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Barcelona, Catalonia's capital of gastronomy

The capital of Catalunya, a benchmark country for gastronomy, is organising the Year of Food, Cuisine and Gastronomy. From March 2005 to March 2006, the city is celebrating 600 years of gastronomy culture with more than 100 events and activities, amongst them trade fairs for the sector, cinema and music festivals, congresses, international symposia, food routes new books with the city's restaurants, fairs in the streets and markets, wine and Cava tasting, *fiestas*, cooking competitions, an exhibition of literature on gastronomy and the creation of new, special menus.

The schedule of events will be held in different areas of the city over a yearlong period, everywhere from the Fira de Barcelona to the popular municipal markets, the city's restaurants or the Port Olímpic beaches and even the Festival Sònar. The variety of the offer, with events like literary readings, musicals, cooking, cinema, and other leisure activities like the Ciutat Vella Gourmet Route, tasting sessions for wines, coffee or chocolate means it will draw a wide ranging public. It's been designed to appeal to both local Barcelonians –young and old- and the millions of visitors that come every year to enjoy the city and its cuisine culture.

■ **Barcelona will put on more than 100 events showing Catalan gastronomy**

■ **Culinary events and others related to literature, cinema, musicals and leisure activities will take place across the city**



On the street

The events that are expected to draw the biggest crowds and citizen participation are those that will be held in the city's squares and streets, like the cooking and wine shows that the Restaurants Guild is organising. Barcelona, often called the capital of peace, will invite well known chiefs from around the world but especially in the Mediterranean Rim and Catalonia to develop the "taste for peace". These street events will be for everyone, catering for all tastes, with a tasting session for even olive oils, fruit and wine.

The shows in the city markets will be very related to the deep-rooted culture of cuisine in Catalonia. And this will even follow the seasons with shows relating directly to the season varieties found in each location. So, for example in March we will see the Pork of Osona and the truffle; May will focus on the Aplec del Cargol; in July it will be the turn of the cuisine of the Terres de l'Ebre; in September dishes from Berguedà, with the big stars being the wild mushroom; in October the emphasis moves to the dishes of Barceloneta; November is dedicated to the typical xató dishes; in January it is the game; February is for shallot. And this is how the festival of events ends.

Many cultures live side by side in Barcelona and Catalonia, and these will also be represented, as the markets will show different ethnic dishes from around the world with cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions by celebrities. All this without losing sight of the deep-rooted culture and cuisine of Catalonia. As such, the city markets will organise omelette competitions and the traditional meals for the Thursday before Shrove Tuesday. And as well, the importance of cod for Lent; la mona chocolate cake for Easter, with a big party in Portal de la Pau; Cava, with the spectacular opening of 1,000 bottles at the same time in Reina Maria Cristina and a show in Port Vell; and canelons and traditional roast meats; an attempt to revive the big festival dinners that were once so important, this time, for the Mercè festival. Finally, following the idea of bringing traditional cooking back, there will be a good tapas routes with a prize for the best quality showings and gastronomic route around Ciutat Vella.

- **Chiefs the world over will show the cuisine of peace**
- **Snails, xató, shallots, la mona and Cava will feature alongside the most multiethnic cuisine**
- **More than 1,000 bottles of Catalan Cava will be opened on Montjuïc for Sant Joan festivities**



The Literature of Flavours

The schedule of events for the Year of Food, Cuisine and Gastronomy includes a part dedicated to books and literature on food. Palau Robert will be the location for an exhibition of books on cooking, a genre that has made Catalonia world famous thanks to the success of figures like Ferran Adrià or the many TV cooking shows.

And as such, a new book is being planned featuring contemporary cuisine and the restaurants of the capital of Catalonia. And to finish, there will be a Cooking Book Fair.

A burst of rhythm, images and aromas

Music and cinema comes together with cuisine. Port Olímpic will be the location for a particular show featuring the flavours of the Mediterranean, with the participation of restaurants and even music. The Festival Sònar will also form part of this event with part of its programme given over to new cuisine. And the seventh art form will also be present with the Generalitat de Catalunya's Filmoteca hosting a film series on food and cuisine.

