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Floriana's executive chef Guilherme Barreto gets inspiration for dishes from museums. "These are my cookbooks," he says. "I get the energy [from the art] and put it into my food and the flavor."

Floriana chef cooks with heart

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

If you should stumble upon his Facebook page, you'll learn that Guilherme Barreto, executive chef of Dupont Circle's popular Floriana restaurant, has some unusual likes: super-chef Alain Ducasse, Confed-eracao Brasileira de Futebol, and "Hell's Kitchen" and "Top Chef" television shows.

That's probably not surprising considering that this flamboyant young chef has led what many would call a colorful life. After all, he's pictured on his Facebook page sporting a ponytail and readying a piglet for some culinary adventure.

A native of Goiania Goias, Brazil, Barreto left the jungle village after his parents divorced, and started a very different life as a cook in Miami's South Beach. "I saw China Grill [in Miami], and said to myself, one day I will work here," Barreto says.

But first, of course, he needed to develop some skills, so he started making sandwiches in a local sandwich shop. Much to his surprise, he discovered he was good at what he was doing. As fortune would have it, after graduating from a culinary school in Miami, he did end up working for China Grill, both in Miami and later in New York.

This has led to a number of culinary jobs from Zed 451 in Chicago as the executive chef, to D.C.'s Willard Hotel, where he worked with famed chef Antoine Westermann, to acting as a cooking consultant in Venezuela, then back to D.C. as a consultant

What's your comfort food?

Any food made by me. Brazilian food, rice and beans. Beef Stroganoff, particularly the Brazilian version made with mustard, ketchup, filet, and potatoes, and served with wild rice. Fried armadillo with yucca flower served with rice and black beans.

Where's your favorite place?

Barcelona, Spain. It is so beautiful and I like the life and the people and the architecture.

Which chef do you admire most in the world?

Bobby Varua and Claude Troisgros. And chefs that I have worked with in the past.

What has been your luckiest moment?

When my first daughter was born. Then it happened again, because I have two daughters.

What is your signature dish?

The short ribs or orange-glazed chicken or barbecued alligator burger.

IF YOU GO Floriana

- » Where: 1602 17th St. NW
- » Info: 202-667-5937
- » Hours: Dinner daily, from 5 p.m. until closing

for the Front Page restaurant group, and then to his current position at Floriana.

Like many of his culinary colleagues, Barreto can point to several sources for his inspiration: Asian techniques for color and height; French for clean precision; and Italian and Brazilian — because these cuisines are so open to flavors. But probably unlike most chefs, Barreto has yet another source of inspiration: museums. "These are my cookbooks," he says. "I get the energy [from the art] and put it into

my food and the flavor. When you get a dish of mine, you can see the techniques and the art."

For such an enthusiastic and passionate young chef, it seems he is doing this culinary thing alone without family support. His mother and family of 11 siblings are not terribly pleased with Barreto's career choice, he says. "She is a good cook," he says of his mother, "but my family does not support what I am doing. Where I come from, women do all the cooking. She wanted me to be a doctor, an anesthesiologist."

When faced with such familial disapproval, why did Barreto persist in following this career? "Others saw in me a potential, so I had to do something that was never planned," he says. Those who have tasted the braised short ribs in a wine and Gorgonzola cheese sauce can testify that Barreto is accurate when he says, "I cook my heart out."

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

The wines of Lisbon: A capital investment

Let's play a little wine-related word association. What is the first thing that you think of when I say "Portugal?" Port, you say? Maybe you came up with Douro or even Dao? I bet you didn't think about Lisbon. And you would not be alone. Most wine consumers think of Lisbon as the capital of Portugal, but not necessarily as a wine-producing juggernaut of the country.

While the history of wine in Portugal dates back before Roman occupation, all the way back to the Phoenicians, it really took off during the Middle Ages. As wine production increased in both quality and quantity, so did Lisbon's social status. The city became the capital of Portugal in the middle of the 13th century, but it wasn't until the 15th century, when Portuguese explorers established trade routes with Africa and the Far East, that the city became one of the most important cultural cities on the European continent. Spices, gems and textiles flowed into the city as wine flowed back out and around the world. It was only a matter of time before vineyards began to sprout up in and around the capital city.

However, it wasn't until 2009 that Lisbon's Wine Board was formed as the regulatory body to govern the appellation surrounding Lisbon and its nine distinct subregions, using the strict policies of the Denominacao de Origem Controlada (DOC), a system created to protect a specific region's superior wines from inferior ones). This large appellation encompasses more than 61,000 acres of vineyard land planted by 200 different wineries. The total production, including both DOC and regional wines, exceeds 1 million liters annually.

The Carcavelos, Colares and Bucelas regions are all located within a 20-mile radius of Lisbon. North of the city, the regions of Alenquer, Arruda and Torres Vedras are planted on picturesque rolling hills where the vines are planted facing coveted southern exposure. Continuing north is Obidos, known for its distinctive red and white wines. The northernmost region extends from the hills of Serra de Aire to the Atlantic. This vast district is known as the Encostas d'Aire. The newest region, Lourinha, borders the Atlantic Ocean and is known for whites wines.

Today, the wines produced in the Lisbon region are some of the best

examples of Portuguese winemaking. Not only are these wines versatile — they pair beautifully with food or can be enjoyed on their own — but they also offer exceptional value. Retail prices are approximate.

One of the best values in the "everyday drinking" red wine category is the **2007 Alta Corta** from the Lisboa area (\$9). Made from a blend of tinta roriz and caladoc, this value-oriented beauty is aged in a variety of oak barrels for three months, then bottled. Flavors of black cherry, dried fig and tart plums are nicely integrated on the medium-balanced frame. The pleasant finish is accented by subtle hints of vanilla from its time in oak.

Another exceptional value hails from the Estremadura region (also known as Lisboa), the **2008 Casa Santos Lima Quinta de Bons-Ventos** (\$9). Made from a blend of five different varietals, this wine exudes so much charm that it is a steal for the price. Full of ripe black and red fruit on a well-balanced body, the flavors glide through to a pretty finish, featuring pepper and spice notes.

The **2007 Quinta do Carreiro Vinho Tinto** (\$12) is an easy-drinking, charming dry red wine from the Alenquer region. The front of the palate is full of bright red fruit flavors, including red cherries and ripe plums. The smooth, soft finish has just enough tannins to carry off the hints of fresh blueberry on the very back of the tongue. This is a versatile wine that would pair well with either spicier fare, such as lamb

rogan josh, or supple cheeses. Another incredible red wine value hails from the Obidos appellation, just north of Lisbon. The **2007 Quinta de San Francisco Red** (\$12) is a blend of castelao (60 percent), aragonez (20 percent) and touriga nacional (20 percent). It is smooth and silky with rich, ripe dark fruit flavors up front and a long, spicy finish. Notes of toasty vanilla are courtesy of the eight months spent aging in small oak barrels. It would be a fine accompaniment to venison or other game.

One of the most popular red wine grape varietals in Portugal is the touriga nacional, often used in port wine production. In the **2007 Grand'Arte Special Selection from Lisboa** (\$14), this varietal really shows off vibrant flavors of jammy black fruit, cassis and violets on the front of the tongue and hints of clove and black pepper on the long, lush finish. The structure and balance are reminiscent of wines twice the price.

