

LAND OF

VALENCIA

# Gastronomy

**TURISME**  
GENERALITAT VALENCIANA  
AGÈNCIA VALENCIANA DEL TURISME

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From the sandy or rocky coastlines to the rugged mountains of the interior, visitors to the Land of Valencia and its thousand and one scenic sights will be surprised to see the fabulous riches awaiting them in the form of the popular cuisine from this Mediterranean region.

Often hidden behind the plethora of rice dishes and paellas that dominate the culinary scene, there are many other traditional dishes which are just as delicious, even if they are not as well known as their big sisters. Either urban or rural recipes, they have been perfected by time and by local wisdom, and some of them actually date back to remote periods of history.

There are *salmueras* and *salazones* (dried, salted fish and roe) going back to Greek and Roman cultures; *olletas de blat picat* (milled wheat stews) that once served as the pabulum of the Roman legions who came to conquer Hispania, according to reports by the historian Livy; *farinetes* (porridge) whose antecedents can be found in the daily gruel or pulmentum eaten by Etruscans and Romans; all the way through to the refined sweetmeats and confectionery of Semitic origin - the legacy of Moors and Jews. All these can still be observed in the cooking of the Land of Valencia, which, like that of many other regions, still contains greater or smaller vestiges of former gastronomic traditions adapted to present-day usages.

The books on agriculture by the Roman tribune Columella (*De re rustica*), Apicius' famous cookbook, the *Etymologies* of St Isidore (8th C), the *Hispano-Maghreb Cookbook* translated by Ambrosio Huici Miranda (13th C), plus many metaphorical passages in Andalusian Arab poetry from the fertile imaginations of men like Ben al Talla and Cafar Ben Utman, not to mention the book on Valencian cooking called *Arte de Cozina* by Diego Granado, cook to King Felipe II (16th C) - all constitute a rich cultural legacy related to many of the eating habits of the present-day population of this region of Spain.

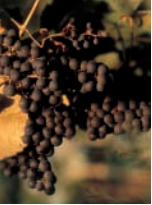
These are the historical roots of an essentially simple way of cooking, both along the coast and in the hinterlands, based on Mediterranean customs, a wise combination of natural resources and products from local gardens and orchards, all inspired by a fertile imagination, and which according to experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO), can be considered one of the most balanced diets in the world.



## ■ NATURAL PRODUCTS WITH THEIR OWN DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN

If we delve deeper into the basics behind Valencian cooking, we can see that the "storeroom" supplying the ingredients is well stocked with quality products. These form part of an important heritage built up over the centuries.

They are often protected by the so-called "denominations of origin", meaning they are controlled products from certain demarcated areas, offering all the premium quality this involves. Caught from the sea using coastal fishing techniques, or grown in the fertile soil of the region - along alluvial plains near the sea or on terraced slopes of the inland mountains - matured by the warm sun, many of these products are inexorably linked to the geographical areas they come from.



*Valencian cuisine mixes mountain and sea. Shown above is a fishing port where fresh fish and shellfish arrive daily thanks to thriving fleets, and fine fruits and vegetables from orchards and market gardens.*

And the above list does not include industrial products such as the nougat-like *turrón* from Xixona and the fine-tasting chocolate from La Vila Joiosa - products that are highly important in the lineup of Valencian and Spanish products, especially at Christmas time. Also of note is the small game hunted in forests and scrubland, ducks from lagoons and marshlands, the more homely free-range chicken, and locally harvested snails from the garden and mountain, all of which are essential in many dishes that are typical of this region.

Today, on the threshold of the 21st century, as food suppliers become increasingly globalised in their approach, and new products and materials are continually appearing, dealing severe blows to traditional and regional cuisine throughout Europe, preserving age-old traditions and culinary styles is a true luxury, a luxury that Valencia has learned to cherish.





