

EATING

top picks

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You could come to Barcelona for the food alone. The options seem limitless, from a rusting grill in a centuries-old farmhouse in the outer suburbs to great pots of fish stew near the waterfront. Barcelona is one of the best places in the country to sniff out what the food writers have predictably dubbed *nueva cocina española*.

For some years now, those lovers of fine dining north of the Pyrenees, the French, have been singing the culinary praises of Barcelona and wider Catalonia. Catalonia has a rich tradition of fine food, and its cuisine, alongside that of the Basque Country to the west, is considered to be Spain's finest. As well as the traditional wide variety of seafood, a whole new culture of inventive gourmet dining has mushroomed in Barcelona since the 1990s, catapulting the city into the foodie limelight. Local chefs, led by the inimitable Ferran Adrià and his contemporaries, Sergi Arola and Carles Abellán, have become international cooking icons, raising the status of their kitchens to that of artistic laboratories.

The innards of Ciutat Vella, from El Raval across the Barri Gòtic to La Ribera (especially in the humming El Born area), teem with places offering everything, from the classics of Spanish and Catalan cuisine complete with atmospheric tiled walls and creaking timber-beam roofs, to the latest in molecular inventions. For a shoal of seafood possibilities, explore La Barceloneta.

In l'Eixample, the variety of menus is unlimited. Forget the barnlike tapas joints along Passeig de Gràcia and head inland, southwest to the area bordered by Carrer d'Aribau. Although quieter, you'll find a handful of options in the streets immediately northeast of Passeig de Gràcia too.

There is no shortage of high-end offerings along and around the west end of Avinguda Diagonal, which cater to the business market and the city's beautiful people. Here, and scattered across La Zona Alta, are some of the most exclusive A-list joints in town.

And what is a great meal without fine wine to accompany it? Aside from being Spain's main producer of bubbly, Catalonia is rich in wine districts, which produce everything from the dark and heavy reds of El Priorat to light whites from the Penedès. Catalonia's vineyards are among the nation's best and most varied.

Food terminology throughout this book is given in Catalan/Spanish (Castilian) or Catalan alone, except in the few cases where the Spanish term is used in both languages. Rather than descend into the murky depths of linguistic polemics, the idea is to reflect what you are most likely to see and hear in the city's restaurants.

HISTORY

The Romans didn't just bring straight roads, a large temple and a functional sewerage system to the little town of Barcino. They also brought with them their culinary habits, which included such fundamentals as olives and grapes. We can perhaps be grateful that another Roman favourite, *garum* (a kind of tart fish paste that could survive long sea voyages), did not survive the demise of the empire.

Catalan cooking is one of several regional Spanish cuisines, all of which have been influenced to some extent by common factors. One particular spin comes from the country's long history of Muslim occupation, reflected in the use of spices such as saffron and cumin and, in desserts, the predominance of honeyed sweets, almonds and fruit. Other major sources of culinary inspiration were imports brought back from South America, whence came everyday staples such as potatoes, tomatoes, and of course chocolate.

At the heart of Catalan cooking is a diversity of products and traditions. Some dishes are referred to as *mar i muntanya* (surf and turf; a mix of seafood and meats), a term which perhaps best sums up the situation. Barcelona has always been enamoured of edible marine inhabitants (Roman annals suggest big, juicy local oysters were once a common item on ancient menus), while the Catalan hinterland, especially the Pyrenees, has long been the hearth of a much chunkier, heartier cooking tradition. From wintry mountain stews to an array of sausages and a general fondness for charcuterie and venison, the Catalan countryside contributes much to

the Spanish dinner table. To these basic ingredients the Catalans add a rich array of sauces, betraying a strong French influence on their culinary habits.

Furthermore, Barcelona has long attracted migrants, at first from the rest of Spain and, since the 1990s, from all over the world. Thus, the city is jammed with Galician seafood restaurants, Basque tapas bars and, since the mid-1990s, foreign cuisines have landed – big time. While cheap and cheerful Chinese establishments have always been here, until the early 1990s, you could count Japanese, Thai and Indian restaurants on the fingers of one hand. All this has changed. Suddenly *pizzeria*, sushi restaurants, tandoori temptations, Thai, Korean and kebabs are everywhere. The number of non-Spanish restaurants in Barcelona has more than quadrupled since the start of the 21st century.

You name it, Barcelona's got it. It might all seem old hat to veteran foodies arriving from London, Paris, New York or Sydney, but here in Spain the new ethnic eateries are a remarkable addition to what was already an exceptional local scene. And however well-travelled the international palate, surprises are always on hand through local dishes and the ebullient atmosphere of timeless eateries. ¡Buen provecho!

ETIQUETTE

You may not arrive in Barcelona with jet lag but, due to the rather different Spanish eating habits, your tummy will think it has abandoned all known time zones.

Esmorzar/desayuno (breakfast) is generally a no-nonsense affair eaten at a bar on the way to work. A *café amb llet/café con leche* (coffee with milk) with a *pasta* (pastry), such as a cream-filled *canya* or croissant, is the typical breakfast. If you can, try an *ensaimada*, a Mallorcan import. This whirl-shaped pastry has the consistency of a croissant and is dusted with icing sugar. It can be a trifle messy to eat, but it's worth it! If you prefer a savoury start, you could go for the oddly named *bikini*, nothing more than a classic toasted ham and cheese sandwich. A *torrada/tostada* is simply buttered toast.

Dinar/comida (or *almuerzo*; lunchtime), between 2pm and 4pm, is generally the main meal of the day, although modern work and living habits are changing this for some people. Many workers opt for the cheap and cheerful, set-price *menú del día* at lunch, while some restaurants offer more elaborate versions both at lunch and dinner time. (See [p172](#) for more information.) A simpler version is the *plat combinat/plato combinado* (combined dish) – basically a meat-and-three-veg dish that will hardly excite taste buds, but will have little impact on your budget, meaning that you can eat solidly and economically at lunch and then splash out at dinner!

Barcelonins generally don't even start thinking about *sopar/cena* (dinner) much before 9pm. A full meal can comprise an *entrant/entrante* (starter), *plat/plato principal* (main course) and *postre* (dessert). In some places the first two are referred to as the *primer plat/primer plato* (first course) and *segon plat/segundo plato* (second course). You will generally be asked what you would like *de primer* (for your first course) and then *de segon* (for your second course). You can skip the starter without causing offence.

Instead of heading for a sit-down meal, some locals prefer to *tapear* or *ir de tapeo* (go on a tapas crawl, also known as *picar* or *pica-pica*). This is the delightful business of standing around in bars and choosing from a range of tasty little titbits. You can stay in one place or move from one to another, and you basically keep munching and drinking until you've had enough.

Generally diners order water and a bottle of wine – separate glasses for each are provided (in Spain the larger glass is generally for the water). In midsummer (mostly at lunchtime), you might also ask for some Casera (lemonade) to mix with your heavy red wine and make *tinto de verano* (summer red).

In many simpler restaurants you will keep the same knife and fork throughout the meal. Once your order is taken and the first course (which could range from a simple *amanida/ensalada rusa* – cold vegetable salad thick with potatoes and mayonnaise – to an elaborate seafood item) is in place, you may find the

PYJAMA PARTY

If a waiter proposes '*pijama*', it is not an invitation to head home for bed and jammies. It is rather a suggestion to try one of the country's most lurid desserts. It consists of tinned peach (and maybe pineapple) slices, a clump of flan, two balls of ice cream (say strawberry and vanilla) and covered in whipped cream with chocolate topping! After that you may well want to have a lie down.

level of service increases disconcertingly. This especially becomes the case as you reach the end of any given course. Hovering waiters swoop like eagles to swipe your unfinished dish or lift your glass of wine, still tinged with that last sip you wanted to savour. Simply utter *'Encara no he terminat'/'Todavía no he terminado'* ('I haven't finished yet') – you'll be flashed a cheerful smile and your waiter will leave you to finish in peace.

Spain is a smokers' paradise and restaurants seem to be a favourite place for this activity. Not only do Spaniards smoke with satisfaction at the conclusion of a filling meal, many smoke between courses, regardless of whether fellow diners have finished or not. A 2006 law provided some relief by requiring all establishments bigger than 100 sq metres to become nonsmoking (with the option of setting up costly, separately ventilated smokers' areas). Smaller places were given the choice of becoming smoking or nonsmoking. No prizes for guessing which most of them went for.

Don't jump out of your seat if people pass your table and address you with a hearty *'bon profit!'/¡buen provecho!* They're just saying 'enjoy your meal!'

SPECIALITIES

The basics are simple enough: bread and olive oil. And lots of garlic. No Catalan would eat a meal without bread, and olive oil seems to make its way into just about every dish. Catalans find it hard to understand why other people put butter on bread when *pa amb tomàquet/pan con tomate* (bread sliced then rubbed with tomato, olive oil, garlic and salt) is so much tastier! There are many local brands of olive oil, but one of the best is Borges, which has been produced in Tàrraga, in Lleida province, since 1896. Spices, on the other hand, are generally noticeable by their absence. If you're told something is *picante* (spicy, hot) you can generally be sure it is little more than mild.

A typical *carta* (menu) begins with starters such as *amanides/ensaladas* (salads), *sopes/sopas* (soups) and *entremeses* (hors d'oeuvres). The latter can range from a mound of potato salad with olives, asparagus and anchovies to an array of cold meats, slices of cheese and olives. The more upmarket the restaurant, the more imaginative the offerings.

The basic ingredients of later courses can be summarised under the general headings of *pollastre/pollo* (chicken), *carn/carne* (meat), *mariscos* (seafood), *peix/pescado* (fish) and *arròs/arroz* (rice). Meat may be subdivided into *porc/cerdo* (pork), *vedella/ternera* (beef) and *anyell/cordero* (lamb). If you want a *guarnici/guarnición* (side order), you may have to order it separately. This may be the only way to get a decent serve of *verdures/verduras* (vegetables), which for many locals seem to be anathema.

Often much more fun than a full sit-down meal is snacking on bite-sized goodies known as tapas. A *tapa* is a tiny serving; if you particularly like something you can have a *media ración* or even a full *ración*. Two or three of the latter, depending on what they are, can easily constitute a full meal.

The origin of the *tapa* appears to lie in the old habit of serving drinks with a lid (*tapa*) on the glass, perhaps to keep out pesky bugs. The *tapa* might have been a piece of bread and at some point a couple of morsels on the *tapa* became par for the course – usually salty items bound to work up a greater thirst. In some bars you will still get a few olives or other free snacks with your beer, but since tapas were always more a southern Spanish thing, it is not overly common – in Barcelona, if you want something, you pay for it.

Since the mid-1990s the number of Basque tapas bars has increased exponentially. They generally work like this: you order drinks (try the slightly fizzy white wine, *txacolí*) and ask for a plate. Many of the tapas are *montaditos* (a sort of canapé), which could range from a creamy Roquefort cheese and walnut combination to a chunk of spicy sausage. They all come with toothpicks. These facilitate their consumption, but serve another important purpose too: when you're ready to leave, the toothpicks are counted up and the bill presented.

If you opt for *tapes/tapas*, it is handy to identify some of the common items: *boquerons/boquerones* (white anchovies in vinegar – delicious and tangy); *mandonguilles/albóndigas* (meatballs); *pebrots/pimientos de Padrón* (little green peppers from Galicia – some of which are hot); *patates braves/patatas bravas* (potato chunks bathed in a slightly spicy tomato sauce, sometimes mixed with mayonnaise); *gambes/gambas* (prawns, either done *al all/al ajillo*, with garlic, or *a la plantxa/plancha*, grilled); *chipirons/chipirones* (baby squid); and *calamars/calamares a la Romana* (deep-fried calamari rings).

CATALAN FAVOURITES

Here are some typical Catalan dishes. For a basic food glossary, see the Language chapter (p284).

Starters

Amanida catalana (Catalan salad) Almost any mix of lettuce, olives, tomatoes, hard-boiled eggs, onions, chichory, celery, green peppers and garlic, with tuna (almost always canned), ham or sausage, and either mayonnaise or an oil and vinegar dressing.

Calçots amb romesco *Calçots* are a type of long spring onion, delicious as a starter with *romesco* sauce. They are only in season in late winter/early spring, when Catalans get together for a *calçotada*, the local version of a BBQ. The *calçots* are the amusing part of the event, as the black ash in which they are grilled inevitably winds up on hands and, when people are feeling naughty, perhaps in their neighbour's face! This is usually followed by an enormous meal with countless meat and sausage courses.

Escalivada Red peppers and aubergines (sometimes onions and tomatoes too), grilled, cooled, peeled, sliced and served with an olive oil, salt and garlic dressing.

Esqueixada Salad of *bacallà/bacalao* (shredded salted cod) with tomatoes, red peppers, onions, white beans, olives, olive oil and vinegar.

Main Courses

Arròs a la cassola/arroz a la catalana Catalan paella, cooked in an earthenware pot, without saffron.

Arròs negre Rice cooked in black cuttlefish ink.

Bacallà a la llauna Salted cod baked in tomato, garlic, parsley, paprika and wine.

Botifarra amb mongetes Pork sausage with fried white beans.

Cargols Snails, almost a religion to some, often stewed with *canill/conejo* (rabbit) and chilli.

Escudella A meat, sausage and vegetable stew, the sauce of which is mixed with noodles or rice and served as a soup. The rest is served as a main course and is known as *carn d'olla*. It's generally available in winter only.

Fideuà Similar to paella, but using vermicelli noodles as the base, it is usually served with tomato and meat and/or sausage or fish. There is also a cuttlefish ink version. You should receive a little side dish of *allioli* (pounded garlic with olive oil, often with egg yolk added) to mix in as you wish – if you don't, ask for it.

