JUL-SEP 2023 NÚMERO – 4

IBRINDIS!

TRUE TASTE OF SPAIN

Spanish Fish Sardines Chef Talk...

MAGAZINE

MONIKA LINTON



rindisa has been Dimporting cured and prepared fish from Spain for over three decades. Spain has long had a culture of preparing and preserving fresh fish as a gastronomic treat, and today tinned fish is perceived in Britain as high quality, healthy and convenient. Fishing must stay within quotas; catch size regulations; and fishing seasons; but the benefit of canned fish is that it allows for availability all year round.

As British consumers' understanding of quality has improved, the choice Brindisa offers has expanded: we now sell four different preparations of anchovies (salted; cured and filleted; smoked and pickled), plus several different lengths of anchovy. Price really does reflect calibre: in the case of anchovies, the higher the price, the bigger, meatier and juicier the anchovies will be. However it has not all been plain sailing: over the course of the last year, we have had to significantly change our ordering patterns to cope with additional customs requirements and

costs, placing bigger orders less often and holding more stock. The new customs certification costs are fixed, regardless of volumes being shipped. For large companies dealing in massive volumes, there is less impact, but it is choice within the speciality sector that is heavily affected. The added costs and administration can be prohibitive, both for importers and exporters. Heath Blackford, Managing Director of Brindisa, says, "Brexit adds time and cost to all we do and in the end this has to be passed on to the consumer."





For the end consumer, the new catch certificate and customs clearance requirements mean that there is more transparency within the general food chain as more proof is required. However for a company like Brindisa, which has a rigorous traceability system in place, the only difference is the extra cost involved in proving it on every consignment. We continue to work closely with government bodies in Spain and the UK, to improve our own systems as well as to recommend ideas to improve general efficiency for the flow of goods across borders.

The good news is that canned fish can be bought in bulk and is a long-life product where flavour is enhanced with time. We asked Heath Blackford, Managing Director, and Fran Pombal, Buying Manager, for their favourite tinned fish from our range. Heath chooses, "hand-packed sardinillas placed into a tin with so much care, just so fantastic," and "smoked anchovies, absolutely delicious". Fran recommends, "smoked mackerel and smoked anchovies: plump, fresh, refined smoky flavour, the taste of the anchovy, just beautiful." We continue to work on our fish range, as always with flavour as our focus. Please talk to our Sales team who can advise you on everything from boquerones, salt cod, octopus and mojama, to our new range of Galician seaweed.







Buying Manager

Sourcing a legendary Spanish sheep's cheese.

This artisan cheese crystallises what Brindisa would stand for.

A cheese in a tin with an incredible organoleptic profile won chefs and retailers over.

Made with a raw milk from Churra breed sheep, with a novel terroir, it was unconventional and flavour-led.



1992 - 1996

Horizons expand as Spain joins the EU.

Brindisa imports Spanish ham, chorizo and charcuterie.

Iconic Spanish foods landed on British menus and shelves for the very first time.



94

Retailing direct to the public begins. Brindisa is one of the founding retail traders at Borough Market.

Occasional warehouse openings introduced the public to new ingredients and sowed the seeds for today's permanent retail market at Borough.



Founder Monika reflects on Brindisa's journey, celebrating the True Taste of Spain since 1988.





2000

A warehouse of our own. Increased warehouse space allows us to import a wider product range.

Brindisa began life as sub-tenants but eventually we had our own warehouse with room to grow our range of Spanish ingredients.



Tapas Brindisa London Bridge opens.

A no-reservations tapas bar raises the profile of authentic Spanish food culture.

Brindisa Kitchens is Brindisa's sister company, co-founded by Monika. Today our menus continue to celebrate Spanish food.



Our name comes from the word "brindis", a toast. Brindisa raises a toast to Spanish food.



A lifetime dedicated to Spanish food.
Brindisa, The True Food of Spain is published.

Monika's book is a compilation of recipes and food stories gathered over 30 years. It celebrates the varied cultures, landscapes and, above all the exceptional foods of Spain.



2004



2013

Brindisa Cheese Caves open.

Our bespoke Cheese Caves allow us to care for artisan cheeses.

Today we are able to bring a diverse range of exciting cheeses to our customers. Since our first cheese in a tin, Brindisa has pioneered Spanish cheese in the UK.



Perelló, a new member of the Brindisa family.

Perelló foods include well-loved olives, pickles and legumes.

After decades of working together, Brindisa bought Perelló; both increasing our supply-chain flexibility (invaluable post-Brexit) and diversifying the range.



Fishing in Spain

Surrounded as it is by the sea, fishing has always been one of the most important occupations of the coastal inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, first as a means of survival and later as an important source of income.

Initially any preservation of fish relied on salting, the only reliable way of staving off putrefaction; heavily salted fish could be transported throughout Spain, even to the regions furthest inland, without refrigeration, a crucial consideration in a Catholic country where there were numerous days on which the consumption of meat was forbidden. It is this link to Catholic practices which has resulted in the appearance of numerous recipes using salt cod in all the regions of Spain, not just close to the coast.

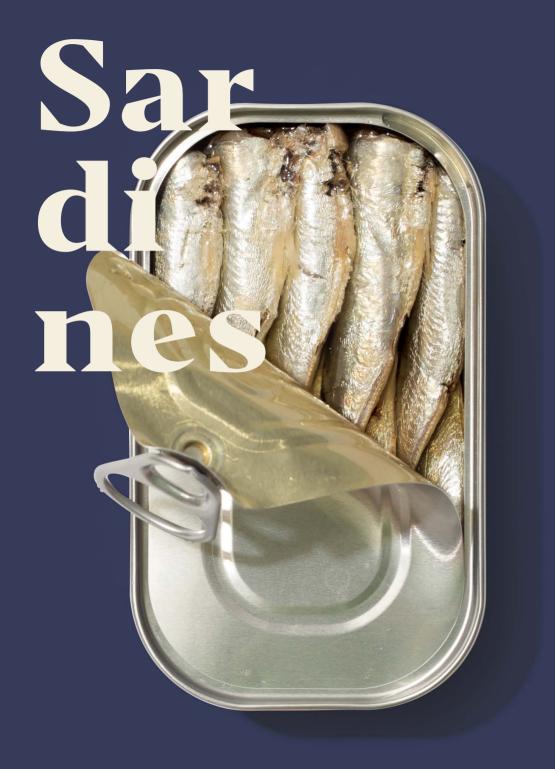
It was not until the start of the 19th century that the preservation of fish in glass or metal containers became possible, and the Spanish preserved fish industry began its growth. Many of the companies involved in the business today have their origins in the 19th century including Conservas Ortiz, which was founded in 1891. It was from the methods used at this time that the company's present-day practices

