

Sunset over
Port de Sóller

HOLD THE TAPAS

Mallorca's food revolution

The culinary scene on this beautiful Balearic island is in full bloom, with a new breed of chefs embracing local flavours and innovation like never before. Kathryn Tomasetti indulges in a food-lover's tour of blowout proportions

Mallorca is shaped like a diamond atop a glistening blue Mediterranean. Just 250km east of mainland Spain, it's a microcosm of its big Iberian brother, with each corner celebrating a special ingredient, flavour, cooking style or dish. Where to start?

Above the northern Tramuntana Mountains sits Sóller, a village so renowned for its sweet citrus it's said France's King Louis XIV refused to eat oranges from anywhere else. Further east is Pollença, the winter training ground for Tour de France cycling teams, where olive groves roll down to the sea. The western port of Andratx is a seafood mecca where giant tuna are still hauled onto the quay. But it's the island's capital, Palma, that's the culinary epicentre. Here, berries, wines, cheeses and crustaceans can be nibbled, stored, picnicked upon and toured – with more to see now than ever before.

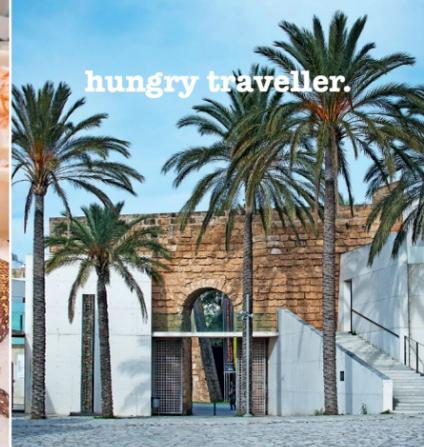
Two thousand years of colonisation have inscribed an edible mark on the island's menu, too. Romans left the capers that are scattered on dishes such as coca mallorquina, a local red pepper tart. Arabian Moors gifted the spices that infuse arròs brut, a rice dish seasoned with saffron and cinnamon (see p118). Admiral Lord Nelson's British fleet paired both with a hefty splash of gin, which is distilled by small producers across Mallorca today.

The culinary scene is burgeoning, blending new ideas with island ingredients. A new breed of chefs, some from the island, some from further afield, are showcasing the sublime ingredients Mallorca so effortlessly cultivates. From local canoneta oranges and manto negro wines to pa moreno, the bread typical of this island, the lure of an eating extravaganza in the sunshine is impossible to resist. And so my appetite-whetting tour begins...

A TASTE OF HISTORY

After jetting into Palma I hit the medieval streets hungry. Since 1951, the 100-plus merchants of →

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Freshly landed tuna on Andratx quay; colourful grocery store front; La Seu Cathedral beyond the rooftops in Palma; fish stall at Mercat de l'Olivar; Es Baluard Museum of Modern Art; the raw bar at Hotel Cort; cream-filled ensaimada with apple; Marc Fosh restaurant; "the best paella" at Sa Foradada Restaurant



Mercat de l'Olivar (mercatolivar.com) have wielded Mallorca's finest ingredients, such as giant capers and sweet green figs. Counters are piled high with freshly landed red prawns and paprika-flecked sobrasada (spreadable sausage), jostling for attention with aged formatge mallorquí cheeses and island tomatoes called ramallet.

There are a handful of tapas joints interspersed among the vendors, many of them crowded with locals grabbing a breakfast of pa'amb oli (bread topped with garlic, tomatoes and olive oil – often with cured

ham, cheese and pickles too), washed down with a punchy macchiato (café cortado).

It's exhilarating and overwhelming. Little wonder the market's new **tasting tours** (malloraculturaltours.com, €100 for a three-hour tour for unlimited participants, then €20pp for tastings) are proving such a success. Historian Albert Bouzas leads you on an edible extravaganza, first exploring Palma's Old Town. "Then we head to the market," he explains, "where visitors can taste frit (slices of fried potato and pork or lamb) and coca de trempó (olive oil flatbread topped with diced tomato, green pepper and onion), among many others."

