

A CHURRASQUEIRA

95-29 Sutphin Blvd.
Jamaica
718-523-5293

THEIR THING: Portuguese food. Try specials of the day and shrimp Mozambique.

THEIR TIMES: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days.

YOUR TAB: Expect to spend about \$15 to \$20 per person, with wine, at dinner, considerably less at lunch.

YOUR STOP: E train to Sutphin Boulevard.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Restaurant on street level but bathrooms downstairs.

By Sylvia Carter

STAFF WRITER

WALK INTO A Churrasqueira's bar and you'll see workmen eating at the bar, riveted to the soccer on the several television screens. Behind the bar, there are platters of codfish croquettes and sausages, and you can get those or one of the chalkboard specials of the day.

But when I say *men* are eating at the bar, I mean it. It's rare to see women there, so if your party includes some, you may want to eat in one of the two dining rooms. The guys feel kind of inhibited, I think, if you choose to eat in the middle of their sports fest.

The honest food appeals to everyone, however, and it tastes great whether you eat it at the bar or at a table. Once, when there was a particularly important match and we were eating in the dining room that's between the bar and the kitchen, the cooks watched a big screen through the kitchen door peepholes.

Tia chica (\$16), a *vinho verde* that is not as green as some and has a slight spritz to it, makes a wonderful accompaniment to such appetizers as subtly spicy grilled Portuguese sausage or clams steamed in a robust garlic-beer sauce. (By the way, there's also Portuguese beer.)

A lively salad of greens, cucumbers, tomatoes and onions was brought to the table before we even placed our orders.

Shrimp Mozambique was not listed as an appetizer, but they make a perfect one, or a wonderful whole meal. Large, handsome, butterflied shrimp with the heads on — go ahead, suck the meat out of the head,



Newsday Photo / Bruce Gilbert

Waiter Antonio Gomes Mar, left, and owner Manuel Cardoso are ready to serve a platter of lobsters at A Churrasqueira.

it's allowed — were beautifully grilled and served in a light sauce that was just peppery enough, not spicy enough to overwhelm them. There is only one problem if you order the shrimp as a main dish; everybody at your table will want one or two and you may not have any left for yourself. After we wolfed down a plate of them and dunked delicious Portuguese rolls into what was left of the sauce, my friend said, only half kidding, "Should we get another order, to make sure they're as good as we think they are?"

The shrimp are on the regular menu, but many of the dishes we tried and liked best were specials of the day. Pork with clams, served in a cozy brown earthenware casserole, was a Portuguese classic, and if a few pieces of pork were a bit chewy, they made up for it in flavor. And browned potatoes soaked up the juices admirably.

A soupy chicken-and-rice casserole was homey and moist, though grilled chicken another day was a bit dry. A Valencian seafood-rice dish was not as spicy but was tasty anyhow. Spareribs had been marinated

for extra tang, and they made fine eating. Salt cod done with potatoes, onions, hard-cooked eggs and olives, the Portuguese way, was excellent.

Thin-pounded steak with onion sauce was flavorful but even better was the steak "zingara" with ham and pickled vegetables. With it came thin, fresh-fried potatoes, some so thin and crisp that they were almost like fresh potato chips. Spareribs and some other dishes came with French fries, which were also topnotch.

By this time, with all this robust food, you may feel it's time to move on to Contreiro-Mor, a fresh red wine from Alentejo, \$12.

At meal's end, there are slices of a rustic flan, and whether you sit at a table draped in a white cloth or put your elbows on the bar, you must have espresso. It's short, with a good *crema*, the way I like it.

All this, and A Churrasqueira has a parking lot across the street. Careful, the son of one of the owners may be playing ball in the lot, getting ready to be a star of the big screen someday. ■