Fricandó A pork and vegetable stew.

Sarsuela/zarzuela Mixed seafood cooked in *sofregit* (fried onion, tomato and garlic sauce) with seasonings.

Suquet de peix A kind of fish and potato hotpot – there are all sorts of variations on this theme, depending on what type of seafood you toss in.

Truita de botifarra Sausage omelette, a Catalan version of the famous Spanish tortilla.

Desserts

Crema catalana A cream custard with a crisp, burnt-sugar coating.

Mel i mató Honey and fresh cream cheese – simple but delicious.

Musc A serving of dried fruits and nuts, sometimes mixed with ice cream or a sweetish cream cheese and served with a glass of sweet muscatel.

The essence of Catalan food lies in its sauces for meat and fish. These sauces are so ubiquitous in more traditional eateries that they may not be mentioned on menus. There are five main types: *sofregit* (fried onion, tomato and garlic); *samfaina* or *chanfaina* (*sofregit* plus red pepper and aubergine or courgette); *picada* (based on ground almonds, usually with garlic, parsley, pine nuts or hazelnuts, and sometimes breadcrumb crumbs); *allioli* (pounded garlic with olive oil, often with egg yolk added to make more of a mayonnaise); and *romesco* (an almond, red pepper, tomato, olive oil, garlic and vinegar sauce, also used as a salad dressing).

The Catalan version of the pizza is the *coca*, often made in the shape of a long, broad tongue. There are many variations on this theme, savoury and sweet. The former can come with tomato, onion, pepper and sometimes sardines. The sweet version, often almond-based, is more common and is a standard item at many a *fiesta* (festival) such as Dia de Sant Joan

in June (see p18). Catalans also like pasta, and *canelons* (similar to Italian cannelloni) is a common dish.

Bolets (wild mushrooms) are a Catalan passion – people disappear into the forests in autumn to pick them. There are many, many types of *bolets*; the large succulent *rovellons* are a favourite. *Trompetas de la muerte* (trumpets of death) are a veritable delicacy and generally available during summer and autumn. A trip to the Boqueria market in central Barcelona around October will reveal even more varieties.

The main centres of cheese production in Catalonia are La Seu d'Urgell, the Cerdanya district and the Pallars area in the northwest. Although some traditional cheeses are becoming less common, you can still come across things like *formatge de tupa* (goat's cheese soaked in olive oil) in produce markets and specialist cheese shops.

You will also find all sorts of sausages, most using pork as a base. Some generic names include *botifarra*, *fuet* (a thin, whip-like dried pork sausage) and *llonganissa*. The names often seem to apply to very different sausages, depending on where you buy them. Some are spicier than others.

Of course, fish and seafood are major components of the region's cuisine. Only 15% of Catalonia's needs are fished in Catalan waters: much of what ends up on Catalan tables comes from the Bay of Biscay, France, the UK and as far off as South Africa (cod in particular in the last case). In 1996 only about 15% of all produce on sale at Barcelona's main wholesale market (Mercabarna) was imported; in 2007, more than half of the fish came from abroad.

Apart from more standard approaches such as serving up steamed, baked or fried fish, the Catalans like to mix it up a little, by way of fish soups and stews. *Suquet*, which combines several types of fish with potatoes, is the best known, while *sarsuela* is richer in its variety of fish ingredients. Other themed stews often go by the name of *caldereta*, where one item (usually lobster) is the star ingredient.

Dessert is a mixed bag. Many of the better restaurants go to great lengths to tempt you into enormous sins of gluttony. At simpler eateries, especially at lunch, dessert might simply be a choice of fruit, *flan* (crème caramel) or *gelat/helado* (ice cream). If you opt for ice cream, don't be surprised to be shown a list of manufactured goodies similar to what you'd grab at the beach.

WHERE TO EAT

Many *tavernes/tabernas*, *cervecerias/cervezerías* (beer bars) and *cellers/bodegas* (wine cellars) offer some form of solid sustenance. This can range from *entrepans/bocadillos* (filled rolls) or *flautas* (a slimmer version), *tapas* and *raciones* to full meals served in *menjadors/comedores* (sit-down restaurants) out the back. For a full meal, you will most frequently end up in a *restaurant/restaurante*. Other establishments you may come across include a *marisquería*, which specialises in seafood, or a *mesón* (big table), which might (but not necessarily) indicate a more modest eatery.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Vegetarians, and especially vegans, can have a hard time in Spain, but in Barcelona a growing battery of vegetarian restaurants offers welcome relief. Be careful when ordering salads (such as the *amanida catalana*), which may contain popular 'vegetables' such as ham or tuna.

COOKING COURSES

If you find you like Barcelona's food so much you want to cook some yourself, there are several cooking courses available. For details, see p272.

BEVERAGES

For an introduction to local wines and other alcoholic drinks, see the Drinking & Nightlife chapter (p194).

MUNCHING IN MUSEUMS

Several museums and other sights house great restaurants and cafés. Keep in mind the following. The most attractive museum snack stop in the Barri Gòtic is the Café d'Estiu (Map pp64–5; ☎ 10am–10pm Apr–Sep) in the leafy courtyard of the Museu Frederic Marès (p68). In the medieval courtyard of the future Centre de Disseny (p83) sits the charming Tèxtil Cafè (Map pp84–5; ☎ 93 268 25 98; ☎ 10am–midnight Tue–Sun), where you can enjoy light meals (such as vegetarian couscous and salads), cake and coffee in between visits to the surrounding museums.

At the Museu Marítim (p78), a fine *café-restaurant* (☎ 93 317 52 56; ☎ 10am–8pm, restaurant lunch Mon & Tue, lunch & dinner Wed–Sat) is housed beneath the vaults of the shipyards. The restaurant sprawls into the gardens outside. Nearby, the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica (p61) has a *café-restaurant* with a pleasant, 1st-floor terrace.

The Museu d'Història de Catalunya (p94) offers a great rooftop terrace *café* and restaurant, La Miranda del Museu (Map pp93; ☎ 93 225 50 07; ☎ 10am–7pm Tue & Thu–Sat, 10am–8pm Wed, 10am–2.30pm Sun & holidays, restaurant Tue–Sun).

On Montjuïc you have a couple of options: the *café* in the Fundació Joan Miró (p143), and Oleum (Map pp140–1; ☎ lunch Tue–Sun), a restaurant with good views in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (p139).

Coffee, Tea & Hot Chocolate

The coffee in Spain is strong and slightly bitter. A *café amb llet/café con leche* (generally drunk at breakfast only) is about half coffee, half hot milk. Ask for *grande* or *doble* if you want a large cup, *en got/vaso* if you want a smaller shot in a glass, or a *sombra* if you want lots of milk. A *café sol/café solo* (usually abbreviated to just *un solo*) is a short black or espresso; *un (café) tallat/(café) cortado* is a short black with a little milk (more or less the same as a *macchiato* in Italy). For iced coffee, ask for *café amb gel/café con hielo* – you'll get a glass of ice and a hot cup of coffee, to be poured over the ice. If you want to skip the caffeine, ask for a *café descafeïnat/café descafeïnado* (decaf) – most people ask for it *de maquina* (from the coffee machine) because *de sobre* (the sachet stuff) is nothing special. If you want your cuppa supercharged, for example with a shot of Baileys (very popular), ask for a *cigaló/carajillo de Baileys* (or whatever your heart desires).

Barcelonins prefer coffee, but you can also get many different styles of *té* (tea) and *infusiones* (herbal teas such as camomile). Locals tend to drink tea black. If you want milk, ask for it to come a *part/a parte* (separately) to avoid ending up with a cup of tea-flavoured watery milk.

A cup of *xocolata calenta/chocolate caliente* (hot chocolate) is an invitation for sticky fingers – it is generally a thick, dark, sweet tooth's dream and could easily be classed as a food. A local version, topped with thick cream, is known as a *suís*.

Fruit & Soft Drinks

Suc de taronja/zumo de naranja (orange juice) is the main freshly squeezed juice available, often served with sugar. Ask for *natural*, otherwise you may get a puny bottle of runny concentrate. Unfortunately, *natural* also means room temperature in these parts, so if you are proffered a bottle when asking for *natural* you'll need to explain that you want it *espremut/exprimido* (squeezed).

Refrescos (cool drinks) include the usual brands of soft drinks, local brands such as Kas and, in summer, *granissat/granizado* (iced fruit crush). A *batut/batido* is a flavoured milk drink.

Orxata/horchata is a Valencian drink of Islamic origin. Made from the juice of *chufa* (tiger nuts), sugar and water, it is sweet and tastes like soy milk with a hint of cinnamon. You'll come across it both fresh and bottled, but this is a drink that should be consumed freshly made. A naughtier version is a *cubanito*, made by adding a fat dollop of chocolate ice cream.

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

Most restaurants and eateries open from 1pm to 4pm and from 8pm to midnight. Bars and cafés that offer *tapas* generally adhere to similar hours as far as food goes, although you can often purchase snacks from the bar outside these times. A few places open through the day, typically from 1pm to 1.30am. Restaurants listed in this chapter are open for lunch and dinner unless stated otherwise. No specific times are given unless they vary considerably from the norm.

top picks

TAPAS

- Bar Celta (p174)
- Cal Pep (p176)
- Inopia (p184)
- Tapaç 24 (p183)
- Taktika Berri (p181)
- Vaso de Oro (p179)

and meat grilled on oak, such as the *bouillabaisse con cigalitas de playa* (little sea-water crayfish).

CAFÈ DE L'ACADÈMIA

Map pp64–5

Catalan €€

☎ 93 319 82 53; Carrer de Lledó 1; meal €30-35;

☒ Mon-Fri; ☒ Jaume I; ☒

This café offers a mix of traditional dishes with the occasional creative twist. At lunchtime, local Ajuntament (town hall) office workers pounce on the *menú del dia* (for around €13.50). In the evening it is rather more romantic, as soft lighting emphasises the intimacy of the timber ceiling and wooden décor. Offerings range from *chuletón* (huge T-bone steak) for two to *guatlla farcida de foie d'ànec i botifarra amb salsa de ceps* (quail stuffed with duck foie and sausage with a mushroom sauce). Take lunch outside in the shadow of the Gothic Església de Sants Just i Pastor.

LOS CARACOLES Map pp64–5

Spanish €€

☎ 93 302 31 85; Carrer dels Escudellers 14; meal

€30-35; ☒ daily; ☒ Drassanes; ☒

Run by the fifth generation of the Bofarull family, 'The Snails' started life as a tavern in 1835 and is one of Barcelona's best-known, if somewhat touristy, restaurants. Several interlocking rooms (consider asking for the small medieval-looking banquet room), with centuries of history seemingly greased into the tables and garlic-clad walls, may well distract you from the rotisserie chickens (no doubt you'll see them rotating on your way in) and snails that are the house specialities. Locals still dine here and the ambience alone makes it worth dropping by, if only for a tipple at the bar.

BARRI GÒTIC & LA RAMBLA

First things first. Skip the strip. La Rambla is fine for people-watching but no great shakes for the palate. Instead venture off into the streets that wind into the Barri Gòtic and your tum will be eternally grateful. Inside the medieval labyrinth, choices abound. If you had to pinpoint any one area it would be the half of the *barri* (neighbourhood) between Plaça de Sant Jaume and the waterfront, especially towards Via Laietana. On and around Carrer de la Mercè a huddle of old-time tapas bars survives, down-dirty and simple, as if caught in a time warp in postwar Spain. Some are simply dirty; others are wonderful, immutable finds. All are laden with dollops of atmosphere.

PLA Map pp64–5

Fusion €€

☎ 93 412 65 52; www.pla-repla.com; Carrer de

Bellafla 5; meal €45-50; ☒ dinner; ☒ Liceu; ☒

You could be forgiven for thinking you have waltzed into a dark designer cocktail bar. Actually it's a medieval den (with a huge stone arch) of devious culinary mischief, where the cooks churn out anything from *bacallà amb salsa de pomes verdes* (salted cod in a green-apple sauce) to grilled kangaroo.

COMETACINC Map pp64–5

Fusion €€

☎ 93 310 15 58; www.cometacinc.com; Carrer

del Cometa 5; meal €35; ☒ dinner Wed-Mon;

☒ Jaume I; ☒

In this grand medieval space the kitchen churns out a constantly changing menu that crisscrosses all boundaries. The candlelit tables over two floors set the mood for, say, some *tonyina vermella a la brasa amb confitura agre-dolça de albercoc* (charcoal-grilled red tuna with chutney).

AGUT Map pp64–5

Catalan €€

☎ 93 315 17 09; Carrer d'En Gignàs 16; meal

€35; ☒ dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, Sep-Jul;

☒ Jaume I; ☒

Deep in the Gothic labyrinth lies this classic eatery. A series of cosy dining areas are connected by broad arches, while high up, the walls are tightly lined by artworks. There's art in what the kitchen serves up too, from a succulent variety of seafood

If the local opening times have your tummy in a panic, don't worry. Plenty of restaurants in more touristy parts of town open early for foreigners – you pay for this with often mediocre food and the almost exclusive company of other tourists. Many bars and restaurants offering tapas and *raciones* have them on the bar before and after appointed main meal times, which means you can almost always pick up something to eat.

Many restaurants take a day off during the week and most are shut on Christmas Eve and on New Year's Eve (or Christmas Day and New Year's Day). Some close over Easter, and a good deal also shut for most or all of the month of August. Beware that Sunday and Monday evenings can be frustrating, as this is when most places take time off.

