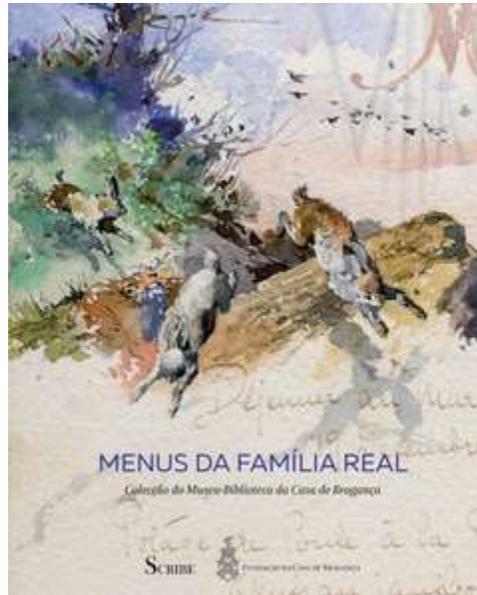


## Wining and Dining with the Portuguese Royal Family

by N. L Taylor

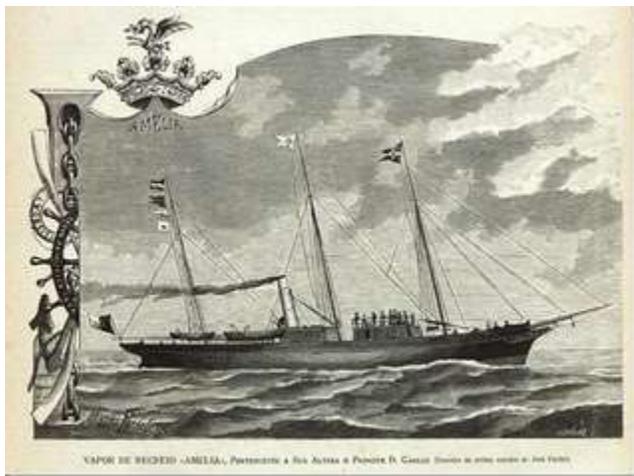


Looking at this wonderful watercolour it is not immediately obvious that the bucolic country scene, with hares scattering at the sound of a rifle shot, was painted by one of the last Kings of Portugal: the give-away is the "M" monogram on the top right-hand corner. This lovely scene was used to illustrate a Menu for a Royal Dinner.

A new book, *Menus da Família Real* is a beautiful collection, coordinated by Maria de Jesus Monge and her enthusiastic team of experts, and drawn from the archives housed in the Museu-Biblioteca da Casa de Braganza – in the Vila Viçosa Ducal Palace visited by the BHS last year. It was published by Scribe in November 2019. The 682 menus - illustrated and customised by the Royal Family and guests with comments, additions or signatures - open a window onto the daily lives of the Royal Family, their entourage, their social agendas, their dealings with suppliers and their housekeeping bills. We learn what was eaten but also what was in season and where, at which royal residence or on which of their travels. On a more intimate level, the book reveals the idiosyncrasies of the various members of the Royal Family and of the courtiers, whether when simply sitting down together to enjoy lunch or dinner or when present at the numerous State Banquets.



We can also travel further afield and follow the Royal Family on their yacht, the *D. Amélia*; first to North Africa, then to the Middle East and then on to Sao Tomé. By looking at what dishes were served in various countries along the way, the menus give us insight into their daily lives and those of their hosts during their travels.



In the spring of 1903, the heir apparent D. Manuel II was in Morocco. The trip by sea started on 26<sup>th</sup> February and D. Amélia, D. Luis Filipe, the infante D. Manuel, the Conde e Condessa de Figueiro, the Viscondes d'Asseca, the Royal Physician D. Antoinio de Lencastre, the teacher of the princes, Franz Kerausch, the painter Enrique Casanova, and the Royal chaplain were listed as on board. The name of the Royal Chef is unknown. The Royal Yacht travelled from Cadiz, to Gibraltar, Algeciras, on to Tunis, Malta, Alexandria, Port Said, Jerusalem, Crete, Messina, Genoa, Toulon and to many other destinations too tedious to detail

here but that read like a modern-day cruise ship itinerary through the Straits into the Mediterranean. In Sidi Marouf, their host, the head of the colonial troops in Oran, served several French dishes – the others were listed as “indigenous or native” - indeed somewhat foreign to the young Princes’ taste buds. This we learn from D. Manuel's Diaries, three small portfolios, *Diarios de Viagem de D. Manuel II*, written during the travels and subsequently corrected by his chaplain, Padre Fiadeiro. Young D. Manuel II enjoyed the “mechoui – un carneiro assado inteiro optimo!”



