

# Paella and Rice Region of Valencia

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Despite the culinary diversity of Valencia, one has to admit that rice monopolises most menus, becoming an inevitable reference point. Quite rightly the Valencian food critic Antonio Vergara states that "the Spanish Mediterranean is like a tiny China. The difference is that our methods of cooking rice are much more entertaining, more colourful, and more pleasing to the eye than those of China".

The repertoire of Valencian rice dishes is by no means a monotonous succession of paellas - that humble yet exquisite dish from the "huerta" or market gardens of Valencia that, by popular demand, was exported from typical farmhouses in the country to invade eating houses, seaside stands and open-air restaurants along the Malvarrosa beach in Valencia and the Portichol and Albufereta beaches in Alicante in the late 19th century.

The lineup of specialities currently on offer at restaurants in the city, at rice restaurants near the seashore and at picnic stands on the beach are difficult to classify in a simple list. First, a division should be made between rices (paella) and rice stews (caldo) cooked in calderos, pucheros, peroles and cazuelas (varying types of metal or earthenware casseroles). There are also soft, spongy rices made in earthenware casseroles like arròs al forn (ovenbaked rice)

and arrs amb costra (oven-baked rice with an omelette crust), whose recipes are incredibly similar to that of the arrs en cassola al forn described in a 16th-century Valencian cookbook called the Llibre de Coch, by Robert de Nola (1520).

## Paella as a ritual <sup>[1]</sup>



Creamy rice with monkfish and prawns <sup>[2]</sup>

The...



Arroz de pulpo y bacalao <sup>[3]</sup>

This is on...



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