Meal times are important events in the daily life of the average Barcelonin. People take the time to enjoy their food, and where possible they still have a full sit-down meal at lunchtime. Lunch can easily go on for a couple of hours. Dinner is frequently a lighter affair.

How Much?

Barcelona is not the cheap night out it once was, but lunch can be an economical affair if you opt for the set *menú del dia*.

You are rarely likely to spend much more than €100 for a top quality meal. In the course of this chapter, restaurants are listed in each neighbourhood by price, from top end to budget.

The *menú del dia*, a full set meal (usually with several options), water and wine, is a great way to cap prices at lunchtime. They start from around €8-10 and edge up to €15 for slightly more elaborate offerings. Many restaurants listed here offer this cost-saving option.

At high-end restaurants you can occasionally opt for a *menú de degustación*, a tasting menu involving samples of several different dishes. This can be a great way to get a broader view of what the restaurant does and has the advantage of coming at a fixed price.

Booking Tables

At many of the midrange restaurants and simpler taverns with *menjadors/comedores* (dining rooms) you can usually turn up and find a spot without booking ahead. At high-end restaurants, and for dinner especially, it is safer to make a booking. Thursday to Saturday nights are especially busy.

Self-Catering

Shopping in the big produce markets such as Mercat de la Boqueria and complementing your purchases with a quick run around the many *supermercats/supermercados* around town will provide you with all the cheese, sausages, fruit and drink you could need. Supermarkets close to the city centre include **Carrefour Express** (Map pp64–5; La Rambla dels Estudis 113; ☒ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat; ☒ Catalunya), near the northern end of La Rambla, and **Superservis** (Map pp64–5; Carrer d'Avinyyó 13; ☒ 8am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat; ☒ Liceu), in the heart of Barri Gòtic. For freshly baked bread, head for a *horn/panaderia* (bakery). For a gourmet touch, the food section of **El Corte Inglés** (Map pp108–9; ☎ 93 306 38 00; Plaça de Catalunya 14; ☒ Catalunya) has some tempting local and imported goodies. The **Zona Alta branch** (Map pp122–3; ☎ 93 366 71 00; Avinguda Diagonal 617; ☒ Maria Cristina) also has a food section. Specialist food shops abound; see the Shopping chapter for details. For more on markets, see the boxed text To Market, To Market (p183).

Tipping

Many eating establishments have a cover charge, usually up to a few euros per head. A service charge is often, but by no means always, included in the bill, so any further tipping becomes strictly a personal choice. Catalans (and other Spaniards) are not overwhelming tippers. If you are particularly happy, 5% to 10% on top is generally fine.

PRICE GUIDE

Some call it *la dolorosa* (the painful one) but sooner or later you will have to ask for *el compte, sisplau* (the bill, please). The price ranges used here indicate the cost per person of a full meal (starter, main and dessert), including a bottle of modest house wine:

€€€	€71 and above
€€	€21 to €70
€	up to €20

BAR CELTA Map pp64-5 Galician €

☎ 93 315 00 06; Carrer de la Mercè 16; meal €20; ☎ noon-midnight; M Drassanes

This bright, straightforward bar-cum-restaurant specialises in *pulpo* (octopus) and other sea critters like *navajas* (razor clams). It does a good job: even the most demanding of Galician natives give this spot the thumbs up. Sit at the zinc bar, order a bottle of Ribeiro and the traditional Galician *tazas* (little white cups) and tuck into your *raciones*.

MILK Map pp64-5 Bar-Restaurant €

☎ 93 268 09 22; www.milkbarcelona.com; Carrer d'En Gignàs 21; meal €10-15; ☎ 11am-4pm; M Jaume I

Known to many as a cool cocktail spot, the Irish-run Milk's key role for Barcelona night owls is providing morning-after brunches. Avoid direct sunlight and tuck into pancakes, salmon eggs Benedict and other hangover dishes in the penumbra.

BAGEL SHOP Map pp64-5 Bagels €

☎ 93 302 41 61; Carrer de la Canuda 25; meal €10; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun; M Liceu; ☎

Searching for a smoked salmon and cream cheese bagel? You've found the spot for this and a whole army of savoury and sweet bagels. Take a seat in the long, narrow eatery out back or simply order to go in this Canadian-run touch of North America.

CAN CONESA Map pp64-5 Snacks €☎ 93 310 57 95; Carrer de la Llibreteria 1; rolls & toasted sandwiches €3-5; ☎ Mon-Sat; M Jaume I Locals (especially workers from the Ajuntament and Generalitat at lunchtime) have been lining up here for the succulent *entrepans* (filled rolls), toasted sandwiches and other snacks since the 1950s.**CAFÈ DE L'ÒPERA** Map pp64-5 Café €

☎ 93 302 41 80; La Rambla 74; ☎ 9am-3am; M Liceu; ☎

Opposite the Gran Teatre del Liceu is La Rambla's most intriguing café. Operating since 1929, it is pleasant enough for an early evening tippie or coffee and croissants. Head upstairs for an elevated seat above the busy boulevard. Can you be tempted by the *café de l'Òpera* (coffee with chocolate mousse)?

CAJ CHAI Map pp64-5 Café €

☎ 93 301 95 92; Sant Domènec del Call 12; ☎ 3-10pm; M Jaume I

Open and bright, this is a tea and tea-infusion connoisseur's paradise. Make your choice, order a pastry and settle in for a nice cuppa and chat.

SALTERIO Map pp64-5 Café €

Carrer de Sant Domènec del Call 4; ☎ 5pm-midnight; M Jaume I

If it got any mellower here, with its gentle Middle Eastern music and low whispering, you'd nod off. The wait for the mint tea is worth it – it's filled with real mint, as good as in Morocco.

EL RAVAL

For contrast alone, El Raval is possibly the most interesting part of the old town. Timeless classics of Barcelona dining are scattered across what was long the old city's poorest *barri*, and since the late 1990s, battalions of hip new eateries and artsy restaurants have also sprung up, especially in the area around the Museu d'Art Contemporani (see p79). Some of the cheapest eats in town, full of character, lurk along El Raval's streets. From Carrer de Sant Pau north towards Carrer de Pelai, the university and Ronda de Sant Antoni is where you'll find most of these haunts.

CA L'ISIDRE Map pp76-7 Catalan €€€

☎ 93 441 11 39; www.calisidre.com; Carrer de les Flors 12; meal €90-100; ☎ Mon-Sat, closed Easter & three weeks Aug; M Paral.lel

Lurking in an unappealing backstreet off El Raval, Ca L'Isidre is an old-world gem. Immaculately kept dining areas stretch away from the entrance, dominated by warm timber and tiles. Quietly efficient waiters waft about the place, which is frequently filled to capacity. King Juan Carlos and superchef Ferran Adrià love it.

CASA LEOPOLDO Map pp76-7 Catalan €€

☎ 93 441 30 14; www.casaleopoldo.com; Carrer de Sant Rafael 24; meal €60; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, Sep-Jul, closed Easter; M Liceu; ☎

Long hidden in the slum alleys of El Raval, this was writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's favourite restaurant; it figures constantly in the urban wanderings of his detective character, Pepe Carvalho (see p38). Several rambling dining areas in this 1929

classic have magnificent tiled walls and exposed timber-beam ceilings. The mostly seafood menu is extensive and the wine list is strong. Surf and turf Catalan classics, like *mandonguilles amb sipia i gambes* (rissoles with cuttlefish and shrimp) are done to perfection.

BIBLIOTECA Map pp76-7 Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 412 62 21; Carrer de la Junta del Comerç 28; meal €35-40; ☎ dinner only Mon-Fri, lunch & dinner Sat; M Liceu

No, it's not the district library, but a pleasing study in original and inventive cooking. Taking Navarran and Mediterranean cuisine as a base, the chef produces such items as *cervol estofat amb pasta fullada i puré* (a steaming venison pie). The long, narrow restaurant with high ceilings is light and airy.

L'HAVANA Map pp76-7 Catalan €€

☎ 93 302 21 06; Carrer del Lleó 1; meal €25-30; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; M Sant Antoni

Little seems to have changed in this cavernous, family-run place since it opened in the 1940s. The front dining area, with frosted glass windows, Modernista design touches and spaciouly spread tables, is a touch more severe than the better lit rear area. A great starter is the *combinat*, with three mussels, a smidge of *amanida russa* (roughly potato salad), *esqueixada* and more. Meat and fish options follow, and the *calamars farcits* (stuffed calamari) is filling. Round off with home-made *crema catalana*.

RESTAURANT EL CAFETÍ

Map pp76-7 Catalan €€

☎ 93 329 24 19; Passatge de Bernardí; meal €25-30, menú de dia €12; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; M Liceu; ☎

Down a narrow arcade off Carrer de Sant Rafael, this diminutive upstairs eatery is crammed with antique furniture and offers traditional local cooking, with one or two unorthodox variations. Paella and a dozen other rice dishes dominate, but you might prefer the chicken grilled in cream of *cava* or a *cassola mar i muntanya* (a surf and turf casserole).

ELISABETS Map pp76-7 Catalan €€

☎ 93 317 58 26; Carrer de Elisabets 2-4; meal €20-25; ☎ lunch Mon-Thu & Sat, lunch & dinner Fri, Sep-Jul; M Catalunya

This unassuming restaurant is popular for no-nonsense local fare. The walls are lined with old radio sets and the *menú del dia* (around €9.75) varies daily. If you prefer *a la carta*, try the *ragú de jabalí* (wild boar stew) and finish with *mel i mató*.

BAR CENTRAL Map pp76-7 Tapas €

☎ 93 301 10 98; Mercat de la Boqueria; meal €20; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat; M Liceu

Hiding out towards the back of Barcelona's best-known market is this fabulously chaotic lunchtime bar. Marketeers, local workers and the occasional curious tourist jostle for a stool – get there early or be prepared to wait. Order a few generous *raciones*, and make one of them the grilled fish of the day.

BAR PINOTXO Map pp76-7 Tapas €

☎ 93 317 17 31; Mercat de la Boqueria; meal €20; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon-Sat, Sep-Jul; M Liceu

Of the half-dozen or so tapas bars and informal eateries within the market, this one near the La Rambla entrance is about the most popular. Roll up to the bar and enjoy the people-watching as you munch on tapas assembled from the products on sale in the stalls around you.

MESÓN DAVID

Map pp76-7 Spanish €

☎ 93 441 59 34; Carrer de les Carretes 63; meal €15-20; ☎ Tue-Sun; M Paral.lel

With its smoky timber ceiling, excitable waiting staff and generally chaotic feel, this is a tavern the likes of which they don't make any more – a slice of the old Spain. Plonk yourself down on a bench for gregarious dining, such as house specialities *caldo gallego* (a sausage broth), and the main course of *lechazo asado* (a great clump of roast suckling lamb).

RESTAURANTE POLLO RICO

Map pp76-7 Spanish €

☎ 93 441 31 84; Carrer de Sant Pau 31; meal €15; ☎ daily; M Liceu; ☎

The 'Tasty Chicken' is true to its name with fast, cheap, abundant grub. Head upstairs and carve out a space amid the noise of garrulous punters, then rattle off your order to a high-speed waiter. Chicken, meat and various other options can be put together to help you fill to bursting. Skip the paella, though.

ORGANIC Map pp76–7

Vegetarian €

☎ 93 301 09 02; www.antonioorganicickitchn.com, in Spanish; Carrer de la Junta de Comerç 11; meal €14-20; ☎ noon-midnight; (M) Liceu; ☒ As you wander into this sprawling vegetarian spot, to the left is the open kitchen, where you place your order. Choose from a limited range of options that change from day to day. The place has an easy cafeteria feel and the servings are generous and imaginative. The salad buffet is copious, desserts good and they do tasty pizzas too. The same people have a stand in the Mercat de la Boqueria that's open from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday.

BIOCENTER Map pp76–7

Vegetarian €

☎ 93 301 45 83; Carrer del Pintor Fortuny 25; meal €10-15; ☎ 1-5pm Mon-Sat, 8-11.15pm Wed-Sat; (M) Catalunya; ☒ Head past the coffee bar and the dining area, with its warm exposed brickwork and dark timber tables, to the kitchen at the back to order your *menú del dia* (around €11.45). Top with as much salad as you can handle at the open salad buffet.

GRANJA VIADER Map pp76–7

Café €

☎ 93 318 34 86; Carrer d'En Xuclà 4; ☎ 9am-1.45pm & 5-8.45pm Tue-Sat, 5-8.45pm Mon; (M) Liceu

For more than a century people have flocked down this alley to get to the cups of home-made hot chocolate and whipped cream (ask for a *suis*) ladled out here. Together with one of the many pastries on display, the offerings here make for the sweet tooth's ideal breakfast. The Viader clan invented Cacaolat, forerunner of kids' powdered chocolate beverages.

LA RIBERA

If you'd mentioned El Born (El Borne in Spanish) in the early 1990s you wouldn't have raised much interest. But now, on the gentrification fast track, the area is peppered with bars, dance dives, groovy designer stores and restaurants. El Born is where Barcelona is truly cooking – avant-garde chefs and fusion masters have zeroed in on this southern corner of La Ribera to conduct their culinary experiments. If you don't want to play such wild games, there's plenty of the traditional stuff to choose from too. One or two ethnic eateries add some delightful variation.

EL PASSADÍS DEL PEP

Map pp84–5

Seafood €€€

☎ 93 310 10 21; www.passadis.com; Plaça del Palau 2; meal €70-80; ☎ Tue-Sat, dinner Mon, Sep-Jul; (M) Barceloneta; ☒ There's no sign, but locals know where to head for a seafood feast. They say the restaurant's raw materials are delivered daily from fishing ports along the Catalan coast. There is no menu – what's on offer depends on what the sea has surrendered on the day. Just head down the long, ill-lit corridor and entrust yourself to their care.