A Royal photographer immortalised the Royal Family at every step of their travels (and often during their home-life) and these albums were religiously collated with the photographs taken or received from their hosts, along with the menus of the various meals served.

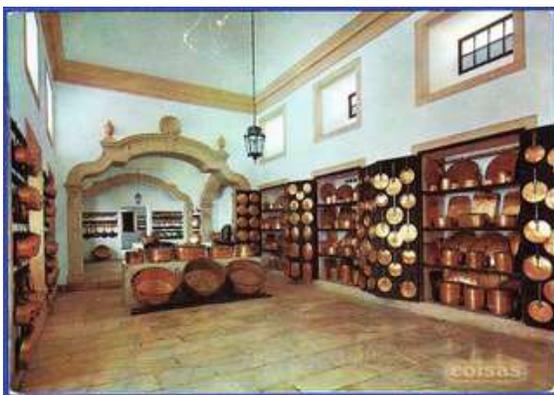


On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1903, the last Viceroy of Egypt and Sudan, Abbas Hilmi Pacha, had a complete French meal prepared for the Queen, with *Pêches à la Portugais*, as a special desert. The camel's milk given to D. Manuel II as a local delicacy is not listed on the Menu but he does mention it in his diary. Music was played on deck - a special decorated programme lists the repertoire and commemorates the event held on the Egyptian Royal yacht, the *Feiz Rabbani*, while cruising on the Nile, with their host, the Royal Party and their retinues.



In 1907, D. Luis Filipe travelled by boat to Mozambique, Sao Tomé & Príncipe, Angola, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), South Africa and on to Cabo Verde on the way back. The trip lasted for three months and the menus that were served on the steam vessel “Africa” were mainly Portuguese – except for the cheeses - Camembert and Roquefort were always served alongside the Prince's much favoured Serra da Estrela. In Sao Tomé, along with more traditional dishes served at Government House, Colares and Bucellas wines, Madeira, Porto and Champagne were served to the Royal Party, along with dumplings or “ovos de fio”.

For anybody wishing to do research on the types of food and beverages available at the time, Mrs Marta Pascoa at Paço Vila Viçosa, will, upon request, open the Royal Archives, which include the list of the key suppliers by Royal Appointment to the Household and of the staff in charge of the management of all household goods (dinner sets, silver cutlery, linen, etc.) sometimes moved between Royal Palaces and on to the Royal Vessels, often supplemented by prestigious gifts of gold, gems and inlays given to the Royal Family when touring foreign lands.



On 26<sup>th</sup> November 1902, Queen Amélia gave a State Banquet for the English Squadron in Lisbon. Twenty-two guests were present: we know some of the ingredients ordered: can anybody guess what the dishes were?

3 kg of grapes; 49 kg roast-beef

5 bottles of Bordeaux; 10.5 kg of Ham from Hamburg

14 bottles of Collares – red; 9.2 kg of ham from York

12 bottles of Vidago water; 13.3 kg of fish

7 bottles of Moura water; 1 kg of sultanas from Alicante

36 bananas; 38 dozen eggs

2 glass jars of olives; 2 tins of foie gras

1 bottle of Jamaican Rum; 44 kilos of potatoes

The prices of these ingredients (as the final days of the Monarchy loomed ahead); the origin of the products and the way that they were kept fresh (just think of the cheeses on the three month long African trip); how they were brought from where they were produced to the Royal Kitchens; the number of staff employed to manage the logistics, etc. Any trainee from a Tourism and Hotel Management School or, for that matter, any hostess and host in their own home about to receive guests for such a dinner, will know what a difficult task it must have been to manage the needs of the Royal Household, one of the smaller Royal Households when considered in the grand scheme of the things. Just as a comparison, below is the menu of the banquet held by the Prince Regent for Duke Nicolas of Russia at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton in 1817. Overseen by the world-renowned chef *Marie Antoine Carême* “the King of Chefs, and the Chef of Kings”, it consisted of 9 courses and 121 dishes - it was the pinnacle-service of his career.



## List of illustrations

- Menus are from the book *Menus da Família Real* by Virgílio Nogueiro Gomes, Marta Páscoa e Maria de Jesus Monge. Published by Scribe, November, 2019 isbn: 9789898410863, with the exception of the last menu, which is on display at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton.
- Pictures of the kitchen and the tableware are from the Paço de Vila Viçosa photographic archives.
- Travel photos of the Royal Family are from the book *Menus da Família Real* or from *Travelogues* by Burton Holmes. Taschen Books.