The art of design, that is so present in Barcelona, will also bring new light to the event with a special schedule featuring the annual gastronomy festivals in Catalonia with their corresponding programmes of events. And after such a wide selection of things to do, get extra energy taking part in some tastes at the Forum Cultural de Café with a wide selection of coffees –a wonder for coffee lovers.

■ **A show and cooking book fair bring a touch of literature to events**

■ **Festival Sònar and the Generalitat's Filmoteca staging music and film programmes dedicated to cuisine**



Courses and competitions to improve

Learn, teach and show. These three ideas sum up the spirit of the wide selection of courses and competitions on offer between March 2005 and March 2006 in Barcelona. In the Boqueria market and in the schools there will be a campaign with cuisine workshops for kids. Catalonia's cuisine culture will come to the fore thanks to special programmes offered to foreign students on Erasmus exchanges.

Regarding companies, there will be a training campaign focused on the experience of cuisine; and for professional chefs there will be a national competition to crown the best chef of the year. The objective of this event, which will be held in the Fira de Barcelona, will be to promote the profession. For younger apprentices there will be a competition for students at the Cooking Schools. And to take a break from all this activity, you can satisfy your taste buds trying some of the special dishes offered by restaurants for this occasion.

A meeting point for the public and professions

Fira de Barcelona will play host to Saló Barcelona Degusta, dedicated to small-scale quality foodstuff producers and visitors. Meanwhile Alimentària –on another scale- returns in March 2006, consolidating its leading position in the food sector.

As well, plans are afoot to stage a Chocolate Fair in the Fòrum area for the general public in which there will be conferences, sculpture, workshops, painting and cinema. Finally the Institut d'Estudis de la Mediterrània will stage a symposium on the Mediterranean's patrimony in the area of gastronomy, in which Catalonia will take a leading part.

■ **Chefs will compete to see who's best**

■ **Restaurants to offer special menus**

■ **New appointments for public and professionals: Degusta Trade Fair and Chocolate Trade Fair**



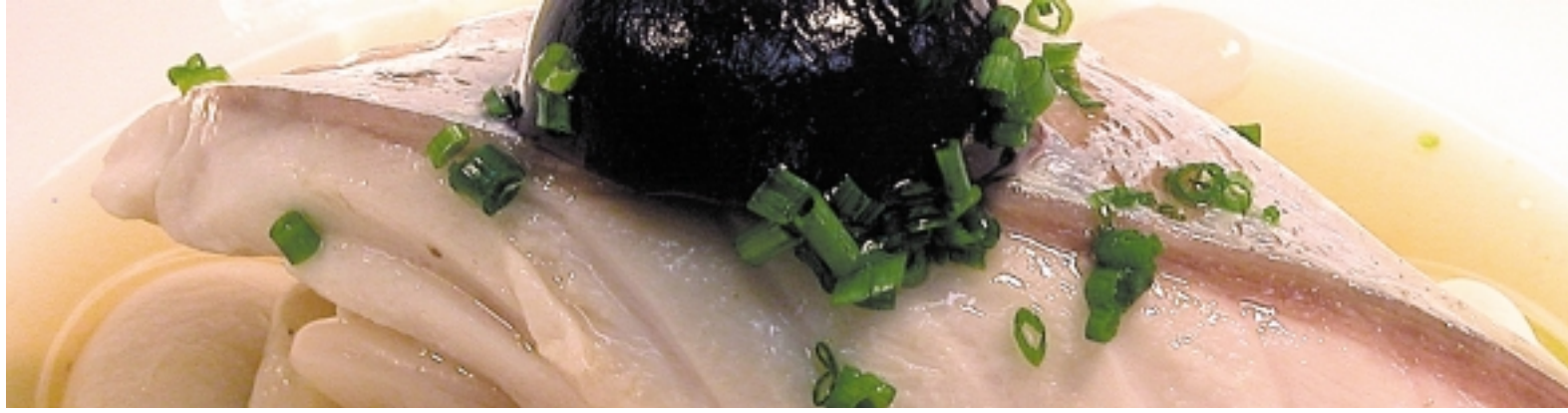
Quality Food Tourism on the rise

The idea of this campaign comes from Barcelona's experience and potential to make food and cuisine –along with Gaudí, its Gothic patrimony, Modernisme, the Born archaeological finds, or the works of Picasso, Miró or Tàpies- magnets for tourism. Gastronomy has become one of the drivers of Barcelona's economy. The Saló Internacional de l'Alimentació i les Begudes, the popular Alimentària, with 4,300 companies from 60 countries and 150,000 visitors, became the second biggest trade fair in the world in this sector in 2004, overtaking France's Sial fair. According to a study by research team AQR from Universitat de Barcelona, more than 30% of tourism spend in Barcelona goes on cuisine. In 2001 tourism generated around 835 million Euro for restaurants businesses.

