

Mutineer

FINE BEVERAGE...REDEFINED

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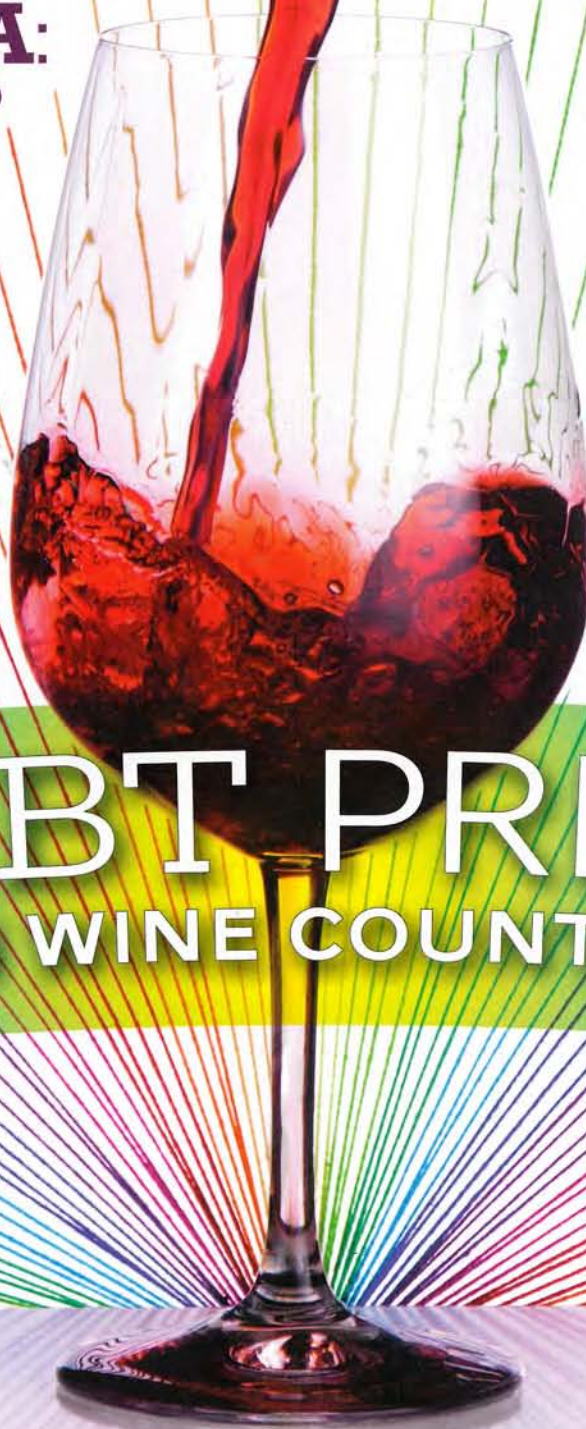
REDISCOVERING
MADEIRA:
THE ISLAND VINEYARD

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REDISCOVERING MADEIRA: THE ISLAND VINEYARD



Photo (opposite page)
The view of hillside vineyards
from Henriques & Henriques.

Photo (left)
Early 1900s vintage
Madeira in the cellar at
Madeira Wine Company.



BY LANCE MAYHEW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAENA MAYHEW

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Americans are regarded as exotic visitors on the tropical island of Madeira. Steep volcanic cliffs, stunning views of the Atlantic ocean and a mild temperate climate make Madeira a common winter destination for Northern Europeans looking for sun and relaxation. Sugar cane and bananas are more common than wine grapes on this small Portuguese colony located 300 miles off of the coast of Morocco in the Atlantic ocean. At first glance, it is hard to tell that world class fortified wines are made on this island, as few traditional vineyards exist. However, the story of Madeira wine continues to unfold as sommeliers and wine enthusiasts are rediscovering these legendary wines.

Madeira wines are some of the greatest and long lived fortified wines in the world. Unfortunately, Madeira wines are often dismissed as garden variety cooking wines, a result of a focus on bulk production that until recent years had severely damaged the reputation of Madeira wines. With a new-found focus on producing quality wines and

replanting traditional Madeiran grapes, the next chapter in the long history of Madeira wines looks exceptionally promising.

