

Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri Article



Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri

Nick Malgieri is the national spokesperson for the Switzerland Tourism Gastronomy and Wine program. After culinary school in the United States, he apprenticed in Switzerland and has maintained close ties with the country ever since through frequent visits. A frequent traveler to other destinations, he collects recipes everywhere. Below is a sample of some of the recipes from his book, *A Baker's Tour: Nick Malgieri's Favorite Baking Recipes from Around the World* (HarperCollins, October 2005).

Additional information on Nick Malgieri: www.nickmalgieri.com 

Lisbon



Long a prosperous port city due to its position on the Teja River facing out to the Atlantic, Lisbon has absorbed many cultural influences during its long history. Already settled during the Neolithic period, it became a Roman colony at the end of the Punic Wars, around 150 BC. Lisbon flourished and was occupied by the Moors in 711 and Arabic became the official language of the country until the city was conquered by Alfonso I of Portugal in 1147. The Braganza dynasty ruled in Lisbon from 1640 until the establishment of a republic in 1910, after the assassination of King Carlos I and the brief reign of his son Manuel II.

Today Lisbon is a flourishing modern city which has one foot firmly rooted in its historical past while the other is stepping into the 21st century at a quick pace. Luckily, Portuguese food reflects both past and present with equal excellence and you'll find everything from traditional kale soup, heavenly custard tarts (see *Pasteis de Belem*, below), and perfectly fresh fish to modern Italian food, sushi, and other trendy delights.

A note about the neighborhoods

Lisbon addresses frequently add on the name of the district for extra clarity. Lisbon is divided into 53 municipal "parishes" called *freguesias*, but the names added to addresses are mostly those of old traditional neighborhoods called *bairros*, that don't have distinct boundaries. Alcantara, Alfama, Bairro Alto, Baixa (downtown), Chelas, and Lapa are a few of the best known. Parque das Nações is a newer bairro around the site of the 1998 European Expo.

Antonio Costa, Lisbon's Socialist mayor, has worked tirelessly to make the city's neighborhoods safe for inhabitants and visitors alike and crime rates have plummeted during his administration. But if you're far from your hotel after dinner or a *fado* performance, have the restaurant or night club phone for a taxi and go directly back to the hotel – I never roam unfamiliar streets at night, even in my own home town.

Eating and Drinking in Lisbon

Portuguese food bears one analogy to its Italian counterpart: it is intensely regional in nature. That doesn't mean that there aren't national specialties and classics, but that you'll find the most unusual specialties right where they originated or in Lisbon restaurants that reflect the cooking of a particular area of the country. By law all restaurants have to provide a menu in English, so that makes choosing an unfamiliar cuisine a little easier. Adventurous eaters will delight in all manner of variety meats, sausages and other preserved meats, and several types of eels. The rest of us will be happy with all the perfect fish and seafood, often served simply grilled, such as fresh and salt cod (*bacalao*), sardines, shrimp, mussels and clams, plus excellent grilled and braised dishes of pork or beef. Salads are doused with wonderfully aromatic

olive oil, and slow cooked-dishes of dried beans such as feijoada made with black beans and pork are subtly flavored with herbs. If you like it spicy, ask for piri-piri, a prepared sauce made from fiery little chilies of the same name. Spicy food is a traditional part of Portuguese food in general – don't forget it was the Portuguese who introduced chili peppers to Thailand, the land of spicy food. Sweets are great as snacks after all that exhausting shopping and sight-seeing. Portugal rivals Sicily for the title of world capital of almond paste and marzipan and there are dozens of variations of egg-rich custards baked with and without caramel – my favorite is barriga de freira, or nun's tummy, a rolled up custard pudding so named because of the way it jiggles and bounces when moved. Portuguese food is like no other European cuisine, so be prepared to enjoy dishes influenced by its Arabic past and its colonies as far flung as Brazil, Goa, and Cape Verde – and Lisbon is the best place to do it.

Fado

Said to be derived in part from the songs of longing sung by Portuguese sailors during the age of discovery, fado (fate) is Portugal's unique musical genre. One version of fado derives from Lisbon and another from Coimbra. Fado is all about saudade, an untranslatable word that's used to describe the feeling of missing home or loved ones. Lost love, death, disappointment, and agony are all part of fado, but in a cathartic way, so that singing or hearing of the intense sadness helps it to pass. Listening to an evening of fado is anything but depressing, hearers leave cleansed and confident having emerged on the other side of all the sadness. So if all that sounds confusing, you just have to go and experience it for yourself. Here are a couple of the best places in Lisbon to hear it:

A Baiuca Fado

Thursday to Sunday 8PM to midnight

Rua São Miguel 20, at Rua São Pedro, Alma bairro

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 218 867 284

Café Luso (more touristy than A Baiuca)

Travessa de Quemada 10, Bairro Alto

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 422 281

www.cafeluso.pt 

Top tables

Some of the best tables fuse traditional Portuguese food and flavors with modern elegance and the following are a few of them. It's best to have your concierge reserve a day or so in advance to be on the safe side.