were established. The manual filleting and packing of the fish, the quality of the medium in which it was preserved and the careful cooking of fish before tinning. Their products were not just convenient, but delicious.

Brindisa's selection of suppliers of preserved fish are carefully chosen as representatives of these old school values, companies that care about the quality and provenance of the raw materials and the traditional, frequently manual, methods of processing.

Brindisa's range of preserved fish is mostly supplied by companies based on the north coast of Spain, source of some of the finest tuna, anchovies and sardines, but also includes other regional specialities, such as salt cod, airdried tuna and octopus. Whichever you choose you will discover authentic, truly delicious flavours and textures.





It's the kind of travel moment you never forget. The year was 1989, and I was leaving the UK to settle in Spain. Hungry and tired after the rough ferry crossing, I drove out of Santander and stopped for a rest in the seaside town of Laredo. Behind the beach was a 'chiringuito' selling sardines grilled over a wood fire, and the air was filled with their pungent fishy aroma. I bought a plateful and ate them with my fingers: they were salty, oily, and so fresh the flesh fell away from

The sardine swims deep in the currents of Spanish life and culture. El Entierro de la Sardina is the curious comic ritual marking the end of Carnival, when sobbing crowds follow the figure of a sardine which is then symbolically 'buried'. Sardines pop up from time to time in Spanish history. Communist firebrand Dolores lbarruri, aka La Pasionaria, began life as a seller of sardines on the beach in Santurce - a fact which is often referred to as proof of her humble origins.

Spain is far and away Europe's major consumer of these little fish, getting through an amazing 58,263 tonnes a year - fully 18 times as much as its nearest rival, France. At the high-summer Festival de la Sardina in Carreño, Asturias - one of the many sardiñadas held in towns along the north coast - around 5000kg are served up every year, to be washed down with lashings of cider. The fiestas and romerías (pilgrimages) of coastal Andalucía would also be poorer without them. In their canned form, whether presented in olive oil, in a tomato-based sauce or en escabeche (a mild vinegar pickle) they're a go-to essential in every Spanish kitchen cupboard, easily available whenever a nourishing snack is required. For anyone who needs to eat lunch on the go - builders, lorry-drivers, schoolchildren, hikers - they're a godsend. And for the rest of us, an excellent Spanish product that never fails

The species Sardina pilchardus exists in two main areas of the world's oceans: the Mediterranean, from Spain and Morocco to the Adriatic, and a swathe of the Atlantic from Norway all the way south to Senegal. Sardines like to stick together in massive shoals or banks, feeding on plankton at a depth of around 150m. One of the family of so-called 'blue' or oily fish including the mackerel, tuna, and anchovy, they are an exceptionally nutritive food, rich in vitamins E and D and high in fatty acids like Omega-3 which help prevent heart disease.

For all their popularity in Spain, however, fresh sardines are allowed into the kitchen only under certain conditions. Try grilling them at home and you're likely to get complaints from your neighbours about the fishy reek filling the stairway. You are most likely to find them done this way in outdoor situations, perhaps at a barbecue in a garden - or at the beach. Spain's greatest

masters of sardine grilling are surely the chiringuitos (beachside restaurants) of coastal Málaga and Granada, where the fish are threaded onto flat metal skewers called espetos which are pushed into the sand facing the coals of a wood fire, thus ensuring the fish cook gently and uniformly. Along the promenade behind Málaga's city beaches the air is fragrant with the smell of woodsmoke and grilled fish. (The last time I ate sardines down here, at the restaurant EI Cachalote on Malagueta beach, the price of a whole espeto (5€) seemed so absurdly low that I double-checked my bill with the waiter.)

Outside the seaside context, fresh sardines are cooked every which way but grilled. Also hailing from Málaga is a traditional dish, moraga de sardinas, which shows them off in a simple casserole with tomato, onion, green pepper, garlic, white wine and lemon. In Galicia small sardines (known as xoubas) make a delicious filling for one of the flat Galician pies called empanadas. In my own kitchen I like to open them up into double fillets, coat these in egg and breadcrumbs and gently fry. They also lend themselves well to an escabeche (simmered with a julienne of carrots and spring onions, plus vinegar, white wine, garlic and herbs) that will keep for a few days in the fridge, making a refreshing main dish for a summer lunch.

The Spanish canned sardine, however, requires no such elaborate treatment. Neatly packed into its rectangular tin, ready to be enjoyed at a moment's notice, this is surely one of the best fast foods known to man.



Brindisa's range of seafood conservas includes sardines from three different Spanish suppliers - Ortiz 'El Velero', Catrineta, and La Brújula - all of which have their roots in the rich preserving traditions of the Cantabrian coast from Galicia to the Basque Country.

Both Ortiz and La Brújula are traditional producers, one in the Basque Country, the other in Galicia, each with its own factory on site. La Brújula, a long-established conservera based in Ribadumia in the Ria de Arousa, specialises in a high-end 'gourmet' product using fish sourced from the Galician coasts, expertly packed by a 30-strong team (all of whom are women, following the local tradition). Brindisa stocks their tinned sardinilla, a smaller version of the standard sardine which according to Santiago Reigada of La Brújula is even tastier than its larger relative.

