



SPRING MEDITERRANEAN COOKING

This spring Mediterranean cooking is bursting to the fore in all its splendour, transforming itself into a comforting breeze of fresh air for the summer, when the heat makes light and healthy meals appetising, and leaving a healthy taste on the pallet with the arrival of the cooler autumn air. Barcelona, like a flower, opens with all its vibrancy at the end of the winter and invites the visitor to enjoy its most varied and imaginative gastronomy. The beaches come to life both night and day; the maritime ambience rubs off on the people of Barcelona and tourists alike, inviting them to enjoy a good **paella** or

fideuà close to the shore.



Barcelona is a true mirror image of Catalunya's cuisine culture, one that brings together the fruits of the coast and the mountains. And, with the arrival of spring, the landscape is transformed with the most

intense tones; dishes take on vibrant colours dominated by reds and greens. Ingredients like peppers and sauté chicory in the paella, red cabbage, radishes, cherry tomatoes and mature tomatoes are the main characters of all the dishes -along with lettuce, bringing life to salads that are more innovative than ever before.

It is a good moment to combine **artichokes**, escarola lettuce, **cod** and cheese, to eat fresh beans sprinkled with mint or, above all, to experiment with **asparagus**, more usual now than as a complement to a second dish; all this in tune with the cli-



mate and the terrain. So the sea invites you to try some blue fish. **Tuna** and **fresh salmon** or **anchovies** that one can find in any city market, transmitting their taste simply on the grill.

It is the time of the "**chatonadas**" (salad made of cod and sauces based on almonds), which still symbolises the communion of Catalans and their culinary tradition. Fruit and vegetables seem to have a more intense flavour, sharing a similar destination in exquisite first dishes. It is not strange to see popular vegetable grills in a culture that has always valued the produce of its own lands.

In Barcelona, two culinary worlds come together in the springtime and summertime. On the one hand, one can find traditional dishes that come from mediaeval roots and arrive at our times in a wide and rich variety of nuances that one can find in everyday cooking. And on the other hand, we can find representatives of the most vanguard gastronomy, modern and experimental, yet still with an eye on the Mediterranean. This is the framework in which chefs elaborate dishes like springtime green salads, magret with red cabbage and grapes, peppers and cheese drumsticks, charlotte of strawberries, or rice with clams and mussels.



The cuisine at this time of year, accompanied by a good wine and cava, is rich in **proteins** and **vitamins**, but above all in **flavours, aromas and colours**. The summer heat is an excuse to turn away from heavy dishes and hot soups, and the educated guest always leaves room to enjoy a nice pudding, starting with **Easter monas** (a cake), or the typical cake for the fiesta of **Sant Joan (called a tortel)**, and which ends with the must-have **summer ice cream**. Enjoy

AUTUMN CUISINE

Autumn is an exciting period in the culinary year for Barcelona. During the months of October, November and December, Catalan cuisine is more tempting than ever, with special dishes steeped in local tradition. These gastronomic delights alone provide a

very good reason to make a trip to the capital of Catalonia, where visitors will find the hearty fruits of the land and the sea, a highly professional sector, and chefs in a flurry of creativity.



Barcelona serves as the primary point of sale for the produce that is cultivated, collected or fished in the surrounding area (and even further afield); moreover, its markets, which used to be the main centres of supply for its inhabitants, have now begun to attract tourists who are curious to discover the wealth of seasonal products. Autumn is the time for tubers such as potatoes and sweet potatoes, kitchen garden produce such as pumpkins, aubergines, peppers, artichokes, cauliflower, spinach, chards and turnips, and pulses such as haricot beans.

Many of these ingredients can be found in **escudelles** (filling soups, which combine pulses and vegetables with pieces of meat) and also, in the case of the vegetables, in **samfaina** (a carefully prepared mixture of vegetables lightly fried in a pan). As for sweet fruit, there is an abundance of **grapes** which have not been crushed for wine, **mandarins**, **pomegranates**, **quinces**, **figs** and **blackberries**. Besides their presence in desserts, they can end up sharing a plate with some meat as a second course, in surprising and delicious combinations. Likewise, nuts (walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, etc.), besides featuring in tempting desserts, are included in the majority of picades, which consist of several ingredients ground in a mortar and added to dishes towards the end of the cooking process, providing colour, consistency and flavour.



