



From main: Confeitaria Nacional, Lisbon's oldest pastry shop; Lisbon sausages; and just say cheese. Photos: Alamy



# THE HUNGRY MILE

It doesn't take long to fill up on this moveable Lisbon feast. By **Kate Armstrong**

"We want people to feel hungry now, but not at the end," Miguel, our guide, exclaims. I assume he's referring to the edible samples that our group of five will try on Taste of Lisboa's "Lisbon Roots, Food & Cultural Walk" at six stops over three hours at designated points in Lisbon's centre. With that, we set off.

The charcuterie Manteigaria Silva, just off Praca do Rossio, a large central square, is a strategic place to start. It opened in 1898, first as a butcher's and then a butter shop. The shelves are crammed with Portuguese products: olive oils. Salt. Tinned fish. Bottles of wine. Above the counter hang a line of Portuguese presuntos (cured hams) while in the glass cabinet below, spreads an array of queijos, cheeses.

Back outside, we gather around a wine barrel and sample cheeses, including Queijo Serra da Estrela, a traditional sheep milk cheese encased in a dry rind.

Miguel is like, well, a Portuguese person in a cheese shop. (Read excited). He's like this the entire time, imparting chunks of knowledge, and engaging with us. But back to the queijo. "Open a hole in the top. And scoop out the cheese with a spoon and spread on top of bread," he instructs. The cheese is soft, gooey and addictive.

He points out bunches of sausages that hang in the store. The farinheira strikingly

resembles a sausage, but comprises flour and seasonings. During the Inquisition, Jewish people ingeniously made these to resemble pork sausages so as not to be identified. The tradition stuck, though vegetarians beware: these days pork fat is included for flavouring. That's hardly odd.

Pork features strongly on Portuguese menus, including our platter. My favourite is the pata negra, melt-in-your-mouth ham from Portugal's acorn-eating wild boar. The extra virgin olive oil from the Douro is equally as delightful – mild and smooth. According to Miguel, Portuguese consume eight litres of oil per person annually, "way more than Spain or Italy," he adds proudly.

We sip on a red, a blend of Aragonese (Tempranillo) and French Syrah (Shiraz). The berry flavours reflect that it's from the hot plains of Alentejo.

But if there's an undoubted winner for Portugal's most consumed product, it's bacalhau, cod. Manteigaria Silva devotes an entire section to this humble fish. Cods, dried and salted, are piled high; their splayed shapes resemble snow angels. Cod has been a staple of Portugal as early as the 15th century and the age of exploration when explorers took dried cod as provisions on their expeditions.

"It's known as 'pig of the seas' because we can eat all of it [as you can a pig]" says

Miguel, pointing to jars crammed with greyish tongues, cheeks and swim bladders. Cod, in the form of pastéis de bacalhau (cod cakes), is waiting for us at our next stop, O Buraco Snack, a non-descript eatery that serves excellent home-style cooking. These are served with a hot and creamy tomato rice plus a glass of vinho verde (green wine).

We enter Ze dos Cornos, a happy, raucous restaurant fuggy with beer and bodies; locals have gathered for their Saturday lunch. While it's a popular meat spot, we enjoy hearty vegetable soup.

We also chew on a bifana, a favourite local snack and the equivalent of a pork schnitzel in a bread roll. Plus local cheeses, including the Queijo Picante da Beira that's joked about informally as being 'between the toe'. It's easy to see (or smell) why. This pungent, face-puckering brute morphs into a fairy when paired with quince jam.

The ghosts of Mouraria's famous fadistas (fado singers) follow us into our drinking stop, Os Amigos da Severa, a hole-in-the-wall bar run by Sr Antonio and named after Maria Severa, a famous fadista who performed here.

The bar is more than 200 years old, and for 45 of these Sr Antonio has served ginjinha, Lisbon's sour cherry liquor that was invented as a cough medicine. (And it still tastes like that).

## THE DETAILS

### TOUR

Taste of Lisboa offers several food-focused experiences around Lisbon including the 3.5 to four-hour Lisbon Roots, Food & Cultural Walk (cost €79 or \$A125 a person). See [tasteoflisboa.com](http://tasteoflisboa.com)

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*Kate Armstrong was a guest of Taste of Lisboa.*

From here, we stroll through the alleyways of Mouraria, passing under washing lines and street art until we reach Cantinho do Aziz, a Mozambican-owned eatery. We sit under an outdoor canopy while we sip on a beer and munch on spicy samosas. Indian-style cuisine in Portugal is the legacy of Goans. Rather than return to India on their independence from Portugal in 1961, many moved to Portuguese colonies. Likewise, after Mozambican independence in 1975, many Mozambicans moved to Portugal.

More predictable a delicacy is the custard tart from Confeitaria Nacional, Lisbon's oldest pastry shop. We establish we've already eaten our share of Portugal's famous pastries and compare our favourites. This one is up there. We sigh and pat our expanding bellies. We're full and it's not surprising. **T**

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