

Gastronomy

Concepts/certification labels

Biodiversity

Malta is under an obligation to formulate a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) as mandated by its status as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This plan is designed to seamlessly integrate biodiversity considerations into various policy frameworks and align with Malta's sustainability objectives. The previous NBSAP (2012-2020) demonstrated significant progress in several critical areas, including the development of policy frameworks and the conservation of both land and marine ecosystems.

Furthermore, Malta's commitment to developing the NBSAP is firmly rooted in the EC Council Decision of October 25, 1993. This decision, which pertains to the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (93/626/EEC), along with the Convention on Biological Diversity (Incorporation) Regulations (S.L. 549.27) and the Flora, Fauna, and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44), forms the legal foundation for Malta's responsibility in creating the NBSAP. Additionally, the NBSAP aligns harmoniously with the recently approved National Strategy for the Environment (NSE) and Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050, as endorsed by the Cabinet.

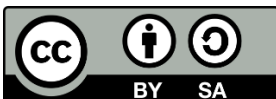
The NBSAP for the period until 2030 derives its impetus from a forward-looking vision for 2050, wherein Malta's biodiversity is esteemed, preserved, and employed sustainably. This vision sets the overarching objective of the revised NBSAP: guiding the restoration of Malta's biodiversity by the year 2030. To this end, the NBSAP delineates five distinct policy areas, each accompanied by specific, measurable targets to be attained by 2030. These targets are intricately aligned with both global and EU biodiversity goals, while also taking into careful consideration Malta's national priorities and capacities.

Organic Farming Certification

Organic farming represents a comprehensive agricultural approach that provides consumers with authentic, fresh food while upholding the principles of natural life cycles. This method involves strategic practices such as crop rotation and the implementation of stringent regulations governing synthetic chemicals, antibiotics, and genetically modified organisms. Organic farming optimizes local resources by fostering the cultivation of disease-resistant plant and animal species and facilitating open-air, organic feed systems for livestock.

It is imperative to recognize that the organic food supply chain extends beyond farming, encompassing critical aspects like food processing, distribution, and retailing. Opting for organic products demonstrates a commitment to a system that places paramount importance on both animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

The foundation of organic farming lies in the maintenance of robust soil health, unwavering adherence to environmental responsibility, and the preservation of biodiversity. Additionally, organic farmers prioritize the well-being of their livestock, ensuring that their specific needs and behaviors are catered to. The collective



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aim of organic processors, marketers, and distributors is to deliver authentic, fresh processed foods that align with the inherent laws of nature.

To ensure that products meet the required standards, consumers should actively seek out the certification label, denoting compliance with Council Regulation (EC) No. 848/2018. Oversight of organic farming practices in Malta is entrusted to the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development, and Climate Change, while the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority diligently inspects and certifies businesses to guarantee the authenticity of organic products available in the market.

Protected Designation of Origin

The inception of registrations for agricultural and food products within the quality systems established by European Union legislation in 1992 culminated in their first actualization in 1996. These voluntary initiatives play a pivotal role in safeguarding brand identities, augmenting their intrinsic value, and expanding consumer choices. It is worth noting that food products bearing EU registration not only meet the obligatory safety and hygienic criteria but also excel in terms of overall quality. Within the purview of these regulations lie programs such as 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO), 'Protected Geographical Indication' (PGI), and 'Traditional Speciality Guaranteed' (TSG), each establishing a fundamental link between a product's origin and traditional manufacturing methodologies.

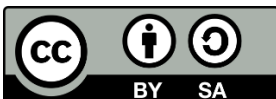
In the context of Malta, the Technical Regulations Division undertakes the responsibility of overseeing applications seeking PDO, PGI, or TSG protection, a process invariably involving extensive consultations with pertinent stakeholders. Typically, a consensus among a majority of key stakeholders, including producers and manufacturers, is deemed a prerequisite for advancing an application. Should an application attain approval at the EU level, only those products meeting the predefined criteria may bear the protected designation. This, in turn, not only amplifies the perceived worth of the product but also furnishes consumers with an expanded array of high-quality choices to select from.

