

Eating in Porto

IN THE CITY CENTER

Bars, Cafés, and Basic Eateries in the City Center

Good, cheap restaurants are scattered all around the city center. You'll see hand-written menus with €1 soups and €5 plates. Re-

\$ Padaria Ribeiro is a bright, happy bakery handy for a breakfast, light lunch, or snack. They serve savory and sweet pastries, sandwiches, and popular cookies. Mini almond tarts are a good choice, but chocolate lovers can get their fix with a *brigadeiro*: butter, condensed milk, and chocolate rolled into a gooey ball and covered with chocolate sprinkles. You can get your treat to go, or order inside and have them bring it to you at the small seating area or at a table on the square (daily 8:00–20:00, Praça Guilherme Gomes Fernandes 21, +351 222 005 067).

\$ Taberna Taxca is a concrete man cave offering up beer, soup, and sandwiches. The menu is cheap and extremely basic. They serve two soups (great *caldo verde* and the much heavier *papas*—made with shredded pork, gravy, and cumin) and sandwiches that celebrate simplicity: smoked ham with fried egg, meat from black crockpots of cooked pork (*rojão*), or spicy shredded pork (*bifana*). I like to sit under the hanging hams at the bar to enjoy the scene. They serve a few salads, kept secret in the lower window. While you're safe ordering a salad, if you order water, they'll ring the cowbell of shame—try it (Mon–Sat 12:00–22:30, longer weekend hours, closed Sun, Rua da Picaria 26, +351 222 011 807).

\$ Cervejaria Gazela, a gritty little hole-in-the-wall just off Praça da Batalha, is beloved among locals for its “little hot dogs” or *Cachorro Especial*. Sit down at the bar, order one and a beer, and watch the staff lovingly lay the sausage and cheese on the fresh buns and then grill these little snacks just right (Mon–Fri 12:00–22:30, Sat until 17:00, closed Sun, facing National Theater just to the right at #3, +351 222 054 869).

\$ Café Piolho d'Ouro is a venerable student diner/café/bar with fun seating both inside and out on a big square. Plaques lining the walls celebrate decades of graduating classes (Mon–Sat 8:00–24:00, closed Sun, Praça de Parada Leitao 41, +351 222 003 749).

\$ Café Santiago F is just a basic diner, long and skinny with a classic bar, that famously serves what many consider Porto's best signature sandwich, the hearty *francesinha*. While its tables are often full, the bar has a great energy. The sandwiches easily feed two—they charge €1 for an extra plate. Go a little early to avoid the lines (Mon–Sat 12:00–22:30, closed Sun, Rua Passos Manuel 198, another location just up the street at #226, +351 222 055 797).

Restaurants in the City Center

\$\$ Restaurante Abadia is a big, bright, old-school place with two floors of customers dining on large splittable portions of straightforward Portuguese cuisine. It's a touristy place with no stress, spacious seating, and formal waiters. Popular dishes are grilled

cod, wild boar, Porto-style tripe (split a half-portion with your partner), and a sizzling hibachi of roasted chicken and potatoes (Mon-Sat 12:00-15:30 & 18:30-23:00, closed Sun, head one block east of Sá da Badeira to side street Rua do Ateneu Comercial do Porto 22, +351 222 008 757).



\$ Confeitaria-Restaurante do Bolhão has been pleasing local shoppers since 1896—and feels like it. This bustling bakery/brasserie offers enticing takeout items in front and an inviting old-time dining hall in the rear (the more elegant basement is less lively and soulful). You'll find cheap lunch deals, daily specials, fresh-baked goods, omelets, and fish. And don't miss the fun selection of mini pastries, just waiting to be experienced (Mon-Sat 7:00-20:00, closed Sun, facing the Bolhão Market entrance at Rua Formosa 339, +351 223 395 220).

\$\$ Taberna Santo António is a convivial, hole-in-the-wall place—the quintessence of a family-run, neighborhood favorite. There's a tight dining room and a few prime seats at the bar where eaters choose from six traditional stews, marvel at the homemade desserts, and joke with the waitstaff (Tue-Sun 12:00-15:00 & 19:00-22:00, Rua das Virtudes 32, +351 222 055 306).

