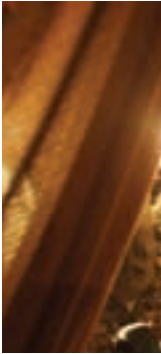


traditional cuisine



albania

pocket guide



your's to discover

Albania
theme guides

Traditional cuisine





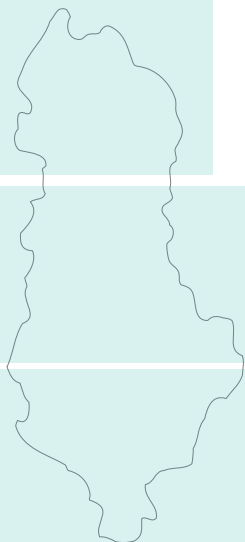
Individual people have preserved their antique culinary traditions and at the same time have enriched them with the culinary experience of others. The geographical and historical proximity have made possible reciprocal influences in the economy, culture and especially in the way of life. Notwithstanding, it appears that the influences of the culinary art are more felt due to the fact that these peoples produce to a great extent the same food articles.

INTRODUCTION 6

NORTHERN REGION CUISIN 10

CENTRAL REGION CUISIN 14

SOUTH REGION CUISIN 14



The traditional Albanian cuisine, costumes, culture and the hospitality that characterize Albanians originate from ancient times.

Albania is one of the most ancient countries in Europe, lying on the border between East and West. As a result, one finds traces of two cultures and culinary arts: oriental and occidental

The favorable climate allows for the cultivation of nearly all kinds of agricultural produce. There is a rich variety of vegetables and fruits, which are consumed raw, in dishes, with meat or conserved.

The most preferred vegetables are: tomato, pepper, egg-plant, ladyfinger, potato, cabbage, onion, garlic, green beans, beans, cucumber, etc. They are most frequently fried, boiled in slow fire, or baked.

Among the leguminous plants, the most popular and traditional is the bean. Cooked in earthenware, beans are especially delicious. They are either used in dishes on their own or with other vegetables or meat. In some regions, beans are also used in pies. Peas and green beans also make delicious dishes.





A number of dishes are prepared in the same manner though using different ingredients. Such are categories of dishes found among all Balkan peoples, such as stew (fërgesë), casseroles (tava), pickles, stuffed grape leaves (japrak), beefsteak, chopsteak, meatballs (qofte) etc.. The mixed dishes, with or without meat (turli), mousaka and meatballs (qofte) are adopted from the oriental cuisine.

Characteristic of all the dishes in our country is that the ingredients retain their natural features, color, and aroma.

Especially delicious are olives prepared in different ways. They are preferred on their own, but also together with other food. Olives from the region of Berat are used as the table variety because they are big and have a low fat content. Olives growing in the region of Vlora, Himara coast, Borsh, and the vicinity of Tirana (Prezë, Ndroq) have a high fat content. For this reason, they are used for the production of natural olive oil, which these regions use for cooking and supply to the whole country.

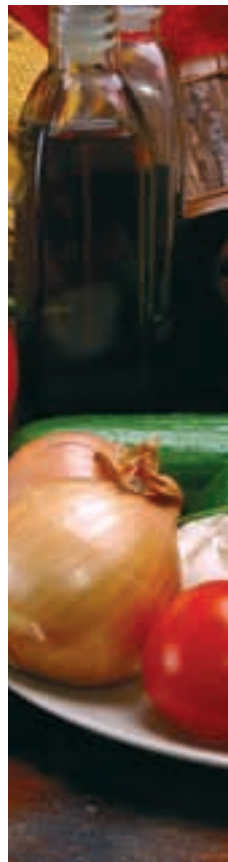
Relish and seasoning play a very important role in the quality of dishes. The most particular in the Albanian cuisine are spices, herbs, the sour taste of lemon, tomato, vinegar or yogurt.

The spicy taste, from mild to strong, in traditional dishes comes from garlic or spicy pepper. Preferred seasonings are local plants such as: parsley, mint, laurel leaves, basil, celery, marjoram, rosemary, etc..

