

# PORTUGAL

## History and Geography

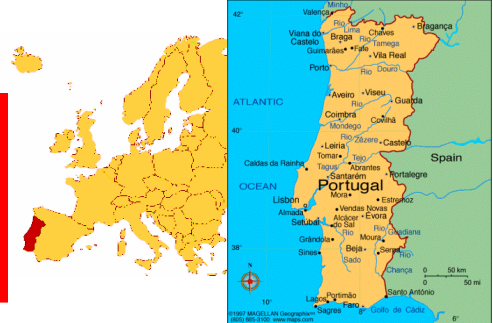
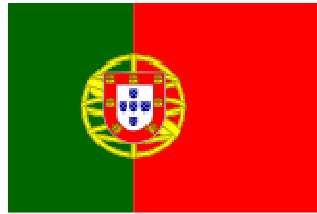
- Located along the western side of Spain, in the Iberian Peninsula; surrounded by Spain on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other.
- Became its own nation separate from Spain in 1143.
- During the development of the original 13 colonies in America, there were only small settlements of Portuguese located in Newport, Rhode Island and Charleston, South Carolina.
- Because Portugal had a major naval fleet in the 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Portuguese colonies were established all over the world - Brazil, Azores, Goa, Macao, Angola, Cape Verde. It is important to verify which country a person or family immigrated from.
- The first wave of Portuguese migrated to the US between 1880 and 1920. Attracted by the whaling industry, they settled in New England.
  - Many settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a leading whaling port.
- Portuguese who settled in California in the San Francisco Bay and San Joaquin Valley, and Hawaii started as farmers and ranchers, but moved on to professional, technical and administrative positions.
- In 1917 the US created a literacy test to discourage the number of immigrants from settling in the States. The Portuguese were directly affected.
- In 1924, the US Immigration Act established a quota system controlling the number of Portuguese entering the United States each year.
- After World War II was the second wave with the Portuguese from Macao (Portuguese settlement on Chinese coast near Hong Kong) settling in California. The people were well educated and held professional jobs.
- Around 1958 – Third wave of Portuguese immigrants – more than 150,000 people arrived in US after a series of volcanic eruptions devastated the Azores.
- Since 1970, 150,000 Portuguese have entered the US. According to the US census in 2000, over one million Portuguese-Americans live in the US.
- Over 50,000 are of Cape Verdean descent and 4,000 are from Azores; the remainder from Portugal.

## Health Concerns

- Heart Disease
- Hypercholesterolemia
- Hypertension
- Alcoholism
- Depression – due to the stress of immigration and adaptation to the United States
- Southern Portuguese are at risk for Sickle Cell Disease, which is often overlooked because they are Caucasian.

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- Disease prevention is not considered an important aspect of health. In order to validate their illness, a doctor must prescribe medications.
- Folk medical practices are still prevalent in some parts of Portugal; healers use a combination of prayer, religious paraphernalia, and traditional and modern medicines.

### Foods

- Emphasis on fish, meat, olive oil, tomato and spices, featuring hearty soups, homemade bread and cheeses, as well as unexpected combinations of meat and shellfish.
- Portugal was once occupied by Arabs who brought the nourishing fava bean with them from the east. The beans are often served at fiestas in the summer.
- Broad beans, fava beans, lupine seeds, sardines, pork sausage, and stew are common foods used in Portuguese cooking.
  - The most popular soup is Caldo Verde (green soup), which is made with Galician cabbage (kale), sausage, potatoes, and olive oil. (at left)
  - The Estremadura region is famous for its seafood, from the common anchovy to swordfish, sole, sea bream, bass and salmon sold in markets and on menus of most restaurants.
  - Acorda is a dish of softened bread, with a bit of olive oil, crushed garlic and anything from vegetables to pork, chicken, fish or sea snails. Fresh coriander is used to flavor the broth. (at right)
- Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India influenced the desire for exotic spices.
  - *Peri-peri*, a Brazilian spice transplanted to the former African colonies is used to flavor chicken and shrimp.
  - Curry spices from Goa are common seasonings. These spices are typically used very sparingly, adding subtle flavor and depth to dishes.
- The Algarve on southern coast near Africa, contributes an old tradition of almond and fig sweets.
- *Bacalhau* (dried salt cod) is prepared in soups, stews, purees, croquettes, and sauces. (at right)
- *Linguica* and *chourico* (pork and garlic sausages) often eaten at breakfast
- Rice and fried potatoes are the staple starches and are often served together
- Olive oil (azeite) is produced and used
- In the US, Portuguese Sweet Bread comes in the form of round sandwich rolls; they are doughier than bulky rolls, made with eggs and milk, and can be served in a loaf. (at right)



- Eggs and sugar are the main ingredients in many Portuguese desserts. Some examples are: flan, “quejadas” (egg custard), arroz doce (rice pudding), and malasadas (fried dough). (Flan and quejadas are pictured on the right.)