\$\$\$ Prova Wine Food & Pleasure is a lounge-y little wine bar with a relaxing jazz ambience. It's the passion of sommelier Diogo, who speaks English and enjoys coaching visitors through his list of Portuguese wines (including ports) and then matching it with his selection of fine meats and cheeses (Thu-Mon 17:00-24:00, closed Tue-Wed, near the Stock Exchange Palace at Rua Ferreira Borges 86, +351 916 499 121).

\$\$ O Tascô serves traditional Portuguese food with a youthful spirit in a trendy space. The menu mixes old and new, featuring *petiscos*—small plates designed to be eaten family-style. The smart-aleck waiters have a fun shtick (daily 19:00-23:00, Rua do Almada 151, +351 222 010 763).

\$\$ O Rápido surprises not for its namesake speediness, but because it serves quality Portuguese classics with white-tablecloth flair on a rather unimpressive street alongside the São Bento train station. Staff know all the regulars but also make you feel welcome (Mon-Sat 12:00-15:00 & 19:30-22:00, closed Sun, Rua da Madeira 194, +351 222 054 847, reservations smart via thefork.pt).

\$ Vegetariano Restaurante da Terra, the place for a meatless meal, is sleek and modern with a self-serve all-you-can-eat buffet

of tasty dishes. Charging €7.50 for lunch and €10 for dinner, it's a great value. While you can go back for seconds, you'll pay extra for drinks and dessert (daily 12:00-15:30 & 19:00-22:30, Rua Mouzinho do Silveira 249, +351 223 199 257).

Fancier Dining in the City Center

\$\$\$ Cantinho do Avillez, a colorful, upscale-casual space, is the Porto outpost of Lisbon-based celebrity chef José Avillez (see page 149). The enticing menu focuses on modern Portuguese cooking: traditional dishes with an international twist inspired by the chef's travels. If tables are full, it's fun to eat at the bar (reservations a must, weekday lunch specials, daily 12:30-15:00 & 19:00-23:00, Rua de Mouzinho da Silveira 166, +351 223 227 879, www.cantinhodoavillez.pt).

\$\$\$ Mistu is a mod, dressy place with high ceilings, sexy art, and a smart clientele. The name refers to mixing cultures—fusion with a Portuguese base. The menu is divided between cold and hot plates designed to share (three plates fill two people). While the upper level is quieter, I much prefer the lower level and would reserve a table there (daily 19:30-24:00, Rua do Comércio do Porto 161, +351 926 682 620, <http://mistu.pt>).

\$\$\$ Solar Moinho de Vento, on a small plaza just above Praça Guilhermão Gomes Fernandes, offers proper-but-friendly service and Portuguese cuisine in a tile-covered dining room upstairs. Their version of *bacalhau à brás*, a salted cod dish, draws raves, as does the tender octopus rice (Mon-Sat 12:00-15:30 & 19:00-22:00, Sun 12:00-15:30, Rua de Sá Noronha 81, +351 222 051 158, www.solar-moinhodevento.com).

\$\$\$ Café-Restaurante Guarany is a dressy and sprawling café facing Porto's main boulevard. It feels like it must have been *the* place to see and be seen back in 1933 when it opened. It's been the musicians' coffee shop for generations and is now popular with tourists. You'll enjoy Art Deco elegance with a Brazilian flair (read the brochure for the story of the murals) and crisp-yet-friendly service. They also have seating out on Avenida dos Aliados (good meat and fish plates, daily specials, daily 9:00-23:30, Avenida dos Aliados 85, +351 223 321 272, www.cafeguarany.com). There's no extra charge for the live music starting at 21:30—some nights fado, other nights piano.

ON THE RIBEIRA RIVERFRONT

Dining options in the Ribeira have predictable tourist-trap quality and prices accompanying the fine views and fun scene. Strolling along the waterfront and following your nose is a good option. You can also try wandering the back lanes, trading river views for lower prices and local color. The seafood's fresh, except on Mondays (since fishermen don't go out on Sundays).

