



Matteo Ferrantino at work at 28°-50°, London (Photo: Tom Watkins)

A FEAST FIT FOR A MARTIAN

# Wine and Wizardry

**Saturday night saw what, on the one hand, was sadly the final London event of the season for TASTE PORTUGAL LONDON 2014/15, but what also marked the beginning of the new season – set to continue in the autumn – following the last few months’ tremendous success at celebrating the joys of Portuguese cuisine and wine and making these known to a wider audience.**

WORDS: ANNA MCNAY | PHOTO: TOM WATKINS | 15 MARCH 2015

Like Share 3 Tweet 9



GALLERY



For this celebratory dinner, which took place at **Xavier Rousset** and **Agnar Sverrisson**’s 28-50° in Mayfair’s Maddox Street, executive chef **Ben Mellor** opened up his kitchen to Italian-born, Algarve-based **Matteo Ferrantino**, who conjured up a very special menu with matching wines, as selected by TASTE PORTUGAL’s award-winning sommelier, **Antonio Lopes**, and served with the help of 28-50°’s very own **Caroline Brangé**.

NEWS | TASTE PORTUGAL 14/15



16 March 2015  
A Culinary Celebration of Spring  
BY TASTE PORTUGAL



15 March 2015  
Wine and Wizardry  
BY ANNA MCNAY



4 March 2015  
The Wine Experts  
BY ANNA MCNAY



4 March 2015  
A Matter of Taste  
BY ANNA MCNAY



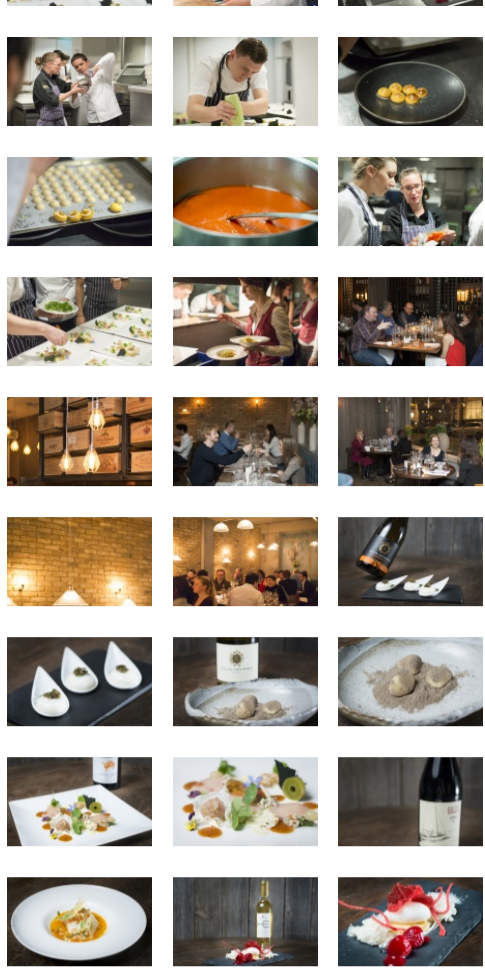
4 March 2015  
The Biggest Wine Showcase Worldwide  
BY ANNA MCNAY



3 March 2015  
London Tasting Event 2015  
BY ANNA MCNAY



2 March 2015  
Springtime in London!  
BY ANNA MCNAY



*‘The chefs are important, but without the guests they are nothing’*

The first two wines on the list were both supplied by **Julia Kemper**, from the Dão region. A light and original Julia Kemper *Vinho Branco*, made from an equal mix of *encruzado* and *malvasia fina* and fermented in two stages in French oak barrels followed by open spout stainless steel tanks, was followed by the more intense and caramelly ‘Curiosity’, with a nose of bay and basil, aged in French timber barrels, which themselves were aged for 10 years before use. This latter was created to celebrate the landing of NASA’s rover of the same name on Mars in 2012. The wine was designed to be fantastic enough to toast a martian, should one be found. As such, Kemper’s organic techniques, which avoid the use of any chemicals at all, including carbon in the toasting process, were exploited to the full. The family, which has been making wine for 400 years, but only began selling 12 years ago, has its vineyards on very high ground – the only higher location possible being the *Serra da Estrela* – and, as such, is blessed with the freshest of spring water. This, along with an entirely done-by-hand process – including the control of bugs, which are hand plucked from any vines, and kept at bay by grasses and rose bushes, planted around the vines, themselves