**Arròs a banda** ("A banda" style rice)

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1/2 kg. anglerfish, 1/4 kg. mackerel, 1/4 kg. horse mackerel, 1/4 kg. blue-mouth rock fish, 1/4 kg. eastern stargazer, 1/4 kg. squilla, 150 gr. cauliflower, 4 small potatoes, 400 gr. rice, 2 dried red pepper pods, 4 cloves of garlic, saffron, olive oil, salt.

**Preparation:**

Lightly fry the dried red pepper pods and grind them in a mortar with the garlic cloves. Add a little salt. Lightly fry the cauliflower and potato in the same oil and add the crushed pepper. Pour in water to cover the ingredients and let simmer for 10 minutes. Add the fish in order of texture and hardness. Add the saffron, leave the fish to simmer for 10-12 minutes and then strain off the stock. Add salt to taste. In a separate casserole, lightly fry the rice in a little oil and then add the fish stock.

Leave to simmer for 18 minutes and then turn the heat off. Let settle for 5 minutes before serving. The fish is served separately (hence the name "a banda") as a second dish.



*In the Land of Valencia rice is an inevitable reference. It is used with meat, with vegetables and fish. The beautiful Albufera lagoon and other marshlands provide eels and duck - also basic ingredients for some dishes.*

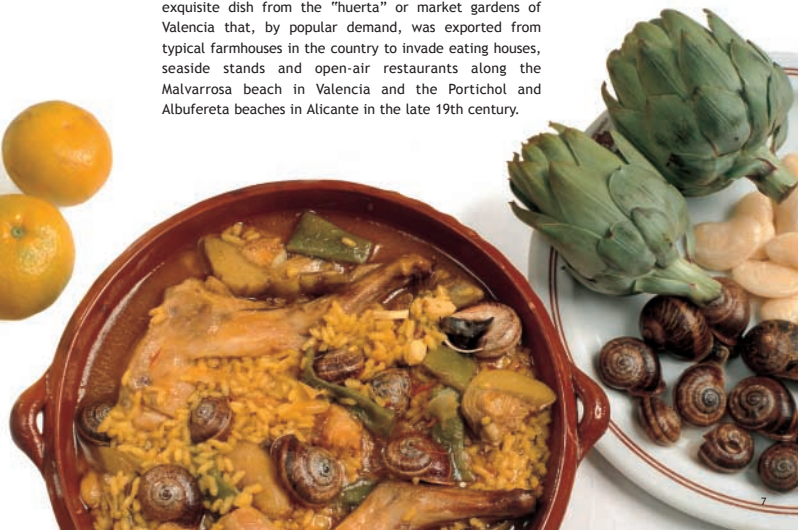
**Arroz al horno** (Oven-baked rice)

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1/2 kg. pork ribs, 1/4 kg. dry blood sausages, 1 head of garlic, 2 tomatoes, 250 gr. rice, 2 medium-sized potatoes, 125 gr. cooked chickpeas, olive oil, salt.

**Preparation:**

Lightly fry the meat, sausages and garlic in an earthenware casserole. Then add one tomato and stir the rice around the casserole a few times. Lightly fry the other tomato in slices. Add a double measure of water, season and add the pre-cooked chickpeas. Slice the potatoes, lightly fry them and place them together with the tomato on top of the rice. Bake in the oven until golden brown on top.

**THOUSANDS OF RICE DISHES**

Despite the culinary diversity of Valencia, one has to admit that rice monopolises most menus, becoming an inevitable reference point. Quite rightly the Valencian food critic Antonio Vergara states that "the Spanish Mediterranean is like a tiny China. The difference is that our methods of cooking rice are much more entertaining, more colourful, and more pleasing to the eye than those of China."

The repertoire of Valencian rice dishes is by no means a monotonous succession of paellas - that humble yet exquisite dish from the "huerta" or market gardens of Valencia that, by popular demand, was exported from typical farmhouses in the country to invade eating houses, seaside stands and open-air restaurants along the Malvarrosa beach in Valencia and the Portichol and Albufereta beaches in Alicante in the late 19th century.