BRINDISA

Of the three suppliers Catrineta is perhaps the odd one out. This small company, also based in the Rias Baixas (Galicia), was founded 10 years ago by Cristina Doel and Roberto Rodríguez, who are not themselves producers but 'négociants' who buy from artisan conserveras in Galicia, Portugal and Andalucía. Roberto tells me the name was inspired by the ancient Portuguese legend of a ship, A Nao Catrineta, and its long journey beset by all manner of obstacles (including a blue-haired devil).

The branding, with its retro image of a smiling young woman in a deep-sea diving suit, is so delightful it seems a shame to throw away the paper the tins are wrapped in. Catrineta sardines come in various guises: in olive oil, in escabeche or tomato sauce, or smoked over bay leaves. But the process followed by each of their suppliers is essentially the same, says Roberto. The sardines are plunged into salt water at 5C and reach the factory no more than five hours after fishing. The heads are removed, then they are packed by hand, normally three to five to a tin, and cooked for half an hour at 100C before the tins are filled and heat-sealed.

For Ander Montalvo at Ortiz, the three factors making the difference between a truly fine canned sardine and a mediocre one are 1. freshness, 2. size and 3. the TLC that goes into the process. Ortiz, with its heritage brand name El Velero (the sailboat), has been faithful to these principles ever since the company was founded in 1942 by José Ortiz and his son José Antonio in the harbour town of Ondarroa. The Ortiz tins themselves are things of beauty: the distinctive image of a sailing boat

in blue, yellow and red (the only colours that could be used for lithographic printing in the early years of the company) is a classic of Spanish product design, instantly recognisable. As for their contents, this is no ordinary tinned sardine. The fish are on the large side, with firm meaty flesh and a clear flavour from the good-quality olive oil Ortiz uses. Ander tells me something I've never heard before: apparently canned sardines improve with age. (Who knew?) The company suggests keeping a store of various 'vintages' to see how their flavour deepers with each passing year.

As is often the case with Spanish products at this level of quality, in some ways the less you do with them the better. Ortiz recommends a crusty roll spread with butter and filled with sardines garnished with a lettuce leaf or two – a bocadillo de sardinas inspired by the classic working lunch devoured on a daily basis in building sites and playgrounds all over Spain. They are good as a pairing with sprue asparagus, or with halved boiled eggs and finely sliced red onion. The ones in escabeche sauce make a brilliant foil for a salad of crunchy frisée lettuce.

But the most radical serving suggestion is also the simplest. Roberto at Catrineta confesses that he prefers them straight from the tin. 'Seeing them so neatly packed reminds me of the monotonous job of packing, which here in Galicia is entirely done by female workers', he says. 'Each time it's like a miniature puzzle, a Tetris. So when I eat sardines from the tin, it feels like my own little homage to all those hard-working women.'



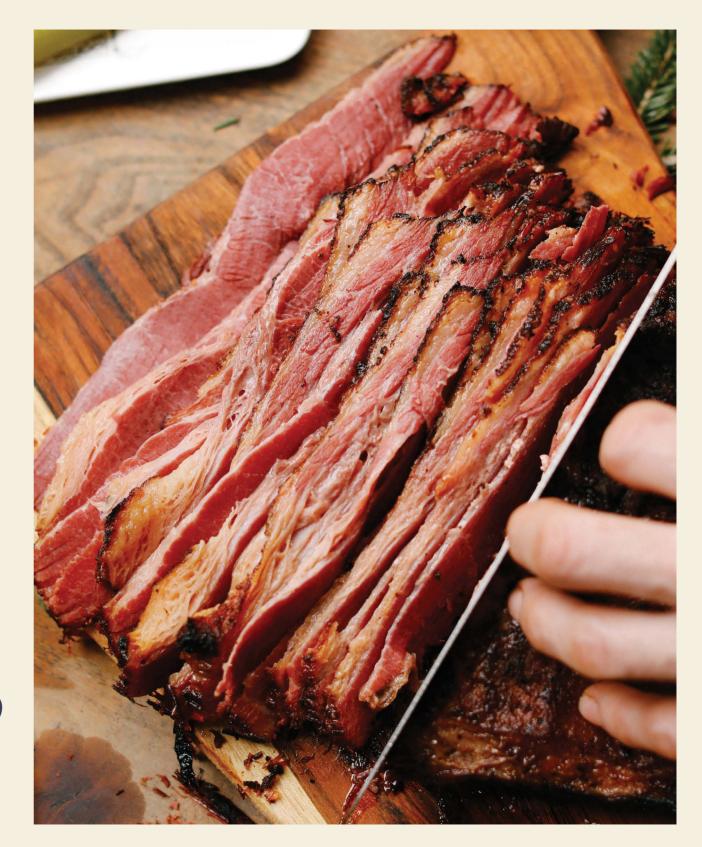


Buyers

Brindisa's buying team is made up of dedicated specialists, based both in Spain and the UK.

As summer approaches, discover new and seasonal products, perfect for al fresco eating and picnics.

Secrets





Brindisa Gazpacho

Spain's quintessential chilled soup, is so easy to serve on a hot day and is available in three unique recipes, created by us. Made with high quality ingredients, our award-winning gazpacho is plant-based, nourishing, versatile and packed with flavour.







Classic Tomato

Sun-ripened tomatoes, refreshing cucumber and peppers. Top with croutons and mint leaves, or use as a base for a Bloody Mary.

Tomato & Beetroot

Sun-ripened tomatoes, sweet beetroot and cumin. Lovely with homemade garlic bread or cubes of goat's cheese.

Tomato & Almond

Sun-ripened tomatoes, aromatic almond and garlic. Garnish with crisp green grapes or top with toasted, blanched almonds..