BACK TO BASICS

Albert's enthusiasm for Mallorca's past inspired me to dig deeper into the island's culinary traditions, and I discovered restaurants that have been embracing the island's bounty for decades. In the town of Calonge near Cala d'Or on the southeast coast, **Restaurante Bona Taula** (+34 971 16 7147) was once a simple village home. Thirty years ago, islander Tomeu Vallbona and

US-born Stuart Magee transformed it into a Slow Food-style restaurant. Today its summertime garden, trimmed with lemon trees and grapevines, is favoured by locals, including tennis Nadal. As well as seasonal dishes such as aubergine and pepper tumbet (see box, left), the restaurant specialises in grilled meats. You have to try the roast suckling pig (lechona al horno).

On the opposite side of the island near the enchanting town of Deià, **Sa Foradada Restaurant** (saforadada.com) offers another opportunity to tap into Mallorca's epicurean roots. It's little more than a glorified beach shack accessible either by sea or via a half-hour downhill walk from the restaurant's car park, with views of the coastline's translucent turquoise waters. The trek is worth it: Sa Foradada serves up the island's best paella, cooked al fresco over a wood-fuelled fire.

URBAN REGENERATION

Back in Palma, change is afoot. Once a rough and ready neighbourhood frequented by burly fishermen and tattooed sailors, Santa Catalina's

harbour district is now an up and coming enclave that's home to artists, young restaurateurs and hip eateries. A case in point is **Patrón Lunares** (patronlunares.com), a 19th-century community centre turned cantina, decorated with traditional textiles. The menu is a heavenly mix of classic and modern, from arroz del patrón (paella with seafood) to quinoa salad and roasted black carrots with cinnamon. It's worth visiting the nearby **Es Baluard Museum of Modern Art** (esbaluard.org/en) too, which is home to **Restaurant Es Baluard** (restaurantesbaluard.com). Enjoy trampó mallorquí (tomato, onion and pepper salad) with fresh mussels on the terrace.

A 30-minute stroll northeast of here, **Mercado Gastronómico San Juan** (mercadosanjuanpalma.es) sits within the Modernist S'Escorxador complex (a former slaughterhouse), which dates from 1905. Relunched in 2015, the space has been transformed into the city's finest gourmet takeaway. Seventeen vendors sell suckling pig sandwiches on llonguets (Mallorcan bread rolls), fideuàs (seafood and noodle →



MEET THE PRODUCER

Citrus farm **Ecovinyassa** (ecovinyassa.com) is set in a valley on the outskirts of Sóller. Purchased for a pittance by current owner Sebastiana Massanet's grandfather in 1937, it's still a flourishing family affair. "We cultivate 15 varieties of oranges," says Massanet. "Five of them are native to Sóller: canoneta, repica, fulla menuda, cul d'ou and salustiana." Visit for a self-guided tour (Mon, Wed or Fri, 10am-2pm; €10 entry) and a generous snack of tomato-topped bread served with icy jugs of orange juice.

DISHES FOR YOUR MUST-TRY LIST

Bon profit! (Enjoy your meal)

- 1 ARRÒS BRUT** Rice cooked in an earthenware pot with meats, tomatoes and mushrooms, seasoned with cinnamon and saffron.
- 2 ENSAIMADA** Mallorca's famous spiral cake, frequently eaten for breakfast, in flavours from traditional plain to cream or pumpkin-filled.
- 3 LLOM AMB COL** Cabbage-leaf parcels stuffed with pork loin, and cured sobrasada and botifarrón sausages.
- 4 RED PRAWNS FROM SÓLLER** Ideally grilled with garlic, drizzled with olive oil and topped with chopped fresh parsley.
- 5 SOPA MALLORQUINA** Vegetable stew made with bread and seasonal produce such as artichokes, cauliflower and peppers.
- 6 TUMBET MALLORQUÍN** Layered veg baked in a rich tomato sauce.

hungry traveller.

platters similar to paella) and sushi. Upstairs, Cooking4People hosts cooking classes.

