Food & Wine

Georgia

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A wonderful range of food and drink that the Georgians clearly put a lot of heart and soul into

Welcome to Georgia!

Nothing tells you more about the spirit and culture of a country than its native food and wine. And Georgia's food and wine is amongst the best in the world.

It may surprise you to know that Georgia has the oldest continuous unbroken tradition of wine making in the world, stretching back over 8,000 years and today, there are more than 500 indigenous grape varieties still cultivated here. A quick look at its geographical position and its landscape shows you why it is the perfect place to grow grapes.

Georgian cuisine offers a variety of dishes, with liberal use of various tasty herbs and spices. Each historical province of Georgia has its own distinct culinary tradition, such as Megrelian, Kakhetian, and Imeretian cuisines. And while meat plays an important part in Georgian cuisine, very close attention is also paid to the locally produced salads, vegetables, fruit and greens. Many people come to Georgia and marvel at the sweet tasting produce and wonder how such flavour can be grown here. Again, the secret is in our history, location and soil type.

A visit to Georgia is a true feast – let us show you how to eat and drink your way around Georgia.

Cradle of Wine

Many discoveries have left historians in no doubt that Georgia is the birthplace of wine. Ancient wine vessels made of clay, bronze and silver; gold cups for drinking wine; wine barrels dated to the 2nd or even 3rd millennium BC; and vine seeds found in the ancient tombs of the Bronze age all leave a continuous story of the history of Georgian wine.

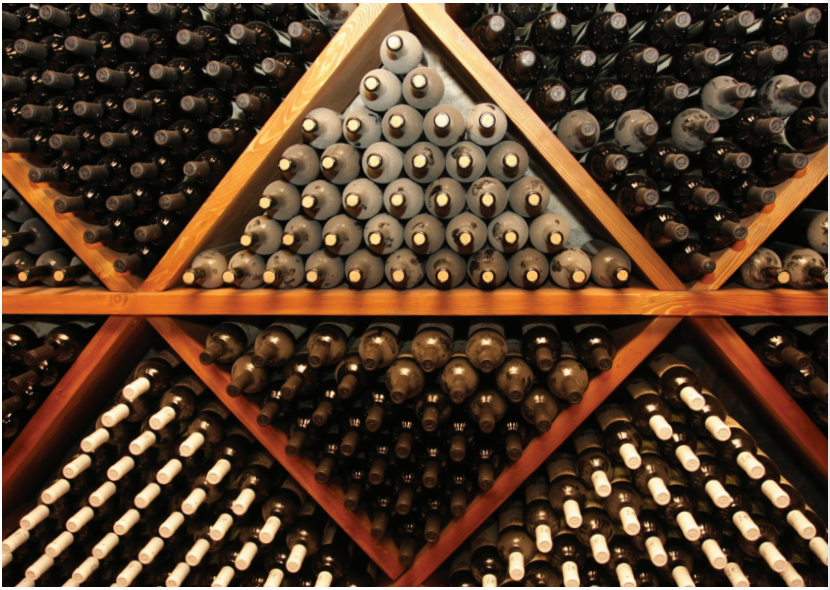
Today, over 500 varieties of grape grow in this small country and Georgian wines are well known for their unique properties and characteristics. Our warm climate and moist air from the Black Sea provides perfect conditions to produce superb wine. Our diverse landscape and numerous climate zones enable us to produce far more varieties of grapes than virtually any other country in the world.

Our main grape types include:

White grapes
Rkatsiteli, Mtsvane Kakhuri, Khikhvi, Kisi, Kakhuri Mtsvane, Chinuri, Goruli Mtsvane, Tsolikouri, Tsitska, Krakhuna, Rachuli Tetra, Sakmiela, Avasirkhva.

Red grapes
Saperavi, Tavkveri, Otskhanuri Sapere, Shavkapito, Alekhandrouli, Mujuretuli, Dzelshavi, Usakhelouri, Orbeluri Ojaleshi, Ojaleshi, Chkhaveri.

The Rkatsiteli grape creates a robust white wine full of character, with many varieties and brands. The increasingly famous red Saperavi grapes provide powerful and fiery wines with an aroma of plums, spices and almonds. In the Kakheti region you will also discover the delicious naturally formed semi-sweet wines of Kindzmarauli and Akhasheni.



Wine Regions of Georgia

The history of wine in the Kakheti region can be traced back to the sixth millennium BC. Wine has been produced using the unique and traditional style of Qvevri – clay pots submerged into the ground which are used to ferment and create delicious, unfiltered, organic wines.

Driving through the region you cannot fail to be impressed with the number of vines and vineyards, but wine production is not only restricted to the Kakheti region. The famous semi-sweet wine of Khvanchkara is found up in the foothills of the high Caucasus in the beautiful Racha region. And you can add Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Imereti, Samegrelo, Guria, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara; every region can surprise you with different tastes of their wines, colours and aromas.