Terreiro do Paço

Creative modern cuisine with an emphasis on lightness is the keynote here where the kitchens are presided over by Lisbon celebrity chef Vitor Sobral. Spearheading the movement toward Nova Cozinha Portuguesa (New Portuguese Cooking), Sobral is also the author of a book by the same name. Delight in codfish carpaccio with a baked vegetable ragout, oysters with eggplant puree and cockle shell vinaigrette, or caramelized duck breast with ginger cream, peas and foie gras. Top it off with a baked custard served floating in a passion fruit and tomato soup with a lemon salad. This is the place to try a vintage Port with or after your dessert.

Terreiro do Paço

Lisboa Welcome Center

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 210 312 850

www.terreirpaco.com 

Cop'3

Named chef of the year for 2006, 35 year old Nuno Mendes is a veteran of many upscale Lisbon restaurants. His contemporary take on fine Portuguese food includes such specialties as foie gras with grapes steeped in Port vinaigrette, shrimp-encrusted swordfish with fava beans, roast pork loin with clams and pimento oil, and confit of bass in olive oil with crispy onions. For dessert don't miss traditional rice pudding with cinnamon ice cream and warm chocolate cake with cherry ice.

Cop'3 Lunch Monday to Friday, dinner Monday to Saturday

Large Victorino Damasio 3, Santos bairro

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 973 094

www.restaurantecop3.com 

Eleven

Started by 11 friends who love good food, they're now sharing Lisbon's first Michelin star. Situated near the Amália Rodrigues gardens, the restaurant has a superb view over the whole city. Chef Joachim Koerper prepares such specialties as squab breast salad with truffle and hazelnut dressing, cod with marrow and baby vegetables, and coconut risotto with shrimp curry. Sao Tomé chocolate cake with white chocolate ice cream and passion fruit soufflé with banana ice cream are among the dessert selections.

Eleven Lunch and dinner every day, closed Sunday

Rua Marquês Fronteira, Jardim Amália Rodrigues

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 862 211

www.restauranteleven.com 

Doca Peixe

Right on the Santo Amaro dock on the river you'll find one of the best fish and seafood restaurants in Lisbon. Part of the redevelopment of this long-neglected neighborhood, the restaurant has had a phenomenal success. You name it, they have your favorite grilled fish or seafood, or try grilled tiger prawns, traditional cataplana of fish and seafood served in a hinged copper clamshell-shaped pan, sea bream baked in a salt crust, or lobster with rice. This is the place for that seafood feast you've been dreaming about.

Doca Peixe

Doca de Santo Amaro

Armazém 14, Alcântara bairro

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 973 565

www.docapeixe.com 

Great food and a little less fancy

Here are a few places with outstanding food in a less trendy atmosphere. You'll also find prices a little lower in general.

Casa do Alentejo

Traditional food and wines from the Alentejo region of Portugal (that's where pork and clams come from) in a beautiful setting complete with courtyard. Look carefully when you arrive, the sign is not very aggressive looking.

Casa do Alentejo

Rua das Portas de Santo Antão 58 Baixa bairro

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 469 231

Mezzaluna

Excellent Italian food is available at Mezzaluna, presided over by Michael Guerrieri, a Neapolitan who grew up in the United States. Choose from such specialties as grilled eggplant with goat cheese and tomatoes; prosciutto, melon and shrimp salad; rigatoni with roast pork and peas, penne with radicchio, snapper with lemon and pine nuts, or traditional Veal cutlet alla Milanese with salad. Don't look for fusion, foie gras, or anything phony here – it's well prepared food made from the freshest ingredients possible and everyone who dines at Mezzaluna for the first time immediately makes plans to go back before leaving Lisbon.

Mezzaluna

Rua Artilharia Um, 16 Rato bairro

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 879 944

www.chefguerrieri.com 

Bom Jardim

A simple place famous for spit-roasted chicken, the best fried potatoes in Lisbon and a great salad too. With a local wine it comes to under 10 Euros, so who's complaining?

Bom Jardim

Travessa de Santo Antão 77 Baixa bairro

Phone: 011 351 213 424 389

A Couple of Cafés

Cafés in Lisbon are too numerous to do any more than scratch the surface here. Here's a link for a more complete list:

www.lisbon-guide.info/day/cafes 

Antiga Fabrica dos Pastéis de Belém

Here you'll find the most famous version of traditional Portuguese custard tarts, made in the same spot since 1837. At the time Belém (Bethlehem) was far outside the city, but people came to visit the famous tower and monastery that are adjacent to the bakery. An enterprising shopkeeper started selling the tarts and it continues to this day, a minimum of 10,000 per day, the record being 55,000 in one day. Don't miss this one.

