

MARIA ANTÓNIA PEÇAS e LUÍS BARROS

A TASTE OF

• The Best of Portuguese Cuisine •

PORTUGAL



ARENA

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Portugal may be a small country, yet its gastronomic culture is as big and rich as its landscape and its people.

With a long coastline (nearly 2,000 kilometres, considering the mainland, the Azores and Madeira), Mediterranean cuisine is also deeply rooted in the country, combined with the multiple heritage brought by centuries-old trade routes.

Salt, spices, sugar and creativity, among so many other attributes, have led a small seaside people to develop hugely rich flavours and an offer that makes it hard to reduce that which defines us to the bare essentials. Choosing but a few dishes was no easy task. Nonetheless, we believe it will prove an excellent greeting card to all those who come here and wish to take a piece of the essence of the Portuguese table back home.

For starters

No dining table in Portugal is ever complete without soup, olives, cheese and bread. Although the best-known soup is possibly *Caldo Verde* (green broth), *Canja de Galinha* (chicken soup), *Açorda de Coentros* or *Açorda de Poejos* (a thick soup of coriander or pennyroyal) with salt cod and vegetable soups are also just the ticket – not to mention the rich, perfumed *Sopa de Peixe*, i.e., fish soup, cooked in a different way in each seaside town, exuding charm and wonder. Seasoned olives (black, green, cracked, crushed, split...) are to die for as well, and seem to vanish into thin air as soon as they get to the table.

To embellish every meal, it is usual to serve a nice sheep or goat's cheese (curado from Nisa – i.e., dried mature hard white cheese –, Serra de Estrela, Azeitão, Serpa or São Jorge, among so many others) as a starter, or even a small dish containing olive oil lightly perfumed with herbs, garlic and salt – accompanied by some nice bread, of course, out of the many different, wonderful kinds that are to be found across the country (wheat, rye and corn being the most common) and a glass of wine.

The sea around us

With so many different species coming to our fish markets every day, no wonder you can easily enjoy a good meal. Be it a grilled rock bass fresh from the sea with a drizzle of golden olive oil – if you have never tasted *Sardinhas Assadas* (grilled sardines) during the June festivities you have missed out on one of the most remarkable gastronomic icons in Portuguese life – or *Cataplana à Algarvia* (Algarve-style cataplana fish stew), *Caldeirada à Fragateira* (fisherman-style fish stew), *Açorda de Marisco* (a thick soup of mashed bread with seafood), *Arroz do Mar* (a soupy dish of rice and seafood) or *Polvo à Lagareiro* (grilled octopus with olive oil and garlic sauce), you will surely have a chance to enjoy an excellent, typically Portuguese meal. What about our shellfish and seafood? They're fresh and taste of sea...

Ours is definitely the best fish in the world! And if that was not enough, there's salt cod.

The star of our most traditional dishes is not caught in our shores. It comes from the North Atlantic Ocean and fell in the intrepid Portuguese fishing nets in the days of the Discoveries. Dried and salted for preservation purposes, it fed the crews on their voyages and later became the general public's most faithful friend.

We know how to cook it indeed. Many, many recipes are to be found in the homes of nearly each and every one of us. Even though it is hard to choose, we must mention the delicious *Pataniscas* (dried cod fritters), *Pastéis* or *Bolinhos de Bacalhau* (codfish cakes), *Bacalhau à Brás* (dried cod with egg and potatoes) or even *Bacalhau à Gomes de Sá* (dried cod fried with onions, boiled eggs, potatoes and black olives).

A tasty, creative hinterland

Pork, lamb and poultry are behind other gastronomic specialities we cannot fail to mention.

Pork was most people's basic food for centuries. Hence, it is only natural that ingenuity and necessity have led to dozens of excellent recipes across the ages. The many different rich flavours and appearances are often linked to questions of survival and scarce home economy, which made these animals the basic food of many generations.

You can eat all things pork. Because of this, pigs were slaughtered in winter. After they were salted, seasoned (typically with roast pepper paste, garlic, salt and wine) and smoked, families used to eat pork throughout the year. Out of the many different ways to cook this tasty meat, we must mention *Cozido à Portuguesa* (a stew made from meat, smoked sausage, rice, potatoes and vegetables), an all-time favourite. No matter how you cook it, the truth is this iconic dish must have many different kinds of meat, smoked sausage and vegetables.