New Rooftop Smokehouse

Coming soon: two outstanding products from the artisan 'Rooftop Smokehouse', based in an old doll factory in the heart of Barcelona. Carefully sourced raw ingredients are smoked over oak, using completely traditional methods. For anything needing more than 24 hours of slow-smoking, the dedicated team will keep an overnight vigil next to the fire, to perfectly control it. Meticulous processes have earned Rooftop Smokehouse products a place in Michelin-starred Spanish restaurants such as Mugaritz, Celler de Can Roca, Lasarte and Disfrutar.

- Pastrami: Hot-smoked Black Angus beef, delicious served with sauerkraut, piparras, beer mustard and sourdough bread, or with a homemade horseradish cream. Originally a Romanian recipe, production is a slow process that takes around two weeks. First it is brined in herbs and spices for just over a week. Then it is dried and coated with a mix of toasted coriander seed, mustard seed, black pepper, sweet paprika and brown sugar. After two days in this spice rub, it is barrel-smoked for around 12 hours.
- Piparras: A Basque speciality, these cold-smoked, pickled medium-hot green chillis are a great accompaniment to cheese and charcuterie boards.





- Perelló Salted Capers: Salted capers are a wonderful addition to summer salad dressings and join our Perelló pickle range. Capers are the unopened buds of the caper plant (caperberries are the fruit) and these non-pareille capers are the smallest and most sought-after size for their delicious flavour and crisp texture.
- Perelló Regañás Olive Oil Crackers: Soon to join our Perelló snacking range are small, square regañás crackers, handmade with extra virgin olive oil. Extremely versatile, they are perfect with cheeses, salads, paté, dips, cured meat and fish: a great addition for outdoor eating, picnics and parties. Available in Classic, Flaked Salt and Paprika







New Canigó Infused Olive Oils

Single varietal extra virgin olive oils, infused with aromatics. Handmade in the Alt-Empordà, Catalunya, with a native olive variety.

- Black Truffle Infused Olive Oil: intensely fragrant Argudell oil partners with Spanish black truffle for a decadent and rich depth of flavour. Fantastic for finishing risotto, pasta, eggs and meat.
- Thyme Infused Olive Oil: Argudell olives are cold-pressed to create a balanced oil which combines beautifully with the slightly earthy, intense herbal aromas of hand-picked, local thyme. This oil is a traditional country recipe and a great accompaniment for red meats.
- Guindilla, Garlic and Pepper Infused Olive Oil: Argudell oil is combined
 with a piquant blend of carefully balanced aromatics. Banyoles garlic is
 grown in the garden of our supplier's father, who has been cultivating
 this variety for over 40 years. The peppers include hot Birds eye chilli;
 black, white, pink and green peppercorns; allspice and guindilla chilli. This
 intense and spicy oil is ideal on pizzas and pasta.



New Bahía Rice

From Illa de Ríu, this single varietal rice cultivar is grown on the Ebro Delta from carefully selected seeds, taken from the best 100 ears of rice grown on the estate each year. Known within Spain as the best rice variety for cooking, the purity of this estate-grown mono-varietal rice gives it unrivalled consistency and flavour, making it very popular with chefs. Read more about rice in our feature interview with Michelin-starred chef María José San Román on page 20.

New Organic Jams

No water is added to these jams, unlike most available on the market, resulting in intense flavour. They are free from thickeners, colourings and flavourings. Made with Extremadura-grown fruit from local groves and organic brown cane sugar, which lends a gentle toasted note to the almost tropical and floral fruitiness of the jams.

- Apricot Jam: bursting with ripe stone fruit and mango flavours. Great for baking, delicious with Manchego.
- Fig Jam: intense Calabacita fig richness is balanced by a fresh minerality. Lovely with goat's cheeses.
- Orange Marmalade: with notes of orange blossom, jasmine and grapefruit. Delicious beyond breakfast, try it as a glaze.

Addictive once you try them, our Galician ship's biscuits are a fantastic base for a cheeseboard or picnic hamper. Serve alongside a selection of Spanish cheeses and our new organic jams. Choose from two traditional recipes, made with either butter or olive oil.





Rice, with María José San Román

by Jenny Linford & Monika Linton

Chef María José San Román is one of the leading female chefs in Spain. A charismatic figure, she is President of Mujeres en Gastronomía, a collaborative movement promoting the visibility of women in the world of gastronomy. Having worked in the hospitality industry, San Román decided to pursue a career as a self-taught chef. Her training saw her work in top Spanish restaurants, including for Joan Roca of El Celler de Can Roca. At Monastrell, her Michelin starred, flagship restaurant in Alicante, she offers food connected to place, using carefully sourced, local, seasonal ingredients.

An expert in Alicante cuisine, San Román brings both a wealth of knowledge and a deep-rooted, open-minded fascination with food to her own cooking. As well as often being called the queen of saffron for her research into this local ingredient, she is more obviously noted for her way with rice, with the Michelin Guide entry for Monastrell highlighting her 'excellent rice dishes'. We interviewed María José San Román to learn more about this ingredient, and hear some of her techniques.

Brindisa's Monika Linton and María José have known each other for decades and whenever Monika visits Alicante she goes to the both the family restaurants... a hearty rice dish at La Taberna del Gourmet is essential and a tasting menu of rice varietals at Monastrell a real treat. María José has shown Monika the amazing culture of Alicante gastronomy, from the fish auction house to artisan makers of turrón in Jijona.

Q. Can you tell me about rice and its starch content?

Broadly speaking, there are two "races" of rice: short-grained japonica and long-grained indica. A key difference between them is that long-grained rice like basmati doesn't have much starch, while short-grained rice is high in starch. Starch acts like a sponge, it absorbs any liquid it is cooked in. When we make paella, we need a rice which is able to soak up the flavour. Basmati, a long grain rice, is aromatic, while japonica isn't fragrant, but it does contain lots of starch

Q. Can you tell me about Spanish rice varietals?

The only type of rice we produce in Spain is short-grained rice. I select my rice by varietal and grower. The Ebro delta, the Albufera and Murcia are areas of rice production near me. Some people will know Calasparra but this is not a variety, this is a little town in Murcia which has grown rice for a very long time. It's a cooperative of growers who cultivate different varietals: some are varietal crosses and some are mono varietals.

