# THE MEDITERRANEAN MENU PLANNER

Count backward from the moment you sit down

**Date** _____ **Occasion** _____

**Number of guests** _____ **Serving time** _____

**Who is coming**

**Allergies, dislikes, and who does not drink alcohol**

| | Dish (and recipe number) | To drink | Alcohol-free |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aperitivo & meze** *something to nibble while you finish* | | | |
| **Starter** | | | |
| **Main** | | | |
| **Side or salad** | | | |
| **Dessert** | | | |
| **Coffee, tea & something sweet** | | | |

**Notes**

*Choose one dish that must be cooked at the last minute, never more. Everything else should wait for you.*

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# THE COUNTDOWN

## The hurrying is all done the day before

**Two days before** — *Marinades, vine leaves, anything that improves with time. Buy the wine.*

**The day before** — *Braises and stews, custards and set desserts, doughs and syrups. The big shop. Set the table.*

**The morning** — *Salads that keep, dips and spreads, chilled soups. Buy the fish and the bread.*

**Three hours before** — *Slow-roasted meat and vegetables go into the oven. Chill the white wine and the rosé.*

**One hour before** — *Wash and dry the herbs and leaves. Put out the meze. Open the red.*

**Thirty minutes before** — *Water on for pasta. Warm the plates. Light the candles. Sit down for five minutes.*

**At the table** — *The one dish cooked at the last minute. Then nothing more to do but eat.*

*Write the time beside each step, counting backward from the moment you sit down.*

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# THE SHOPPING LIST

Sorted the way the markets are

### Fishmonger
*Buy fish last; take it home cold.*

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### Butcher
*Ask for bones for stock.*

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### Greengrocer & herbs
*Smell the tomatoes.*

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### Deli & cheese
*Feta stays in its brine.*

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### Bakery
*Day-old bread for gazpacho and ribollita.*

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### Pantry
*Oil, rice, pulses, spices.*

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### Wine & drinks
*One alcohol-free choice per course.*

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### Flowers & table
*Candles, napkins, a jug of water.*

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# EIGHT MENUS FROM THE BOOK

## Along the shores, from Valencia to the Bosphorus

**1 Sunday lunch near Valencia** — *serves 4*

Gazpacho Andaluz (3) · Paella Valenciana (10) · Crema Catalana (13)

To *drink*: Manzanilla, then a Bobal rosé

**2 A Saturday in Nice** — *serves 4*

Socca (19) · Salade Niçoise (24) · Tarte Tatin (30)

To *drink*: Bellet rosé all the way through

**3 A Ligurian Sunday** — *serves 4*

Trofie al Pesto Genovese (33) · Coniglio alla Ligure (41) · Panna Cotta (44)

To *drink*: Vermentino, then Rossese di Dolceacqua

**4 A Greek taverna evening** — *serves 4*

Horiatiki (48) · Fava Santorinis (50) · Kleftiko (57) · Galaktoboureko (59)

To *drink*: Santorini Assyrtiko, then a Naoussa Xinomavro

**5 A Turkish meze night** — *serves 6*

Yaprak Sarma (65) · Kısır (66) · Midye Dolma (69) · Adana Kebap (70) · Pistachio Baklava (73)

To *drink*: Rakı with the meze, Boğazkere with the kebabs, tea with the baklava

**6 A winter dinner party, all made ahead** — *serves 6*

Escalivada (6) · Daube Provençale (26) · Tiramisù (43)

To *drink*: Garnacha Blanca, then a red Bandol

**7 A vegetable feast around the sea** — *serves 6*

Socca (19) · Fava (50) · İmam Bayıldı (64) · Tian Provençal (21) · Rizogalo (60)

To *drink*: Côtes de Provence rosé; mountain tea with dessert

**8 A long breakfast for friends** — *serves 6–8*

The Turkish Breakfast (Bonus) · Pan con Tomate (1) · Tiganites (47)

To *drink*: Black tea in tulip glasses, fresh orange juice

*Recipe numbers refer to the book. The full countdown for each menu is in the Appendix.*

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# WHAT IS IN SEASON

## The Mediterranean year, at the market

| | Vegetables & herbs | Fruit | From the sea |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Spring** *March – May* | Artichokes, asparagus, broad beans, peas, spring onions, new potatoes, spinach, dill and mint | Strawberries, loquats, the first cherries, the last oranges | Sea bream, squid, cuttlefish, prawns |
| **Summer** *June – August* | Tomatoes, eggplants, zucchini, peppers, cucumbers, green beans, okra, basil | Apricots, peaches, cherries, melons, watermelon, the first figs | Sardines, anchovies, swordfish, mackerel |
| **Autumn** *September – November* | Pumpkin, wild mushrooms, leeks, fennel, cabbage, cavolo nero, chestnuts | Grapes, late figs, pomegranates, quinces, apples, pears | Bonito (palamut), bluefish (lüfer), sea bass, octopus, mussels |
| **Winter** *December – February* | Cauliflower, cabbage, cavolo nero, chard, spinach, leeks, celery; dried beans and lentils | Oranges, blood oranges, mandarins, lemons | Black Sea anchovies (hamsi), sea bass, red mullet, clams, salt cod |

*Seasons shift by a few weeks from one coast to another, and from year to year. Lemons, garlic, onions, potatoes and olive oil are with us all year.*

### In season where I live

*Ask what is local and in season. The answer is usually the best thing in the shop, and often the cheapest.*

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# AFTER THE MEAL

So you remember it, and cook it again

**Date** _____ **Where** _____

**Who came**

**What they loved**

**What we drank, and what I would open again**

**What I would change next time**

**A moment I want to remember**

*Fold this page into the book, next to the recipe. One day someone will be glad you did.*

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