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Serra da Estrela



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The sweetest side of Serra da Estrela by João Durão da Silva

Serra da Estrela is the highest mountain range of Portugal. Beside the snow and the winter sports, the entire region has a rich culture of traditional dishes and handicraft to offer to the visitors. It's the sweetest side of Serra da Estrela. A side full of smells and flavours that any visitor should experience.

The mountainous region of Serra da Estrela has a unique and diversified gastronomy. Among these traditional dishes, there are plates of meat and fish, soups, desserts and smoked food. However, the icon of the gastronomy of this region is Queijo da Serra, a smooth cheese with a semi-liquid texture and an intense flavour. You may find this manufactured cheese in every supermarket, coffee house or traditional shop of the region.

Besides the cheese, the visitors of Serra da Estrela should seize the opportunity to taste the smoked meat, like sausages, ham or salami. The smoked food has a huge tradition in Portugal, especially in the regions far away from the sea as this one. In older days, when people had less economical possibilities and no other way to preserve the food, many of it was smoked. Nowadays, even with all the technologies, the tradition of smoking food wasn't lost. There are so many dishes of this kind of food that you should not consider your visit completed without tasting a few of them... And, just like the cheese, you may find smoked meat in every corner of this region.

Other typical products of Serra da Estrela are the wool clothes. As it happens in many other regions traditionally poor and cold, the cattle is an important economical and social factor not

only because of the milk, the cheese and the meat, but also because of the sheep wool. Every little village has some shops with manufactured products for sale. Among some other things, these shops sell especially this kind of clothes. The huge nightgowns, the scarves, the caps and the slippers - all of them made of wool – are part of another visible side of the culture of this region.

And what can we say about the little friends of four legs named Serra da Estrela, just like the mountain range? As you can understand by the name, this race of dogs is typical from the region. You can see them everywhere, sleeping under the lighting sky or near a fireplace. These lazy fellows are only called Serra in a friendly manner.

These things and many more are waiting for you in Serra da Estrela. These are the ex libris which rise among the shining mountains covered with snow in the winter or among the green pastures during the summer. It's an idyllic landscape with little and rustic villages spread by the hills, where the experience becomes as intense as the food.



One day at Folgoso

by Joana Dalila

Serra da Estrela is one of the most mythical places that you can find in Portugal, especially at this time of the year. I feel like I was the only person here, lost in this snow-capped endless mountain. It's all so quiet, so pure.

I'm in Folgoso, a 5233 hectares medieval village from the 12th Century, sited 933 meters high, on the northeast from Serra da Estrela.

This typical village from Estrela has an unique history, usages and traditions. Edified between the Castle and the Mountain, the village has its historical centre in the Main Church and in the Town's Square, to where all the streets go.

To Folgoso's north, there's Melo, Vila Cortês, Freixo da Serra and Figueiró da Serra, to the east, there's Linhares, Videmonte, Vale da Amoreira, Famalicão da Serra and Vernelhas, to the south, there's Sameiro and Manteigas, and to the west, there's Gouveia, S.Paio and Nabais. I would like to visit all villages, because I think they've got much to say about Portugal, they've got the same spirit as Folgoso. Maybe next year, who knows?

Here, I already visited the Castle (made of pure quartz), the Church, the Municipal House, the Court and the Jail, replaced by a single house, but there's much more patrimony to see (the Roman streets, the forests, the natural park of Serra da Estrela, the Mondego river, the Pillory, symbol of the municipal liberty and autonomy given by our first kings, the mills, the Museum, and so on).

Today, it's so cold out there that I decided to have lunch at a comfortable and regional place. In Folgoso, there's no better place than Albertino's restaurant, where you have a fixed price and you can eat all you want. I am sure you will like it as much as I do. It's so difficult to choose what to eat... let me see...

Bread with olives, greaves, roast blood pudding... and one of my favourite plates: Coney rice! There's also Albertino's roast shoat, roast kid, boar with beans and grilled veal with mushrooms. The restaurant has a great wine list but I think I'll drink something regional. After all this there's the dessert (like the typical cheese or the sweet rice).

Now I'm going to walk for little and think about what to do tomorrow in another day in paradise. It's so good to be here, far away from the city and its noises, far away from the routine and in contact with nature.

I'm tired... I need some rest.



