Monção & Melgaço

Discover all about the nature of Alvarinho



VINHO VERDE®

Monção & Melgaço
THE NATURE OF ALVARINHO



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The nature of Alvarinho

In 1908, at the time of the Vinho Verde region's demarcation, differences in the types of soil, climate and grape varieties precipitated the region's organization in several sub-regions, each one gradually making their identity clear. Currently, the Vinho Verde demarcated wine region is divided into 9 sub-regions, each one with reccomended grape varieties for the production of table wine, sparkling wine and bagaceira brandy.

The Monção & Melgaço sub-region is one of these nine. It possesses a very particular microclimate and developped around the south bank of the Minho river, on half-slope hillsides. The Alvarinho varietal wines are the main winegrowing reference from the Monção & Melgaço sub-region. The most recognisable characteristics of the Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho were forged here, in the Northeast of the Iberian Peninsula the northernmost point in Portugal, comprising the winemaking counties of Monção and Melgaço. This Vinho Verde subregion is where the Alvarinho has its origin and where it began its evolution, something that happenned even before any written records.

The nature of the Alvarinho is placed between the river and the mountain. The presence of the Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho extends from the Minho river valley and its tributaries, climbing the mountain's half-slope, adapting to several types of terrain and reaching considerable altitude levels. The Alvarinho in this subregion is only mildly exposed to the influence of the sea and has, as one of its beneficial conditions for growth, a wide thermal amplitude during maturing, characterized by warm days and cold nights. This factor contributes to the protection of the aromas and the persistance of taste, preserving its freshness. Whether young or aged, this Vinho Verde always preserves its character through the years. In its terroir, Alvarinho gave rise to several styles of wine, sparkling wine and brandy. All these feature some of its more pronounced characteristics, and in its conception make use of the experience and knowledge of the local producers. Despite its singularities, the Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho is included in the larger family of the Vinho Verde.





Monção & Melgaço
Its history

In 1908, with the intent of defending the genuineness and quality of the wine originating from this area, the sub-region of Monção was created, at the time of the outlining of the demarcated Vinho Verde region (by royal decree, on the 18th of September of 1908). Later it became known as the Monção and Melgaço sub-region, in order to include the areas of both counties, and composed by two towns with over 700 years of history – both being adorned by magnificient fortifications and castles - the Monção Walls and the Melgaço Castle - which have defended the territoy since the conquest of portuguese independence.

The Monção township decree, attributed to the Monção town by King D. Afonso III, is one of the varied examples of secular tradition in grapevine growth:

> *"... and him who builds a house or honors his vineyard or property and there remains for a year, if he wishes to relocate to another town, may he keep his property, wherever he may reside; and, if wishing to sell, may he sell it to whomever he so desires, by our township decree."*
>
> 1261.03.12 – Guimarães, royal township decree issued by D. Afonso III

The winegrowing culture in Monção & Melgaço dates back to the second half of 100 BCE, archaelogical data being plentiful (pitchers for wine transportation) to support how deeply a part of the local communities' diet wine was.

The vineyard culture thrived side by side with other agrarian cultures as a result of the subsistence economics that reigned in those days.

Nowadays Monção and Melgaço is a region mainly dedicated to the growth of the Alvarinho grape variety, and the income made from its production represents a considerable portion of the yearly income for the local population. The recognition beyond its borders of the Monção and Melgaço wine dates back to the 14th century AD. By then, the wine in this region was extremely sought-after by the english, who headed to Portugal in order to trade codfish for Monção wine. Besides this, the Monção wine was selected by the english to replace the established Borgogne wines, when periods of war stopped the latter's supply. Throughout the centuries, this recognition spread through the corners of the earth, and the Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho reached international notoriety.

More than the unique morphology of the region, the Monção & Melgaço Alvarinho is, in essence, the result of a shared knowledge, of an accruing of experiences and skills, a cultural heritage brought to us by the previous generations.



