



Maltese Food

Maltese cuisine has been clearly influenced by the influx of different dominant cultures before gaining its independence in 1964. Most Maltese food is typically Mediterranean, with a predominance of fish and sea food.

Cooking duties were and generally still are assigned to the Maltese housewives who prepare the family's main meals. Vegetables are often bought at the local vegetable man who sells his wares at the side of the road. Meals are still influenced by whatever vegetables are season and often featured a lot of hearty vegetable soups such as *Brodu* (a beef and vegetable soup) and *Minestra* (a thick vegetable soup) as starters along with the delicious crusty Maltese bread or *hobz*.

Perhaps one of the best loved but time-consuming Maltese dishes is *Bragioli* or beef olives. These are made with beef slices which are rolled and filled with a mixture of meat, garlic and herbs and wrapped in bacon. This is then cooked slowly in a mixture of wine, garlic and tomatoes. (See recipe on the next page)

Pasta is also a staple food with many people eating it at nearly every meal time. *Timpana* is an unusual pasta dish you should try while in Malta. It is a type of baked macaroni made with eggs and beef and pork that includes a pastry topping. This is usually served piping hot with plenty of cheese. It is a tasty but very filling meal.

Other interesting things to try include *bebbux* or snails; rabbit or *fenek*; horse meat; *pastizzi* which are savoury pea and cheese cakes) and *gbejna* which is a local traditional cheese that comes in several varieties.

Vegetarians will find that there is plenty of food for them to eat as well and should try the local bean dip *bigilla* which is delicious spread on top of some water biscuits.

People with other special diets can usually request something simple off the menu or call a restaurant in advance.

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Treating yourself to a fantastic Maltese meal is reliving a people's history. The number of restaurants specialising in Maltese food has grown so once you arrive at AClass Academy of English, ask one of the staff to recommend a restaurant to you.

AClass Academy of English Beef Olives (Bragioli)

There are many different variations of this recipe. This version was submitted by Liz, the Director of Studies at the school.

Ingredients

Serves around 4 people

- 4 large thin slices of beef
- 400 grammes minced meat
- 8 rashers of streaky bacon
- 1 large egg
- 100 grammes grated cheese (e.g. parmesan)
- Chopped parsley
- 2 sliced onions
- 3 garlic cloves crushed
- 2 glasses of good red wine
- ½ a teaspoon of aniseed seeds (this gives the sauce a distinctive rich flavour)
- 3 cans of chopped tomatoes
- or about 800g fresh tomatoes peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon black pepper (or more!)
- Salt to taste
- 1-2 teaspoons mixed herbs (oregano, thyme, rosemary, sage)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Method

First, mix the minced meat with the egg, cheese and seasoning. Then put some filling on each slice of beef and roll into a cigar shape. Put a toothpick right through to keep the beef olives closed and after that, wrap 2 rashers of bacon around the beef olive to help secure it.

Next, in a pan, heat some oil and fry the onions and garlic lightly until they become transparent. Add the herbs and aniseed seeds and next place the beef olives into the pan and allow to brown all over. Pour in the wine and tomatoes and cover the pan with a lid. Turn the heat down and let the beef olives cook gently for at least an hour and a half adding some water if the mixture appears to be drying out.

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Bragioli can be served with roast potatoes and fennel for a traditional and delicious Maltese meal.

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