Tourists like enjoying the variety of Barcelona with 10,000 or so licensed eateries (The Eixample area has 23% of all premises and Ciutat Vella, 16%). So the variety of options in Barcelona is huge. And they come in many different formulas and categories, and this has had a positive effect on how tourists see the city (they give it a 7.8 out of 10). Indeed, surveys show visitors see Barcelona cuisine as offering value for money (with a high mark of 7.6). So the binomial tourism-gastronomy is evidence of one of the city's main tourism attractions. The Boqueria market is an absolutely clear example with 2,500 tourist visits a day, which puts it on the same level as the Museu Picasso.

■ **Tourists dedicate more than 30% of spend on eating and drinking**

■ **Visitors gave Barcelona's gastronomy a high mark in terms of its value for money**



One of the best types of cuisine in the world

One of Catalonia's most identifiable faces to the world at large is its cuisine. Barcelona exemplifies the rich gastronomic tradition of a country that for many years has been a thoroughway, diverse civilisations leaving behind them their cultural mark. The capital of Catalonia, the head and home base for Catalonia, combines the cultural background of 2,000 years of history -with all the anthropological background that this implies- and the rise of new chefs which have helped bring Barcelona the honour of being named the first Gourmand City outside France in 2002. This is recognition -in a practical way- that other influential players have added to, like the *Michelin Guide*, that distinguishes the city with nine stars.

At the moment Catalonia has the privilege of being home for some of the world's top chefs. Recently, the media have featured the likes of Ferran Adrià on the frontpage of *The New York Times* and *Le Monde*, and he has in fact been chosen one of the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine. Santi Santamaria, Fermí Puig, Carles Gaig, Carme Ruscalleda and Sergi Arola, to mention but a few, enjoy huge media attention for their professional careers. This recognition all comes thanks to the solid roots of Catalan cuisine, a style of cooking that comes from tradition and a willingness to experiment with vanguard techniques, and this is what makes it stand out as one of the best sorts of cooking in Europe.

That is why Barcelona and Catalonia have decided to bring cuisine and gastronomy together for this year. With the Year of Food, Cuisine and Gastronomy we are not just paying homage to the rich tradition of Catalan cuisine, but also showing how this has managed to become integrated and open new horizons. So, it is a transversal campaign which includes everything about gastronomy, cuisine, and food, and in this sense, it embraces the food process, from markets to the elaboration of dishes and its tasting; an initiative that has to have continuity in time –a parallel course to the evolution of Catalonia's stoves.

■ **Barcelona was named the first non French Gourmand City in 2002**

■ **The Capital of Catalonia has the privilege of being home to some of the world's best chefs, like Ferran Adrià**



Project ALÍCIA

The contraction of the terms ALlmentació (food) and ciènCIA (science) has led to the Project ALÍCIA, created in 2004 with the objective of getting the best out of what is a sweet moment for Catalan cuisine and with the objective of developing a research centre, which would be open to all, under the guidance of Ferran Adrià. The opportunity has arisen thanks to a cultural centre being developed by Caixa de Manresa in Sant Benet de Bages and the implication of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

As well as adding to the high level of Catalan cuisine, Project ALÍCIA includes other aspects related to food and health, culture, education, economic promotion, and co-operation.

For the moment the Project ALÍCIA has already made enquires down various research and action lines. For example in the field of physics, chemistry and biology, they are working on a common language for science and cuisine so helping to create understanding between elaboration processes and the cooking of elements.

ALÍCIA plans to carry out campaigns aimed at getting young people to adopt healthy food habits and help stop problems like anorexia or bulimia. And in the medical area, they will be working on education programmes to improve the situation of those with hypertension problems and thus avoid dangerous heart conditions and help diabetics attain a better standard of living. The objective of the programme, then, is to develop education programmes that improve our knowledge of foods and the advantages and alternatives of balanced diets.

