

# SABOREAMADEIRA

a journey through taste

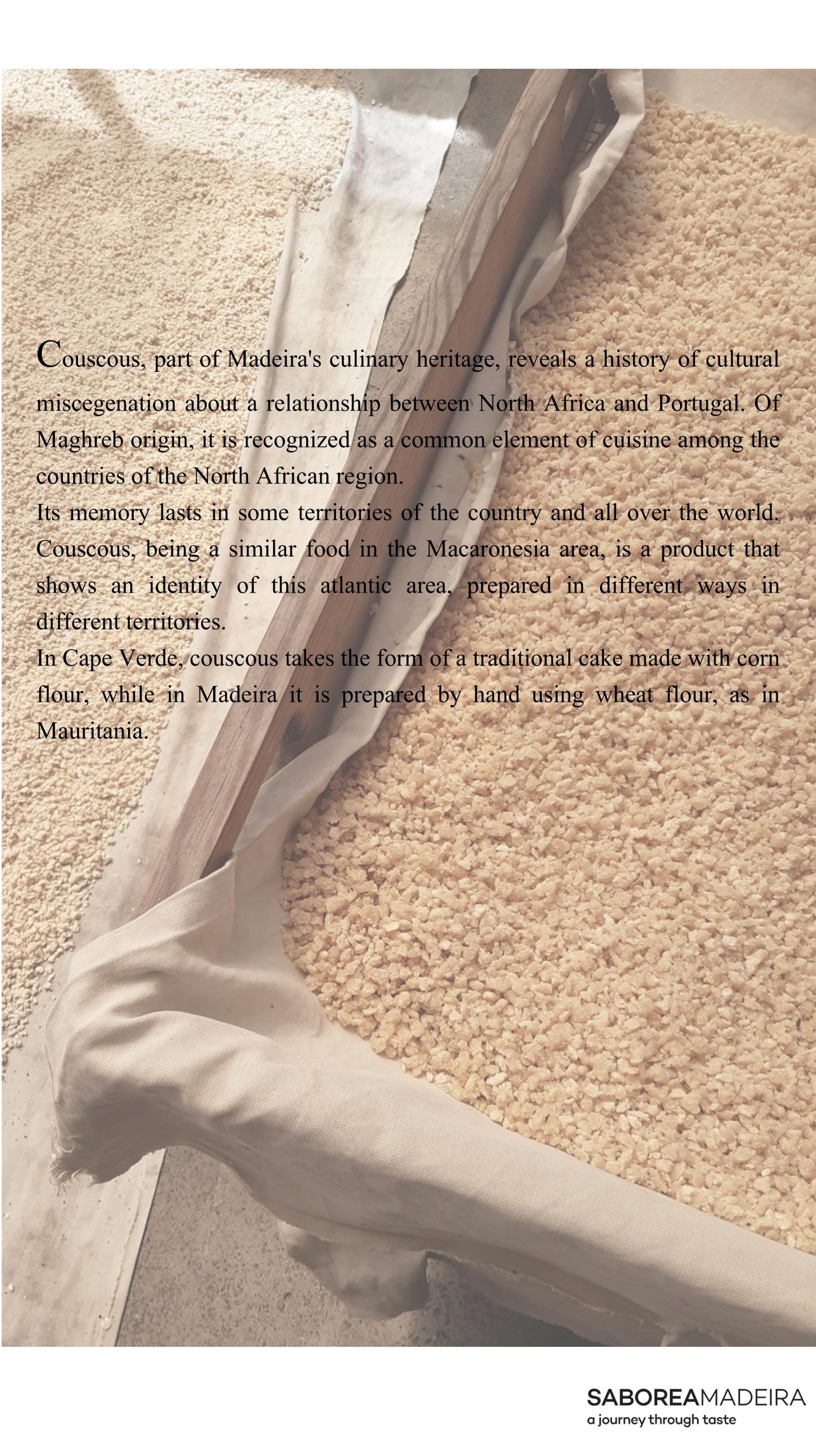
ROTA DO CUSCUZ



# Couscous route

Calheta, Ponta do Sol, São Vicente





Couscous, part of Madeira's culinary heritage, reveals a history of cultural miscegenation about a relationship between North Africa and Portugal. Of Maghreb origin, it is recognized as a common element of cuisine among the countries of the North African region.