COMERÇ 24 Map pp84–5

International €€

☎ 93 319 21 02; www.carlesabellan.com; Carrer del Comerç 24; meal €50-60; ☎ Tue-Sat; (M) Barceloneta; ☒

The black-red-grey décor in the rear dining area lends an edgy New York feel to this cauldron of culinary creativity. Chef Carles Abellán and his crew, in their little yellow kitchen, whip up a series of eccentric small dishes, of which you'll want four or five to approach a full meal. His ideas range from *pizza-sashimi de tonyina* (little tuna sashimi pizza) to *arròs d'ànec i foie* (intense duck and foie gras rice dish). Prepare yourself for the tasting menu and leave the rest up to Abellán.

CAL PEP Map pp84–5

Tapas €€

☎ 93 310 79 61; www.calpep.com; Plaça de les Olles 8; meal €45; ☎ lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Mon-Fri, Sep-Jul; (M) Barceloneta; ☒

It's getting a foot in the door here that's the problem. And if you want one of the five tables out the back, you'll need to call way ahead. Most people are happy elbowing their way to the bar for some of the tastiest gourmet seafood tapas in town. Pep recommends *cloïsses amb pernil* (clams and ham – seriously!) or the *trifàsic* (combo of calamari, whitebait and prawns).

CAFÉ DE LA PRINCESA

Map pp84–5

Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 268 15 18; www.cafeprincesa.com; Carrer Sabateret 1-3; meal €35-45; ☎ Mon-Sat, lunch only Sun; (M) Jaume I; ☒

Little of the original 14th-century building remains (the soaring columns and high glass ceiling of the 'cloister' are all new) but the location remains unique. Pick your way through *bacallà* (cod) specialities or

BARCELONA'S GOURMET GAUDÍ

He presents his latest culinary inventions like a child who has just made a fabulous mud pie. Indeed, if Ferran Adrià came up with a mud dish, it wouldn't come as much of a surprise. Born in 1962, this self-taught chef has rocketed to the forefront of international *haute cuisine* with his fearless experimentation. The Gaudí of gourmets, he has been dubbed by his three-star Michelin colleague from the Basque Country, Juan Maria Arzak, 'the most imaginative cook in all history'. The rough-spoken Adrià has been made a doctor honoris causa at Barcelona University (UB).

During the 1980s Adrià worked his way up to head chef at a good, if unspectacular, Franco-Catalan restaurant, El Bulli (see p255), in a splendidly wild spot on the Costa Brava. By the early 1990s he was co-owner of the business and had begun to let rip, converting El Bulli into one of the country's most exclusive restaurants, where anything from essence of carrot to solidified edible coffee might have appeared on the menu.

Aided by brother Albert and a staff of more than 50, Adrià runs El Bulli for six months of the year – dinner only. What the lucky guests get to eat is entirely a matter of chance. He spends the rest of the year like a mad scientist in El Bulli Taller, his kitchen workshop on Carrer de la Portaferriera, virtually across the road from the Mercat de la Boqueria in central Barcelona. He has also branched out, opening fast-food eateries in Madrid and Barcelona, a hotel in Seville and even lending his name to bags of potato chips (which are nothing remarkable, it has to be said).

Adrià (voted the world's best chef by a committee of 60 gastronomy journalists in 2006) is not alone. One of his disciples, fellow Catalan Sergi Arola, couldn't resist the call of a place at Hotel Arts Barcelona, where he runs Arola. Another El Bulli alumnum, Carles Abellán, has received acclaim at his dramatic Comerç 24 (opposite), the focus of special kitchen effects in El Born, and more recently at his earthier Tapaç 24 (p183). Meanwhile, brother Albert has a hit on his hands with gourmet tapas at Inopia (p184).

perhaps a *carré de cabrito glaseado a la miel con setas* (rack of honey glazed kid meat with mushrooms). You may be accompanied by a little live music.

TANTARANTANA

Map pp84–5

Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 268 24 10; Carrer de Tantarantana 24; meal €30; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat; (M) Jaume I

Surrounded as it is by the furiously fashionable, front-line nuclei of *nueva cocina española*, this spot is a refreshing contrast. There is something comforting about the old-style marble-top tables, upon which you can sample simple but well-prepared dishes such as risotto or grilled tuna served with vegetables and ginger. It attracts a 30-something crowd who also enjoy the outdoor seating in summer.

WUSHU Map pp84–5

Pan-Asian €€

☎ 93 310 73 13; www.wushu-restaurant.com, in Spanish; Avinguda del Marqués de l'Argentera 1; meal €25-30; ☎ 1pm-midnight Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; (M) Barceloneta; ☒

This Australian-run wok restaurant serves up an assortment of tasty pan-Asian dishes, including pad Thai, curries and more. What about kangaroo *yakisoba*? Pull up a pew at the nut-brown tables or sit at the bar. Wash down with Tiger beer or one of a handful of wines.

PLA DE LA GARSA Map pp84–5

Catalan €€

☎ 93 315 24 13; Carrer dels Assaonadors 13; meal €25; ☎ dinner; (M) Jaume I; ☒

This 17th-century house is the ideal location for a romantic candlelit dinner. Timber beams, anarchically scattered tables and soft ambient music combine to make an enchanting setting over two floors for traditional, hearty Catalan cooking, with dishes such as *bacallà amb cigronets del Pla de Llerona* (salted cod with chickpeas). They also have a good cheese selection.

BUBÓ Map pp84–5

Patisserie-Restaurant €€

☎ 93 268 72 24; www.bubo.ws; Carrer de les Caputxes 6 & 10; meal €20-30; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon, 10am-midnight Tue-Thu & Sun, 10am-2am Fri & Sat; (M) Barceloneta; ☒

Carles Mampel is a sweet artist, literally. It is difficult to walk by his bar and pastry shop without taking a seat outside to try one of his fantasy-laden creations. They are limitless in style and number. Try saying no to a mousse of Giandua with mango cream, caramelised hazelnuts with spices and hazelnut biscuit. You could dip in for lunch. Try the set menu, which consists of a couple of *amuse-gueules* and six varied savoury tapas.

HABANA VIEJA Map pp84–5

Cuban €€

☎ 93 268 25 04; Carrer dels Banys Vells 2; meal €20-25; ☎ Mon-Sat; (M) Jaume I

HOTEL DINING HIGHS

There was a time when about the saddest thing you could do was eat at your hotel. How that has changed in some cases! A number of Barcelona's hotels are high-end, elegant restaurants and veritable havens for gourmet highs. You don't even need to be a hotel guest to dine in them. Some of the best are:

- Actual (Grand Hotel Central, p234)
- Arola (Hotel Arts Barcelona, p235)
- Drolma (Hotel Majèstic, p236)
- East 47 (Hotel Claris, p236)
- El Comeder del Axel (Axel Hotel, p236)
- Gaig (Hotel Cram, p237)
- La Terraza (Hotel Claris, p236)
- Lasarte & Loidi (Comtes de Barcelona, p237)
- Moo (Hotel Omm, p236)

Since the early 1990s this Cuban hideaway, the first of its kind in Barcelona and still one of the best, has offered old island faves such as the stringy meat dish *ropa vieja* (literally 'old clothes') and rice dishes. With its antique light fittings and predilection for timber furnishings, this Ribera house could easily be an Old Havana eatery.

CENTRE CULTURAL EUSKAL ETXEA

Map pp84–5 Basque €€

☎ 93 310 21 85; Placeta de Montcada 1; tapas €20-25, meal €35-40; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎ Jaume I

Barcelona is awash with a wave of Basque eateries, but few have the genuine feel. This one started off as a cultural centre and captures the essence of San Sebastián. Choose your *pintxos*, sip *txacoli* wine and remember to keep the toothpicks so the staff can count them up and work out your bill. A full sit-down meal out the back might include *txangurro a la donostiana* (a flambéed spider crab).

ORÍGEN 99.9% Map pp84–5 Catalan €

☎ 93 310 75 31; www.origen99.com; Carrer de la Vidriera 6-8; meal €15-20; ☎ 12.30pm-1am; ☎ Jaume I; ☎

This is a treasure chest of Catalan regional products, with shelves groaning under the weight of bottles and packets of goodies. It also has a long menu of bite-sized dishes, such as *ànec amb naps* (duck and turnip) or *civet de senglar* (jugged boar), that you can mix and match over wine by the glass. At the L'Eixample branch (Map pp108–9; ☎ 93 453 11 20; Carrer d'Enric Granados 9; ☎ 1pm-1am; ☎ Universitat) you can dine outside. Several others are scattered around town.

CASA DELFIN Map pp84–5 Spanish €

☎ 93 319 50 88; Passeig del Born 36; meal €15-20, menú del día €11; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☎ Barceloneta

While surrounding restaurants may serve up exquisitely designed Sino-Moroccan-Venezuelan creations, the bustling waiters at the 'Dolphin House' content themselves with serving bountiful Spanish classics. And they are right to do so. Finding a free lunchtime table at their sprawling terrace requires a modest portion of luck. Choose from more than 30 tried-and-true dishes.

EL XAMPANYET Map pp84–5 Tapas €

☎ 93 319 70 03; Carrer de Montcada 22; meal €15; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎ Jaume I

Nothing much has changed for decades in this, one of the city's best-known *cava* bars. Plant yourself at the bar or seek out a table against the decoratively tiled walls for a glass or three of *cava* and an assortment of tapas, such as the tangy *boquerons en vinagre* (white anchovies in vinegar). It's the atmosphere that makes this place.

PORT VELL & LA BARCELONETA

In the Maremàgnum complex (Map p93) on the Moll d'Espanya you can eat close to the water's edge at a handful of fun if fairly slapdash joints. For good food and atmosphere, head around to La Barceloneta, a traditional haven of simple seafood cooking and, in spite of rampant gentrification and publicity, still laden with everything from good-natured, noisy tapas bars to upmarket seafood restau-

rants. Almost everything shuts on Sunday and Monday evenings.

TORRE D'ALTA MAR Map p93 Seafood €€€

☎ 93 221 00 07; www.torredealta.com; Torre de Sant Sebastià, Passeig de Joan de Borbó 88; meal €70-80; ☎ Tue-Sat, dinner Sun-Mon; ☎ Barceloneta or ☎ 17, 39, 57 or 64; ☎

Head to the top of the Torre de Sant Sebastià and instead of the Transbordador Aeri, take a ringside seat for the best city views and fine seafood (a few meaty alternatives such as steak tartare are thrown in). The setting alone, high up above the city and port, makes this a unique dining experience, perfect for a romantic couple.

SUQUET DE L'ALMIRALL

Map p93 Seafood €€

☎ 93 221 62 33; Passeig de Joan de Borbó 65; meal €45-50; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎ Barceloneta or ☎ 17, 39, 57 or 64; ☎

A family business run by an alumnus of Ferran Adrià's El Bulli, the order of the day is top-class seafood with the occasional unexpected twist. A good option is the *pica pica marinera* (a seafood mix) or you could opt for the tasting menu, or one of the various marine rice dishes on offer. Grab one of the few outdoor tables.

CAN MAJÓ Map p93 Seafood €€

☎ 93 221 58 18; Carrer del Almirall Aixada 23; meal €30-40; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎ Barceloneta or ☎ 45, 57, 59, 64 or 157

Virtually on the beach (with tables outside in summer), Can Majó has a long and steady reputation for fine seafood, particularly its rice dishes and cornucopian *suquets* (stews). Simpler options include oven-cooked fish. Sit outside behind the little blue picket fence.

CAN ROS 1911 Map p93 Seafood €€

☎ 93 221 45 79; Carrer del Almirall Aixada 7; meal €30-35; ☎ Thu-Tue; ☎ Barceloneta or ☎ 45, 57, 59, 64 or 157; ☎

The fifth generation is now at the controls in this immutable seafood favourite. In a restaurant where the décor is a reminder of simpler times, there's a simple guiding principle – give the punters succulent fresh fish cooked with a light touch. They also do a great chunky *fideuà amb cloïsses i gambes* (noodles with clams and prawns) and a generous *suquet*. Otherwise you

could try the *mariscata*, a mixed seafood platter for two.

CAN RAMONET Map p93 Seafood €€

☎ 93 319 30 64; Carrer de la Maquinista 17; meal €30; ☎ Barceloneta; ☎

Perching at one of the little tables across the lane is the perfect way to pass a warm summer evening, perhaps over some *vieires al cava* (scallops in *cava*). Or step inside and enjoy your tapas around a barrel-cum-table. Rice dishes cost €15-17 and the catch of the day is around €20-22. They claim to have been in business since 1763.

RESTAURANT SET (7) PORTES

Map p93 Seafood €€

☎ 93 319 30 33; www.7portes.com; Passeig d'Isabel II 14; meal €30; ☎ 1pm-1am ☎ Barceloneta; ☎

Founded in 1836 as a café and converted into a restaurant in 1929, this is a classic. In the hands of the Parellada clan, which runs several quality restaurants in and beyond Barcelona, it exudes an old-world atmosphere with its wood panelling, tiles, mirrors and plaques naming some of the famous – such as Orson Welles – who have passed through. Paella is the speciality, or go for the surfeit of seafood in the *gran plat de marisc* (literally 'big plate of seafood'). We dare you to finish it!

