

2016 – A Madeira Odyssey From A To Z

03/01/2017

My first thought when I decided to do an A to Z on Madeira, summing up 2016? I must be mad. Is there enough stuff to write about? Then I started going through my notes and photos. And ended up realizing the alphabet is too short! But yes, I am mad, mad about Madeira; you probably know that by now.

2016 was special for me, in every sense. I had two fantastic visits to the island, the #madeirawineday was a real step up from the first one in 2015, I did a podcast episode on Madeira in Sweden, I wrote a 14 pages long update on the island – in the wine magazine I work for, I created playlists for each grape on Spotify, I helped numerous of people who contacted me via the site – with suggestions on what to do when in Madeira, and of course, I was enthroned in to the Confraria do Vinho da Madeira. Isabel Borges of HM Borges is my Madeiran godmother; she will look after me and make sure I behave. Being a Cavalier (that's a knight but without the horse) is an honor I have difficulties putting into words. Sometimes I have to look in my wardrobe, just to see the cape and my hat with ostrich feathers. Or the tambuladeira, the tin cup with engraving which I received. Yup, didn't dream it all; it's for real.

But don't worry, nu hubris here. For me it was more the ultimate motivation receipt, to keep on doing what I love the most – spreading the word about the most breath-taking wine in the world! Enjoy my personal impressions of Madeira in 2016. And always remember when tasting and drinking wine – it's fun, crazy fun. Not rocket science. Cheers all!



Anticipation of the year. Juan Teixeira pours me four wines. Three from 1997 (Sercial, Verdelho & Malvasia) and one is a 1998 (Bual). All are outstanding wines although two of them are right up my alley. Wines I'd like to buy more than one or two of. And will. But first when they're bottled and on the market. These wines are extra special being all Single cask pipas – a new scene for Justino's. Love what Juan is doing right now and more will come from up there, in Caniço. Keep an eye for these wines friends!



Blend of the year. *"You can't write about this. Not yet."* That was the words of Ricardo Diogo at Vinhos Barbeito when he offered me a sample of the Vó Vera. Fine I thought, I respect that. Then he poured the wine. It was amazing; it is amazing. And all of a sudden it wasn't as easy to hold back my words on the wine. For a month! The [30 Years Old Vó Vera Malvasia](#) pretty much sums up what Ricardo is all about; curiosity and a constant search for different expressions of Madeira. And this one might be his best ever!



Celebration of the year. [You only turn 70 years once. Or 25 for that matter.](#) Being invited to celebrate the first seven decades of Vinhos Barbeito was great and at the very same party, the company also highlighted the 25 years long partnership with the Kinoshita family from Japan. All the cool kids were there (and I), the canapés and Verdelho kept on coming and before leaving I even got a sneak preview and first taste of the table wine project. Exciting stuff. Happy anniversary to Vinhos Barbeito and Kinoshita! **P.S.** I behaved and didn't eat the water melon garniture.



Dia da Madeira of the year. Second time now, for the [#madeirawineday](#), and a major step up in visibility from all over the world. This year included retailers with good deals on the 1st of July, restaurants offering Madeira wines by the glass and of course – YOU. The great thing with the highlighting of Madeira wine during one day, is the fact that it doesn't limit itself to social media but becomes for real thanks to all who shows commitment. Thanks everyone for contributing; let's make the third #madeirawineday even better!



Entrance of the year. So, where are we eating tonight? Probably the most difficult question you're asking when on vacation. This year's two trips to Madeira found us visiting one restaurant at several occasions. Not because there aren't any to choose from in Funchal, au contraire, but because they're always so welcoming at Restaurante dos Combatentes, just next to Jardim Municipal. Classic local kitchen, nice wine list and great staff. I'll be back next year, more than once I think...



Fifty is the new forty of the year. Not talking about myself here. But I will, when I write the 2022 Odyssey. Anyway, there's a new age category and the first to release a [50 Years Old blend](#) was Henriques & Henriques. But what I like the most is how they did it; by bottling a Tinta Negra from the 1950's! It's so good to see the grape being written on the labels now, even better when it demonstrates its awesomeness as in the H&H wine. Previously, the old blend was used to add that little extra to Henriques & Henriques 5 Years Old series. Thankfully, Humberto Jardim has now found a better destiny for these old casks.



Gratitude of the year. End of September and hell starts. My youngest daughter is diagnosed with Lyme disease, goes through a most painful lumbar puncture and we're visiting the child hospital for daily treatments during 11 days. But that girl's a real fighter even if the facial paralysis first now is disappearing. Hence the inevitable feeling of gratitude being able to, just five weeks later, travel to Madeira and dine at our favorite Italian in Funchal – Bernini.