It is around October when the first items of **caça de pèl i ploma** (“game with fur and feathers”) arrive: wild boar, hare, young pigeons, quails, partridges, etc., which are cooked in stews, hotpots and in other ways designed to make the meat tender and to tone down its strong flavour. Nor should we ignore the merits of *xarcuteria catalana*

(cold meats and sausage), which make the very most of the meat from pigs. In the country, Sant Martí (11 November) traditionally marked the time of year when the pig was slaughtered for its meat; these months are ideal for buying botifarres, fuets, bulls and other delicious sausages and cold meats.



As for the produce of the sea, this is the best time for **cuttlefish, squid, red shrimp, clams and octopus**, and for fish such as **skipjack tuna, swordfish, sole and grouper**. These form part of rice dishes, soups or tasty and healthy second courses, which in some cases combine pulses and vegetables with the fish (or even

offer fish and meat together!), faithful to an age-old culinary tradition known as *mar i muntanya* (“sea and mountain”), one of the defining features of a varied cuisine that is not afraid to experiment... creative cuisine, we might rightly say.

December sees the arrival in the markets of pedigree poultry, such as duck (including the black-legged duck from the Penedès), goose, turkey, guinea-fowl, farm-raised chicken (including the blue-legged chicken from el Prat), etc., birds of the highest quality, blissfully unaware of the festive fate that awaits them towards the end of the month, when they will form part of the Christmas meal.

Bolets (wild mushrooms) deserve a special mention, for despite the element of good fortune in finding them, they continue to be one of the mainstays of autumn cuisine. These fruits of the woods are used in many of the seasonal dishes, in particular to accompany *guisats de carn* (meat stews). The



most popular ones are the saffron milk cap, the porcini mushroom, the *llenega* and the chanterelle, but there are dozens of different varieties, many of which have been given curious local names: *trompetes de la mort* (trumpets of death), *ou de reig* (drumfish egg), *fredolic* (sensitive to the cold)...



For those with a sweet tooth, an important date in the calendar is 1 November, Tots Sants (All Saints). Some time ahead of the feast day, stalls begin to appear around the city offering roast **chestnuts** and **sweet potatoes** in cone-shaped bags. Eating these as you walk along the street on a cold afternoon is one of those little gastronomic pleasures that should not be missed. On 1 November itself it is customary to eat **panellets**, oven-cooked confectionery prepared from a paste containing almonds, sugar and eggs, to which different types of nut, and more recently, a wide range of other ingredients are added.

WINTER CUISINE



Winter is the perfect time of year to enjoy the varied menu of **soups** on offer in Barcelona. Besides the **escudella barrejada**, you will find other different types, such as onion soup au gratin, a typical Barcelona dish, and fish soup using monkfish, conger eel, and rockfish. These soups are always accompanied by a picada: a special paste made of crushed garlic, fried bread, toasted almonds, hazelnuts and spices. And there's also thyme soup, a variant of the garlic soup eaten throughout Spain. In Catalonia it is perfumed with thyme which completely changes its flavour.

Calçots, tender spring onions which are chargrilled and eaten with a special dipping sauce, can be enjoyed at this time of year. The **calçotada** is an exquisite dish and a gastronomic spectacle rolled into one.





In the second half of the nineteenth century Italian cuisine conquered our city which, in turn, adopted a dish which has become inextricably linked with festivities on the day after Christmas. On Boxing Day, Catalan families eat delicious **cannelloni au gratin**.

As winter draws to a close, the menus feature **broad beans Catalan style**: a nutritious, tasty stew cooked with black pudding and bacon. February and March are the best months to sample it.

If you feel like a delicious meat stew, your best choice is **fricandó**. The winter months are also the perfect time to order a Barcelona speciality par excellence: **bacallà a la llauna**, or salt cod baked in tomato, garlic and wine.

Barcelona cuisine is very varied because it brings together the finest dishes from different parts of Catalonia, from the inland provinces to the Mediterranean sea.