Its memory lasts in some territories of the country and all over the world. Couscous, being a similar food in the Macaronesia area, is a product that shows an identity of this atlantic area, prepared in different ways in different territories.

In Cape Verde, couscous takes the form of a traditional cake made with corn flour, while in Madeira it is prepared by hand using wheat flour, as in Mauritania.

## In the world



The origin of couscous appears to be in the eastern region of North Africa. Its geographical origin is difficult to pinpoint, and yet it is recognized as a traditional delicacy from North Africa and a common component of cuisine among the Maghreb countries. In Portugal, couscous became known since the reign of King Manuel I (1495-1521).

It has become the staple food for millions of people around the world. It is currently being recreated by Chefs in several countries, occupying a place on the menus of restaurants.

With the lack of wheat cultivation and the arrival of couscous machines, it became a packaged product, easily found on supermarket shelves, ready to be consumed. However, the search for authentic couscous requires knowledge of the origin of the dish and its history, traditions, practices and knowledge involved in its production.

## A journey to the island



Duarte Martins

Through archaeological finds, such as the couscous bowls and other utensils that were found in *Álcacer Ceguer* in Morocco, between the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to assume the preparation and consumption of couscous among the portuguese population that lived in that ancient region.

Becoming a food resulting from cultural exchanges between Portugal and the North African region, its consumption was widespread in rural fields and portuguese cities. The first written reference to the word “couscous” appears in a 15th century manuscript.

From the 18th century onwards, the production and consumption of couscous disappeared from Portuguese cuisine, except in Trás-os-Montes and Madeira Island, where it continues to this day.

Several historians believe that couscous was introduced to Madeira at the time of its settlement, making it one of the oldest dishes on the island. An ancestral and traditional food, passed down wisely from generation to generation, currently the preparation and consumption of couscous is found in various territories of the region.



“The couscous – it seems that it was introduced in Madeiran cuisine by Moorish slaves at the time of the settlers – and the most popular dishes: flour, warm water seasoned with salt and with a small sigurelha broom (...). The small balls of raw dough that are later removed into a linen towel where they go to be cooked in the couscous bowl, that is, in a large clay container, in the kind of pan with a concave bottom and a wide sieve.

This couscous bowl is placed in the mouth of a large pan and the balls of dough are baked there, inside the linen towel, in steam for a few hours. Then it is exposed to the sun to dry.”

Visconde do Porto da Cruz, *A Culinária Madeirense – Das Artes e da História da Madeira*, vol.6, nº33



Of the various products that arrived on the Island, until the seventies of the 15th century, the wheat crop stood out in the Madeiran economy. Thus, the presence of this cereal in Madeira allowed the preparation of couscous, a living legacy of a migratory route that existed for centuries, of people, practices and knowledge, becoming part of the food heritage of Madeira Island.

