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SET PORTES  
HISTORICAL  
CATALAN  
RECIPE  
BOOKS

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# BOOK OF SENT SOVÍ

EDITION  
JOAN SANTANACH

INTRODUCTORY STUDIES  
ANTONI RIERA  
JOAN SANTANACH  
FUNDACIÓ ALICIA



BOOK OF SENT SOVÍ

# 7 R

## SET PORTES HISTORICAL CATALAN RECIPE BOOKS

# 1

*Steering and original idea of the collection*

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# BOOK OF SENT SOVÍ

PRESENTATIONS

FRANCESC SOLÉ I PARELLADA

CARLES DUARTE

EDITION

JOAN SANTANACH

TRANSLATION

ALLAN BEBBINGTON

INTRODUCTORY STUDIES

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# Presentations



# We are what we eat, we are what we read

**FRANCESC SOLÉ I PARELLADA**

Restaurant de les 7 Portes

**CARLES DUARTE I MONTSERRAT**

Director General of the Fundació Carulla and Editorial Barcino

Josep Pla once reminded us that ‘we are what we eat’. Nevertheless, if our body is nurtured by food, and cooking is a key element in our way of life and defining our culture, then ‘we are also what we read’, because books have played a decisive role in building and transmitting the foundations of our collective personality over the centuries, in a tradition beginning with the texts of the ancient Mediterranean civilisations, the foundation on which our relationship with scientific thought and spiritual reflection was laid. Moreover, the Mediterranean has bequeathed us a wonderful heritage of working the land and of sensitivity and wisdom in the way its bounty is cooked, enhanced by other products that have gradually reached us from overseas. Since the medieval period, Catalonia has been and remains an esteemed reference point in gastronomy, a land of prestigious and influential chefs, professionals and researchers, and a land blessed with a cuisine that has a long tradition and deep roots in the country’s soul.

Cookery and books play a decisive role in the way that we explain the world. They did so in the Middle Ages and continue to do so in our time. Restaurant de les 7 Portes and Editorial Barcino, two classic institutions in gastronomy and publishing, respectively, are aware of the responsibility placed on them by their background, but also wholeheartedly committed to the present. They do their work with a desire to remain important

players in their respective areas in the future. Both institutions understand the importance of recovering and disseminating certain cookery books, often passionate reads, that have helped us to glean a better understanding of where we come from and who we have been since the fourteenth century; books which have been crucial, and in some cases very popular, and which, now that they are available in modern formats, we would like to become a repertoire available for experts to consult, and for cookery lovers of all backgrounds.

Editorial Barçino, created in 1924, and since 1972 a member of the Fundació Carulla, is sponsored and supported by a family with strong bonds to the food sector. It regards its involvement in a project that is clearly linked to essential aspects of our life as immediate and natural, a project that rests on three pillars: culture, education and society which, meshed together, mirror a way of understanding our country based on our roots, cohesion, knowledge, quality and excellence. Education runs the risk of being trivialised if it lacks a consistent and integral conception of culture. If society fails to prioritise culture and education, learning and innovation properly, it loses sight of the objectives of dignity and progress that should be its guiding light.

The industrial revolution was consolidated in Barcelona and all over the country in the first half of the nineteenth century. The lack of services necessary for the thrilling adventures of economic and social development became clear. Among many other things, the city's planning model was outmoded, lacking buildings befitting its entrepreneurial drive, not to mention suitable gathering points served by ample and professional culinary facilities. Els Porxos d'en Xifré was one of the first contributions made in response to this patent desire of certain citizens to help to improve services in the city, and the Cafè de les 7 Portes was conceived in 1836 as a cornerstone of the Porxos d'en Xifré project. The idea was to fill the void of comfortable and hospitable eateries using quality ingredients and recipes.

Ever since Xifré's project was realised, Restaurant de les 7 Portes has maintained an uninterrupted presence in the country's social and gastronomic scene, hosting diners from home and abroad, after-dinner gatherings, family and business meetings and get-togethers of the simply curious and gourmets alike, playing a modest role in shaping historical events and being shaped by them.

In 2011, the City Council of Barcelona awarded the restaurant the city's Gold Medal of Civic Merit. Apart from the natural satisfaction with this recognition, such a meritorious distinction also provided food for thought about the reasons it was bestowed and how to continue to be worthy of it. It obliges the recipient (in this case the restaurant) to reflect upon its commitment to its surroundings, how to reward the people that have placed their trust in us and more particularly how to continue to uphold and further the aims and the spirit that underpinned its foundation in 1836. This reflection is at the heart of our participation in this publishing and social project, which takes shape in the publication of this book.

Editorial Barcino, highly esteemed for its rigorous work in publishing medieval and modern texts, also strives to attract and facilitate access to new readers from our country and other cultures. And it takes great pride in being able to collaborate with Restaurant de les 7 Portes, one of our most distinguished and beloved gastronomic institutions, to bring this ambitious proposal to fruition, one that seeks to increase the awareness and appreciation of Catalan cuisine at a time when it aspires to the highest possible international recognition. Restaurant de les 7 Portes, with its outstanding capacity to innovate and adapt, is also proud to undertake this project with Editorial Barcino, the latter being a guarantee of commitment to the culture of quality and understanding, in the shared conviction that the time has come to amass the work accumulated in the field of gastronomy in Catalonia ever since written records exist and to

contribute to generating reflection upon its foundations and how it has evolved until the present day.

