

Aperitif (with CG)

Johanna Raffan

Wine: Monte Seco

Producer: Henriques & Henriques

Year: 3yr old

%: 19%

Cepage: 90% Tinta Negra Mole, 10% Sercial

Price & Availability in UK: approx £10 from everywine or order direct from H&H

Tasting Notes:

A light pale dry aperitif wine (vermouth style). Crisply dry and fruity. Lovely nose with nutty notes, plenty of rich almond and walnut. On the palate lovely freshness with a real tang of orange and fresh breezy almost salt and ozone acidity.

Invented in 1938 by Peter Cossart, John Cossart's father, Monte Seco was the first wine he made on his own at the age of 19.

Madeira starts life as fermenting must and is then fortified, either to arrest fermentation for a Malmsey or a Bual, or after fermenting out, in the case of Sercial or a Verdelho (to a minimum of 17% alcohol) and undergoes its own very special maturation process. Fermentation takes place at different stages according to the grape variety used. Grapes are picked from mid-August up to the end of October and the special 'estufagem' of the wines begins in January.

The Estufa process: The unique character of Madeira was discovered in the 15th Century, when Madeira wines were used as victuals for ship's companies, stored in the holds of caravels. The blowsy heat of the ship's hold was found to have dramatically improved the wines, making them richer and more complex, as well as proving them to be the most stable in heat. This also demonstrated the great ageing potential that they had. The wines are estufa'd usually for 3 months in temperatures rising to 45 degrees C before being allowed to cool. Maturation then starts in wooden casks, which need not be topped up.

The wines are not bottled until they are at least 3 years old.

Madeira should be cellared upright. It loves heat light and air, but never frost.