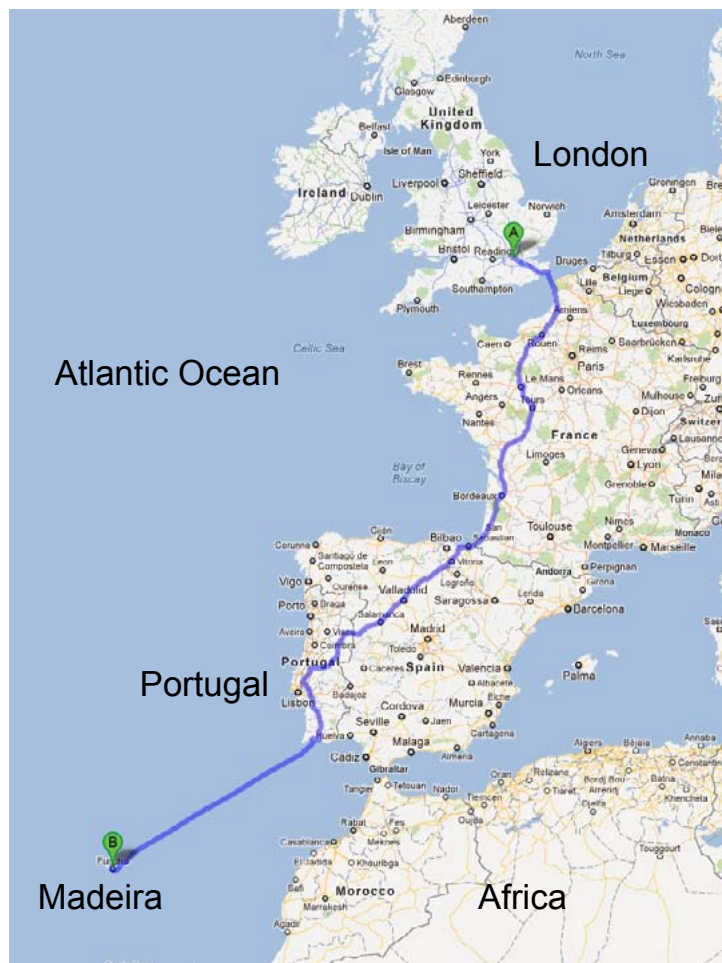


Our old Madeiran Wheat

- The wheat you are about to sow was given to us by an old gentleman, Antonio Luis originally from the town of Santana, Madeira who now lives in London and was a plotholder on Rosendale Allotments. He brought this wheat with him from the Madeira Islands which are out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.
- We can tell this wheat is a very old type because it can grow very high, up to 1.5m. Modern wheat is usually less than half a metre tall.
- Being so tall this wheat shades out the weeds underneath it, but if you put modern farmers' fertilizer on this wheat it would get too tall and big and fall over, which farmers' call "lodging".
- Modern short wheat you can feed with fertilizers to get more and bigger grains but you also have to use chemicals to stop the weeds and then other chemicals to stop disease and pests. This makes it difficult for organic farmers who don't use chemicals - maybe they can grow these old wheats again.



the Madeira Islands

- Madeira is much further south than London, in fact it is next to North Africa
- It is much warmer than London even in winter so its possible to grow plants like bananas that we can't here. It has what is called a "sub-tropical" climate.
- Nobody lived on Madeira till some people from Portugal moved there in 1420, just under 600 years ago
- At first the new farmers on Madeira grew wheat to sell to Portugal, then they found they could grow a new crop that we can't grow here, sugar cane. Before Europeans discovered the Caribbean Islands most of our sugar came from Madeira.





the Madeira Islands were volcanoes

- the Madeira islands are the tops of volcanoes that have come up from the bottom of the ocean 6 kilometers below.
- This happened quite recently so rain and wind has not had much time to wear them down and so most of Madeira is very steep sided hills, valleys and mountains. It makes it quite difficult to travel around and to farm but the Madeirans have found solutions. They move water around mountains in special channels because one side of the mountain can get a lot of rain and the other has very little. They have different varieties of plants to grow at different heights.
- In Santana farmers have some fields by the beach which they travel to in a special cable car.





