**Mangia alla Siciliana**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pasta_alla_Norma_(2563876877).jpg)

**Pasta Alla Norma**

The style of cooking on the island of [Sicily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicily) shows traces of all cultures that have existed on the island over the last two millennia.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_cuisine#cite_note-1) Although its cuisine has a lot in common with [Italian cuisine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_cuisine), Sicilian food also has [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_cuisine), [Spanish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_cuisine), and [Arab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_cuisine) influences.

The use of [apricots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apricot), [sugar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar), [citrus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citrus), sweet [melons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melon), [rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice), [saffron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saffron), [raisins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raisin), [nutmeg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutmeg), [clove](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clove), [pepper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_pepper), [pine nuts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pine_nut) and [cinnamon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinnamon), along with some fried preparations, is a sign of [Arab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab) influences from the 100 years of [Arab domination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Sicily) in the 10th and 11th centuries.

[Normans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normans) and [Hohenstaufen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenstaufen) influences are also found, such as in the fondness for [meat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meat) dishes. Later, the [Spanish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain_cuisine) introduced [numerous items from the New World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbian_Exchange), including [cocoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chocolate), [maize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maize), [peppers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_pepper), [turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey_(food)), and [tomatoes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato) along with other [produce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Produce). Much of the island's cuisine encourages the use of fresh vegetables such as [eggplant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eggplant), [peppers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_pepper), and tomatoes, and fish such as [tuna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuna), [sea bass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_seabass), [cuttlefish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuttlefish), and [swordfish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swordfish). In [Trapani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trapani) in the extreme western corner of the island, [North African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_African_cuisine) influences are clear in the use of [couscous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Couscous).

**A TYPICAL SICILIAN MEAL**

**Starters**

The ***Antipasti***are an important aspect of Sicilian cuisine. Common Sicilian starters include [caponata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caponata) (a jarred baked eggplant), giardiniera (Pickled Vegetable) and gatò di patate (a kind of potato and cheese pie), along with olives, peppers etc.

**Soups**

[Maccu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maccu) is a Sicilian [soup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soup) and foodstuff prepared with [fava beans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vicia_faba) as a primary ingredient. It is a [peasant food](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peasant_foods) and a staple that dates back to [ancient history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_history). *Maccu di San Giuseppe* is a traditional Sicilian dish that consists of various ingredients and maccu.

**Pasta**

Sicily is the oldest Italian and Western location on record where [pasta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasta) was part of the local cuisine after being worked into long and thin forms, dating back to around the 12th century.

Spaghetti ai ricci (spaghetti prepared with sea urchin), [pasta con le sarde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasta_con_le_sarde) (with sardines) and [pasta alla Norma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasta_alla_Norma) (a specialty that originated in Catania) are the most popular pasta dishes that are typically Sicilian. [Cannelloni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannelloni) is another common dish.

**Main Dish**

After the pasta, the typical Sicilian menu includes a second or main dish (*secondi*) based on meat or fish. Main dishes based on seafood are [couscous al pesce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Couscous) and Pesce spada alla ghiotta (Swordfish).

**Desserts and Sweets**

Sweets are another specialty. Examples include: [frutta martorana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frutta_martorana), [Pignolata of Messina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pignolata), [buccellato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buccellato), [cannoli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannoli), [granita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granita), [cassata siciliana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassata_siciliana) and the [Crocetta of Caltanissetta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crocetta_of_Caltanissetta), a sweet that disappeared and was rediscovered in 2014.

Candy in Sicily was heavily influenced by the Arab candy makers in the 9th century, and Sicilian candy has preserved more of that influence than almost any other place in Europe. Marzipan fruits may have been invented at the [Convent of Eloise at Martorana](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Convent_of_Eloise_at_Martorana&action=edit&redlink=1) in the 14th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries, many Sicilian monasteries produced candies and pastries, some with sexual or fertility themes. The only surviving convent to follow this tradition is the Monastery of the [Virgins of Palermo](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Virgins_of_Palermo&action=edit&redlink=1), which makes breast-shaped cakes in honor of St [Agatha of Sicily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha_of_Sicily).

**Wines and Drinks**.

The drink most often served with the main meal in Sicily is [wine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wine). The soil and climate in Sicily are ideal for [growing grapes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viticulture), mainly due to [Mount Etna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Etna), and a wine-making tradition on the island has existed since the Greeks first set up colonies there. Today, all Sicilian provinces produce wine and Sicilian wine produced by modern methods has established itself on the European and American wine market. Well-known red wines include the [Cerasuolo di Vittoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerasuolo_di_Vittoria) and the very well known. [Nero d'Avola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero_d%27Avola), mainly those produced around Noto (Siracusa).

Various [dessert wines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dessert_wine) are also produced, such as the famous [Marsala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsala_(wine)) and the [Malvasia delle Lipari](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Malvasia_delle_Lipari&action=edit&redlink=1).

Other typical Sicilian alcoholic drinks are the [limoncello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limoncello), a lemon liqueur, and the [Amaro Siciliano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amaro_Averna), a herbal drink, which is often consumed after meals as a [digestive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digestif).

### Street Food

[Arancini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arancini) from [Ragusa, Sicily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ragusa,_Sicily). Arancine are fried or (less often) baked rice balls usually filled with [ragù](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rag%C3%B9) (meat sauce), [tomato sauce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato_sauce), [mozzarella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozzarella) and [peas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pea), and then coated in bread crumbs.

Sicilians eat large quantities of street food, including the renowned [arancine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arancine) (a form of [deep-fried](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_frying) rice [croquettes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croquette)). Throughout the [Palermo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palermo) region are found [pani ca meusa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pani_ca_meusa) and pane con [panelle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panelle), while in the [Catania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catania) region Cartocciate and Cipolline are very popular, and finally in the [Messina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messina) region Focaccia messinese and Pitone messinese are common.

**Author: Salvatore J. Mangano, PNP**