Honor of the year. Confraria do Vinho da Madeira: *“Hey, would you like to hang out with us, wear a cool cape, hat with ostrich feathers and get your own drinking cup?”* **Me:** *“A cape! Awesome; finally I can realize my superhero dreams!”* **Confraria do Vinho da Madeira:** *“Cool. Then come, we’ll party like there’s no tomorrow!”* **Me:** *“And listen to Metal?”* **Confraria do Vinho da Madeira:** *“All night dude.”*

As you probably understand this isn’t what happened when I received the distinguished honor of becoming a [Cavaleiro](#) in the Madeira Wine brotherhood, the biggest and most honorable recognition there is for a huge Madeira wine friend like myself. I exaggerated a bit. We didn’t listen to Metal.



I wants it, I needs it of the year. 1972. A great year for Madeira wine. And people who write about Madeira wine. So I am told. And yes, I’ve had the pleasure to taste a 1972 Verdelho at Blandy’s still in cask. But I’ve never seen any for sale so just imagine my eyes when I spotted this 1972 Verdelho I.V.M. bottling at Justino’s! Now the question is, can I make an offer to the General Manager and winemaker Juan Teixeira, one he can’t resist? Heard it before?



Juiciest steak of the year. There are several places serving excellent meat in Madeira but I wonder if the best isn't the one served at Nélio Camacho Ferreira's Chalet Vicente. Meat from the Açores, tenderized at the restaurant. Oh lord, it's so good. And the wine list is a killer. Lots of great Portuguese wines at friendly prices. A must visit when in Madeira.



Kick-off of the year. It's for real now. Madeira Vintners [released their first two wines](#) earlier this year and at my second visit in November, two more were just about to hit the market. All four are three years old wines; a dry, semi-dry, semi-sweet and a sweet. My preference so far lies with the sweeter wines. It's a young team behind Madeira Vintners, girl power you might say, and they will probably learn a lot along the way. But it's great to have them on board as they are very enthusiastic and we're not particularly spoiled with new producers. When was it the last time? Twenty plus years ago? Anyway, can't wait to taste a wine with more age from MV, a five years old.



Laureate of the year. Exactly a week after I was enthroned in to the Confraria, my website received the award as Best Beverage Blog in Sweden at the Stockholm Wine & Food fair. The

prize, [Matbloggspriset](#), has since 2005 been handed out awards to sites covering everything from cooking, baking, photo and beverage and this year was the first time they decided that Swedish blogs written in English, could participate. And I won! And I'm so proud!



Madeira table wines is the new black of the year. I've longed for this development and in 2016 it's becoming real. The table wines of Madeira only represent a small percentage of the island production, roughly 5 %, and will not become a threat to the fortified wines. Just complement them. Sure, they're not cheap and you can question the price quality relationship but that's not the thing. These wines are needed, to develop Madeira as a culinary destination. This year saw the introduction of a table wine Verdelho from Blandy's, a first ever sparkling from Terras do Avô and both Vinhos Barbeito and Justino's has hired winemakers for their current or upcoming table wine production. These wines will of course find their way in to my site, has already!



New releases of the year. It's always a thrill to find out about the current year's releases from d'Oliveiras. They're always presenting something really exciting. Like last year's 1901 Vintage Malvazia for example. This year they came up with a quintet; the 1990 Vintage Sercial, 1994 Vintage Malvazia, 1986 Vintage Boal, 1929 Vintage Tinta Negra and a 2003 Colheita Verdelho. All splendid wines but with a special mention to the great Boal. And friends of the closed Artur Barros e Sousa have something to look forward to this year when d'Oliveiras will start bottling some wines from ABSL!



OMG of the year. When Isabel Borges pours me their [1877 Terrantez](#), it's so much more than a glass of wine. I'm sitting at the old mill of HM Borges which the company bought in the 1920's, being served a wine from their private cellar; a very special wine from the founding year. Even cooler; it's the fourth generation of Borges pouring me the Terrantez which Henrique Menezes laid down so many years ago. The circle is complete so to say. Isn't that just pure awesomeness in times when so many wine properties becomes anonymous businesses instead? The wine? Just as amazing as the people behind it!



Pool of the year. This year's visit to the village on the north-west coast of Madeira, Porto Moniz, was good to us. This time we had ten minutes without pouring rain. A new personal record. 1,668 people live here, last time they counted them all. Porto Moniz fascinates me, the remote feeling it induces, as if it was at the end of the world. And then of course the fact that they have some of the coolest natural pools in the world.



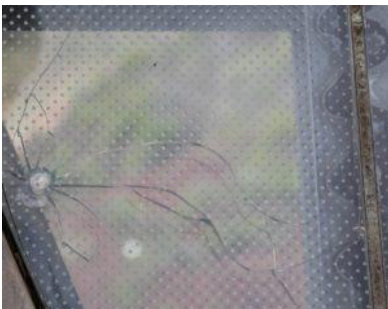
Quinta of the year. This one's easy. I finally got to visit Quinta do Bispo on the northern side of Madeira. The 4.5 hectares at [Quinta do Bispo](#) is an investment in the coming generations of Blandy's and a kind of insurance making sure the company has access to the classic varieties such as Malvasia, Sercial, Bual but also the incredibly rare Bastardo and Terrantez. Two hectares are planted with Malvasia, Sercial and Bual has one hectare each. Bastardo and Terrantez shares half a hectare. It's an honorable project and perhaps the way to go in the future. Bravo Blandy's!