VASO DE ORO Map p93 Tapas €

☎ 93 319 30 98; Carrer de Balboa 6; meal €20; ☎ Barceloneta; ☎

This must be one of the world's narrowest bars. At either end, the space balloons a little to allow for a handful of tables. Squeeze in and enjoy the show. Fast-talking, white-jacketed waiters will serve up a few quick quips with your tapas of grilled *gambes* or *solomillo* (sirloin) chunks. Want something a little different? Ask for a *flauta cincuenta* – half lager and half dark beer.

CAN MAÑO Map p93 Spanish €

☎ 93 319 30 82; Carrer del Baluard 12; meal €15-20; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☎ Barceloneta

The owners have been dealing with an onslaught of punters for decades and swear they are going to retire soon (but they never do). You'll need to be prepared to wait before being squeezed in at a packed table for a raucous dinner (or lunch) of *raciones* (listed on a board at the back) over a bottle of *turbio*, a cloudy white plonk.

CAN PAIXANO Map p93 Tapas €

☎ 93 310 08 39; Carrer de la Reina Cristina 7; meal €15-20; ☎ 9am-10.30pm; **M** Barceloneta; ☒ Tucked away amid the bright tacky lights of cheap electronics stores in what could almost be a backstreet in southeast Asia, this lofty old champagne bar has long run on a winning formula. The standard tippie is bubbly rosé in elegant little glasses, combined with bite-sized *bocadillos* (filled rolls). This place is jammed to the rafters, and elbowing your way to the bar to ask harried staff for menu items can be a titanic struggle.

PORT OLÍMPIC, EL POBLENOU & EL FÒRUM

This yachties' pleasure port is lined on two sides by dozens of restaurants and tapas bars, popular in spring and summer but mostly underwhelming. A more upmarket series of places huddles at the northeast end of Platja de la Barceloneta – it's hard to beat the sand, sea and palm tree backdrop. Otherwise, the search for culinary curios will take you behind the scenes into the depths of El Poblenou, where a few gems glitter.

EL CANGREJO LOCO Map pp98-9 Seafood €€

☎ 93 221 05 33; www.elcangrejoloco.com; Moll de Gregal 29-30, Port Olímpic; meal €45-60, menú del día €22; ☎ daily; **M** Ciutadella Vila Olímpica; ☒ Of the hive of eating activity along the docks of Port Olímpic, the 'Mad Crab' is the best. It inevitably has a thoroughfare feel, attracting swarms of tourists, but the difference is that the food is generally of a reasonable quality. Fish standards such as *bacallà* and *rap* are served in various guises and melt in the mouth, as does the *sarsuela*.

XIRINGUITO D'ESCRIBÀ

Map pp98-9 Seafood €€

☎ 93 221 07 29; www.escriba.es; Ronda Litoral 42, Platja de Bogatell; meal €40-50; ☎ lunch only daily; **M** Llacuna

The clan that brought you Escribà sweets and pastries also operates one of the most popular waterfront seafood eateries in town. This is one of the few places where one person can order from their selection of *paella* and *fideuà* (normally reserved for a

GLUTTONY WITHOUT GLUTEN

Those with a gluten intolerance can find eating out in any town a problem. In Barcelona you get your hands on all sorts of snacks and products and put together your own meals at **Syngluten** (☎ 93 356 33 07; www.syngluten.com, in Spanish; Avinguda Diagonal 3) in the Diagonal Mar shopping mall (Map pp98-9).

minimum of two people). Prices are higher than average, but quality matches. You can also choose from a selection of Escribà pastries for dessert – worth the trip alone.

L'EIXAMPLE

This huge grid area can seem a little daunting but the first thing to remember is that most of the many varied and enticing restaurants are concentrated in the *Quadrat d'Or* between Carrer de Pau Claris and Carrer de Muntaner, Avinguda Diagonal and Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes. There is no shortage of perfectly acceptable bar-restaurants (often with street-side tables) that offer reasonable *menús del dia* and stock-standard dishes *a la carta*. In among these places are sprinkled real finds, whether offering local or international cuisine.

SAÜC Map pp102-3 Catalan €€€

☎ 93 321 01 89; www.saucrestaurant.com; Passatge de Lluís Pellicer 12; meal €70-80; ☎ Tue-Sat; **M** Hospital Clínic; ☒

Pop into this basement place down a little Eixample laneway and you enter a soothing sanctuary. Sober designer décor, dominated by ochres, creams and buttercup yellows, allows you to concentrate on what emerges from the kitchen, with surprises like *vieires*, *mongetes de Santa Pau*, *tripetes de bacallà i peus de porc* (scallops, broad beans, cod and pigs' trotters). The tasting menu comprises an appetiser, five courses, then a cheese selection and two desserts (€68). They've even opened a branch in Beijing.

CASA CALVET Map pp108-9 Catalan €€€

☎ 93 412 40 12; www.casacalvet.es; Carrer de Casp 48; meal €70-80; ☎ Mon-Sat; **M** Urquinaona; ☒ An early Gaudí masterpiece loaded with his trademark curvy features now houses a swish restaurant (just to the right of the building's main entrance). Dress up and

ask for an intimate *taula cabina* (wooden booth). You could opt for a *lasanya de llamàntol, verdures, tomàquet i formatge fresc* (lobster lasagne with vegetables, tomato and fresh cheese). They have a tasting menu also available for €72.

NOTI Map pp108-9 Mediterranean €€€

☎ 93 342 66 73; www.noti-universal.com; Carrer de Roger de Llúria 35; meal €70-75, menú del día €19; ☎ Mon-Fri, dinner Sat; **M** Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

It's hard to believe that this was once home to a newspaper, the *Noticiero Universal*. The news now is that Noti is a serious culinary player with muted club sounds and it's under siege by the city's glitterati. The ample, square dining room is plastered with mirrors that seem to multiply the steely designer tables. Try a *lenguado laqueado a la soja y miel, arroz thai rebocado en sésamo negro* (sole coated in soya and honey, with Thai rice battered in black sesame) or perhaps a meat dish – anything from beef tartare to chicken curry. Start the evening with the cocktail of the day at the bar.

SPEAKEASY Map pp102-3 International €€€

☎ 93 217 50 80; Carrer d'Aribau 162-166; meal €70; ☎ Mon-Fri, dinner Sat; **M** Diagonal This clandestine restaurant lurks behind the Dry Martini bar (p205). You will be shown a door through the open kitchen area to the 'storeroom', which is lined with hundreds of bottles of backlit, quality tipples. Dark tones in the décor, a few works of art, low lighting, light jazz music and smooth service complete the setting. What's on the menu depends on the markets and cooks' whim. The *cochinillo ibérico deshuesado* (deboned Iberian suckling pig) is a carnivore's tender dream.

CASA DARÍO Map pp108-9 Seafood €€

☎ 93 453 31 35; www.casadario.com, in Spanish; Carrer del Consell de Cent 256; meal €50-60; ☎ Mon-Sat Sep-Jul; **M** Passeig de Gràcia; ☒ Step into the timeless world of silver service and ample helpings of the fruits of the sea. Waiters serve tables with hushed efficiency and present a seafood feast as only the folks from the northwest Atlantic region of Galicia know how. Opt for one of the set menus (around €50) and you will be served endless rounds of seafood wonders, many of which are flown in daily from

Galicia. You can treat yourself to anything from *cañallas* (sea snails) to *nécoras* (small crabs that abound on the Galician coast).

CINC SENTITS Map pp108-9 International €€

☎ 93 323 94 90; www.cincsentits.com; Carrer d'Aribau 58; meal €50-60; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Mon, Sep-Jul; **M** Passeig de Gràcia

Enter this somewhat overlit realm of the 'Five Senses' to indulge in a tasting menu (from €46 to €65), consisting of a series of small, experimental dishes. What's on offer changes from one day to the next, but think wine reduction sauces, *pols de cansalada* (bacon fat powder), cuttlefish noodles and other unique elements in a brief menu that offers a balance of fish and meat. An optional wine-matching component adds to the bill. Less ambitious but cheaper is the set lunch at €29. You'll either love it or be somewhat puzzled by it!

CATA 1.81 Map pp108-9 Tapas €€

☎ 93 323 68 18; www.cata181.com; Carrer de València 181; meal €50; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jul; **M** Passeig de Gràcia

If you like an Al Capone-style conspiratorial feel, call ahead to book the little room out the back, past the busy, compact kitchen. Surrounded by shelves of fine wines packed to the rafters, you will be treated to a series of dainty gourmet dishes, such as *raviolis amb bacallà* (soft dumplings) or *truita amb tòfona* (thick potato tortilla with a delicate trace of truffle). The best option is to choose from one of several tasting menu options ranging from €28 to €45. Since wines feature so highly here, let rip with the list of fine Spanish tipples.

TAKTIKA BERRI Map pp108-9 Basque €€

☎ 93 453 47 59; Carrer de València 169; meal €50; ☎ Mon-Fri, lunch Sat; **M** Hospital Clínic

Get in early here as the tapas bar teems with punters from far and wide, anxious to wrap their mouths around some of the best Basque tapas in town. The hot morsels are all snapped up as soon as they arrive from the kitchen, so keep your eyes peeled. The seated dining area out the back is also good. In the evening it's all over by about 10.30pm.

ALKÍMIA Map pp102-3 Modern Catalan €€

☎ 93 207 61 15; Carrer de l'Indústria 79; meal €45-50; ☎ Mon-Fri; **M** Verdaguer

Jordi Vila, a culinary alchemist, serves up refined Catalan dishes with a twist in this elegant, white-walled locale well off the tourist trail. Dishes such as his *arròs amb nyora i escamarlans* (rice with crayfish and a sweetish chilli) have earned Vila his first Michelin star.

ALBA GRANADOS

Map pp108–9 Spanish-Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 454 61 16; www.albagranados.com; Carrer d'Enric Granados 34; meal €45-50; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☑ FGC Provença; ☒

In summer ask for one of the romantic tables for two on the 1st-floor balcony. Overlooking the trees, it is a unique spot, with little traffic. Inside, the ground- and 1st-floor dining areas are huge, featuring exposed brick and dark parquet. The menu offers a little of everything but the best dishes are the meat offerings, such as *carrillera de ternera* (a dark, soft meat from the neck of the cow).

IGUELDO

Map pp108–9 Basque €€

☎ 93 452 25 55; Carrer del Rosselló 186; meal €45-50; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☑ Diagonal; ☒ White and maroon décor and smooth lines tempt patrons into this refined, contemporary Basque option. Sink into a white leather chair or perch at the back bar for *chuletón a la parrilla* (one kilo of grilled chop for two), or an intense *cochinillo confitado con peras* (suckling pig prepared with pears). Igueldo is a winner at lunch with a *menú del día* (€20) that include choices such as *penne con txipirones* (pasta with tiny cuttlefish).

RESTAURANT ME

Map pp102–3 Pan-Asian €€

☎ 93 419 49 33; Carrer de París 162; meal €45-50; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat; ☑ Hospital Clínic ☒ The Vietnamese-American chef whips up wonders in the kitchen at this surprise fusion establishment. At a time when fusion is often synonymous with nothing in particular, they manage to create superb Asian dishes. The curry *vietnamita* is a symphony of seafood critters with noodles in a green curry, while the *confit de pato a las siete especias* is a succulent, vacuum-cooked duck thigh with bok choy and orange. Occasionally dishes with a more local bent or a playful New Orleans intrusion (crab with creole sauce and corn bread) stimulate the palate further.

SENSE PRESSA

Map pp108–9 Spanish €€

☎ 93 218 15 44; Carrer d'Enric Granados 96; meal €45-50; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Mon; ☑ Diagonal Tiny tables for two await in this split-level basement eatery. It serves up exquisitely prepared Spanish dishes, with a wide range of meat and fish options, depending on the season and chef's whim. You might start with *mini-carxofes saltejades amb pernil* (sautéed mini-artichokes with ham) and follow with the *fetge d'oca al vi d'Oporto* (goose liver in port). Splurge on a *suquet de llamantiol amb mongetes grosses* (lobster and bean stew).

PATAGONIA

Map pp108–9 Argentine €€

☎ 93 304 37 35; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 660; meal €40-45; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

An elegant Argentinean beef-fest awaits in this stylish new arrival. Start with *empanadas* (tiny meat-crammed pies). You might want to skip past the *achuras* (offal) and head for a hearty meat main, such as a juicy beef *medallón con salsa de colmenillas* (a medallion in a morel sauce) or such classics as *bife de chorizo* (sirloin) or Brazilian *picanha* (rump). You can choose from one of five side dishes to accompany your pound of flesh.

YAMADORY

Map pp108–9 Japanese €€

☎ 93 453 92 64; Carrer d'Aribau 68; meal €35-40; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☑ FGC Provença

Yamadory remains one of the steadiest ambassadors of Japanese cooking in the city. As the door slips closed behind you, the first thing you notice is the hushed atmosphere of the place. Divided into several different dining areas with a contemporary Japanese décor, it is notable for its gliding efficiency. Head upstairs to sit on a floor-level tatami. The sushi, sashimi, udon and tempura are all good.

CHICOA

Map pp108–9 Catalan €€

☎ 93 453 11 23; Carrer d'Aribau 73; meal €35; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☑ Hospital Clínic; ☒

It looks as rustic on the inside as out, with ceramic plates decorating the walls, stone arches and dark wood all over. For traditional Catalan cooking, this is an address that loyal locals come back to time and again. Indeed, time seems to have stood still here since they opened back in the

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

One of the greatest sound, smell and colour sensations in Europe is Barcelona's most central produce market, the **Mercat de la Boqueria** (Map pp64–5; www.boqueria.info; La Rambla). It spills over with all the rich and varied colour of plentiful fruit and vegetable stands, seemingly limitless varieties of sea critters, sausages, cheeses, meat (including the finest Jabugo ham) and sweets. It is also sprinkled with half a dozen or so unassuming places to eat, and eat well, with stallholders at lunchtime. According to some chronicles there has been a market on this spot since 1217! Mind you, nowadays it's no easy task getting past the gawping tourists to indicate the slippery slab of sole you're after, or the tempting piece of Asturian *queso de cabra* (goat's cheese).

