

## Catalan Cuisine

Catalan cuisine encompasses influences from Spanish, French and Italian cooking.

The province of Girona boasts one of the most carefully preserved cooking traditions. It brings together the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean to create the concept of mar y montaña /mar i muntanya (sea and mountains). The geographical diversity puts everything into the melting pot: meat, poultry, game, fruit and vegetables. This is a cuisine that likes to mix flavours, sweet and salty or fish and meat.

### Shopping for food in Girona / What to Buy

Shops open at 9.30am then close for lunch, re-opening again at 5pm until 8pm.

The supermarkets (Champion on the way into La Bisbal from Girona offers magnificent cheese, fish, and wines) remain open all day apart from Sundays when they generally close all day.

The Autonomous Catalan Government, the Generalitat de Catalunya, established a 'Denomination of Quality' Products included under this system are the apples of Girona and the anchovies of L'Escala.

Other notable products to buy in this region are the many types of Catalan Sausage (Botifarra, Fuet, llonganissa, peltruc), wild mushrooms, mature cheese and goat or sheep's milk cream cheese, plus fruits, jams and preserves.

### Eating at home: a seasonal guide

*Spring:* Savour the tastes of spring with an omelette of courgettes, aubergines, garlic, artichokes and wild asparagus, or try tender spring lamb with minted peas and Morels (wild mushrooms). (Ask the butcher for the youngest lamb they have, this is the best.) There are specialist pork butchers that sell mouth-watering suckling pig, but you'll need to order it in advance. The fishing season starts around May, so pass by the fishmonger and see what delights grace the stalls. Cook up a magnificent suquet, the traditional Costa Brava fisherman's dish made from a selection of fish, usually hake (Merluza / Lluç) and monkfish (Rap / Rape) boiled in a thick broth and sofrito, garnished with mussels (mejillones/musclos) and served in a 'cazeula' (earthenware dish).

*Summer:* Fiesta season! The season that brings the mar i muntanya / mar y montaña (sea and mountains) concept into its own. Try Chicken with lobster, the Costa Brava classic. It seems an unusual combination, but you'll soon appreciate the enjoyable mixture of flavours. In Girona there are chicken specialists that can recommend not only which parts of the chicken you should use for particular dishes, but can also offer expert advice on cooking methods and recommended accompaniments (guarnición / guarnicio). Another masterpiece and probably one of the most unusual in the Catalan cookbook is the Estartit stew of sausage, rabbit, shrimp and fish, called 'Sea and heaven'.

*Autumn:* The hunting season and that of the wild mushroom, of which there are many (see guide below). Salads and vegetables make popular autumn meals. Combine this with fish and try esqueixada (salt cod salad) as a fresh palate-stimulating starter. During this season more so than any other, you'll see the streets lined with stall upon stall of succulent vegetables, all waiting to be chopped and roasted in olive oil, garlic and herbs for the perfect Escalivada, Tumbet or Xamfaina. Add this to a dish of oven-roasted veal for a hearty meal. Panellets are rich almond biscuits made in every household in Catalonia to celebrate the eve of All Saints Day. They are accompanied by roasted chestnuts and mature wine and can be kept for a long time, so make a big batch!

*Winter:* Warming meals, soups and winter vegetables like turnips, cabbage and parsnips. Snails and truffles are a winter delicacy, as are the sea urchins celebrated during the seasonal gastronomic feast from January to March. For Christmas, Escudella i carn d'olla is the dish of the day. This is a Catalan soup made with the famous pilota, a meaty 'dumpling' made of parsley, breadcrumbs and egg. The stew probably has more ingredients than any other in the whole country: veal, bacon, beef, chicken, pig's ear and trotters, pork, white and black butifarra, ham and marrow bone, chickpeas, beans, potatoes, cauliflower, egg, turnip, carrot, garlic, flour, pepper, cinnamon and parsley.

## Dictionary of Dishes

### Starters, main courses and garnishes

Escalivada / Tumbet	Baked vegetable salad
Rovellons a la llauna	Wild mushrooms
Faves a la catalana	Stewed broad beans
Pa amb tomaquet	Bread rubbed with tomato, olive oil, garlic and salt
Botifarra amb mongetes	Sausage with white beans
Escudella i carn d'olla	Broth, stewed meats and vegetables
Cargols a la llauna	Snails
Graellada de peix i marisc	Grilled fish and seafood
Llagosta amb pollastre	Spiny lobster with chicken
Sarsuela and suquet de peix	Fish casserole
Calçots	Green onions

### Desserts

Bunyols	Fritters
Crema cremada	Caramelized custard cream
Panellets	Marzipan cakes
Torrons	Almond sweets
Tortells	Pastry rings

