

Antonio Madeira

This cuvée marries the power of Baga with the nuance of more than twenty forgotten Portuguese varieties, yielding a singular field-blend expression.

Dão
D.O.P. SUB-REGIÃO SERRA da ESTRELA
ANTONIO MADEIRA

94



A Palheira 2021

Dao, Portugal

Region and Vineyards

The wine comes from the **Dão region**, specifically in the shadow of the **Serra da Estrela**, Portugal's highest mountain range. This high-altitude environment, between 500 and 600 metres, tempers the hot inland summers with cool mountain breezes, ensuring **slow ripening and bright natural acidity**. The soils are predominantly **granite-based**, poor and sandy, which enhance mineral definition and aromatic precision.

The vineyards average **60 years old**, with many parcels surpassing a century in age. These are traditional **field blends**, where **more than 20 native red varieties** coexist. **Baga** is the backbone of the blend, making up nearly 50%, accompanied by grapes such as Jaen, Tinta Amarela, Bastardo, and Touriga Nacional. The vines are cultivated biodynamically, with all vineyard work carried out **by hand and horse**, a reflection of Madeira's deep respect for heritage and sustainability.

Winemaking

Harvest is done manually into **small baskets**, with careful sorting in the vineyard. Grapes are **destemmed and gently pressed** before undergoing a **pre-fermentation cold maceration of 4-5 days** to maximize aromatic lift. Fermentation takes place with **indigenous yeasts** in small tanks or plastic vats, where a single **daily hand punch-down** over **12-14 days** ensures gentle extraction.

Following fermentation, the wine is aged in **used French oak barrels of 400-600 litres** for **two winters**. This approach naturally stabilizes and clarifies the wine without fining or filtration. The result is a red that is precise, pure, and deeply expressive of its highland terroir.

Alcohol :13,00 %

Composition: 50% Baga, 50% Vieilles Vignes

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Tasting Notes

- **Color**: Medium ruby with translucent edges, hinting at freshness and finesse.
- **Aroma**: A complex bouquet of wild red fruits, pomegranate, and dried herbs, underpinned by granite minerality, forest earth, and subtle spice. Floral notes of violets and roses add refinement.
- **Palate**: Tense and linear, balancing juicy red fruit with savoury, mineral undertones. The tannins are fine and sculpted, the acidity vibrant, and the finish long, saline, and mouthwatering.

Did you know?

The name **A Palheira** refers to the humble "shed" where viticulturists store their tools. By choosing this name, Madeira juxtaposes the grandiose image of a château with the **authentic, down-to-earth essence** of vineyard life—celebrating the farmer's work rather than aristocratic prestige.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Roast partridge with chestnuts**: A game bird pairing that highlights the wine's earthy, mineral depth.
- **Grilled lamb with rosemary**: The herbal elements mirror the wine's aromatic profile, while acidity cuts through the richness.
- **Wild mushroom risotto**: The savoury character and saline finish resonate beautifully with umami-laden mushrooms.
- **Aged Portuguese cheese**: Complements the wine's freshness and subtly saline finish, a classic regional harmony.

94

Robert Parker (RP) : 94 Points (2021)

The single-vineyard red 2020 A Palheira comes from one of the two best vineyards worked by Madeira, a 60- to 100-year-old plot planted on granite soils with a field blend of many varieties dominated by Baga. It matured in a 600-liter oak barrel for 18 months. It has a moderate 13% alcohol and a pH of 3.66 with 5.77 grams of acidity. In 2020, he lost 50% of the crop because of frost in March, and the remaining grapes were more concentrated. So, the wines are a little more powerful and feel a little riper than the wines from 2021. 880 bottles produced. It was bottled in August 2022. I also had a preview of the 2021 that was sourced from a different vineyard, and the wine was very floral, perhaps a little more reductive and showing a little like some wines from the Canary Islands.