La Boqueria is not the only market in Barcelona. The city is bursting with bustling markets, which for the most part are tourist-free. Try **Mercat de Sant Antoni** (Map pp102–3; Carrer de Mallorca 157; ☑ Hospital Clínic); **Mercat de Santa Caterina** (Map pp84–5; Avinguda de Francesc Cambó; ☑ Jaume I); **Mercat del Ninot** (Map pp102–3; Carrer de Mallorca 157; ☑ Hospital Clínic); **Mercat de la Llibertat** (Map p118; Plaça de la Llibertat; FGC Gràcia); **Mercat de l'Abaceria Central** (Map p118; Travessera de Gràcia 186; ☑ Fontana) and **Mercat de la Concepció** (Map pp102–3; Carrer de València 332; ☑ Girona). Markets generally open from Monday to Saturday from around 8am to 8pm (although some close around 2pm on Saturday). They are all at their animated best in the morning.

1970s. A speciality of the house is anything to do with *bacallà* (salted cod).

THAI GARDENS

Map pp108–9 Thai €€

☎ 93 487 98 98; www.thaigardensgroup.com; Carrer de la Diputació 273; meal €35, menú del día €14; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

One of the first and still one of the best for Thai food in Barcelona. Tables for two set in quiet corners contrast with great round-party sittings amid a veritable forest of tropical greenery. The set meal (€29) allows you to try a broad range of dishes and can be a good idea for larger groups.

DE TAPA MADRE

Map pp108–9 Catalan €€

☎ 93 459 31 34; Carrer de Mallorca 301; meal €35; ☎ daily; ☑ Verdaguier; ☒

A chatty atmosphere greets you from the bar from the moment you swing open the door. A few tiny tables line the window, but head upstairs for more space in the gallery, which hovers above the array of tapas on the bar below, or go deeper inside past the bench with the ham legs. Choose from a range of tapas or opt for a full meal. The *arròs caldós amb llagostins* (a hearty rice dish with king prawns) is delicious.

TAPAÇ 24

Map pp108–9 Tapas €€

☎ 93 488 09 77; www.carlesabellan.com; Carrer de la Diputació 269; meal €30-35; ☎ 8am-midnight; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia

Carles Abellán, master of Comerç 24 (p176) in La Ribera, runs this delightful basement tapas haven. Abellán and his crew, in the

entirely visible kitchen out back, do gourmet versions of old faves. Specials include the *bikini* (toasted ham and cheese sandwich – here the ham is cured and the truffle makes all the difference!), a thick black *arròs negre de sípia* (squid ink black rice), the McFoie-Burguer, and for dessert, *xocolata amb pa, sal i oli* (delicious balls of chocolate in olive oil with a touch of salt and wafer).

CA LA NURI

Map pp108–9 Catalan €€

☎ 93 215 55 23; www.calanuri.es; Carrer del Consell de Cent 377; meal €30; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

With its white and grey tones, and schools of silver fish shapes seemingly skudding like wind-driven clouds along one wall, this is a classic for Catalan seafood and rice dishes. They have various set lunch menus, such as *fideuà*, *arròs negre* and seafood paella. Another good one is the *arròs de l'avia Nuri* (Grandma Nuri's rice), a paella-style dish in which all the seafood creatures have been peeled.

RELAIS DE VENISE

Map pp108–9 French €€

☎ 93 467 21 62; Carrer de Pau Claris 142; meal €30; ☎ daily Sep-Jul; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

You can eat anything you want here, so long as it's meat. Indeed, there's just one dish, a succulent beef *entrecôte* with their secret 'sauce Porte-Maillot' (named after the location of the original restaurant in Paris), chips and salad. It is served in slices and in two waves so that it doesn't go cold. The setting does not lack elegance although it is a little barnlike.

DOLSO Map pp108–9

Desserts €€

☎ 93 487 59 64; www.dolso.es, in Spanish; Carrer de València 227; meal €25-30; ☎ Tue-Sat & lunch Mon; M Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

There is a good reason for saying 'no' to dessert in nearby restaurants and coming here for the final dish of the evening. A constantly changing menu of sugary delights, from standards such as tiramisù to concoctions like the *nemesi de chocolate* (a chocolate pastry with cream of passion fruit), makes dessert in this laid-back spot a great temptation. A small selection of savoury dishes, such as the *coques* (a kind of open toasted broad baguette with toppings like goat cheese with honey and nuts) means that you can contemplate a full meal.

INOPIA Map pp102–3

Gourmet Tapas €€

☎ 93 424 52 31; Carrer de Tamarit 104; meal €25-30; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sat; M Rocafort Albert Adrià, brother of Barcelona's star chef Ferran and something of a kitchen celebrity himself, runs this popular corner tapas temple. If you can't grab one of the handful of tables, don't worry; just grab a standing spot inside or out and select a *pincho moruno de pollo* (chicken bites on a skewer) or the lightly fried, tempura-style vegetables (fresh from La Boqueria market). Wash down with house red or Moritz beer and finish with the *4 bombones con vino dulce de Castaño* (4 pralines with a heavenly sweet red dessert wine).

KOYUKI Map pp108–9

Japanese €€

☎ 93 237 84 90; Carrer de Còrsega 242; meal €25-30; ☎ Tue-Sat, dinner Sun M Diagonal

This unassuming basement Japanese diner is one of those rough-edged diamonds that it pays to revisit. Take a seat at one of the long tables and order from the cheesy menu complete with pictures courtesy of the Japanese owner – you won't be disappointed! The variety of *sashimi moriawase* is mixed, generous and constantly fresh. The *tempura udon* is a particularly good thick and hearty noodle option. You can then splash it all down with a Sapporo beer.

BODEGA DE SEPÚLVEDA

Map pp108–9

Catalan €€

☎ 93 323 59 44; Carrer de Sepúlveda 173bis; meal €25; ☎ Mon-Sat; M Universitat; ☒

This tavern has been showering dishes (which they like to call tapas) on its happy

diners since 1952. Without a booking, you'll have to hang around at the bar for a while and take in some of the goodies on show. The main dining area is out the back and downstairs, with a small, low-ceilinged non-smoking area upstairs. The range of dishes is a little overwhelming and mixes traditional (cold meats, cheeses and Catalan faves like *cap i pota*, a dish of chunks of fatty beef in gravy) with more surprising options like *carpaccio de calabacín con bacalao y parmesán* (thin zucchini slices draped in cod and parmesan cheese). You can hang out until 1am.

CERVESERIA CATALANA

Map pp108–9

Tapas €€

☎ 93 216 03 68; Carrer de Mallorca 236; meal €25; ☎ daily; M Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

This place, translated as 'Catalan Brewery', is good for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Come in for your morning coffee and croissant, or wait until lunch to enjoy choosing from the abundance of tapas and *montaditos* (canapés). You can sit at the bar, on the pavement terrace or in the restaurant at the back. The variety of hot tapas, mouth-watering salads and other snacks draws a well-dressed crowd from all over the *barri*. This joint's staff run an equally good place not far off, *Ciudad Condal* (Map pp108–9; ☎ 93 318 19 97; La Rambla de Catalunya 18; meal €20-25; ☎ daily; M Catalunya).

CASA AMALIA Map pp108–9

Catalan €€

☎ 93 458 94 58; Passatge del Mercat 4-6; meal €20-25; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; M Girona

For hearty Catalan cooking using fresh produce, mainly sourced from the busy market next door, this restaurant is a popular stop. The orange and white decorated joint has split level dining that makes the most of its space. On Thursdays during winter they offer the Catalan mountain classic, *escudella*. Otherwise you might like to try light variations on local cuisine, such as the *bacallà al alloli de poma* (cod in an apple-based *alloli* sauce). The four-course *menú del día* is exceptional lunchtime value at €11.

BALTHAZAR Map pp108–9

Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 217 82 50; Carrer de Rosselló 189; meal €20-25; ☎ daily; M Diagonal; ☒

Balthazar offers a spacious and buzzy dining atmosphere and an extensive menu

of Catalan and Mediterranean dishes, which are good without being spectacular. Locals converge here for stylish, economical dining. After all, where else might you encounter a *carpaccio de bou amb encenalls de pomesà* (beef carpaccio with parmesan cheese shavings) for €6.60? The *menú del día* also wins the hearts of savers at €8.70.

CASA ALFONSO Map pp108–9

Spanish €

☎ 93 451 39 46; www.casaalfonso.com; Carrer de Roger de Llúria 6; meal €20; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Sat; M Urquinaona

In business since 1934, Casa Alfonso is perfect for a morning coffee or a tapas stop at the long marble bar. Timber-pannelled and festooned with old photos, posters and swinging hams, it attracts a faithful local clientele at all hours for their *flautas* (thin custom-made baguettes with your choice of filling), hams, cheeses, hot dishes and home-made desserts. Consider rounding off with an *alfonsito* (a mini Irish coffee).

EL RINCÓN MAYA Map pp108–9

Mexican €

☎ 93 451 39 46; Carrer de València 183; meal €20; ☎ Tue-Sat, dinner Mon; M Passeig de Gràcia

Getting a seat in this Mexican eatery can be a real trial. The setting is warm, modest and thankfully devoid of the excesses of pseudo-Mexican décor. The pocket-sized serves of nachos, guacamole and fajitas all burst with flavour. You'll also discover lesser-known items like *tacos de pibil* (pork tacos) and *tinga*, little pasta pockets of chicken. The owner-chef spent much of his life in the restaurant business in Mexico City. On quieter nights, he'll emerge from the kitchen to chat animatedly with his guests.

RESTAURANTE JARDÍN ROSA

Map pp102–3

Chinese €

☎ 93 325 71 95; Avinguda Mistral 54; meal €15-20; ☎ daily; M Espanya

As in any other city, there's no shortage of cheap and cheerful Chinese joints, but this is the real McCoy. Go for the first part of the menu where you'll find anything from pig blood soup and black chicken in ginger to frogs' legs and strips of eel with leek. The chintzy décor one normally associates with Chinese eateries is considerably more sober here.

AMALTEA Map pp108–9

Vegetarian €

☎ 93 454 86 13; www.restaurantamaltea.com; Carrer de la Diputació 164; meal €10-15; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat; M Urgell; ☒

The ceiling fresco of blue sky sets the scene in this popular vegetarian eatery. The weekday set lunch (€10) offers a series of dishes that change frequently with the seasons. Get in early for dinner Monday to Thursday (when they close at 10pm) and savour an *escalopa de seitan* (seitan escalope) and *empanadillas* (pastry pocket) stuffed with spinach or *hiziki* algae and tofu. At night, the set two-course dinner menu (€14.50) offers good value. The home-made desserts are also tempting. The place is something of an alternative lifestyle centre, with yoga, t'ai chi and belly-dancing classes.

L'ATZAVARA Map pp108–9

Vegetarian €

☎ 93 454 59 25; Carrer de Muntaner 109; meal €10-15; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat; M Hospital Clínic; ☒

A hushed air reigns in this brightly lit place – it could almost be grandma's tearoom. A limited and varying *menú del día* (€9.90) is offered, and while servings are hardly huge, the food is tasty. The menu changes regularly but you might encounter a scrumptious *paella d'arròs integral amb verdures* (whole rice vegetable paella) or an oven-baked *pastís camperol* (vegetable pie).

CAFÈ DEL CENTRE Map pp108–9

Café €

☎ 93 488 11 01; Carrer de Girona 69; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri; M Girona

Step back a century in this café, in business since 1873. The timber-top bar extends down the right side as you enter, fronted by a slew of marble-topped tables and dark timber chairs. It exudes an almost melancholy air but gets busy at night.

CAFÈ ZURICH Map pp108–9

Café €

☎ 93 317 91 53; Carrer de Pelai 39; ☎ 8am-11pm Sun-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat; M Catalunya; ☒

It doesn't quite exude the atmosphere of the café of the same name that once occupied this prime spot, but not even the hardest of hearts can deny the location is impeccable. Pull up an outdoor pew for the human circus that is Plaça de Catalunya, or huddle over a paper on the mezzanine on a winter's day. In summer it stays open as late as 1am.

CACAO SAMPKA Map pp108–9 Chocolate €

☎ 93 272 08 33; www.cacaosampka.com; Carrer del Consell de Cent 292; ☎ 9am–9pm Mon–Sat; ☑ Passeig de Gràcia; ☒

Chocoholics will be convinced they have died and passed on to a better place. Load up in the shop or head for the bar out the back where you can have a classic *xocolata calenta* and munch on exquisite chocolate cakes, tarts, ice cream, sweets and sandwiches!

ESCRIBÀ Map pp108–9 Chocolate €

☎ 93 454 75 35; www.escriba.es; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 546; ☎ 8am–3pm & 5–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat, Sun & holidays; ☑ Urgell; ☒ Antoni Escribà carries forward a family tradition (since 1906) of melting Barcelonins' hearts with remarkable pastries and criminal chocolate creations. Try their Easter *bunyols de xocolata* (little round pastry balls filled with chocolate cream). Escribà has another branch in a Modernista setting at [La Rambla de Sant Joseph 83](#) (Map pp64–5).

