

Who was Manezinho?



Manezinho, whose real name was Manuel Medeiros, was born to a poor family on São Miguel around 1930. He never went to school and started to work at a young age. When in his early teens his parents moved to São Jorge, where he initially helped his father as a woodcutter (serralheiro). Later he worked as a fisherman on one of the four large fishing boats (traineiras) that were stationed on the island. They would roam around in the archipelago and on occasions made fishing trips of more than a month. In the early seventies the family moved to the USA, but the father would return regularly to work during the summer on São Jorge. In the mid-seventies the father

bought the plot of land where Grand Café Manezinho is now located. In the beginning of the eighties the family returned to stay on São Jorge. At that time the coast of Urzelina was very rough and dangerous. Manezinho often went out fishing on the cliffs where he used ropes to climb to the good fishing spots. He had a talent for cooking, and he started to prepare meals for his fellow fishermen. He even opened at three or four in the morning to make coffee for them before they went to the sea. Also, the construction workers from other European countries that helped to rebuild Urzelina after the earthquake of 1980 found their way to his little shed near the coast. Gradually the business grew into a real restaurant, not in the least because of home cooking of Manezinho and his wife Ilda. For a while the Manezinho restaurant was famous all over the Azores.

The story has no happy end, however. One evening, while returning to home from work in the dark, Ilda missed a step on the coastal path and fell to her death. Later the daughter Margarida and her husband helped her father to reconstruct the restaurant and although it thrived for a while in the second decade of this century the restaurant fell into decline due to conflicts between the owners and financial mishap. In 2013 Manezinho died. The restaurant was left to itself without any interior or equipment. Occasionally vagrants lived in it.

In 2020 the philosopher, painter and musician, Pieter Adriaans and his wife Cesarina could buy the building from the relatives of Manezinho. They decided to create a meeting place where art and music could be appreciated. In remembrance of this hard-working man who created a place of happiness and beauty out of nothing and brought joy to so many lives, the new owners decided to keep the name. Today the portrait of Manezinho is looking out over the restaurant he founded forty years ago: Grand Café Manezinho. It is our tribute to him.

