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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