The lineup of specialities currently on offer at restaurants in the city, at rice restaurants near the seashore and at picnic stands on the beach are difficult to classify in a simple list. First, a division should be made between "dry" rices (paella) and rice stews (*caldoso*) cooked in *calderos*, *pucheros*, *peroles* and *cazuelas* - varying types of metal or earthenware casseroles. There are also soft, spongy rices made in earthenware casseroles like *arròs al forn* (oven-baked rice) and *arròs amb costra* (oven-baked rice with an omelette crust), whose recipes are incredibly similar to that of the *arròs en cassola al forn* described in a 16th-century Valencian cookbook called *El Llibre de Coch*, by Robert de Nola (1520).



## ■ THE PAELLA AS A RITUAL

Returning to the family of the so-called "dry" rices, the typical paella is the prime representative of this class. It is cooked in a flat metal pan provided with two handles riveted to the sides. Paella-type rice can be prepared with chicken or rabbit or both, with shellfish, fish of various kinds, or with vegetables only. The combinations are practically limitless - ranging from meatless "Lent" paella containing only salted codfish and cauliflower, to paella made using small game fresh from the hunt.

For all good Valencians priding themselves on their origins, rice - so combinable with different flavours and ingredients - is practically a symbol of their identity, an emblem that always provokes a certain amount of controversy when it finally reaches the table.

Because of its very nature, the paella is exaggeratedly Baroque. It is a festive, popular and, curiously enough, a masculine meal customarily made by men out-of-doors. The Valencian phrase *anar de paella* (to go paella-eating), customarily used throughout the region, provides a glimpse of the ritual nature of this pursuit, which may involve outings, hunting parties, picnics and the like. Making a paella is less simple than it looks, and there are self-named specialists in every single village, town and district. The actual style is greatly dependent on environmental factors, such as the availability of raw materials, the type of rice grain (*bomba*, *granza*, *secreti*), the composition of the local water, the proportion of oil actually used, not to mention the kind of wood used to kindle the paella fire - another art in itself.

*A typical "fideuà" from Gandia, which is similar to a seafood paella, but made with noodles instead of rice.*



*In Valencia rice is a symbol of regional identity, an emblematic dish.*

Although there are as many kinds of paellas as there are districts in the region, genuine Valencian paella most always has a good helping of *ferraduras* (long, wide-pod green beans) and *garrofó* (giant dried butter beans). As for meats, chicken is the most common, followed by rabbit, and exceptionally wild duck. Adding extra flavour are white-shelled mountain snails known as *xonetes* or *vaquetes* with thin black stripes, providing what some call an exquisite taste, and often fetching very high prices. But there are also seafood and shellfish paellas, which in recent years have become increasingly popular, particularly the high-priced but mouth-watering lobster paella.



Rices are cooked in pots, earthenware casseroles, steel casseroles and the famous metal paella pans.



Whatever the ingredients may be, when an orthodox paella reaches the table, the grains of rice should be crisply dry, loose and golden, never mushy or sticky, leaving no trace of oil if served on the plate. When the paella has been cooked over an outdoor wood fire, the paella-eating ritual calls for diners to sit in a circle around the pan placed on its fire irons, and eat from the communal pan using a boxwood spoon and occasionally refreshing themselves with gulps of cool wine from a *porrón* (a glass wine jug with a pointed spout that drinker's tip up and pour into their open mouths).

Another highly popular recipe using the same flat pan is the *fideuà*, which is a 'rice' dish using fish and shellfish, made with noodles instead of rice, cooked in a fish stock. This dish is delicate and mellow, with colours ranging from golden yellow when it contains seafood and saffron, to jet black when garnished with squid or cuttlefish ink. Restaurants in the resort town of Gandia organise highly popular competitions to see who makes the best *fideuà*. The Marina district of Alicante abounds with seafood *fideuàs* using very thin vermicelli noodles, or sometimes thicker noodles and clams, or black noodles bathed in squid or cuttlefish ink.