Another objective of the project is to preserve Catalonia's traditional genetic agriculture, strengthening the use of autochthonous varieties. This will also help develop the brand name Catalonia around the world and associate it to home-grown quality products. ALÍCIA wants to work alongside farmers and artisans and Catalan industrialists to reach this objective and at the same time get the collaboration of the best restaurateurs. In collaboration with ESADE and Intermón-Oxfam, the project plans to develop fair-trade commerce to help Third World farmers.

Finally ALÍCIA will investigate new cooking technologies and create new systems and machines to improve conservation, the elaboration, and the serving of foodstuffs. With this in mind, there will also be historical, anthropological and ethnographical studies undertaken to document Catalan cuisine patrimony.

■ **The project, overseen by Ferran Adrià, will create a new research centre open for all**

■ **This initiative aims to promote good food habits based on Catalonia branded products**



Barcelona, symbol of Mediterranean cuisine

The capital of Catalonia is well placed to compete for the title of Capital of Mediterranean Cuisine. It does not just boast exceptional variety in its gastronomy but also has great ingredients (eating habits and lifestyle) that reaffirm its position as a symbol of Mediterranean cuisine.

Fresh and elaborated products

The first great value of the Mediterranean and Catalonia's cuisine is the ingredients. Barcelona is privileged in that it has a wide variety of natural landscapes nearby: the sea, mountains, rich gardens land and drylands.

Culinary prestige also represents praise for agricultural products and farmers, which means farmers can continue to develop work on the land. For example, gastronomy brings added value to quality wines, and this has been the catalyst for the rise of Catalonia's wine business over the last few years. There are many other cases that show the value of products from Mother Earth, which are factors of territorial rebalance. Those foodstuffs that can be found in the markets are also in specialised shops in Barcelona, and this adds to the attractiveness of the city.

Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet

Foodstuffs we eat have a direct effect on our health. Catalan cuisine, the Mediterranean one, has been praised for its health qualities, which are a recognised source of good health. It is worth saying that cuisine is a reflection of the culture and way of living of a country. Mediterranean wisdom is based on equilibrium. "Not too much of anything" said Josep Pla, who was from the Empordà.

Poor eating habits –now more frequent in our society–, has a direct effect on health. We should remember how important gastronomy is. Nutritionists and dieticians have always praised the traditional food values of Catalonia and the dangers of substituting these for other models, both on our health and what this would mean on our health system, too.

■ **Barcelona's specialised markets and shops offer the best products showing Mediterranean cuisine**

■ **Nutritionists and dieticians praise the quality of Mediterranean food**



A very characteristic lifestyle

Eating times in Barcelona are very important for people, both in a personal sense and a social one. Complementarily, the culture of good eating is associated with southern lifestyle and this brings important benefits as seen in the public health records of Catalonia.

Internationally, Barcelona is known for its architecture and culture. Its bustle, climate, and the soul of the Catalan capital mean we should complement this image with other attributes, like historic patrimony, big macro-events, shopping, shows, street life, and of course gastronomy.

A great offer and prestige

The food business is one of the economic sectors that has most grown in recent years. Eateries are part of the Catalan capital's taste for the aesthetic, which is seen in the design and architecture of the restaurants. But also in another value: the presence of some of the best chefs of the time. This is all fruit of the consistency, the centuries of tradition and the willingness of Catalan vanguard cooking, which makes it one of the best in Europe.

Just as with other art forms, like music or theatre, Barcelona offers the chance to mingle with some of the great cuisine creatives of the time, which is really a unique aesthetic experience. The added value of a clever interpretation cannot be written down on a piece of paper, and precisely now, high quality the world can share with this city the success Catalonia is enjoying at this time and its gastronomy high quality.

■ **The culture of eating well has important benefits as seen by data on the population's health in Catalonia**

■ **Barcelona's restaurants are putting their money on design and the best chefs of the time**



The restaurant business as an economic engine

Gastronomy can bring great leverage to a country's economy. France learnt this some time ago, and Italy applies it with brilliant results. The real direct and indirect impact of the restaurant business goes much further than one might originally have thought.