We would like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed their talent, academic expertise and institutional support to back our project that was born of the calling to honour and explain Catalan cuisine through its books. We are what we eat, we are what we read.

# The 7 Portes collection

FRANCESC SOLÉ I PARELLADA

Some literary and scientific institutions have drawn attention to certain texts which, due to a lack of editions or their intrinsic difficulty, had been unavailable to readers. Therefore, in pursuit of this goal, Editorial Barcino and Restaurant de les 7 Portes have set out to publish a collection that includes all the most important recipe books written about Catalan cuisine from the fourteenth century until the 1970s. This initiative seeks to extend the reach of our culinary culture and to plot its evolution over these seven centuries.

The books in the collection will contain the original texts, which have been duly edited. They will also provide an analysis of the historical setting—social, institutional and culinary—of the era when the works were written; a study of the gastronomic content of the published book and how it was transmitted; and an evaluation of its status in the sequence of Catalan recipe books. These editions will also include a rigorous analysis of the sourcing of the ingredients and the culinary procedures used and how they are related to other types of cuisine. The collection will comprise a total of fifty titles, due to be published at the rate of two or three books a year.

A project of such magnitude and ambition could never have been undertaken without the assistance of experts in different areas and different periods. Aware of the risk of turning the collection into a simple succession of facsimiles, at the very

outset we created a scientific committee tasked with designing, proposing and ultimately executing a rigorous research plan. This plan must match the needs of each recipe book, underscoring the interest of retrieving manuscripts and texts, while also making it possible to understand the rationale employed in producing a set of books that explain the evolution of a given cuisine. And while the plan must be executed rigorously, it should also be entertaining. The collection's Research Committee comprises the professors Antoni Riera i Melis (UB), Jesús Contreras (UB), Joan Santanach (UB), Toni Massanés (Fundació Alícia), and myself, Francesc Solé i Parellada. We were subsequently joined by professor J. M. Cela, representing the Supercomputing Centre of Barcelona (BSC). Mr Daniel Quer is the Scientific Committee's secretary.

One of the challenges facing the collection, consisting of texts of great intrinsic value but also as an essential constituent of a much broader tradition, lies in selecting the titles that will be included. Such a project cannot be exhaustive. The most representative recipe books from those available must be selected based on the project's rationale and without losing sight of its goals. The first question to be answered is therefore: why should some books be part of the collection but others not?

In the case of medieval books, the choice is apparently simple, because there are fewer of them and there is a general consensus on their importance. That said, doubts arise regarding the possibility of including the chapters (which were written in Catalan) on contemporary eating and gastronomic habits in Francesc Eiximenis's *Terç del Crestià*. The historical studies contained in the initial volumes of the collection speak to their influence and importance. However, these chapters by the learned Franciscan monk, published under the title of *Com usar bé de beure e menjar*, are not properly speaking a recipe book, which is why they have been excluded from the collection. Things are not always so easy. Another question we considered

was why not offer facsimiles of the recipe books instead of publishing them all with the same format. This possibility can be quickly ruled out in the case of medieval books, which exist as written manuscripts that are often difficult to decipher. However, this is not true of books from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is not easy to forego the covers and illustrations of some of these printed texts, which are highly representative of their eras. The Scientific Committee has chosen to publish the recipe books in a consistent format across all titles, at least for the time being, although the possibility of making certain exceptions is not ruled out if deemed suitable.

A decision also had to be taken on the language in which the books were to be published in the Catalan and Spanish markets. Most of them are in Catalan, although some of them, which are highly representative of the country's cuisine, are in Spanish. We ultimately chose to maintain the works' original language, albeit correcting certain sections or passages as necessary. The medieval books deserve special mention. Due to the challenges the old language would pose for the general public, the original texts will be published alongside adaptations into modern Catalan.

The collection was designed by Mr Jordi Casas. We were also fortunate to draw on the advice of Mr Daniel Giralt-Miracle during this project.



# Studies



# The historical backdrop of Catalan medieval recipe books.

## 1. The evolution of food production and distribution structures

ANTONI RIERA I MELIS

(University of Barcelona/Institute of Catalan Studies)

### **1. The debate on the nature and the extent of the European crisis in the Late Middle Ages**

After the Second World War, the Late Middle Ages sparked great interest among European historians and yielded an extensive bibliography. Until but a few years ago, and barring occasional disagreements, experts were of the opinion that Europe at the turn of the fourteenth century, following a preparatory phase lasting some twenty years, was plunged into a prolonged crisis involving a far-reaching and traumatic reorganisation of the continent's economic, social, political and cultural structures.<sup>1</sup> These times of hardship and of lack of identity through loss of tradition reached a nadir between 1348 and 1350, when the Black Death—originating in Asia—decimated the population with an intensity far beyond anything wrought by previous episodes of disease. Following the initial epidemic, further periodic outbreaks of Bubonic Plague and other infectious diseases became a constant scourge that set demographic recovery back almost a century.



1. SEIBT & EBERHARD 1993.