- A very popular beverage in Portugal and also available in the U.S. is Sumol. Sumol is a canned soda drink which comes in various flavors, such as orange and pineapple. (at right)



- The traditional bread, especially in the northwest, is *broa*, a grainy corn bread with a thick crust baked on flat hearth stones. (at right)
- Port, a fortified wine produced in the region of the upper Douro River, is a major export. In rural households on ceremonial occasions, port is offered to celebrated guests, including the parish priest; Port wine and Madeira are the most common. A small quantity of port is generally consumed after a celebratory meal as it is believed to help with digestion. Very expensive bottles of port wine are viewed as a delicacy that is served only at celebratory occasions.



### **Main Dishes**

- Shrimp Mozambique- a very flavorful dish in which the shrimp is sautéed in a pan with butter, hot sauce, beer, olive oil, azafran, and spices. It is most often served with white rice.
- The Portuguese steak, bife, is a thin slice of fried beef or pork served with fried potatoes and black olives. To add a few more calories to this dish an egg, sunny side up, may be placed on top of the meat, in which case the dish acquires a new name, “bife com um ovo a cavalo”, steak with an egg on horseback.
- Sardines roasted on an open grill and served with boiled potatoes and roasted bell peppers.
- Bacalhau ao Brás- made from thin strips of salted cod mixed with onions, and thin strips of potatoes bound by eggs. Some serve it with chickpeas sautéed in olive oil, parsley, crushed red pepper, and other spices.

### **Specific Food Practices**

- Portuguese consider milk consumption important for growing children.
- Most meals are accompanied by a soup of some kind.
- Meals can last for hours and are mainly a family affair.
- If a woman is planning on getting pregnant, it is believed that if she eats certain types of food she can determine the gender of the child. Round fruits and vegetables such as apples and grapes are thought to produce girls while long vegetables like carrots and cucumbers produce boys.
- The noon meal (o almoço) is served at about twelve thirty and traditionally is the main meal with three large courses, and dinner (o jantar) is lighter and eaten at 8 P.M. In US, this tradition is often followed on weekends. Breakfast (o pequeno almoço) is Continental style. Coffee houses

are places to meet friends, talk business, and study. Various styles of coffee are served, each with a special label.

- Red table wine is usually served with lunch and dinner.
- Americanized Portuguese eat their main meal at dinner and their diets are higher in fat and sugar and low in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products than native Portuguese.
- The woman's role as homemaker is of primary importance in Portugal, although Portuguese women comprise 50% of the country's physicians and those enrolled in higher education.
- Jewish influence may have determined some other practices in food preparation and eating habits. Spanish Jews forced out of Spain during the Spanish Inquisition went to Portugal
- Meat is often repeatedly rinsed in water to clean it of any trace of blood.
- After chickens are killed, they may be hung up upside down, so the blood may be drained. However, it can be used later for cabidela (a dish made with chicken or rabbit).
- Scaleless seafood, such as morays, may be shunned in some areas.
- A point is made of slaughtering animals with a very sharp knife, a practice also exacted by rabbinical law.

### **Major celebrations**

- Most predominant religion is Roman Catholicism.
- Most native Portuguese still attend church every Sunday. However, many Portuguese-Americans who have fully assimilated into American culture continue to follow their faith but no longer attend church on a weekly basis.
- As is the case with American Catholicism, Portuguese Catholics observe the practice of fasting on holy days and abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent.
- Many festivals, or *festas*, honor saints.
- Festival of the Blessed Sacrament: A four-day festival which takes place the first weekend of August, is the largest Portuguese American celebration. This festival features Portuguese and American music, singing, dancing, and famous entertainers. Decorative arches are erected in the festival area and are covered with bundles of bayberry branches. There is a wide variety of Portuguese food such as *carne de espeto* (roasted meat on a skewer), *linguiça* (sausage), *cabra* (goat), *bacalhau* (codfish) in spicy Portuguese sauces, *favas* (beans), and Madeiran wine.
- Our Lady of Miracles Celebration occurs in the middle of September consists of three full days of singing, candlelight processions, folk dancing, prayers, parades, auctions, red wine, bullfighting, and fried sardines. Other foods found at this festival, are *lupini* beans, salt cod, sacks of chestnuts, pastel candied almonds, red octopus stew and cinnamon pastries.
- Christmas Eve features two meals, dinner and post midnight mass buffet. Dinner includes potato and *bacalhau* casserole. The later buffet features finger foods such as sausage and cod fritters.
- On New Year's Eve, the Portuguese pick and eat twelve grapes from a bunch as the clock strikes twelve on New Year's Eve. This is done to ensure twelve happy months in the coming year.
  - In Northern Portugal, children go caroling from home to home and are given treats and coins. They sing old songs or "Janeiros" which is said to bring good luck.
- Holy Ghost Festival –a social/religious ceremony among Portuguese Americans. The festival is held for one week between Easter and the end of July. It features an open banquet served to the