- PDO – protected designation of origin (food and wine)
- PGI – protected geographical indication (food and wine)
- GI – geographical indication (spirit drinks).

History of food

The culinary landscape of Malta bears the indelible marks of numerous significant civilizations and historical occupations. Upon scrutinizing the evolution of Maltese cuisine, one discerns a harmonious amalgamation of culinary influences from the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, British, and Italians.

To fully grasp the historical tapestry woven into Maltese cuisine, it is imperative to cast our gaze back to the eras of the Phoenicians and Romans. These ancient civilizations, through their extensive empires and intricate trade networks, introduced the Maltese people to staples such as olives, citrus fruits, and wheat. These ingredients swiftly ingrained themselves in the Maltese diet. Furthermore, this period witnessed the infusion of cumin, coriander, and saffron, imparting a rich tradition of robust flavors and innovative culinary techniques. Even today, elements like wheat, grapes, and olives, bestowed by the Phoenicians and Romans, remain fundamental components of Maltese cuisine.



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The Arab invasion that unfolded between 870 and 1091 holds particular significance in the annals of Maltese cuisine. During this period of Arab rule, which left an indelible imprint on the island's culture, language, and architecture, Maltese cuisine underwent transformative influences. The Maltese language, replete with Arabic loanwords, stands as a testament to this profound Arab influence. The culinary realm was equally affected as figs, almonds, and spices like cinnamon and cloves found their way into Maltese kitchens, adding distinctive flavors and textures.

In the medieval epoch, characterized by knights and castles, the fusion of Sicilian and Spanish culinary traditions with Maltese customs gave rise to innovative recipes. Dishes like "ross il-forn," a hearty baked rice dish featuring meat, vegetables, and flavorful seasonings, exemplify the culinary creativity of this period.

Geographically close to Italy, Malta's culinary journey has been significantly shaped by Italian culture, especially in terms of gastronomy. Italian culinary staples such as pizza, pasta, and a plethora of pastries have seamlessly integrated into Maltese cooking, becoming beloved classics.

The rich repertoire of pasta dishes, pizzas, and desserts that have become cherished fixtures in Maltese cuisine bears a discernible Italian influence. Malta's proximity to Italy facilitated the adoption and adaptation of various Italian culinary traditions. Pasta, pizza, ravioli, and risotto have all become integral components of Maltese cuisine.

The British era, spanning from their invasion in 1800 to their rule until 1964, ushered in another transformative period in Maltese history. The British introduced fresh ingredients, cooking methods, and recipes that enriched the culinary landscape. Pastizzi, flaky pastries filled with ricotta or peas, rapidly gained popularity during this time. Modern Maltese cuisine, as it stands today, is a reflection of the country's diverse past, artfully blending British and Mediterranean flavors.

In contemporary times, Maltese cuisine is celebrated in restaurants that pay homage to its historical roots. Dishes like the iconic rabbit stew, "stuffat tal-fenek," serve as poignant reminders of Malta's intricate and fascinating culinary history.

Food and drink festivals

Malta International Food Festival

The esteemed and widely recognized culinary event known as the Malta International Food Festival stands as a flagship occasion on the island. This eagerly anticipated international culinary gathering garners the attention of tens of thousands of culinary and wine enthusiasts annually, making it the most significant event of the year in Malta. Notably, the festival recently attracted approximately 150,000 visitors, with the 2022 Malta edition alone drawing over 48,000 attendees, marking it as the most well-attended iteration to date. Furthermore, the 2022 Gozo edition, spanning two days, saw an additional 15,000 participants.

