

## 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](http://www.nickmalgieri.com) 

### Nice



The area now known as Nice has been inhabited for close to 400,000 years and archeologists have found some of the earliest examples of the use of fire and the building of dwellings there. Don't worry, though, things have been thoroughly modernized during the last thousand-odd years and Nice has become a world class city and resort.

Nice's role as a resort derives from its situation on the Mediterranean coast, the fact that its winter temperatures are relatively mild, and the fact that it enjoys 300 days of sunshine per year. No wonder the main seaside street is called the Promenade des Anglais (English Promenade) – the English (and the Russians, Scandinavians, and other Northern Europeans) gathered there for the winter season after the resort hotels were built in the 19th century. Nowadays South Beach, Dubai, and Hawaii beckon winter visitors, but lovers of the sea and sun still flock to Nice 12 months a year.

The city seesawed between French and Italian rule for most of its history. Though Garibaldi, the founder of a united Italy, was from Nice, he never achieved his dream to make Nice a part of the Kingdom of Italy he helped to create. Despite that, Nice has retained much Italianate character in its food, language, customs and appearance – it's the most Italian city in France.

My own history of Nice started in the early 1970's when I spent 3 long summer seasons working in Monaco. I love Monaco, especially Monte Carlo, but it gets small pretty fast when you are from the New York area, so at every possible opportunity, I hopped the bus for the short ride to the city. I always made for a window seat on the driver's side in order to see the incredible panorama of the Baie des Anges (Bay of Angels) as it appeared below and in the distance as the bus rounded the last curve off the main road into the city. The bus station is right behind the old town (Le Vieux Nice) and I began every visit with a little walk through its narrow streets, usually winding up on the Rue Pairoliere, old Nice's main street, where snacks and rich lemon tart could be bought from street-side windows of bakeries and restaurants, and a half-ton tuna would sometimes be lying casually on the sidewalk next to a fish market. I still love the 19th century working class atmosphere of this part of town and though all of Nice is beautiful, Le Vieux Nice will always remain my favorite part of the city.

Nice is a great walking town and the center is small enough to be able to navigate easily on foot. It's fairly flat, though the land does slope gently upward from the sea to the upper part of the town near the train station. There is plenty to discover and taste – go hungry.

### A taste of Nice

Here are a few essential dishes, some of them so casual you can pick them up for a quick bite as you are walking through one of the markets

or the old town. Others may be found in traditional restaurants (see below).

**Salade Nicoise:** You won't find any rare seared tuna in the true Nice version of its namesake salad. It makes a perfect light lunch or first course of a more substantial meal. Available everywhere.

**Pan Bagnat:** Not exactly a Salade Nicoise on a roll, but very similar. Be careful – sometimes these rustic sandwiches contain unpitted olives.

**Friture:** Fried whitebait, tiny anchovy-like fresh fish you eat head, tail, bones and all. Sometimes there are miniscule 1/4-inch shrimp mixed in.

**Socca:** To call this a chickpea flour pancake doesn't do it justice at all. Real socca is baked in a wood-burning oven on immense unlined copper pans liberally coated with olive oil. It's rich, nutty, and thoroughly addictive – don't be surprised if you get in line for another portion before you've finished the first.

**Farcis:** Small stuffed vegetables baked with a liberal coating of olive oil until very tender. Sunday dinner fare.

**Daube:** Typical beef stew of the region. Nicois ravioli are filled with leftover daube.

**Tourte de Blettes:** Tart of Swiss chard, rice, and cheese – savory and sweet versions exist.

**Ratatouille:** Vegetable dish made from eggplant, onions, garlic, peppers, zucchini, and tomatoes, all stewed in olive oil until meltingly tender.

Great warm or cold, but not al dente.

### **Fine dining in Michelin-starred Restaurants**

Nice has several one-star Michelin restaurants, most serving a modernized version of the local fare. Each of the places below is perfect for a celebratory meal when visiting or a great place to impress local guests.