MAURI Map pp108–9 Pastries €

☎ 93 215 10 20; [La Rambla de Catalunya 102](#); ☎ 8am–9pm Mon–Sat, 8am–3pm Sun; ☑ Diagonal; ☒

Since it opened in 1929, this grand old pastry shop has had its regular customers salivating over the endless range of sweets, chocolate croissants and gourmet delicatessen items.

CREMERIA TOSCANA Map pp102–3 Gelato €

☎ 93 539 38 25; Carrer de Muntaner 161; ☎ 1–9pm Tue–Sun; ☑ Hospital Clínic; ☒

Yes, you can stumble across quite reasonable ice cream in Barcelona, but close your eyes and think yourself across the Mediterranean to the real ice cream wizards. This corner *gelateria* is a slice of Italy. Creamy *stracciatella* and wavy *nocciola*...and myriad other flavours await at the most authentic gelato outlet in town. Buy a cone or a tub! They have another branch in [El Born](#) (Map pp84–5; ☎ 93 268 07 29; Carrer dels Canvis Vells 2; ☎ 1–9pm Mon–Thu, 1am–midnight Fri, noon–1am Sat, noon–midnight Sun; ☑ Barceloneta).

ORXATERIA SIRVEN Map pp102–3 Ice Cream €

☎ 93 441 76 16; [Ronda de Sant Pau 3](#); ☎ 10am–2.30pm & 4.30–9pm; ☑ Sant Antoni

A haven of *orxata/horchata* (tiger-nut drink), this busy locale serves up the best you'll try without having to catch the train down to this drink's spiritual home, Valencia. You can get it by the glass or take it away by the bottle. This place also purveys ice cream, *granissat* (iced fruit crush) and *turrón* (nougat).

GRÀCIA & PARK GÜELL

Spread right across this busy *barri* are all sorts of enticing options, from simple tapas bars to top-class seafood. Gràcia is loaded with Middle Eastern and, to a lesser extent, Greek restaurants, which are chirpy and good value. Several good value, classic Catalan taverns tick along nicely with a strong local following. There's little of interest, however, around Park Güell.

BOTAFUMEIRO Map p118 Seafood €€€

☎ 93 218 42 30; www.botafumeiro.es; Carrer Gran de Gràcia 81; meal €70–80; ☎ 1pm–1am; ☑ Fontana; ☒

It is hard not to mention this classic temple of Galician shellfish and other briny delights but, perhaps overconfident after years as one of Barcelona's premier eateries, it runs the danger of pricing itself out of the market. Share a few *medias raciones* to taste a range of marine offerings or share a *safata especial del Mar Cantàbric* (seafood platter) between two. You can also try *percebes*, the strangely twisted goose barnacles harvested along Galicia's north Atlantic coast.

RESTAURANT ROIG ROBÍ

Map p118 Catalan €€

☎ 93 218 92 22; www.roigrobi.com; Carrer de Seneca 20; meal €70; ☎ Mon–Fri, dinner Sat; ☑ Diagonal; ☒

This is an altar to traditional cooking, but with an unusual delicacy. The *mandonguilles de lluç amb bolets i sipia* (salt cod meatballs with mushrooms and cuttlefish) are delicious. Even the simplest items, like *croquetes de pollastre* (chicken croquettes) are prepared to perfection.

BILBAO Map p118 Northern Spanish €€

☎ 93 458 96 24; Carrer del Perill 33; meal €40; ☎ Mon–Sat; ☑ Diagonal

It doesn't look much from the outside, but Bilbao is a timeless classic where reservations for dinner are imperative. The back dining room, with bottle-lined walls, stout

timber tables and a yellowing light evocative of a country tavern, will appeal to carnivores especially, although some fish dishes are also on offer. Consider opting for a *chuletón* and wash down with a good Spanish red.

LA ROSA DEL DESIERTO

Map p118 Moroccan €€

☎ 93 237 45 90; Plaça de Narcís Oller 7; meal €35–40; ☎ Tue–Sat, lunch Sun; ☑ Diagonal

The arched doorway gives a clue as to the North African flavour of this long-standing favourite for couscous. It offers eight nine varieties of the stuff, from vegetarian to 'imperial' (with *merguez*, North African sausage, and a skewer of *kefta*, lightly spiced minced meat), along with other Moroccan faves like *tajine* (a kind of casserole). Take your place amid piles of cushions and finish with a refreshing mint tea.

PARCO Map p118 Japanese €€

☎ 93 238 78 22; Passeig de Gràcia 119; meal €35–40; ☎ Tue–Sun; ☑ Diagonal

The Italian love affair with Barcelona manifests itself here with this branch of the stylish Milan sushi-restaurant-cum-cocktail-bar. With a little fusion music in the background, start the evening with a round of bulbous cocktails before ordering plates of sushi and sashimi. Lighting is low, while red and black dominate the décor. Those unlucky enough to miss out on a lounge may find themselves uncomfortably perched on backless chairs.

TIBET Map p118 Catalan €€

☎ 93 284 50 45; Carrer de Ramiro de Maetz 34; meal €35; ☎ Wed–Sat & Mon, lunch only Sun; ☑ Alfons X or ☑ 24 or 39

In a semi-rustic setting not far from Park Güell this restaurant has as much to do with Tibet as the author of this book does with Eskimos. For 50 years they have been sizzling meat on the grill and dishing up snails, one of the house specialities. There's not an item of seafood in sight.

CAL BOTER Map p118 Catalan €€

☎ 93 458 84 62; Carrer de Tordera 62; meal €30–35; ☎ Tue–Sun; ☑ Joanic

A classic eatery that draws families and noisy groups of pals for *cargols a la llauna* (snails sautéed in a tin dish), *filet de bou a*

la crema de foie (a thick clump of tender beef drowned in an orange foie sauce), and other Catalan specialities, including curious *mar i muntanya* combinations like *bolets i gambes* (mushrooms and prawns). Finish with a *xarrup de llimona amb mar de cava* (lemon sorbet drowned in *cava*). The *menú del dia* (lunch Tuesday to Friday) comes in at a good-humoured €8.70.

O' GRÀCIA! Map p118 Catalan €€

☎ 93 213 30 44; Plaça de la Revolució de Setembre de 1868 15; meal €30–35; ☎ Mon–Sat; ☑ Fontana; ☒

This is an especially popular lunch option, with the *menú del dia* being outstanding value for around €10. The *arròs negre de sepia* makes a good first course, followed by a limited set of meat and fish options with vegetable sides. Serves are decent, presentation careful and service attentive. *A la carta*, you have tasting menu options ranging from €23 to about €30.

ENVALIRA Map p118 Catalan €€

☎ 93 218 58 13; Plaça del Sol 13; meal €25–30; ☎ Tue–Sat, lunch Sun; ☑ Fontana

Surrounded by cool hangouts, Lebanese eateries and grunge bars, you'd barely notice the modest entrance to this delicious relic, seemingly from another era. Past the handful of tables by the bar you head into the tiny dining room out the back, where the décor seems not to have changed since the 1950s. Serious waiters deliver all sorts of seafood and rice dishes to your table, from *arròs a la milanesa* (savoury rice dish with chicken, pork and a light cheese gratin) to a *bullit de lluç* (slice of white hake boiled with herb-laced rice and a handful of clams). You could start with a *sopa ¼ hora* ('quarter hour soup', a fish and rice broth).

LAC MAJÜR Map p118 Italian €€

☎ 93 285 15 03; Carrer de Tordera 33; meal €20–25; ☎ Mon–Sat; ☑ Verdaguer

You could easily miss this cosy little slice of northwest Italy as you stride along this quiet and unusually leafy lane. Inside, all sorts of home-cooking delights await, including house specials *gnocch* and *trofie*. The latter are little twists of pasta, usually served with pesto sauce in Liguria. Try the *mascarpone* and ham variant followed by, say, a *saltimbocca alla romana* (a veal slice cooked with ham, sage and sweet marsala wine).

EL GLOP Map p118

Catalan €

☎ 93 213 70 58; www.tavernaelglop.com; Carrer de Sant Lluís 24; meal €20; **M** Joanic
Step inside this raucous eatery decked out in country Catalan fashion, with gingham tablecloths and no-nonsense, slap-up meals. The secret is hearty serves of simple dishes, such as *bistec a la brasa* (grilled steak), perhaps preceded by *albergínies farcides* (stuffed aubergines) or *calçots* in winter. Try the *tocinillo*, a caramel dessert, to finish. Open until 1am, it's a useful place to have up your sleeve for a late bite.

NOU CANDANCHÚ Map p118

Tapas €

☎ 93 237 73 62; Plaça de Rius i Taulat 9; meal €15-20; **☒** Wed-Mon; **M** Fontana
The liveliest locale on the square, Nou Candanchú is a long-time favourite for myriad reasons. Many flock to its sunny terrace just for a few drinks. Accompany the liquid refreshment with one of the giant *entrepans* for which this place is famous. Otherwise, it offers a limited range of tapas and does some reasonable grilled meat dishes.

TAVERNA LA LLESCA Map p118

Catalan €

☎ 93 285 02 46; Carrer de Terol 6; meal €15-20; **☒** Mon-Sat; **M** Fontana

Head out to the back of this wonderfully boisterous eatery where the name of the game is hearty servings of meat (which you can temper with a little salad if you want), washed down with throaty house red. A good option is *entrecot de vedella* (beef entrecôte), which arrives in generous portions.

HIMALI Map p118

Nepalese, Vegetarian €

☎ 93 285 15 68; Carrer de Milà i Fontanals 60; meal €15-20; **☒** Tue-Sun; **M** Joanic

Spacious and simple, with gruff service and paper place mats, this is a great spot for cheap Nepalese food and vegetarian dishes. You could pick up a filling lentil-based *dal bhat* or a *sabji tarkari* (mixed vegetable curry). Carnivores are catered for with options such as mixed grills with rice and naan, or *kukhurako fila* (roast chicken in walnut sauce).

EL CRIOLLO Map p118

Argentine €

☎ 93 218 01 02; Carrer de Sant Domènec 10; meal €10-15; **☒** Tue-Sun; **M** Fontana

Longing for Argentine *empanadillas*, or Cabsha chocolate cookies? Need a sup-

ply of *mate*? This is a cheerful stop for a snacky meal to take away or eat in. It doubles as a general store for mostly Argentine products. The *tarta de pollo* is scrumptious, but the *empanadillas* (anything from spicy beef to spinach) are the star attraction.

EL ROURE Map p118

Tapas €

☎ 93 218 73 87; Carrer de la Riera Sant Miquel 51; meal €15-20; **☒** Mon-Sat; **M** Fontana

This old-time locals' bar is what Hemingway meant by a 'clean, well-lighted place'. Sidle up to the bar or pull up a little wooden chair and tuck into a choice of good-value tapas from the bar, washed down by a few cold Estrellas. The choice is abundant. The *bunyols de bacallà* are delightful battered balls of cod that demand to be gobbled up. The place is full-to-bursting most of the time.

VRENELI Map p118

Café €

☎ 93 217 61 01; Plaça de Rius i Taulat 8; **☒** 8am-9pm Tue-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat-Sun; **M** Fontana

For banana or carrot cake and a cup of coffee on a grey winter's day, this long, narrow bar with soft mood music is a good place to come in from the cold.

LA ZONA ALTA

Some of the grandest kitchens in the city are scattered across La Zona Alta, from Tibidabo across Sant Gervasi (as far down as Avinguda Diagonal, west of Gràcia) to Pedralbes. Plenty of places of all cuisines and qualities abound, often tucked away in quiet, unassuming residential streets far from anything of interest to tourists. Eating in La Zona Alta can be both a culinary and, with a couple of notable exceptions, a genuine local experience.

VIA VENETO Map pp122-3

Catalan €€€

☎ 93 200 72 44; www.viavenetorestaurant.com; Carrer de Ganduxer 10; meal €90-120; **☒** Mon-Fri, dinner Sat, closed three weeks in Aug; **☒** FGC La Bonanova; **☒**

Dalí used to regularly waltz into this high-society eatery after it opened in 1967. The vaguely Art-Deco setting (note the oval mirrors), orange-rose tablecloths, leather chairs and fine cutlery must cater perhaps to more conservative souls, but the painter was here for the kitchen exploits. Catalan dishes dominate the menu and

the mouth waters at the mere mention of, say, *San Pedro asado y lacado con pancetta, dátiles y tomate confitado* (a beautiful white fish coated in bacon and dates with crystallised tomato). The service is so good you barely notice the presence of the waiters.

HOFMANN Map pp122-3

Mediterranean €€€

☎ 93 218 71 65; www.hofmann-bcn.com; Carrer de Granada del Penedès 14-16; meal €80-100; **☒** Mon-Fri; **M** Jaume I; **☒**

Perhaps it was inevitable that the renowned cuisine school's restaurant should move from La Ribera to the money uptown. It's worth following them to their new designer locale to taste the efforts of the trainee chefs and their instructors. Dishes are generally elegant renditions of classic Mediterranean food, followed by such delicious desserts that some people prefer a starter and two sweets, skipping the main course.

EL RACÒ D'EN FREIXA

Map pp122-3

Mediterranean €€€

☎ 93 209 75 59; www.elracodenfreixa.com; Carrer de Sant Elies 22; meal €70-100; **☒** Tue-Sat Sep-Jul; **☒** FGC Sant Gervasi

On a quiet residential street deep in the Zona Alta, this hushed designer hideaway offers all sorts of little surprises from one of Spain's top chefs, Ramon Freixa. Let's see: what about the Big Duck, a hamburger of duck meat served with bread made of cereals, crystallised red onion and frozen mustard, for a starter? You can follow with one of six seafood options. A coolly elegant place, with clean cream-hued lines and flawless service, it's little wonder Freixa has a Michelin star and has twice been voted Spain's chef of the year by the country's *Gourmetour* good food guide.

