

Top 10 foods to try in Argentina

A trip to Argentina is the perfect opportunity to indulge in some serious feasting, including sampling some of the country's legendary steak. Make sure to seek out these traditional dishes.

Argentina is surging up the travel bucket lists for young and old alike. Whether you're lured by the romance of cosmopolitan city life or in search of legendary steak, the country has platefuls of charm to suit every taste.

Don't leave Argentina without trying...

1. Asado

The way to Argentina's heart is through its asado, or *barbecue*, also known as parrillada. Don't leave the country without spending a leisurely afternoon beside the warmth of a grill or open fire, feasting on copious grilled meats. This is the national dish, originating from the country's gauchos, or cowboys, who would subsist on the abundant cows dotting the country's plains. Expect to find beef, pork, ribs, sausages, blood sausages and sweetbreads hot off the fire. In Patagonia, look out for a whole lamb or pig roasting over an open flame. Lightly salted, topped with chimichurri and paired with *malbec* – this is Argentina.

2. Chimichurri

A green salsa made of finely chopped parsley, oregano, onion, garlic, chilli pepper flakes, olive oil and a touch of acid, such as lemon or vinegar, chimichurri is the country's go-to condiment. This tangy, garlicky salsa is sometimes used as a marinade, though most often it's found blanketing grilled meats and heaps of other savoury foods throughout the country.

3. Provoleta

Argentineans give whole new meaning to grilled cheese with their trademark dish of provoleta. A consequence of the significant Italian immigration to Argentina, provoleta is the country's variant on provolone. Pungent, sharp, sliced discs of the cheese are topped with chilli flakes and herbs, like oregano, then grilled. The nearly melted cheese is served crisp and slightly caramelised on the outside, gooey and smokey on the interior. Top it off with a drizzle of olive oil or a spoonful of chimichurri.

4. Dulce de leche

Cows roaming Argentina's expansive grasslands have not only provided the country with phenomenal beef, but also dairy. And it's from condensed milk that Argentina gets one of its culinary treasures, dulce de leche. Loosely translated as 'milk jam', this thick caramel is the result of condensed milk being slowly reduced until sweetened and sticky. Look for it in everything from alfajores and dessert empanadas to another national favourite, helado (ice cream) over which it is liberally drizzled and downed by the kilo.

5. Alfajores

Argentina is said to be the world's largest consumer of alfajores, crumbly shortbread-like biscuits sandwiching jams, mousses or dulce de leche. Alfajores' roots lie in the Arab world, brought to southern Spain by the Moors. Spaniards later carried the sweets to Argentina – and no one has looked back since. Akin to their national cookie, Argentines indulge in these cylindrical biscuits throughout the day and across the country.

6. Empanadas

Another gift from the Moors to the Spanish and, finally, to the Argentineans, where this hot, cheap and portable meal became popular among the working classes. A sort of South American pasty, empanadas are deep-fried or baked, then filled with a sweet or savoury stuffing, depending on the province. Dessert empanadas are commonly packed with quince jam, sweet potato paste or dulce de leche and sprinkled with cinnamon, sugar or sweet raisins, as is typical in Córdoba. Savoury empanadas are filled with stewed and spiced ground beef, chicken, goat, cheese and/or vegetables, with the markings on the pastry fold identifying the treasures hidden inside.

7. Matambre arrollado

While the thick, slabs of Argentinean meat aren't to be missed, you should opt for a matambre arrollado at least once. This super-slim cut of beef, like a flank steak, is thinly sliced then stuffed with vegetables, hard-boiled eggs, herbs and olives. The meat is rolled around the filling, then boiled, baked or grilled. Matambre translates literally to 'hunger killer' and arrollado as 'to roll-up'. The story goes that these are often the first

meats ready on the grill, staving off hunger while waiting for the rest of the asado to catch up.

8. Yerba mate

It was indigenous populations in South America that first used and cultivated yerba mate, prior to European colonisation. A herbal- and caffeine-infused drink, you'll find it filling everything from to-go cups to shallowed-out squash gourds across the country. Leaves from the yerba mate plant are dried, chopped and ground into a powder, or steeped as whole leaves into hot water. Drinking yerba mate is a social practice and the gourd, fitted with a metal straw that doubles as a sieve, is often passed around a group, each person sipping before passing.

9. Choripán

A pre-requisite before any football match, a go-to among taxi drivers and a mainstay at markets and street stalls, choripán is the ultimate Argentinean street food. Made with pork and beef chorizo cooked over charcoal or wood flames, the sausage is grilled, then butterflied down the centre, topped with chimichurri and served between slices of crusty bread. Depending on the province, caramelised onions, pickled aubergines, green peppers and a host of other condiments are also added. Another gaucho tradition, the choripán has experienced a rural-to-urban shift that has placed it firmly on the country's culinary map.

10. Carbonada

During the cooler months, carbonada is a staple, stick-to-your-ribs dish. A savoury, meaty, brothy stew, carbonada is made of meat, potatoes (sweet and white), corn on the cob, carrots, peppers, bacon and topped with fruits (ranging from dried apricots and raisins to peaches, pears and green grapes). The stew is spooned into a hollowed-out pumpkin that's placed on the barbecue to cook. Different variants on the carbonada can be found throughout the country and it can even make its way into empanadas, where it takes the form of the ultimate, portable stew.

Source: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-argentina>