Bomba is an ancient rice varietal which is popular because it doesn't break up when you cook it, the grain doesn't disintegrate. If you have less experience in cooking Spanish rice dishes you can use bomba and it will work well.

Bahía – for me this is the rice for connoisseurs. When you cook Bahía it gives a beautiful result – the flavour is amazing. You need to know more about cooking rice to use it – it's important not to overcook it as the grain may not hold its form so well.

Q. What type of rice would you use for what sort of dish?

If you're making a soupy or a creamy rice, then Bomba will hold its shape and not explode. For a dry dish, I would use Bahía or Senia – they have a good texture.

Q. What are your thoughts on cooking rice with olive

One thing which is so important for me is cooking rice with extra virgin olive oil. It has been demonstrated by scientists that when cooking rice with extra virgin olive oil the sugar in the rice has less impact. For me, using a ratio of 25% of extra virgin olive oil to rice is a must, so for a kg of rice, I'd use 250q of extra-virgin olive oil.

Q. Do you have a favourite olive oil for cooking rice with?

It doesn't need to be a special one, but it should always be extra virgin olive oil, which is the best fat in the world. I use mature olive oil, which is cheaper because it's obtained at the end of the season, when the olives yield more oil. I will never use a green, fragrant olive oil for cooking – that would be a waste.

Q. Can you tell me more about cooking rice in stock?

When you make a paella broth it is a vital part of the recipe. In Valencia they make the broth a la minute: that is, they prepare the sofrito, add the chicken and then add the correct amount of water for the rice that will be added shortly, this becomes the stock as it takes on the flavours of these ingredients. Once this is all boiling, the rice is added and the cooking is timed. Where I live in Alicante, we make a fumet or bouillon first, we strain it and then we add the rice to the pan. You can mix your broths; traditional recipes often have both surf and turf where you add whatever protein was available to the dish. When I make stock, I roast the chicken, prawns or fish

- whatever you're going to cook with the rice
 with tomatoes and onions, until browned
- and then use this with water to make the stock.

Q. Can you tell me about sofrito, the paste used as a base in Spanish cooking?

This is another essential part of the recipe. It needs to be a freshly made sauté of vegetables that you choose: depending on which part of Spain you are from, this can be leeks, green peppers, red peppers, tomato, paprika, garlic, onions - whatever you use you can make it your secret ingredient! In Alicante, a type of sofrito called salmorreta, made with ñora peppers, a little tomato, garlic and parsley is very popular. In my restaurant, when I make salt cod paella, we use leeks, onion, cauliflowers, asparagus, broccoli: all boiled and then blended and we add it to the rice. No one would ever realise that there are so many vegetables in the rice! And the flavour is amazing!

Q. How do you add the sofrito to the rice?

I never fry the rice. I just add the right amount of water or fumet to the freshly made sofrito and the extra virgin olive oil. I bring this to the boil and then add in the rice.

Q. Tell me about adding saffron to rice.

To get a lovely yellow colour, you add saffron. Saffron is a nice ingredient – not for all rice dishes, but for some of them. I make an infusion – 1g of saffron to 250ml water and I keep it at 65 degrees, like a tea, for hours, until the stamens are completely white.

Q. Is rice a popular ingredient in Spain?

Everybody loves paella. There's a tradition of sharing – you make a big pan that everyone can go and eat from. When you're with a family you make a paella, everyone goes in with a fork and gets the bit they

Q. What is the secret to creating socarrat?

The socorrat that people often look to achieve can be achieved by having enough oil in the recipe and enough collagen in the broth from the ingredients.

First the rice is boiling, absorbing the flavour in the grain. At the end of the cooking there is no more liquid and it starts to fry, that is when you get socarrat. It's a matter of rice, water, heat and timing.

The pan itself doesn't make a huge amount of difference for the socorrat, however I always use the traditional steel pans, as they last a lot longer than enamel pans.

Q. Tell me about your sustainable policies in your restaurant.

Many of our customers ask for vegan dishes and I cater for them; we have vegan menu options. We don't use dairy produce, so it's not a problem. Everything we use in the restaurant is organic. We live in an area where we can grow absolutely everything, so we get vegetables all year round. I don't use much meat and what I do use is locally produced. I use a lot of fish and seafood.

My son has 3 acres, so we have our own chickens, oranges, olive oils. We are not self-sufficient, but we have neighbours who produce in the same way as we do. I am more than happy to use these ingredients because good, organic food has unbelievable flavour. We have a garden in Alicante and we send the leftovers from the restaurant kitchen to the garden to make compost.

Q. How do you source your rice?

My rice comes from a small producer in Valencia, who doesn't have issues with water supply. He stores the wholegrain rice in dry conditions in a village 500 metres from the sea. When I order rice each week, he polishes the rice for me, without over-polishing it. This is something I learnt in Japan.

All rice has a husk and this is always removed, but the grain still has the bran after this first step. This bran contains vitamins and minerals that are good for our health (vitamin B, iron, magnesium, zinc, calcium). The Japanese as true experts on rice and health often store de-husked rice unpolished and then polish to order as a way to keep an amount of these nutrients in the grain. You can polish the grain more or less and keep the level of nutrients that you choose in the grain.

I order 50kg at a time, and my batches are polished the minimum possible to keep these nutrients in the grain. I request the polish level that I would like fortnightly with each order. When I visit my producer, I see my name written in his storerooms: For María José. I am very much attached to the agricultural world. He grows seven different varieties, of which I use four: Bahía, Senia, Dinamite and Bombita). I use the different varieties in different dishes, so Bahía rice with salt cod and truffles, seaweed rice using Bombita rice. We use the names of the rice varieties on the menu, so my customers appreciate the care we take regarding ingredients.