Fish and shellfish form the basis of succulent rice dishes in casseroles.



### Fideuà ("Noodle paella")

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1/2 kg. small fresh fish of the day, 1/2 kg. diced tunny, 1 tomato, 2 dry red pepper pods, 6 cloves of garlic, 1/4 kg. baby squid, 3 strips of sweet red pepper, 375 gr. "fideuà" pasta (short, thick hollow noodles), saffron, olive oil, salt.

**Preparation:** Boil the small fish in water with a little oil and two cloves of garlic over a low heat. Strain off the fish stock. Discard the small fish. Lightly fry the dry red pepper pods, then the tomato and the strips of red pepper. Crush the dry red pepper pods, plus the garlic, in a mortar, season to taste and reserve. Optionally, flour the tunny, fry lightly and reserve. Tip the oil used for frying into a paella pan. Stir the uncooked noodles around in this oil for a few minutes over a low heat. Add the crushed red pepper pods, the saffron and baby squid and stir around the pan a few times. Add the fish stock and leave to boil for 15-18 minutes. Just before it is done, add the red pepper strips. The noodles, when done, should be just turning soft.







In the interior, stews and boiled dishes are popular (ollas, olletes, putxeros and tarongetes), using vegetables, legumes and pork as their main ingredients.

### Olleta ("Pork stew")

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1/4 pork ribs, 1/4 pork ear, 1 trotter, 150 gr. white beans, 150 gr. pinto beans, 150 gr. ground wheat, 2 blood sausages, 2 carrots, 2 turnips, 4 cardoons, 1 sweet potato, 2 chard leaves, salt, olive oil.

**Preparation:** Leave the beans to soak overnight on the day before. Wash and cut the vegetables. Place all the ingredients in a pot with water and season to taste. Boil over a low heat for two and a half hours. About three minutes before turning off the heat, peel the skin off the blood sausage, chop it up and sprinkle it over the stew.



## STEWES AND HOT-POTS

Any report on Valencian gastronomy should include important local stews and boiled dishes called *ollas*, *olletes*, *putxeros* and *tarongetes* (sometimes with dumplings or *pilotes*), most of which contain ingredients such as pork, sausages, calabashes, chard leaves, grains of wheat, chickpeas, beans and rice. From the Els Ports district in the mountainous hinterland of Castellón to the Vega del Segura along the southern coast of Alicante, the Land of Valencia has lots of surprisingly unique stewed dishes to choose from.

In Castellón, mention can be made of the *olla de recapte*, a typical stew from Morella, containing vegetables, legumes and a variety of meats, including dried beef; *l'olla de cardets*, using cardoon, chard and beans; *l'olla barrejada*, whose main ingredients are lamb, bacon and chickpeas. This province has a noteworthy cookbook for hearty, mountain fare. Closer to the seashore in the same province, in the La Plana district, people are fond of power-packed specialities such as *l'olla de la Plana* and *l'olla churra*.

In the mountains of Alicante province and the hinterland of Valencia, the so-called *olleta* is the queen of the stews. It is a succulent dish - one of the most refined of Spanish stews - very much like the vegetable and chickpea stew called *potaje caldoso*, seasoned by the use of aromatic sausages (whose fat is duly scooped off), and boasting an exceptional taste. Some stews vary according to the occasion being commemorated, such as the *puchero de San Blas*, or St Blaise's stew, typical of Bocalrent. The leftovers are very often kept and fried up as hash, or used in other recipes that prolong the culinary delights long after the feast-day has actually been celebrated.



Lamb features in dishes that used to delight shepherds, and now make everyone else's mouth water. Shown here is a lamb stew called "caldereta", and a leg of lamb stuffed with black truffles.

