

were considered to attract the local community and to be part of the neighbourhood day by day. Hotel guests are always welcome, but we don't want to make sure that they get in touch with the people of the area and don't just have dinner in one of touristic restaurants of the city."

It's little surprise therefore, that whilst the hotel is regularly at full occupancy, locals make up 90% of the trade at the 55-cover restaurant, which in turn already represents around 35% of Memmo Príncipe Real's revenues. It's a percentage Machaz, and Executive Assistant Manager Eduardo Consiglieri Pedrosa hope to grow, as the venue cements itself as a destination restaurant and important lifestyle spot.

Tapping the local set requires a particularly sensitive approach to cuisine and at Café Colonial dishes are intended to reflect Portugal's influence around the world, whilst still offering an original take on the region's favourites. It is a thoughtfully conceived menu, from Chef Vasco Lello, that not once veers into cliché territory.

"This is a place for conversation, a sense of community and melting pot of Portuguese heritage," Machaz continues. "In many ways it's a Portuguese journey around the world, with influences from Brazil, Africa and Asia, combined in contemporary dishes that linger in the memory. This is a very different concept from the other restaurants in the area."

A starter of fried chicken wings with peri peri sauce, okra and peanut is infused with the spirit of Angola, a former Portuguese colony. On the mains menu, meagre with Bulhão Pato rice, razor clams and cockles represents one of the country's most enduring and popular flavour profiles. For dessert there are tastes of Brazil, in the Quindim with passion fruit ice cream and lime; and São Tomé, in a decadent chocolate creation with banana and caramel praline. The dishes are confident and speak to the broad culinary legacy of a former empire, but also to the forward-looking character of today's Portugal.

Throughout the day the restaurant evolves. Mornings are exclusively for guests, who can choose between light and flavoursome à la carte options, or set themselves up for the day at a breakfast bar well-stocked with cereals, cold meats and crowd-pleasing Pastéis de Nata; served on

plates from Costa Nova. In the afternoons light meals and bar snacks are available, whilst in the evening the restaurant opens for main service along with the signature cocktail bar.

During the opening of the hotel, the team collaborated with Luis Domingos, owner of drinks company Black Pepper & Basil, on the development of the cocktail menu. As in the restaurant, there is a local sensibility. Mixes like Port Tonic and the Amarginha Sour – made with a Portuguese almond liqueur – provide a suitably regional twist on international favourites. The hotel partners with Diageo and stocks multiple brands from the company's portfolio, with a spiky cooper Absolut Elyx pineapple adorning the bar.

For most city hotels, and certainly design-led boutiques, creating a destination restaurant and bar that succeeds in being just that, is perhaps the holy grail of contemporary hotel F&B. At Café Colonial it is so far mission achieved, and the restaurant is on an upward trajectory. But it's still early days for this new hotel in an increasingly lauded portion of Lisbon, and Machaz has plans. Capitalising on the dramatic skyline vista, the terrace will soon play host to DJs and a sundown happy hour. On the currently unutilised roof there's scope for private cocktail events and room for 60 guests.

Memmo Príncipe Real is a member of Design Hotels, and this year the group's Arena conference will be held in the city. The hotel is set to host attendees for the welcome cocktail and there's little doubt that many will be taking notes. After all, it's only fair that the city that captured the attention of Europe's 'coolest' should share some of its secrets.

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