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Know Your Paella: A Brief History of Spain's Favorite Dish

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Did you know that paella (pronounced in Spanish pah-eh-yah) was invented over **1,200 years ago**? It's a coastal dish from Valencia, Spain, a port city on the Balearic Sea.

The history of paella began as a one-pot meal shared among many. Today, it hasn't changed much except for that there are now five varieties

of paella consumed around the world.

The History of Paella

So what is paella? It's a delicious and social meal that's prepared with fresh ingredients. Modern paella history goes all the way back to the mid-nineteenth century. This delicious rice and protein dish originated in Valencia when farmers and day laborers would break for lunch and use the leftover food from the Moorish feasts and cook it over an open flame. They would eat the paella together and bring the leftovers back to their families.

The dish isn't named after the blend of ingredients, but the type of pan it's cooked in which is called a paellera. The paella pan, or paellera, has two handles on either side and made to withstand the intense heat of an open flame.

Paella can be prepared with many ingredients, but it's always cooked over a fire since it cooks the paella more evenly throughout. Rice, meat, seafood, seasonal vegetables, and saffron are the main ingredients that make up an authentic paella recipe.

You can include or exclude any of the following ingredients depending on taste or the type of paella you're making: chicken, fish, shellfish, rabbit, squid, snail, beans, and peppers. But don't exclude the **saffron** which gives paella its famous yellow hue and distinctive flavor.

Paella is traditionally eaten in a family-style setting where everyone is gathered around the table. Spanish paella history doesn't include plates – and is consumed straight out of the pan with each person using their own wooden spoon. **Wine with paella** is always a good choice for dinner.

Valencia, Spain Facts

1. Valencia is an important rice-producing area of Spain
2. The cuisine is very Mediterranean and diet includes regional vegetables, seafood, and meat
3. Paella is an identifying gastronomy symbol of Valencia

5 Types of Paellas to Enjoy

Valencia Paella



Valencian Paella

This is the traditional paella from Valencia. Paella ala Valenciana is an easy recipe, generally cooked with rice, tomatoes, peppers, onions, and garlic sofrito. Rabbit meat is the popular protein choice, but many enjoy using chicken too.

Meat Paella



Meat Paella

A Sunday dinner tradition! Whether at home or in Spanish restaurants, Spaniards will cook their meat paella with chicken, rice, black pepper, paprika, saffron, red peppers, and peas. A generous amount of seasoning is recommended so that the meat will absorb the flavor.

Seafood Paella



Seafood Paella

This dish is probably the best definition of authentic Mediterranean cuisine. Also called “paella marinera,” a Spanish seafood paella recipe is cooked with rice, squid, prawns, mussels, and clams as it’s main ingredients. Not only delicious but visually stunning as well.

Mixed Paella



Mixed Paella

A blend of land and sea! Mixed paella is the Spanish version of surf and turf. It is prepared with meat, usually chicken or chorizo, sofrito, squid, and prawns in addition to a medley of fresh vegetables. This version is without a doubt, the most popular type of paella in the United States.

Veggie Paella



Vegetarian Paella

This one is for the vegetarians out there. No meat, no problem! Veggie paella is made with rice, saffron, artichokes, asparagus, mushrooms, and olives. You can also add in or substitute other veggies to suit your taste!

Food for Thought

Paella is a wonderful and shareable dish cooked to celebrate a plethora of special occasions – and we have the history of paella to thank for that. Spanish wines pair well with paella and make sure to follow up a great meal with tasty [Spanish churros for dessert](#).

Rioja reds make an excellent wine selection for seafood paella because of the Tempranillo grapes. Dry rose and red Grenache wines are delightful and pair well with mixed paella.

For more [authentic Spanish recipes](#) or gastronomy history, check out our [Spanish foods blog page](#). Have fun cooking up a great meal that's full of flavor!

Sharing is caring!

Amigofoods

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