#### **Chantecler**

Bad-boy chef Jacques Maximin put the main restaurant of the Hotel Negresco on the gastronomic map in the 1980s. Though his tenure was brief, it was enough to guarantee the future of the restaurant as a haven for serious food and wine. Now under the able direction of Chef Jean Denis Rieubland, the Chantecler shines again with excellent food and service. There is a strong commitment to using the freshest local products possible – the fish on your plate was probably having a leisurely swim 24 hours before you started eating it. Table d'hote and tasting menus from 45 to 130 Euros. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Le Chantecler

Hotel Negresco

37 Promenade des Anglais

Nice

E-mail: [chantecler@hotel-negresco.com](mailto:chantecler@hotel-negresco.com)

Phone: 011 334 93 16 44 00

[www.hotel-negresco-nice.com](http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com) 

#### **Parcours**

A mere 15 minutes outside the center of Nice, Parcours is a new restaurant worth discovering. Grounded in fine modern versions of classic Mediterranean dishes, Parcours is run by chef Frederic Galland ably supported by his parents and companion, the lovely Delphine. For this level of quality, prices are reasonable and two to six-course menus run from 32 to 75 Euros. Open for dinner Tuesday through Sunday, lunch Saturday and Sunday only.

Parcours Live

1 Place Marcel Eusebi

Falicon

Phone: 011 334 93 84 94 57

[www.restaurant-parcours.com](http://www.restaurant-parcours.com) 

#### **L'univers**

Christian Plumail's elegant restaurant near the Place Massena and at the gates of Le Vieux Nice is a true celebration of fine Mediterranean

cooking. Soupe de poisons (like bouillabaisse but just the broth), dorade royale braised with tomatoes, capers, and anchovies, and squab with foie gras are just a few of the tempting selections he prepares. This is my first choice for a special evening while you're visiting.

l'Univers

54 Boulevard Jean Jaures

Nice

E-mail: plumailunivers@aol.com

Phone: 011 334 93 62 32 22

[www.christian-plumail.com](http://www.christian-plumail.com) 

### **La Reserve**

Housed in an 1875 building right on the port, La Reserve incorporates a gastronomic restaurant as well as a 40-seat bistro, both under the direction of Finnish-born chef Jouni Tormanen. Having spent the last 15 years working in various fine quality restaurants, Tormanen ably juggles the flavors of the French Riviera and is completely at home with olive oil, garlic, tomatoes, and Mediterranean fish. The menu leaves making a choice pretty difficult – red mullet tartare, duck foie gras with beets, whole roast fish of the day as a main course, and veal with glazed carrots and mustard are all equally tempting. And if one of the appetizers sound particularly appealing, you may order it as a main course... A great place for lunch on a sunny day with the whole Baie des Anges at your feet.

La Reserve

60 Boulevard Franck Pilatte

Nice

Phone: 011 334 97 08 29 98

[www.jouni.fr](http://www.jouni.fr) 

### **Casual choices with great food**

These are all personal favorites and I know them all well. Don Camillo has changed ownership since the last time I was there, but a recent report from friends who had dinner there was glowing.

### **Le Safari**

Safari (no one uses the "le" when referring to it) is one of those remarkable places that combines a great location, perfect food, and reasonable prices, a combination that's not only hard to beat, but no longer that easy to find in Europe. I would feel perfectly safe in ordering by throwing a dart at the menu – that's how good all the food is. Soupe de poisons, raw artichoke salad, farcis (one of the few places you'll find them outside a Nicois home), great grilled fish, and fun pizzas combine to make a menu where the only difficulty is choosing. If you want to reserve an outdoor table for later in the day or the following day, just stop in and take care of it – phone messages get lost in places as busy as Safari...