Madeira wines played an important role in early European trading and exploration. Madeira was the last stop for supplies and goods for ships before making the transatlantic crossing to the East Indies or America. Ships planning to round the horn of Africa to sail to the Middle East or India also stopped at Madeira to resupply before continuing on their journeys. The wines originally made on Madeira weren't fortified with brandy, they were simply table wines that ships would bring aboard in barrels to drink on their voyages. Water could become contaminated, but wine, with its alcohol content, was a safe way to consume water on long voyages. This need to supply ships on their way to distant lands is what started the original Madeira wine industry. Madeira wines and their reputation grew as merchants shipped these wines to the New World and the East Indies. As these wines traveled through the tropics they experienced high temperatures, something that would destroy other wines. Surprisingly, this seemed to improve the quality of the Madeira wines and soon, Madeira wine barrels were being stored as ballast in the holds of ships traveling to and from Europe. "Vinho da Roda" or round trip wines that had made the trip to the new world and back were highly prized and by the mid-eighteenth century,



Photo (this page)

Top left: A display of sample wines for analysis at Madeira Wine Company.

Top right: View of the hillside dwellings of the major city of Funchal.

Bottom: Canteiro aging at Madeira Wine Company.



Once winemakers on Madeira realized that the continued heating in ships holds improved their wines, they developed two processes to recreate the effect. The first, *estufagem* involves putting the wine in heated *estufas* (generally concrete or stainless steel tanks) and then maintaining the temperature for three months at about 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The other method, known as the *canteiro*, the wines are stored in oak casks. The casks are placed in attics and wine lodges for decades where the heat of the sun keeps the rooms hot and humid.

Unfortunately, Madeira wines became so popular that fraud became a major issue, with adulterated and poor quality wines being passed off for true Madeira. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Madeiran vineyards were devastated by powdery mildew and phylloxera, a one-two knockout punch that saw some producers leave the island. Many vineyards replanted with lesser quality vines and with it came a focus on bulk wines.

In more recent times, Madeiran wine producers have been focused on a commitment to higher quality wines and to restoring and repairing the reputation of Madeira wines in the world wine community. With Portugal gaining admission to the European Union in 1986, regulations and controls were introduced to improve the quality of Madeira wines, and while the Madeira



wine industry remains small, significant improvements to the quality of the wines being produced are spurring renewed interest in these wines.

The island of Madeira features a temperate climate with humid, warm summers and mild winters. According to legend, Portuguese explorers who first reached the island of Madeira were confronted with thick, impenetrable woods that covered the island. In order to clear the land, the explorers started fires which burned for years and have resulted in a rich, volcanic soil with a large amount of organic matter. This can actually be problematic as many of the soils on Madeira are too rich to produce good wines. Steep cliffs cover much of the island, so early settlers terraced vineyards into the hillside and vines are traditionally trained on pergolas, essentially wires suspended about five feet off the ground between stakes. During harvest, the grapes are harvested by hand from below.

One of the truly unique characteristics of Madeira wines are the general lack of winery owned vineyards. Only one producer on the island, Henriques & Henriques actually owns vineyards. In fact, the Madeira wine industry relies on over 1,600 small growers who deliver tiny quantities to the wineries during the harvest. Most wineries work with over 400 individual growers, mostly private individuals who grow grapes as an additional source of income and are not full time farmers. Growers are paid based on the sugar content of the grapes and the grapes are delivered around a two week window at the end of August and early September. This can pose a challenge for the wineries, as they have little control over what grapes are planted and how the vineyards are kept. The IVBAM (formerly the Madeira Wine Institute), a local governmental agency, gives advice and registers growers and chooses



the official harvest date. Harvesting grapes prior to the official harvest date can be done with written permission from the IVBAM (Instituto do Vinho, do Bordado e do Artesanato da Madeira, which translates to the Madeira Wine, Embroidery and Handicrafts Institute).