It is not usual to mix seasoning. Each dish is seasoned with what harmonizes best with the natural aroma of the main ingredient. Quantity varies by regions and individual tastes, that is why their quantity is not specified in recipes. They only mention what kind is used.

Milk and its byproducts, as well as eggs, which are daily food, are also much used in dishes. Yogurt is an irreplaceable albuminous food, with high biological value, great aroma and taste. It is consumed on its own or as a side dish for many plates, pasta/pastry, and desserts. Another byproduct of milk is buttermilk, pleasant to drink in every season, but especially during the hot days of summer. Cheese is classified according to the milk it comes from. The most famous, the white cheese from sheep milk, especially if originating from the southern regions of the country, is always present in Albanian kitchens.

Desserts are rich in variety too. They are made of milk, cream, fruit juices, as well as accompanied with syrup (baklava, sugar cookie (sheqerpare), kadayif), wheat pudding (hashure), rice pudding





(syfliash), etc.. The most notable among the desserts made of dough are sweet or salty cakes from fermented dough, phyllo dough, fritter balls (petull), etc.. Others are hallva and hasude.

A very popular drink is boza, produced mainly in the northern part of the country (Kukës). With maize as its main ingredient, it is used a lot as a refreshing drink during summer.

With fruits being bountiful during the year, they are preferred as dessert, mainly in natural state, but also as compote, juice or preserve. The favorites are: apple, cherry, peach, pear, watermelon, melon, fig, grape, lemon, orange, apricot. Shell fruits, such as walnut, almond, nut, chestnut are eaten with pleasure and used a lot in desserts.

Our country has a long tradition in the production of alcoholic drinks. The most traditional is raki, made from grapes. Especially known and appreciated is the artisan production from the vines of the region of Skrapar and Përmet, in the south of the country. Raki from plums is made in regions of cold climate, like Dibër, Korçë and Pogradec.

Viticulture and the production of wine also have a long and old tradition in the country. The art of winemaking was practiced from antiquity. It flourished in the southwestern shores of the Balkans 3,000 years ago. Illyrians had an ancient tradition in the cultivation of grapevines and the making of wine. Evidences of this are the archeological discoveries in Lin.

Maize is widely cultivated in this region, making maize flour not only the key ingredient in producing bread but also in cooking an assortment of traditional dishes both salty and sweet.

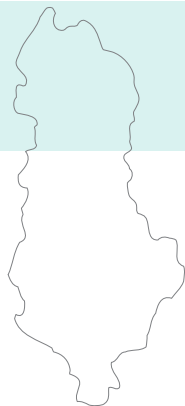
The cold climate of the region enables each family to create food supplies that last for a long time like *pastërma* (dried meat), stuffed tripe (*zorrë e mbushur*), mash (*trahana*), pasta (*jufka*) etc., used during the winter season. These are homemade in every household in the north.

Among the most characteristic and often used vegetables in the kitchen are: bean, potato, cabbage, which are ingredients in different delicious dishes. Onion and garlic are ever present. They are tied in strings and dried, a tradition of the northern regions, so that they are available throughout the year.

Traditional dishes of this region include: baked rice (*birjan* of Peshkopia, fritter balls (*petulla*) of Luma, pasta (*jufka*), casserole (*tavë*) of Gora, *paçe* of Kosova, *suxhuk* of Gjakova, maize mash (*harapash mëmëlikë*), chicken wheat risotto (*qeshqek me pulë*), garlic mash (*çervish*), maize flour cookies (*gurabie me miell misri*), milk pie with maize flour (*qumështor me miell misri*), *haxhimakulle* etc..

The cuisine of Shkodra occupies a special place, with popular dishes taste makes it a fixture in family celebrations.





"For this dish, select the eggplants to be of medium size and regular shape. Remove the stem and part of the peel, cut the eggplants in the middle lengthwise and then fry or bake. Prepare the stuffing in another pan. The ingredients for it are: crumbled cheese or curd, finely chopped parsley, egg and some flour. Once well-mixed, put the stuffing into the eggplants, and place them side by side on a flat pan to be baked or fried. Serve garnished with parsley and tomato."