Le Safari

1 Cours Saleya

Nice

Phone: 011 334 93 80 18 44

### **La Merenda**

I have always enjoyed having lunch or dinner at La Merenda, but be forewarned, you go for the food, not the atmosphere or the backless stools, cash only policy, and lack of phone (you have to stop by the day before to make a reservation). With all that out of the way, be prepared to enjoy great Nicois food at reasonable prices with rough, reasonably-priced wines. Stuffed sardines, various salads, and pasta with pesto might be the appetizer selections, with a daube, braised oxtails, salt cod, and sausage with lentils among the main courses. With cheese, (or a homey dessert), and wine, it will probably come to less than 50 Euros a person.

La Merenda

4 Rue Raoul Bosio (formerly Rue de la Terrasse)

Nice

### **Chez Rene**

This is the place for socca, friture, tourte de blettes, and tarte au citron, that uniquely Nicois lemon tart with the top charred black from being baked in the wood burning oven. Situated right in the middle of Le Veix Nice, Chez Rene is at the corner of the Rue Pairoliere and the Rue Miralheti. There is an indoor dining room across the street from the socca stand, but I always choose to pick up what I want at the socca window, sit at one of the outdoor tables right in the middle of the Rue Miralheti, and order a drink from a passing waiter. It's good, it's casual, and it's cheap, not a bad combination.

Chez Rene

2 Rue Miralheti

Nice

Phone: 011 334 93 92 05 73

### **Don Camillo**

Originally opened in the early 80's by Franck Cerutti who is now the chef at Ducasse's super-elegant restaurant in the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, Don Camillo continues to delight visitors to Nice with its fresh seafood and excellent wine list. The menu has changed, but Don Camillo continues to be a great choice with excellent food at reasonable prices – a rare combination.

Don Camillo

5 Rue des Ponchettes

Nice

Phone 011 334 93 85 67 95

### **Vin de Bellet**

Nice's own wine from nearby Bellet, is a popular choice on lists throughout the area. Always young, cool, and reasonably priced, Bellet wines may be white, rose, or even red, though the latter is less common. Local grape varieties, as well as classics such as Chardonnay or Grenache are used to make the wines which are always drunk on the young side. Bellet wine is a perfect complement to the equally sun-drenched Nicois food.

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

### **Recipe: Salade Nicoise: salad of cooked and raw vegetables from Nice**

A composed salad of this type is still the typical Sunday night supper of many Niçois families. Salad greens, herbs, raw and cooked vegetables, and of course Niçois olives, are combined with cold sliced boiled beef, left over from the weekly pot au feu. If there isn't any leftover beef, then the cook opens a can of tuna. Cooked fresh tuna is never used – Salade Nicoise is not a tuna salad, after all. Feel free to vary the selection of vegetables in any way you wish, though members of the cabbage family are not welcome additions.

Makes about 4 to 6 servings

Salad

1 head Boston or Romaine lettuce, rinsed, dried, and shredded

4 hard cooked eggs, peeled and quartered

1/2 pound green beans, tipped and cooked in boiling salted water until tender and cooled

2 large ripe tomatoes, cut into wedges or a pint of grape tomatoes, halved

1 large English cucumber, peeled, halved, seeded and sliced

1 celery heart, sliced

1 can tuna packed in olive oil

2-ounce can anchovy fillets in oil, optional

1/2 cup Nicois olives

1 bunch scallions, white and half the green, stripped and finely sliced

A handful each of torn basil leaves and chopped flat-leaf parsley

#### Dressing

2 tablespoons strained lemon juice or wine vinegar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1 very small garlic clove, grated

1/2 cup olive oil

1. Arrange the salad ingredients in order, scattering them on each other on a large round or oval platter. For a more formal presentation, line the platter with the lettuce and make little symmetrically-placed bouquets of the ingredients on the greens.

2. For the dressing, whisk all the ingredients together.

3. To serve the salad, bring it to the table and present it, then, bring it back to the kitchen and slide the contents into a large bowl. Add the dressing and toss, then taste for seasoning and adjust. Replace the salad on the platter.

4. Serve the salad with some good bread and a light cool rosé.

Note: For a really substantial salad cook 1 1/2 pounds boiling potatoes in their skins, then peel, slice and dress them with olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Scatter the potato salad over the greens when assembling the salad.