The case is the same with the boiled Christmas stew called *cocido de Nadal*, from which a soup is first made, then the meatballs, meat and vegetables are served, after which rice is made with the stock on the second day, and perhaps on the third day *ropa vieja* ("old clothes") - a hash made with the leftovers fried in tomato sauce and garlic. These gastronomic rituals are described in literary works such as Blasco Ibañez's novel *Arroz y Tartana* ("The Three Roses", Dutton & Co. New York, 1932) and a work by Teodoro Llorente Falcó called *Memorias de un sesentón* ("Memoirs of a Sexagenarian").

Succulent stews should also include the so-called *gazpachos* and mountain stews from the interior, not to be confused with the Andalusian-style cold vegetable soup called *gazpacho andaluz*. *Gazpachos* from the valley of Ayora, from the Vinalopó, and those of La Plana and Requena-Utiel in fact consist of stewed game (rabbit or hare, partridge or quail)



A bean and partridge stew, or perhaps a duck stew, serve as a good introduction to Valencia's gastronomic delights from the pot.

finely shredded, which is thickened using dried, unleavened bread called *tortas*. It is something like a rustic version of a meat lasagna.

Delicious dishes of pastoral origin such as the irreplaceable lamb stews made in the season of the Moors and Christians festivals - good for low fat diets - are still absolutely modern in approach despite their long history. In some coastal areas, fish and shellfish *gazpachos* are made, although these are of more recent origin.



## FRESH FISH AND SHELLFISH FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN

Exemplifying the kind of wisdom to be found in simplicity, fish and shellfish in the Land of Valencia are usually prepared in uncomplicated yet mouth-watering ways: baked in the oven, hot from the grill, done over charcoal, lightly fried, or cooked in succulent yet simple stews. Despite the increasingly scarcity of certain species, the traditionally hard-working fishing ports along the Mediterranean still bring in fresh catches almost daily, much like they did in the days of the famous beach and fishing paintings by Joaquin Sorolla. This can be seen in a visit to Valencia's modernist Central Market.







## Gazpacho marinero (Fisherman's Stew)

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1 kg. small rock fish, 4 cubes of swordfish, 2 ripe tomatoes, 3-4 cloves of garlic, 100 gr. onion, 8 mussels, 8 clams, 4 scampi, 4 red shrimp, *ñora* (dried red pepper), 1 teaspoonful of *pebrella* (wild thyme), 100 gr. flour, 25 gr. yeast, salt, olive oil.

**Preparation:** To make the pasta base for the *gazpacho*, tip the flour into a bowl, add a pinch of salt and half the yeast, then add the water and mix well to form the dough. Cover with a damp cloth and after an hour mix the other half of the yeast in water and add to the mixture. Let the dough stand for 8 hours. After this make walnut-sized balls and flatten them out with a rolling pin. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes at 160°.

Prepare the stock using the *morralla*, or small fish. Fry the dried red pepper in a frying pan and then crush it in a mortar together with the raw garlic. Add the raw grated tomato and reserve. Tip the finely grated onion into the oil used to fry the pepper. When soft, add the fish and shellfish. After a few minutes, when the mussels and clams have opened, add the crushed garlic, pepper and tomato mixture. Pour in the strained fish stock and the wild thyme and season to taste. Leave to boil for 5 minutes and then add the *gazpacho* pasta, well broken up into pieces. The dish should have a sauce of reasonable consistency, neither too thick nor too thin.

Some of the typical fish from which delicious fisherman's dishes are made include tunny, sardine, hake, red mullet, sole, anglerfish, octopus, swordfish, grey mullet, narrow-mouthed catshark, common pandora, cuttlefish, redfish, mackerels, blue-mouth rock fish, wreck-fish, rays, gilthead, forkbeards and milt.

The so-called *sucs* and *suquets de peix* are simply fish stews often made in paella pans using a variety of fish in sauce created by using crushed almonds and garlic. Valencian fish soups are made from *morralla*, a medley of small fish and shellfish; casseroles or *cassolas* are made using lightly fried mixtures of tomato, onions and finely chopped garlic over which slices of fish are placed; fish à la sel - a recipe from the ancient Phoenicians - are baked in the oven without any other seasoning than their own juices boxed in by the effect of the salt covering.



