

Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri Article



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Nick Malgieri is the national spokesperson for the Switzerland Tourism Gastronomy and Wine program. After culinary school in the United States, he apprenticed in Switzerland and has maintained close ties with the country ever since through frequent visits. A frequent traveler to other destinations, he collects recipes everywhere. Below is a sample of some of the recipes from his book, *A Baker's Tour: Nick Malgieri's Favorite Baking Recipes from Around the World* (HarperCollins, October 2005).

Additional information on Nick Malgieri: www.nickmalgieri.com 

Barcelona



Going Catalan

Catalonia, the area of Spain of which Barcelona is the capital, is recognized by the Spanish government as an autonomous region and a historic nationality, meaning that it has the right to self-govern within the guidelines of Spanish law. After this status was granted to Catalonia in the late 1970s, the rest of Spain followed suit and grouped into 14 more autonomous regions. But Catalonia, and Barcelona, are different. They have their own language, Catalan, as well as a long history of the arts, literature, and gastronomy unlike anywhere else in Spain. Eating around in Barcelona you'll find plenty of the old standards of Spanish cooking such as gazpacho, paella, and sangria, but look a little further and you'll find some uniquely Catalan food, and there's nowhere better to enjoy it.

The five pillars of Catalan cooking

The following five preparations, though they're often simplistically referred to as sauces, are used either as the aromatic foundation of a cooked dish or as an accompaniment to anything from simply cooked seafood to a salad. The first three are bases for cooked dishes, while the last two are simply sauces.

Sofregit is a simple mixture of onion, garlic, and tomato slowly cooked together in olive oil. It might be the beginning of a more complex dish or it might be added to one before long cooking.

Chanfaina adds red pepper and either eggplant or zucchini to the basic sofregit, above.

Picada starts out as ground almonds and is often seasoned with garlic, parsley, other ground nuts, and occasionally even chocolate.

Allioli is a garlic flavored mayonnaise and is similar to the southern French preparation of almost the same name, aioli.

Romesco is a sauce made from ground almonds, tomatoes, garlic, olive oil and vinegar.

Some of these terms may appear on menus, so a little familiarity with them is helpful.

Barcelona meals and meal schedules

Most natives drop by a café for a cup of coffee and a roll for breakfast, though cafés also offer slightly more substantial fare in the form of tostadas (a piece of buttered toast which may be ordered with a topping such as ham or cheese). Bocadillos, little sandwiches on rolls can also make a more substantial breakfast as can churro fritters with hot chocolate, also revered as a hangover cure.

Lunch usually runs from 2 to 4PM, so you might find yourself wandering into a café for a second breakfast in the late morning, especially if you are an early riser. Lunch tends to be the main meal of the day, especially since dinner is served so late. It's best to follow the Spanish trend here or you might wind up with a full stomach at 1AM when you'd prefer to be sleeping.

Tapas (see below) are certainly not unique to Barcelona, since they are more varied and more prevalent in places like San Sebastian or Seville. That said, there are plenty of excellent tapas places in Barcelona and many of them open around lunchtime and stay open until fairly late at night, since some people are still eating tapas before dinner at 11PM. Knowing a few good tapas places may be your salvation if you can't or don't want to adjust to the eating schedule of Spain – it's pretty easy to fill up on tapas and be ready for bed when most of Spain is just venturing out for dinner.

Dinner starts at 9 or 9:30PM and may easily continue until 1AM, though many kitchens close by 11:30. No wonder a coffee and a roll are enough for breakfast...

What to drink

Beer

Though Catalans love wine they are also great beer drinkers and Damm and San Miguel are two popular ones brewed in Catalonia. If you ask for a canya you'll get a small draft beer, better in quality and lower in price than bottled beer. Of course all the usual international brands of bottled beer are available too.