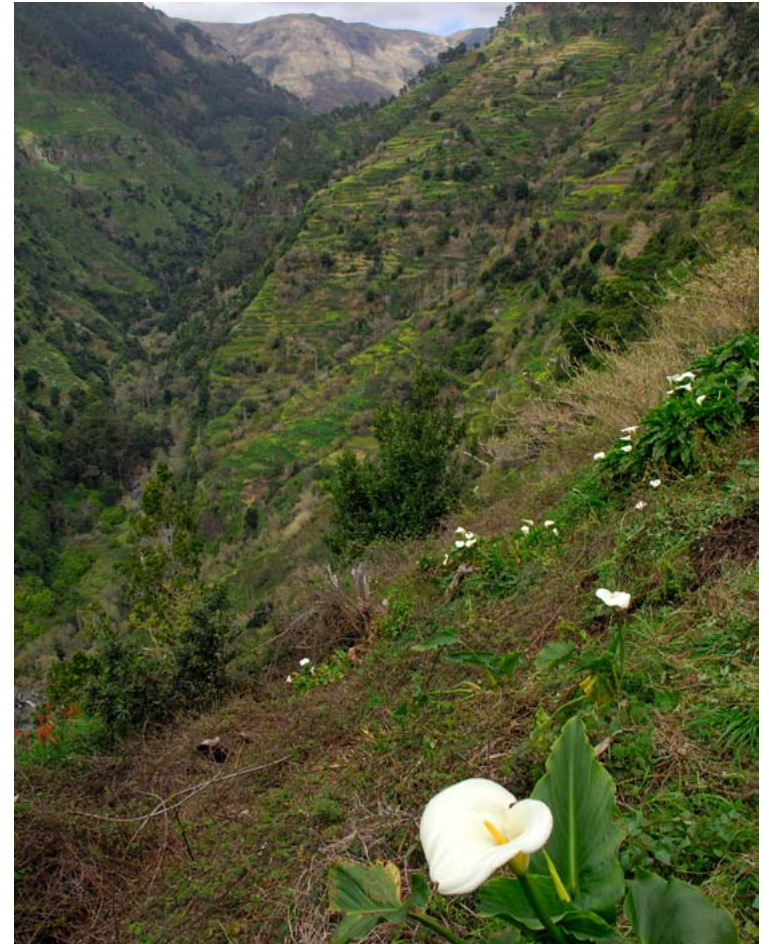
our Madeiran wheat is a special mixture, a “landrace”

- to cope with being at different heights and also with some special poisonous metals in the volcanic soil our Madeiran wheat is not all the same variety, it is a mixture made by the local farmers called a “landrace”. Above are pictures of some of these different varieties in the Madeira landrace mix.
- Over many generations the farmers have experimented by adding wheats from many lands together to find a mix that will be good for the climate and the land on Madeira and which can be used for what they want, to make their bread and cakes but also to build their houses.
- Because our wheat is a mixture of varieties it has also been able to change and adapt over the last few years to grow quite well in London.



the Levadas of Madeira

- Starting in the 16th Century the Madeirans have built many kilometers of water channels called “levada” bringing water from the wet North and North West of the island to the hotter, drier flatter South to grow crops such as sugar cane. These channels go along the side of mountains, through tunnels and under waterfalls. They are also now popular with as tourist walks.





the grape harvest to make wine

Harvest on Madeira

- Because most farmers' fields on Madeira are very small and on hillsides, the big "Combine Harvesters" farmers have here cannot be used to harvest wheat. Wheat is cut with scythes and sickles and then fed by hand into a threshing machine which separates the grain from the straw. We will harvest our wheat in a similar way in September when it is ripe.
- Other crops are also ready to harvest in the Autumn such as grapes to make wine, afterwards it is time to eat and drink a lot.



After the harvest is time to celebrate and relax with some music, notice the special Madeiran hats



Madeira's last water mill

- After threshing out the grain it can be taken to be ground into flour between stones driven around by water in Madeira's one surviving water mill. We will be grinding our wheat between stones also.





what to make with our wheat

- on the right you can see the traditional style of Santana house with its roof of straw right down to the ground on two sides. This can only be done with old long strawed wheat.
- above you can see the making of a special Madeiran Christmas cake which mixes wheat, dried fruit, butter, nuts and sugar cane syrup to make a cake called “Bolo de Mel de Cana”. We can make this in London with our Madeiran wheat also.





Madeirans in London

- Quite a lot of people have moved from Madeira to London, many live in the Stockwell area of Lambeth borough.
- They have brought their own culture with them including festivals, cafes and bakeries, their favourite food and drink, language and music to add to the big mix that makes living in London so special for all of us.
- There are quite a few Madeirans who are plot holders on Rosendale Allotments. Because they often used to be farmers in Madeira they look after their plots very well and they know many things about growing food that other people may have forgotten. They can make things like wine that English people don't know how to.



Madeira at the Feast on the Bridge

- In September for the Mayor's Thames Festival we will have a feast on Southwark Bridge where we will thresh, winnow, mill and bake the Madeiran wheat crop.
- There will be Madeiran food and Madeiran music and we hope to build a traditional Santana thatched house.
- We hope you can bring your Madeiran wheat harvest to the Feast!