In response to overwhelming demand, the forthcoming 2023 edition will extend the festival's duration to seven days, showcasing not only an array of culinary delights but also the essence of the Maltese food scene. This encompasses a profound appreciation for local and seasonal produce, the celebration of diverse cultural



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influences, unwavering support for premium producers, a symphony of flavors to savor, and the opportunity to relish an unforgettable evening in Valletta's Pjazza Tritoni.

The festival's program is further enriched by live performances featuring some of Malta's preeminent artists, alongside a curated selection of family-friendly activities that ensure visitors are engaged throughout the event.

The modest yet equally captivating Gozo edition unfolds beneath the majestic Xewkija Parish church, a few weeks after the Malta edition. The 2023 iteration of this free street food festival offered a mosaic of over ten distinct foreign cuisines, complemented by live music and various forms of entertainment.

Malta International Wine Festival

Wine festivals provide a seasonal opportunity for the general public to engage in an educational and entertaining wine experience, featuring an extensive array of wines.

The Malta International Wine Festival stands as the inaugural wine festival of the Republic of Malta, extending its focus beyond national borders. The festival's primary objective lies in the spotlight it casts upon wines originating from Malta and various other countries, offering a diverse selection of grape varieties sourced from across the globe.

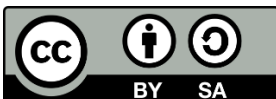
The annual Malta International Wine Festival serves as a grand celebration and exhibition of a wide spectrum of wines hailing from diverse corners of the world. This event holds immense significance for wine connoisseurs, enthusiasts, and visitors to Malta alike. It encompasses a multifaceted program that often encompasses wine tasting sessions, food pairing experiences, educational seminars, workshops, entertainment, and networking opportunities. Notably, attendees have the opportunity to receive tutelage in wine appreciation and the art of winemaking from esteemed wine experts, sommeliers, and seasoned winemakers. Additionally, the festival may feature live musical performances, traditional Maltese acts, and other cultural elements, fostering a unique fusion of wine appreciation and cultural immersion.

Farsons Beer Festival

Farsons Beer Festival, regarded as one of the highly anticipated summer events in Malta, is poised to deliver an extensive assortment of local and internationally acclaimed beers. This comprehensive offering encompasses a diverse portfolio, featuring no less than 70 local artists and performances, as well as a food court offering a wide array of delectable cuisine. The festival consistently draws a substantial number of festival-goers, attracting thousands each night.

The festival's primary attraction lies in its expansive selection of award-winning beers, which prominently includes the entire Cisk portfolio, comprising Cisk Lager, Cisk Excel, Cisk 0.0, Cisk Pilsner, Cisk Chill, Cisk Export, and Cisk Strong. Additionally, the Farsons Classic Brews line, encompassing Blue Label Amber Ale, Double Red Strong Ale, and Green Hop IPA, further augments the beer offerings.

In addition to these renowned local brews, a plethora of globally recognized brands such as Carlsberg, Budweiser, Corona, Beck's, Desperados, Newcastle, Kilkeny, and Guinness will be featured. Furthermore, specialty foreign brews like St Austell, Hop House13, and Baladin will enhance the beer selection. The festival



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also caters to a diverse audience by including a variety of cider brands, offering gluten-free lager options like Bellfield, alcohol-free versions of Cisk and Carlsberg, and featuring Bellfield among its offerings.

National dishes

Pastizzi

The pastizz represents a fusion of flaky Arabic pastry and culinary elements that bear the imprint of Malta's southern Italian gastronomic influences. These delectable creations take the form of diamond-shaped pockets crafted from filo pastry, generously filled with either fresh ricotta cheese or a flavorful mixture comprising mashed peas and spices. Establishments specializing in pastizzi are ubiquitous, and the popular Maltese expression "jinbieghu bal pastizzi" ('selling as fast as pastizzi') stands as a testament to their widespread popularity and rapid consumption.