### Sauces

Sofrito	Garlic, onion, tomato and parsley
Samfaina	Tomato, pepper and aubergine
Picada	Garlic, parsley, almonds and toasted pine seeds
Ali-oli	Olive oil and garlic
Romesco	Spicy sauce

**Wild Mushrooms** (this is just a list – some of these cannot be translated from Catalan)

Rovellons  
Ceps  
Escarlets  
Llenegues  
Ous de reig  
Peus de rata  
Gírgoles  
Camasecs  
Pinetells  
Fredolics

More for the dictionary can be found at  
[http://www.costabrava.org/ang/gastronomia/ga\\_16.htm](http://www.costabrava.org/ang/gastronomia/ga_16.htm)

## Eating out in Girona

Girona offers a diversity of eateries, from swanky establishments with imaginative gourmet menus, to raw standing-room-only taverns where famished workers amass to satisfy their ravenous appetites.

From the traditional concerns serving age-old authentic recipes, to the prestigious Michelin guide restaurants; Girona manages to cram a spectacular assortment into a relatively small area.

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### Eating out in Girona – types of eateries

Menjadors/comedores	Sit-down restaurant or dining room in a hotel
Cerveseries/cervezerias	Beer bars
Tavernes/tabernas	Taverns
Tasques/tascas	Snack bars
Cellers/bodegas	Wine cellars serving wine from the barrel
Restaurant/restaurante	Restaurant
Marisqueria	Restaurant specialising in seafood
Meson	Meaning a 'big table' – a more modest eatery
Fonde	Eatery for the workers

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### Eating out in Girona – recommended dishes

Once you've found a restaurant that suits you (and there are many to choose from in Girona city), you might like to try:

#### Starters

##### *Pa amb tomaquet*

Thick sliced country bread rubbed with tomato, olive oil, garlic and salt and sometimes covered with slices of Serrano ham.

##### *Escalivada amb anxoves (baked vegetable salad with anchovies)*

This typically Catalan vegetable dish is accentuated by the renowned anchovies from L'Escala. Tomatoes, aubergines, onions, peppers and courgettes all thrown into the pot along with garlic and a carefully selected bunch of herbs.

#### Main course

##### *Graellada de peix i marisc (grilled fish and seafood)*

If you like fish and seafood, this is the dish to order. It's a platter of delights: usually gambas (large prawns), calamars (squid), rap (monkfish), Lluç (hake), and sometimes polp (octopus). It's a 'dry' dish – no sauce – but usually served with slices of lemon and often Ali-Oli.

##### *Botifarra amb mongetes (sausage with white beans)*

The Catalan sausage Botifarra is the UK equivalent of 'black pudding' It's a melt in the mouth meat that is enhanced by garnish of beans.

#### Dessert

##### *Bunyols/ Bunelos (fritters)*

These are fritters traditionally eaten at Christmas but also enjoyed by tourists throughout the year. They are made from dough with a hint of aniseed, deep-fried then drenched in a brown sugar, cinnamon, and guava syrup.

##### *Crema cremada (caramelized custard cream)*

No visit to Catalonia is complete without trying this dessert. Catalan cream can be described as crème brulée - creamy custard with a crisp caramel topping. Catalan creams are flavoured with lemon zest and are traditionally served in an earthenware dish.

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## **Eating out in Girona – Where to eat - Recommendations**

(Linda – have included this for reference in case you want to name any restaurants, also this website is a good guide: <http://www.restaurantsgirona.com/>)

Girona offers innumerable bars and cafés. La Rambla and Plaça Independència have the most concentrated collection of establishments.

### **Three of the best:**

Here's a selection of three, picked out as being the most well-known and offering a good varied menu:

The best restaurant in Girona and said to be one of the best in Spain, is the **Celler de Can Roca**. It is tucked away the suburbs and offers creative cuisine, a cosy atmosphere, top-class wine cellar with over 400 different wines from all over the world, home-made desserts and a delightful terrace and garden. Recommended dishes are rosemary and truffle soup and suckling pig with oranges and cloves. Average price per person is €40 plus, more if you choose the gourmet menu.

Carretera de Taialá, 40 17007, Girona  
Tel. +34 972222157 / Tel. Bookings +34 972222157 / Fax +34 972485259  
Closed Sundays and Mondays, the first fortnight in July and Christmas

**Albereda** in the historic district offers an international and Mediterranean menu. Recommendations include Anglerfish in virgin olive oil, kid stuffed with Catalan sausage with thyme and home-made pastries. The average price per person for the gourmet menu is €32 and other menus vary from €20 to €40 per person.