\$\$ Restaurante A Grade is a small mom-and-pop restaurant on a delightful alley just off the Ribeira. Ferreira serves while wife Helena cooks good, home-style Portuguese food. The baked octopus is a favorite among regulars (big, splittable portions of seafood and meat dishes; Mon-Sat 12:00-16:00 & 18:00-22:30, closed Sun, Rua de São Nicolau 9, +351 223 321 130, <https://a-grade-restaurant.negocio.site>; reservations smart).

\$\$\$ Restaurante Adega São Nicolau, just above Restaurante A Grade, is homey, small, and sparkling, with a few outside tables and a tight interior under a shiplap vault. While touristy, this spot is great for tasty, traditional cuisine with lots of fish (Mon-Sat 12:30-23:00, closed Sun, Rua São Nicolau 1, +351 222 008 232).

Muro dos Bacalhoeiros is a narrow lane over the harbor with a handful of \$\$ restaurants, each with a single line of little tables outside capturing the riverfront scene. I wouldn't eat inside here—pick a place where you can sit out and enjoy the view.

\$\$\$ Wine Quay Bar is all about *vinho*, paired with high-quality *petiscos* (plates of Portuguese cured meats, cheeses, olives, and other munchies; no cooked dishes). While they have inside seating, I'd come here for a spot at their banister facing the river (Mon-Thu 15:00-22:00, Fri-Sat 16:00-23:00, closed Sun, Muro dos Bacalhoeiros 111).

IN VILA NOVA DE GAIA

Eating across the river in Vila Nova de Gaia, just a 10-minute scenic stroll over the bridge from the Ribeira, is a fine option. It's basically as touristy as the Ribeira, so don't expect great quality or values—except at the port wine lodges—but the views over to Porto are marvelous. The last port lodges finish their tasting tours at 19:00, so working a dinner here into your sightseeing schedule is easy. Gaia rolls up the sidewalks early, so don't expect much activity after dinner. For locations see the "Vila Nova de Gaia" map, earlier.

\$\$\$ Ar de Rio Restaurante, where modern design meets traditional Portuguese cuisine, is in a park right on the river. Their €10 *francesinha* (a local super-grilled meaty sandwich that makes a triple cheeseburger seem like health food) is considered one of the best in town. You can eat inside or out on the deck (daily 12:30-23:30, modern steel-and-glass "box" along the embankment at Avenida Diogo Leite 5, +351 223 701 797). Consider a drink from their bar while enjoying a lounge chair on the riverbank here.

\$\$\$ Vinum Restaurant-Wine Bar delivers on their mission statement: to marry their port wines with locally sourced products. Located within the cellar of the Graham's port wine lodge (past the end of the Gaia boardwalk), their elegant, white-tablecloth dining room sits alongside barrels of aging port. They also have terrace view seating...a worthy splurge (daily 12:30-23:00, Rua do Agro 141, +351 220 930 417, www.vinumatgrahams.com, reservations smart).

Scenic Drinks: With a delightful rooftop bar, **Porto Cruz** has a great view over both the bustle of the Gaia embankment and Porto across the river (lunches and light snacks, Tue-Sat 10:00-23:30, Sun until 19:00, closed Mon and in bad weather, just past Sandeman at Largo Miguel Bombarda 23). Higher up, the restaurant at the swanky **Yeatman Hotel** offers even more commanding views...and prices (Rua do Choupelo, +351 220 133 100, www.the-yeatman-hotel.com).

Picnic Perfect: The Vila Nova de Gaia mayor is determined to make his city (which is actually bigger than Porto) visitor-friendly.

A sign of that is the inviting waterfront, welcoming picnickers with picnic tables, grass, rockery, piers, and the best views in town. A higher option is the park at Jardim do Morro at the top of the cable car and the upper level of the Dom Luís I bridge. Grab snacks at a local supermarket, then snack and watch the sunset fall over Porto.