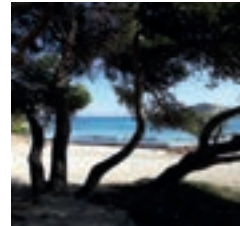


majorca

gastronomy and cuisine

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TRIANGLE ▼ BOOKS



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Taking a closer look at a region's gastronomy is in a sense a type of journey, a means of discovering new geographies through the dishes created from the flavours of the earth and sea. In this book on Majorcan gastronomy the reader will not only find information on products which are already known to be symbolic of this island, such as *sobrassada*, *ensaimada* and almonds but also on other products, not so well known but also fundamental to this island's gastronomy, such as olive oil and honey or liquors such as *hierbas* and *palo*.

Majorcan cooking is a the result of a fusion between available foodstuffs and the gastronomic heritage of those people who, for one reason or another have passed this way, such as the Romans, Jews, Arabs and Catalans. Aside from these factors we also have to add that of creativity, driven by the need to eat, the desire to enjoy doing so and the isolation in which the Majorcan people lived prior to the bridges of communication being established with other lands. The book is completed by a selection of the most typical recipes. We could almost say a guided tour through the authentic flavours of this island. Have a good trip and enjoy your meal.

The Majorcan table

“Its almost always the people with imagination who eat the best, perhaps because, as said by the Count of Clermont-Tonnerre, they associate the land’s sustenance with the place itself, and get right to the core of the link which tethers them to this earth which supports them, establishing the secret essence of that with which they are united and thus shared with their lands in a feast of devotion”.

These words from Galician gastronmist Álvaro Cunqueiro illustrate the important relation between creativity and the availability of food



In spite of the island’s dependence on tourism, traditional agriculture is still alive and well. On the right, a view of Capdepera.

products. Without imagination humanity would have never advanced, our very survival having depended on it and, without imagination, neither would what we understand to be gastronomy exist as we know it today.

On the basis of this correlation, it can be said that Majorcan gastronomy is both rich and inspired, created as it is with fresh produce from the land and sea. The traditional rural society, with a precarious subsistence economy before the influx of tourism, has literally made the most of all available food produce, having converted animals, such as pigs, and trees, such as the fig, into veritable benefactors for the local stomach.

The island’s gastronomy is a perfect example of having adapted to the environment and a passing encounter with different cultures and the cultural heritage they left behind. Offerings from the island itself include soups (vegetable and at times meat with finely sliced brown bread), *l’arròs brut* (a soggy rice dish prepared in days gone by with whatever meat and ingredients were available) or *frit de matances* (a hearty combination of various pork cuts with vegetables and spices). But there are also Catalan contributions which are now considered to be part of the island’s anthropological heritage,



The great benefactor

Pigs have been bred as domestic animals for some ten thousand years. Pig accounts for a quarter of the meat consumed throughout the world and is also a source of leather, soap, edible fats and hormones such as insulin. Practically the entire animal is put to use, a factor which has encouraged its breeding in rural communities such as Majorca.

For centuries the pig has been the great benefactor of Majorcan gastronomy, above all when this was a subsistence economy, in reality barely fifty years ago. At the time the rural calendar revolved around the slaughter of this animal, this being a time for celebration and stocking up the food supplies for the rest of the year.

It's difficult to imagine what either the Majorca of today or yesterday would be without the ubiquitous pig. There was and continues to be a *porcofilia* society, as is explained by Trías Mercant in his indispensable book *Antropologia de la cuina mallorquina* (The anthropology of Majorcan cookery): "According to anthropology (...) *porcofilia* involves family pig rearing and home cooking. The Balearic agricultural



culture, one hundred percent porcofilia, carefully separated and isolated, as in a rite of passage, the pig from the slaughter and it was diligently fattened for the kill”.

In Majorca, the indigenous breed of pig is the so-called black pig, bred in the wild in forest groves and scrubland. This animal accumulates a great deal of fat and at seven or eight months is taken to the pig-fattening farms and at eighteen — when it weighs around two hundred kilos — is duly slaughtered.



In praise of the *ensaimada*

“Just out of the oven, they appear shiny, golden and pleasing to the eye, like a symbol of peace” This was how Catalan painter and writer Santiago Rusiñol expressed his feelings on the Majorcan *ensaimada*, now awarded and protected by a *Specific Designation*, which guarantees its quality.

The *ensaimada* is a circular cake created by coiled sweet pastry, made from flour, sugar, yeast,



The island has an abundance of bakeries and cake shops with a profusion of local delicacies.

eggs and lard (in Catalan *saim*, from whence comes the name *ensaimada*). The origin of the *ensaimada* is uncertain. Some historians are of the opinion that its origins are Hebrew as, apparently, a Jewish pastry maker offered one to king Jaume I during the Majorcan conquest. Others believe it to be of Arab origin and in a Majorcan recipe book by Jaume Ferrà i Martorell some Arabic sweet pastries called *bulemes dolces* are described as coiled and made with the same ingredients as the *ensaimada*, although the lard is replaced by butter made from sheep's milk. However, it also says in the same recipe book that in traditional Jewish cooking there are also desserts called *bulemes* and of the same coiled shape.