Q. You have an inventive, creative approach to your cooking?

Oh yes! For me, I don't want déjà vu. I always want to go further, to try and be better. If you can't be better, then you should stop, but you can always improve – that's my religion.



Think of it as the top left corner. Situated on the ragged north-western edge of the Iberian peninsula, jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean, Galicia is a region with its roots sunk deep in history and legend. Like Catalunya and the Basque Country, it has its own language and culture. It also has its own unique ingredients and a fine, idiosyncratic cuisine.

Good eating in Galicia is the best example I know of a maxim that could be applied to Spanish food across the board: very often the simplest things are also the best. When I think back over my 30 years of edible adventures up here on the north-west frontier, what comes to mind generally has to do with product and context, almost never with fancy cooking and refined presentation.

There are moments, and mouthfuls, that I've never forgotten. To wit: a platter of fried Padrón peppers, smoking hot from the pan, at a sawdust-floored tavern in Santiago de Compostela. Juicy octopus slices dressed with

olive oil and dusted with pimentón at the San Froilán fair in Lugo. A doorstep cheese sandwich made with chewy, strong-tasting bread in what is for me Spain's capital of perfect pan, the town of Cea (Ourense).

Here, geography and gastronomy are joined at the hip. Of all the 17 'autonomous communities' that make up the jigsaw puzzle of Spain, none but Galicia has such a close and fruitful relationship with the sea. More than half the nation's fishing industry is concentrated here; Vigo is Europe's most important fishing port. Fish and shellfish are therefore not only crucial to Galicia's economy but a pillar of its culinary identity.

From the Rias Baixas, the five estuaries pushing inland like five twisted fingers, comes much of the shellfish consumed in the rest of Spain, along with a white wine (albariño) whose acid freshness and tangy fruit flavours make it the perfect foil for a ración of grilled scallops. Around the Costa da Morte, where perilous

From the clean, cold waters of the west coast come the products of Porto Muiños, a pioneer in the marketing of seaweed. Meanwhile in the deep interior lie the verdant sierras of Courel and Ancares, where cast-iron pots of pote gallego (an all-in stew of beans, vegetables and mixed meats) bubble on rustic stoves and chestnuts roast on open fires. (Brindisa stocks the pre-cooked chestnuts from Posada, a leading producer based in Ourense.) The damp atmosphere of this Atlantic climate makes dry-curing charcuterie impossible, but the ingenious locals have found a solution. In the mountains of Galicia chorizo and morcilla are smoked in the chimneys of rustic kitchens while lacón, made from the shoulder or front leg of the pig, is not air-dried but cured in brine. Boiled up with potatoes, chorizo and green turnip tops (grelos), lacón con grelos is one of the region's best-loved dishes.

Since the 4th century AD pilgrims have tramped from all over Europe to venerate the mortal remains of Saint James, which supposedly arrived from Jerusalem on a stone boat and were laid to rest in Santiago cathedral. Yet mass tourism of the beach variety has had little impact on Galicia's intricate coastline, the sweeping sands of Carnota and Loura and the sheltered estuaries of the Rias Baixas where palm-trees, citrus fruit, even fig-trees flourish.



Galician shellfish (notably crabs, scallops, lobster, and clams) owes its firm flesh and depth of flavour to the cold Atlantic currents around these coastal waters, which allow them to develop slowly.

A common sight in the Rías Baixas are the floating wooden platforms (called bateas) used for mussel cultivation, with the bivalves clinging to long ropes suspended in the water. Mussels from the Rías find their way to fish counters all over the country, and also into the tinned conservas made by numerous manufacturers in the province of Pontevedra. Traditionally speared on wooden cocktail sticks, Galician mejillones en escabeche (mussels in a mild vinegar pickle) are a storecupboard staple perfect as part of a pre-lunch aperitivo. We at Brindisa are long-term fans of tip-top Galician conservas - among which are some of the fattest, tastiest tinned sardines we have ever tried.

Galician beef, especially when obtained from the mighty oxen once bred for ploughing the fields, is commonly agreed to be the best in Spain. Perhaps surprisingly, however, given the lush green pastures of its rolling countryside, Galicia is not one of the outstanding Spanish makers of cheese. The region's standard-bearers San Simón and Tetilla (so-called for its suggestive tapering shape, from teta, meaning 'tit') are mildly flavoured cow's-milk cheeses with a pleasantly soft and yielding texture. The exception is Galmesan - also a cow's-milk cheese, but cured for months until it takes on a hard, granular texture. This could almost be described as a Spanish Parmesan, except that Galmesan also has a distinctive flavour profile of its own.



As you'll have gathered by now, the excellence of Galician food is less about sophisticated culinary techniques - though the region does have some very fine restaurants - and more about the product. The summer months, when the rain abates and the region looks more like Ireland than Andalucía, see a plethora of food-related fiestas, each devoted to a single product or dish with tastings and feastings usually accompanied by lashings of local wine. In high summer the Festa do Lacón in Silleda (Pontevedra) celebrates the famous brine-cured pork shoulder, while Pobra de Trives (Ourense) rolls out the red carpet for its bica, a richly delicious kind of sponge cake. I recently counted as many as 25 different Galician food-fests and the object of their devotion, from green peppers and razor clams to sardines, maize bread, tripe, and octopus. Perhaps the greatest gastronomic party of them all is the Festa do Marisco held every October in the coastal town of O Grove (Pontevedra), which attracts visitors in their thousands to a shellfish feast lasting three days.



So there's a great diversity to Galician cuisine, yet certain products and dishes are found with delicious regularity across the region. Though originally a local speciality, Padrón peppers, sizzled in olive oil and scattered with salt, are now practically ubiquitous. These little green morsels are famous for a peculiar characteristic: for every ten or twelve of them, one or two may take you by surprise with a blast of spicy heat. If Tarta de Santiago, a rich, moist almond cake, is perhaps Galicia's most famous dessert, its most brilliant pastry invention is surely the empanada, a flat pie made with an egg-enriched dough and stuffed with all manner of fillings among which might be bonito (white tuna), xoubas (small sardines), zamburiñas (small scallops) and salt cod with moscatel raisins.