Calle Albereda, 7 17004, Girona  
Tel. +34 972226002 / Tel. Bookings +34 972226002 / Fax +34 972226002  
Closed Sundays and Monday evenings, Easter Week, half of August and Christmas

**Can Marquès**, established 1920, offers a menu del dia of, amongst other things, Paella (paella d'arròs), Roasted veal (Vedella rostida) and desert for €10.80 plus IVA as well as a gourmet selection and 'sugerencias' (chef's suggestions).

Plaça Calvet i Rubalcaba, 3-1702 Girona  
Tel: 972 20 10 01 / [restaurant@canmarques.com](mailto:restaurant@canmarques.com) / [www.canmarques.com](http://www.canmarques.com)

### **The best of the rest:**

**Cal Ros**, Cort Reial, 9  
Traditional Catalan cuisine, served in abundance.

**Casa Marieta**, Plaça de la Independència, 5-6  
Established 1892, specialises in typical Catalan dishes and offers a good selection of wines.

**Boira**, Plaça Independència, 17  
Serves local food and tapas.

**L'Arcada**, la Rambla Llibertat, 38  
Specialises in pizza and Italian food.

**Nelson**, Carrer Lorenzana, 44  
Specialises in local dishes.

**Núria**, Plaça Poeta Marquina  
Vegetarian food.

**La Taverna**, Plaça de l'Església del Mercadal  
Specialises in hams, pates and cheeses.

**El Museu del Vi**, Carrer Cort Reial, 4  
Tapas, local dishes and wines.

**Casa Marieta**, Plaça de la Independència 5-6, [www.casamarieta.com](http://www.casamarieta.com)  
Girona's oldest and possibly the best-value restaurant

**Al Rebost**, Pompeu Fabra, 9 17002 , Girona  
Good food served in the tranquil surroundings of the **Terrace and garden**.

**Pil.la**, Sant Narcis, 65 17005, Girona  
Vegetarian menu

**La Farinera**, Passatge Farinera Teixidor 4,  
Set in an old Modernista flour factory, Basque restaurant with excellent tapas.

**Le Bistrot**, Sant Domènec 4  
Offers a good, cheap set lunch in a lovely setting.

**El Pou del Call**, C/Força 14,  
Offers typical Catalan dishes and some Jewish ones (including kosher wine)

### Gastronomic Seasons

Throughout the year, Girona celebrates its renowned gastronomy with a series of 'Gastronomic Seasons' (listed below), which involve the promotion special menus in selected restaurants in the particular areas, cooking demonstrations and general awareness-raising publicity.

Months	Name	Main dish	Where	Information
Jan - March	La Garoinada	Sea urchins	Palafrugell	972 61 18 20
Feb - April	L'Olla de Peix	Fish stew	Sant Antoni de Calonge	972 66 17 14
Feb - March	Peixopalo	The Cod Cuisine	Sant Feliu de Guixols, Platja d'Aro, Santa Cristina d'Aro, Llagostera	972 81 71 79
March - April	La Cuina de L'Arròs	Dishes cooked with rice.	Pals	972 63 61 61
April	The Cuisines of the Broad Beans, Peas and Suquet	Fish stews and pulses	Sant Feliu de Guixols, Platja d'Aro, Santa Cristina, Llagostera	972 81 71 79
April - June	The Prawn of Palamós	The famous Palamós prawns	Sant Antoni and Palamós	972 31 95 33
April - June	The Cuisine of the Rock Fish	Celebration of the fish that congregate about the rocks	Begur	972 62 45 20
May	The Cuisine of the Market Garden products	Celebration of the fresh vegetables that compliment	Peratallada	972 64 55 22

		the gastronomy of Girona		
May - June	Tastets de Mar	Shellfish and fish	Toroella de Montgrí and L'Estartit	972 75 06 99
May - June	La Cuina del Peix Blau Ganxó	Rice specialities and Suquet of oily fish	Sant Feliu de Guixols, Platja d'Aro, Santa Cristina, Llagostera	972 81 71 79
September	The Cuisine of the Cim-i-Tomba	The Cim-i-Tomba is a traditional local fisherman's dish of fish and potatoes in an ali-oli sauce.	Tossa de Mar	972 34 01 08
Oct - Dec	The Norway Lobster	Celebration of the Lobster	Sant Antoni de Calonge	972 66 17 14
October	La Cuina del Bolet	Specialities made with local wild mushrooms	Sant Feliu de Guixols, Platja d'Aro, Santa Cristina, Llagostera	972 81 71 79
October	The Cuisine of the Small Animals and Free Range Fowl	Celebration of the dishes made from rabbit, hare and chicken, amongst other things	Peratallada	972 64 55 22
November	Cuisine of the Snails	Dishes made from snails	Mont-ràs	972 30 19 74

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