AT THE CHEF'S TABLE

To get the area lowdown, I caught up with **Marc Fosh**, chef and owner of his eponymous restaurant (marcfosh.com) housed in the 17th-century **Hotel Convent de la Missió** (conventdelamissio.com). He was the first British chef to be awarded a Michelin star in Spain.

Marc is the island's biggest fan, but it took him a while to fall under its spell: "We've come a long way in the past 20 years," he says. "Mallorca has always been blessed with superb ingredients and a farm-to-table mentality, but we've never realised its importance until now." Marc sources his olive oil from Pollença, porc negre pig from Porreres and half the wine list from the island. His food is local and refreshingly affordable. The three-course lunch menu is a snip at €27.50 and may feature salt cod with Iberian chorizo, pork with figs or marinated melon. "Mallorca is becoming a gastronomic destination, and it deserves to be," he says. I couldn't agree more.

WHERE TO STAY

• THE PINK PEPPER TREE

Half an hour northeast of Palma, this 16th-century finca has been beautifully restored. Owner Jacqueline cooks seasonal dinners thrice weekly using produce from the garden. Doubles from €125 B&B. thepinkpeppertree.com

• HOTEL L'AVENIDA

Boutique hotel in Sóller with romantic four-poster beds and mountain views. Doubles from €215 B&B (min two-night stay). avenida-hotel.com

• **HOTEL CORT** This design hotel in downtown Palma has stylish bedrooms and a hip restaurant with a seafood bar. Doubles from €240 B&B. hotelcort.com



TRY
THIS AT
HOME

Marc Fosh's hake a la mallorquina with potato purée

SERVES 4. HANDS-ON TIME 40 MIN

MAKE
AHEAD

Make the purée up to 24 hours ahead; keep covered in the fridge. Gently reheat in a pan or microwave until piping hot. The leftover vinaigrette will keep in the fridge in an airtight container for 2-3 days.

FOOD
TEAM'S
TIP

To peel tomatoes, plunge each one into boiling water for 10 seconds, then set aside. When cool enough to handle, use a sharp knife to score the skin, then peel it off.

- 4 x 150g skin-on hake fillets
- Olive oil for frying

FOR THE POTATO PURÉE

- 350g potatoes (about 3 medium floury potatoes), cut into quarters
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 400ml fish stock
- 300ml olive oil

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE

- 50ml sherry vinegar
- 30g sultanas
- 200ml extra-virgin olive oil
- 20g pine nuts, toasted
- 500g vine tomatoes, peeled, deseeded, diced (see tip)
- Small bunch fresh parsley, leaves finely chopped

1 To make the purée, put the potatoes, onion and fish stock in a medium pan and bring to the boil. Turn the heat down to medium, then simmer for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are just cooked. Drain, then put in a food processor or blender and whizz with the olive oil until smooth. Push through a sieve into a saucepan, season to taste and keep warm over a very low heat (or see Make Ahead, left).
2 While the potatoes are simmering, prepare the vinaigrette. Put the vinegar in a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the sultanas, then remove the

pan from the heat and set aside to cool (the sultanas will plump up as the mixture cools). Once cool, add the olive oil, pine nuts, tomatoes and parsley, then season to taste. Set aside.

3 To cook the fish, heat a splash of olive oil in a large frying pan. Season the hake fillets with salt then, when the oil is hot, add them to the pan, skin-side down. Fry the fillets for 5-6 minutes until the skin is crisp and golden. Flip and cook for 4-5 minutes until the fish is cooked through and flakes easily.

4 To serve, divide the potato purée among 4 plates, then top each with a hake fillet and spoon over some of the vinaigrette.

PER SERVING 974kcal, 84g fat (11.9g saturated), 30g protein, 22.8g carbs (6.8g sugars), 1.3g salt, 3.5g fibre

WINE EDITOR'S CHOICE

Fresh and fruity Spanish albariño is the star match. **CL**