



Sarah Ahmed THE WINE DETECTIVE

The inside track on Portuguese and Australian wine

Barbeito Vó Vera Malvasia 30 Year Old Madeira

[Sarah Ahmed](#)

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I'm glad I got my fix of fortifieds at Friday's Big Fortified Tasting. Sitting next to a table judging Port and Madeira this week has been torture! I've felt like a Bisto kid, sniffing the air hopefully. But no Sunday roast for me. Me and my teams have enough on our plates this week with 652 Portuguese wines to assess at Decanter World Wine Awards.

However [Barbeito](#) Vó Vera Malvasia 30 Year Old Madeira lingers vividly. With Niepoort Bioma Vintage Port 2008 (notes of a vertical to follow), it was my pick of The Big Fortified Tasting. Here are my notes.



Ricardo Diogo V Freitas always pulls something out of the hat at The B.F.T. This time, Barbeito Vó Vera Malvasia 30 Year Old Madeira shone out like a beacon from his table. The box is quite a colour! In fact I seem to have had difficulty focusing on it – sorry about that photo! But the picture tells a story. It would seem knitting is a universal granny sport. The label depicts Ricardo’s granny (vó means granny), Vera, pictured above.



Much as granny was sweet, offering her knitting to those in need, Ricardo was keen to show *“that Malvasia doesn’t have to be that boring sweet thing everyone thinks is Malvasia.”* Telling me this wine was *“three months in the thinking, three minutes in the making,”* it comprises a blend of Malvasias between 30 and 70 years old, some of which had been stored in a glass demi-john for more than 20 years. At 98g/l, the residual sugar is relatively low; Ricardo reckons the volatile acidity (1.14) of the 70 year old component (as well as the TA of 9.15g/l) is also key to the perception of freshness/balance.



The world’s most glamorous shepherdess!

Barbeito Vó Vera Malvasia 30 Year Old Madeira

A golden saffron hue with a tight, lively nose, this wine is piquant and lip-smacking even before you've broached it. In the mouth it's very concentrated, tightly coiled and energetic, with flavours of marmalade. But it's grapefruit marmalade, so the sweetness is tempered by lip-smacking acidity. There's smoke and salt in abundance too, crashing around the back palate and sustaining this wine's pungent and powerful wave of flavour. Terrific!