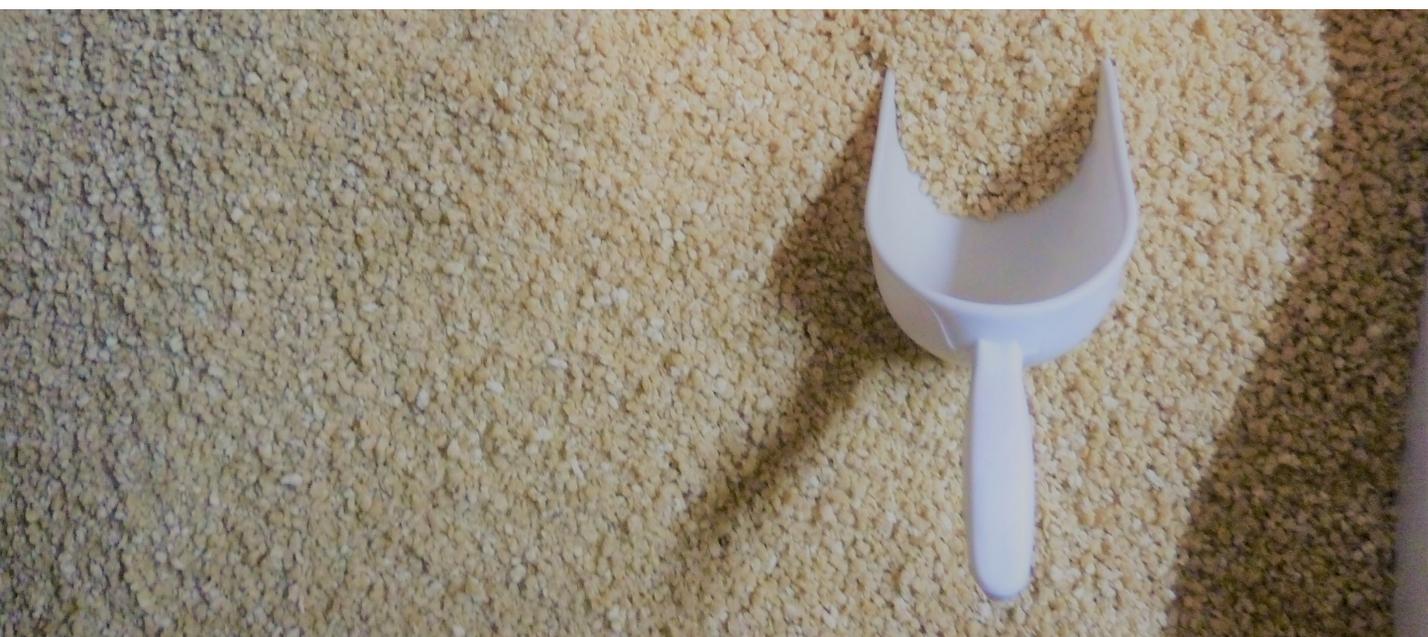
Currently, couscous is prepared in several places such as Ponta do Sol, Calheta and São Vicente, and in some houses, couscous continues to bring together some families. The couscous preparation processes vary from territory to territory, but the utensils are the same and the gestures, which have been repeated for centuries, are identical.



It used to be a dish consumed mainly on commemorative dates and is now prepared throughout the year and can be incorporated into various food preferences.



In the three territories where couscous is still used, the way of working the grain is different, thus obtaining different results in terms of color, weight, grain size, texture and flavor.



On this island, the preparation of couscous is made with wheat flour, yeast and warm water seasoned with salt and savory, working the dough through a movement of the hands, until obtaining a granulate.



The techniques cover a method of cooking, which is similar in all territories of the region where the dish is still made: the couscous is cooked inside a cloth, steamed, over a wood fire.

The couscous is wrapped in a linen towel, placed in a pan with pieces of crockery or limpet shells at the bottom. The sound of shards or limpets rattling indicates that the water is boiling.

After cooking, the couscous is worked again, being rubbed while hot. It is then left to dry.

# Calheta

## bay, hills and mountains



The municipality of Calheta extends over 116km<sup>2</sup>, offering beautiful panoramic landscapes, cut by agricultural fields and bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. Hence its name, Calheta, a small cove or bay.

Founded in 1835, the territory consists of eight parishes: Calheta, Estreito da Calheta, Arco da Calheta, Prazeres, Jardim do Mar, Paúl do Mar, Fajã da Ovelha and Ponta do Pargo.

The soils of Calheta have always been fertile, allowing this territory to stand out in agricultural production. Given the existence of cereal cultivation, it is a land where the preparation and consumption of couscous has always been verified. It was prepared during the summer so that it could be dried in the sun.



 Duarte Martins

In this locality, couscous production is still practiced, with small producers dedicated to the manufacture of artisanal couscous for their own consumption and for their families, thus transmitting the recipe and the know-how to the younger generations. Here, couscous is prepared without yeast and mixed with tea and savory leaves, worked and cooked for longer than in other territories, resulting in a slightly darker color.



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# Ponta de Sol

*“Ponta do Sol se chama assi por ter uma ponta ao Occidente da villa que tem o parecer... aonde também dá o sol primeiro que na villa quando nace “*

