



HERDADE  
ALDEIA DE CIMA

## **MEDRONHO: A NEW VENTURE FOR HERDADE ALDEIA DE CIMA**

At Herdade Aldeia de Cima, Luisa Amorim and Francisco Rêgo continue to restore the montado and traditions of the Alentejo.

The arbutus tree, a bushy species of high stature, exists in Portuguese forests and finds perfect conditions for spontaneous propagation in the Serra do Mendro, where the altitude and the schist soils favour its growth and the fruit's acidity.

Based on a geological study that made it possible to analyse the most suitable soil profiles, 25 hectares with good conditions were identified, thus giving rise to the idea of selecting the most robust and promising plants in a nursery in order to micro-propagate them in pots and, later, to plant the first 5 hectares in the Alfaiates area. This shrubby patch, which enriches the enclave between the terraced vineyards and the montado, promotes biodiversity and fixing auxiliaries from different cultures.





The arbutus tree and its aguardente are part of a centuries-old tradition in southern Portugal, appreciated throughout generations for its elegance and aromatic freshness. In 2021, with wine-makers Jorge Alves and António Cavalheiro, the first harvest begins with the manual harvesting of wild arbutus trees in Herdade Aldeia de Cima and other neighbouring estates, managing to distil about 500 l (3500 kg) and produce the first Herdade Aldeia de Cima aguardente de medronho with 48% ABV, in an edition limited to 1000 bottles.

With a refined design and a cork stopper created explicitly for this aguardente, an individual box in the shape of a "monte alentejano" was developed, with a small yellow door symbolising the authenticity and freshness of the medronho and the colour of the ideal point for its harvest.

Traditionally consumed as a digestive, we recommend that Herdade Aldeia de Cima Aguardente de Medronho be served neat and in small glasses at room temperature. But for those who want something more irreverent, the combination of aguardente (1 portion) with concentrated pineapple juice (2 portions), ice cubes and a bit of mint makes a very refreshing drink for this summer.



## **Arbutus Tree**

The arbutus tree (*Arbutus unedo*) is native to Mediterranean Europe, but it is in the montado that it finds the perfect conditions for its development. The freshness of the Serra do Mendro, at 424 metres altitude, enhanced by the Atlantic winds, favours its spontaneous development on schist soils. In the autumn-winter period, the flowering and fructification of the arbutus tree occur simultaneously, producing yellow and red fruit. With slow growth, the arbutus tree is a shrub of high stature and very resistant, which can live up to 200 years.

## **Plant Nursery**

Based on a geological study to analyse the most suitable soil profiles, 25 hectares with good conditions for planting the arbutus tree were identified in different Herdade Aldeia de Cima zones. Subsequently, the most robust and promising plants were selected in a nursery to micropropagate them in pots and, later, plant them. Currently, there are 5 hectares of arbutus trees in the Alfaiates area, a shrubby patch that enriches the enclave between the vineyards and the montado in the Serra do Mendro, promoting biodiversity and the fixation of auxiliaries of the different cultures.



## Harvesting

The fruits harvested for the aguardente de medronho come from the arbutus trees growing wild in Herdade Aldeia de Cima and in the lands of Serra do Mendro. The shade of the arbutus tree guides the harvesting time, and the analysis of the firmness level and 26-28° Brix degree confirm the optimal time for manual harvesting. The medronho ripens slowly, and it takes three to four passages on the same bush and at different times to obtain the quantity necessary for production. The arbutus tree is a very delicate fruit that is usually harvested by skilful hands that immediately select for two baskets: one for the yellow and yellow-orange fruits, less ripe, destined for the production of aguardente; and another for the reddish-ripe fruits, for fresh consumption or the elaboration of jam and jelly.

## Double Distillation

Due to the arbutus tree's delicacy, managing the time between harvest and fermentation to distillation is crucial to maintain freshness and find the perfect balance between elegance and identity of the aguardente de medronho.

Fermentation is carried out at a controlled temperature for 3 weeks, where the fruit on the surface hydrates all the volume by manual pumping over. After fermenting, the distiller master puts the mash in the boiler for steam distillation, where the technique is refined for 3 hours in a discontinuous cycle that separates the aguardente into three different vats: head (first 20% of the distillate), heart (60% of the distillate) and tail (last 20% of the distillate). Finally, the heart aguardente is submitted to a second distillation to minimise the presence of aggressive compounds, making the aguardente more transparent, harmonious and tasty.

## Tasting

A proper distillate should be balanced, harmonious and pleasant to the nose and palate.

The aguardente de medronho is part of an age-old tradition in southern Portugal and has been consumed for generations as an excellent digestive. After a meal, it should be served neat and at room temperature to appreciate its aromatic freshness.

The colour of medronho is clear, transparent, almost crystalline. The aroma is lovely and slightly fruity and, according to the year of harvest, it can present floral notes of dried daisies, white plum and green peach, the latter in colder years, or even show, in hotter years, notes of wild fruits like currants and molasses. In the mouth, it shows incredible purity and clarity, with a dry touch and a good balance of soft alcohol and a floral and fruity retronasal aroma.

To enjoy it properly, gently bring your nose close to the glass and keep a distance of ten centimetres to gradually smell the aroma and taste the aguardente de medronho. Adding a few drops of water (one or two added with a dropper) can help open up the flavours and aromas. Typically, 3 cl is served, and like any good distillate, it should be savoured slowly in several sips in the company of good conversation.



## HERDADE ALDEIA DE CIMA

### ARBUTUS BRANDY

Alentejo Region - Serra do Mendro

PVP 65€

Limited edition of 1000 unidades

Tech file [here](#)

Available on the online store [www.aldeiadecima.com](http://www.aldeiadecima.com)



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