



If you can't wait until your next holiday to sample delicious Portuguese cuisine, head for Portal in the heart of London. The restaurant's owner, Antonio Correia, talks to **Leaonne Hall** about the secrets of successful cuisine...

# Portal to Portugal

Above Portal's owner, Antonio Correia

**PM:** Can you tell us about Portal and the type of food you serve?

**AC:** Portal Restaurant and Bar is a modern European restaurant based in the centre of The City. I think it successfully combines the vibrant conviviality of Iberian dining with a bold interior design and a specialist wine list. The cuisine at Portal is a sumptuous blend of traditional Portuguese fare with a hint of French and a Pan Asian influence, and we only use seasonal and fresh ingredients.

Our signature dishes include the 24-hour slow-cooked braised *bisaro* with bean mash and Madeira sauce, veal *carpaccio* in harmony with vanilla and chilli ice cream and mustard cress, and Mediterranean sea bass on *bacalhau* paste with wasabi risotto. We also offer a roast suckling pig feast, which is ideal for an intimate meal or a shared dining experience.

My dedication to, and love of, port and fine wines has led to my friendship with Pedro Branco who owns Quinta do Portal, a family-run wine-making company based in the Douro Valley in the north of Portugal. The vineyard supplies the restaurant with its award-winning wines and ports, and has also inspired the name of the restaurant.

The bar provides a relaxed atmosphere for you to indulge in *petiscos* – Portuguese tapas – and as well as the modern dining room, there's also a conservatory designed by renowned architect Ken Mackay.

**Does your restaurant serve traditional Portuguese fare?**

Portal focuses on a mainly Portuguese menu, cooked in a sophisticated French style, but there's also an inventive yet classic side to our menu that has its roots in the finest culinary traditions of southern Europe. Our recipes are designed on the basis of traditional and authentically Portuguese cuisine with a twist of my own philosophy, yet without losing the identity, character, flavours and personality of the country. Head Chef Luis Campos displays a delicate understanding of traditional and well-known Portuguese fish dishes such as *bacalhau* (salted cod) and sea bass, as well as some more unfamiliar dishes, such as braised *bisaro* (half pig and half wild boar) and *Leitão à Bairrada*, the famous Portuguese suckling pig.

**How does Portuguese cuisine compare with that in other European countries, such as Spain and Italy?**

The flavours in Portuguese dishes are intense, elegant and distinct. There are some familiar tastes and some crossover with Spain and Italy, but it certainly has its own identity.

**Can you give us an idea about typical Portuguese cooking – for example, the type of ingredients that are used?**

The range of typical Portuguese dishes is both delicious and vast, and many of them appear in *petiscos* and include delicacies such as risotto balls, *gambas com alho* (shelled prawns with garlic), whitebait *escabeche* in crispy tortilla, and grilled chorizo with pickles. We also use quite a lot of garlic, onion and chilli in our dishes.



**What is it about Portuguese food that you love so much?**

I love Portuguese food for its novelty and exotic flavours.

**What's your favourite Portuguese meal?**

As I'm Portuguese, in the summertime you'd typically get grilled sardines when you're at the seaside, which I always think is a perfect complement to your holidays. Also, a nice *caldeirada de peixe* – a mixed Portuguese fish stew – is always welcome!

Left Head chef Luis Campos blends modern ideas with traditional recipes



## John Dory

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 fillets of John Dory
- 1 tomato
- 1 pak choi
- 1 chicory
- 200ml fish stock
- 2g coriander seeds
- 2g garlic powder
- 2g cumin
- 2g piri-piri
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 5g coriander
- 100g white bread
- 20g old mustard
- Salt and pepper

- Season the John Dory with the spices mixed together. Cut a tomato into four pieces and take out the seeds. Mix the tomato and pak choi together and place them between the fillets of John Dory. Cook in the oven with a little olive oil.
- Boil the fish stock. Cut the white bread into small squares, mix it with the coriander and then mix with the boiling fish stock to thicken. Roast the chicory in the oven and serve with the old mustard sauce.



Above The bar area offers a relaxed atmosphere, where you can enjoy *petiscos*, or Portuguese tapas



## Monkfish and scallops with a duo of rice and samphire mash

### INGREDIENTS

200g fresh monkfish  
 2 scallops  
 50g Basmati rice  
 50g wild rice  
 60g samphire mash  
 4 garlic cloves  
 100ml white wine  
 20g butter  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 Salt and pepper

- Cook the Basmati and wild rice separately beforehand.
- Sauté the monkfish with salt, pepper and oil until it becomes yellow. Add the scallops and the white wine, let it simmer for a while until the sauce thickens, and then add the chopped garlic and butter to add flavour to the sauce.
- Warm up the previously cooked Basmati and wild rice, fry the samphire and serve.



Above Portal's award-winning selection of wines is sourced from the Douro



## Stuffed, roasted rabbit saddle with moira and carrots, fresh spinach and red wine sauce

### INGREDIENTS

2 rabbit saddles  
 1 moira  
 1 carrot  
 200g fresh spinach  
 200ml red wine  
 2 cloves of garlic  
 2 tablespoons of olive oil  
 1 onion  
 200ml white wine  
 3 bay leaves  
 10g cumin

- Season the rabbit saddles in salt and pepper, cut the onion in half, add it with the olive oil and white wine, and marinate for about four hours. Stuff the saddle with *moira* (traditional blood sausage) and boiled carrot, wrap it and fry until the outside is crispy. Now transfer it into the oven to enable the inside to cook.
- Sauté the spinach with chopped garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper. Make the sauce with the juice from the rabbit saddle, add the red wine and herbs for flavour, and then serve.

● Portal Restaurant And Bar: 88 St John Street, London, EC1M 4EH; 020 7253 6950; [www.portalrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.portalrestaurant.co.uk)



Above The stylish design and cool stone floors provide the ideal setting for Portal's modern cuisine