What’s on TAP: Interview with TAP Air Portugal

This is a special feature from *PAX International*'s March 2024 Amenities & Comfort issue, on page 24.



Left to right: Catarina Coelho, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Media Relations, TAP Air Portugal; Joel Fragata, Director of Commercial & Customer Care TAP, Cateringpor; Rita Tamagnini, Director of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, TAP Air Portugal; Catarina Índio, Head of Inflight and Ground Product, TAP Air Portugal; Sofia Lufinha, Chief Customer Officer, TAP Air Portugal; and, Aijaz Khan, Publisher, *PAX International*

Headquartered at Lisbon Airport, TAP Air Portugal is not only the country's flag carrier but also an ambassador of Portuguese culture. In 2023 the airline highlighted its Portuguese heritage through inflight menus, amenities and the overall product experience.

“We are working hard to increase customer satisfaction, and we are already seeing the results,” says Sofia Lufinha Chief Customer Officer at TAP. She says the airline’s plans for 2024 include enhancing the passenger experience and focusing on infusing the product with the Portuguese identity.

“We are continuing to support Portuguese brands and bring them, the tastes and the feelings of Portugal into the passenger experience. It is something we always receive positive feedback about—once passengers get into the cabin, they feel that they are in Portugal,” she explains.

Catering a sense of Portugality

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TAP Air Portugal launched new Business Class amenity kits onboard featuring iconic Portuguese cosmetic brand Benamôr

Catering is arguably the most memorable aspect of the inflight experience, and TAP knows how to satisfy passengers with a curated sense of Portugality.

The airline introduced new Business Class amenity kits featuring iconic Portuguese brand Benamôr in late September 2023. Created with the help of Skysupply, the pouches have received good feedback from passengers thus far, Lufinha tells *PAX International.*

The pouches are available in four assorted colors, each representing iconic symbols of the country and Benamôr. The kits are made of recycled plastic bottles and other PET (rPET). While bamboo was used for the toothbrush, the packaging of the toothpaste and the earplugs are made of paper.

For sips, the airline serves only Portuguese wines. And, every two months, it introduces a new Business Class menu on long-haul flights departing from Lisbon through its Local Stars initiative.

“We believe in the quality of our wines. Our menu is a way of showing Portugal to the rest of the world. We are an ambassador of Portuguese food and wine across the globe,” says Lufinha. “It is something that we are very proud of, and I think we are doing it quite well.”

The TAP Local Stars Project, available to Business Class passengers, is a partnership with The Art of Tasting Portugal. It aims to bring the best Portuguese cuisine to the world by featuring the star ingredients of each Portuguese region. TAP invited 12 renowned Portuguese chefs to prepare menus using these traditional ingredients, selecting a star product. Passengers who do not want the Local

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Stars main dish can opt for the alternative dish.

Joel Fragata, Director of Commercial & Customer Care TAP, Cateringpor, agrees that ensuring passengers are satisfied with the inflight dining experience is a major focus for 2024. He says TAP has plans to update its pre-ordering meal platform (available to Business Class passengers) to enhance the passenger experience and reduce waste.

“Changing meals or introducing something new is a big deal,” he explains. “We consider passenger feedback and satisfaction. We test recipes, check presentation, and then we launch the product usually for one year. It stays in catering as long as passengers are still satisfied.”

2024 and beyond

Looking ahead is sometimes accompanied with a quick look at the past. “The world changes a lot in two years,” says Lufinha.

With some restructuring plans in place through 2025, Catarina Índio, Head of Inflight and Ground Product at TAP, says the airline has a “goal of growth in existing places.” It will focus on optimizing and fine-tuning its routes, introducing more flights to the United States and Brazil

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