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Portugal



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TASTE PORTUGAL | LONDON
2014/15

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The Portuguese Village

White-washed houses scattered higgledy-piggledy on the hillside, narrow cobbled streets with bright flowerpots, antique fountains, small churches, and often castle ruins. The Portuguese village is a haven of peace and quiet, perfect for romance, and frequently offering panoramic views over the nearby countryside or coast. Largely unspoilt by tourism, you will find good bars and often small *Tasca Portuguesa* (traditional restaurants), run as they have been for centuries. There are hundreds of these idylls dotted across the country.



Portugal Awarded

Portugal is becoming the place to go, according to numerous respected travel surveys and guides. Amongst those singing its praises are the Spanish edition of *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine, which recently named it the best country to visit in 2014, and Rough Guides, which picked it as Best Value Destination. With a variety of stunning landscapes, beautiful beaches, gastronomy and wine to rival all competitors, and warm and welcoming natives, what more could you want? Whether you prefer city breaks, hill climbing, golfing tours, or a laze on the beach, Portugal can come up trumps. Its capital, Lisbon, won the Travellers’ Choice award on TripAdvisor in 2014 for the second year running.



Porto

Located along the Douro river estuary in northern Portugal, Porto is the country’s second largest city and was elected Best European Destination in 2014. A vibrant city, filled with history, it is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its greatest export is, of course, Port wine.



Golden Drops

An independent family business since 1842, Niepoort produces a whole range of Port wines – from red to white, ruby to tawny and young to vintage. Names are sourced from fairytales, featuring a Max and Moritz duo – the former fresh and fruity, the latter smooth and elegant – and Lewis Carroll inspired Ruby Dum and Tawny Dee. The Niepoort lodges are located in the historical centre of Vila Nova de Gaia and the wines are aged in old casks, bottles and demijohns.

Land of History

There is evidence of human life in Portugal as far back as 30,000 years ago, when ice still covered much of modern-day Europe. Given its location, it is hardly surprising that the Peninsula became a key point of trade for peoples from across the Mediterranean, and that later, it became seat of a worldwide empire. Influences from all of this cross-cultural traffic have left their mark on the architecture and customs – culinary and cultural – of the land, making it the perfect destination for anyone with an artistic or historic bent.



DESIRE

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Forming an integral part of the Ministry of Economy, Turismo de Portugal, I.P., is responsible for the promotion, development and sustainability of tourist activity. It thus unites in one single body all the institutional powers relating to the development of tourism, in all areas ranging from supply to demand.

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Cover Image: Low temperature quail egg with imperial caviar and toucinho by Hans Neuner
Photo: Paulo Barata



WITH ITS VARIED climate and geography, Portugal has a distinctive and diverse cuisine to match. And, of course, it is well known for its nectarous Port and Moscatel wines. While the best place to enjoy the fresh Iberian produce remains the Peninsula itself, TASTE PORTUGAL is delighted to be bringing some of the very best gourmet delights, along with esteemed Michelin-starred chefs and a range of special culinary and cultural events, to London and the surrounding area, from September 2014 – March 2015, as part of an unmissable epicurean extravaganza.

London, as well as being the world’s most-visited city, is officially culinary capital of the world, with a surge in the number of its chefs being awarded their first Michelin star. The city was therefore the natural choice for TASTE PORTUGAL, a project organised and presented by the Portuguese Board of



‘TASTE PORTUGAL is delighted to be bringing some of the very best gourmet delights to London from September 2014 to March 2015’

Tourism (*Turismo de Portugal*), to take place, and we are absolutely delighted to be working with some of the capital’s hottest-ticket, covetable venues. Star chefs – including Luís Baena, José Avillez, Matteo Ferrantino, Dieter Koschina and Ricardo Costa – will work together with our Executive Sommelier, Arnaud Vallet, and his colleagues, to offer tasting events and dinners to die for. The secrets of age-old traditions will be combined with contemporary culinary know-how to throw the spotlight on to this exquisite gem of a cuisine.

Our special thanks go to *Turismo de Portugal*, *Wines of Portugal*, and Luís Baena, for their continued support, as well as to everyone else whose hard work and dedication has made this exciting project possible. We look forward to enjoying this wonderful season of Portuguese delights with you all!

Justin Ultee, Project Manager



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PROGRAMME TASTE PORTUGAL LONDON



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All dates and venues subject to change

*Please check our website
for updates and additions:*

www.tasteportugal-london.com



2014

SEPTEMBER

09 | Notting Hill Kitchen, London

Press conference

25-30 | UK Press Trip – Portugal

North to South in 6 days:

From the northern estuary city and UNESCO world heritage site of Porto to the granite hills and rolling plains of Alentejo, this journey will introduce the best of Portuguese culture – on its own terms.

OCTOBER

13 | The Ledbury, London

Portuguese wine-tasting featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & ANYA BRIEG
Chefs DIETER KOSCHINA & HANS NEUNER

14 | London & Surroundings

Hunting, shooting, preparing and cooking, with chefs BRETT GRAHAM, DIETER KOSCHINA & HANS NEUNER

NOVEMBER

3/4/5 | World Travel Market, London

Cooking demonstrations featuring chefs VASCO LELLO, RUI PAULA & HENRIQUE SÁ PESSOA

06 | 28°-50°, London – Mayfair, Maddox Street

Wine-tasting featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & XAVIER ROUSSET
Wine bar event featuring chef HENRIQUE SA PESSOA
finger food/Portuguese tapas and wine dégustation

07 | Murano, London

Portuguese wine-tasting featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & MARC-ANDRA LEVY

Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chefs ANGELA HARTNETT, NIGEL HAWORTH & BENOIT SINTHON

DECEMBER

01 | Anton Mosimann Cooking School, London

Cooking demonstration by chef JOSÉ AVILLEZ

02 | London

Street-food safari with chef JOSÉ AVILLEZ

03 | Venue TBA

Portuguese wine-tasting featuring sommelier ARNAUD VALLET
Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chef JOSÉ AVILLEZ

04 | Wright Brothers Oyster-bar Spitalfields, London

Wine bar event featuring chef VASCO LELLO
finger food/Portuguese tapas and wine dégustation

2015

JANUARY

20 | Notting Hill Kitchen, London

Workshop & live tasting: Portuguese fish and shellfish featuring chefs LUIS BAENA & MIGUEL LAFFAN
Special guests: PEDRO BASTOS (Nutrifresco) & JOÃO PIRES

21 | Notting Hill Kitchen, London

Portuguese wine-tasting featuring sommelier ARNAUD VALLET

Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chefs LUIS BAENA & MIGUEL LAFFAN

29/30 | OBSESSION FESTIVAL, Northcote, Blackburn

Portuguese wine master-class featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & CRAIG BANCROFT

TASTE PORTUGAL evening at OBSESSION food festival featuring chefs JOSÉ AVILLEZ, VITOR MATOS, MIGUEL LAFFAN & DIETER KOSCHINA

FEBRUARY

23 | Texture Restaurant, London

Portuguese wine-tasting featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & XAVIER ROUSSET

Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chefs AGNAR SVERRISSON & RICARDO COSTA

24 | Le Cordon Bleu Academy, London

Cooking demonstration: RICARDO COSTA

24 | London area

Special activity: fresh river fishing featuring chefs AGNAR SVERRISSON & RICARDO COSTA

25 | 28° - 50°, London - Fetter lane

Wine master-class/vertical tasting featuring sommelier JOÃO PIRES

Portuguese product live tasting

MARCH

10 | Brasserie Chavot, London - Mayfair

Portuguese wine master-class featuring sommeliers ARNAUD VALLET & JOÃO PIRES

Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chefs ERIC CHAVOT & MATTEO FERRANTINO

11 | 28° - 50°, London - Mayfair, Maddox Street

Wine bar event featuring chef MATTEO FERRANTINO
finger food/Portuguese tapas and wine dégustation

13 | The Lanesborough, London

Dégustation dinner with harmonised wine menu featuring chefs HEINZ BECK & VINCENT FARGES

APRIL

TBA | Conrad Algarve, Portugal

TASTE PORTUGAL: London closing event



Oyster, Red Mullet and Caviar by Aime Barroyer Photo: Vasco Céllo

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PORTUGAL IS A COUNTRY STEEPED IN RICH CULINARY TRADITION. ALTHOUGH TODAY SOME OF THIS MIGHT SEEM QUITE SINGULAR COMPARED TO MANY PAN-EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN CUSTOMS, THE COLONIAL AND INLAND RELIGIOUS HISTORIES OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A MULTICULTURAL LORE WITH ECHOES AND FOOTPRINTS ACROSS THE GLOBE.