Outstanding among the fisherman's dishes along the coast are the "sucs" and "suquets", fish and shellfish cooked in a tasty sauce. Of note among the shellfish are the fresh prawns from Peñíscola and Vinarós.





## ENTRÉES

One chapter worthy of special mention are the typical appetisers served before the main meal, which in the form of *salmueras* and *salazones* - just like pork sausages and other meat products - are none other than ancient preparations intended to preserve food by salting or drying, saving today's catch and keeping it for tomorrow.



Dried and salted fish preparations are exquisite appetisers. Just like local salads and pizza-like "cocas", with bread-like bases topped with anchovies, sausages or dried fish and tomato.

Similar preserving is carried out on local meats as well. Pork sausages include black *botifarres* (blood sausage), *llonganissa* (pork sausage), long, thin Easter sausage called *llonganissa de Pascua*, white sausages called *blanquets*, red-hot *chorizos*, and the typical *sobrasada* (red sausage spread) from the Marina district. All these can be eaten either as is, or fried, or as ingredients in rice dishes and stews. Many of them are unique to a particular area, of Moorish influence, using herbs from the local mountains, plus cinnamon, nutmeg, dried fruits and nuts, and aniseeds.

### Borreta de melva (Blue-mouth rock fish stew)

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 200 gr. dried blue-mouth rock fish, 3 dry red peppers, 4 potatoes, 2 onions, olive oil, salt.

**Preparation:** Pour water into a steel casserole and place over the heat. Slice and add the onions and potatoes. When boiling add the dried blue-mouth rock fish, after desalting for 3-4 hours, and then add the dried peppers. Pour in the olive oil and salt to taste. Boil over a low heat.



## Coca farcida (Stuffed "cocas")

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:** 1 kg. flour, 1/2 l. olive oil , 1/2 kg. onions, 1/2 kg. ripe tomatoes, 125 gr. dried tunny trunk, 250 gr. peas, 1 hard-boiled egg, 20 gr. salt, bicarbonate, olive oil.

**Preparation:** Mix the flour, salt and bicarbonate in a bowl. Pour in hot olive oil. If the mixture is too dry, add some boiling water.

To prepare the tomato mixture, lightly fry the onion, tomatoes and add the peas and the shredded tunny. The dried tunny trunk should be desalted previously for three hours, changing the water continually. When the mixture is properly fried, add the hard-boiled egg in small pieces. Spread a layer of dough over a pre-greased tray. Spoon on the tomato mixture and cover with another layer of dough. Bake in the oven until golden brown.



Legumes and vegetables, such as artichokes from Benicarló, come in outstanding qualities. They form the basis of many traditional and modern dishes.

## VEGETABLES FROM THE MARKET GARDEN

This inventory of Valencian food cannot be concluded without making reference to a chapter that is as unique as it is considered modest. This is the case of vegetables and legumes from the Land of Valencia's famous "huerta" or market gardens surrounding the city and along the riverbanks.

One dish which is probably more frequently eaten than the paella is the so-called *bullit*, consisting of boiled vegetables like chard, green beans, onion and potato, a simple entrée usually eaten at dinner time. Using broad beans, peppers, artichokes, aubergines, cardoons, calabashes and turnips, thousands of different dishes can be made, starting with imaginative salads and perhaps concluding with assorted vegetables from the grill.



According to Valencian gastronomy scholar Carlos Llorca, turnovers called *empanadas*, pizza-like *cocas* and *minxos* form part of a select gastronomic lineup, especially in Alicante province. These are usually stuffed with different vegetables (chard, peas, onion, peppers and aubergine) or covered with dried meats, sausages or salted and dried fish, resulting in delicious creations as good as the finest of pizzas.