Serra da Estrela best friend by Cátia Pinheiro

The dog was the first animal ever to be domesticated: the Man would provide it a shelter and food, while the dog would protect the Man - an alliance from which both sides would benefit. The Serra da Estrela Dog is a perfect example of that. But how did this self-ish association of interests developed in such ways that became a loyal friendship between those two distinct races? What do Man and the Serra da Estrela have in common? The answer is the necessity to subsist in the Estrela mountain chain, a place with terrible weather conditions, as well as a great number of predators - like wolves and bears (that today, unfortunately, no longer exist) which frequently attacked the cattle and the herdsman.

The search for a strong dog, capable of resist to the difficult weather conditions, as well as being big and intelligent enough for hunting, protecting people and guarding a herd, led to the segregation of inferior species, along with the prevalence of the Serra da Estrela breed. Today, it is one of the most popular races of dogs in Portugal, in part because of the previous mentioned distinguishing features, but also because of its playfulness, loyalty and submission with the children.

HIS APPEARANCE

The Serra da Estrela is a large dog (the bigger males can weight about 50 kgs, and be 75 cms high) but still, agile and fast. They have a powerful appearance: the head is quite majestic and voluminous and his skull is rounded; the eyes, oval and brown, are very expressive as they show how intelligent and peaceful these dog are. Their ears are small, pendent, and covered with a soft short fur. His shoulders are strong, the back has a slight leaning and the members have large stiff muscles. The tail is long and thick, and the fur that covers the Serra da Estrela is abundant and rustic looking. The length (of the fur) may also vary, from short to long (depending of the geographical area of the Estrela mountain chain in where they live), and its colours are always yellow, brown or black.

HIS CHARACTER

Sometimes the Serra da Estrela dog may seem too obnoxious, too independent or even too stubborn: it concerns to his owner to show who's in charge. Nonetheless it's important to keep in mind that, despite this Dog nasty personality, he is very protective and courageous. This is, in fact, a dominant moral quality of his, and there are many cases in which the animal almost sacrificed his own life in order to save a child or a member of its family.

It's also important to refer that, due to its great size, the Serra da Estrela must always be maintained under strict orders and a very specific training routine; however, this is a very social, loyal and most of the time, obedient animal, that only attacks in case of threat to its owner. Other than that, he is a calm, dignified and charming friend.

[Cuisine]

6th January: Dia de Reis

by Joana Dalila



King Cake:

Ingredients for the dough:

- 100g wheat flour
- 60g yeast
- 1 dl warm milk

To complete the cake:

- 800 g wheat flour
- 225 g margarine
- 225 g sugar
- Grated orange peel
- 6 eggs
- 1 wine glass of Brandy
- 1 pinch of salt
- Baking powder
- 200 g assorted crystallized fruit (plus some sliced for decoration)
- 70 g raisins, pine nuts, nut paste and a broad bean
- Beaten egg for glazing
- Castor sugar

“Galette” or “Gâteau des Rois” for the French people, “Panettone” for the Italian, “Roscón de Reyes” for the Spanish. The King Cake came to Portugal at the end of the 19th century by the hands of Baltasar Castanheiro Júnior who brought the recipe from Paris. He had his own business, Confeitaria Nacional in Lisbon, so he started selling the cake. It seems simple, but there is much more to say about this traditional cake. The King Cake doesn't have an easy history.

Everything started a long, long time ago, precisely in the French Revolution, and why was that? Because the French people couldn't stand the idea of having a cake named king.

So, the French pastry-makers decided to give it a new name: “Gâteau des

Sans-Cullotes”. Obviously, here in Portugal we had the same problem in 1910 when the Republic was proclaimed... and the “President Cake” was created! It must be owned that this cake is a truly resistant from these strained circumstances.

Perhaps that's why we say the cake could bring luck upon the one who finds the small gift and bad luck upon the one who finds the broad bean. To forget the misfortune the King Cake introduced himself to the Porto Wine and they make a wonderful couple.

Nowadays, the small gift has been forbidden (because it could be accidentally eaten) but the broad bean still stays on. But take care! If you find it, you will be forced to provide the next cake!

Are you curious to know why there is a broad bean?

The legend says that when the Three Kings were going their way till Jesus, they had a discussion about which of them should be the first to give the gift to the child. A baker that witnessed the dispute decided to make a cake with a broad bean inside, and the King that found the broad bean should be the one to give the present first.

Method:

1. Knead together the flour, yeast and milk; leave to one side.
2. Separately, combine the 800 g of flour with the margarine, sugar and orange rind and mix well.
3. Add the eggs, and finally the glass of Brandy.
4. Fold into the dough mixture and mix until it becomes a soft paste.
5. Add the crystallized fruit (pieces), raisins pine nuts and nut paste.
6. Place the mixture in a bowl, cover, and wait until the mixture rises (to double its original volume).
7. Mould the dough to form a ring shape, and then hide the broad bean inside the dough (wrapped in greaseproof paper).
8. Place the ring on a baking tray and wait until the dough rises again to further double its size.
9. Paint the surface with beaten egg and decorate with the remaining crystallized fruit pieces and dust with castor sugar.
10. Bake in the oven at 150°. for approximately 45 mins.