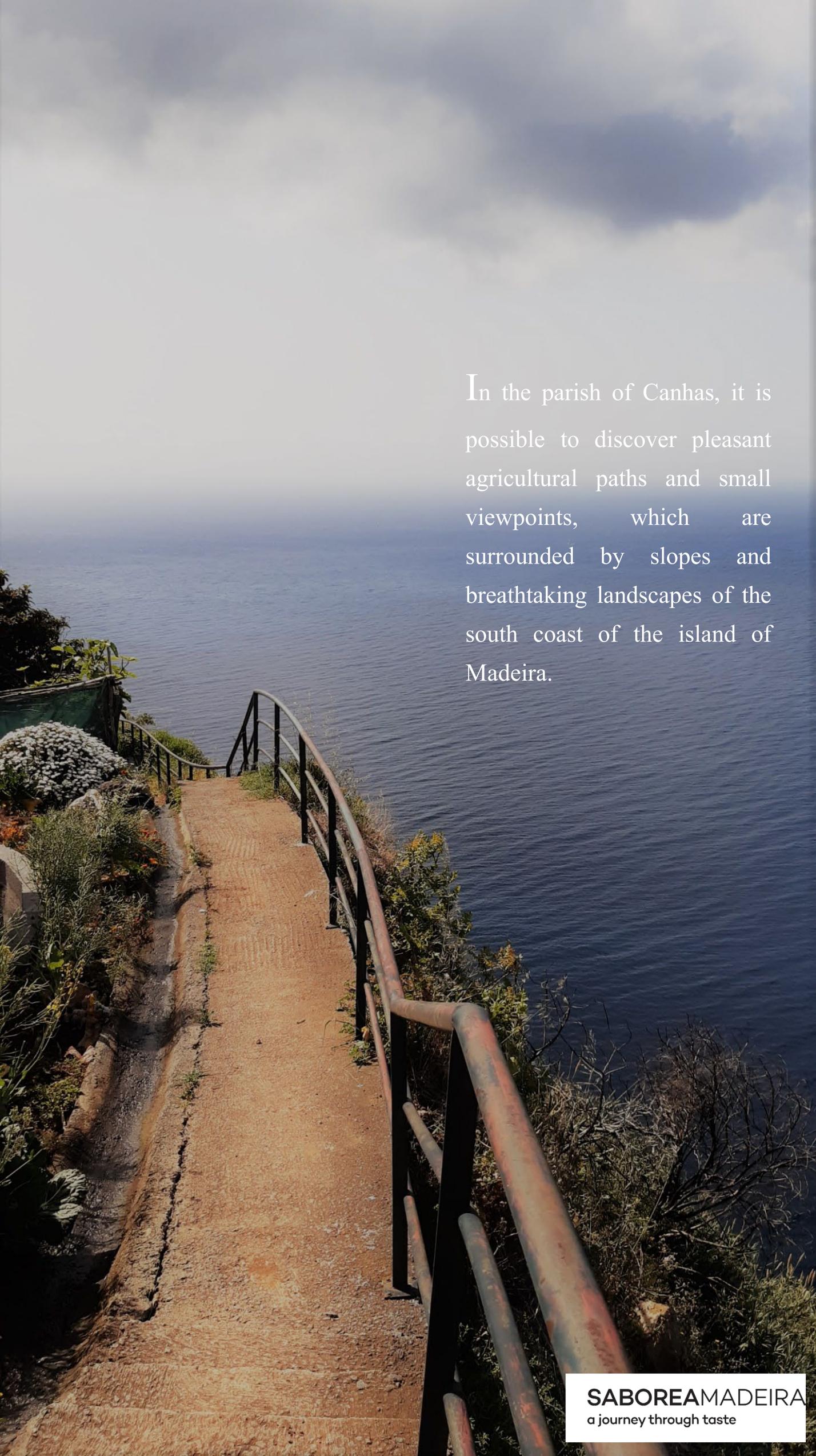
Gaspar Frutuoso in *Saudades da terra*



Where the sun shines the longest, it is a municipality made up of 3 parishes: Madalena do Mar, Canhas and Ponta do Sol.

The production of sugar cane and bananas constitutes the main economy of the county, which has an area of 46.19 km<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout history, there are several testimonies that illustrate a relationship between the cultivation of wheat and couscous in the parish of Canhas. Black wheat was a variety cultivated throughout the south coast, appearing linked to gastronomic traditions such as couscous.

A dirt path with a metal railing overlooking the ocean. The path is made of reddish-brown earth and leads down a slope towards the sea. The railing is made of dark metal pipes. The ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is overcast with grey clouds. There are some green plants and bushes along the path.

In the parish of Canhas, it is possible to discover pleasant agricultural paths and small viewpoints, which are surrounded by slopes and breathtaking landscapes of the south coast of the island of Madeira.



