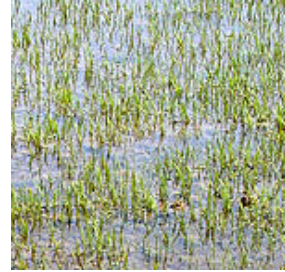


Translation from Norwegian by Brita Drangsholt Jaksjø

About Calasparra rice and other rices of Spain

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The Far East is not the only rice producing area of the world, even though it counts for approximately 90 per cent of the rice production worldwide. Italy, for instance, produces the round Arborio rice, used in *risotto*, and the Spanish grown Calasparra rice is the preferred rice for *paella*.



Other European rice producing countries are Russia, Ukraine, Portugal, France, and Greece.

The rice came with the Moors

The Moors brought the rice to Spain during the Arab hegemony in the Middle Ages. The oldest rice is the Calasparra rice from the region of Murcia. It is a round, Japonica type, and the preferred rice for *paella*. In the region of Catalonia they grow some Indica or Basmati rice. The Indica rice needs a lot of heat and is normally grown in subtropical areas as distinct from the Japonica rice that can be grown in more temperate climate. There are, however, thousands of rice sorts worldwide – classified by the length of the rice grain.

The consumption of rice in Spain is 6 kilos per person a year (...)

The rice fields are located in marshland and we find the largest production in the provinces of Andalusia, Catalonia, and Extremadura. Compared to earlier years, the province of Valencia has lost importance when it comes to rice production, and now has to import rice from other Spanish districts or from abroad to cover the domestic consumption. Even the province of Catalonia is working hard to maintain its rice production.

Two kinds of rice fields in Spain

Open rice fields – receiving water from rivers and dwells – and closed rice fields – in the lower areas, like in Albufera. The closed rice fields are said to be the better because of their better ability in keeping the water.

Rice field in the Albufera Nature Reserve



We visited the Albufera district in May. The rice fields in Albufera are part of the Albufera Nature Reserve, south of the town Valencia. The Albufera Lagoon, today covering an area of approximately 3,000 ha, once covered 30,000 ha. Through the centuries a continuously increasing part of the lagoon has been turned into arable fields. Large parts of swamp areas were first turned into rice fields, then into vegetable fields and orange groves. Since the area was pronounced Nature Reserve in 1986, the Albufera Lagoon stands under a special protection.

November 25st 2002

Side 2

Rice farmers in this area are directed to pay great attention to the eco-system. The rice fields are protected through specific regulations, like limiting the use of nitrogen fertilizer. The farmers have to record all production data. Burning straw after harvesting is also forbidden.

Declaration of origin

The rice from Valencia has got its own label of origin – “Arroz de Valencia”. It was, however, the Calasparra rice that first earned this mark of unique and outstanding quality.

The rice field through a year

This is in short what happens during one year in the Albufera rice fields: From September until the beginning of February the rice fields are swamped. Then the water is drained off. In March and April the rice fields are prepared by machinery. From the end of April the rice fields are set under water again. Last week of May the water is being drained off for three days, while one sows the rice seed or plants the rice. By mid-June the water is led off once more. Then, at last, between September 5th and 25th, the rice is harvested. The work is all done by machinery.



Paella

Rice is important in the Spanish dish *paella*, and as already mentioned, the Spaniards recommend the round grained Calasparra rice because of its special ability in absorbing humidity.

(Links to two *paella* recipies):

[Paella](#)
[Vacation paella](#)

Text: Brita Drangsholt Jakstjøl, www.mat.no

Photo: Albufera Lagoon and rice from Valencia: Brita Drangsholt Jakstjøl.

Rice field: Jan Ferstad.

Valencia salad: From the Spanish book “ Recipes with water melon”.

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