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# Grogue

From Sugar Cane to Glass

Grogue, an indulgence to savour in moderation!

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This book is dedicated to the  
**Brotherhood of Grogue**  
and everyone who kindly supported me  
with this project, as well as all my friends  
on the Cape Verde islands.

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**Note:** This book uses the original spelling of Grogue in acknowledgement of Cape Verde’s history. The English term “grog” is usually associated with a hot alcoholic drink made from rum, sugar and hot water, typically drunk to ward off cold weather or the sniffles. This is something completely different.

The words written in italics (apart from the Latin names) are explained in the Creole glossary based on the dialect spoken on the island of Santo Antão. It is also worth noting that word plurals do not exist in Barlavento\* Creole.

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\* Meaning “windward”, referring to the northern Cape Verde islands.

## Foreword

Just like *cachupa* cuisine and moma music, Grogue is an elemental part of every Cape Verdean's cultural identity. Grogue also represents a vital link between the people and the land, sometimes arid, sometimes blessed with luxuriant growth, depending on the rainfall. Despite the day-to-day hardships faced by many Cape Verdeans, they tend to be a cheerful nation, not gloomy or melancholy.

As a regional product, Grogue is a key part of any special occasion or celebration. From the arrival of a new baby to a departure for a better life across the ocean, Grogue features at every festivity and social event with family and friends. For us visitors, it is inextricably linked to the local *morabeza* (hospitality) so cherished by the Cape Verdean people.

There are even plenty of everyday events which deserve to be celebrated with a glass of aguardente, the deliciously fragrant spirit carefully distilled from local sugar cane with a good measure of *joie de vivre*.

Saúde!







## Grogging, or the art of drinking Grogue

Grogue is the Cape Verdean rum distilled from sugar cane and artfully blended to a traditional recipe handed down through the generations. It is said to have the miraculous ability to cure almost any ailment

- For headaches – Enjoy without remorse, but not just to forget!

- If you are feeling uninspired – Drink until a brainwave strikes!

- For heartache – Administer to taste, depending on your state of mind

- For stage fright, coughing, sneezing or hoarseness before singing morna – A quick gargle will suffice.

- For any type of infection – A branquinha (distilled sugar cane) can often work wonders!

- For stomach ache – A tot of well-aged Grogue three times a day.

Some say Grogue is like a woman: Young and impetuous. Fiery. Temperamental. Seductive. Pristine and unadulterated. As pure as spring water, but with the power to inebriate. Innocence is slain by her glow. Her purifying fire reveals her true character, unleashes passions, sets predilections free, soothes sadness, sparks joy and inflames our desires ... and on occasion, make us lose our minds. When aged, she is golden brown, mild-smooth and mild on the tongue. Once liberated into the glass, she sheds tears for her captivity in a bottle. Paradoxically, the older she is, the better and tastier she becomes.

We would advise against matxóna, because to grogar is to enjoy without becoming intoxicated. If there's a mismatch between your words and your actions, be relentless in your endeavours to harmonize them. Unless we have been intimate with her, we cannot appreciate her youthfulness or maturity, praise her virtues or criticise her failings. Some find her revitalising, while others become limp and sluggish. Some are invigorated, others find her soporific. If you don't like the taste of Grogue, you might blame grogging for leading the grogger to ... well, something or other.

Groggers insist that while food can become addictive, grogging is a basic necessity of life. Theories abound; everyone has their own opinion on the matter. Grogging calls for taste and knowledge. It takes a well-practised drinker to experience and enjoy the finer nuances of this exquisite drink – but it can also be enjoyed on a very prosaic level, accompanied by pork scratchings.

Whatever your preferences, just remember that a good Grogue should always be enjoyed wisely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kiki Lima', with a long, sweeping underline.

Kiki Lima, Cape Verdean painter,  
Mindelo, 18. Oktober 2019

## Cape Verde: The country and her people







**\*Surface area of the individual islands:**

Santiago 991 km<sup>2</sup> • Santo Antão 779 km<sup>2</sup> • Boa Vista 620 km<sup>2</sup> • Fogo 476 km<sup>2</sup> • São Nicolau 343 km<sup>2</sup> • Maio 269 km<sup>2</sup> • São Vicente 227 km<sup>2</sup> • Sal 216 km<sup>2</sup> • Brava 67 km<sup>2</sup> • Santa Luzia 45 km<sup>2</sup> (uninhabited).

## The country

The Republic of Cape Verde was established on 5 July 1975 after more than half a century of Portuguese colonial rule. The ten islands that make up the archipelago extend from 17°00 N to 24°00 W and cover an area of 4,033 square kilometres in total\*. Its richly contrasting landscape ranges from arid brown to luxuriant green. Shaped by their volcanic origins, each island has its own identity and unique beauty, of which the inhabitants are justifiably proud.

Located in the mid-Atlantic Ocean around 500 kilometres west of the Mauretanian-Senegalese coast, the Cape Verdean climate is influenced by the Sahel zone, making it naturally vulnerable to drought and water shortages.

Three major airstreams dictate the dry tropical climate with minimal rainfall, two of which are responsible for the islands' aridity:

- The year-round northeast trade winds
- the Harmatão (also known as *Lestada* and *Suão*) trade-wind from January to April, carrying large quantities of Saharan desert sand.
- Meanwhile, the Atlantic monsoon brings irregular summer rains.

The annual rainfall varies between around 250 millimetres in dry areas to more than 1,400 millimetres in the damper high-altitude zones. The average annual temperature

is 24°C, and never varies by more than 10°C thanks to the influence of the ocean. There are two main seasons:

- The dry season from November to June
- The rainy season from July to October

In recent years, however, traditional patterns have been disrupted by climate change.

## The people

The most recent census in 2020 estimated the Cape Verdean population at 555,988, comprised of 50.4% women and 49.6% men. The population is comparatively young, with 32.6% aged 14 or younger, 61.9% aged between 15 and 64, and just 5.5% aged 65 or older.

The average population density is around 130.5 inhabitants per square kilometre. The majority (62.6%) live in small towns and villages, with only 37.4% living in rural areas.

Schooling is compulsory and there is a general right to education. The inhabitants of urban areas are more likely to attend school (95%) than their rural counterparts.

In recent years, illiteracy levels have decreased sharply thanks to universal access to the educational system.

Cape Verde has always been a country of emigration, partly as a result of poverty and periodic famines. However, emigration rates are now visibly declining in the face of restrictions imposed by host countries. In recent years