controlled by sheep. If the producers notice the roses wilting, they know that there is a bug, and they must then rush to deinfest the vines. ‘It’s a very expensive technique,’ explains Julia’s brother, **Gonçalo Melo**, ‘but even the milk produced by the sheep attracted some biologists who wanted to test it because of its unique and wonderful taste – such is the freshness of our raw ingredients. You cannot have holidays. People must always be there in case bugs attack the grapes. You cannot miss a single day, end of story, because if you do, too bad, the bugs will take hold.’

With this celebratory and uniquely produced wine, guests at 28-50° were able to enjoy three magical appetizers, each bringing a teaspoon-sized explosion to the palate: firstly an oyster, served in velvety sour cream, topped with caviar – a veritable fresh taste of the ocean and therefore typically Portuguese; followed by a miniature meringue-like ball of *foie gras*, served with passion fruit and coca cola powder, which fizzed on the tongue like sherbet; and finally a rich and intense black truffle.

Moving on to the starter, Ferrantino served up an artwork of flavours and colours, comprising some 22 elements, which took an hour to plate. ‘This was a real challenge for our kitchen,’ says Mellor, ‘to do something like this here for such numbers. 28-50° has a 120 cover and was fully booked for the TASTE PORTUGAL event; Matteo is used to working at a 20 cover restaurant. I actually quite enjoyed it all in the end though. It was good fun. And it was great for the young chefs in my kitchen to experience something like this.’ The dish included melt-in-the-mouth slices of lirio fish, served sushi style, along with crispy cauliflower slithers, lemon cream, stimulating ginger, salt crystals and a perfect balance of flowers and herbs. This was paired quite deftly with a soft Alentejan white, *Herdade da Malhadinha Nova*, which brought out the fresh summery flavours on the plate.



27 February 2015  
**A Triumph of Taste and Texture**  
By ANNA McNAY



13 February 2015  
**The Taste of Portugal**  
By AGATHON RAMIREZ

◀ PREV    NEXT ▶

The main dish of the night was *Caldeirada* of Black Cod, a concentrated fish stew, with flaky fish pieces and the tiniest of potato cubes, served together with rustic ‘redneck’ bread and the exceptional 2013 *Gilda*, *Tiago Teles* red from Bairrada, a light and elegant combination of three grapes – *merlot*, *tinto cão* and *castelão* – made by a very small producer.

The meal was brought to a conclusion with a fusion of raspberries and lychees in a special iced dessert, with textures including foam, sponge and chocolaty seaweed shapes, delicately coloured in red and white, with just a hint of basil. To accompany this, a honey flavoured 2012 *Late Harvest*, *Herdade do Esporão*, also from the Alentejo, was savoured by all.

‘At the end of the day,’ said Melo, ‘everything I say is pointless if the wine doesn’t speak for itself.’ Well, I think we can safely conclude that it did. The wine and food made a lasting impression on guests, who were all very keen to find out what is coming up next on the TASTE PORTUGAL programme. As Ferrantino modestly concluded: ‘The chefs are important, but without the guests they are nothing.’ A big cheers to everyone who has been along to enjoy the programme thus far!

TASTE PORTUGAL is organised by  
**Turismo de Portugal**, the national tourist board



**Visitportugal** is the official website for Portugal as a tourist destination, and is developed by Turismo de Portugal



TASTE PORTUGAL is supported by **Wines of Portugal**, the official association of the Portuguese wine industry