

# Barbeito

## *Fabulous 19th- and Early 20th-Century Madeiras*

*It is ironic* that among major producers of Madeira, the *youngest* firm has one of the most impressive stock of *very old* wines not only on the island of Madeira, but in the world.

Vinhos Barbeito was founded just 60 years ago, in 1946, by Mario Barbeito de Vasconcelos, a wealthy businessman. The firm's incredible range of old vintages today is due to his foresight, since in the 1940's and 1950's Barbeito went around the island buying up large quantities of privately owned wine, some of it dating back to the 18th century. These old wines became the foundation for one of the world's most unique wine libraries.

### **The Sources for Barbeito's Treasures**

Mario Barbeito bought his wines from small growers who had stocks of old, high quality wine set aside for a rainy day, as well as from old families who had put aside great vintages for future generations. Included among these purchases were some of Madeira's greatest wines, from the island's most important growing areas, including Cama do Lobos, São Martinho, Campanario, Caniço and Ribeira Brava. Included among Barbeito's prizes was the famous 1795 Terrantez that had once belonged to the important Hinton-Welsh family.



Mario Barbeito de Vasconcelos' house in Funchal.

### **Preserved in Cask**

*"We are fortunate that the old shippers and growers reserved their best vintages as a 'nest egg' or an investment against emergencies. They just kept them in wood, locked away, rarely drinking them except for a wedding or an anniversary, selling them only when they were hard up. There was certainly a loss from evaporation, calculated at two per cent per annum but, on the other hand, this ullage was far surpassed by the gain in quality."*

Noel Cossart, *Madeira: The Island Vineyard*

At the time Barbeito acquired them, these wines were virtually all still in cask, a tradition in Madeira, where 50 to 100 years or more in wood is mandatory for the greatest wines. The long, slow oxidative process in cask adds to the wine's complexity. And though costly to the owner, the evaporation in barrel concentrates flavor and extract.

Since Barbeito's death more than twenty years ago, his grandson Ricardo Diogo Freitas has continued to nurture the surviving wines of grandfather—while acquiring numerous treasures of his own. As a result, the scope of Barbeito's library of old Madeiras is today unrivalled.

The Rare Wine Co. been privileged to represent Barbeito in the United States for more than a decade. We have also worked closely with this remarkable house on our acclaimed Historic Series—affordable Madeiras that reflect the style and complexity of the great vintage wines.