

Recipes
&
Stories

Octávio Viana



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RECIPES & STORIES

Published in Portugal
First print 2023
3rd Edition

We encourage you to use your creativity and skills to personalize your culinary experience.

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*For those who seek adventure in their hearts,
Not just accolades on cold, hard stone.*

Preface

Acting in films and soap operas, hosting TV shows, and even whipping up culinary recipes are all part of who I am, but writing a preface for a book like this presents a unique challenge. Although I've lived in Miami, USA, for many years, I was born in Uruguay—a country known for its rich *cuisine* and deeply rooted gastronomic culture, especially when it comes to land and livestock. Meat dishes, such as *parrillada* or *milanesas*, dominate Uruguayan *cuisine*, likely because the meats produced there are considered some of the best in the world. However, Italian influence is also evident in Uruguayan cooking, including *gnocchi alla sorrentina*, similar to the recipe Octávio shares in this book, which I often prepare for my daughter Mila—who loves it.

I also lived in Brazil, starring alongside Antônio Fagundes in the soap opera “Vale Tudo,” where Germán Barrios curiously played the role of Octávio, and when I played Madalena in TV Globo’s “Kubanacan.” Therefore, my palate is also familiar with the blend of indigenous, African, and European ingredients, including the strong influence of Portuguese and African slaves. Brazilian feijoada and São Paulo’s *caipira cuisine*, where the Italian community influenced the introduction of pasta and pizza, are examples of this.

Octávio’s book is filled with fantastic stories, parts of his life always filled with intensity and joy, including extraordinary passions and adventures. At the same time, with immense grace and mastery, Octávio blends these life snippets with gastronomy, focusing significantly on Italian *cuisine*, which I greatly enjoy and also cook. He does this for main dishes, like *tagliolini* with Taleggio

and black truffle from Alba, as well as for typical desserts like *tiramisù* or Sicilian *cassata*.

I was aware of Octávio's connections and preferences for Italy, so much so that we've long promised each other a trip through that wonderful country to discover the pleasures of its diverse *cuisine* and incredible architectural beauty—I can think of no one better than Octávio for this Italian adventure. I know how intimately he navigates that country, the friendships he's cemented there—Octávio is a connector of people—and his knowledge of gastronomy and the lesser-known places that offer fabulous opportunities to experience the best of Italy's culinary offerings.

This book is a bit of both—gastronomy and stories of successful friendships, and much of what Octávio is. That's what readers can find here.

However, one chapter strongly connects me to the story—the recipe for *mozzarella* and smoked salmon salad, not because I've tried such a delicacy, but because it's the story of an exceptional day I spent with Octávio when I visited him in Porto, Portugal, after a small detour from Spain where I was working.

The excellent day I spent with Octávio, discovering the wonderful city of Porto, partially described in that chapter, allows me to say that behind every simple recipe is a beautiful, intense, and always captivating story—every recipe is a beautiful story. This assertion holds true for all the other chapters, as it's the intense and beautiful stories that make all the recipes, even the simplest ones like Provencal tomatoes or Sicilian *zabaglione*, into true delights.

When I cook, I do it with passion and intensity, as it should be. This means tirelessly searching for the best technique and always the best ingredients. But the greatest pleasure comes from sharing all of this with my friends and with my daughter Mila.

It's this kind of intensity, passion, and sharing that I find in Octávio's stories behind each recipe. Without focusing on technique, Octávio simplifies recipes as if telling stories, connecting them to life more than to execution or style. But it's clear that what matters, both in gastronomy and relationships, is life, which always prevails over any dogmatic scruples or state of the art.

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The simplicity and the inherent life of the recipes in this book do not distort their technical execution. However, even if it were the case, the truth is, when the execution does not align with the recipes' own life and their ingredients, it's the technique that needs to change, not the other way around.

I wish you enjoyable reading and culinary experiences.

Nádia Rowinsky¹

¹ Nádia Rowinsky is a presenter, actress, reporter, and writer trained at EMAD (school of acting) in Buenos Aires, who has been working in radio, theater, and television since childhood. In her native Uruguay, she was a pioneer in sports reporting at a time when women were not yet considered for this role. She covered sports events around the world, which led her to present the Atlanta Olympic Games for the Telemundo network. Already a part of Telemundo's ranks as a network figure in the United States, she left journalism to join the iconic Colombian soap opera "Pedro el Escamoso". Her outstanding performance in this soap opera took her to "O Globo" in Brazil, where she became the first foreign actress to be part of the cast of a soap opera, "Kubanacan", and later of the miniseries "Carga Pesado". However, her passion for informing and entertaining took her to Mexico, where she joined the sports reporting team of "Azteca Deportes". She later returned to Miami to host the morning show "Romance FM" and work in local television as a morning news presenter. This talented and recognized TV actress and presenter is also an excellent and fun cook and the mother of Mila.

