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Very BEYrouth

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Ezzat Ellaz

In an exclusive interview to HN, [Hodema consulting services](#) talks with [Ezzat Ellaz](#), founder of a successful F&B concept launched and operated in Lisbon, Portugal.

What is the idea behind the opening of 'Muito BEY' in Lisbon?

It all started with my passion for Lebanese cuisine that transpired into the opening of a restaurant showcasing our food in an emerging European market where it was almost non-existent. It is a modern Lebanese kitchen where authentic recipes are served using fresh local ingredients. As a result, the brand, which communicates a culinary and cultural message, became a platform where Portuguese, as well as tourists from different nationalities, learned about our cuisine. Principal to our offerings is the concept of 'sharing', a habit that we as Lebanese grew up to, which our customers are happily adopting. This October, we celebrate the third year of operation, which since opening has increased demand for Lebanese food, as well as the growth of our own offering. The Lebanese culinary experience we offer our valued guests ranges from salads to a variety of hot and cold mezze dishes, an assortment of grilled foods and fresh oven-baked bread. In addition, we also offer the much-demanded manakish, as well as homemade desserts. Our dishes are prepared with a sophisticated modern touch often combining Lebanese and Portuguese cuisines.



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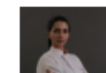
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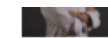
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What are the success factors of 'Muito BEY'?

The first, is its adaptation to the market in Lisbon. Our slogan is 'Our name says it all', which indeed it does, considering that 'Muito Bem' in Portuguese means 'Very Good'. So, we replaced the letter 'M' in Bem with the letter 'Y', transforming the name to 'Very BEYruth'. Furthermore, the concept of approaching the Lebanese and Portuguese cultures is not only reflected in our food, but also in our branding and decor through the use of colors and materials that are common to both countries. The other success factor lies in the fact that I am always present on-premises, as is the highly-experienced Lebanese [Chef Joseph Youssef](#). We invest every moment by consistently working to perfect the food experience and offer innovation based on customers' feedback and market alteration.

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What were the challenges faced during the project's developmental phase?

Every restaurant project involves operational challenges, especially during the first year. We learn how to overcome these in a timely-fashion and experience. In my case, the major obstacles emerged even before opening as I was dealing with a new culture, system and language all of which were foreign to me. Thankfully, I was able to adapt, learn and move forward.

How do you perceive Lisbon's current and future F&B market?

Lisbon is growing and so is its F&B market. Like every emerging market, the trend started with fast-casual and local food concepts, then moved to ethnic food concepts. Nowadays, the focus is on star chef restaurants and high-end concepts. Nevertheless, each segment is still in full development and I assume that more restaurants will open triggering a rise in terms of standards pertaining to food quality and service. Also, the future, in the coming years, for mid-end restaurants offering an appealing food experience at affordable prices will be bright.

What are your future projects?

We have several projects in development at the moment and are waiting for the right moment to announce and implement them. I also would like to stay in Lisbon and expand my brand in Portugal.

Muito BEY



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