Enchidos (smoked sausage) is another Portuguese speciality that brings joy to the table. Whether they are *chouriços de carne* (meat sausage such as *linguiça*), *chouriços de sangue* (blood sausage such as *morcelas* and *cacholeiras*), *chouriços de ossos* (bone sausage), *mouras* (pork sausage with garlic and cumin), *farinheiras* (pork sausage with flour and spices), *salpicões* (salami), *paios* or *paiolas* (pork sausage with garlic, sweet pepper and

white wine), each household has its preferences and its different seasonings. The common denominator is the fact that they are smoked, salt and the art of knowing how to cook rich, tasty comfort food designed to last a whole year (there are even pork-free alternatives, as is the case of *alheiras*, i.e., garlic sausages, in the Trás-os-Montes region in northeast Portugal, the most famous ones being those from Mirandela).

For centuries, most Portuguese lived on cereal and vegetables (which gave rise to wonderful *açordas* and *sopas de pão*, i.e., bread soups), as meat was expensive and not so common in those days as it is now.

Again, home economy played a major part when it came to choosing: lamb and poultry were a regular gastronomic feature: there are many variations of roast, *sarapatel* (cooked in its blood) and stewed lamb across the country.

As far as poultry is concerned, one must mention chicken and fowl (which was less common, as it supplied eggs), featuring *cabidelas* (cooked in its own blood) and stews.

The art of sweet

When sugar came to our country (initially from Madeira in the 15th century, and from Brazil soon after), we could not fail to show our creative gifts. That was when things got complicated. The Portuguese arguably have a sweet tooth. Our pastry and confectionery is as varied as it is rich, and especially peopled by eggs, nuts and sugar.

The reason for this may well be the abundance of convents and religious orders across the country, where there was plenty of time and produce available, and gave rise to fabulous recipes and little pieces of heaven that we enjoy serving (as well as eating) at the end of a meal.

There is so much to choose from across the mainland and the islands alike that this has been the most difficult selection for us. Should you wish to «have a taste» of our sweets and desserts, you must try *Pudim Abade de Priscos* (egg pudding), *Ovos Moles* (egg yolk sweets), *Bolo de Mel* (honey cake) and, obviously, the famous *Pastéis de Nata* (custard tarts). We could have made many other suggestions, though. Because we have a sweet tooth, it is a pity we must keep it short.

We are certain that all these suggestions will be made even richer by adding a fine Portuguese wine (be it red, white, *verde* or even *rosé*). Hence, we wish to end by raising a glass of Port or Madeira in honour of our creative people and all those who visit us, eager to get to know a country and its inhabitants, who are so much more than the mere visible surface at first glance.

Cheers!

Maria Antónia Peças / Luís Barros



CODFISH CAKES

One of the most delicious starters in Portuguese cuisine, and one that is essential to lead to a meal packed with aromas and flavours. The recipe of this snack is said to have been first published in Carlos Bento da Maia's 1904 cookbook *Tratado de Cozinha e Copa*. One thing is certain: it is here to stay.

INGREDIENTS

- 250 g codfish (soaked)
- 250 g potatoes, peeled
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 3 large eggs
- Salt, black pepper, grated nutmeg as needed
- Olive oil or vegetable oil for frying

PREPARATION

1. Peel and cook the potatoes and the cod. Drain and purée the potatoes. Discard the skin and bones of the cod and shred it (rub it inside a clean towel).
2. Mix the cod with the potato mash and add the onion and parsley. Add the eggs one by one and season with salt, pepper and nutmeg.
3. Make the cakes with the help of 2 tablespoons and deep-fry them in a lot of hot olive oil or vegetable oil until browned.



