanded by acquiring a beautiful parcel in Carcavelos through a friend. They also started buying and picking grapes from the famous coastal region of Colares in 2018. Though they still live in Lisbon, the plan is to have 100% of the production vinified in the house attached to the Portalegre vineyards with the 2020 vintage.

Neither Rita or Vitor have studied viticulture or oenology; their work is 100% empirical. Nevertheless, the talent is evident and the wines keep getting better each vintage. To us, these are one of the most exciting, unique producers in Portugal, their wines always fresh, bright and full of life. And now that the Claros are fully dedicated to viticulture and taking the necessary steps to improve their cellar, we cannot wait to see what they do next.