

## DINING OUT

# Welcome to Portuguese dining in Jamaica

*Small enclave in SE Queens home to A Churrasqueira, equal to fare on other side of Atlantic*

## A CHURRASQUEIRA RESTAURANT

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Jamaica

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BY CAROL BROCK

Open the door of A Churrasqueira Restaurant and you're there — in Portugal. Seated in a row at the bar, heads turned east to watch a Portuguese-language TV program, are men who seem the heart and soul of Portugal. Weekdays at noon they sit side by side to lunch at the bar.

Blue and white Portuguese tiles, chair rail-high, are used throughout. This 19-year-old churrasqueira, founded by the family of Manuel Cardeso, is set in a small Portuguese community in Jamaica. Three tables for four and three tables seating six are in the dining room with shields and armor on display.

A bottle of Portuguese wine was on each table. Caipirinha, a sugar rum drink with lime juice, seemed to be the alternative.

Churrasqueira means "grilled things," and our first course at dinner proved it in a most delightful way.

My guest ordered the Portuguese sausage, which came to the table ablaze on a ceramic barbecue dish. It grilled delightfully for a moment or two and then was sliced and served by our waiter sporting a Van Dyck-style beard. My appetizer was clams,

Portuguese style: clams baked in a clay casserole in a brown sauce stepped up with tomato. Nestled among the opened clams were slices of the distinctive Portuguese sausage and ultra thick bacon bits, both adding immeasurably to the flavor.

We were impressed even before the appetizers. Unannounced, a perky green salad with tomato and egg garnish came. It was the sturdiest and best watercress that I've nibbled in an age. It had the peppery bite that is usually missing.

Portuguese rolls were there, too, with a wonderful dense texture. Each was sliced almost all the way through, like a loaf of bread — a nice touch.

Seafood is featured — shrimp and lobsters galore. A unique shrimp dish had been recommended. I certainly wanted to try it. Shrimp, heads and all, are slit through the shell and butterflied. They're served in a fine sauce with rice and ultra thin, homemade potato chips — that very Portuguese combination. The homemade chips, paper thin, fried to perfection, are totally irresistible. As for the shrimp, just the right amount of hotness is in the sauce to induce you to suck on each and every shell. And why not?

My companion's seafood casserole with sailor-style rice featured scallops, shrimp and lobster.

Our dessert was chocolate mousse and an interesting cookie and jellied cream mixture layered in a champagne flute. Coffee? Of course. I'm one of those people who doesn't

feel a meal is complete without it.

While seafood, as it should be — shrimp, lobster, seafood combinations and bacalhau (codfish) — is the backbone of A Churrasqueira Restaurant's menu, there are steaks and such aplenty: steak, house style; grilled steak with egg and seafood; grilled pork loin; grilled veal cutlet; veal cutlet with bread crumbs and linguine and the chef special of a steak medallion.

My friends who have been to Portugal any number of times will be so pleased to know of this Portuguese dining spot sitting so close to home. I've checked the extensive wine list with bottles running from \$14 to two priced at more than \$100. Their favorite wine is not there, but I know they'll be pleased with the selection.

I've planned my order already with the clams in garlic and wine sauce, the house special of codfish with garlic and warm olive oil garnished with fresh tomato, boiled potato and fresh green peppers. For dessert, it's the flan with a splash of Portuguese liquor, Beirao.

When you're looking for a delightful bit of the unusual, try A Churrasqueira Restaurant — Jamaica.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Fine Portuguese cuisine in a Portuguese enclave in Jamaica. Blue and white tiled setting. Fine service. Small and delightful.

## CHEF'S CHOICE

Grilled Portuguese sausages (in grapa flame)...\$7.50

Clams In Beer and Garlic Sauce (1 dozen)...\$9

Bacalhau Assado a Casa (grilled cod in warm olive oil & garlic w boiled potato, fresh tomato and fresh roast peppers)...\$13.50

Mariseada en Salsa Verde (seafood combination in green parsley sauce)...N/A

Medalhaoa Chefe (chef medallion steak special)...\$15

Puding Flan (flan pudding plain or with splash of Portuguese liquor Beirao)...\$2.50

Doce Maria Helena (Marie Helena cream with cookie splash)...N/A

Cuisine: N & S Portuguese & Continental

Setting: Blue and white tiles

Service: Very fine

Hours: From noon 7 days

Reservations: Yes

Parking: Street

Location: Near LIRR station

Dress: Casual

Credit cards: All major

Children: Accommodate

Smoking: No

Takeout: Yes

Off-premise catering: Yes

Private parties: To 130

Handicap access: Yes