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It's a wonder...

It takes an experienced hotelier to come up with the concept of three eateries with completely different menus operating under one roof.

This ambitious goal was achieved when Roland Klein-Lercher created the incredible 3 Wonders - Restaurant, Caffé Vienna & Tapas Lounge. Born and brought up in a hotel in an Austrian ski resort, Roland's professional and personal life led him to Portugal.

Last year, by chance, he discovered premises overlooking an imposing valley on the outskirts of Loulé, in Alto do Relógio. Suddenly inspired to buy he decided, together with his Portuguese partner and friend Architect Armando Dos Reis, to create somewhere exceptional, undertaking a building project with no-expense spared.

Aiming to attract guests throughout the day and evening, menus for lunch, afternoon tea and dinner were prepared, each becoming one of the '3 Wonders'.

The theme is carried through by the minimalist décor. Three contrasting colours, tables and lights in rows of three, photographic images that feature '3' and menus with the dishes laid out in threes.

From the restaurant menu there are three

starters, three soups, three fish - the list goes on, including three different types of fondue (which must be ordered in advance) and vegetarian meals based on produce of the day. An international staff team manages the kitchen.

The food, though, is wonderful - meriting five stars rather than the expected three.

Recommended main courses include leg of lamb, slow roasted in rosemary and thyme juice with grilled vegetables and wild rice (€16), monkfish in bacon with roast potatoes and steamed vegetables (€17.50) and, from the 'Specials' list of three, Viennese goulash with roasted potatoes (€14.50)

The Tapas Lounge - serving such imaginative choices as 3 mini squid and chorizo kebabs (€6) - and Caffé Vienna open until 6.30pm. There is also a Tuesday to Friday set-lunch menu for €10.

Even clients who are not eating are encouraged to linger, enjoy the majestic view and play backgammon, whilst drinking Darjeeling tea by the pot (€1.75), flutes of champagne (€8.50) or

Mozart hot chocolate with Amaretto (€3). Choices of delicious cakes, strudels, ice cream specialties and crêpes are, of course, listed in threes.

Sonia, the service and logistics manager, advises on wines and is in charge of front of house whenever Roland isn't around.

The '3 Wonders' concept includes unusual extra details. A lending library, for example, as well as shawls to wear on the terrace if the evening is windy and, for forgetful short-sighted clients unable to read the menu, reading glasses - three strengths available! *CFK*

From the A22 exit at Loulé Sul, 3 Wonders is close to the new Continente hypermarket.

Open:

Tuesday to Saturday, noon to midnight

Sunday, noon to 5 pm.

Reservations essential in the evenings.

Contacts:

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www.3wonders.pt