WORDS ANNA McNAY | IMAGES VARIOUS

Image: A study in Portuguese delights by Matteo Ferrantino



LISBON-BORN LUÍS BAENA IS HEAD CHEF AT LONDON’S NOTTING HILL KITCHEN, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL VENUES FOR TASTE PORTUGAL 2014/15. HAVING WORKED AROUND THE GLOBE DURING HIS 35-YEAR-LONG CAREER AND ABSORBED THE BEST OF THE WORLD’S VARYING GASTRONOMY TO IMPLEMENT IN HIS OWN FUSION-STYLE RECIPES, HE IS MORE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR TRADITIONAL PORTUGUESE CUISINE THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.



The Age of Discovery brought valuable spices to Portugal’s shores. Saffron, derived from the crocus flower, is the rarest and most expensive.

THINK IT’S in our blood, you know?’ Baena laughs. ‘We have always loved those kind of melting pots. If you want a cuisine that can really reflect the trend for fusion cuisine historically, Portuguese is it.’

The Portuguese have long been a nation who have travelled and taken goods to and from other countries. Becoming a world power in Europe’s ‘Age of Discovery’ in the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal had colonies in South America, Africa, Asia and Australasia. Portuguese explorers were responsible for introducing chili peppers from the New World (South America) to India and Pakistan and, in return, mangoes from India to South America. ‘We mixed up the flora of the world a little bit,’ Baena smiles. As a result, Portuguese cuisine includes elements from all of these lands. So, today, it is common to eat curry in

Portugal, but, whereas in other European countries this might be considered Indian food, there it is part of ‘native’ tradition. There is much crossover too, with, for example, Brazilian *muqueca* being enjoyed in Portugal under the name of *caldeirada*, and Portuguese *migas* being known in Brazil as *vatapá*. Who had what first is uncertain, but does it really matter?

A good pub quiz fact is that Portugal also invented *tempura*. Known as *peixinhos da horta* – literally ‘little garden fish’ – it was made with green beans and a wheat flour based batter and eaten during Lent as a replacement for fish and meat. It was introduced to Japan by Jesuit missionaries in the 16th century, possibly alongside some other cultural exchanges, including fire weapons, the way of building cities on hills, and linguistic items such as Portuguese *obrigado* which corresponds to Japanese *arigatō* (‘thank you’).

Within Portugal, multicultural history has also left its traces in culinary tradition. One particularly popular food is the spicy pork sausage known as *chouriço*. This is made by firstly seasoning the pork meat, traditionally in large clay bowls, and mixing it with bell pepper paste, garlic and various other spices. Once the *chouriço* has been made, the seasoning that’s left over in the bowl, along with the fat that came off the pork, is mixed with flour and stuffed into tripe. This delicacy, named after the flour it contains, is known as *farinheira*. Traditionally, they are hung over the fireplace in Portuguese homes. Nowadays, Portugal is a largely Catholic country, but, in the past, it had a sizeable Jewish community, many of whom were refugees from Spain. During the 16th century Inquisition, Jews had to adopt Christianity in order to remain. The court used to go and visit homes to check whether families were secretly still practising Judaism, and one way in which stalwart Jews sought to pull the wool over the Inquisitors’ eyes was to make a special type of *farinheira*, using game meat rather than pork, and hang these over the fireplace instead. Such sausages are known as *alheira* (the name deriving from *albo*, ‘garlic’).

It is religious customs in monasteries that we have to thank for some of

Portugal’s more sweet-toothed delicacies. Back in the monastic heyday, vast quantities of egg whites were needed by the monks for two purposes: to make the host and to starch the laundry. As such, eggs yolks were always left over in abundance. Mixed with equally large measures of sugar, a myriad of sweets and desserts were born which remain popular to the present day.

Another sweet dish common in Portugal is rice pudding. This is made with Carolino Rice, which is grown in flat regions in the centre north of the country, near Lisbon and Coimbra, and, of course, near to a river. This rice – a short, plump, white grain – is very versatile and has a great capacity to absorb flavours. It can produce different textures for risotto, ‘soupy rice’ (another Portuguese specialty), and pudding. Low in amylose content, this rice becomes pasty and tight upon cooking. It is not very easy to work with until you understand its properties, but, once you do, it becomes very all-purpose. It is also ideal for the monkfish and rice dish known as *malandrinho*, which requires the rice to become creamy and smooth.

Mealtimes in Portugal are traditionally very important. Breakfast is fairly simple: just bread and butter, milk and coffee or tea, and perhaps some fruit.

But lunch is typically a substantial meal, authentically served with wine, although less so nowadays because of the need for workers to return to the office in the afternoon. Baena recalls how a traditional – and fairly typical for any Portuguese family of that time – lunch at his great aunt’s house, would comprise six or seven courses. Supper would then be an altogether lighter affair of biscuits, cakes and scrambled eggs.



If you want a cuisine that can really reflect the trend for fusion cuisine historically, Portuguese is it.’

LUÍS BAENA

Although somewhat adapted to fit the modern person’s working schedule, lunch and dinner are still two key moments in the Portuguese day, served respectively from 13.00-14.30/15.00

and 20.00-22.00. If you make a lunch appointment, it’s for an hour at least – none of the grab-a-sandwich 15-minute-tops business lunch culture of the UK and USA.

Food unsurprisingly also plays a large part in traditional seasonal and religious festivities. In the north of the country, at Christmas, it is common to eat octopus, but elsewhere there is

Facing page: Despite nearly 1000km of continental Atlantic coastline, Portugal’s most iconic fish, *bacalhau*, or dried cod, is actually an import from Canada and Norway. With some 600-700 recipes, the simplest and best remain variations on serving it with herbs and good quality olive oil.

Clockwise from top left: The flavour and quality of fresh Portuguese produce speaks for itself. Fish straight from the Atlantic needs only lightly grilling to be savoured at its best.

Feijoadá, or bean and meat stew, which is best prepared over a low heat in a thick clay pot, is typically served with rice and sausages, including *chouriço* and *farinheira*.

Caldeirada de peixe or *muqueca* (fish stew) is one of the many crossover dishes enjoyed both in Portugal and one of its past colonies, Brazil.

Bread, ham, sausage, cheese, olives and wine. Typical Portuguese *petiscos* to awaken the appetite.



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more: maybe in the region of 600-700 would be a more accurate estimate. A longstanding Portuguese favourite, the cod is dried because it is not actually native to the Atlantic coasts and needs importing. The first stage is to rehydrate the cod, so that it gains around 60% more weight, a process which, depending on size, may take 24-36 hours. When it is ready, the flesh will fall apart very easily. In the north, a popular recipe is to mix the fish with fresh olive oil, straight out of the press, creating something like a confit, which is served with potatoes and kale. Further south, it is more commonly grilled with garlic and olive oil, or boiled and served with potatoes, vegetables and again – this seems to be the common denominator – lots of olive oil. One *tasca* recipe – traditionally a snack for poor people – involves mixing the cod with olives, pickles, onion, chopped parsley, chopped coriander and olive oil, and serving it like a ceviche. The recipe most popular with visitors to Portugal is known as golden *bacalhau* (or *bacalhau dourado*). It consists of very thinly sliced 'straw' potatoes and shredded *bacalhau*, served with a mixture of olive oil, onion and garlic, stewed, mixed altogether and finished with eggs, from whence the golden colour.

