The “A Place at the Royal Table” project celebrates the gastronomic heritage and the Arts of the Table in the European Courts

- Initiative commemorating European Year of Cultural Heritage
- Project promoted by the Association of European Royal Residences
- Program includes events across all of Europe to celebrate culinary traditions and the Arts of the Table
- Parques de Sintra is presenting exhibition projects in the National Palaces of Pena, Queluz and Sintra and in the Chalet of the Countess of Edla

Sintra, 5 April 2018 - ARRE – the Association of European Royal Residences is commemorating European Year of Cultural Heritage with the project “A Place at the Royal Table”, a program of exhibitions and events dedicated to the gastronomic heritage and the Arts of the Table in the European Courts. This initiative was launched on 15 March with the inauguration of the display “Why do we eat the way we do?” at the Schloss Hof Palace in Austria. Hereafter, this theme is receiving different presentations at each one of the 19 participant royal residences.

Across all of Europe, and running through to October, there are numerous events and initiatives taking place to celebrate this heritage. Exhibitions, thematic tours, educational sessions, events for the general public, workshops, seminars, historical re-enactments and performances all provide the opportunity to reflect on the history of Europe and its identity from the perspective of its gastronomic heritage and the objects, traditions and experiences lived out at royal tables.

Parques de Sintra exhibitions

Under the auspices of this European project, Parques de Sintra is staging a set of initiatives at the National Palaces of Pena, Sintra and Queluz and in the Chalet of the Countess of Edla.
Countess of Edla, which seek to establish a dialogue between the spaces and collections of these Palaces and the practices and traditions of the royal table.

In the National Palace of Pena, through to 8 October, on display in the Dining Room is the exhibition “Design, a Royal Table Innovation”, which seeks to convey the ambience particular to this site, recreating the dining table as it would have been set in the 19th century.

The pieces demonstrate how design emerged over the course of the second half of the 19th century, a time when there came a new type of furniture for dining rooms and innovative table pieces that aligned functionality with aesthetics.

In the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the exhibition project “A Place Far From the Royal Table – The Picnic Basket of the Countess of Edla”, on display until 8 October, highlights one object in particular: the picnic basket of the second wife of Ferdinand II and the pieces it contained.

The culture of Romanticism nurtured the enjoyment of nature, taking walks, whether in the countryside or the city, as well as dining outdoors. This context led to the production of means of transporting objects appropriate to picnics as was the case of the basket for six persons belonging to the Countess of Edla, which contained an entire dining set.

The National Palace of Queluz welcomes three exhibition projects and a colloquium. “Drinking chocolate, a royal habit” is the theme under presentation in the Picnic Room in the Private Chambers until 8 October. The table is set so as to display the various collection items interrelated with chocolate, with its history and habits illustrated through interpretative exhibition displays.

The royal habit of drinking chocolate became popular in the late 17th century. The European courts then adopted new utensils for the serving of this beverage, including chocolate pots in silver and porcelain. There are various references to the purchase of “xicolate” for the dinners, suppers and refreshments in the Palace of Queluz during the reign of Queen Maria I, destined for the tables of “royal persons”.

In the Dining Room, from 7 May to 8 October, there is a focus on “The Eclecticism of the Royal Table”, an exhibition that conveys the variety in the origins and materials of
the objects coexisting on the royal table during the period Queen Carlota Joaquina lived in Queluz: European commissioned Chinese porcelain, British and French dinner services, Mexican silver, Portuguese and Spanish glassware.

In the Botanical Garden, through to 8 October, “Pineapple, the Royal Fruit” is the theme of this didactic exhibition on the importance and the exoticism of pineapples to the royal botanical collections of the 18th century. The display particularly focuses on the case of Queluz and its recently rehabilitated botanical garden in which the royal family had this fruit cultivated. In 1774, the greenhouses here produced pineapples in sufficient quantities so as to supply all the Court banquets.

In November, the auditorium of the National Palace of Queluz is hosting the colloquium “A Place at the Royal Table”, which incorporates a set of conferences featuring guest specialists to deal with this theme across its various different facets, ranging from the dietary habits of the Royal Family through to the migration and popularisation of certain foodstuffs as well as table objects and the protocols.

In turn, the National Palace of Sintra, from 5 July to 7 October, the Magpie Room hosts the exhibition of "A Royal Lunch. The visit to Sintra of Queen Alexandra of the United Kingdom. 24 March 1905". This project, in partnership with the National Palace of Ajuda, evokes the lunch served in the Palace of Sintra in honour of Queen Alexandra, consort of Edward VII, on the invitation of Queen Maria Pia. This reconstruction extends to the decorative ambience then prevailing in the Magpie Room and the sumptuous table laid for the occasion of the British monarch’s Sintra visit. A unique opportunity to see gathered together in Queen Maria Pia’s palace of leisure the refined objects and table services (silver, porcelain and crystal) belonging to this queen.

Joint events

The project extends to a set of joint events. On 23 June, visitors to European royal residences shall symbolically gather in the gardens of the Palaces in a simultaneous, open-air event. The same day also sees the launch of the #EuropeanRoyalPalaces, an Instagram photography competition that seeks to involve younger audiences.

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On 19 July, there is the third edition of #PalaceDay that invites the public to share their best images on the social networks.

On 8 October, the Palace of Versailles is hosting a closing dinner featuring a meal inspired on historical menus and not only celebrating gastronomy but also paying tribute to European “haute cuisine”, with its over century long history recognised as one of the best worldwide.

The complete program of events is available at: www.europeanroyalresidences.eu

Launched in 2001, ARRE brings together the institutions that manage some of the most prestigious palaces, castles and museums of Europe, which were or are the residences of monarchs and royal rulers. The association seeks to foster exchanges of experiences and knowledge among its members around the preservation and valuation of their cultural heritage. Parques de Sintra has been an ARRE member since 2002.

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About Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua

Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is an entirely state owned company founded in 2000 in order to meet the challenges arising out of the UNESCO classification of the Sintra Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site. The entity does not resort to the State Budget and the restoration and maintenance of the heritage in its care are ensured by the revenues resulting from sales at its ticket offices, stores, cafeterias and the rental of facilities for the hosting of events. In 2016, the sites managed by PSML (the Park and National Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, the Convent of the Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed 2.625.011 visits, around 83% of whom were international in origin. In 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, PSML was distinguished with the World Travel Award for the “World’s Leading Conservation Company”.

The PSML shareholders are the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finance (representing the Portuguese state), the Portuguese Institute of Nature and Forestry Conservation, the Portuguese Tourism Board and Sintra Municipal Council.

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