While Madeira is most famous for its noble white grape varieties, the majority of grapes grown on the island are the red *tinta negra*. *Tinta negra* wines make up 94 percent of all fortified wines made on Madeira. The *tinta negra* grape is favored by growers as it has higher yields and is more resistant to disease than the white varieties. That said, *tinta negra* is generally used for lower quality cooking wines, but some surprising examples of great *tinta negra* based Madeira wines do exist. The bulk of Madeira wines sold (63 percent in 2009) are three-year-old fortified wines made from *tinta negra*. In fact, only *tinta negra* grapes are allowed to be used for three-year Madeiras, which may be labeled to reflect the level of sweetness in the wine (*seco*, *meio seco*, *meio doce*, and *doce*). Many five-year Madeiras are also made from *tinta negra*, especially if a varietal is not stated, although the classic noble varieties of white grapes on Madeira are also allowed to be used. These will exhibit caramel and cooked fruit notes similar to three-year-old Madeiras but with a more complex and developed flavor profile. Both

DOUBLE PLATINUM COCKTAIL

BY JOEL TEITELBAUM
HARRY DENTON'S STARLIGHT ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO

1 1/2 oz. *Partida Reposado* Tequila
3/4 oz. *Boal* Madeira
3/4 oz. *Manzanilla la Gitana* sherry
1/2 oz. *Luxardo* Maraschino liqueur
Stir over ice, serve up in a chilled cocktail glass.



Photo (right page)

Left: Vintage Madeira wines dating back to 1903 by D'Oliveira on display.

Right: The exterior of Henriques & Henriques winery.

Photos (this page)

Below: Madeira aging in cantieiro barrels at Henriques & Henriques.

Bottom: Quinta Do Furão, a restaurant and former winery on the north side of Madeira.

three and five-year Madeiras are made using the bulk estufagem process, in which the wines are heated in tanks for three months before being aged.

Madeira wine can easily age for decades, and stocks of Madeira wine from the nineteenth century are still available from some producers. It is important to understand that Madeira wine ceases to age once it is bottled. It is the extended time in a neutral cask that allows a vintage Madeira to change in complexity and character. Once bottled, Madeira wines do not need to be kept on their sides as other wines are, as the purpose of the cork on other wines is to prevent oxidation, something Madeira wines have already experienced. Storing Madeira wines upright is perfectly acceptable and bottles of Madeira wine do not need special cellaring or other conditions to preserve the wine. Once opened, Madeira wines will keep indefinitely as oxidation has already occurred and the high level of alcohol from fortification will have a preservative affect on the wine.

It is the white varietals that have made Madeira wines so famous. Sercial, known locally as the "dog strangler" for its high acidity, is the palest and driest of the white grapes. It often exhibits citrus flavors and can have a distinctive nutty aroma. The wines made from the sercial grape also

have a bright streak of minerality, and are sometimes mixed with tonic water to make a long drink. Verdelho grapes produce a medium-dry style with caramel notes and a floral bouquet. Both sercial and verdelho are appropriate as apéritifs and have enough acidity to pair well with savory dishes. Bual, also known as boal, wines are medium-rich with pronounced notes of butterscotch, vanilla and roasted nuts. Malvasia, also known as malmsey, is the richest and sweetest of the great Madeira grapes, making deep, rich honeyed wines with notes of caramel, raisins and coffee. Recently, plantings of bastardo, a light, floral and elegant grape once widely planted on Madeira have been reintroduced, and wines made from bastardo should begin to appear on the market again in the next 10 years. Terrantez is also occasionally seen, although due to very low yields growers do not like to plant terrantez vines. Most terrantez wines seen from Madeira are old stock that continues to be released.

The winemaking process itself is what makes Madeira wines unique. Lower end and bulk wines are transferred after fermentation and fortification into concrete or stainless steel tanks. The tanks are then heated to 140 degrees where they are held for at least 90 days. Then the wine is transferred to wooden barrels or vats to be aged

until release. The second method, canteiro aging, involves transferring the wines, usually of superior quality and using white varietals and the best tinta negra wines, into barrels or vats in heated attics or lofts and then left for extended aging.

Interestingly, wood casks and vats come in a variety of sizes and shapes for aging Madeira. Wineries prize neutral casks, as the wine may rest for decades in wood without an over-extraction of wood tannins. There are no standard size barrels for aging nor any particular fondness for a particular type of wood. Most barrels are oak, but the influence of wood on Madeira wines is minimal at best. Visitors to some Madeira wineries may spot new, uniform barrels filled with three-year-old tinta negra destined to be used for barrel finished whiskeys, but those are casks specifically provided and paid for by whiskey producers.