Turkey, although eaten quite a lot in Portugal as risotto or schnitzel, at Christmas is traditionally roasted and commonly stuffed with other meats, nuts and dried fruits, and served with potatoes and vegetables.

The Christmas meal is eaten on 24th December before attending midnight mass. Upon returning home, a meal of sweet things is served: deep fried dumplings with sweet potato or squash, or sometimes just deep fried dough with cinnamon and sugar. Presents, traditionally brought by the baby Jesus, latterly more often by Santa Claus, are then exchanged.

The main dish at Easter is lamb, especially Alentejo lamb, which has an amazing flavour because of having eaten straw for most of the year due to the region's sunny and dry climate. There is also a special Easter soup made in Alentejo, consisting of turkey stock, thickened with roasted semolina, served with an emulsion of egg yolk and lemon juice, and finished with chopped parsley.

A summer seasonal specialty is sardines, available in June, around the feast days of St. Anthony, John and Peter, and served on toasted corn bread with roasted bell peppers, potatoes, crispy green salad, tomato, coriander, oregano and olive oil. As you remove



Fishmongers and chefs know how to work together to source the absolute best in fresh seafood.

'A migratory species, tuna can swim up to 400 km per day, and this results in their meat being very vascularised and red'

the skin and bones, the flavour from the sardine and the oil comes through into the bread.

Red mullet is another fish much enjoyed in Portugal. Its taste can vary radically, depending on the depth of the water in which it has been living,

and, in the fishing villages around Lisbon, there is great variety in this factor – on one side of the city, the villages have deep water, on the other side, there are more sandbanks. Fishmongers and chefs therefore work together to source the perfect mullet for the recipe at hand.



Pastel de nata

THE PORTUGUESE KITCHEN

In Lisbon and the south, throughout spring and summer, snails are popular. In the autumn and winter months, game comes into season, and partridge, wild boar and wild pigeons are enjoyed. How much is trapped, however, is carefully controlled, much as is also the case these days with fishing. Yellow-tail and bluefin tuna, for example, must be line caught, and there is a limit to how many specimen may be caught per year. So as to have completed their lifecycles and produced offspring, the fish should be relatively old – and large. They typically weigh in at between 300-500 kg each and so reeling them in to the ship is no mean feat. This also means that a catch of 60 per year is plenty to meet culinary demand. A migratory species, tuna can swim up to 400 km per day, and this results in their meat being very vascularised and red. Another popular fish caught off the Atlantic coast is swordfish, which, even without its sword, can weigh up to 700 kg.

More terrifyingly still, the islands of the Azores, although having fewer fish varieties available off their shores than the continental coast, boast, as their specialty, the giant squid, which, at up to 5 metres in diameter, is very dangerous until it arrives in a safely digestible form on your plate.

A further longstanding tradition of the Azores –volcanic islands which, although no longer erupting, remain active – is to use the holes in the ground, where water still boils naturally below the surface, as points on which to place your pan of stew for the perfect slow cook. Tip of the day is to get there very early, as there can be some competition over who gets whose hole. Sitting watching your pan, you might then want to enjoy a cup of tea, since the islands are the only place in Europe where tea is grown – another legacy of colonial trading. Themselves colonised by the continental Portuguese, the Azores also have a small community of Irish, making them typical of Portugal as a whole: 'a small country with many multicultural influences.' Baena, whose fusion style we can now after all recognise as Portuguese through and through, goes on to describe his native gastronomy as 'like a hidden pearl in the ethnic cuisines of Europe.' And the most important thing, an outcome of perhaps less recent international exchange than in times of yore: 'If you want to eat real Portuguese cuisine, you still have to go to Portugal.'

Aside from running his restaurants, Avillez also provides consultancy services, is involved in catering, writes and publishes books, and has his own television show, JA at the stove, launched in 2012.

AVILLEZ!

José Avillez is more than just a Michelin-starred chef. With four established and successful eateries in Lisbon, the young entrepreneur with a marketing background also owns a takeaway and a pie chain, provides consultancy services, is involved in catering, writes and publishes books, and has his own television show. No wonder he regularly works a 16-hour day!

WORDS ANNA McNAY | PHOTOS VASCO CELIO

FROM AN EARLY age, José Avillez had a love of cookery and food. As a child, he would spend three or four hours a day, after school, in the kitchen with the housekeeper. Around the age of ten, he and his sister used to make cakes to sell to their family and friends. His father, who died when he was six, had owned three restaurants, but was not himself a chef.

Avillez didn't originally set out to become one either. It was only during his final year of studying marketing that he realised his heart lay elsewhere. Nevertheless, he still went on to first train as a sommelier, before undertaking several trips, training courses and traineeships as a chef, amongst others with Antoine Westermann at Fortaleza do Guincho, at Alain Ducasse's school, in Eric Frechon's kitchen at the Bristol Hotel, and at the renowned El Bulli – a step which really catapulted his career.

Born in 1979 in Cascais, an elegant seaside resort just west of Lisbon where he still lives, Avillez's memories are all centred on food. 'Portuguese cuisine brings tears to my eyes,' says the chef. 'My life is cooking. I was born and raised in Cascais. The memory of being that close to the sea is very strong and is really a part of me, it defines me. I love creating dishes with the taste of the sea.' After finishing his training with Ferran Adrià at El Bulli, Avillez went on to become Head Chef at Tavares in 2008.



Avillez describes chefs as being like fashion designers: artists, but with the ability to collaborate

'Each dish tells a story and sets out to stir the emotions of those willing to try it'

In less than a year, he was awarded his first Michelin star. In 2011, he left Tavares to open his own restaurant, the Cantinho do Avillez, in the trendy Lisbon district of Chiado. Just a couple of months later, he took the huge risk of taking on the nearby Belcanto, an establishment founded in 1958, next to the São Carlos National Theatre, with a strong reputation and respected history. But, within a year of his taking over the kitchen, following extensive refurbishment, this restaurant was also awarded a Michelin star. Going from strength to strength, Avillez went on to open the Pizzaria Lisboa (a tribute to his father) and Café Lisboa, part of the São Carlos National Theatre. Aside from these four eateries, Avillez also owns a takeaway service in Cascais,

JA at Home, and, together with the H3 hamburger group, he runs the Empadaria do Chefe pie chain. He provides consultancy services, is involved in catering, writes and publishes books, and has his own television show, *JA at the stove*, launched in 2012. Together with José Bento dos Santos and the Quinta do Monte D'Oiro vineyard, he also owns a brand of JA wines. In 2010, he was voted Chef of the Year by the magazine *WINE*, and last year he won this same title from the prestigious gastronomic blog, *Mesa Marcada*, who also voted the Belcanto as Restaurant of the Year. Avillez is reluctant to categorise his culinary style, preferring just to call it 'inspiration cuisine'. 'My style of cooking

reflects my evolution and mixes all I've learned, all my experiences, the various influences, along with my feelings and fears. Each dish tells a story and sets out to stir the emotions of those willing to try it.' Having worked with the molecular gastronomy of El Bulli, Avillez agrees that scientific study in the kitchen may lead to the development of some interesting new methods. He is, nevertheless, keen to reinforce that his culinary rules – and 22 commandments – focus first on flavour, with the techniques being used purely in service of the product.

Avillez, who regularly works a 16-hour day, describes chefs as being like fashion designers: artists, but with the ability to collaborate. 'If you are an artist, you can live your whole life by yourself as a painter,' he says. 'In the kitchen, that's not possible; you need a team trained to think like you. You could be a very good cook, but a very bad chef, because you don't know how to transmit your knowledge to the people who work with you. That's my biggest challenge.' Luckily, it seems to be a challenge for which the rising star Avillez is more than fit.

