



Catalan-Inspired Book Club Dinner

APPETIZER

PA AMB TOMÀQUET (bread with tomato)

This is one of my favorite Catalan-style tapas. My paternal grandmother would serve it every day after school. It's easy to make and there are lots of recipes online. Just make sure the tomatoes are RIPE. Also, be generous with the olive oil. And if you want to live it up, decorate with anchovy.

<http://bit.ly/3EZ1u7U>

SIDE DISH

ESCAVILADA (roasted vegetables)

Even the kids won't mind eating these veggies. This is super tasty.

The eggplant and peppers make it colorful, too.

<http://bit.ly/3kKj4pm>

MAIN DISH

CANELONS (Catalan-style cannelloni)

This is more of a Christmas-season dish – my mother prepared it for Christmas Day – but I love it so much that I can eat it at any time of the year. The béchamel sauce is the perfect topping.

It's inspired by the Italian cannelloni.

<http://bit.ly/3ETg6WE>

DESSERTS

MEL I MATÓ (cheese and honey)

Most modern recipes online use cow's milk to make the cheese part of this recipe, but goat cheese is so much better. It's also the traditional ingredient dating back centuries. To make preparations simpler, I buy quality goat cheese at a good cheese counter. Local honey is also best. Warm the honey before drizzling it over the cheese.

<http://bit.ly/3ZmwKG2>

CREMA CATALANA

Often likened to crème brûlée, this custardy dessert is much better because it has lemon and cinnamon flavors. My mother used to caramelize the sugary top with an old style iron she heated on the stove.

I have a little blowtorch, but the oven broiler setting does just as well.

<http://bit.ly/3JelfLh>

DRINKS

If you don't mind alcohol and want to add some authenticity, try ratafia, an ancient Catalan sweet liqueur. You can also indulge in a red vermouth (or vermut), which my father enjoyed with cheese and ham. And for a celebratory touch, invest in a good bottle of cava, a sparkly wine.

