

# D'Oliveira

## *History in a Bottle*

D'Oliveira is one of the greatest of the classic Madeira shippers, and one of the few to survive from the pre-phylloxera era. Founded in 1820, and today housed in cellars that date from 1619, this small jewel of a company is still owned by the same family, who were once highly important growers in the parish of São Martinho.

Its stocks of old wines have grown over time, either through marriage with other wine-producing families, or by the purchase of other old firms. But the foundation for its unparalleled library of ancient vintages was laid by wines made by the family itself, from its legendary vineyards in São Martinho.

### **Ancient Wines**

No other company on the island can boast such a wealth of great old Madeiras. These include five monumental Verdelhos from the family's own São Martinho vineyards, vintaged in 1850, 1890, 1900, 1905 and 1912. There are no finer examples of mature Verdelho in existence today.

Digging into the D'Oliveira's library, we can also find profound Malvasias (aka Malmseys) from 1875, 1895, 1900 and 1907; Buals from 1903, 1908 and 1922, and Sercials from 1862, 1875, 1910 and 1937.

The family also boasts superb examples of two very rare grape varieties: Terrantez (1880) and Moscatel (1875 and 1900).

### **Immensely Powerful Wines**

Over the years, it has been our privilege to take part in many comprehensive tastings of D'Oliveira vintages. There is a definite "house style" to these wines. They have very



*D'Oliveira's 1619 lodge on the Rua dos Ferreiros*

powerful aromatics, great lushness and viscosity, incredible structure, and a tangy character that is essential to great Madeira.

It's no wonder that others in the Madeira trade consider these to be supreme examples of classic Madeira. In fact, during the 1970's and 1980's, when the Madeira Wine Co. (Blandy's,

Cossart, etc.) was beginning to run low on old vintages to sell, it was to D'Oliveira that they turned.

Like Barbeito, D'Oliveira believes that Madeiras age best in cask. Consequently, its old vintages are kept in wood, and only enough is bottled to meet short-term needs.

### **Adegas do Torreão**

In the early 2000s, D'Oliveira had the good fortune to absorb a smaller house, Adegas do Torreão, whose legendary owner, Vasco Loja, had recently passed away.

Like d'Oliveira, Loja supplied Madeiras to the major shippers. At the time of his death, his firm owned little bottled Madeira, but he did have some incredible wine still in barrel.

By buying Loja's stocks, d'Oliveira made several important additions to its portfolio, but the most momentous was certainly a 1927 Bastardo—one of the very few examples of vintage Bastardo still in existence.

### **More Recent Vintages**

While D'Oliveira has many great old Madeiras, it also possesses one of the most impressive stocks of relatively young Vintage Madeiras, from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. These stocks reassure us that, 50 years from now, just as today, d'Oliveira will be *the* reference point for Vintage Madeira.