

# The ASTOR Guide to...

## MADEIRA



*P*roduced on the Island of Madeira off the coast of Africa, this fortified wine is completely unique.

*M*adeira spends months literally cooking in estufas (heating tanks) at temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The process mimics the conditions of the tropical sea voyages on which madeira was first (accidentally) produced, transforming the young, highly acidic wines into deep, layered, complex creations that offer a unique array of flavor characteristics.

*T*hough these wines are appealing from the day they are released, their texture softens slowly over time until they become velvety and dense, with saline notes underneath the citrus and toffee flavors for which these wines are famous.

*M*adeira is produced from a small assortment of grapes, each of which imparts its unique stamp on the finished wine. The very dry style of **Sercial** clearly exhibits madeira's famous acidity, even as it offers a glimpse of the mineral notes that keep sweeter styles refreshing and balanced.

*V*erdelho generally offers an experience similar to Sercial, but with a bit of smoky sweetness accentuating the nutty notes, and acidity that is a touch softer.

*B*oal (a.k.a **Bual**) produces sweeter wines with fruitier, more intense flavors that offer great contrast to the strong caramel notes imparted by the aging process.

*T*he star of the lineup is generally considered to be the **Malmsey** or **Malvasia** grape, which adds some spectacular aromatics to the style of the sweet Boal. This is truly the grape that made madeira famous.

*R*are bottles of **Bastardo**, **Terrantez** and **Moscatel** also appear from time to time, and are treasured for their uniqueness as well as their scarcity.