José Avillez will be giving a cooking demonstration at the Anton Mosimann Cooking School, preparing a dégustation dinner, and leading a street-food safari across London in December 2014.

www.joseavillez.pt/en/jose-avillez





STYLE ICONS

Much like its cuisine, Portuguese architecture offers a historical and cultural mélange, encompassing the best the world has to offer, delivered with a unique twist.

WORDS ANNA McNAY | IMAGES VARIOUS

THE IBERIAN Peninsula and landmass making up modern day Portugal has been a site of significant construction since the second millennium BC. As well as several scores of medieval castles, it is also home to the ruins of many a Roman villa and fort. It does, however, also have a catalogue of home grown styles, including the 16th century late Gothic Manueline architecture and the 18th century Baroque Johannine style. In more recent times, celebrated architects such as Alcino Soutinho, Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto de Moura have been reaping awards – including the Pritzker and Wolf Prizes – and building some exciting modern and contemporary structures, spanning bridges, pavilions, stations, functional buildings and private residential projects.

Let's begin with Expo '98, the world fair hosted by Lisbon to commemorate the 500th anniversary of celebrated

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama's arrival in India in 1498. Built fully from scratch, every building on the site, including Álvaro Siza Vieira's pavilion, was pre-sold for after-Expo repurposing, thus avoiding post-event abandonment and dereliction. An extensive building programme included a new bridge across the river, a new Metro line, and

'The bridge is recognisable worldwide and symbolises the glory of Portuguese cultural and engineering prowess, past and present.'

a new multi-modal train, metro, bus and taxi terminal, the *Gare do Oriente*, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. The bridge, named after Vasco da Gama, is recognisable worldwide and symbolises the glory of Portuguese cultural and engineering prowess, past and present. Cable-stayed, with H shaped pylons and flanked by viaducts, it spans the Tagus

River. With a length of 17.2km it was, at the time of building, the longest in Europe. The project cost €897million and was split into four parts, each one built by a different company, supervised by an overarching independent consortium. 3,300 people worked simultaneously on the project, which took 18 months of preparation and 18

months of construction. It was financed through a build-operate-transfer (BOT) system established by the private consortium Lusoponte, who now receive the first 40 years of tolls. The bridge has a life expectancy of 120 years and has been designed to withstand the impact of a 30,000 tonne ship travelling at 12 knots, wind speeds of 250 km/h and earthquakes of up to 4.5 times

stronger than the historical one which shook Lisbon in 1755 and is estimated to have reached 8.7 on the Richter scale.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of Manueline architecture is the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos* (Hieronymites Monastery), also in Lisbon, and built to fulfill a promise made by King Manuel (1469-1521), regarding the safe return of Vasco da Gama, whose tomb now lies within. Born out of several existing styles, this synthesis, which in turn became something unique – a suitable master style for the seat of a flourishing empire – embodies the intricate and rich designs of the Golden Age of Discoveries, including plentiful nautical symbols. This maritime influence is visible throughout the Hieronymites Monastery, both in the church and the vaulted cloisters. The original architect, Diogo de Boitaca, worked with *calcário de lioz*, a local gold-coloured limestone. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the church also boasts an elaborate 32 metre high, 12 metre wide entrance, designed by the Spanish architect João



The Casa das Artes echoes the geometries of the Lousã Mountains – a striking contrast between urban and rural landscapes

de Castilho, and crowned by various figures in carved niches, surrounding a statue of Henry the Navigator, which stands on a pedestal. This portal, although not even the main door to the church, provides a popular backdrop for wedding photographs. Inside, the voyages of discovery are further celebrated by pillars carved to resemble giant palms, fanning out into a ceiling resembling a jungle canopy. The building of the whole complex, which began in 1501 and continued for nearly a century, under the directorship of numerous architects, was funded by the spices brought back from da Gama’s voyage, which were subject to the *Vintena da Pimenta*, a 5% tax on commerce from Africa and the Orient, equivalent to 70kg of gold per year.

The monastery’s refectory contains an example of another highly characteristic element of Portuguese architecture, again strongly influenced by the colonies, namely the *azulejo*, or painted, tin-glazed, ceramic tilework, first introduced to Portugal by the Moors, and an integral part of Portuguese culture for the last five centuries. *Azulejos* are found both on the interior and exterior of churches, palaces, houses, schools, restaurants, bars and stations; on the walls, floors and ceilings. Often painted with tales of major historical events, the tiles also perform a specific function of temperature regulation. Until the mid

16th century, *azulejos* were largely imported, mostly from Spain, but in latter times, the Portuguese learnt the craft for themselves, and, when King Pedro II stopped all imports of the tiles between 1687 and 1698, the workshop of Gabriel del Barco readily took over the production. Around the same time, blue and white tiles from Delft in the Netherlands were introduced and this



Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, in Lisbon

style was integrated into the craft. The late 17th and early 18th centuries became the ‘Golden Age of the Azulejo’ and mass production was necessary to meet demand, both internally, and in the Portuguese colony of Brazil. Great narrative panels were replaced by simpler to produce, repetitive Rococo patterns and panels depicting gallant and pastoral themes. Good examples might be seen at the Palace of the Dukes

de Mesquitela in Carnide (Lisbon) and the *Corredor das Mangas* in the Queluz National Palace. 20th century *azulejos* saw the influence of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, an example of the latter decorating the vestibule of the São Bento railway station in Porto. With 20,000 tiles depicting historical themes, this grand work by Jorge Colaço is a noteworthy achievement.

The 44-year-long reign of King João V (1689-1750) was a period when a great many iconic architectural masterpieces were produced in Portugal as well. Thanks to gold from Brazil and the skills of hired foreign artists, such as Tuscan-born Nicolau Nasoni (1691-1773), who moved to Portugal in his early thirties and never again left, a Baroque Johannine style was derived. A particularly rich treasure trove for

architecture of this style is found in the churches of Porto, one especially worthy example being the Clérigos Church, whose tall bell tower, the *Torre dos Clérigos*, can be seen from various points across the city, making it a recognisable and iconic symbol. The church was built by Nasoni for the Brotherhood of the Clérigos (Clergy) between 1732 and the 1750s. The church’s main façade is heavily decorated with Baroque motifs, in particular garlands and shells, and has an indented broken pediment, based on an early 17th century Roman scheme. The central frieze above the windows depicts symbols of worship and an incense boat. The church was one of the first in Portugal to adopt a latterly typical elliptical floor plan. The famous tower stands at 75.6 metres high, and its design was inspired by Tuscan campaniles. It has 240 steps ascending six floors. Nasoni, who himself entered the Clérigos Brotherhood, is buried in the crypt.

Staying in Porto, but coming into the 20th century, the 1950s saw the birth of a distinctive architectural style from the so-called Porto School. This influenced a number of native architects, including Alcino Soutinho (1930-2013), Álvaro Siza Vieira (born 1933) and Eduardo Souto de Moura (born 1952). The latter is responsible, amongst other things, for the striking cultural centre in Viana do Castelo,



Alcácer do Sal: this pile of cubes is actually a nursing home



Casa da Música, Porto

described by some as a ‘low-level Pompidou Centre with the colour taken out’. He also designed the *Casa das Histórias* at the Paula Rego Museum in Cascais, with its two pyramid shaped towers and red-coloured concrete reinterpreting typical regional architecture in an innovative way.

Other recent architectural starships include the likewise bright red *Casa das Artes* in Miranda do Corvo (designed by Future Architecture Thinking (FAT), 2013), whose dynamic sloping roofs follow the line of the village houses whilst also echoing the irregular geometries of the nearby Lousã Mountains, thus setting up a striking contrast between urban and rural landscapes; the Vodafone headquarters building in Porto (conceived by Barbosa & Guimarães, 2009), whose design concept was to reflect the slogan VODAFONE LIFE, LIFE IN MOTION; and the bright white pile of cubes forming the nursing home in Alcácer do Sal (designed by Aires Mateus architects, 2010), which brings modernist architecture to social causes, with 38 geometric bedrooms set into the hillside of a medieval settlement topped by a Moorish castle built on the ruins of sixth century Roman fortifications.