Rosé of the year. You know these lists with places you have to visit before you die? Well, add the view at Quinta do Furão to the need-to-experience list as it's close to unbeatable. Located up north between the villages of São Jorge and Santana, the Quinta is today both a hotel, restaurant and vineyard. The wine in my hand? Blandy's then just released 2015 Atlantis rosé made from Tinta Negra. A fruitier style compared to the previous year. Simple but delicious and well made. Pairs especially well with great views.



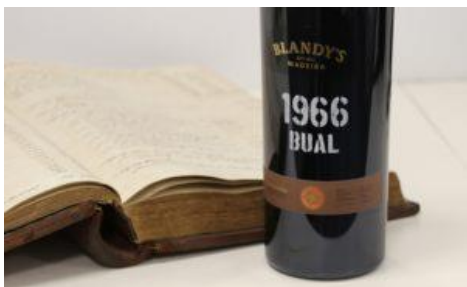
Selfie of the year. On a clear day, the view is stunning from Pico dos Barcelos. Located in the western part of the city, around 350 meters above the sea level, you have a great view over Funchal, the bay and even the Desertas islands. In other words, THE place to take a selfie with mum.



The heart in the mouth moment of the year. So you're visiting the sea cliff of Cabo Girão, 580 meters above the sea level. It's a bright day, no clouds blocking the view. After some careful risk calculating you finally decide to enter the glass skywalk which is hanging out over the cliff. Then, while out there, you spot it – the crack in the glass...



Uauh! of the year. I've had many fine meals in Madeira this year but there's this tuna serving which just needs a special mention. So, we're at the Maré Alta restaurant in Machico. Beautiful location next to the imported sand beach. Our friend Filipe has just ordered in a sashimi styled tuna, thinly sliced and covered with fresh garlic, fennel, pink peppercorns and olive oil. In the glass, Quinta de Lemos gorgeous 2012 Dona Paulette. I remember a tuna variation serving at a two guide star restaurant several years ago but honestly, this was superior. Why? Because freshly caught and local beats any star when the raw product needs to travel, losing much what it's all about.



Vintage of the year. There were quite a lot of them in 2016; the goosebump moments. But since I'm only allowed to pick one, after all that's the law, my choice will be the [1966 Bual](#) from Blandy's. A monumental wine, a grand experience and one that stands ready to take on the role as the successor when the company's 1920 Bual is all bottled and sold out. Oh, how I would love to taste these two giants of wines next to each other! Bravo winemaker Francisco!



What I suspected moment of the year. I don't look good in hats but wear one during winter since I live up north and don't have much of a choice. Furthermore, I never wear a cap because I don't want others to feel bad for laughing at me. In other words; I didn't expect to look good in the hat I received upon becoming enthroned in to the Confraria do Vinha da Madeira. Which is confirmed in this photo when I'm swearing the oath next to the chancellor of the Confraria, Jacques Faro da Silva – a man who demonstrates how to wear it gracefully



Xanadu of the year. When I was young, I remember our neighbors who traveled to exactly the same place every year. I thought that was strange, didn't they want to explore the world? Guess it takes time to understand some things because here I am, visiting Madeira for the 9th year in a row now. Twice even in 2016. And now I understand why our old neighbors did exactly the same; traveling is not only exploring but just as much about returning to a place which have a special impact on your soul. Time to buy an apartment in Madeira maybe?



Yet to come of the year. I've followed it in cask, tasted its development. Next year, latest by

February, it will be bottled. And it's going to be one of the best red wines made on the island. I'm talking about the 2014 premium red wine of Filipe Santos. Grande Paixão. That's the name Filipe will go for. I have to admit that when he told me about this wine for the first time, when we went to the adega in São Vicente, I was pretty skeptical. That is, imagining an oak monster. But I was wrong. It has developed extremely well in cask and my latest taste of it in November, showed a well balanced wine with fine texture. More than two years in oak, this mainly Merlot based wine will demonstrate the potential of the table wines in Madeira. Thanks Filipe, for having the courage to dare!



Zzz of the year. 28 articles on Mad about Madeira in 2016. That sucks. I can do much better and will so. The stories are there, just waiting to be told and it all comes down to time management of my spare time, my most important new year's resolution for 2017. Next to that, I need to speed up the transition to madaboutmadeira.com – a domain I finally own after cyber squatters gave up the hope that I would actually buy it from them. Haha...fools. The plan is to make my site more Madeira, including recommendations such as restaurants, hotels, what to do and so on. After all, I'm Mad about Madeira.