Ftira

A distinctive Maltese sourdough bread, characterized by its leavened, ring-shaped form, is commonly known as "ftira." Noteworthy features of this bread include a robust crust and a airy internal structure, marked by wide and irregular cavities. The unique texture of ftira results from baking it at elevated temperatures and maintaining a flatter profile compared to other Maltese bread varieties. A prevalent culinary practice involves halving ftira and adorning it with Mediterranean ingredients such as tuna, sardines, tomatoes, olives, and capers, creating a sandwich-like preparation commonly referred to as "ftira biz-zejt".

Rabbit stew

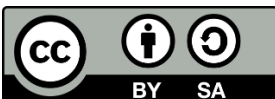
The consumption of rabbit represents a longstanding and substantial source of protein within the culinary heritage of the island. This traditional dish in Maltese cuisine typically involves the utilization of whole rabbits, which are segmented into pieces and subjected to a stewing process in a sauce comprised of tomatoes, onions, and garlic. To impart the dish with its characteristic flavor profile, an array of herbs and spices is incorporated into the preparation, including parsley, thyme, and rosemary.

Qagħaq ta' l-Għasel

A classic dessert of Maltese origin, recognized as "qagaq ta' l-gasel," predominantly consists of treacle as its key ingredient. The preparation process entails the creation of pastries, which are filled with a mixture comprising black treacle, orange zest, semolina, a medley of spices, chocolate, and sugar, before being shaped into rings and subjected to cooking.

Naspli

Loquats, known by the Maltese name "naspli," are a fruit indigenous to the southeastern regions of China and Japan. Often colloquially referred to as the Chinese or Japanese plum, this fruit is notable for its sweet flavor profile underscored by subtle citrus notes with a mildly sour undertone. When fully ripened, some individuals liken the texture of loquats to that of a peach, drawing comparisons to a hybrid amalgamation of apricot, apple, and pineapple flavors. Primarily consumed fresh, naspli fruits can also be employed in the creation of jam or utilized as a garnish for pies and crumbles.



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Imqarrun Il Forn

Imqarrun il-forn, a quintessential baked pasta dish originating from Malta, features the utilization of tubular pasta varieties such as rigatoni or penne. The preparation of this dish involves a flavorful meat-and-tomato sauce, characterized by the infusion of an array of herbs and spices, including garlic, cumin, paprika, oregano, bay leaves, thyme, rosemary, and curry. Notably, the mixture is typically enriched through the incorporation of eggs, enhancing its overall richness and texture.

Traditional dishes

Starters

- Bigilla: This dip is crafted from mashed beans, garlic, and olive oil, rendering it an ideal accompaniment for application on freshly baked Maltese bread. Renowned as a broad bean pate, it proves to be a delightful enhancement to various culinary preparations, particularly when paired with crusty toast and olive oil.
- Gbejniet: A distinctive variety of cheese derived from sheep or goat's milk, Gbejniet is frequently presented alongside crackers or bread. It stands as a prevalent choice often featured on shared platters, offering a delectable cheese option for discerning palates.

Main courses

- Fenkata: A quintessential rabbit stew deeply ingrained in Maltese gastronomy. This hearty dish features rabbit slow-cooked alongside aromatic herbs, wine, tomatoes, onions, carrots, and assorted vegetables. Often served with potatoes and additional vegetables, it is renowned for its filling and delectable qualities.
- Lampuki Pie (fish pie): Crafted using fresh Lampuki fish, a Mediterranean species abundant in Maltese waters during late summer and early autumn. This pie is meticulously prepared by incorporating spinach, tomatoes, and olives or shallow-frying them in locally sourced olive oil, complemented by a tomato sauce, capers, and green peppers.
- Stuffat tal-fenek: A slow-cooked rabbit stew, akin to Fenkata, distinguished by its thicker sauce consistency. The preparation entails marinating the rabbit in red wine, garlic, thyme, and an array of spices before undergoing a leisurely cooking process, ultimately resulting in a rich, dense sauce. This dish is often accompanied by rice or freshly crafted pasta.

