

Some Belgian consumers mistakenly believe that food from solar greenhouses in Southern Europe is neither safe nor sustainably grown.

Solar greenhouses in Southern Spain produce tasty, safe, and sustainable fruit and vegetables.

Lorenzo Rubio is a Spanish journalist and content creator passionate about Belgium. He is committed to promoting the goodness of the cuisine of his homeland, the coast of Almeria, where most of Europe's solar greenhouses are located. He recently organised a culinary day with his colleagues to taste the famous Spanish dish Migas. During the meal, he explained that the vegetables on the plate come from the solar greenhouses on the coast of Almeria and Granada in Spain. He also provided information to dismantle the prejudices surrounding Spanish products. Lorenzo explained to his colleagues that vegetables from solar greenhouses are produced using safe and environmentally friendly methods. For example, biological pest control -using good bugs to fight pests- ensures that the product is free of chemical residues and allows for production that is respectful of people and the environment, contrary to what is often thought of Spanish fruit and vegetables by several Belgian consumers.

Migas is the Spanish word for this delicious dish. The name was not chosen by chance. The dish consists mainly of semolina flour which, after a laborious mixing with water in a frying pan, finally acquires the consistency and appearance of small breadcrumbs. In southern Spain, Migas are always accompanied by fresh vegetables and, occasionally, a little meat or fish. Depending on the season, different vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, aubergines, or courgettes are used, usually roasted or fried. Thanks to the ever-present sun that bathes this privileged area, Spaniards eat vegetables with it all year round. Locals often eat this dish on rainy days. In Belgium, it rains regularly, giving the Belgians the opportunity to prepare Migas traditionally.

Dismantling prejudices about Spanish fruit and vegetables

Lorenzo Rubio shows how the dish is prepared for his colleagues on a rainy-day using vegetables from the solar greenhouses in Almeria and Granada. While cooking the dish, Lorenzo informs his colleagues about the solar greenhouses' production methods and encourages them to taste the quality of Spanish fruit and vegetables.

Here are some of the comments from Lorenzo's colleagues. It is striking that Lorenzo's Belgian colleagues are surprised by the taste, quality, and production methods of the vegetables from the Solar Greenhouses:

- I'm a vegetarian, so I eat a lot of vegetables. I did like these".
- "I've always been told not to buy products that come from Spain. I never really knew why. I thought they tasted bad and were not produced in an environmentally friendly way. But the vegetables are tasty, and it is nice to know that they are produced with biological control using good bugs against pests (bad bugs). Native plant species are also planted around the greenhouses to provide shelter and food for the good bugs when there are no pests in the crops. These techniques potentiate biodiversity and are essential for a sustainable future".
- "The flavours are delicious. Very, very strong. I recommend everyone to try this dish at home".

Migas recipe

ingredients (4 pax)

- 4 glasses of semolina flour
- 5 cups of water (you can add a little more water, they will come out better but will take longer to cook)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 glass of olive oil
- 1 head of unpeeled garlic, but the garlic should be loose.
- Garnish: vegetables and meat or fish. The latter two are optional, but fresh vegetables are a must (peppers, tomatoes, aubergines, courgettes).

Preparation (Link to the video)

Step 1

Put the oil in a large frying pan. When it is hot, add the garlic, you can cut them in half; I count them whole, so they don't break.

Step 2 Fry the garlic

While the garlic is frying, prepare the flour and the measured water in another bowl.

Step 3

When the garlic is starting to brown, add a handful of flour to the oil so that when you add the water, it jumps less. Immediately pour the water into the pan. Be careful not to let it splash.

It is not necessary to remove the garlic, as it is delicious, but for those who do not like it, this would be the time to remove it so that it does not break.

Step 4

Let the water come to a boil, and at this point, add the salt and add the flour little by little, constantly stirring with a flat shovel, integrating the water with the flour.

Step 5

Now the hard work begins, you must move them and move them for a long time, the result will depend on this. Make sure there are no lumps and use the shovel to break up any remaining balls.

Step 6

Halfway through cooking, remove from the heat and continue stirring for a faster cook.

What is a solar greenhouse?

A solar greenhouse is a closed structure covered with a plastic film through which the sun's rays shine, giving the plants the light they need to maintain the right temperature for their development during

the winter months so that they can carry out photosynthesis. In the process, the plants produce nutrients from the CO₂ they absorb from the air and release enormous amounts of oxygen into the atmosphere. Solar greenhouses are very different from the production methods used in other greenhouses, which use fossil fuel-based heating and lighting systems that consume up to 30% more energy and are therefore harmful to the environment.

About CuteSolar

CuteSolar is a promotion programme funded by the European Union (EU) and supported by a consortium of Andalusian fruit and vegetable growers' associations (APROA), the Spanish inter-branch fruit and vegetable association (HORTIESPAÑA) and the Assembly of European Fruit and Vegetable Growing Regions (AREFLH). The aim of the information and promotion campaign, which will run until 2022, is to inform consumers about the sustainable and environmentally friendly production and cultivation methods of EU fruit and vegetables, the high standards of greenhouse technology and the quality of fruit and vegetables from southern Spain.

The programme, with a total investment of €1.95 million, is co-financed by the proposing organisations and the European Union, will run for three years (2020-2022) and will be implemented in Spain, Germany and Belgium.

Disclaimer

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Contact:

Sam Jaspers
+32 499 28 34 00