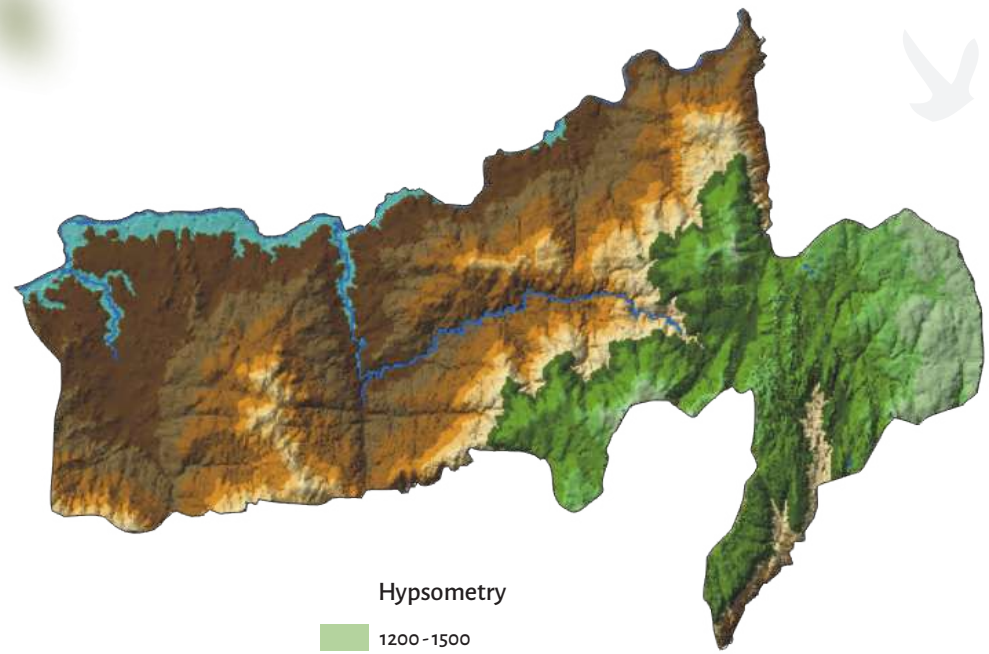
The natural conditions for production in the sub-region

The Geology, the Soils, the Climate and the Topography

In the sub-region there's a main valley, the Minho river valley, presiding over the valleys of its tributaries, chief among them the Gadanha and Mouro rivers. The sub-region possesses vigorous elevations, being surrounded by mountains that are constituents of the portuguese section of the septentrional iberian massif and that provide, on the west, protection from atlantic winds, and on the north, south and east a hydrographic bay with a particular microclimate, which could globally be characterized by a temperate atlantic climate.
This mountain chain defined the rainfall, humidity and air temperature, fundamental factors in the sub-regions specificity.

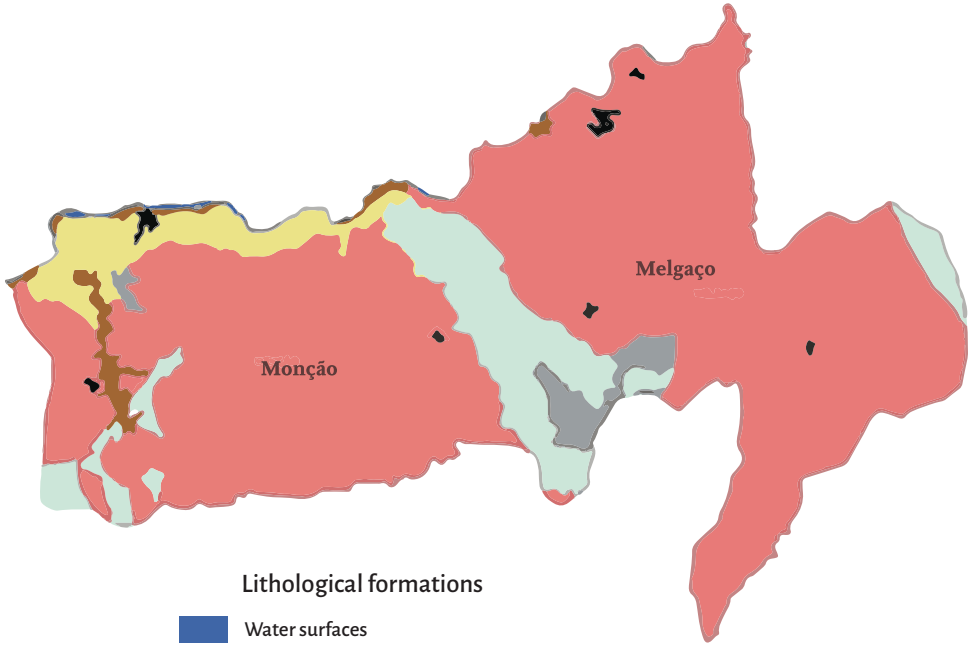


Geology Mapping



Hypsometry

- 1200 - 1500
- 1100 - 1200
- 900 -1100
- 800 - 900
- 700 - 800
- 600 - 700
- 200 - 500
- 150 - 200
- 100 - 150
- 50 - 100
- 1 - 50
- Water surface