Antiga Fabrica dos Pastéis de Belém Open every day

Rua de Belém 84

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 637 423

www.pasteisdebelem.pt 

Café Nicola

The favorite spot of Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, this café opened in 1929 and was completely refurbished in art deco style just a few years later. A must see in Lisbon.

Café Nicola

Praça do Rossia 24 Closed Sunday

Lisbon

Phone: 011 351 213 477 925

Café no Chiado

This hangout for locals and students is near the São Carlos Theater and also serves light meals.

Café no Chiado
Rua do Picadeiro 11 Chiado bairro
Lisbon
Phone: 011 351 213 460 501

Portuguese wines

Portugal produces a unique variety of wines including the fortified wines Port and Madeira; Vinho Verde, a thin white wine made from under-ripe grapes; and Dão, light fruity wines both red and white.

Deciphering the labels: All Portuguese wines bear the name of the quality standard classification to which they belong. Though it's not a guarantee that the wine you just ordered or bought is going to be great, it does sift out the plonk from the better quality wines. Here they are:

Denominacao de Origem Controlada

Strict control of the wine's origin, the same as appellation contrôlée. Indicates a superior quality wine

Indicacao de Proveniencia Reglamentada

Guaranteed to be a wine from a specific area named

Vinho Regional

A regional specialty, a grab bag as far as quality is concerned

Vinho de Mesa

Table wine, probably not of the best quality unless you happen to be able to see the vineyard when you're drinking it.

Whenever I'm not sure about a wine I'm about to choose, I always ask for help from the wine steward or waiter. He or she has most likely tasted the wine and if not, I ask for a recommendation. If you have something specific in mind, say you'd like to try a Vinho Verde for example, definitely ask for a suggestion. Price is not necessarily an indication of quality, though the best wines never seem to be inexpensive.

Port

One of the world's most sought-after wines, Port is made in the Douro Valley in northern Portugal from red grapes of the region. Though many countries produce wines called port, the real thing only comes from Portugal. After the wine has started to ferment and reaches a minimum of 18% alcohol and a high residual sugar content, brandy is added to stop the fermentation and the wine is then aged. Tawny port is aged in air-permeable wooden barrels and loses its bright red color due to oxidation. Cheaper and more-quickly made port is aged in metal or stone casks that don't permit oxidation so the wine retains its color and full volume during aging. Vintage port is produced from grapes of a single year and is not blended with wine from other years as cheaper ports are. Even in Portugal, a bottle of vintage port can be expensive, though a glass of port after a fine meal next to a window that looks out onto old Lisbon isn't a bad experience...

Recipe: Cinnamon-Scented Butter Cookies

These intriguing looking cookies are a specialty of the Beira Litoral region of Portugal. They are adapted from Cozinha Tradicional Portuguesa (Traditional Portuguese Cooking) by Maria de Lourdes Modesto (Editorial Verbo, 1982).

Makes about 24 cookies

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour (spoon flour into dry-measure cup and level off)

1 teaspoon cinnamon

5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1/2 cup sugar

3 large eggs

2 cookie sheets or jelly roll pans covered with parchment or foil

1. Set racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees.
2. Stir the flour and cinnamon together and set aside.
3. Beat the butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle on medium speed until soft and light, about 2 or 3 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, beating smooth after each addition.
4. Remove the bowl from the mixer and stir in the flour by hand, using a large rubber spatula.
5. Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and fold the dough over on itself 2 or 3 times, to make it smoother.
6. Roll the dough onto a cylinder and divide it into 6 equal pieces using a knife or a bench scraper.
7. Cut each of the six pieces of dough in half, then in half again, to make 24 pieces of dough.
8. Roll one piece of dough to a strand about 10 inches long. Join the ends and place the circle of dough on one of the prepared pans. Push the sides of the circle in toward the center, in an irregular pattern to crinkle them, as in the illustration. Continue with the remaining pieces of dough, placing 12 on each pan.
9. Bake the raivas for about 12 to 15 minutes, or until they are slightly puffed, deep golden and firm when pressed with a fingertip. Change the position of the pans from upper to lower rack and vice versa at least once during baking. If your oven gives strong bottom heat, stack 2 pans together for baking on the bottom rack to provide insulation and prevent the bottoms of the cookies from burning.
10. Slide the papers from the pans to racks to cool the cookies.

Storage: Keep the raivas in a tin or plastic container with a tight-fitting cover for up to a week.