A couple of further contemporary, socially orientated projects include Rem Koolhaas’s vast white *Casa da Música* (2005), a flagship part of Porto’s urban

regeneration programme, and House II in Aroeira (by ARX Portugal Architects, designed by José and Nuno Mateus), part of the series of urbanisation projects for Aroeira’s golf course.

As modern Portuguese cities have expanded, there has been a revival of interest in traditional domestic and folk architecture, and thus typical religious

‘As modern Portuguese cities have expanded, there has been a revival of interest in traditional folk architecture’

buildings, such as the white churches of the Algarve and the coastal towers of the Lisbon area have been celebrated anew. The *Torre de Belém*, for example, is probably Lisbon’s most famous architectural icon. Located on the riverbank to the west of the Hieronymites Monastery, it was built as a lighthouse and defensive fortress by the well-known Manueline architect, Francisco de Arruda, around 1515.

Another very well-known architectural image in Portugal, or, rather, perhaps the best known architectural export of the country, is the *Casa de Mateus*. Often attributed to Nasoni, this country house dates to around 1740 and owes



Stone corn driers, called espigueiros in Lindoso, north of Portugal



In Monsanto, houses are hewn into and moulded around the large grey boulders of granite outcrops

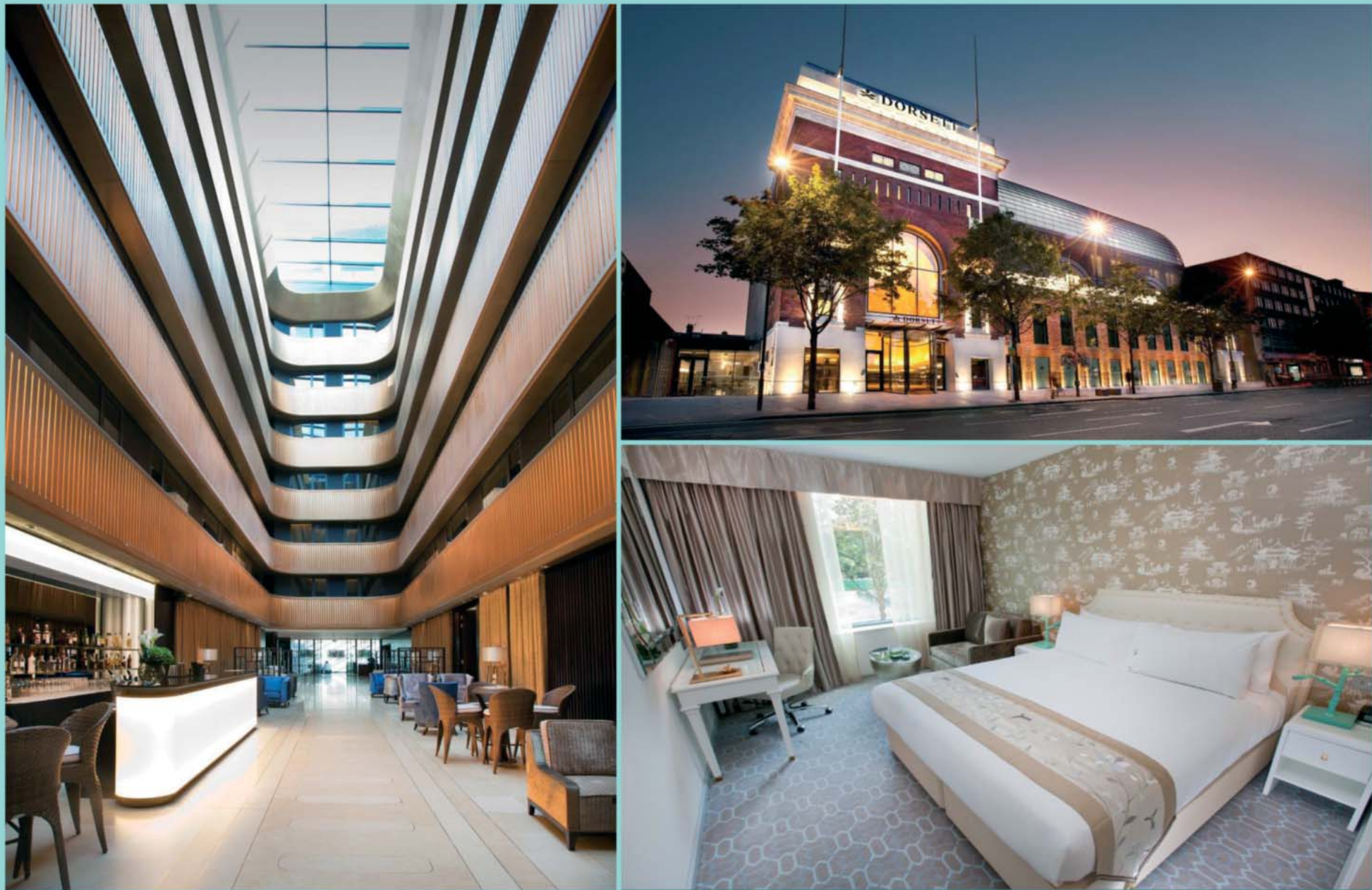
its current fame to its appearance on the label for bottles of Mateus Rosé, one of Portugal’s biggest wine exports. A particular ‘architectural’ peculiarity comes in the shape of the *Casa de Uma Só Telha* (‘the house with only one tile’) in Monsanto, Beira Baixa. Widely considered to be the ‘most Portuguese’ village in the country, its houses are hewn into and moulded around the

which in part still stands, right through to the modern city of today, offering a typology of building styles and a catalogue of the development of Portuguese architecture.

According to online digital lifestyle magazine, *HiConsumption*, Portuguese design seems to be among the fastest growing in the current market and shows no signs of slowing down its progressive movement. With current evidence of recent architectural constructs and a strong tradition of drawing on multicultural influences and creating new and invigorated styles, I see no reason whatsoever why this claim shouldn’t prove to be true.



The azulejo tilework, has been an integral part of Portuguese culture for the last five centuries



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WINE BARS | ESSENTIALS

Please check our website for updates: www.tasteportugal-london.com



Wright Brothers Oyster Bar Spitalfields

Hot on the heels of their successful Oyster & Porter House in Borough Market, Wright Bros have opened a new wine-bar-cum-top-notch-but-less-formal-seafood-restaurant in another of London's famous markets – Spitalfields. A wine dégustation event will also feature Portuguese finger-food and tapas prepared by visiting chef **Vasco Lello**.

Wright Brothers Oyster Bar
8 Lamb Street, E1 6EA 4 December 2014



Nectar of the Gods

Whatever your preferred tipple – red, white, rosé or a light and bubbly champagne – your wish is our command

With a rise in conspicuous consumption and a growing taste for continental culture, it is not surprising that London has seen the arrival of a number of praiseworthy wine bars over recent years. With excellent and knowledgeable sommeliers, offering the chance both to taste and to acquire some of the grape juice jargon at special events, the key contenders in this new league of post-work wind-down venues are indubitably accompanied by food menus of an equally exceptional standard. Several of London's very best have opened their doors to host TASTE PORTUGAL events.



28°-50° Fetter Lane

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28° – 50°
140 Fetter Lane, EC4A 1BT
25 February 2015



28°-50° Mayfair, Maddox Street

The youngest of **Rousset** (pictured) and **Sverrisson**'s wine bar family, this Mayfair venue is also home to 28° – 50°'s first champagne bar, which serves nearly 50 champagnes. The lower ground floor houses a significant wine display, as well as to the restaurant's open kitchen. Rousset will be joined by **Arnaud Vallet** and chef **Henrique Sá Passoa** to host a wine dégustation with Portuguese tapas.