Lithological formations

- Water surfaces
- Urban
- Recent alluviums
- Granodiorites and similar
- Granites and similar rock
- Non-consolidated detrital sediments
- Diverses shale, schists and similar rockXistos diversos e rochas afins

A determining factor in the characterization of a Terroir is the soil, a fundamental element in the character of the grapevine and the wine's profile. In this region the granite dominates, however, on the Northeast, there are several quantities of sediments (clay and rolled pebble), as well as the existance of a shale strip in the central part of the region.
Another determining factor for the Monção and Melgaço Terroir is the climate, conditioned by the elevations present in the region. The fact that this region is cut through in the South, shelters it from the Atlantic influence typically found in the Vinho Verde region. Together with the mountain layout of the Serra da Galiza to the North, reaching considerable elevation close to the Minho river, they form a sort of mountainous barrier responsible fo the existance of a unique microclimate.

This microclimate is characterized as an atlantic temperate microclimate with continental influence, featuring cold and rainy winters, and dry and hot summers. The presence of a significant amount of water surfaces (Minho river and its main tributaries) induces a regulation of temperatures, making for thermal amplitudes adequate for the production of fresh and aromatic wines. The full breadth of these characteristics creates the necessary conditions for the production of the renowned Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho, a unique product.



Viticulture and winemaking in the sub-region

In Portugal, Monção and Melgaço stands out as the region with the most density of Alvarinho variety inception, leading to a vast knowledge of the variety and where its is possible to discover its many values.

The human factor – and namely the grapevine growth techniques – amplify the differences in the natural factors found in the region. In the sub-region, there are three driving systems implemented, generally described as: the simple ascending cord, where the grapevine is laid as an ascending wall of vegetation and bunches find good exposuer to the sun; the simple resounding cord, where the grapevine features descending vegetation (the most abundant system) with bunches benefitting from intermediate exposure to the sun; and still the grapevine in the "ramada" style (the least found variation) with the vegetation laid out horizontally, the bunches being underexposed to the sun.

Simple resounding cord

Most grapevines are built in this descending system – a system widely adopted in the sub-region on account of it allowing only a partial exposure to the sun, which reduces the degradation of the grapes' aromatic profile, allowing for a better balance between acidity, aroma and moderate alcohol content.

Simple ascending cord

The remaining vineyards are arranged in the ascending system, the most widely used system in the rest of the world, and which may present different configurations (royat, sylvoz, guyot, bilateral, etc.), in which the grape are quite exposed to the sun and in which the reduction of acidity and aroma is more important.

"Ramada"

The vineyard is supported in horizontal structures, whether in iron or wood and wire, these being held up by pillars, usually made out of granite.



The main varieties in Monção & Melgaço

WHITES



Alvarinho

This grape variety is grown especially in the Monção and Melgaço subregion, although it has been taken to other places in the region and in Portugal due to its high quality. It produces must which is particularly rich in sugar but also has a reasonable organic acid content. The color of the wine can be from citrus to an intense straw color with citrus overtones. The aroma is intense, and complex, reminiscent of quince, peach, banana, lemon, passion fruit and lychees (fruity). In recent years wines have showed the presence of melon and pear aromas. With aging the aromas can change to mature orange, hazelnut, and walnut (nutty) and honey (toffee-like). The result is a complex, smooth, rounded, harmonious, full-bodied wine with a lingering flavor. It has a great potential for storage and evolution in-bottle.



Loureiro

This grape variety is grown across most of the region. It adapts best to the coastal areas, and the only place it is not recommended is in the more inland subregions of Amarante, Basto and Baiao. This is an old variety of great quality which produces must with an accentuated aroma characteristic of this grape. The resulting wines are citrus in color with refined, elegant aromas ranging from citrus fruits (lemon) and green apple, to menthol with emphasis on floral (freesia, rose) to sweet terpenic (reminiscent of jasmine). Notes of honey and even tropical aromas may also be present. The flavor is fruity, mineral, crisp, harmonious, fullbodied and lingering.



