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Portugal Weekend

Bailliage Provincial of Sud du Tage
North Alentejo, November 8-10, 2019

Wines, traditional gastronomy and culture

" Our first wine event of the day at 'Tapada do Chaves' provided the opportunity to taste some of the best red wines in the Alentejo "

The annual extended weekend organised by Chargé de Missions/Bailli Provincial Jean Ferran in honour of São Martinho (otherwise known as St. Martin, Patron Saint of geese, hoteliers, wine makers and drunks, horse riders, knights and even the French) started in style on Friday with a visit to "Ribafreixo winery" in Vidigueira.

First a wine tasting then lunch. We enjoyed two regional specialties: "Sopa de cação" (dogfish soup) and "Carne de Alguidar com Migas" (fried marinated pork with bread mash,) served with wines from the estate.

Our base for the weekend was the superb wine hotel, Torre de Palma in Monforte, which is a 5-star luxury establishment in a restored mansion dating from 1338 built near the site of an ancient Roman Villa from the first century AD. A visit to the spa, a welcome glass of wine set us up for dinner.

The restaurant "Taberna Tintos e Petiscos" (literally meaning "the tavern of red wines and snacks") is a "mom and pop" operation, mom in the kitchen, pop looking after the 16 guests maximum.

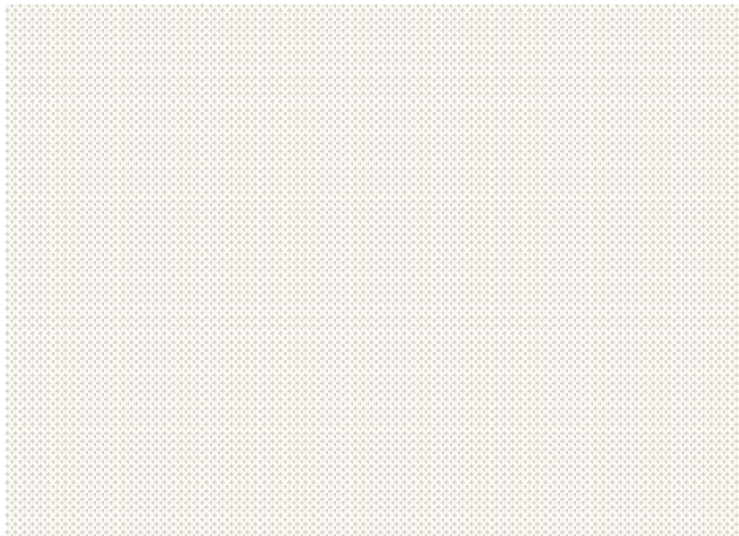
An impressive selection of starters was followed by an amazing speciality of the Chef, a "Feijoada de Pato" (duck and beans stew). No wine list means one chooses from a selection of excellent local wines on the shelves. The dinner was perfectly ended with local cakes and a sweet wine from the region.

Early on Saturday saw a quick guided tour of the old city of Portalegre, the regional capital of North Alentejo founded in 1259. Nothing remains of the old fortifications except two gates. The town has a quaint feeling, with a very interesting modern tapestry museum.

Our first wine event of the day at "Tapada do Chaves" provided the opportunity to taste some of the best red wines in Alentejo.

Back to Portalegre for a superb lunch at the restaurant "Tombalobos" where Chef José Julio Vintém served us a dozen small dishes, including some mushrooms picked that morning in the forest, rabbit ribs fried with honey and lemon, guinea fowl bites ... the list is too long!

Dinner was at Restaurant Basill, the gastronomic restaurant of Torre de Palma, named after the Roman family who owned the estate. Young Chef Filipe Ramalho served amuse-bouches in the vineyard's cellars. A seven-course menu with local wine pairing followed. What a great experience it was from the olive oil tasting to the petits fours!



We braved a very cold wind on Sunday to walk to the ruins of the Roman villa near the hotel. Afterwards we met students and teachers of the Bailliage's sponsored Gastronomy School who joined us from Évora.

There was a small ceremony to award their diplomas, before enjoying a nice lunch together. "Sopa de Cação" completely different from the first one and "Arroz de Cabidela de Fraca" (guinea-fowl rice with blood sauce), another local treat were our main courses!

Chestnuts grilled on the open fire in honour of São Martinho, the theme of this fantastic weekend of gastronomy, tourism, conviviality and Chaîne friendship, made a perfect ending!

Jean Ferran
Chargé de Missions
(and continues to act as Bailli Provincial)



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CONTACT THE CHAÎNE NEWS ONLINE

Please address any questions to:
Marie Jones, Managing Editor
E-mail: news-online@chaîne-des-rotisseurs.net

La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs
111, rue de Longchamp, 75016 Paris France
Tel : +33 1 42 81 30 12
Fax : +33 1 40 16 81 85

Chaîne des Rôtisseurs website
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