

Local Knowledge: Gloria's Portuguese Restaurant

From this restaurant, Little Portugal in Petersham grew.

Original article can be found at broadsheet.com.au/sydney/food-and-drink/article/local-knowledge-glorias-portuguese-restaurant



Photography: Leigh Griffiths

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Before Frango's, Silva's or Sweet Belem opened in Petersham, there was a Portuguese accountant. Maria Gloria Belinha used to do her tax there. Most Portuguese would recognise that name as the founder of little Portugal's first restaurant, Gloria's, but back then she was a cleaner.

"[One day] while she waited [at the accountant] she went to have a coffee. There were no coffee shops around. The only place she found was on Norton Street," says Maria's son, Alcino de Sá. There was no coffee and no Portuguese food, so Belinha – a single mum without much money – decided to risk everything and do it herself. She opened Gloria's in 1988. "It took off, all the Portuguese heard about it," says de Sá. From there, little Portugal grew.

The area and the community have changed considerably since then. Many of the restaurants that opened after Gloria's have since closed but Belinha's restaurant is as popular as ever. An old

photograph of the place shows it has kept much of its old tavern-style charm. The only real difference is that no one smokes indoors anymore. The menu's changed over time. Dishes such as dobraba (tripe-and-white-bean stew) or chicken pipis (chicken gIBLETS and hearts cooked in red wine) are now only available via pre-order. But the classics, such as feijoada and alentejana, are still on pretty much every table.

You'll hear "woah" a lot when they come out – everything here is either huge, hearty or both. Alentejana for instance – a platter of fried pork, clams, capsicum and coriander that sits, slowly oozing juice, on a bed of cubed potatoes—is big enough for two. The feijoada, a red-bean, pork, beef and chorizo stew with rice, is similarly large. It's the kind of food you can imagine craving either post-marathon or mid-hangover, which makes sense – this is the food you'd find farmers and workers eating in a Portuguese tavern.

For something a little more typical, try the francezinha. "It's basically a sandwich with pork steak, pork sausage, chorizo, ham, cheese and egg. We put that into a bowl and we put cheese over the top and then a chili sauce over the top of it all." A sandwich, in a chilli soup, with chips on the side. It's a Northern thing, de Sá says (Belinha's family is from the north of Portugal). In Porto you'll see it all over the city.

Unless you're about to rupture (which is likely), ask for dessert. Before moving her family to Australia, Belinha was a pastry chef. She's no longer at the restaurant (she went to uni late in life and became a nurse) but her recipes for babas de camelo (dulce de leche pudding) and natas do ceu (like a trifle of cream, crushed biscuits and sweetened yolk) remain.

Gloria's
82 Audley Street, Petersham
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Hours:
Mon to Thu 11.30am–9:30pmpm
Fri & Sat 11.30am–10:00pm

<http://gloriascafe.com.au/>