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## Blending Is An Art Form; Vinhos Barbeito's Mãe Manuela

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It's such an intense wine and yet it's all about elegance. The complex bouquet awakens reminiscences which have been hiding in my memory bank for decades. The subtle scent of bitter almonds; a childhood memory when my mother prepared the Christmas porridge. Or the sweet-root scent; I loved to chew on those roots as a kid. But most of all I'm reminded about my very first job, at the age of 15; seasonal work at a greenhouse planting flowers. Thousands of marigolds. Like a flashback the scent reminds me of a fragrance I'd almost forgotten about.

More recently registered recognition factors are the pipe tobacco (Yes, I do own a pipe) and the boat varnish. The dusty summer road feeling on the nose adds nostalgia, just as the Asian spice shop fragrance and the dates and figs. Sniffing a wine can sometimes offer an emotional ride you hardly were expecting. In the case of the recently released **Mãe Manuela** from **Vinhos Barbeito** I'm experiencing a trip filled with associations from my own memory bank collected over 41 years. Tell me, what other agricultural product can offer the very same emotional experience as a wine, a Madeira wine especially?



**Mãe Manuela.** Mother Manuela. Earlier this summer Ricardo Diogo, owner and winemaker at Vinhos Barbeito, told me about a new wine he would release later this

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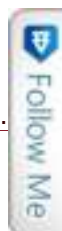


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year; a homage to his mother Manuela de Vasconcelos. The Mãe Manuela is labeled as over 40 years old but Ricardo Diogo can't go any further than that pursuant to the regulation, although the wine is much older. There's actually some 1880 Vintage Madeira blended in to the wine!

The Mãe Manuela wine is all about details and I realize that when having it. Old Malvasia was the favorite wine of Ricardo's mother and for the homage wine he has even blended wines from his grandfather's and mother's private collections. 1, 050 bottles are produced and they're elegantly packed in a purple box, Manuela's favorite color. Details.

This is a wine that needs to be experienced. The taste is profound and a real treat to drink. Few blended wines reach the same level of concentration as this one although the wine is still all about elegance. Such integrated acidity, such a mineral and almost salty feel. The sweetness is the last thing you give a thought. And why should you, balance runs the show here. The floral notes, the dried fruits, the old wood and fresh walnuts, the sweet-root and spicy clove and curry reminiscent taste is ever lasting and gorgeous but honestly, don't dismantle the Mãe Manuela. Just sniff it, drink it and you'll understand why some of us hold Madeira as the most breathtaking wine in the world.

#### The MAM opinion:



**Find the wine?** Not many offer it but you now have an excuse to visit Madeira and the winery of Vinhos Barbeito. The first half of the production, 525 bottles, Ricardo offered at a sensationally low price to his clients. The wine is now limited to purchase at the winery shop and a maximum of 2 bottles per customer. Price will be around 185 EUR. For those of you living in the US, run to Mannie Berk at [The Rare Wine Co](#) and pick up a bottle for 149.95 USD! That's nothing but a steal and the ultimate Christmas gift!

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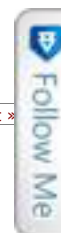
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