

Cultural Daily

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Why Lisbon's Familjen Restaurant is Worth the Hike

R. Daniel Foster · Monday, February 2nd, 2026

Many Uber to [Familjen](#) in Lisbon's hilly Madragoa neighborhood. But I encourage friends to walk. You'll get a feel for this neighborhood of the *varinas* (fishwives). The women once shouted from their shops, hawking their husbands' catch of the day. It's also a prime area to view *azulejos* tiles that cover building facades.



Lisbon's Familjen opened last year. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

While the eatery is only a 10-minute walk from the Santos train station, and a 20-minute walk from the Cais do Sodré Metro station, it's uphill, as most strolls in Lisbon are. I recently learned that a planned Santos Metro station will put subway riders even closer to the restaurant.

A Subtle Nordic Influence

Swedish chef Petter Nyström opened Familjen last year, choosing the name because it means family—and that’s exactly the vibe you’ll find at his establishment, with small tables and one large, curved table for communal dining. Counter seats overlook the open kitchen.



The restaurant is in Lisbon’s hilly Madragoa neighborhood | Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The ambiance in the narrow space is rough-hewn with unfinished walls. The bathroom walls are scrawled with (intentional) graffiti—markers are available for guests to leave their thoughts. It’s an easy, comfortable space. It felt like dinner at a best friend’s place.

A wiry man with wrist bracelets and tattoos, chef Nyström didn’t strike me as someone who likes to follow rules, and that shows up in his dishes that can have unusual pairings. You’ll find the best ingredients from Portugal’s nearby farms. Yes, there’s a touch of Nordic influence—he’s had more than 25 years of Nordic culinary experience—but I found it to be subtle.



Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Everyone around us drank Negronis, but I chose the spicy margarita with chili, served in a wide low glass with an oversized ice ball.

Oysters with Sea Buckthorn Started the Meal

The nine-course menu was priced individually from €14 to €24, but we chose the “No FOMO” version and tried it all. It was a wise choice, and a bargain at €55.



Swedish chef Petter Nyström | Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Before I get into the flavors, here's the spoiler. It was one of the best meals of my life. Dish after dish was presented, and as I said later to my dining companion, Theo, "There were no clunkers." And there usually are with such small dish presentations. As the courses rolled in, each one a knockout, we savored them slowly—they were that good.

First up: oysters with sea buckthorn and dill. The first slurp lent a tart citrusy taste balanced by the clean dill. The combination was a winner.



Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The raw yellowtail, thinly sliced, was served with lemongrass and cayenne pepper. The lemongrass provided a bright aromatic lift to the rich, buttery fish. The cayenne provided a clean burn. Delectable.

Tempura kale was the perfect follow-up, dusted with smoked pepper. Also, raspberry. The batter was light and crispy, the pepper providing a slight char note. The addition of the raspberry seemed an odd choice when I first read it on the menu, but once the flavor combo was in my mouth, all I could say was, “More, please.”

Up next: “Not a Caesar Salad,” a dish that would no doubt reference such a salad. It did, with generous grilled halves of romaine drizzled with some secret sauce and topped with pistachios. Delicious.



Tempura kale | Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Surya Octopus with cashew nuts and kimchi: the octopus was cooked just right, with the kimchi adding the right spicy-sour, funky note to temper the richness of the seafood and cashews.



Rice cream and sea buckthorn | Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Beef tartare was next, with tomatoes, horseradish, and paratha. I thought the layered buttery flatbread would compete with the tartare (usually served with something more crispy), but it worked quite well.

Desserts were next: a delightful gingerbread and jam paired with Ortodoxo blue cheese. This was a collision of tastes and flavors—the Ortodoxo cheese, inspired by Gruyère, gave the combo a creamy, unctuous texture with a robust, slightly salty flavor.

The menu listed a “Happy Ending” to conclude. It arrived in a handmade ceramic bowl: rice cream and sea buckthorn—the rice cream providing a kind of blank canvas for the sea buckthorn’s intensity. The tartness cut through the starchy sweetness in all the right ways. The rice cream softened the palette; the sea buckthorn sharpened it. Bravo.

The Lisboa City Card

While I encourage walking in Lisbon, you’ll no doubt need to take a tram, train, bus, or subway on occasion. Check out the [Lisboa Card](#), which grants unlimited travel + entry to over 50 of the city’s best attractions and museums, among other benefits.

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