In this parish, we find a producer of artisanal couscous. This production unit located in Canhas produces around 600 kilos of couscous per week which, after being properly packaged, goes to the suppliers to be sold in commercial establishments.



# Production method



After mixing the flour with the yeast, savory leaves, salt and hot water, with constant movements, they knead to granulate the flour until it is dry and does not stick to the hands. Then the flour is passed through a net board in order to obtain a more uniform granulate. After the couscous has dried, the pans filled with a third of water are lined with a cloth that wraps the couscous, without touching the water, to be immediately covered with blankets. They are placed on a wood fire and, after the water boils, it is steamed for about two hours.





While it is hot, it passes through the winnower once more, to even out the granules.

Immediately afterwards, it is spread out on long trays where it will be left to dry for 8 days so that all the moisture evaporates before being properly packed.



# São Vicente

## land of forests and mountains



Thirty minutes from the parish of Canhas, towards the north coast, we find the parish of São Vicente, where about 68 percent of its territory is made up of forest. Traveling inland and enjoying magnificent landscapes, the abundant forest and its slopes outlined by volcanic origins are a gift from nature.

Since the 15th century, it has been the main settlement center in northern Madeira.

With an area of 78.82 km<sup>2</sup>, it comprises 3 parishes: Boaventura, Ponta Delgada and São Vicente. It is known as the capital of Laurissilva due to the extensive swath of this forest that is present in this county.

At the place of Lameiros, in the Municipality of São Vicente, couscous is made in a traditional way, keeping this production that must be preserved.

It was prepared at the end of autumn, around the height of São Martinho's summer, when it was still possible to dry in the sun, before the arrival of winter. Finally, it was stored in burlap, plastic or cotton bags.



In this territory we also find a small producer of couscous that produces by hand, in a slow process, slowly rubbing the dough until the desired grain is obtained. It is then cooked to arrive at the delicious savory-flavored couscous.



The flour is moistened using a boxwood and savory broom, which allows the water to fall in drops in the right amount and movement.

Thus, and with the work of the hands, the wheat flour is worked until the grains appear.

A large, dark metal pot sits on a brick stove. The pot is covered with a bright yellow cloth. Below the pot, a fire of wood is burning brightly. The background is a wall of dark bricks.

It bakes in a wood oven, wrapped in cloths, a ritual that is repeated from generation to generation.



After cooking, the couscous is removed from the pan, presenting flavored and cozy pieces, being necessary to separate the grains through the fingers. The couscous is then left to dry for several days before being packaged.





In Madeira, there are several ways to make couscous. It is served as a side dish or alone as a main course. It can be prepared with water from the stew, in broth or can be used as an accompaniment to meat or fish such as tuna.

It is also possible to eat it, still hot, with butter or without anything, as soon as it is removed from the steaming process.

As part of the Traditional Portuguese Products of the General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development, <https://www.dgadr.gov.pt/>, couscous is still prepared as it has always been prepared, and must be passed on to new generations so that this unique heritage be preserved.

# Couscous base recipe



1 Portion of couscous , 2 of water, 1 bunch of savary, salt, butter or olive oil

Insert the couscous in boiling water with butter or olive oil, salt and 1 sprig of savory. Let it cook for 2 or 3 minutes, remove from the heat and cover with a towel. Let it rest for 5 minutes. Then, loosen the couscous with a fork and serve.

## Did you know that?

The word couscous is the Latin translation of Seksu, Kuseksi and Kseksu, terms of Berber origin meaning tightly rolled grains.

In North Africa, recipes were circulated orally.

Couscous and its practices were considered Intangible Heritage of Unesco, on December 16, 2020, in a joint application of 4 countries on the African continent: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania.

In Portugal, couscous is prepared by hand only in 2 regions: in the northeast of Trás-os-Montes and on the island of Madeira.

Couscous was included in the traditional recipes of the manor houses of Machico and it was common practice for the wealthier houses to hire a specialized person to make the couscous.

As determined by King D. Sebastião for Madeira, couscous could be used as rice, but not on the day it was served.