Whatever the case, its popularity both on and off the island is indisputable. *Ensaimadas* today are still made according to the traditional recipe albeit now with a variety of fillings. The original ones probably weren't filled but later there appeared many tempting varieties: with *cabell d'àngel* (a preserve made of strands of pumpkin in syrup), with slices of *sobrassada* and pumpkin (typical of Carnival time) or apricot, confectioner's custard, cream, *turró* (similar to nougat), chocolate or almond.



The expanding wine market

Wine is made up of more than three hundred components which account for its unique structure. According to the experts wine is defined according to its colour, its bouquet and its taste and, as far as taste is concerned, this certainly has to be the most sophisticated product there is. The Balearics are now recovering from the concerns which came with wine making in the 19th century and many wine cellars are now applying the latest technologies to their production and aiming for excellent harvests.

It was probably the Romans who first introduced the vine and developed its cultivation in Majorca and it has remained on the island ever since. One of the most prosperous periods was in the 18th century when an annual wine production of 88,000 hectolitres in 1777 had, by the year 1802, risen to 335,331 hectolitres.

In the 1830's wine making suffered a serious setback due to the poor economy at that time and the onset of aphid plague. However, shortly after that time, France was hit by the phylloxera plague

The island's wines are constantly improving, two wine producing areas now having been awarded a Designation of Origin: Binissalem and Pla i Llevant.



and began to import Spanish and Italian wines to meet the country's considerable domestic demand. Partly as a result of this, vineyards rapidly spread throughout the Balearics. This is illustrated by the mere fact that in 1891 a total of almost fifty million litres of wine left the ports of Palma, Porto Colom and Alcúdia heading for France and the Iberian Peninsula. However, the dreaded phylloxera was soon to appear on the Balearic vines with the result that they were no longer the main source



Liquid gold

Olive oil transforms any food into gold. To food it adds personality, improves the quality, transforms the texture and imparts aroma, flavour and colour. In Mediterranean cooking olive oil is a basic essential and for thousands of years besides being a food element it was also used as a balsam, ointment and ritual oil. Modern dietetics has literally fallen to its feet in awe of olive oil, finally treated with the respect it deserves both in respect to its culinary as well as curative virtues, known as it is to reduce certain types of cholesterol and reduce the risk of coronary heart diseases.

The Spanish word for oil “*aceite*” comes from the Arabic *al-zait* meaning olive juice. It was the Phoenicians and Greeks who first introduced the olive to the Iberian Peninsula and the Romans and Arabs later improved its cultivation and production. The olive oil trade helped to develop the Mediterranean economy at the same time becoming the basic fat used in the region’s cooking. Almost ninety percent of current olive oil production continues to be made in the Mediterranean.

The island’s climate and geology favours the production of an olive oil which is sweet and fruity and full of character.



In Majorca extra virgin olive oil is produced under the protected Designation of Origin, made on the island with Majorcan olives of the *arbequina* or *picual* varieties. The degree of the olive’s ripeness at the time of picking denotes the nature of the oil: fruity or sweet. The first comes from the earlier picking whilst the second is made with riper olives and is characterised by its golden yellow colour and mild flavour.



A heavenly gift

Honey was one of the first delicacies known to mankind, praised by Virgil in his introduction to *The Georgics*: “Now I will sing the praises of honey, this rose of the air, this sweet gift from the heavens”. The Greeks and Romans used it as a cooking liquid, combining it with other ingredients to make stuffing for meat, terrines, puddings and sauces. The Arabs engulfed their desserts with honey and it has also served to conserve fruit both whole or in jams and marmalades. In the Hindu kitchen it was used to preserve meat for months. From ancient times up until the Renaissance it was used as a sweetener and condiment to many dishes, mixed with spicy or fragrant substances.

Honey is a natural product made by bees to feed their larvae and its flavour, colour and aroma differs depending on the species of flower from which the insects have drunk the nectar. The worker bees transform the nectar (a sweet substance secreted by the flowers to attract insects) into honey in their stomachs.

In Majorca the famous mille-fleurs honey is made from carob or almond trees blossom, amongst others.



