

Dates with Bacon

(DÀTILS AMB BACON)

Wrap big, soft, luscious Medjool dates in bacon, then fry until crisp. Find Medjools at Middle Eastern and gourmet grocery stores.

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 25 minutes

MAKES: 18 pieces;
6 to 8 servings

NOTES: You can make these dates up to 6 hours ahead; let cool, then cover and store at room temperature.

6 pieces thin-sliced bacon

18 pitted Medjool dates

1. Cut bacon slices crosswise into about 4-inch lengths. Wrap a piece snugly around each date, overlapping ends.

2. Set dates, seam sides down, in a 10- to 12-inch nonstick frying pan over medium heat (you may have to fry dates in batches). Turn dates occasionally until bacon is browned and crisp on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes total. Transfer dates to paper towels to drain; blot dry. Serve warm or cool.

Per date: 60 Cal., 15% (9 Cal.) from fat; 1 g protein; 1 g fat (0.4 g sat.); 12 g carbo (1.2 g fiber); 34 mg sodium; 1.8 mg chol.

Chickpea and Tomato Salad

(AMANIDA DE CIGRONS)

Mix canned chickpeas with tomatoes, onion, hard-cooked eggs, and a basic vinaigrette for an amazingly fresh-tasting salad.

PREP TIME: About 25 minutes

MAKES: 6 to 8 servings

NOTES: Salad may be made up to 6 hours ahead; cover, chill, and toss with dressing just before serving.

2 cans (15 oz. each) unsalted chickpeas, drained and rinsed

4 tomatoes (2 lb. total), rinsed, cored, and chopped

4 hard-cooked large eggs, shelled and

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

6 tablespoons sherry vinegar

1 teaspoon coarse salt

Freshly ground pepper

Chopped parsley (optional)

1. In a large bowl, mix chickpeas, tomatoes, eggs, and onion.

2. In a medium bowl or jar, combine olive oil, vinegar, and salt.

3. Shortly before serving, whisk or shake oil mixture well. Pour over chickpea mixture. Stir, adding salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with parsley if you like.

Per serving: 310 Cal., 70% (216 Cal.) from fat; 8.4 g protein; 24 g fat (3.6 g sat.); 19 g carbo (4.8 g fiber); 347 mg sodium; 106 mg chol.

Grilled Bread with Tomato

(PA AMB TOMAQUET)

Catalans, who consider *pa amb tomaquet* the ultimate comfort food, often rub both sides of the toast with garlic and tomato and top it with anchovy fillets; another common topping is serrano ham, which Eva Bertran always sets out on her table.

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 10 minutes

MAKES: 6 to 8 servings

12 to 16 thick slices crusty, very coarse-textured bread such as ciabatta

2 to 3 cloves garlic (optional)

4 very ripe, juicy medium tomatoes

Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling on toast

Coarse salt

1. Toast the bread slices on a grill, turning once, or in a toaster until golden brown.

2. Peel garlic, if using, and rub cloves on toast. Cut tomatoes in half crosswise and rub toast with cut side of tomatoes, squeezing gently so that each piece of toast is coated with juice, bits of tomato flesh, and seeds. Drizzle toast with olive oil and sprinkle with salt to taste.

Per serving: 276 Cal., 59% (162 Cal.)



Above: A tapa of sweet Medjool dates and crisp bacon blends Spain's Arab and Iberian cultures. Left: This arbequina olive oil is pressed from olives grown on the Gloria Ferrer grounds.

Eva Bertran's pantry

Bertran turns to gourmet grocery stores and the Internet to find favorite Spanish foods (she recommends www.spanishable.com and www.tienda.com). Here are her buying tips.

■ **Manchego cheese.** Get it from a reputable shop that knows how to buy and care for the cheese—and will let you taste it.

■ **Olives.** Mellow anchovy-stuffed green olives are what her family loves best. "We have to keep the kids

■ **Serrano ham.** For small parties, says Bertran, buying sliced ham makes more sense. "Salt crystals on the surface means it's dried out," she cautions. "Also, it should have a good amount of fat."

■ **Spanish olive oil.** Bertran uses extra-virgin oil pressed from arbequina olives grown on the Gloria Ferrer grounds. She prefers the rich, mild flavor of arbequina oil "because it's the one I grew up with. Also,