Wright Brothers Oyster Bar
17-19 Maddox Street, W1S 2QH 6 November 2014



Xavier Rousset



NOTTING HILL KITCHEN Notting Hill

While the restaurant as a whole hasn't fallen short at pulling in the accolades, most critics seem to agree that the best way to enjoy a night at the Notting Hill Kitchen is to pull up a pew in the bar area and enjoy a selection of small plates of food for sharing (*pesticos*), some artisanal cheeses, and a glass or two to drink. TASTE PORTUGAL Executive Sommelier, **Arnaud Vallet**, will join us here to share his knowledge at a wine tasting and dégustation dinner, together with chef-owner, **Luís Baena**, and **Miguel Laffan** from the L'AND Vineyards Resort in Alentejo.

Notting Hill Kitchen
92 Kensington Park Road, W11 2PN 21 January 2015

PORTUGUESE GOLD

Burgundian born Arnaud Vallet is Executive Sommelier for TASTE PORTUGAL 2014/15. Leaving his homeland for the lure of the Portuguese shore, he fell in love with both the country and its culture, and especially its wine.

WORDS ANNA McNAY | PORTRAITS TOR SÖREIDE

WHEN ONE thinks of high quality wine and knowledgeable experts, one probably thinks first of France. And, indeed, Arnaud Vallet was born and bred in Burgundy, considered by the nation to be the best French region for food and wine. Nevertheless, having been based in the Algarve for seven years now, he has put down roots and feels inclined to stay on the Iberian Peninsula. It seems his new countrymen are keen to keep him too, since he was voted Sommelier of the Year in 2012 by the magazine *Wine*.

Growing up, Vallet was used to eating good products from the farm, and to drinking wines from a good region. He would cook a lot for his family, partly out of enjoyment, partly out of



necessity. At a parent-teacher meeting when he was about 15 years old, it was suggested that he might consider studying hospitality, which he did, for three years, covering subject areas such as cooking, service and housekeeping. He also learnt a bit about wine, with some very basic tastings. Luckily, for this, he had an excellent teacher from

whom his passion was ignited, and who helped him get in to one of the most renowned and oldest sommelier training academies in the country.

Vallet remained in France until he was nearly 30, at which point he was caught by the travel bug. Initially his voyages were principally for leisure, but then he realised it would be possible to combine work and pleasure. And so he went on to Switzerland and Italy, learning more about wine along the way. 'I like being home in France,' Vallet says, 'but I also like visiting new places, learning new things and meeting new people.'

So how did he end up in Portugal?

'Well, you know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody,' Vallet laughs. Through friends, he was put in touch with Vila Joya, and, after a

*Arnaud Vallet,
Executive Sommelier for
TASTE PORTUGAL: LONDON
will be responsible for the
selection and quality of wines
in our programme.*

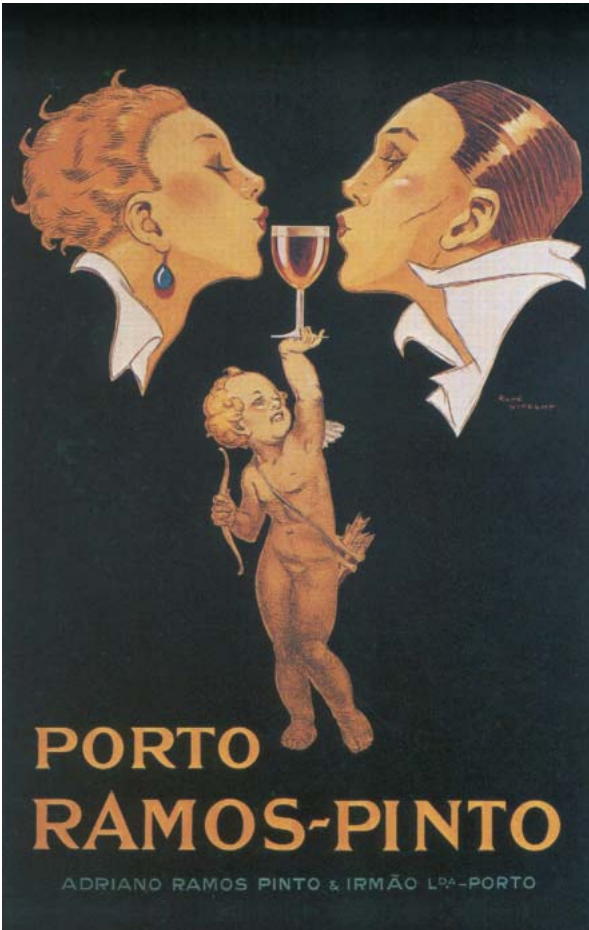




The most highly rated Portuguese wines are the Barca Velha from the Douro region, an unforgiving region with vineyards hewn into the sheer, unstable hillsides of the valley and with long hot summers



Light, crisp whites from Alentejo, and intense, full-bodied table wines from the Douro region



Until recently, Portugal was better known for its Port than for its wine (René Vincent: The Kiss, 1929)



Portuguese winemakers have long remained faithful to indigenous grapes. And with some 250 varieties from more than 20 distinct DOC wine growing regions, it is hardly a surprise. Portugal's wines offer thrillingly different palates and unreconstructed tastes



WINE REGIONS

While not a vast country, Portugal's geographic regions are subject to the very different influences of Atlantic, Mediterranean, and even continental climates. Her soils too vary enormously, leading to a surprising number of distinctive grapes.

Long famous as the source of Port wine, the torrid Douro is now also renowned for its fine, rich unfortified wines of both colours. The Alentejo region is Portugal's largest, covering about a third of her land mass, and producing rich and fruity reds, popular in Lisbon cafés and restaurants.

few months of negotiation, he travelled out for an interview which led to his appointment as sommelier. The rest, as they say, is history. 'It's a great location and one of top three restaurants in Portugal. Why wouldn't I stay?'

The wine cellar is home to around 12,000 bottles of the best Portuguese and international wines. Nevertheless, Vallet is strict in that he will only recommend Portuguese wines, unless his customers specifically request otherwise. As a student, he learnt that if you are in a certain region or country, you must allow visitors to experience the local products wherever possible.

The main USP of Portuguese wines, as Vallet explains, is that Portuguese winemakers use Portuguese grapes. While Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grapes have become fairly ubiquitous across the globe, Portugal, with its varied and difficult – but often favourable – climate and terrain, would not lend itself to these grapes. Instead, Touriga Nacional and Encruzado are the basic red and white grape varieties which exemplify Portuguese winemaking. 'There is something really traditional and special about using these grapes,' says Vallet, who had himself never tasted Encruzado before arriving in Portugal.

'Portuguese wines are not known so well outside of Portugal,' he explains. 'Exportation is difficult for Portuguese winemakers because they favour a small production of quality. The exported Portuguese wines, such as Mateus, are mass produced in vast quantity and are simply not comparable.' Only about 5-10% of the winemakers Vallet uses in Vila Joya export their wines, some maybe sending 10 or 20 boxes to good restaurants in London or Paris, but

that's all. Portugal is a country of winemakers who favour quality over quantity.

In addition to production issues, Vallet explains that it's also a matter of the wine not transposing well, a problem for which he has personal anecdotal evidence. 'Portugal is not seen as the best country for producing rosé, but the funny thing is, if you're sitting on the beach in the Algarve, eating a piece of fresh fish, just grilled, with a tomato salad, then a Portuguese rosé is the perfect accompaniment.' Having had this experience, Vallet thought he'd like to recreate the occasion back home in France, and so he took some bottles with him, bought and grilled some fresh fish, made the tomato salad, and opened the wine: 'But even if you've done everything right, it doesn't taste the same.' Similarly, taking bottles to a different country for a wine tasting can lead to trouble. Both he and his predecessor have tried it. 'I kept the bottles for a couple of days and then I was ashamed to present them – they tasted awful! It's really strange. It's not



just about the quality of the wine, or the food, it's about our mind and the place we're in. The ambience. In a certain way, you have to have the whole package.'

So how will it work for Taste Portugal? 'I don't know,' confesses Vallet. 'In terms of the quality of the wines, it's important that the wine has been in the country a long time in advance, to acclimatise. Also, we will use tried and tested recipes and combine them with the best wines which we know work well with those meals. Such an occasion is not the time to experiment too much.'