### ■ SWEETS OF MOORISH ORIGIN

For dessert in the Land of Valencia there are artisan cheeses - *cassoleta*, *de servilleta*, *Tronchón*, *Burriana*, *Puzol*, *Cervera* - of very savoury characteristics, and a wide array of unique sweetmeats which are usually made during religious feasts in the Christian calendar.

Sweet floury breads halfway between normal bread and confectionery are zealously made at the end of winter, and Easter brings a wide variety of typical *monas de Pascua*, or Easter loaves. In addition to sweet pastries and confectionery called *pastes* and *pastissos*, *coques* and *coquetes* at any time of year, we can add an emblematic dessert dish going by the name of *arnadí*, made using sweet potato or pumpkin; custard; Fallas buns; *pastis de gloria* made for the Saturday before Easter; *leche merengada* (ice cream made from milk, egg whites and flavourings); tiger nut milk called *horchata*; cheese custards; anisette rolls; pumpkin turnovers, crisp almond cookies called *carquínolis de avellana*; *orelletes* (pan fried sweets) and a very long list of other delicacies.



Many Valencian sweets are made on specific holidays. The sweetmeat lineup in the Land of Valencia is one of the most extensive in the world. Among the most famous are "horchata de chufas" from Alborià. Ice creams and cold creams from Ibi and Xixona.

The repertoire for the sweet-toothed includes other star performers in Spanish gastronomy: none other than the nougat-like *turrónes* from Xixona and Alicante, made from the abundance of almonds and honey produced in various districts of the province. *Turrón* comes in hard and soft versions, accompanied by marzipan, and cookies called *panellets* and *huesos de santo*.

This list also compulsorily includes ice creams and chilled creams usually made using artisan methods according to long-established traditions in the Marina Baixa district, where the towns of Ibi and Xixona stand out as indisputable ice-cream capitals. Refreshing drinks accompanying the sweets go by the names of *leche merengada*, barley water, iced coffee and iced lemon, a field in which the town of La Vila Joiosa enjoys great prestige.







### Pastissos de Moniato (Sweet potato pastries)

Serves: 6

**Ingredients:** For the dough: 1/2 glass of high-alcohol "cazalla" (aniseed spirit), 1/2 glass of olive oil, 1/2 kg. sugar, 3/4 kg. flour, 1 egg.  
For the filling: 3/4 kg. white sweet potato, 1/4 kg. sugar, cinnamon.

**Preparation:** For the filling, boil the sweet potatoes with their skins on. Peel, and scoop the pulp out while still hot and mix with the sugar and a pinch of cinnamon until a thick paste is formed.

To make the dough, mix the aniseed spirit and the olive oil together with the sugar in a pot over a low heat. Take care that the high-alcohol spirit does not catch fire. Cover with the lid for a few seconds if it does. When part of the alcohol has evaporated and the sugar has dissolved, add the flour. Mix well to form a paste. This process should last about 20 minutes in all. To make the pastries, the dough should be worked while hot. Spread them out in round portions (using a glass as a mould) on a smooth oiled surface. Fill with the sweet potato paste and close. Seal the ends by crimping with a fork. Brushed over with a beaten egg to achieve a shiny gloss when baked. Place in a pre-heated oven and bake for 25 minutes at 220°.



### Helado de turrón (Nougat ice cream)

Serves: 6

**Ingredients:** 1/2 l. milk, 100 cc fresh cream, 100 gr. sugar, 150 gr. Xixona turrón.

**Preparation:** Use a knife to slice up the soft turrón. Mix it with the milk, sugar and cream to obtain a paste, neither too soft nor too hard. Leave to stand for over five hours. Tip into an ice-cream dish and freeze until it has the desired consistency.



With honey and almonds, confectioners in these lands make famous desserts such as the nougat-like "turrónes" from Xixona and Alicante, in addition to "panellets" and marzipan.