There are many different styles of Madeira wines produced, which can make it hard to understand the differences between them. By law, at least 85 percent of the varietal listed on the bottle must be the base for the wine. The remaining 15 percent can contain other varieties for blending purposes. The main styles of Madeira produced are:

3-YEAR OR FINEST: These bulk wines, which are always made from tinta negra, make up almost 65 percent of all fortified

wine made in Madeira. Usually used as cooking wines, these are sometimes labeled by their level of sweetness; seco (dry), meio seco (medium-dry), meio doce (medium-sweet), and doce (sweet).

5-YEAR OR RESERVE: This is the minimum amount of aging for any of the white varieties. The majority of these wines are tinta negra.

10-YEAR OR OLD RESERVE, SPECIAL RESERVE OR VERY OLD: No vintage date is allowed on these wines, but this is generally the transition point from wines treated to the estufagem process to wines in the cantieiro process.

15-YEAR: This is where Madeira wines begin to shine. Henriques & Henriques 15-year verdelho is a multiple award winning example of how continued aging improves Madeira wines.

COLHEITA OR HARVEST: While these wines do have a harvest date, these are not true vintage Madeiras. These younger Madeiras are still of high quality and this is a newer designation for Madeira wines, only introduced in the twenty-first century. To be labeled as colheita, the wine must be 100 percent of the grape varietal named (if no varietal is named a blend may be used) and aged for at least five years.

SOLERA: Madeiran soleras are slightly different from the more known Spanish solera

system. In the Madeiran solera, wines from a particular harvest are put into the solera. A maximum of 10 percent of the solera may be drawn off and bottled each year, with an equal quantity of similar quality wine allowed to be used to top off the solera. A maximum of 10 additions are allowed and then all the remaining wine must be bottled. Soleras are rare, and increasingly being replaced by colheita wines, but they do still exist. Solera wines are allowed to use the year of harvest on the label.

FRASQUEIRA OR VINTAGE: Wines aged at least 20 years (often much longer) and must be made from 100 percent of the white noble grape variety listed.

RAINWATER: A mild, apéritif style wine usually made from tinta negra grapes. This lighter style of Madeira is aged at least three years in oak casks.

Photos (right page)

Left: Vineyards at Câmara De Lobos Madeira.

Right: Sample wines for analysis at Madeira Wine Company.

Photos

Below: Exterior of the Madeira Wine Company aging lodge.

Bottom left: Wrapped pallets of Madeira at Justino's Wine Company.

Bottom right: The tasting room at Madeira Wine Company in Funchal, Madeira.

Top right: Barrels aging in canteiro at Justino's Wine Company.

Of the eight producers of Madeira wine on the island, six of them export wines to the United States. While third party labels do exist (i.e. The Rare Wine Company and Broadbent Selections), all of the Madeira wines in the U.S. market comes from one of these six producers:

PEREIRA D'OLIVEIRA: Perhaps the most traditional producer on Madeira. Founded in 1850, D'Oliveira has the largest stocks of vintage wines on the island and is known for producing big and rich styles of Madeira wines.

H.M. BORGES: Founded in 1877, Borges is a small producer that focuses 80 percent of its production on three-year-old wines. Borges also offers small amounts of 10 and 15-year sercial, verdelho, boal, and malmsey, as well as five-year-old tinta negra.

HENRIQUES & HENRIQUES: Founded in 1850, this is the only producer that owns vineyards which accounts for about 15 percent of the total grapes used in its production of wine. The rest of the grapes are sourced from over 400 individual growers on the island. Henriques & Henriques offers a full range of Madeira wines and supplies Irish whiskey producers with Madeira barrels for cask finished whiskeys.

JUSTINO'S MADEIRA WINES: Justino's dates back to 1870, and this large producer works with over 800 growers in a new, modern winemaking facility in the hills above

the main city of Funchal. Justino's makes a wide range of styles under several labels as well as wine for third party labels. A recent focus on certified organic grapes should bring the first organic Madeiran wines to the market in the next 10 to 15 years.