Cava

The “Champagne” of Spain, Cava is a dry or semi-dry sparkling wine made in Catalonia. The best are made according to the French “methode champenoise” or “Champagne method” in which the bottles are actually opened several times to nurture the in-bottle fermentation which imparts the characteristic fizz.

Sherry

Spain’s great fortified wine is acknowledged by many experts as the greatest of all in that category. See below for further discussion of Sherry.

Going for Tapas

The word “tapa” in Spanish means top or cover and the original tapas were slices of cured meat or cheese placed on the glass when it was handed over. No one seems to agree whether it was just a convenient way to hand over the snack, or whether the tapa had the practical purpose of keeping fruit flies from dive bombing into the wine.

Ir de tapas (“Go for tapas”) is a popular pursuit for a group of friends who might bar hop to taste the specialties of several establishments before the evening meal. It goes without saying that enough tapas can easily equal a meal, especially when, as in some places, tapas are available in a variety of portion sizes. Here are a few of the best tapas places in Barcelona:

With four different locations in Barcelona, Taller de Tapas is a justifiably popular destination. The website will take you through all the offerings (in Spanish with English translations below the menu items), as well as list all the wines available by the glass. Most tapas are about 3 to 6 Euros.

Taller de Tapas www.tallerdetapas.com 

Location	Address	Phone
Rambles	Rambla Catalunya 49	011 3493 487 4842
Comtal	Comtal 28	011 3493 481 6233
St Josep Oriol	Plaça St Josep Oriol 9	011 3493 301 8020
Argenteria	L’Argenteria 51	011 3493 268 8559

Another 4-location establishment Lonja/Celler de Tapas occupy slick modern premises and promise the best Mediterranean style tapas made to order. This is more of a seated at the table tapas experience as opposed to the “stand at the bar and grab”

style. www.lonjadetapas.com 

Location	Address	Phone
Celler de Tapas	Plaça Universitat 5	011 3493 317 6488
Celler de la Ribera	Plaça de le Olles 6	011 3493 310 7845
Lonja de Tapas	Pla del Palau 7	011 3493 268 7258
Lonja de Tapas	Placeda Montcada 5	011 3493 315 1447

A little more than Tapas

More than a tapas place, Bar del Pi is a lively café where you can get coffee and a pastry for breakfast or a variety of sandwiches on small rolls if you’re making it a light lunch. Their selection of tapas is not enormous, but it’s quite varied. The Pujol family has been running the café since 1927, though it was a post stop already in the late 18th century.

Bar del Pi

Plaça St Josep Oriol 1

Phone: 011 3493 302 2123

www.bardelpi.com 

More a casual restaurant than a tapas place per se, Els 4 Gats has had a long history of catering to famous artists whose original works once adorned the walls. Today they’ve been replaced by reproductions, but the quality of the food and the delightful atmosphere haven’t changed much during the restaurant’s 110 years.

Els 4 Gats

Montsio 3 bis

Phone: 011 3493 302 4140

www.4gats.com 

For a taste of real Catalan food, don’t pass by l’Antic Bocoï del Gotic, named for the city’s Gothic quarter. Traditional and contemporary takes on Catalan dishes such as coques, a kind of flatbread with toppings, pan ab tomaquet (dry bread rubbed with ripe tomato, and escalivada, a baked pepper, eggplant, and onion salad. Fish and meat dishes abound, some of which are simply grilled while others are given a full Catalan style treatment of aromatic braising.

L'Antic Bocoï del Gotic
Baixada de Viladecoï 3
Phone: 011 3493 310 5067

www.bocoi.net 

Time for sweets




These listings appeared in a previous column about Barcelona, but I feel so strongly that you should try them, I'm repeating them here.

When Espai Sucre opened in 2000 it was one of the very first all-sweet restaurants where you could have successive courses of desserts in an organized tasting menu. The brainchild of Jordi Butró and Xano Sagner, the restaurant has since spawned a dessert school and actually has an application on its website for young pastry enthusiasts eager to go and work there. A not to be missed experience in Barcelona.