## THE PLEASURE OF GOOD COOKING

In recent years Valencian catering and restaurateuring has made great strides forward. In the most unimaginable places - sometimes hidden away in villages of the interior, or next door to a tourist resort along the coast - one can find restaurants with a style of their own, offering quality products, practising modern Mediterranean cuisine and sometimes delving into the adventure of the avant-garde, but always faithful to their roots, making extraordinarily chromatic, picturesque and convincingly healthy dishes. There are many fine examples of the way the new generation of Valencian cooks respond to demand using new techniques, lots of imagination and benefiting from their deep knowledge of the region's raw materials. This is part of the culinary richness of the Land of Valencia, where regional recipes are an important source of inspiration for professionals involved in the culinary field.

*Valencia cuisine is evolving at an increasing rate, with traditional recipes sharing the table with modern inventions.*



The progress being made in Valencian restaurateuring is so notable that certain geographical areas have numerous establishments with star listings in fine gastronomy guidebooks. In addition to restaurants, there are many attractive tapa bars offering freshly made snacks and appetisers - Alicante is known as one of the best tapa areas in Spain in view of the quality of its raw materials, where the Spanish ritual of tapa eating reaches sublime levels.

Tasteful Mediterranean cooking in the Land of Valencia is very much alive today, bringing new delights each year. Here cooking harmoniously combines pleasure and health in equal proportions. If you know the places to go for gastronomic secrets, eating can become a true fiesta in this region.

## ■ VALENCIA WINES - INCREASING QUALITY

In Valencian gastronomy the role of wine is no less important than that of food, with regional wines increasing their quality substantially in recent years.

White wines, red wines, rosés and sweet wines come from three officially recognised denominations of origin - Alicante, Utiel-Requena and Valencia - to which the wine-growing areas of Benirráres, north of Alicante, and Sant Mateu, in Castellón province, can be added.



Using *monastrell* and *tempranillo* grapes, to which other varieties such as *cabernet-sauvignon*, *merlot* and *syrah* have been added, Alicante province manages to achieve very straightforward, fruity wines with medium bodies and outstanding tannin levels. There is a famous Alejandría muscatel wine, some very pleasing white wines, either dry or sweet, and fragrant fruity wines. Modern sweet muscatels from La Marina Alta are the pride of the district.



*Valencia wines have evolved spectacularly, thanks to advance technology and age-old traditional knowledge, very fine whites, reds and rosés are obtained.*

Another quality Alicante wine is called Fondillón, a typical old maderised white wine with a high alcohol content, rich and red in its early stages but turning amber following barrel maturation, made from grapes drenched by the sun and held up on cane supports, some of which are also ideal as dessert grapes. In Utiel-Requena, where the red *bobal* grape thrives in the company of *tempranillo* and other "improvers" (*cabernet-sauvignon* and *merlot*), increasingly attractive reds and rosés are being obtained. The rosés are balanced and fresh, with an agreeable flavour, and the reds have medium full bodies, savoury and elegant with all the characteristics of the finest Spanish wines.

Also noteworthy are the wines produced in the 66 municipalities in the Valencia denomination of origin, an area encompassing four sub-zones - Alto Turia, Clariano, Moscatel de Valencia and Valentino - with a Mediterranean climate enjoying variable sea influences, giving rise to highly-appreciated whites, rosés and reds exported throughout Europe. These quality wines enjoy increasing recognition, and combine well with recipes from the Land of Valencia.



## PRACTICAL TIPS

For further information, please contact any of the offices in the Regional Government's Tourist Info Office network, with over 90 information sites available throughout the land of Valencia.



### Tourist Info Alicante

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### Tourist Info Castellón

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### Tourist Info Valencia

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If you need more information on the tourist lineup in the Land of Valencia, visit us on the Internet. You'll find all the information you require to prepare your trip and enjoy yourself during your stay in the region.

Beaches, fiestas, urban tourism, cuisine, routes, accommodation, leisure and special events and activities, tourist offices and lots more...

[www.comunitatvalenciana.com](http://www.comunitatvalenciana.com)

...your guide to Valencian tourism on the Net.