GOMES DE SÁ-STYLE DRIED COD

Over 100 years ago, a dried cod merchant from Porto, José Luís Gomes de Sá, decided to deconstruct the recipe for *Pastéis de Bacalhau*. And so one of the tastiest dried cod dishes — an absolute must-have for those who visit Portugal — was born.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg small potatoes, unpeeled, sliced
- Salt and pepper
- 4 boiled eggs, sliced
- 600 g cod fillets, soaked
- Milk
- 1 dl olive oil
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 3 chopped garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- Black olives

PREPARATION

1. Cook the cod with the milk. Drain, let cool and discard the skin and the bones. Shred the cod and set aside. Preheat the oven at 200 °C.
2. Heat a frying pan with olive and add the onion and garlic. Season with salt and pepper and cook until the onion is translucent. Remove from the heat, pour some vinegar and set aside.
3. In a baking tray, arrange layers of potatoes and cod. Finally, place the eggs and the onion and cook in the oven until browned. Serve sprinkled with chopped parsley and olives.



PORTO-STYLE TRIPE

According to one of many legends on the subject, *Tripas à Moda do Porto* first appeared in 1415. The inhabitants of Porto decided to supply the vessels that were about to set off to conquer Ceuta with all the pork they had — all that was left were guts. Proving that necessity is the mother of invention, they began to cook them to keep them going. It was a capital idea: this is one of the most delicious Portuguese dishes and should be enjoyed unreservedly.

INGREDIENTS

- 500 g mixture of tripe
- Salt and pepper
- Lemon juice
- ½ neat's foot
- ½ pork trotter
- ½ meat sausage
- ½ pork sausage
- 150 g lard with meat
- ½ chicken
- 350 g white beans, soaked overnight
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 laurel leaf
- Ground cumin

PREPARATION

1. Wash the tripe thoroughly, rub it with salt and lemon juice and cook with salted water. Wash the neat's foot and cook. In a separate saucepan, cook the rest of the meat.
2. Cook the beans with the carrots for 40-50 minutes.
3. Fry the onion and garlic with the olive oil until browned and add the meats (except for the chicken), cut in bite-size pieces. Bring to a boil and add the beans, the carrots, paprika and laurel. Season with salt and pepper and cook.
4. Place the chicken on top and sprinkle with ground cumin and chopped parsley. Serve with white rice.



PRISCOS' ABBOT PUDDING

Probably the best pudding in the world. The recipe was created by Manuel Joaquim Machado Rebelo, the parish priest of Priscos, Braga, in northwest Portugal, famous for being a magnificent gastronome and an excellent cook. Velvety, extremely sweet and packed with different flavours, it is so good it is almost a sin.

INGREDIENTS

- 50 g *presunto* lard, chopped
- 5 dl water
- 500 g sugar
- Rind of 1 lemon, thinly chopped
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 15 egg yolks
- 1 glass of Port wine
- Caramel as needed

PREPARATION

1. Heat the water with the sugar, the ham, lemon rind and cinnamon. Bring to a boil until the sugar draws a line in the bottom of the pan. Strain and let it cool slightly.
2. Whisk the yolks with a metal whisk and add the Port wine. Add the yolks to the sugar syrup always whisking.
3. Pour some caramel in a cake tin with a hole and pour the mixture. Place the lid and cook in *bain-marie*, in a preheated oven, at 180 °C, for 45 minutes. Let it cool before removing from the tin.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are thankful for the legacy that our paternal grandmothers, Maria Peças and Zita Barros have left us. Throughout our life as a couple, they have been an inspiration in the art of cooking and passing the family recipes that honor the purest Portuguese gastronomy.

We would also like to pay homage and thank our maternal grandmothers Antónia Cordeiro and Carlota Mascarenhas, and «grandmother» Juliana Ribeiro and Teresa Fernandes, for the inheritance of many traditional decorative details that embellish our table.

Finally, a very special thank you to great-aunt Francisca Peças, who gave wings and took care of a curious little girl, thus contributing to her passion for the Alentejo's gastronomy.

Maria Antónia e Luís

THE BEST OF PORTUGAL AT YOUR TABLE!



Visiting and getting to know Portugal is an experience for the senses. If you are delighted by the green mountain landscapes, the blue of the sea that surrounds the coast or the ochre shade of the plains, you will surely not be indifferent to the flavours that will be there for you wherever you go.

The sixty simple, easy-to-cook recipes in this book are an introduction to the best of Portugal: fresh produce, unique flavours and a diverse regional cuisine.






**Take these flavours to your table
and share them with your loved ones!**



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