Trajadura

This grape variety is grown across the region (although it is not recommended for the Baiao subregion). It is of a high quality and produces must with a delicate aroma which is naturally low in acid. The wines have an intense golden straw color and an intense aroma of macerated ripened fruits (apple, pear and peach) where green apple is predominant in cold years. The flavor is smooth, warm and rounded and, in certain conditions, tends to be unbalanced (low acidity).



Alvarelhão

This grape variety is not widespread in the Region. It is mostly grown in the Monção and Melgaço subregions and is recommended in the Baiao subregion. It is known as Alvarelhao because it is close to the Douro where this grape variety is grown with this name. The must has naturally high sugar content, and produces flavorful, harmonious wines with a ruby or light-ruby color and a delicate aroma.



Borraçal

A variety in expansion, it is currently grown all over the region and is reccomended for all sub-regions. It produces musts naturally richer in mallic acid and total acidity, compared to Amaral, Vinhão and Espadeiro, giving way to wines of a red ruby color, with a variety aroma, balanced and savoury.



Pedral

A variety of little expansion in the region, being reccomended particularly for the Monção and Melgaço sub-region, although it can sporadically be found under another name. It produces musts with an average richness in sugars, giving way to sugars of a ruby to light ruby color (such as Espadeiro), with an aroma and flavour typical to the variety.



Vinhão

A variety in great expansion, it is grown throughout the region due to its quality and due to being the regional variety that transmits most colour. It produces musts naturally richer in sugars than Espadeiro, Amaral and Borraçal (and the opposite with total acidity), giving way to wines of intense color, granate red, vinic aroma, where wild berries can be found (blueberry and raspberry), the flavour being equally vinic, full-bodied and slightly adstringent.



The Monção and Melgaço Alvarinho is specifically regulated towards a minimum alcohol content that is above the remaining varieties in the Vinho Verde region. In terms of productivity there are also specifications defining a maximum allowed productivity of 65%. This is due to the fact that the bunches are smaller in size, the pulp to skin ratio being larger, which favours the aromatic intensity of the wines.

Profiles and wines from Monção & Melgaço

Vinho Verde whites from Monção & Melgaço They usually present a citric or straw color, rich aromas, fruity and floral, depending on the varieties that are in its origin. They're harmonious and intense in the mouth, showing great freshness. This sub-region, due to its territorial profile, contributes to white wines with a moderately higher alcoholic content than elsewhere in the region, and where acidity is always present due to the continental influence that turns warm days into cold nights during maturing. Whites, reds and rosés all share this characteristic of a sweet balance between moderate alcohol and naturally fresh acidity.
In what concerns the clearly most explored variety - the Alvarinho – this territory allows this variety to show its full versatility. The riverside area, from 50 to 150 meters in altitude, gives way to wines globally more fruited and less acid. The hillside areas, which may reach 350 meters in altitude in the mountains, bring out the minerality and freshness. These micro-terroir interactions inside the terroir allow for alvarinhos with cask, fruity alvarinhos, mineral alvarinhos, sweet or dry alvarinhos, late harvest alvarinhos or even liquor alvarinhos, all of them with the shared characteristic of providing enormous evolution potential in the bottle.

The wines of the Monção e Melgaço Alvarinho variety are characterized by an intense straw color, with citric shading, intense aroma, distinct and complex, ranging from peach, banana, lemon, passion fruit and lychee (fruit character), orange blossom and violet (floral character), walnut and hazelnut (almond character) and honey (caramel character), the flavour being complex, soft, round, harmonious, full-bodied and persistant.

Vinho Verde rosés from Monção & Melgaço

The varieties in the region usually hit less color than the ones used further south, so naturally there's potential for this style of wine that displays a lightly pink color, intense aromas, fresh, evoking red fruits or other fresher fruits. The flavour is harmonious, refreshing and persistant.

Vinho Verde reds from Monção & Melgaço

The reds are light in color and have always assumed in the region a role of complementarity, underlining their character with light acidity and moderately intense aroma. In the mouth they're fresh, intense, and flavourful, revealing a very gastronomic vocation.

Vinho Verde sparkling wine from Monção & Melgaço

The sparkling always reveals its origin as a wine. Since the 90s the region has embarked on the sparkling wine production adventure. A precocious harvest is mandatory in order to moderate the alcohol, and sparkling usually values fruit and a soft balance on the degustation. There is great potential for the production of rosé and red sparkling due to the soft coloring, and high aromatic elegance of the Monção and Melgaço red varieties.