Eating as a leisure activity

Eating out is by far the most practised leisure activity in Catalan and Barcelona society. You only have to take a walk round our city streets or those of our towns to realise just how many establishments there are. Catalan cuisine is seen through its restaurants, with a wide variety of different sorts of them. It is one of the main sources of wealth for Barcelona. The restaurants of this city are quotidian economic dynamo, since they channel thousands of services aimed at people from Barcelona and the many tourists that visit us every year.

And cuisine aimed at groups is also growing. Canteens in colleges, at work, hospitals or homes for the elderly are some of the main suppliers for a large part of Catalonia's population, and will be even more so in the future.

Gastronomic research has much to do in this field. And there is still lots more to do in the field of agricultural food transformation, one of the most solid bases of the Catalan economy, that is constantly investigating how to adapt products to the new demands and needs of the time and to gain prestige. A strong quality brand image helps market products for local consumption and, above all, export. We should not forget the commerce and distribution sectors that also benefit from the influence of these products.

■ **Eating out is one of the main leisure activities of people in Barcelona**

■ **Gastronomy is one of the main sources of wealth in Barcelona**



Trade fair activity

Gastronomy, nutrition applied through the kitchen, creates tremendous amounts of trade fair activity in the Catalan capital. Fira de Barcelona has two fairs which are benchmarks in Europe and the rest of the world. These are the Saló Internacional de l'Alimentació i les Begudes (International Fair of Food and Drinks), known as Alimentaria, which is coming close to overtaking the world leader Anuga fair in Germany. On the other hand, we have Hostelco, (the International Fair for Restaurant Equipment, Hostelry and Collectives), which is third biggest in Europe in this sector; a fair which brings together twelve benchmark shows for Continental Europe, which make them amongst the five top one in their specialities in Europe. Expoaviga, one of these shows that has proved itself, occupies the fifth spot in Europe in its sector. And the Saló Internacional de la Tècnica Avícola i Ramadera (the International Show of Poultry and Livestock), is another show of the sorts of synergies that come about from the cuisine.

Fairs in the environment of gastronomy represent about 25% of the total surface area taken up of the total of all professional fairs held every year in the capital of Barcelona in absolute terms. In 2002 the trade fair activity for food and related sectors took up 179,169 m² net space with a total number of direct exhibitors of 2,581. With this as a backdrop, the weight of the foodstuff trade fair activity is unquestionable, until the point that Fira de Barcelona represents 78% of all the net total surface area taken up in the State in this sector.

■ **Alimentaria is the second-biggest trade fair in this sector in the world and Hostelco, the third biggest in Europe**

■ **Fira de Barcelona represents 78% of all the surface area of taken up by food fairs in the State**



Gastronomy as a potential tourism hook

Gastronomy is becoming more and more one of the main reasons for choosing one holiday destination or another. Internal tourism, which plays an important role in rebalancing territories, also follows attractive food. Remember that the most famous food guidebook is by a tyre company. Gastronomy levels, then, are one of the main ways to increase tourism from abroad. Many studies and papers (report on cultural tourism by Turespaña on Spain, or that done by ENIT on the Italy brand, or latest by Maison de la France) show that the cuisine offer is one of the most important component for any destination. This explains why this sort of cultural tourism brings about higher levels of spending. Therefore, promoting gastronomy with a specific event is very coherent and advisable when trying to develop a market position for Barcelona.

The creation of the Catalonia's Club of Gastronomy, which is an offshoot from the Departament de Turisme of the Generalitat, aims to develop this line of work. As well, the Consortium Turisme de Barcelona has been aware of the importance of gastronomy for a while now, and that is why they often use this cuisine element in their campaigns here and abroad and support, for example, the present event on gastronomy. The large scale of tourism in Barcelona has a clear wealth distribution effect. Dishes prepared for tourists have this distributive effect on the local economy even though many establishments are concentrated in tourist areas, like the Eixample or Ciutat Vella. General statistics indicate that every day around one million meals are served in the capital of Catalonia.

■ **Every day one million dishes are served in Barcelona**

■ **Tourists mainly visit restaurants in the Eixample and Ciutat Vella**



Barcelona, 600 years of gastronomy culture

In 2005 we are not just celebrating a hundred or two hundred years of a gastronomy culture in Barcelona or Catalonia, but rather 600 years since the moral intellectual and counsellor to kings, Francesc Eiximenis, wrote: «Catalans eat with more grace, and better than other nations».