More popular than either, though, is a dish that has come to be almost a symbol of gallego life. Polbo á feira (octopus 'in the style of the fair') originated in the country towns of inland Galicia where, as its name implies, it was a popular dish at fairs and fiestas. The octopus were boiled until tender in

copper vats and snipped into slices with scissors by expert polbeiras - octopus ladies who travelled from town to town. The slices were laid out on round plates invariably made of wood, which would have been easier to transport on the rough roads of the interior. For polbo á feira they were slathered with olive oil, scattered with salt and dusted with pimentón de la Vera. Another variant, polbo con cachelos, had the octopus slices served on a layer of cooked potato.

I'm using the past tense, but Galicia's passionate relationship with octopus is still very much alive. At any fair or pilgrimage or saint's- day celebration it's still served up in the traditional manner on the same wooden plates, and the polbeiras still do the rounds with their copper pots, their tins of pimentón. Yet over the years the fame of polbo á feira has spread far beyond its rural origins, becoming a familiar item on tapas menus from Madrid to Manhattan and a proud ambassador for the land of its birth. You might say it's a classic Galician dish that has legs.

Brandada de Bacalao

From Brindisa, The True Food of Spain by Monika Linton

Ingredients.

300g salt cod fillet

1 medium onion, peeled and halved

8 black peppercorns

2 bay leaves

600ml milk

250g potato, peeled and cubed

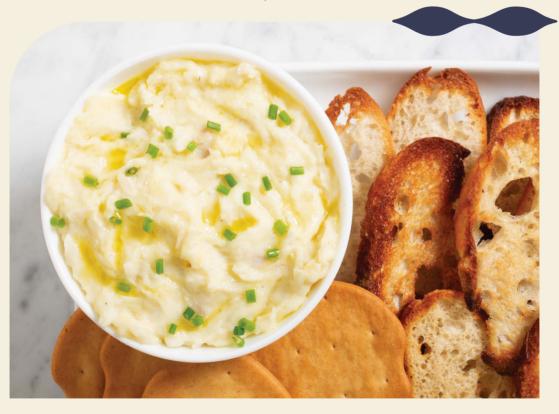
2 garlic cloves, peeled

5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

Little tip: Taste the cod after soaking to check the level of salt. Don't use all the milk at once, add enough to reach a soft mash consistency. Add another garlic clove if you like it very garlicky.

Method.

- 1. Soak the cod in cold water for 24-48 hours (in the fridge), changing the water two or three times.
- Drain the cod and place in a medium saucepan with the onion, peppercorns, bay leaves and milk.
 Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Remove the fish from the milk and set aside to cool. Remove the aromatics and discard. Add the potato and garlic to the hot milk and simmer until soft.
- Pull the fish apart into large flakes and remove any bones.
- 5. Place the fish, potato, garlic and milk in a food processor and puree to a soft mash. Stir through the olive oil and season with black pepper and salt to taste. Serve on toast, sprinkled with chopped chives and drizzled with a little more olive oil.





Buñuelos de Bacalao

(Salt cod Fritters)

From Brindisa, The True Food of Spain by Monika Linton

Ingredients. (to make around 30 portions)

400g de-salted cod migas (pieces, or 'crumbs'), or salt cod fillet

250ml fish stock or water

100g butter

150g plain flour

about 6 eggs

vegetable oil, for deep-frying

Little tip: Work in the eggs one at a time, until you have the right consistency. For a variation, add $\frac{1}{2}$ a teaspoon of mild paprika and 1 tablespoon of finely chopped parsley to the batter just before shaping and frying. The buñuelos are good served with a tomato salad and some fresh mayonnaise.

Method.

- 1. If using migas, break them into pieces 1–2cm square. If using cod fillet, peel the skin from the flesh with a sharp knife, then feel for any bones with your fingers and remove before flaking it into pieces 1–2 cm long. Keep the pieces to one side.
- 2. Bring the stock or water to the boil in a pan, then add the butter and let it melt. Take the pan off the heat and add all the flour at once, whisking continuously, then add the eggs one at a time, working them in vigorously with a wooden spoon. Don't add the next egg until the previous one has been completely absorbed into the dough. Six eggs is usually about right, but you may need more or less. The dough is ready when it comes away from the sides of the pan easily.
- 3. Gently stir in the flakes of cod so that you avoid breaking them up too much.
- 4. Pour some vegetable oil into a deep pan it should not come more than a third of the way up – and heat to 180°C (if you don't have a thermometer, test by dropping in a little of the mixture – it should sizzle). Taking two lightly oiled teaspoons, make 'quenelles' and gently ease them into the hot oil.
- 5. Fry in batches, so that the mixture doesn't lower the temperature of the oil. As the buñuelos fry, the batter will puff up. As soon as each batch is golden brown all over, lift them out carefully and drain on kitchen paper. Eat hot.



School of Fish

Simple and delicious pairings for cured fish, plated or straight from the tin.



- 1. Delicate, lightly beech-smoked mackerel from the Cantabrian sea is complimented by thin slices of sharp, crisp, green apple.
- 2. Intense, savoury, Mojama is also known as the "ham of the sea". A delightful tapa with sliced pear or smoked Catalan almonds.
- 3. Rich, meaty sardinillas in silky olive oil work beautifully against the pared back freshness of ripe tomatoes and parsley.

- 4. Tender, refined, beech-smoked Cantabrian anchovies are very moreish with a beetroot salad or piquillo peppers on toast.
- 5. Pole and line-caught Ventresca belly tuna is stunning with the crunchy acidic heat of Piparra chilli peppers.
- 6. Gildas are an easy and fun way to present cured anchovies or boquerones, skewered alongside acidic, juicy olives and pickles.