Desserts

- Imqaret: Imqaret is a delectable sweet pastry renowned for its crisp texture, typically served hot. The dough for Imqaret is traditionally composed of flour, water, and a modest quantity of butter or oil. The filling, on the other hand, comprises dates—an ingredient commonly featured in Maltese culinary traditions—combined with an assortment of aromatic spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, and cardamom. The distinctive and appetizing flavor of Imqaret is a harmonious blend of sweet dates and these flavorful spices.
- Kannoli: A delightful sweet pastry characterized by its ricotta cheese filling, often enhanced with hints of orange or lemon zest. This confection represents the Maltese rendition of the renowned Italian dessert known as a "cannolo," which features fried pastry shells enveloping a sweet and creamy ricotta filling.



Beverages

- **Kinnie:** An exclusive soft drink native to Malta, Kinnie is crafted from bitter oranges and a blend of aromatic herbs. Typically enjoyed as a standalone beverage, it also serves as a favored mixer for alcoholic concoctions.
- **Cisk:** A domestically brewed beer renowned for its popularity in Malta, Cisk holds a prominent position in the local beer landscape. With its distinctive golden hue and unique flavor profile, this fermented beer has been the preferred choice among Maltese beer enthusiasts since its establishment in 1929.

Modern menu

Starters

- **Maltese Fritters:** An innovative rendition of the classic "qassatat" pastry, these fritters feature a delectable filling composed of local cheeses, aromatic herbs, and spices. Accompanied by a zesty dip, the ricotta-based filling can be further enriched with the addition of raisins, onions, or fava beans. The fritter's dough, prepared from a blend of flour, butter or olive oil, eggs, salt, and water, forms a delightful complement to the flavorful filling. Variations of qassatat may also incorporate ingredients such as spinach, capers, peas, olives, and anchovies.
- **Octopus Carpaccio:** Octopus Carpaccio presents thinly sliced octopus, marinated in a harmonious blend of lemon and olive oil, served alongside fresh greens and delicately garnished with a drizzle of balsamic glaze. This dish showcases thinly sliced, impeccably cooked octopus bathed in a vibrant citrus vinaigrette, making it a visually appealing choice suitable for serving as an appetizer or a light entrée in the realm of Italian cuisine.

Main courses

- **Beef Cheek Ravioli:** This dish features succulent beef cheek that has been slow-cooked to perfection, generously stuffed within delicate, handcrafted ravioli. It is elegantly presented alongside a luscious tomato and red wine sauce. The slow-cooked beef cheek can also be prepared in larger quantities to be enjoyed as a standalone main course or utilized as a delectable ragu sauce paired with pappardelle pasta.
- **Swordfish Fillet:** Fresh swordfish, skillfully grilled to achieve optimal flavor and texture, is elegantly complemented by a vibrant salsa verde and a medley of expertly roasted vegetables. Swordfish, known for its versatility in culinary applications, can be prepared through various methods, including pan-frying, grilling, roasting, sautéing, smoking, or baking, making it a highly adaptable ingredient in the kitchen.

Desserts

- **White Chocolate and Pistachio Mousse:** This delectable dessert is a luxurious offering featuring white chocolate and finely ground pistachios, elegantly adorned with a medley of fresh berries. It boasts a velvety and airy mousse texture, enriched by the pronounced essence of pistachio.
- **Maltese Fig and Almond Tart:** A decadent tart made with locally sourced figs and almonds, served with a scoop of homemade honey ice cream. It has an almondy, almost cake-like filling in a pastry shell with the figs on top.



Beverages

- **Maltese Craft Beer:** Within the burgeoning craft beer landscape of Malta, there exists a plethora of locally brewed beers, each distinguished by its distinctive flavors and stylistic attributes.
- **Maltese Wine:** The heritage of winemaking in Malta is steeped in tradition, with numerous local vineyards crafting exceptional wines, including those crafted from indigenous grape varieties such as Gellewza and Ghirghentina.



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