In the early part of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the most influential people regarding food in Europe were the cooks of Catalonia. Let us not forget that the first recipes in Latin-derived languages (14th and 15th centuries) are in Catalan, like the so-called Sent Soví. And, as the philosopher and mathematician Rudolf Grewe said in his critique of this book, Catalan cuisine of this epoch managed to achieve international fame.

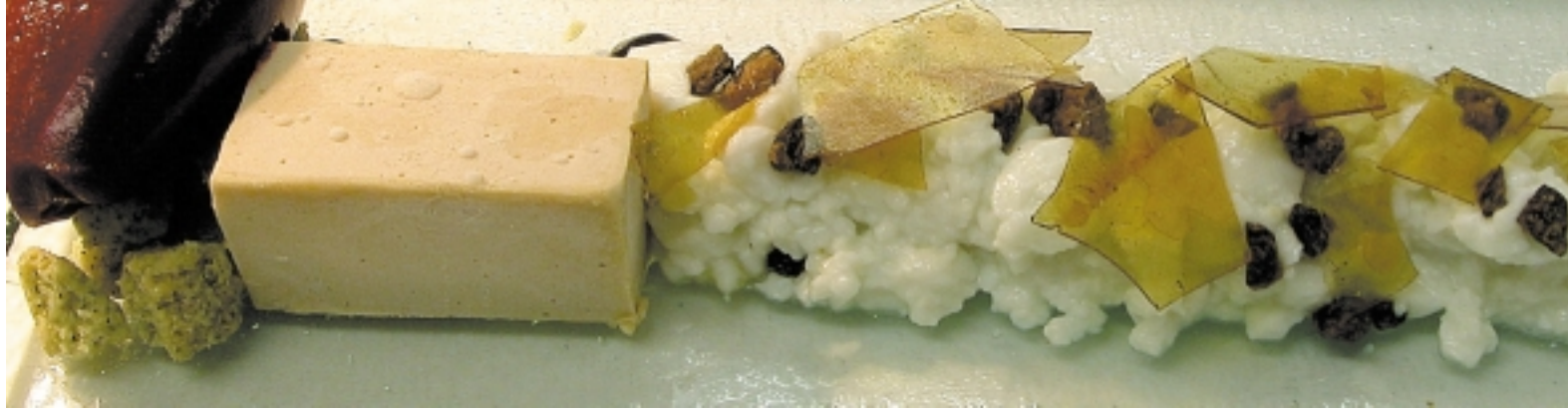
The first successful cuisine: Mediaeval Cooking

Mediaeval cuisine represented a golden age for gastronomy in Catalonia, according to Teresa Vinyoles in her book *El menjar a la Barcelona gòtica: necessitat primària i ritu social*. Probably much of the uniqueness of Catalan cuisine comes from the fact that it has managed to bring together, from the basis of its classical and visigoth heritage, the fine influences of Andalusian culture, thus guaranteeing the Mediterranean culture and transmission of oriental treasures.

The Arabs introduced or reintroduced many products to the Iberian peninsula, some of these still play a part in idiosyncratic nature of Catalan food, like rice, spinach, egg plants, lemons, sugar or pasta (*fideus*), and there was a certain taste for greens, which the philosopher Ramon Llull identified as a source of health, especially taking into account that garden fruits had really undervalued until then by feudal masters. As well, the presence of fish and other products from the Mediterranean characterised this mediaeval Catalan cuisine. And there were also some exquisite sauces like *ginestrada*, a cream made with rise, saffron, with the milk of almonds, and costum —exported to a large extent— made by cooking poultry in citric fruits, as well as various dishes delicately scented with rose water and prohibitive mixes of far off spices. Remember that ginger arrived much before *sushi*, or coriander before guacamole, and that galangà came before the Tom lam soup.

Catalonia shared this way of cooking with, firstly -and in a very special way- Occitània, as it did with serenading, the *trobadors* and an occasional heretic, and afterwards there were successful contacts with Sicily, Sardinia and the Italian Peninsula. In the moment when Catalan cuisine was really founded, it already showed its most characteristic trait: the capacity to incorporate the best of other culinary cultures, that for one or another reason, it had come into contact with. This was not a unique thing; anthropologists have shown that cuisine reflects societies quite clearly. So it is not at all strange that cuisine in Catalonia reflected the spirit of a place that was very much a thoroughfare and place of arrival, preferring to incorporate that than resist other styles.

