

Historic Series Madeiras



In the 18th and 19th centuries, Madeira was the United States' most prestigious wine, shipped to connoisseurs in major seaports from New Orleans to Boston. Prominent families purchased vintage Madeira in cask or demijohn, and built sizeable collections for long-term aging. In the late-1800s, successive plagues of Oïdium and Phylloxera devastated Madeira production, and the tradition of Madeira drifted into obscurity.

As America's leading merchant of rare, old Madeiras, The Rare Wine Co. has been a major force behind Madeira's recent revival in the marketplace—introducing a new generation of wine lovers to the wonders of vintage Madeira. But it was long a dream of ours to introduce Madeira's glory to a broader market—teaching Americans about both Madeira's magical quality and our two centuries of shared history ... Thus the Historic Series was born.

OVERVIEW

HISTORY: The RWC Historic Series represents a close collaboration between The Rare Wine Co. and Vinhos Barbeito. First conceived in 1998, the goal was always to produce affordable varietal Madeiras that possess the magical qualities of great Vintage Madeira. The difficulty of such a task was great, and, in fact, it took four years to perfect the blends. But finally in 2002, the first two wines in the series—New York Malmsey and Boston Bual—were released. And over the next nine years, three more wines were created: Charleston Sercial, Savannah Verdelho and Baltimore Rainwater. The market reception has been extraordinary.

WITH the exception of the multi-varietal Baltimore Rainwater, each wine is made up of 85% of the stated varietal, selected from parcels of wine averaging 15 to 20 years old. The remaining 15% is very old Tinta Negra Mole, 40 to 60 years of age, which gives the wines much of their aged vintage character.

Each wine is aimed for an American seaport where Madeira was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. The labels feature early engravings and historic information, further evoking a sense of Madeira's towering importance in American history.

VINEYARD INFORMATION

Soils: Volcanic, on steep, terraced hillsides.

Vineyards: A range of historic sites along the island's coast.

Composition: Each RWC wine is made primarily from its stated variety, with 15 percent very old Tinta Negra Mole. Residual sugars range from around 50g/l for the Sercial, to just over 100g/l for the Malmsey.

WINEMAKING NOTES

With many different sources for the wine, one can only generalize about the winemaking.

Historically, the grapes were pressed in or near the vineyards, and the juice transported to the producers' lodges in Funchal. The fermentations were stopped at the desired point with the addition of grape or sugar cane spirit.

Oak Aging: The critical process for making great Madeira is

extended aging in wood.

Most inexpensive young blends are typically heated for 3 months (a process called "estufagem"), to approximate the effects of age. But the best Madeiras, including those in the Historic Series, have spent years or decades in large barrels of various sizes, subject to substantial yearly swings in temperature (a method called "canteiro"). This time is what gives the wines their unique personalities.

CHARLESTON SERCIAL

The driest of the Series, this Sercial shows the characteristic strong acidity and nutty flavors that have always marked great vintage Sercial. Superb as an aperitif or with the soup and cheese courses.

SAVANNAH VERDELHO

Lightly sweet with zesty acidity for freshness. The finish sharpens orange zest, buttery shortbread, and subtle milk chocolate into a refreshing blend of spiciness and citrus sweetness.

BOSTON BUAL

This elegant Bual shows the classic notes of citrus peel and cinnamon. Its moderate sweetness, combined with good acidity, makes it not only a wonderful after-dinner wine, but versatile for dessert pairing.

NEW YORK MALMSEY

This wine has the deep color and classic toffee and caramel notes that make Malmsey a favorite among Madeira lovers. A perfect wine with which to finish a meal, and is fabulous with rich desserts, including chocolate.

BALTIMORE RAINWATER

In 19th-century America, Rainwater Madeiras were considered the ultimate in delicacy and refinement. Baltimore Rainwater recreates that classic style, in a pale-colored Madeira of little sweetness and great elegance.