

TRADITIONAL SPEZIA DISHES

The La Spezia gastronomic tradition, based both on the seafaring community and on farmer's experience, still offers authentic dishes, bearing evidence of memories long gone by.

The most typical recipes of local culinary art are born from the unison between sea and land and are linked with the Mediterranean tradition but exalted by unmatched fragrance and perfume.

Basil, rosemary, thyme, lemons and olive oil are just a few of the unmistakable expressions of this small Eden of Italian flavours. **Mes ciua** and **Fainà (farinata)** are by far the most typical dishes originating from the land in La Spezia.



(Mes ciua)



(Farinata)

Mes ciua is a soup made of chickpeas, beans, dried broad beans, grass-pea and spelt, with uncertain origin but perhaps something to do with the economic difficulties experienced by the farmers astride the XVIII and XIX century, or, as some experts believe, dates back to as far as three thousand years before Christ. In any case Mesciua is undoubtedly the typical dish of La Spezia cooking, made of "poor" ingredients but exalted by the flavour of black ground pepper and the rich olive oil from the Riviera, accompanied by good wine from the surrounding hills. It is a well thought out recipe both for the proportions and for cooking it and there is nothing like it anywhere else in Italy.

The fragrance of **farinata**, a crusty piece of pastry made from chickpea flour and cooked over a wooden fire, coming from the bakeries along the city carrugi still fills the air today.

The origin of this dish is a point of controversy but it seems to have come from upper Tuscany, even though it can now be considered a typical recipe of the La Spezia culinary tradition, and has a quite different consistency and taste from the similar Tuscany dish.

Flavours from the land can also be found in **sea food** dishes, merging into a triumph of tastes such as for example **stuffed mussels** (muscoli ripieni): a tasty mixture enclosed between the two mussel shells.

There are numerous fish dishes chiefly using anchovies, dried salted cod and mussels. They can be enjoyed fried, stuffed, steamed, marinated (a scabegio), or preserved under salt or olive oil. **Stockfish** and **squid** are instead prepared stewed with flavouring. A special mention should be given for **whitebait fritters**, practically not to be found anywhere now as fishing them has been strictly limited



(mussels)



Another typical dish originating in La Spezia is **Focaccia**. Focaccia is a flat oven-baked Italian bread, which may be topped with herbs, with onion or other ingredients. However, by far the most typical **focaccia** is simply baked dough topped with olive oil and a simple herb like rosemary or sage, and salted with coarse salt. It is very popular as a snack.



(Focaccia)