Vinho Verde brandy from Monção & Melgaço

The Alvarinho gives way in this region to aromatic and strong profile wines, and this characteristic is maintained through the distillation whether of wines or fermented bagasse to their respective brandies. The aging turns the obtained aromas even more delicate and unique, favoring the peerless profile of these distillates.

Certification and the warranty seal for Monção & Melgaço

The communication for the "Nature of Alvarinho" extends to the authenticity, origin and quality certification for the Monção and Melgaço wines via the application of an exclusive warranty seal. This seal is attributed to wines of the territory by the Vinho Verde Commission, thereby affirming the particular value of a segment within the universe known as "Vinho Verde".



The certification of products in the domain of CVRVV is a process that, as a general approach, includes four stages:

. INSCRIPTION OF THE ECONOMIC AGENT ON THE COMMISSION AS A BOTTLER;

. APPROVAL OF THE LABELING WITH ITS RESPECTIVE BRAND;

. CONTROL OF THE PRODUCT TO CERTIFY, NAMELY THE ANALYTIC AND SENSORIAL CONTROL (LABORATORY);

. ATTRIBUTION OF THE WARRANTY SEALS.

The Vinho Verde Designation of Origin implies the fulfillment of criteria defined in the Common Organisation of the Market in Wine (european commission standards), in the national legislation, as well as in the region's own regulation.

The european legislation mandates rigorous discipline in what concerns production standards, labeling and sales, ensuring the observance and quality of european wines. In order to obtain Vinho Verde's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), it is mandatory to fulfill the requirements of the Common Organisation of the Market in Wine, in the national legislation, as well as in the region's own regulation. From the soil conditions to the sale, the authenticity of Vinho Verde is ensured by certification.

Monção & Melgaço in numbers

MAIN STATISTICS OF THE MONÇÃO AND MELGAÇO REGION

- TOTAL AREA **45.000 HA**
- VINEYARD AREA **1730 HA**
- ALVARINHO AREA **1340 HA**
- NUMBER OF PRODUCERS **2085**
- NUMBER OF BOTTLERS **67**
- ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF VINHO VERDE IN LITERS

  10,2 MILLIONS OF LITERS
- PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION THROUGH WHITE, ROSÉ AND RED

  85% VV WHITE, 11% VV RED AND 4% VV ROSÉ
- NUMBER OF BRANDS **253**



Monção & Melgaço and gastronomy

The Monção & Melgaço vinho verde whites are ideal to accompany salads, seafood, fish, game meat and asian cuisine. They're the perfect marriage for lighter dishes, white meat or sushi, among other asian delights. There's also a marked tendency for their use as an appetizer.

The **Monção & Melgaço Alvarinhos**, through their structure and and aromatic complexity, perfectly accompany dishes of stronger flavours, such as Codfish, grilled and roasted meats, and also play harmoniously with cheese and cold cuts.

The **Monção & Melgaço** reds are lively and refreshing, great for accompanying traditional Minho cuisine: Lamprey, Cod with Broa, Roasted Lamb and Kid, Portuguese Stew, Sarrabulho Rice and Porridge, Minho style Rojões, Porto style Tripe and other delights. The Vinho Verde red sparkling wines are equally appreciated for accompanying these dishes.

The **Monção & Melgaço Vinho Verde Rosés**, with an intense aroma of fruits, are served especially as an appetizer or accompanying deserts that feature red fruits. The freshness of their aromas also makes them an excellent combination with asian cuisine: sushi, sashimi, thai food, etc.

The **Monção & Melgaço Vinho Verde Sparkling Wines** reveal themselves as perfect for accompanying entrees and all sorts of hors d'oeuvres, fish and meat dishes, seafood dishes and asian cuisine.

The **Monção & Melgaço Brandies** are served at the closing of a meal, accompanying the coffee and digestifs, with other pairing found in dried fruits, chocolates and, to those who partake, a good cigar!

Visit Monção & Melgaço

Visit the nature of Alvarinho. Discover the roots of this singular wine, starting with the territory bordered on the north by the Minho river, climb to the lookouts and lose your sight in all the hills, mountains, fields and tracks. Get to know the thermal pools, the attractive villages and the monuments that were shaped our personalities. Get acquainted with the region, follow a path that will lead you through accomodation, dining spaces, stores, entertainment and both natural and cultural heritage, where everyone you meet feels the emotion and passion of the Alvarinho. The invitation is made.


www.vinhoverde.pt

VINHO VERDE ®

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