THE MADEIRA WINE COMPANY: The MWC dates back to the early twentieth century, but boasts some of the most famous names in Madeira wine like Cossart Gordon, Blandy's and Leacock's. As the largest producer on Madeira, the MWC accounts for half of all bottled Madeira sold overseas, and uses tinta negra for three-year bottlings while reserving five-year and older ages for noble white varieties. With three flagship marques, each brand carries its own unique style throughout its range; Leacock's are the most traditional style being full-bodied and rich, Blandy's strikes a more modern style with an acidic backbone while still being rich, and Cossart Gordon is lighter and more of an apéritif style with a focus on drier wines.

VINHOS BARBEITO: Founded in 1946, this is the newest producer on Madeira, but that hasn't stopped Barbeito from becoming a significant force in the Madeira wine world. Focusing on leaner, more modern styles from his new winery, wine-maker Ricardo de Freitas is hoping to make his wines as food-friendly as possible. Wines from The Rare Wine Company are produced at Vinhos Barbeito.



One of the more interesting things about Madeira wines is how food-friendly and versatile they truly are. Most wines wither in the face of being paired with a vinaigrette dressing, but the acidity in Madeira is able to pair well with vinegar, creating a unique and harmonious pairing. While Madeirans themselves generally serve a traditional honey cake known as **BOLO DE MEL**, Madeira wines can be paired with a number of courses. Dry and medium-dry styles of young Madeira made with tinta negra, sercial or verdelho make excellent apéritifs. Soups, olives, smoked fish, caviar and cheeses make great pairings with these wine styles. These wines also lend themselves to being mixed into long drinks as their bright acidity and residual sugar content mix well with sparkling or tonic water. Younger, sweeter styles of Madeira are easily paired with chocolates, desserts, dried and tropical fruit and pralines. Older Madeira wines with a pronounced sweetness like a 10-year boal can be an excellent pairing for foie gras, mature cheeses and berries. For a decadent end to an evening, malvasia pairs well with coffee, pecan pie, dark chocolate and high quality cigars and pipe tobacco.

The wines of Madeira are starting their slow return to prominence as more focus begins to turn to the noble white grapes of Madeira. While younger wines made from tinta negra continue to dominate Madeira wine production and will remain so for the time being, a renewed focus on classic styles of Madeira is introducing this historic style of wine to an entirely new generation. While America's Founding Fathers toasted the Declaration of Independence with Madeira wine, Americans today can just as easily toast the Fourth of July with Madeira wine. It is, and continues to be, an important part of America's wine drinking heritage.

BOLO DE MEL CAKE

Bolo de Mel is the traditional Madeiran honey cake baked by families on the island. It is served with Madeira at parties, gatherings and social events. It has a very Christmas-like flavor due to the nuts, fruit and spices. These are made in larger batches, so this recipe yields five cakes. This is also a two-day process.

8 c. cake flour
4 c. granulated sugar
1 c. candied citrus peel
1 c. chopped almonds
4 c. chopped hazelnuts
2 TBS. baking soda
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
2 tsp. ground cloves
1 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground ginger
2 tsp. anise seed
1 tsp. allspice
1 1/4 c. golden raisins
2 1/2 c. butter, melted
4 c. golden syrup* (can be substituted with honey or agave)
2 lemons, zested and 1 juiced
2 oranges, zested and 1 juiced
1/4 c. Madeira wine

For Topping

1 c. walnuts
1/2 c. almonds

Day 1

Combine the first 14 dry ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer. With the paddle attachment operating on low speed; add juices, zest, golden syrup and Madeira slowly to combine. Mix until the dough becomes stiff and starts to come off of the sides of the bowl and be tacky (more flour may be added at this point if the dough is too soft). Store the dough in a bowl covered with a kitchen towel. Brush dough with melted butter and let stand overnight.

Day 2

Preheat oven to 350. Line five 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper on the bottom and butter the sides thoroughly.

Divide the batter evenly among the pans. Decorate each cake with walnuts and almonds. Bake for 20-25 minutes until a skewer inserted in the center of the cake can be removed cleanly. Remove cakes from oven and let cool.

Wrap each cake tightly in plastic wrap and set aside for two weeks to allow flavors to marry. Wrapped cakes will last up to one year. Serve as an accompaniment to Madeira wine. Boal and malvasia are particularly good with Bolo de Mel.

*Also known as treacle