Talking about the region, one cannot help but mention the reservation of Kunë-Vain in the district of Lezha and the surrounding lagoons rich in seafoal and wild animals, like: duck, goose, woodcock, pheasant, wild hare, etc.. Hunted for their delicious meat, these birds and animals are in the menus of local restaurants.





The climate, well suited for growing the characteristic plum of Dibra, apple, cherry (vishnja), nut, walnut, etc., has spurred the tradition of making raki from plums (shliva) and preserves.

A special fruit of this region is the pomegranate of Shkodra, big, sweet and juicy.

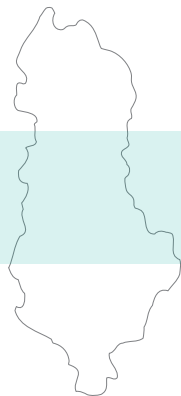
The diversity of animal species grown biologically in the region, is augmented by the diversity of domestic birds (turkey) and seafoal (goose, gosling, duck and duckling).

The area of the forest of Divjaka, which lies on the Adriatic shore, is live with wild birds and animals like: duck, wild goose and wild boar. Fishing is a significant activity given that a number of fish species migrate from the sea, such as: sole, bass, flat fish, eel and mullet. Traps are set up in the canals linking the lagoon with the sea to catch them. The Albanian or foreign visitors, who come to relax amidst the nature of the area, ought not to miss the variety of fresh fish dishes offered by the local restaurants.

The suitable land and climate promote the growing of all kinds of fruits and vegetables used in the whole country. Among particular fruits of the region are berries like cornel, etc.. The assorted raw ingredients are the basis for the very rich menu of the local cuisine.

Traditional dishes include: dried de-stoned plum casserole (tavë me pistil), Elbasani yogurt dish (tavë kosi Elbasani), Tirana stew (fërgesë Tirane), pie of baked phyllo (byrek me petë të pjekura), turkey with (kaposhtet me përshesh), baked rice with milk (birjan me qumësht) and milky rice of Myzeqe (oriz qumështor Myzeqeje - yshmer), etc..





The use of livestock and cattle insides in dishes and meze is a tradition of the region. The taste of a plate of fried liver, kidney and heart, or a roasted calf's head accompanied by raki, would leave the visitor with an unforgettable pleasurable memory. The region is known for the making of raki, wine (according to the variety of grapes used), fruit juices, nonalcoholic drinks, preserves and compotes.

The area of Berat has the largest plantations of figs in the Balkans. Here the locals have a tradition in the preparation of fig preserve and fig jam. The figs of Rroshnik (Berat) are known for their quality. This is the reason they are also used dried in strings or as buk fiket (ground fig made into the shape of bread and dried in a clean environment).

The area of Myzeqe is known for raising turkey and a particular dish called turkey with mash (kaposh deti me përslesh). This dish is prepared in all the regions of the country, but it is more delicious in this area. Local restaurants serve it, too.

The recipe is as follows:

Clean and wash the turkey. Daub with salt and butter. Bake pouring a little water so that it does not burn, and we have some juice for the mash. Crumble the dough (prepared beforehand using maize flour, water, salt and some oil) or the maize bread, and leave it in a pot. Lightly fry the leek or onion, pour the turkey juice and some water and let it come to a boil. Add the crumbled bread and stir until it thickens. Serve the turkey with the mash.





A special dessert is ballokume, characteristic crumpet of the town of Elbasan, masterfully prepared by local homemakers mainly for the celebration of the Day of Summer (March 14), but also family feasts. They are made of finely sieved white maize flour (4 -5 kg of flour make 1 kg ballokume), butter, fine sugar, egg and finjë (sieved ash boiled in water).

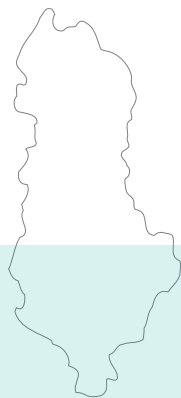


Albania is known for its animal-husbandry. Especially this area of the country is famous for the breeding of livestock (he- and she-goat), given the many natural pastures and the size of herds. The variety of smaller livestock grown organically are the source of milk to make the dairy products. The characteristic dairy-farms, especially in Gjirokastër and Delvinë, are know for the production of various kinds of cheese, soft and hard, of high quality and great taste. Together with curd, cheese is a very important item in the menu for the inhabitants of this region, but also Central Albania and beyond. The region makes the famed sheep yogurt (kos i deles), so thick it can be cut by knife. .