■ **Mediaeval cuisine used the best on offer from culinary cultures that had passed through Catalan territory**



The fusion of «new» Americas products

With time ultramarine products from the Americas were incorporated into Catalan cuisine, which would look very different without them today. For example, sausages and beans (American), Egg plants with peppers (American), Soup of Cauliflower and potatoes (American), and tomato (American)-bread and even bread and chocolate (American) for an afternoon snack. But, as the historian Massimo Montanari said, «the history of food customs goes hand in glove with the vicissitudes of power and politics», or to sum up with words from the Catalan writer Joan Perucho, «If we look at the cuisine of the past, the majority of times we can glean a good lesson from social history, as well as politics».

Modern times is not especially good —as everyone knows— for the production of Catalan culture, which was persecuted and occasionally had to hide even in convents or monasteries. Precisely it was in the monasteries where many of the recipe books of the time were written, faithful to the mediaeval tradition (there was still a fair mix of sweet and salty dishes that were so liked in the Middle Ages, for example), but also with the healthy meat restrictions as prescribed by monastery rules. And bit by bit the new incorporations began to bring the makeup of the dishes, despite not losing their character, to current day ones.

■ **Potatoes, tomatoes, and beans were the most important products to come from the Americas**

■ **In modern times, Catalan recipes started to be written up**



barcelona

The first inns

The evolution did not stop there, and the first inns appeared. Sempronio explains in *Quan Barcelona portava barret* that the word «fonda» (inn) comes from the Arabic word *alfòndec*, sort of warehouse where, apart from storing merchandise, the men that transported the goods also ate and slept; a sort of urban, western caravan harem. Barcelona's most well known *alfòndec* was in the Santa Maria del Mar quarter; later to become a hostel, which was what came directly before the *fonda*.

The first inn owners were Italians and they came in the 18th century. And they would advertise themselves on wooden boards with pictures of falcons or a sabre rather than with letters for those that could not read. In the book *Vint segles de cuina a Barcelona*, Nèstor Luján explains that the most famous inn belonged to a Sardinian who had arrived in the city in 1788. In 1815 he opened Beco del Racó, where you could eat rabbit casserole, potato stew, *escudella*, meatball soup, beef stew...; a whole series of dishes that we recognise as traditional Catalan dishes and that we included in the majority of recipes when, with the Renaissance, cooking books reappeared.

«At around the end of the 19th century, in the sisos inns, where you could eat for "sis quartos" (a small quantity of money), the food on offer was great, nice and very popular. But there was also a need for a different sort of offer dedicated to the new emerging social classes because the so called "golden age", a name taken from Europe, was growing in Barcelona more and more [...] luxury sweet shops, glove makers, cake shops and restaurants were setting up like under a spell», explains Narcís Oller in his famous novel *La febre d'or*.

While the rest of the State was still crying at the loss of its colonies, in Catalonia, the flowering industrial and financial sectors had created a nouvel rich and made the already rich even richer. Barcelona became a cosmopolitan city. There were those who had a lot of money and a need to show it! One way was to go out and eat for *a duro* (a sizeable sum of money for the time) in the most exclusive and flamboyant French style restaurants opened between the 19th and 20th centuries. The restaurants, a figure that emerged with the French revolution, had become the height of refinement. Auguste Escoffier topped the evolution of the time with the sort of restaurant that took the top class French style restaurant to a new international height when he opened, along with Cèsar Ritz, a grand luxury hotel.

■ **The first inns were Italian and arrived in the 18th century**

■ **The new rich of the Catalan industrial age boosted the luxury restaurants modelled on the French style**



Exquisite and bourgeois Cuisine

In Catalonia this exquisite and bourgeois cuisine, as only it could be, was also liked. And it left its mark on those that could afford it. Great Rondissoni -the great Rondissoni, through his work at the Escola de la Dona and the magazine **Ménage**, spread the message about this type of cuisine. Meanwhile, as Rusiñol explains, «the workers that could and their bosses would get out of town on Sundays to eat rice and conger with muscles or grilled lamb» Another great cook of the time, Ignasi Domènech, who had worked with Escoffier, said this part of traditional cooking, that we have seen, continued to be added to with outside influences.

