

SALT & WONDER

THE NEW OLD LISBON



COPENHAGEN
COFFEE LAB

—
Nordic Coffee
Culture in the South.

A
SOCIEDADE

—
Lisbon's First
Gastronomical Studio.

PEIXARIA
CENTENÁRIA

—
Return of the
Fresh Fish Shop.

A Sociedade

L I S B O N ' S F I R S T G A S T R O N O M I C S T U D I O

Connecting everything. A Sociedade is a unique project in Portugal — a Creative Gastronomic Studio whose mission is to promote the coming together of creative and inspiring people in the world of food to foster conversations, learning and sharing of knowledge.

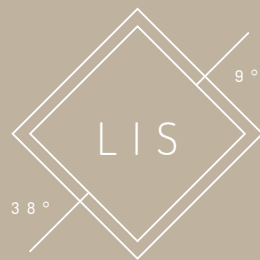
founded by
Claudia S. Villax

THE NEW OLD LISBON

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asociedade.pt
established 2016





In the small,
we see the perfect.

CLAUDIA VILLAX
A Sociedade



Lisbon, although a big and contemporary city — still maintains the feeling of the pause, the coffee break and the simple things of life, it respects the natural time of things.

Lisbon's first gastronomic studio

The Philosophy of Food from Farm to Table

HONESTY FOR CHANGE — A Sociedade is reevaluating the way we prepare, eat and think food, all in an attempt to flip food culture on its head. Salt & Wonder reached out to Claudia Villax, the mind behind the movement, to learn about the cause and the reasons behind it.

How did you get the idea to start A Sociedade?

A: My passion is food, not just in eating it but through all its lifecycle, from farming, the environment and sustainability, to production and preparation, from marketing to food photography, food is my life. After being in contact with many projects, chefs, bloggers, and after reading many books from chefs or activists, like Vandana Shiva and Micheal Pollan, I started to realize that consumers were for the most part ill informed as to the food they eat, from how it was produced, to what it contains, its effect on our bodies and the overall impact on the environment. Information that reaches the consumers is generally tailored to serve the economic interests of the industry rather than ensuring a healthy diet for all while considering the impact on the environment.

Can you tell me a bit about your background in the industry?

A: I started working in marketing within the pharmaceutical industry but soon realized it was not my thing. I then moved on publishing newspapers and magazines, and was one of the founders of *Blue* magazines, one of the most interesting publishing projects in Portugal which began in 2003. At the same time we started a family project of Azeitona Verde (Green Olive), a working organic farm in Marvão. In 2005 still at *Blue*, I developed the concept for *Blue Cooking* — the first cooking and lifestyle magazine in Portugal. In 2007 I left *Blue* and started my own journey and launched *Giggle*, the first monthly digital magazine in Portugal, an online magazine for tweenies and families. In 2009 I got involved in the creation and development of a brand for an up and coming chef from which I setup *Food People & Design* (FP&D) and since then never left the food arena. While working on *Azeitona Verde* organic olive oil project, I was involved with FP&D working in the food scene in the area of marketing, website design, and cookbook design and content. In 2013 I was asked by a publisher to write a book which gave rise to “The Horta para a mesa”, a book intended to be a stimulus to get people in touch with the earth and setup their own organic gardens at home. In 2015 I launched “Brunch”, my second book, and in 2016 opened the A Sociedade with the help of my loyal team: Diogo Santos, who has been my “Tenzing Norgay” for many years, Luiza Chataigner, Fabio Ferreira, Maria Joao Fernandes and Alberto Quintas.

All of them contribute with their fantastic skills and creative ideas in the different areas of design, illustration, food and social network and of course we have a few other great and creative people collaborating with us.



What’s the idea behind the logo of “A Sociedade”?

A: The concept behind our A Sociedade’s logo is movement and community. The letters are bundled together as a group representing the community, with a simple and subtle movement, slightly provocative, yet perceptible, a sagacious movement to bring about change. The movement in the logo transfers to the space the inherent idea of change through the sharing of knowledge and coming together of people in the field of food and sustainability.