[News] *Deutscher Kinder Hospiz:*

Raising smiles since 1990

by João Durão da Silva

What could be worst than knowing that your child has a terminal disease? Probably, this is the question that many parents ask themselves when they listen to a diagnosis of this kind. To help these families, a groups of parents created Deutscher Kinder Hospiz in 1990. Since then, this association has been taking a little care and welfare to hundreds of boys and girls.

For almost two decades, Deutscher Kinder Hospiz (or German Children's Hospice Society) has been a supportive hand to many German children with terminal diseases. In 1990, a group of parents with experience created this association to help these children and their families. The purpose of D.K.H. is to support the entire family since the diagnosis until the mourning grief, teaching and assisting in all the phases and problems. Generally speaking, this association builds a network of professionals and volunteers around these families which makes their life easier.

An important part of this help consists in home care services. D.K.H. trains many volunteers to this work. Marcel Globisch is a sociologist with 30 years old and the head coordinator of the association. He explains that volunteers are trained by professionals to assist these children and families in their own homes in all kind of activities. These volunteers are people from all ages, mostly women, who don't necessarily have professional skills. "We interview everyone before they are accepted in our course. It doesn't matter whether the people have a professional background or not. Everyone has special qualities to offer which help the families in their needs" says Marcel.

These volunteers spent 3-5 hours per week with these families. Many of them are 10 or more years with a child and

it's natural that they often establish strong bonds with children and their families. Marcel explains the feeling of this job quoting a mother: "For god's sake, we are not in tears every day. We laugh, we cry, we have good and bad days as every family. We just don't feel sorry of ourselves all the time. Our life is not as bad as it might seem." Marcel concludes: "Of course it's terribly sad to see children suffer and die but on the other side they live a worthwhile life".

Deutscher Kinder Hospiz also has several hospices where children could be with their family for some periods of time, maximum four weeks. The biggest difference between them and the home care services relies on the fact that the home care services don't include nursing care. The home care services are a kind of more psychological and social work, while the hospices have a permanent assistance provided by professionals. This makes it possible to receive not only the child, but also the entire family if that will be their wish.

The oldest of these hospices is in Olpe and it was named "Balthasar". During a year, Balthasar receives approximately 130 families. Its ultimate goal is for a child to feel at home in the hospice, with as few rules as possible. "Home away from home" is the motto. To

achieve it, Balthasar has its own staff, with nurses, doctors and pedagogues. At all, there are at least 30 people to assist and provide all the help that a family may need.

Besides this, D.K.H. provides a set of seminars where families and professionals of the area can learn more about how to deal with this reality. There are 33 different seminars available and 2/3 of them are aimed at the families. This association also has some other projects like a telephone line where people can be advised about their problems, or public relations department disposable for the needs of these families.

The work that D.K.H. does with its children is possible especially through private supports. As Marcel Globisch says, most of the money comes from "donations, legacies and foundations." From the government comes 1/3 of the financing of the hospices. However, the most important support comes from other families and it is not about money. "Families help other families with similar experiences, the kind of support which government could never provide", explains the head coordinator of D.K.H. All of this is done focusing on the children. "We learn from them every day and we are grateful for that", concludes Marcel.

New rules for construction

by Joana Dalila

The rules for the construction of buildings in Portugal will take into account the access for citizens with reduced mobility. Now, the non-governmental organizations for the defence of the disabled people's rights can start legal proceedings in a court of justice in order to guarantee the accomplishment of the technical norms. This is an important innovation bearing in mind that it's a tool given to their direct beneficiaries.

It's all about two legislative measures approved this year, and Idália Moniz, the Portuguese secretary of state for Rehabilitation, considers that they can help improving the current state of affairs, where the Portuguese Government doesn't set an example yet.

If the rules were broken

There are higher sanctions for those who trespass the rules because the fines were intensified. Other sanctions can also be applied, just like subsidy privation, the interdiction of the activities or even the closing of establishments.

Beyond legislation

Apart from the legislation, Portugal has a new National Plan for the Promotion of the Accessibility which will be approved through a Resolution of the Cabinet Council. This plan is not only about the accessibility to the urban environment (for instance, to buildings and public transport) but it's also about the accessibility to information and communication.