

> 8 August 2026 at 0:00

Wine with Gerard Richardson

WHEN was the last time you opened a bottle of Madeira?

I'm guessing never, am I right? Madeira fell from grace decades ago for one reason or another, but it never went away, and the winemakers on the island (yes, it can only be made on Madeira) are among the most skilled on the planet.

Imagine producing a wine that you are then going to add a spirit to in order to raise the alcohol, then putting it in a wooden barrel and ageing it for years, sometimes decades, while from the outset knowing the style you aim to achieve at the end.

Yeah, pretty mind-boggling, but as well as skilled winemakers, it takes very specific grapes and a unique hot seaside atmosphere to create the masterpiece that is Madeira.

As with Port and Sherry, there are various styles of Madeira: dry, medium and sweet.

I find the former too dry for my palate, but I've also heard people wax lyrical over their freshness.

The latter, by contrast, are just a bit too sweet for me, but again, they score highly.

My personal love affair is in the middle, the ones they call Boal, perhaps because that type is very close to the aged tawny ports I love so much.

The dukes of this, that and t'other

that you find in the supermarkets are okay as an introduction to the style of wine, but if you really want to drink Madeira, go for a five or 10-year-old from one of the old houses.

Blandys 15-year-old Boal, 50cl

A superb and very classy wine with warm figs on the nose and plums and caramel on the palate. Oh, and a cracking price at Waitrose.

Waitrose £27.50

Blandys 10-year-old Malmsey 50cl

Sweet but not so much that your dentist would protest, with lovely layers of figs, caramelised sugar, and hints of orange peel. A real stunner.

Cockburns of Leith £34

www.richardsonsofwhitehaven.co.uk
[@gerardfinewine](#)