community which places emphasis on sharing of food with the needy. The festival is believed to date back to Queen Elizabeth of Aragon's desire to set an example of charity and distribute food to the needy in the name of the Holy Ghost. Food at the feast includes meat, bread, potatoes, and sweet breads called *Massa Sovoda* often shaped like a dove.

- The annual Holy Ghost Festival in Fall River, MA, held in the last weekend of every August, has been heralded the largest of its kind in the world. Hundreds of volunteers from local church groups put their professional lives aside for a weekend to donate their time and efforts in creating this extravagant festival that caters to an average of 200,000 people each year (in a single weekend). Various local organizations, communities, church groups, and even the Portuguese government provide the funding for this massive event.

### **Communication Style**

- Initial greetings are reserved, yet polite and gracious.
- Portuguese people are known to be expressive, welcoming, easy-going and friendly.
- Although honest, the Portuguese do not volunteer information unless solicited, especially if remaining silent is in their best interest.
- Although the Portuguese are not emotive speakers and do not use hand gestures, they may be demonstrative when greeting friends. Typically, Portuguese men and women (especially men) are emotive speakers. When engaged in informal conversation with friends and family, the Portuguese may be demonstrative and use hand gestures ("talk with their hands"). This is done to emphasize a particular point.
- The proper form of address is the honorific title '*senhor*' and '*senhora*' with the surname.
  - Anyone with a university degree is referred to with the honorific title, plus '*doutour*' or '*doutoura*' ('doctor') with or without their surname.
  - Wait until invited before moving to a first-name basis.
  - Use the formal rather than the informal case until your Portuguese friend suggests otherwise.
  - Using an informal title (i.e. "tu") instead of a formal title (i.e. "voce") can be interpreted by the Portuguese as disrespectful, especially when speaking to an elderly Portuguese person.
- In many circles, five minutes late is considered on time.
- Have printed material available in both English and Portuguese. Older immigrants may be not be able to read in Portuguese.
- Portuguese are traditionally thorough and detail-oriented. They value social interaction and prefer a learner/client centered teaching style.
- The Portuguese are less conscious of personal space than Americans. They stand and talk closer than average Americans. Oftentimes, Portuguese people may place a hand on your back or around your waist while moving by and saying "com licença," or excuse me. This is not meant to be orderly and should not be interpreted as so.
- Great importance is placed on the character of the person with whom they do business, so they will take time to get to know you.

- First impressions hold great importance to the Portuguese. They are observant of body language, dress, and tone of voice.
- Portuguese are traditional and conservative and retain a sense of formality when dealing with each other, which is displayed in the form of extreme politeness.
- If you tend to use hand gestures while speaking, you may wish to moderate your behavior since it may incorrectly be viewed as overly demonstrative.
- Men dominate the family unit in Portuguese culture. In years past, men have been expected to be the major (sometimes only) source of income for a household. Women have been expected to be housekeepers and take care of children while their husbands are at work. In more modern times, men have accepted the role of provider and child caretaker while women have ventured into advanced education and a more leadership role in the household.
- Portuguese men are raised to be romantic, a father, and a householder. In fact, a Portuguese man is expected to be the chief provider in the home – so much so that more emphasis is placed on being a financial provider than offering emotional support for one's children.
- Unless highly Americanized, Portuguese people usually live at home with their parents until they get married.
- Sons and daughters live close to their parents when they are older to keep with tight family tradition and culture and are involved in their parents' health care. It is not uncommon for Portuguese family celebrations (e.g. college graduation) to involve over 50-75 family members.

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- ✱ Reviewed by:



Damaso, Alberto. Ponte Delgada, Portugal. Year of immigration: 1966  
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