



# SPICE of LIFE

*This husband-wife duo are bringing Portuguese heat to Romford with a South American twist*

Words ELEANOR WILSON Photos MELISSA PAGE

**P**eri-peri aficionados, this is your moment: authentic Portuguese-style charcoal chicken has arrived in Havering at long last. Galetos, with its simple frontage, cosy feel and enormous menu, is Romford's answer to those hankering for a change from the usual Friday night curry.

Luiz Orlando and his wife Sylvia opened Galetos in late May 2016. Celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary this August, they argue playfully over what to serve me – but there's a core of steel beneath the smiles. They own several other restaurants including Braza Churrascaria Rodizio, a Brazilian restaurant just around the corner in Arcade Place, and Galetos is their latest brainchild in an ever-growing family.

"Galetto" means "spring chicken", a favourite comfort food in Luiz's native Rio de Janeiro. Brazilians like to sit at the counter after a night out and watch as



ABOVE:  
Owners Sylvia and  
Luiz Orlando, Galetos  
Restaurant, Romford



Seafood platter with calamari and Portuguese rice

their chicken is cooked butterfly-style over the coals, but the Orlandos have laid out Galetos in a more familiar way for an Essex crowd, with plenty of natural wood and wine bottles. “I copied the name and the marinade,” he tells me, “but the atmosphere and menu are our own creation.” Sylvia, who is “passionate about cooking” and hails from the Philippines, concurs: “My dream was to have a restaurant where I created everything.”

Peri-peri is a collaboration of Brazilian spices and Portuguese cooking, now embraced on both sides of the world. The widely varied menu at Galetos reflects the cross-cultural appeal with Portuguese rice, sweet potato fries and seafood platters big enough for four to share – “a mix of everything,” says Luiz, “just like Brazilian culture.” But crispy, juicy charcoal chicken and Sylvia’s homemade sauces are the stars of the show. Naturally, more than a few

customers have made cheeky comparisons with a certain international peri-peri chain, but Luiz is ready with a response.

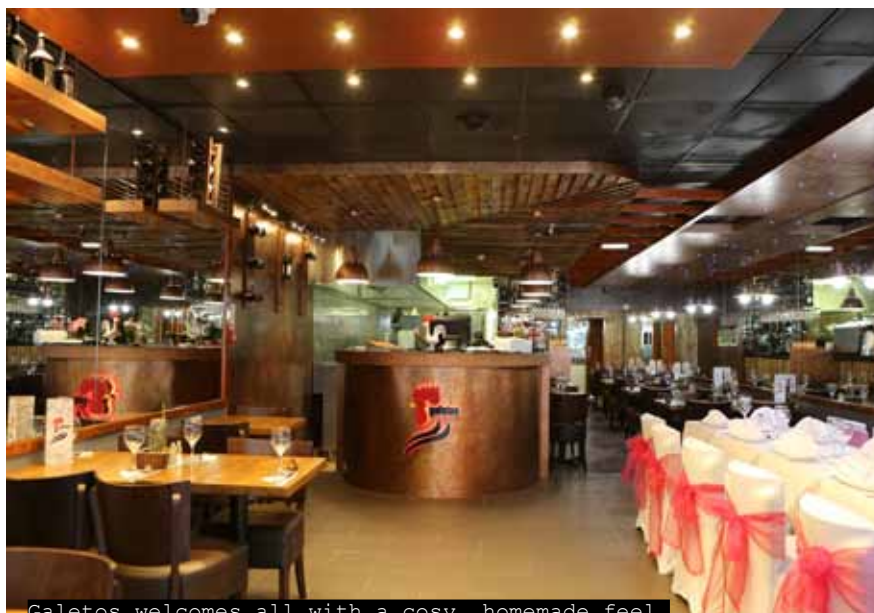
“People like to compare us with Nandos, but you can’t compare – it doesn’t do it justice,” he says. “For one thing, we use charcoal, but they use gas. Even in houses in Portugal and Brazil, they use charcoal, so that the meat is smoked at the same time. Even the woods you use make a difference.”

I note other contrasts, too: the atmosphere here is quieter and friendlier, and here, you add your own sauces. It’s worth taking your time to taste and experiment. Sylvia’s creations, using spices imported from Brazil, include a rich garlic and herb for breads and salads; tangy coriander and lime; capsicum, with a strong bell pepper taste and medium spice; and “Vulcanic”, the hottest, with bags of flavour and a long slow burn. She and Luiz have big plans for the sauce range.

“I’m very ambitious,” says Sylvia. “We want to sell the sauces in the shops and from that, build the restaurant into a franchise. I’m small, but I want to get big!” They already sell the sauces by the bottle from their front counter; while we’re talking, a boisterous family from Ealing goes home with six bottles of garlic and herb.

With the restaurant open for less than three months, the duo are already planning their next move: an international supermarket in Romford stocking goods from Asia, South America and Africa. In Sylvia’s words: “wherever we go, we’re always looking for ideas. A good chef can observe everything.”

Galetos Restaurant, 96 South Street,  
Romford, RM1 1RX; 01708 749770;  
galetosrestaurant.co.uk



Galetos welcomes all with a cosy, homemade feel