



**December 24th 2023, 19°
In the sun 32,5°**



www.a-hill-of-your-own.com
www.montedocasarao.com
info@montedocasarao.com
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=TVrT0eEcC&feature=youtu.be



Painting weeks 2024

Spring: 10-17 April

Autumn: 2-9 October

Further info on the homepage of the website under *What to do*



CHRISTMAS DINNER

When I was young, we'd have rabbit for Christmas. My father always won a rabbit at his workplace bridge tournament. I didn't want rabbit, so there was a meatball for me. Later, we switched to beef and pork fondue Bourguignonne in those spluttering pans. We still eat fondue at Christmas. The table is set with the crockery we inherited from Wynand's parents. It has a golden edge, which means it needs to be washed by hand. But we don't mind, it's just once a year.



In Portugal, traditionally, *bacalhau* is served on Christmas Eve. The Portuguese have been eating bacalhau since the 15th century, when Newfoundland was discovered where a lot of codfish was found in the sea. They love their salted and dried codfish. And not just on Christmas Eve. Once, about 70,000 tons of bacalhau a year were consumed. It was a bit less this year. Smaller catches and higher production costs have driven up the price. But Christmas Eve still accounts for some 5,000 tons. There are hundreds of different ways to prepare it. You can put a different bacalhau dish on the table every day. *Bacalhau com natas* stands out for me. You should give it a try too. Very tasty.

PAINTING ON THE MOUNTAIN

The painting week has never been a topic in our previously published newsletters. Still, we have organised a painting week at Monte do Casarão 27 times. What started in 2008 as an experiment with Jenny Heider, a teacher at my former painting club in Almere, has grown into a twice-yearly event. Jenny has guided the painting weeks 22 times. Then, in 2020, Margot Verhoeven took her place. Painting here, from nature and by the sea, soaking in the almost perpetual sun and enjoying delicious evening meals, is always a joy. And if there's something to see or experience nearby, we take advantage of it. A gathering in memory of Amália Rodrigues, a performance by the Grupos Corais, a procession in honour of Santa Barbara, or a visit to the gypsy market: just for fun or for inspiration.



We have something new now. Last time, the students joined me for my choir rehearsal. We sing, they paint. Everyone is happy. Worth repeating! Absolutely!

CEASAR'S MUSHROOM

My mushroom man has been here again. For five days, Edwin Flores and I searched for, found, and picked mushrooms. Here, at Monte do Casarão. Really special. Thanks to his wise lessons, I have been able to add four types to my 'Edible' list. I'm now at twelve.

To Edwin's great sorrow, we didn't find Caesar's mushroom, which rivals truffles in taste and does not grow in Northern Europe. Three weeks earlier, I found a few specimens near the old garden. A scrumptious mushroom, indeed! Worth of an emperor! Perhaps next year, Edwin!



Before that happens, I still have work to do. I received his online, Dutch-language course on Wild Edible and Medicinal Mushrooms. A new lesson every week. Something for you, perhaps? Otherwise, just a day of mushroom hunting with Edwin in the Netherlands? All the information can be found on Casa Foresta, at *home in edible nature*, as the slogan goes.

LITHIUM WITH A TWIST

In newsletter 62, I wrote about lithium, the white gold. Europe wants its own lithium, and Portugal has a lot of it. But chaos has erupted since. Concessions have been manipulated, favouring Portuguese companies, bribery and illegal money have entailed. The left-wing Prime Minister Antonio Costa has resigned because he was alleged to be involved. Later on, it turned out to be someone named Jorge Costa, but the Prime Minister did not want to reconsider his decision. The name Costa was tainted. Elections are due in March. Right-wing populists are on the rise here, too. Own people first. André Ventura's party Chega is gaining ground. CHEGA: ENOUGH. That says it all, really.



I still want to wish you a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2024. Until next year. Love,

Nel