# Take note

## producers



### **Ana Cristina Ornelas Chá-Chá**

Caminho da Vargem, Canhas

9360-252 Ponta do Sol

☎291 973 721

[32.694376984024004, -17.112584920675125](https://www.ana-cristina-ornelas.com)



### **Helena Gouveia**

#### **Arrumar Sabores**

Estrada Padre José Teixeira Marques, 95

Lameiros

9240-211 São Vicente

[32.78953417779821, -17.024802647660447](https://www.arrumar-sabores.com)

# Take note

## sales location



### **Padaria/ Pastelaria Cristina Chachá**

Caminho da Vargem, Canhas

9360-252 Ponta do Sol

☎ 291 973 721

[32.69433183901338](tel:32.69433183901338), -17.112606378345845



### **Arrumar Sabores**

Estrada Padre José Teixeira Marques, 95

Lameiros

9240-211 São Vicente

[32.78947104223773](tel:32.78947104223773), -17.025231801074792



### **Supermercado Rio Maior**

Estrada da Boa Nova, r/c, Bloco C Edifício Boa

Nova

9060-001 Funchal

☎ 291 602 648

[32.65898413996003](tel:32.65898413996003), -16.895505739411



### **Pharmácia do Bento**

Rua dos Tanoeiros, 4

9000-057 Funchal

☎ 291 223 613

[32.647991185346214](tel:32.647991185346214), -16.905895010877476

# Take note

## agro-turism units



### **Socalco Nature Hotel**

Caminho do Lombo do Salão, nº 13

Calheta, 9370-174

☎ 291 842 018

<https://socalconature.com>

[32.72308841588289, -17.1781530703937](tel:32.72308841588289,-17.1781530703937)



### **Canto das Fontes Glamping**

Caminho dos Anjos

Ponta do Sol

[cantodasfontes@gmail.com](mailto:cantodasfontes@gmail.com)

<https://www.cantodasfontes.pt/>

[32.69164972739332, -17.120037529912825](tel:32.69164972739332,-17.120037529912825)



### **Solar da Bica**

Rua da Bica nº17, Sítio dos Lameiros

São Vicente, 9240-211

☎ 291 842 018

<https://www.solardabica.pt/>

[32.791556123504776, -17.02584317223932](tel:32.791556123504776,-17.02584317223932)

# Take note

## activities / leisure

### Calheta

**Charolas** - In the month of June, the Espírito Santo festivities take place, in Arco da Calheta, where the famous Charolas composed of agricultural products grown by the local population, tied to a spherical structure, are displayed.

Beaches ❖ Levadas and paths ❖ Paragliding ❖ Sea tours ❖ Big game fishing ❖ Marine Vertebrate Observation

### Ponta do Sol

**Regional fair of sugar cane** - In April, in the parish of Canhas, the regional sugar cane fair takes place, an event that aims to promote the work of sugar cane farmers and where you can discover exhibitions about sugar cane and the production process of honey from cane.

Levadas and paths ❖ Pedestrian Path Caminho Real nº 25 ❖ Road to Paúl da Serra ❖ Beaches

### São Vicente

**Country soup fair** – Event where you can taste good Madeiran style soups. It takes place in the parish of Boaventura.

**Vineyard and wine feast** – In September, the festival of vineyards and wines takes place in the parish of São Vicente, which aims to promote the importance of wine production in that region.

**Rota da Cal** – In an area of about 12 thousand square meters, in Lameiros, there is the Museological of the Rota da Cal, which has two limestone quarries and a lime kiln. The core has a set of fossil more than five million years old.

<https://sites.google.com/site/rotadacal/home>

Caves and Vulcano center ❖ Pedestrian Path Caminho Real nº 25 ❖ Levadas and paths



# Take note

## places to visit

### Calheta

**Sidraria dos Prazeres** –production unit in the parish of Prazeres for madeiran cider

Farol da Ponta do Pargo

Engenho da Sociedade de Engenhos da Calheta

Miradouro Dr. Trigo Negreiros (Arco da Calheta)

Miradouro do Sítio da Carreira (Prazeres)

Miradouro da Raposeira (Fajã da Ovelha)

Miradouro do Jardim do Mar

### Ponta do Sol

Torre-Relógio da Levada do Poiso

Miradouro do Pico de Santiago

Capela Nossa Senhora dos Anjos

Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Piedade

### São Vicente

Miradouro dos Cardais

Moinhos de Água de Ponta Delgada

Miradouro São Cristóvão

Capela de Nossa Senhora de Fátima



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Cabildo de Lanzarote



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Governor Regional

Secretaria Regional do Turismo e Cultura



UNIVERSIDADE da MADEIRA



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