Climate in the coastal area favors the cultivation of olives and citrus. In every home as well as the restaurants of the whole region, olives prepared manually are served as appetizers whether alone as a salad or accompanied by other vegetables.





Characteristic for this region is the making of raki from the grape varieties growing in Nartë, Skrapar, Përmet, Himarë, Leskovik, Këlcyrë, Pogradec, Delvinë. In the village of Labovë in Gjirokastra, excavations have accidentally brought to surface two stones shaped like washtubs used in earlier times for the crushing of grapes. The liquid would pass through a narrow canal in the stone, and would undergo further processing to become wine or raki. These discovered objects are evidence of the tradition of viticulture in antiquity, when wine is said to have been drunk in place of water.



The area of Pogradec is known for the making of the wine or raki in individual households. Almost all make wine according to recipes handed down from one generation to the other. Wine is kept in barrels in the coldest places in the house. The wine of Pogradec is a table wine, mild and aromatic (rose). Skrapar is known for the making of rehani, a nonalcoholic drink from grape juice, as well as drinks of the alcoholic variety. Përmeti natives make special fruit jams (gliko), like that from walnuts.



but also for the delicious food. The road to the Riviera is full of restaurants that prepare fresh fish or seafood dishes. The taste of shrimp, cuttlefish, squid, and mussel is memorable.

The Pass of Llogara, being the only land passage to the Riviera, is resting area for the visitor, where they can also try the typical dishes of the region, like the roasted meat on a spit, (mish i pjekur në hell), the hot maize mash (harapash i ngrohtë - mëmëlikë misri), insides of suckling lambs (të brëndshme të qinqjave pirës), jelly of honey and walnuts (pelte me mjaltë e arra), etc..

Meat in this region is the most tasteful in the country. The proximity to the sea and the quality of pastures give the meat an incomparable flavor, especially to the lamb of Karaburun and of the surrounding highlands. The lamb is usually roasted on a spit (the whole lamb), on embers, or in an oven.

Pastırma, the dried conserved meat, is characteristic for the cold areas of this region. It is prepared with beans, and is served both at home and restaurants.





Other traditional dishes, very well liked, including vegetarians as they have no meat, are rice meatballs (qofte me oriz - qifqi), pie of Lunxh (lakror i Lunxhit - koftopite), rice made of fine crumbles of dough prepared with flour, egg and milk (pilaf me rosnica), bean pie of Korça (petanik me fasule), sham meatballs with garlic and yogurt prepared in the area of Gjirokastra. The latter are prepared especially for weddings and served at the end of the meal for digestion.

Meatballs with rice (qofte me oriz-qifqi).

Take 5 to 6 eggs for 1 kg of rice. Boil the clean and washed rice in water until it becomes dry. Let it cool down by stirring with a wooden spoon. Add the eggs, mint, black ground pepper and salt. Take a spoonful of the mixture and poor it in a frying pan.



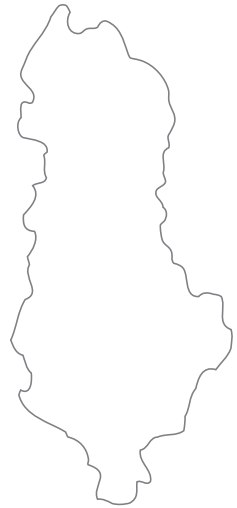
your's to discover

Ministry of Tourism, Coulture, Youth and Sports
"Abdi Toptani" street, Tirana, Albania
National Tourist Organization
Bld. "Dëshmorët e Kombit", hotel Dajti, Tirana Albania



Realised by Net Vizion Studio

Design by Haldi Pema



theme guides

 **general information**

 traditional cuisine

 museums

 underwater heritage

 sport activities