HISOP Map pp122-3

Mediterranean €€€

☎ 93 241 32 33; www.hisop.com; Passatge de Marimon 9; meal €70-80; **☒** Mon-Fri & dinner Sat; **M** Diagonal; **☒**

The hippest entrance on this restaurant-jammed uptown lane definitely belongs to Hisop, an elegant dining option where flavour and service are a priority. Black, white and burgundy dominate the dining room décor. Consider the four-course seasonal tasting menu – you might wind up with a melt-in-your-mouth deer sirloin done in truffle, and for dessert a light chocolate

and olive-flavoured ice-cream biscuit with a froth of tofu. The wine list is impressive and service immaculate.

LA BALSA Map pp122-3

Mediterranean €€

☎ 93 211 50 48; www.labalsarestaurant.com; Carrer de la Infanta Isabel 4; meal €70; **☒** lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat; **☒** FGC Avinguda del Tibidabo; **☒**

With its grand ceiling and the scented gardens that surround the main terrace dining area, La Balsa is one of the city's top dining experiences. The menu changes frequently and is a mix of traditional Catalan and off-centre inventiveness. Lounge over a cocktail at the bar before being ushered to your table. The place is famous for its August dinner buffet (around €28).

CAN TRAVI NOU off Map pp102-3

Catalan €€

☎ 93 428 03 01; www.gruptravi.com; Carrer de Jorge Manrique s/n, Parc de la Vall d'Hebron; meal €45-50; **☒** Mon-Sat, lunch Sun; **M** Montbau; **P** **☒**

Yes, it has been discovered by tourists. But who can blame them? This expansive 18th-century mansion has several dining areas that stretch out across two floors. The warm colours, grandfather clock and a wholesome, rustic air make for a magical setting for a Catalan splurge. The *risotto de formatge* (cheese risotto) makes a hearty starter but the generous mains will please you even more. The *arròs caldós amb llamàntol i cloïsses* (rice stew with lobster and clams) is irresistible and they also do some tender grilled steaks.

CAN CORTADA off Map pp102-3

Catalan €€

☎ 93 427 23 15; www.gruptravi.com; Avinguda de l'Estatut de Catalunya s/n; meal €40; **M** Montbau; **P** **☒**

More than anything else, it is the setting and the hearty welcome that makes this 11th-century estate (complete with the remains of a defensive tower) worth the excursion. Try for a table in the former cellars or on the garden terrace. Lots of Catalan fare, like *pollastre amb escamarlans* (chicken and crayfish), dominates the menu.

JOSÉ LUIS Map pp122-3

Spanish €€

☎ 93 200 83 12; Avinguda Diagonal 520; meal €40; **M** Diagonal

Welcome to Madrid! Long established in the Spanish capital, the Barcelona branch

occupies a privileged spot. It is said this place introduced the *montadito* (delicious little canapés) to Barcelona. Pick and choose from these and a long list of *pinchos* and *raciones*, including the all-time Madrid favourite, *callos* (tripe). Otherwise you could sit down in the elliptical basement for a classy meal served by brisk waiters in black jackets and bow ties. Mains of fish and meat come in at about €20. You can also opt for morning *bocadillos* at the bar.

INDOCHINE Map pp122–3 Pan-Asian €€
☎ 93 201 99 84; www.indochinebarcelona.com; Carrer d'Aribau 247; meal €35-40; ☎ daily; ♿ FGC Plaça Molina; ☒

This uptown Asian eatery could almost pass for a florist. Once through the French doors and greenery you will be presented with a selection of Thai, Vietnamese and Cambodian dishes. The result is a little westernised, but the food is enticing nonetheless. You could start with a light green-papaya salad and follow with *pescado al estilo camboyano* (Cambodian-style fish, lightly steamed and done in a vegetable sauce). Those with flexible legs can opt to sit on the floor.

BAR TOMÀS Map pp122–3 Tapas €
☎ 93 203 10 77; Carrer Major de Sarrià 49; meal €15; ☎ Thu-Tue; ♿ FGC Sarrià

Many Barcelonins have long claimed that Bar Tomàs is by far the best place in the city for *patates braves*, prepared here with a special variation on the traditional spicy tomato and mayonnaise sauce. The place is a rough-edged bar, but that doesn't stop the mostly well-off citizens of Sarrià piling in, particularly for lunch on weekends.

CAFFÈ SAN MARCO Map pp122–3 Café €
☎ 93 280 29 73; Carrer de Pedro de la Creu 15; ☎ 9am-9.30pm; ♿ FGC Reina Elisenda

For one of the best coffees you're likely to have, it is hard to beat this place. A charming atmosphere where you can settle in to read the paper or simply watch passers-by.

FOIX DE SARRIÀ Map pp122–3 Pastries €
☎ 93 203 04 73; www.foixdesarria.com, in Spanish; Plaça de Sarrià 12-13; ☎ 8am-8pm; ♿ FGC Reina Elisenda

Since 1886 they have been selling the most exquisite cakes and sweets in this exclu-

sive pastry shop. You can take them away or head out back to sip tea, coffee or hot chocolate while sampling the little cakes and other wizardry.

MONTJUÏC, SANTS & POBLE SEC

Montjuïc is largely bereft of notable eating options, for the obvious reason that it is mostly parks and gardens. In gruff old Poble Sec, however, you'll turn up all sorts of priceless nuggets, from historic old taverns offering Catalan classics to a handful of smart, new-wave eateries. The pickings in Sants are slimmer, but there are still some worthy exceptions.

ROSAL 34 Map pp140–1 Mediterranean €€
☎ 93 324 90 46; www.rosal34.com; Carrer del Roser 34; meal €45-65; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ♿ Poble Sec

This place is seriously stylish. Exposed brick and stone walls and a sinuous bar, accompanied by wafting lounge sounds, set the scene for a gourmet experience. You can opt for one of two tasting menus or search the fairly extensive menu for such full-flavoured numbers as *ventresca de tonyina de sorra amb alberginia fumadada i agridolç de gerds* (grilled tuna meat, served with smoked aubergine and a sweet-and-sour raspberry sauce).

XEMEI Map pp140–1 Italian €€
☎ 93 553 51 40; Passeig de l'Exposició 85; meal €45; ☎ Wed-Mon; ♿ Paral.lel; ☒

With its half-dozen rough preloved tables, gentle jazz and ebullient Venetian owner, Xemei is a slice of Venice on the side of Montjuïc hill. Portions of such delicacies as *bigoi in salsa veneziana* (thick spaghetti in an anchovy and onion sauce) or *paccheri* (a Neapolitan tubular pasta) in a thick cuttlefish sauce are probably not enough, so adopt Italian tradition and opt for a second course such as *suprema de San Pedro con tomatito y espárragos* (a tender white Mediterranean fish with cherry tomatoes and asparagus).

MIRAMAR Map pp140–1 Mediterranean €€
☎ 93 443 66 27; www.club-miramar.es, in Spanish; Carretera de Miramar 40; meal €40-50; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ♿ 50 & PM

HIGH IN THE SKY

For a five-star dining experience beneath a transparent UFO-style dome, 105m above Hotel Hesperia Tower in l'Hospitalet de Llobregat, grab a cab for **Restaurant Evo** (☎ 93 413 50 30; www.restauranteevo.com; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 144; ☎ Mon-Sat; ♿ Hospital Bellvitge; ♿ ☒). This is gourmet dining literally under the stars (of which one comes from Michelin). Lean lines dictate décor, with lacquer-finished tables, low white chairs and light arched into the structure of the dome. The highpoint is the presentation of Mediterranean market cooking (say, the *cocotte de setas, verdure, cigalas y tocino* – a casserole with mushrooms, vegetables, crayfish and pig fat), with noble touches (like Mollet eggs and caviar).

With several terraces and a cool designer main dining area, this restaurant's main draw is the views it offers over Barcelona's waterfront. Built just above the Transbordador Aeri cable car station, you can linger over a coffee or tuck into an elegant meal. Set tasting menus are on offer for €32 or €48 or you can try *a la carta*. The *bacallà confitat al pil-pil de fava tonka i praliné d'ametlles amb verduritas* (glazed cod in a slight hot sauce with tonka beans, an almond cream and vegetables) is tempting.

EL PEIXEROT Map pp140–1 Seafood €€
☎ 93 424 69 69; Carrer de Tarragona 177; meal €40-50; ♿ Sants Estació or Tarragona; ☒

Twinned with the restaurant of the same name in Vilanova, a seaside town southwest of Barcelona, El Peixerot has sea-blue décor and is rather ugly from the outside. Inside, it's big and boisterous, but service is rapid and the food is always good. It's famous for fresh seafood (sold by weight) and rice dishes. And Michelin likes it.

TAPIOLES 53 Map pp140–1 Mediterranean €€
☎ 93 329 22 38; www.tapioles53.com; Carrer de Tapioles 53; meal €35-45; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat; ♿ Paral.lel; ☒

A stylish place housed in a former umbrella factory, this gem is run by Australian-born chef, Sarah Stothart, who has been cooking around the world for years. It shows in her limited yet constantly changing international menu. Ingredients are sourced daily from the city's markets. Asian touches are sometimes present but you might just as easily find yourself with a Moroccan-style *tajine*. Start at the bar and proceed to one of the stout timber tables. Book ahead.

ZARAUTZ Map pp140–1 Basque €€
☎ 93 325 28 13; Carrer de l'Elisi 13; meal €30-35; ☎ 8am-11.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jul; ♿ Tarragona; ☒

A short hop away from the train station, you can take in some quality Basque tapas at the bar any time of the day, or retire to the restaurant for a full meal, such as *carpaccio de bou amb formatge Idiazabal* (Argentine beef carpaccio with a tangy Basque cheese). The owner is a dessert specialist, so save some room. It's a rough-and-tumble looking joint but don't let that put you off.

RESTAURANT ELCHE Map pp140–1 Paella €€
☎ 93 441 30 89; Carrer de Vila i Vilà 71; meal €30; ♿ Paral.lel

With tables spreading over two floors and old-world service and settings, this spot has been doing some of Barcelona's best paella (of various types) and *fideuà* (similar to paella, but using vermicelli noodles as the base) since the 1960s. Other places come and go, but this classic never seems to wilt.

LA BODEGUETA Map pp140–1 Catalan €€
☎ 93 442 08 46; Carrer de Blai 47; meal €30; ☎ lunch Fri-Sun, dinner daily; ♿ Paral.lel

For a homey Catalan atmosphere (complete with wine barrels, an old frigidaire and Gingham tablecloths), pop by this cheery spot. Options are limited to classic local favourites such as a thick *entrecot al pebre* (pepper steak) for carnivores or a reasonable *graellada de verdure* (mixed grilled vegetables) for gentler souls. Wash down with a generous ceramic jug of house red (€6) and you have the makings of hearty night out.

TAVERNA CAN MARGARIT Map pp140–1 Catalan €€
☎ 93 441 67 23; Carrer de la Concòrdia 21; meal €30; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat; ♿ Poble Sec

For decades they have been dishing out dinner to often raucous groups in this former wine store. Traditional Catalan cooking is the name of the game. Surrounded

by aged wine barrels, take your place at old tables and benches and perhaps order the *conejo a la jumillana* (fried rabbit served with garlic, onion, bay leaves, rosemary, mint, thyme and oregano).

QUIMET I QUIMET Map pp140–1 Tapas €€

☎ 93 442 31 42; Carrer del Poeta Cabanyes 25; meal €25-30; 🕒 Mon-Fri, lunch Sat; 📍 Paral.lel; 🚫

A tapas bar which has seemingly been around forever, Quimet i Quimet is a family-run business that has been passed down from generation to generation. Although there's barely space to swing a calamari, this bottle-lined, standing-room-only place is a treat for the palate. Just look at all those gourmet tapas waiting for you! Let the folk behind the bar advise you, and order a drop of fine wine to accompany. Or opt for their behind-the-counter malt beer, especially bottled for them in Belgium.

LA TOMAQUERA Map pp140–1 Catalan €

☎ 93 441 85 18; Carrer de Margarit 5; meal €20; 🕒 Tue-Sat; 📍 Poble Sec

The waiters shout and rush about this classic, while carafes of wine are sloshed about the long timber tables. You can't book, so it's first in, first seated (queues are the norm). Try the house speciality of snails or go for hearty meat dishes. The occasional

seafood option, such as *cassola de cigales* (a crayfish hotpot) might also tempt. And cash is king.

EL SORTIDOR Map pp140–1 Mediterranean €

☎ 93 441 85 18; Plaça del Sortidor 5; meal €15; 🕒 lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri; 📍 Poble Sec

Step back in history. Hot food has been dished up here since 1908. The ceramic-fronted fridge, tiled floor and bar seem to have changed little since then – but appearances can deceive. Turin-born Flavio runs this place, and offers a typical *menú del dia* that isn't that typical – how many Catalans have eaten handmade *pappardelle* (a broad ribbon pasta from Italy)? On Friday nights he serves up couscous and live Irish music. And on other nights he'll only open for a reservation of 20 or more!

LA BELLA NAPOLI Map pp140–1 Pizza €

☎ 93 442 50 56; Carrer de Margarit 12; pizza €8-10; 🕒 Wed-Sun, dinner Tue; 📍 Paral.lel

There are pizza joints all over Barcelona. And then there's the real thing, the way they make it in Naples. This place even feels like Naples. The waiters are mostly from across the Med and have that cheeky southern Italian approach to food, customers and everything else. The pizzas are second to none and the atmosphere sunny.