Honey has been produced in Majorca for literally centuries. Beekeeping, the breeding of bees for crop pollination, collecting honey and other products, is an ancient art, which apparently originated in the Near East. The Egyptians were already breeding bees thousands of years ago and trading them along with the wax and honey on the East African coast. Until the 19th century beekeepers collected the honey and wax by killing or making the bees drowsy, that is



starters

01

- 01_Stew
- 02_Majorcan soups
- 03_Fresh escudella
- 04_Bread with olive oil
- 05_Fried cauliflower
- 06_Tombet
- 07_Stuffed aubergines
- 08_Trempó
- 09_Broad bean stew
- 10_Aubergine granada
- 11_Brut rice
- 12_Snail stew

Serves four



trempó trempó

3 or 4 medium salad tomatoes

1/2 onion

1 spring onion

2 long green peppers

1 dl olive oil

2 cs wine vinegar (optional)

salt

1. If you prefer the tomatoes skinned they have to be first scalded for a few seconds in boiling water and once cooled, finally chopped. Next wash the peppers, remove the stalk, the middle, the seeds and cut into small squares. Peel the onion and spring onion.
2. Finely slice the onion and chop the spring onion. Mix all the vegetables together in a salad bowl and season with salt, stirring to mix the flavours.
3. The salad can be sprinkled with vinegar if so desired. Afterwards add the oil and stir again. Trempó is served with pickles such as cracked olives (*trencades*), capers or sea fennel (*fonoll mari*) and slices of brown bread.

Trempó is a simple summer salad. In some cases the spring onion is replaced by a well chopped garlic clove and in others apple or apricot is added. The most important factor is that the vegetables are well coated in olive oil to be able to make the most of the soaked bread.



02

- 01_Stewed eel
- 02_Stuffed squid
- 03_Cuttlefish with onion
- 04_Common dolphinfish with red peppers
- 05_Baked fish
- 06_Red Mullet with tomato
- 07_Ray in *escabetx*
- 08_Fish stew
- 09_Pork liver paté
- 10_Slaughter fry up
- 11_Roast suckling pig
- 12_Pork loin with cabbage
- 13_Rabbit with onion
- 14_Grape harvest vermicelli
- 15_Stewed partridge
- 16_Chicken *Escaldums*

Serves four

meat and fish recipes



greixonera d'anguiles stewed eel

* 1 kg chopped eel * 2 *ramellet* tomatoes or 1 medium sized ripe tomato * 3 garlic cloves
* 2 fresh spring onions or leeks * 4 small potatoes * 1 egg * 3 or 4 artichokes * 150 g peas
(optional) * 4 almonds * 6 sprigs of parsley * salt * freshly ground black pepper * paprika
* bay leaf

1. Wash the pieces of eel well. Peel the garlic cloves and spring onions and chop separately. Scald the tomatoes, leave to cool, skin, remove the seeds and finely chop. Wash and dry the parsley, remove the leaves and very finely chop. Boil the egg, cool and remove the shell. Peel and slice the potatoes.
2. Place the pieces of eel in a bowl and season with 1/3 of the chopped garlic, a pinch of parsley, black pepper and paprika according to taste and a dash of oil. Stir well by hand and leave the eel to macerate for at least 20 minutes.
3. Heat 2 or 3 table spoons of oil in a *greixonera* or earthenware cooking dish and prepare a *sofregit* with the chopped onion and tomatoes, half the garlic and the remaining parsley. Once this is all well softened add the potatoes. Stir well and cover with water, add a pinch of salt and cook for 10 minutes. In the meantime, peel and cut up the artichokes.
4. Once boiling point is reached, add the pieces of eel together with the marinade, the artichokes, peas and the bay leaf. Stir well and cook for 10 minutes more.
5. Mix together the egg yolk, almonds and the remaining garlic. Prick the artichokes with a rod to check if tender and therefore cooked. If so add the egg mixture diluted by a little stock. Stir, check the salt and serve.

This dish is typical of Sa Pobla, the only place on the island where eels are found. As always, the recipe varies from one household to another and also according to the vegetables available with respect to the time of year.



03

- 01_Virgin's dumplings
- 02_Baked apples
- 03_Almond milk
- 04_Sweet French toast
- 05_Chard dumplings with honey
- 06_Orange flan
- 07_Quince jelly
- 08_Orellanes
- 09_Ensaïmada flan
- 10_Ricotta type cheese *greixonera*
- 11_Almond drum
- 12_Almond biscuits

Serves four

desserts





flam de taronja orange flan

250 ml natural orange juice

5 eggs

2 cs lemon juice

200 g sugar

1 cs sugar

1. Carefully measure and weigh all the ingredients. Place a bain-marie with hot water into an oven pre-heated to 150° C. Juice the oranges and strain the juice to eliminate any possible pips.
2. Put the juice in a bowl with the sugar and mix with a manual whisk, until the sugar has dissolved completely.
3. Crack the eggs and add to the juice whisking very gently so as not to create too much foam.
4. Caramelize the remaining sugar and two spoonfuls of lemon juice by cooking and stirring continuously until a translucent caramel is obtained. Pour the caramel into a flan mould.
5. Top up the mould with the egg and fruit juice mixture, place in the bain-marie and bake in the centre of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes, check if the flan is cooked by piercing the centre of the flan with a rod which should come out clean.
6. Leave the flan to cool at room temperature before removing from the mould and placing on a serving dish.

If very sweet oranges are used, the amount of sugar can be reduced. Majorcan oranges from Sóller are well renowned for their flavour and quality. In blossom time the entire valley is filled with the scent of orange blossom. A veritable delight to the senses.