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Bom Apetite!

Chef Natalia Palva-Neves hosts a **PORTUGUESE FEAST** at a friend's home for picture-perfect summer entertaining.

By **JAMIE COELHO AND DANA LAVERTY**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGEL TUCKER

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Natalia Palva-Neves serves tomato rice to guests at the table, set with a floral arrangement from SEMIA Studio, and glasses, place mats and a tablecloth from Wendy Brown Home.

Want to toast like a true Portuguese native? Hoist your glass and say "Saúde." ("sah-ood") It means "to our health."

Summer should be easy, relaxed and simple.

No fuss, no fanfare ... just plenty of relaxing, long days meant to be savored and flavorful meals (with wine!) shared by family and friends without hours of preparation.

To help us achieve these easy-breezy goals, we asked chef Natalia Paiva-Neves of O Dinis restaurant in East Providence to create an easy entertaining menu featuring fresh seafood and Portuguese dishes perfectly suited for an outdoor gathering. She was more than up for the task: Food, after all, is her love language.

"I obsess over food," says the Barrington resident, who came to the United States from the Azores when she was six years old. "I love food."

Her creations are full of bright flavors, rounded out with fistfuls of chopped garlic, fresh cilantro, liberal drizzles of olive oil, lemon juice, paprika and salt and layered through with family stories, a hearty laugh and the care and passion of someone who loves to feed and nourish others.

Jackie Ignall (@wanderandlash) coordinated the styling, using her lush backyard patio as the setting, with table linens and accessories provided by Wayland Square's Wendy Brown Home (*190 Wayland Ave., Providence, 455-2337, wendybrownhome.com*) and a floral centerpiece by Semia Dunne of SEMIA Studio (*semiafloral.com*). Joining the meal are two local food lovers, Kayla Mandeville (@k__elizabeth) and Sharmin Attaran (@*hangrygirl_ri*). Find more of Paiva-Neves' recipes at *natallapaivaneves.com*.

Delicate farmer's cheese (*queijo fresco*) needs little preparation: "You make it one night and eat it the next day," says Paiva-Neves. She tops it with a heady mixture of diced onions, garlic, olive oil and paprika and smears it on rustic *pão da avó* (literally "grandma's bread").

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: The women enjoy a taste of the Baga Clarete red wine with appetizers. **BOTTOM, FROM LEFT:** *Pasteis de carne* from Taunton Avenue Bakery with small dishes of lupini beans and olives. A wooden platter set with *Queijo São Jorge* (cheese) from the Azores, sardine pate, tinned fish and soft farmer's cheese, all served with Portuguese bread.

For a simple date, Paiva-Neves and her husband head to Barrington Beach with a tin of sardine pate and a baguette in tow. "It doesn't look cute," she says, "but it's delicious."

Garlic Shrimp

Camarão Alhinho

Paiva-Neves always buys purple garlic, which she says is more pungent.

SERVES 6

3 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp butter, divided
2 lbs shrimp, cleaned and deveined, tails still on
1 tsp sea salt
1 head garlic, peeled and chopped
1 tsp red pepper flakes
Half a lemon, sliced
3 tbsp fresh chopped parsley

In a frying pan, add olive oil and 1 tbsp of butter on high heat. Add shrimp, making sure to place in one layer along the bottom of the pan and add salt. Add garlic and red pepper flakes, then toss to make sure all the shrimp are coated. Cook for five minutes, then lower the flame to a simmer. Add the last of the butter, the lemon slices and fresh chopped parsley and toss it all together. When finished, pour onto a serving platter.

Note: This is a quick-cooking dish, so make sure everything is ready to go beforehand.

Simple Portuguese-Style Salad Dressing

Juice from 1 lemon
½ tsp Dijon mustard
¼ cup red wine vinegar
½ cup olive oil
Salt and pepper

Pour all ingredients into a Mason jar and shake.

Tomato Rice

Arroz de Tomate (shown on page 59)

SERVES 4

2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 tbsp fresh chopped parsley, stems and leaves
3 tomatoes, diced
1 tsp sweet paprika
½ tsp smoked paprika
1 tsp salt
½ tsp crushed red pepper
1 bay leaf
1 cup rice
2 cups water
3 tbsp freshly chopped cilantro, stems and leaves

In a medium-sized pan, bring the onions and olive oil to a simmer for about 4 minutes, until onions turn translucent. Add garlic, parsley, tomatoes, both paprikas, salt, crushed red pepper and bay leaf. Saute for about 5 minutes to bring all the flavors together, then add in the rice and stir, making sure every grain has been tossed and covered. Add water and simmer until rice is cooked, making sure to avoid overcooking. When ready, remove the bay leaf and add cilantro just before serving.

Paiva-Neves uses a traditional copper cataplana to cook littlenecks, a Portuguese dish that needs no salt thanks to the bivalves' briny nature. It can be used on the stovetop or a grill. The best part? Once you're done eating, you just pop the shells in the vessel's empty half.

Littlenecks with White Wine and Garlic

Amêijoas à Bulhão Pato

SERVES 4

3 tbsp olive oil
6 garlic cloves, chopped
24 littlenecks, cleaned and scrubbed
½ tsp red pepper flakes
Half a bunch of cilantro, stems and leaves
1 glass dry white wine

In a pot with a tight-fitting lid, add olive oil and garlic and saute on medium heat until just slightly softened but not browned.

Add littlenecks, red pepper flakes, fresh cilantro and white wine, then seal the pot. Turn on high heat and let come to a simmer for about 6 minutes until all clams are open.

Steam explodes as Paiva-Neves cracks open the cataplana like a giant clamshell. She digs into the littlenecks, raising a spoonful of the redolent broth to her lips and pausing for just a moment. "Is that not freakin' gorgeous?" she says. "So good — and no salt."

Portuguese Chicken

SERVES 6

One whole spatchcocked chicken (split in two)
4 tbsp of chef Natalia's special Eat Me Sauce

Rub sauce all over the chicken, sprinkle with salt, then grill over medium heat for about 30 minutes until cooked.

Paiva-Neves' dream is to bottle and sell her own sauce, which she's been making for a "million" years and used on the Portuguese Chicken dish. She even has a name for it: Eat Me Sauce. The meaning behind the name? "It literally screams 'Eat me!'" she says.

Natalia's Eat Me Sauce

"It's just something I created before my kids were born that I could keep in the fridge to throw on chicken or steaks in a hurry."

1 head garlic, peeled and chopped
½ tsp red pepper flakes
Juice from half a lemon
1 cup of olive oil

Throw all ingredients in a food processor and keep it in a jar in the fridge with a bay leaf. Use it to marinade any meat or veggies for the grill.