The Spanish Civil War was horrible and the dictatorship a disaster. But many people from other parts of the State came to Catalonia, bringing new cultural riches. Franco's dictatorship left Catalonia with the sensation of being a sort of cultural desert. Those that resisted, risked it all; amongst them, the writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who took on the urgent and necessary task of, that in his own words, «chronicling the signs of resistance of Catalonia's gastronomic identity». If it was a priority to "to save the words", as Espriu asked, it was also necessary to revitalise, while they still could, the culinary symbols of Catalonia that Francoism had tried to do away with. «It is all very well to be worried about the languages of nations without state, but what of cuisine without state?» he wrote. That is why he published **L'art de cuinar a Catalunya**, in 1977, a reference book for students of the history of Catalan cuisine, that was consciously written «with the intention of doing a cultural and political service (to the country)». As well as being a great writer, he managed to stop the pleasure of good food being penalised, which at the start of the move towards democracy was basically seen in a bad light, both for the parties of the left and right.

- **During the dictatorship, Vázquez Montalbán helped recover Catalonia's gastronomic identity**



The gastronomic difference: antropology and culture

Recently, gastronomy has become totally accepted as an essential part of culture. It could not be any other way, because even anthropologists have identified that cooking is one of the basic elements of human nature and the first signs of a cultural skill inherent in the human condition. A well-known phrase by the evolutionist Faustino Cordón: «Cooking made mankind». Cooking, as a human food strategy, has changed in every place and at every time depending on the geographical, environmental, economic, and social circumstances. That is why cuisine is a faithful reflection of the people and societies that put down its roots; this means, cooking forms an essential part of the cultural structure of every people: «we are what we eat», said wise men. And that is why the way we eat is a key indicator.

Cuisine has always been an inseparable element from its landscape because it is fruit of itself, as Josep Pla is said to have claimed, but also because agriculture and farming, the basis of countries food chains, generates and marks out the landscape. According to experts, the best way out is for landscape and cuisine to continue to be linked. But, beyond the strategy of sustainable food for each country, there is an undeniable fact: often cuisine becomes, because of its capacity to provoke aesthetic pleasure, an art, a popular and traditional art, in the case of home cooking served at festivals and as the basis of what is social in Catalan culture. In this sense the power of popular Catalan recipes has become public and noteworthy, a valuable patrimony that is worth saving and yet is in constant evolution.

■ **Cuisine is used as a way of
integrating other cultures**



As well, showing what is our own way of cooking, brings us to another function of gastronomy; the value of traditional cooking as part of a necessary integrating strategy for immigration. In fact cooking is already used - often unknowingly, as a way for us to get to know other cultures. It must be one of the few traits of other cultures that from the outset creates interest, predisposition, and positive vibes in general. This is not the place to carry out a social analysis of this question, but it seems obvious that in our cities, cooking is a good small ad for the introduction of contemporary multicultural society.

But cooking is also an art form created by professional chefs, with important representatives throughout our history and, above all, going through a splendid moment thanks to quite a few of our own chefs, whose excellent work has drawn attention to Catalonia by the rest of chefs the world over. Creative Catalan cuisine is, therefore, an undeniable benchmark, and it marks a new trend in the culinary evolution of contemporary restaurants. At the moment, an important part of new trends in cooking the world over is designed here.

■ **Catalan gastronomy, as an art form, has become a benchmark for contemporary cooking**



Barcelona, the year of food, cuisine and gastronomy

Barcelona and Catalonia's gastronomy merits homage: it has contributed to our territorial identity and history. Initiatives of this kind, often programmed as part of theme year promotions, are in recognition of some relevant celebrity or act that is worthy of public thanks. And the tablecloths of Catalonia contain lots of history. A series of menus, meals, and dishes have paraded on the tables of our country, and its capital for the last centuries. These are testimonies of their time, an interesting living museum of Catalonia, Europe, and its travels. Our cuisine is an inheritance from and tribute to all the civilisations that have ruled Europe since Imperial Roman times. The result is a recipe book that clearly shows what Catalans are like, and that helps define their identity and construct the culture and intellectual background of Catalonia.