'In the pairing of food and wine, it's not just a question of the food and the wine, but also of the person doing the tasting. What is the perfect match for one person, mightn't be the perfect match for the next. It certainly makes it all fun!' laughs Vallet. 'With Taste Portugal, we know that the guests will be open minded and there because they know about and love food and wine.'

Despite avoiding experiments, Vallet is keen therefore to introduce some unexpected matches, indeed maybe not always giving the 'best' wines. 'A wine which is perhaps a little too sweet on its own might match perfectly with a dish that is a little acidic. The wine then gives the dish what it lacks and vice versa. This is the fun of food pairing.' And a match which might look completely wrong before you taste it, can turn out to be something quite special. Vallet gives the example of matching white wine with camembert, or of drinking something other than the traditional sweet wine with foie gras or duck liver. 'Sweet wine is not the only

Vallet is convinced that Portuguese wine will become better known throughout Europe in the coming years.

answer! There's also the option of putting it with a very fruity red wine or a very acidic white wine. There's always a lot of options for combinations, not just based on the main ingredient, but on the other ingredients that the chef is using.' And this is, for Vallet, one of the key purposes of Taste Portugal – getting people to take culinary risks and broaden their horizons.

One grape that Vallet is keen for people to learn more about is the white grape Alvarinho which he describes as being like Chablis for the French or Riesling for the Germans – 'I think that, in the next years, Alvarinho will become that for Portugal. I believe that this will really be the top of the top of whites.' Produced in the northwestern region near Monção and Melgaço, the wine can be drunk really young – within six months to one year of bottling – or it can be left to ripen, even aged in oak. Some people even use it *curtimenta*, which is a special method of fermentation whereby the skins are left in the juice, making the grape more resistant to ageing.

Vallet is convinced that Portuguese wine will become better known throughout Europe in the coming years. 'Wines follow fashion, but also the "wine gurus",' he says. 'There are so many people writing books about wine and vineyards and people follow their opinions. 20 years ago, the top ranking wines were always from France, Italy and Spain – no other wines stood a chance. But, in the last five or six years, Portuguese wines are increasingly being found in the top lists. The quality is improving.'

But this then comes back to the problem of quantity. 'The more you produce, the



From north to south, from east to west, from mountain to maritime vineyards, hot and dry or cool and green. From sparkling wines to vintage Ports, from crisp dry whites to elegant reds, in so many diverse ways, Portuguese wines are unique

'Portugal is a country of winemakers who favour quality over quantity.'

lower the quality. If there are too many grapes on a plant, they don't have such good taste. Everything is related. If you start to produce more to sell more, the quality decreases. If you get a good result in a wine magazine, and accordingly increase production, you won't have the same good result the next year. The producers therefore need to find the balance between quality and quantity.'

Asked about his own personal favourite wine, Vallet says it's an impossible

question. 'I cannot pick one favourite wine, because it depends on the food and the mood. But if I had to select one, it would be a wine that I could drink every day; a good quality wine so that I wouldn't get bored of drinking the same thing after three or four days.' In Vila Joya, they try to select a number of just such wines; wines that could be bought by the customer for between €8 and €12 in the supermarket. 'Below €8, it's hard to find a good enough one, but within this range, there are some good wines that you could enjoy every day.'

Wines from the Doura region, for example, such as the light, crispy and fresh whites Viosinho and Rabigato, could be drunk every day, combined with many simple dishes. And the red wines Tinta Roriz and Touriga Nacional, from the same region, again combine with everything, from pasta to grilled beef or veal. 'There's a lot of possibility with those wines,' Vallet recommends.

A question he is often asked by incredulous French tourists is whether he has become more of a fan of Portuguese wine now than of French. 'Am I allowed not to answer?' Vallet laughs. 'French people have a strange way of looking at wine. They think that they are producing the greatest wine, and that nobody can be producing good things around them. This is completely strange.' Vallet, of course, realised long ago that other countries' wines can be good too. It's simply not possible to compare the grapes of one country with those of another. 'If I have to think, for example, about what I will drink tonight, if I have in front of me two bottles, one French, one Portuguese, it will take me a long time to decide which one to drink. I will not pick the French first or the Portuguese first because I know that I have in front of me two really great wines.'

Basically, I think the best wine is the wine that's coming from its home – taking the grape elsewhere won't be as good. And sure, then those wines are the best wines in the world.'

For more information about Portuguese wine visit:
• www.winesofportugal.info
• www.wineanorak.com/portugals_wineregions
• www.portugalwines.org

From the Yucatán to the Iberian Peninsula, Ferrantino travelled far and wide en route from his native Apulia, Italy, to the Algarve.

THE ART OF CULINARY TRAVEL

Italian-born Matteo Ferrantino arrived in Portugal seven years ago after a long and winding route through Europe and USA, working in some of the top restaurants along the way. With Portuguese cuisine tickling all of his taste buds, this looks set to be his final destination (for now, at least).

WORDS ANNA McNAY | IMAGES TOR SÖREIDE



Ferrantino believes he has found his place in life in the Algarve

‘I F I HAD TO describe Portuguese cuisine in three words, they would be: sunny natural food,’ says chef Matteo Ferrantino, who works alongside Dieter Koschina at Vila Joya, one of the only two Portuguese restaurants to hold a prestigious two Michelin stars. ‘All the foods here are full of energy when you touch them. Energy from the sun. The products are really amazing. You can feel that they are good.’

Ferrantino hails from the small town of Mattinata in Apulia in the south of Italy, but he believes he has found

his place in life in the Algarve. ‘I have found what I like in my life: the food, the products... I seem to have found the right place for my tastes,’ he says. And this comes from someone who has travelled and worked in Italy, Spain, the UK, Austria and Germany. So something must be right!

‘I never saw such good fish in my life,’ he continues. ‘The quality is amazing. As are the fruit and vegetables. Bananas, oranges, tomatoes, olive oil. They’re all very good products. We get almost 300 days of sunshine per year here, and the Atlantic Ocean is a really cold

sea which is just perfect for fish, as they need really cold water.’

Ferrantino’s kitchen style is modern, but he has learnt a lot of traditional Portuguese recipes from friends and colleagues, books, and visiting fish markets and farms. He likes to bring these up to date in terms of presentation, while maintaining the best of time-honoured flavours. Mediterranean in style, everything is cooked fresh, using a lot of olive oil and a lot of fruit. Fish is often lightly grilled, or served raw, with a lot of lemon, oil, and coriander, almost *ceviche*-style. But Portuguese cuisine also favours slow, long

cooking, like stewing, and combinations of meat and fish are also common.

The single most important Portuguese food, about which Ferrantino could wax lyrical for hours, is *Porco Preto*, or ham made from a special race of Iberian black pig, raised in large fields of holm oak trees. They feed mainly on a type of sweet acorn called *bolota*, wild herbs and roots that they find between the oak trees. This diet gives them the famous ‘nutty’ taste and smell. There are two principal dishes which Ferrantino recommends as exemplary of Portuguese cuisine, and these both include *Porco Preto* as a



‘I get my inspiration from travelling around Portugal and visiting old fashioned Tasca Portuguesa’

key ingredient. The first is *Porco Preto Alentejana*, which means ‘black pig Alentejana-style’, and in which the ham is cooked with clams, olives and potato. The second is *Cozido à Portuguesa*, a rich stew made from *Porco Preto*, chorizo, bacon, and various other parts of the pig, cut small and cooked with vegetables and served with cabbage. Ferrantino has taken this recipe and made it his own,

cooking it first in its traditional manner, before separating off the juices, which he keeps as a sauce. He then feeds the meat and vegetables to his staff, before cooking fresh meat and vegetables for his restaurant guests, and serving them in a new way with the sauce drizzled over the top. ‘Then when you eat it,’ he says, ‘what you feel in your mouth is *cozido à portuguesa*.’