What are the thoughts behind your special events — Beyond the Sea, Breakfast Club LX and Green Kitchen Story' ?

A: “Beyond the Sea” was the first big event we put together and a model to follow for future events to be titled “Conversas com sabor” (“talks with flavour”). This first one was dedicated to the sea. Fish is still the least controlled food, whereas the concept of organic meat, vegetables, wine, olive oil or other food is recognized in most countries, only few countries recognized organic fish. This first event targeted journalists, we got them around a long table to share a meal and have a discussion. As speakers we had a biologist, an oyster producer, a fish monger and a chef with environmental concerns. The discussion was around the state of the seas, the current methods of fishing and what else is present in the fish we eat today, the problem we are facing today and in the future, issues of aquaculture amongst others. The result was a fantastic sharing of knowledge, very enlightening and it was super interesting to have a collection of journalists present. Green Kitchen Stories and Breakfast Club LX were events that took place at Sociedade premises but organised by other organizations as the place can also be used by others if they share the same values around sustainability and organic food.

Where do you see the mix between innovation and tradition?

A: Innovation is pervasive today and essential to our economy. Innovation is the key driver and allows companies to bring new products to the market with high margins in a world of ever shrinking product lifecycles. So how can innovation be reconciled with tradition? Surely innovation will see the end of tradition. However tradition and traditional products are synonymous with hand craft. Hand craft brings about the creation of unique and exclusive products, in an ever increasingly technological word, “handmade” could very well become the new luxury.

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A Sociedade



How do you change the city with your concept?

A: I don't think I can change the city. I can however influence people's minds. By bringing people together to discuss important issues that affect us all you can bring about awareness. In this way contribute to a critical mass of people and through their trickledown effect drive positive change in the city.

What makes your daily life in the neighbourhood of Praça das Flores?

A: I love living in an area that oozes tradition, I love the local commerce, to greet the local street sweeper, have lunch or a simple coffee in the surrounding area, in the "Praça das Flores", and recharge my batteries, I love it. My days are always super intense and try to multitask on various ongoing projects. I may be discussing with an expert on how best to treat and prune olive trees, preparing a marketing campaign for a client, in a photo shoot surrounded by yummy food or overseeing the design of a website or the layout for a new book. My days start early around 7:00 am and finish late and describing my average day would take another page or two...

Being proud and honest. What are the biggest limitations to reach the people?

A: Indeed honesty is foremost on our mind. In a day and age where social network and "photoshop" rules and everyone aspires to project a less than honest and "enhanced" reality of themselves is there any room left for hard and true honest reality? We believe that there is, we believe that in a world of uniformity people will once again value the odd shaped tomatoes or the smell of humid earth on a dusty potato. This is still a niche area but clearly in growth, soon "free WIFI" signs will occasionally be replaced by "WIFI free" signs. Reaching out to new audiences will be challenging but this is what makes it fun.

What is in your mind when you think about your project, Azeitona Verde?

A: Azeitona Verde is a project that fills me with pride, it is my great passion, I love everything about this project, organic farming, and the wonderful world of olive oil, the conservation of millennial trees, the conservation of the endangered oak and many others. Azeitona Verde is my perfect world, here I can show that organic farming is a reality and that you can produce good food yet care for the environment. We have a new project for Azeitona Verde scheduled for 2018 that again will be based on the sharing of knowledge which will be very special.

We talked about "Everything is connected". What describes success for you, nowadays?

A: Success for me is summed up in having a passion and being able to execute it, in believing that there is something greater than you and striving to make it happen. That's success. •

W O R D S

Claudia Villar

P H O T O G R A P H Y

A Sociedade



My passion is food,
not just in eating it but
through all its lifecycle.

To become more honest; we need to build a new society. For the future,
we need to change. We need to show how everything is connected.

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