



**2B Haute-Corse** The island is often referred to as the “mountain in the sea” because of its mountainous nature. Close to two-thirds of its area consists of mountains, while forests cover 20%. The mountain chain runs from northwest to southeast. 120 of

the island's peaks are at least 2,000 m tall, with Mount Cinto as the highest point at 2,706 m. These mountains display vivid colours due to the granite rocks and dramatic mountain silhouettes. To the east of the mountain chain are cliffs and large alluvial plains.

Corsica is drained by several seasonal rivers rising from the mountains. Golo, Liamone, Tavignano, Tarova, and Granove are some of the island’s main rivers.

Tourism is the main economic driver due to the island’s coastline, climate, and mountains. The natural landscape is still largely intact since there has not been intensive development on the island. Bonifacio, a region near the strait separating Corsica and Sardinia, as well as Porto Vecchio and Calvi are the most visited places on the island.

Mediterranean gastronomy is famous for being one of the healthiest in the world. Olive oil, introduced in the island by the Greeks, centuries ago, is used in all the dishes. It is mainly produced in the Balagne area. The charcuterie is a delight to taste, along with cheeses and some wines. Some traditional dishes include: ‘Aziminu’, a kind of Bouillabaisse (a seafood and fish soup), polenta (boiled cornmeal) and Canistrelli, white wine biscuits, fiadone, a cheesecake made with local brocciu cheese and chestnut flan.

Corsicans love soups and stews and, depending on the time of year many menus will include zuppa corsa (a vegetable minestrone in a ham-bone stock), civet de sanglier (a thick stew of wild boar, vegetables, chestnuts, red wine and fennel), veau aux olives (another slow-cooked stew of veal, olives tomatoes, herbs and white or rosé wine) and agneau Corse (roasted lamb with garlic and rosemary).

Corsica’s mountainous interior is key to understanding the island’s culinary predilections. Green pastures provide the ideal environment for rearing sheep, forested hillsides rustle with free-range pigs and wild boar, attracted by an unending supply of flavour-giving chestnuts, trout delight in the clean-water rivers,

bees thrive on a multitude of flowers, and mushrooms offer up an autumnal bounty to rival prodigal spring.

On any self-respecting Corsican's table pride of place is given to sheep and goat milk cheeses and cured meats.

**Brocciu** - a non-lactose whey cheese, similar to ricotta. It can be eaten fresh or aged

**Tommette de Chèvre** – a strong, full-flavoured goat milk cheese.

**Niulincu** -a soft tangy cheese from the very centre of Corsica.

**Corsu Vecchiu** - a semi-hard, semi-mature sheep milk cheese.

**Casgiu Merzu** is a version of Sardegna's famous 'rotting cheese', complete with insect larvae-for real cheese specialists only!

Corsica's best cured meats are made from free-range pigs raised on chestnuts, acorns and other foraged goodies.

**Figatellu** is a smoked, dried pork liver sausage often grilled or used in lentil soup to add a bit of substance.

**Coppa (or capicollu)** - an Italianate classic made from neck and shoulder cut.

**Lonzu** - salted, smoked and peppered pork fillet.

**Prisuttu** - is a cured ham matured for a minimum of 12 months

In terms of salt water fish, you will find lots of fresh red mullet, sea bream, anchovies, sardines and langoustine. From the island's rivers and the east-coast lagoons come plentiful trout and eels. The east coast is also a significant producer of oysters.

Italy's influence is not only evident in the production of cured meats and cheeses, but also in the pasta course, and many eateries offer ravioli, cannelloni and gnocchi served in a variety of sauces (usually with brocciu cheese involved somewhere).

## **Aziminu or Bouillabaisse (Corsican Fish Stew)**

The important thing is to use the freshest seafood possible. Serve Aziminu hot as a meal for 8 people, with excellent crusty peasant bread on the side for sopping and for the rouille.

### **For the Rouille (375ml)**

2 small (or 1 large) dried red chili pepper, stemmed but not seeded

1/2 red bell pepper, seeded, chopped, blanched in water for 5 minutes, and drained

3 cloves garlic, peeled

1 50mm slice of crusty peasant bread, crust removed, dunked in water, and squeezed dry

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

100 ml olive oil

### **Method**

Puree all ingredients until smooth.

Set aside to cure.

It will be passed round in a bowl when the Aziminu is served to stir into the soup or spread on the bread.

### **For the Broth**

1 kg small Corsican rockfish (possibly substitute smelts, butterfish or striped bass)

1 or 2 small cuttlefish (possibly substitute some squid)

6-8 small crab (use a proportionate amount of crab local to you or obtainable by you)

2 large onions, chopped

500 g tomatoes, seeded and chopped (canned are fine)

bouquet garni of a small sprig of thyme, 1 bay leaf, 6 sprigs of fennel, and 3 cloves of garlic

1 l boiling water

3.25 l boiling water

salt and pepper to taste

50 ml olive oil

### **For the Asiminu:**

3 kg of at least 5 varieties of fish, cut into uniform pieces.

Traditional Corsican fish include rascasse, chapon, grouper, angler fish, red mullet or gurnet, whiting, and sea perch.

You may substitute mackerel, small turbot, haddock, sea bass, red snapper, trout, and striped bass.

Several langouste (spiny lobster), scrubbed. Or substitute 500g - 1 kg large shrimp, shelled and cleaned

500 g mussels or other shellfish, scrubbed

50 ml olive oil

### **Method**

Scale, clean, and wash all the fish and seafood you are going to use for the dish.

That includes cleaning the cuttlefish or squid, washing the crab and lightly breaking their shells, peeling the shrimp, scrubbing the shellfish.

In a large saucepan, heat the 3 Tablespoons of oil to a simmer.

Saute the onions for about 10 minutes, until they begin to take on colour.

Raise the heat to medium, add the tomatoes, bouquet garni and garlic, and all the seafood for the broth (rockfish, cuttlefish, and crab), and cook for 15 minutes, stirring often.

Pour the litre of boiling water into the seafood and leave to simmer for 20-25 minutes.

Strain the liquid into a large bowl (through dampened cheesecloth if there's a small bone problem; and twice if you're not sure that you got all the bones), pressing to make sure you get all the goodness out of the cooked seafood.

Add the 3.25 l of boiling water to the broth.

Salt and pepper to taste,

Add the 50 ml olive oil.

Bring this broth to a lively boil, then begin to add the remaining seafood, never letting the broth stop boiling.

First put in pieces of the big sea fish, cover, and let boil for 5 minutes

Then add the lobster (if you're using it) and cook 5 more minutes

Then add the delicate fish, the shrimp, and the mussels and cook 5 more minutes, when all the mussels should be open.

With a strainer, remove all the seafood from the broth and place either in a tureen or in individual bowls.

Bring the remaining broth to a high boil and slowly pour in the last 50ml olive oil as an enrichment.

Pour over the arranged seafood and serve immediately, passing the rouille and bread separately.