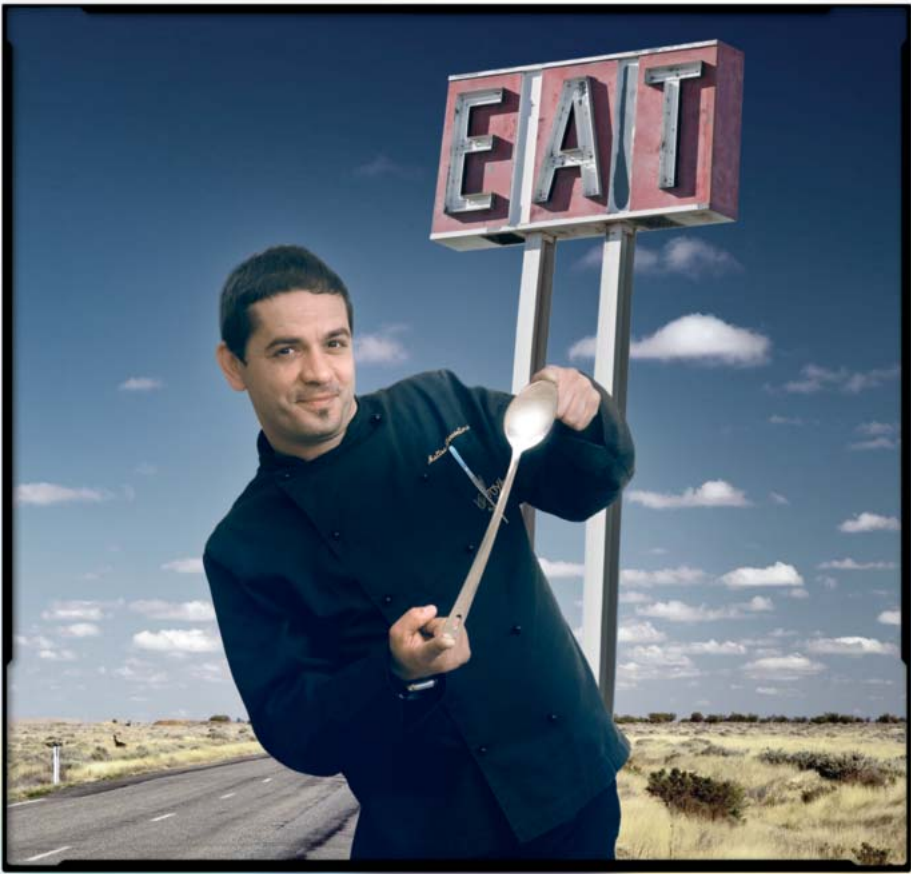
Even the fat from these pigs is good. ‘It’s healthy. It’s not high in cholesterol, so you can eat as much as you want.’ The pigs, who roam free over a region the size of Israel, have a metabolism like hippopotamuses and regularly have to go to the water to cool down. Because of this and their diet of acorns, their meat is marbled, like *wagyu* beef used for *teriyaki* in Japan. The Japanese cows, however, are given special massages and fed on beer to bring about this effect, whereas the Alentejo pigs are naturally this way. Accordingly, their fat is unsaturated and melts away when the meat is cooked, making it very healthy. In fact, every bit of the pig can be used – even

its hairs are used for terrines. ‘You can cook them for a long time until they’re really soft, add salt, pepper, and some vinegar, and press them into terrine.’ *Et voilà!* Or should that be *e aí está!*

Another animal of which no part is spared is tuna. Its loins, belly, cheek and marrow can all be put to use in the kitchen. Portuguese tuna is, according to Ferrantino, ‘the best tuna in the world’, and, every day, some 100-200 fish are sent to Tokyo to be turned into sushi in some of Tokyo’s best sushi bars and restaurants – that’s 70% of the Japanese capital’s tuna. On the seafood front, Portuguese turbot and Atlantic (blue) lobster also deserve a mention.

Ferrantino has worked with a lot of ‘celebrity’ chefs over the years, both as part of the International Gourmet Festival, and at Hangar-7 in Salzburg, where he worked alongside Eckart Witzigmann, Roland Trettl and numerous guest chefs from around the globe. One of his favourite chefs is Joachim Wissler of the three Michelin starred Vendôme in Bergisch Gladbach, near Cologne, Germany, but he also highly respects Joan Roca of El Celler de Can Roca in Girona, Spain.

All of this stardom taken into account, he nevertheless feels he learns the most from simply taking the time to travel around Portugal and visit old fashioned *Tasca Portuguesa* (traditional restaurants), where there might be an 80-year-old woman



Ferrantino cooks up traditional food with a modern twist

‘If I had to describe Portuguese cuisine in three words, they would be: sunny natural food’

cooking very traditional food and serving up *petisco* (like tapas). It is from these reces that he draws inspiration for new dishes. Sometimes he even discovers new ingredients, but more often it is just new combinations.

If he’s very lucky, the people might be friendly enough to show him how they’re cooking too. Asked if it’s ever a two-way exchange, Ferrantino laughs. ‘At 80-years-old, a lot of these women are very set in their ways!’

Nevertheless, Ferrantino sees himself as something of an ambassador for Portuguese cuisine, and he firmly believes that it is becoming and will continue to become ever more popular: ‘Portugal is a really small country, but it is rising really well in the ranks.’ Speaking on a more personal level he adds: ‘Now is my time. I have a lot of experience and I love my job more than anything. I want to use my name around Europe.’ He’s still not sure what the highlight of TASTE PORTUGAL 2014/15 will be but he is looking immensely forward to being involved: ‘I think it will be a big and great event and I don’t think it will stop there. This is just the start. In a city like London, with such a mega business around food and gastronomy, there is scope for many projects.’

Amongst other things, Ferrantino believes London needs more good Portuguese restaurants. ‘In our restaurant,’ he explains, ‘we have a lot of English guests, and none of them wants to go back home to the UK because of the food and the weather.’ In summary, Ferrantino’s belief in his adopted country’s cuisine is unwavering. ‘Portuguese cuisine deserves to be more highly regarded internationally,’ he concludes. ‘The level is completely there.’

Matteo Ferrantino will be preparing finger food and Portuguese tapas at 28°-50°, Mayfair, Maddox Street in London, 11 March 2014.



Tastes to Tempt and Delight

Whether you prefer your meals light and summery or rich and hearty, Portuguese cuisine has more than enough to offer, combining ingredients in novel and mouth-watering ways.

THANKS TO ITS favourable climate and peninsular geography, with 943km of Atlantic coastline, Portugal’s chefs are blessed with fresh and vital ingredients, filling them with inspiration when it comes to ways of preparing and serving their foods. Travelling up the coast, or along any inland river, fish will take priority, and given its high quality, it will often be served just lightly grilled with a little olive oil and

salad – Mediterranean-style – although dried, salted cod (*bacalhau*) is also a specialty, and it is not uncommon to find fish combined with meat in many a traditional Portuguese dish. One of these is the famous *Porco Preto Alentejana*, which combines clams, olives, potatoes and the quintessential Iberian black ham, which you will simply not be able to avoid, given its ubiquity on menus across the country.

Cocido a la Portuguesa, a rich meaty stew, provides hearty fare for the colder days, and *caldeirada de peixe* is the seafood equivalent. *Arroz de marisco*, mixed seafood in a soupy rice, offers a maritime comfort food, and *massa de peixe* *marisco* is a similar dish made with noodles. Since the Portuguese are renowned for their waste-not-want-not attitude, offal and tripe are also popular delicacies, and it is likely that you may find a pig’s ear in your stew – if so, consider yourself lucky!

Most dishes come with potatoes: fried or roast in the case of meat, or boiled to accompany fish. Rice is also often served. Vegetables are not so common, unless boiled in a stew, but salad is plentiful and crisp.

Desserts are not such an expectation in Portuguese cuisine, but the classic Lisbon *pastéis de nata* (custard tarts) are a glorious confection that ought not to be missed when stopping in a café or tearoom.

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