Prologue

Octávio showed up at my door just as I was getting ready for bed. Since moving to Vinagra in Alentejo, embracing total isolation with the intent of practicing organic farming, I've adopted the chickens' schedule—early to bed and early to rise. So, it was a surprise to see Octávio, Resende Sá, and two other friends I didn't know, there in the middle of nowhere, in the deep Alentejo.

“Can we have dinner?” Octávio asked.

“Dinner!? But I have nothing for dinner,” I replied honestly and with concern.

“No need. I have everything we need. Even wine,” Octávio retorted, smiling as he pulled shopping bags from the immaculate Porsche 911 belonging to Resende Sá, who, without any shame or fear of dust and mud, had navigated the dirt roads of the Alentejo hills to reach my retreat in the splendid and harmonious Alentejo.

Truth be told, the surprise visit and the magnificent dinner we all helped prepare, which lasted until after one in the morning, was a lot of fun.

Resende Sá was thrilled about the launch of his daughter Sofia Sá's latest album, playing live on Spotify at 7 p.m. We all listened to Sofia's new songs while cooking.

I remember Marreiros, one of the friendly friends accompanying Octávio and Resende Sá, who I had just met, towering nearly 2 meters tall with a commanding presence, grilling black pork sausages on a small clay grill with ethyl alcohol, ensuring dinner amidst Octávio's potential Italian *cuisine* mishap.

I laugh when I recall Resende Sá offering a handful of pine nuts to the giant Marreiros as a dessert, to complete our dinner. Octávio had thought of everything down to the last detail, except for dessert.

“At least an orange,” someone complained, missing dessert.

Writing the prologue for a cookbook was Octávio Viana’s unexpected request during dinner, surprising me for three reasons: one, because he had seen that my culinary skills were limited to barely managing fried eggs; two, because the preface of the book was written by a true writer and actress, and a good one at that, Nádia Rowinsky; three, because of Octávio’s interest in a book of this kind.

Octávio is a genius, and like all geniuses, he easily harbors completely disparate interests, so in truth, this third reason shouldn’t have surprised me.

Perhaps it was the Alentejo wine, which Octávio insisted be served in the Austrian Riedel glasses he had gifted me during another visit to Vinagra last summer, and the lively conversation that led me to accept the challenge. After all, that improvised dinner and the fluid, enjoyable conversation by the fireplace were the prologue to another of Octávio’s adventures, both gastronomic and with friends, similar to so many others he describes with great intensity and passion in each chapter of this book.

Seated on the sofas by the fireplace, we discussed everything: business; my projects for Vinagra; the graphene applications of Octávio’s Italian partners; the recent achievements of the consumer association Citizens’ Voice; Resende Sá’s latest acquisitions; real estate; financial crises; my years in finance and asset management; Sergio Cirino’s legal and political experiences; and, finally, the significance of gastronomy in defining different social classes.

For example, in that lively conversation over glasses of exceptional Pêra-Manca from the Eugénio de Almeida Foundation, the following story was shared between two friends:

“Today I went to a gourmet restaurant,” one said.

“Oh yeah? And then?” the other asked.

“My lunch was shrimp wrapped in bechamel sauce, with tiny hints of Australian curled parsley, on a bed of thin pasta bathed in crispy breadcrumbs and confit in vegetable oil.”

“What!? But what the hell did you eat?”

“A *rissole*.”

We laughed a lot, though this story satirized the differences between haute *cuisine* accessible to the wealthier classes and the simple dishes eaten in Alentejo. Different *cuisines* for different social classes.

I steered the conversation towards the more historical and curious side, certain that few knew that it was the Portuguese who introduced spice to the world. The Portuguese fetched the plant from the Amazon forest, its place of origin, and took it to Africa and India. Although now common in Indian *cuisine*, the reality is that Indians did not use *capsicum frutescens*, the famous chili pepper, before the arrival of the Portuguese. What would today’s *cuisine* be like without the Portuguese intervention? Certainly monotonous, considering that the medieval diet was limited to wheat or rye bread, vegetables, mainly cabbages, and some fruits like chestnuts, quinces, apples, and grapes.

Thanks to the Portuguese and the Age of Discovery, gastronomy was enriched with numerous plant products from other continents. Sugarcane brought from Asia began to be cultivated in Madeira and the Algarve, revolutionizing Portuguese confectionery. Speaking of confectionery, I must mention the sweet orange, brought from India by Portuguese traders. Its cultivation was a success throughout Southern Europe, eventually being identified as Portuguese in several countries, notably in Italy, whose *cuisine* is profusely referenced by Octávio in this book.

Aside from this historical interest in the botanical evidence of plant exchanges between continents during the Age of Discovery, my interest in food and its recipes centers on its playful aspect, representing to me its simplest form: survival. Survival linked to nourishing the body and the soul, with good company, strengthening human bonds, just as the unexpected dinner at Vinagra did. Food brings people together through affection, and this bond is certainly strengthened by flavors and experiences.