Espai Sucre
Princesa 53
Phone: 011 3493 268 1630

www.espaisucre.com 

Chocolate is a big thing in Catalonia, especially in Barcelona. Antonio Escriba now runs the chocolate and pastry business started by his grandfather at the beginning of the 20th century, expanding it to 3 locations. Escriba is famous for his Easter chocolates and for his Monas, a uniquely Catalan small chocolate sculpture of a church or chapel that godparents give their godchildren on Palm Sunday. His newest creation is Candy Glam Rings sporting enormous stones made from colored sugar.

Address	Phone	Website
Rambla de les Flors 83	011 3493 301 6027	www.escriba.es 
Gran Via 546	011 3493 454 7535	www.escriba.es 
Ronda Litoral 42	011 3493 221 0729	www.escriba.es 

Decorous Sherry

Dry sherry is the perfect accompaniment to tapas. Sweet sheries have a complex and satisfying flavor and aroma, so much so that I prefer them as dessert rather than as an accompaniment to one.

All sherry is produced in the Spanish province of Cadiz, in a geographic triangle between Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and El Puerto de Santa Maria. Sherry production is strictly monitored and controlled by wine regulatory council of Jerez, not only specifying which grapes may enter into the production of each type of sherry, but even to what type of soil the grapes must grow in.

From driest to sweetest, these are the different varieties of Sherry:

Fino: The driest and palest in color of all sheries

Manzanilla: A variation of fino made at Sanlúcar de Barrameda

Amontillado: A dry sherry that has been allowed to develop a cap of cottony mold, and is then semi-oxidized (exposed to air) during aging

Oloroso: Oxidized during aging for a long period of time, making it darker, richer, and with the highest alcohol content of all sheries

Palo Cortado: A rare variety produced in the same way as amontillado

Sweet sherry: Cream, pale cream, and medium sheries have had sweet wine added to them to produce the sweet flavor

Production

Only the first pressing of Palomino grapes is destined to become sherry. The wine is then fermented for several months in stainless steel vats and has an alcohol content of 11 or 12% at the end of that time.

Once the wine is ready, a mixture of already aged sherry and distilled spirits (like a brandy) are added to the wine before it goes to aging casks made from American oak. The casks are not filled to allow for the development of the flor or characteristic cap of mold.

The casks are stacked on their sides several casks high in what is called a solera and the sherry is aged for about 3 years. When the wine needs to be bottled or further processed a third of the wine in each cask of the bottom row is drawn off, then replenished with wine from the row of casks above. This continues until the top row of casks has some newer wine added to fill them back up.

Once bottled, sherry ceases to age and should be drunk within several years. The small, narrow tulip-shaped glass is ideal for drinking sherry because its narrow mouth diminishes the perception of sherry's strong alcohol bouquet.

Though sherry need not be drunk chilled, it should be served cool rather than at room temperature.

Recipe: Camarones Al Ajillo

Tapa of Sauteed Garlic Shrimp

Some people (and tapas places in Spain) leave the shells on the shrimp for this dish. I prefer to have the shrimp shelled before cooking especially since the oily liquid will make peeling them after cooking messy and difficult

Makes about 4 servings

1/4 cup olive oil

4 gloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 pound medium shrimp (26-30 per pound) peeled, deveined, rinsed, and drained

Salt

1 teaspoon each sweet and hot Spanish paprika

3 tablespoons dry sherry or dry white wine

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon finely chopped flat leaf parsley

Crusty bread for serving

1. Combine the oil and garlic in a sloping-sided sauté pan and place on medium heat.
2. When the garlic starts to color lightly, add the shrimp, salt lightly, and toss or stir for a couple of minutes to cook the shrimp through.
3. Add the paprikas, wine, and lemon juice and allow to boil up once. Off heat, stir in the parsley.
4. Scrape into a serving bowl and accompany with crusty bread for mopping up the garlicky juices.