Brindisa



Plant-based

Plant-based and healthy foods have never been more popular. Our beans and pulses are available both dried in cloth sacks and pre-cooked in jars, and we also offer seasonal heirloom varieties. Accompany them with intensely-flavoured Spanish spices, such as pimentón (paprika) or saffron. For the perfect paella try the mineral-rich Calasparra rice from Murcia or the fabled Bomba rice from Tarragona. Our store cupboard range is completed with Catalan pasta and preserved vegetables from Navarra.





for cheeses. Our fruit wheels from Valencia can even be eaten on their own as a nutritious snack. Our quince paste is the traditional partner for Manchego cheese, but can also be used as a glaze for patisserie or as an ingredient in cooked pork dishes. Add to this pickles, biscuits and seasonal preserved fruit and there's something to match any cheese you buy.



Cheeses

The geographical extremes and diverse microclimates of Spain result in many different styles of cheese. We have sought out the best cheesemakers in Spain since 1988 and every year we still discover wonderful new dairies: we bring you the best of this tremendous variety. We have built our own cheese caves at our Balham warehouse, which allows us to import more fragile, unwrapped cheeses and to work with their natural rinds.



Olives & Pickles

Spain is the largest producer of table olives in the world. Varietals include fragrant Arbequina, oily black Empeltre, as well as those that are harvested solely for eating such Manzanilla. Encurtidos, or pickles, are widely consumed in Spain, in bars and restaurants or as an accompaniment to cheese or charcuterie at home. The flavour of our olive pastes stand out in comparison to most, as they have so few ingredients.



Oils and vinegars

Olive oils have been amongst Spain's most important exports for more than 2000 years. Brindisa imports excellent extra virgin olive oils for use in the kitchen, as well as single estate olive oils. We also supply a wide range of distinctive vinegars, produced from regional wines and grape varieties.



Meats

Ibérico Bellota hams, Serrano hams, Chorizo, Salchichón, Lomo, Panceta and Sobrasada are amongst the iconic Spanish charcuterie and meat products we supply. There are many regional variations of these classics to discover as well as more unusual items like Cecina. air-dried beef, or a new innovative chestnut-fed roast ham from Galicia, which is a delicious stand-out item for a deli counter or menu.



Snacking

Spain grows excellent almonds and hazelnuts, which are widely used in both sweet and savoury recipes. Marcona almonds, indigenous to Spain, are wonderful roasted and made into turrones (similar to nougat), as well as fried, salted and eaten as a snack. Our gourmet crisps fried in extra virgin olive oil hail from the Basque country, and more luxurious crisp flavours created from authentic ingredients come from Catalunya.



Dulces

Spain makes delicious almond and honey-based cakes, biscuits, and sweets such as turrón. Our crisp olive oil biscuits from Sevilla are a real treat, with almond, orange, traditional and savoury versions. Single varietal, unpasteurised honeys from Catalunya come in a range of beautiful flavours. Drinking chocolate has been popular in Spain since the 16th century and ours results in a traditional thick and creamy drink, perfect for dipping churros.



1. Madrid

2. Catalunya

- Cooking chorizos
- Charcuterie
- Pyrenean country pâté
- Goat's milk cheeses
- Quince paste
- · Salchichón de Vic PGI
- · Illa de Riu bomba and bahía rice
- Fesol del Castellfollit de Boix
- Fesol del Ganxet
- Pasta
- Marcona Almonds
- Varietal Honeys
- Pickles

3. Aragón

- Cured ham: Jamón de Teruel PDO
- Olive pastes

4. Valencia

- Fruit wheels and quince
- Chocolates

5. Andalucía

- Ibérico ham: Jabugo PDO, Los Pedroches PDO
- Game pâtés
- Cured tuna: Mojama de Barbate PGI
- Goat's milk cheeses
- Olives
- Olive oil
- Sherry vinegar: Vinagre de Jerez PDO
- Gazpacho
- Moscatel Raisins: Pasas de Málaga PDO

6. Murcia

Calasparra rice PDO

7. Castilla La Mancha

- · Manchego Cheese: Queso Manchego PDO
- Saffron: Azafrán de la Mancha PDO

8. Castilla y León

- Morcilla, chorizo, cecina, panceta
- · Lamb: Lechazo de Castilla y Leon PGI
- Organic charcuterie
- Zamorano Cheese: Queso Zamorano PDO
- Picos Blue Cheese: Queso de Valdeón PGI
- Beans and pulses
- · Ibérico ham from Salamanca

9. La Rioja

- Regional chorizos
- Dried peppers

10. Navarra

- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- · Preserved vegetables
- Cooked beans and pulses
- Piquillo Peppers: Pimiento del piquillo de Lodosa PDO
- Asparagus: Espárrago de Navarra PGI

11. Basque Country

- Bonito tuna, anchovies, sardines, mackerel, salt cod
- Idiazábal cheese PDO
- Biscuits

12. Cantabria

Tuna and anchovies

13. Galicia

- Chestnut roast ham
- Cheeses: Queso Tetilla PDO, San Simón da Costa PDO
- Sardines
- Octopus
- Beans: Fabas de Lourenzá PGI
- · Tarta de Santiago Almond Cake, PGI Galicia

14. Asturias

- Cider vinegar
- Cabrales Cheese: Queso Cabrales PDO

15. Extremadura

- Cured meats
- Ibérico ham: Dehesa de Extremadura PDO
- Torta style cheese
- Ibérico pork
- Paprika: Pimentón de la Vera PDO
- Rabitos, ganache stuffed figs

16. Balearic islands

- · Mahón cheese: Queso Mahón-Menorca PDO
- · Sobrasada de Mallorca PGI
- · Artisan Mallorquín Paprika

17. Canary islands



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Free to install and use, simply download the Brindisa app to your smartphone (from the App Store, or Google Play) or you can visit order.brindisa.com to place your orders from your PC or laptop.

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- Save time by scanning product bar codes with your phone.
- View your previous activity and repeat orders with the touch of a button.
- · Check product pricing before placing your order.
- View your next delivery date options & place your orders for dates in the future.

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