Italian *cuisine* is one of the most popular for good reasons: it’s simple and delicious. That night in Alentejo, which sets the stage for reading this book, showed me that it’s possible to organize a

party, a dinner with friends, in very little time and almost impromptu, with delicious Italian dishes prepared by my dear friend Octávio, where we all lent a hand. Recipes have always been passed down orally, and this book is no different. This book is the result of Octávio's personal experiences, all with a beginning, a middle, and always a happy ending.

The book does not aim to be a faithful portrait of Italian *cuisine*, with its *risotto*, *pasta alla genovese*, *bruschette*, the wonderful and sweet *tiramisù*, the very simple and quick-to-prepare *zabaglione*, the *gnocchi* from Sorrento, nor of French *cuisine*, with simple Provençal tomatoes, the sophisticated lobster with asparagus in vanilla butter, or cucumbers and salmon eggs, or even the Portuguese conventual sweet from the convent of Odivelas. This book is simply a journey inspired by flavors and the experience lived and anchored in the elaborate rituals around the table, which Octávio has so well explored in this work, always accompanied by fabulous stories and company.

These are simple and easy-to-make recipes, even for kitchen novices like me.

Enjoy!

Paulo Pinto²

² Paulo Pinto has been immersed in the world of high finance for over 30 years, both as a co-founder of the ATM - Association of Investors in Portugal, serving as its president from 1999 to 2003, and as an executive of a stock brokerage firm. He also held the position of director for an economic magazine and contributed as a columnist to various weekly publications and newspapers. He is the author of several books on economics and capital markets. Currently, he is dedicated to the Alti Wine Exchange, the first platform dedicated to trading wines as an alternative asset investment, and Vinagra Village, an eco-friendly resort nestled in the wild landscape of Viana do Alentejo, Portugal.

Introduction

Cuisine is all about flavors, aromas, presentation, and, most importantly to me, the memories evoked by each of these senses. Thus, this cookbook is essentially a compilation and sharing of those memories through stories, adventures, places, people, ingredients, cultures, and ultimately, flavors and aromas.

Here, you will find my favorite recipes, from Paola's *risotto* to the *tiramisù* from Nascimben pastry shop mixed with Grandma Tininha's chocolate mousse, passed down to Inês, to the fabulous Cremino *gelato*. All are enveloped in memories of a delightful life lived here and there, always in the company of the best people I've ever had the privilege to meet and spend time with.

Most importantly, as someone who is neither a *chef* nor particularly versed in the culinary arts, these recipes are simple, easy to make, and thus accessible to anyone, without sacrificing their ability to impress at any table.

The majority of the recipes are heavily influenced by Italian *cuisine*, from Sicily, a gastronomically diverse and multicultural island shaped by numerous invasions, including the Greeks in 734 BC, and the Normans in 1091 AD, to Emilia-Romagna, hailed as the region with the best food in the world by culinary critic David Rosengarten, where I spent many wonderful years of my life. French *cuisine* also plays a significant role in these recipes, from the freshness of the South of France in Provence to the eternal city of love, Paris. Finally, Portuguese conventual sweets, a prominent part of my childhood, find their place in this book.

Let these dishes inspire conversations, forge connections, and enrich your gatherings!

§1

Risotto ai funghi porcini con tartufo bianco

O *risotto* from Paola, Vicenza, Italy

The moody haze of Venice embraced me as my feet touched her grounds. Just a year earlier, in 2019, the airport had been a hive of activity with 11.6 million visitors bustling through its gates. Now, it stood eerily quiet, a silent testament to the pervasive shadow of an unseen adversary, SARS-CoV-2.

Gone were the boisterous echoes of travelers; replaced by the chilling silence that December's chill often brings. The handful of brave souls venturing out wore protective masks, their footsteps echoing a cautious rhythm. They moved like phantoms, shadows of their former selves, maintaining the sacred distance, perhaps not just from the virus but from the specter of fear itself.

Gloom seemed to have taken up residence there, with even the usually vibrant lights dimmed into obscurity. How cruel the season was, testing our mettle and resilience in the face of nature's icy temperament.

Eager to escape this haunting tableau, I moved towards the ferry pier. There, in that space of fifteen embarkation points, only a lone boat docked, a serene outlier in what were once hectic times. The captain, absorbed in his world, with *cigarette* smoke curling around him, greeted my approach by shielding his face and discarding the small ember.

The city, both on the mainland and its scattered isles, was a ghost of its former self, its few open restaurants shuttering at the early hour of six, save for the hotels catering to their sparse clientele.

My journey was to take me through this changed landscape, from a visit to Venice to a meeting in Desenzano del Garda. This route was more than a mere series of destinations; it was a pilgrimage to