Georgian Traditional Winemaking

Among red wines the barrique method of barrel fermentation and storage is now virtually standard practice. However the old Caucasian method of wine production is still widely practiced in Georgia, mostly in the eastern part of Georgia, particularly Kakheti in which grapes are placed in large, earthenware vessels called Qvevri, buried in the ground, sealed and left for several months to reach a natural and delicious maturity. An early type of Qvevri was found on Mount Khrami and is believed to date back to the 6th millennia BC and many qvevri from this and later periods have been found in both Eastern and Western Georgia. Despite similarities in their use, however, Western and Eastern Georgian i.e Colchian and Iberian Qvevri – called Churi in Western Georgia – differed from one another in terms of shape, manufacture, colour and decoration.

RTVELI

The important and magical time of Rtveli or grape harvesting, is held in autumn, once the grain crops are gathered in and in every home there are baskets full of locally produced pomegranates, pears, apples and peaches. In the fine early mornings during Rtveli, the vineyards fill up with cheerful calls, the Rtveli merry songs. The grapes are harvested using a Godori – a large basket made of branches from a cherry tree. This is the time of year to prepare the famous and delicious Churchkhelas. You start to prepare it far in advance by stringing together as many walnuts as possible and placing them into Tatara, a mixture of grape juice and flour which is cooked in a pot. The walnuts are removed from the Tatara and dried, placed into the Tatara again and dried once more.

The Churchkhelas are then ready.

The Toasting Tradition

The Tamada or toastmaster is a very important and honoured person at a Supra, a traditional Georgian dinner. He creates and sets the whole atmosphere of the supra by creating and proposing toasts which are designed to be little poems by their structure and pieces of wisdom in their meaning. A sense of humour and a good knowledge of traditional toasts are just some of the characteristics of a good Tamada.

The Supra accompanies all the key events of Georgian life and stands at the heart of Georgia's famed hospitality. A Tamada bridges the gap between past, present and future. Be prepared... and remember the best response to a toast is the word 'Gaumarjos!' which translates "to our Victory!" Proposing toasts has a certain traditional order: first you often drink to peace, and then to the reason for the gathering (to our guests!).

"Every Georgian dish is a poem

Alexander Pushkin

Georgian Cuisine and The "Supra"

Original and very specific to the country, Georgian cuisine is the natural extension of a fertile, mineral-rich landscape fed by the pure waters of the Caucasus Mountains. The cuisine offers a variety of dishes, high in herbs and spices, and a mix of vegetarian and meat dishes: organic fresh meats like pork or lamb, chicken or fish, hazelnuts and walnuts, various sorts of cheese, pickles and pungent seasonings; eggplants, plums, corn, pomegranates, kidney beans, wild herbs, coriander, scallions, hot peppers, mint, basil, garlic and much, much more fill homes and restaurants all around the country every day.

Georgian Dishes

For example, here are just a few of the dishes unique to Georgia that you can try when you visit:

STARTERS

Georgian Cheese – A Georgian Cheese assortment is full of various cheese platters from all regions of Georgia.

Nadughi – A dairy product similar to cottage cheese, but with a softer taste.

Khachapuri – Georgian cheese bread, also known as Georgian pizza, cooked to a number of regional styles.

Lobiani – "Bean khachapuri", bread baked with a seasoned bean stuffing and aromatic spices. Traditionally served on the Georgian holiday of Barbaroba, or St. Barbara's Day, December 17.

Pkhaleuli – Vegetarian dishes from a variety of spiced plants usually with a walnut paste base, similar to spinach, but each having a unique taste and seasoning. Among these are: Jijilaka, Moloqa, and Ekala.

Ispanakhi – Spinach with ground walnut seasoning, spices and herbs.

Badrijani Nigvzit – Eggplants seasoned with ground walnuts, vinegar (or pomegranate juice), garlic, pomegranate seeds and spices.

Mchadi – Cornbread. Can be small and thick fried in oil, or thin and wide with a crunchy texture. Either way, it goes very well with cheese.

SOUPS

Khashi – a broth cooked from beef entrails and lavishly seasoned with garlic.

Kharcho – tender chicken soup Chikhirtma with eggs whipped in vinegar and a transparent light meat broth flavoured with garlic, parsley and fennel.

MAIN DISHES

Satsivi – Chicken or Turkey in a walnut sauce with garlic and spices.

Mtsvadi – Georgian barbeque, meat grilled to perfection over a grape vine-wood fire, with fresh pomegranate juice squeezed over it.

Khinkali – The Georgian National dish:

juicy meat dumplings made to be eaten by hand, using a special technique that can be learned only here. Visitors end up craving this so much they make special trips back just to taste it again.

SAUCES

Baje – Ground walnut sauce with garlic and spices. Great with everything.

Ajika – Georgia's own spicy hot sauce filled with herbs and spices.

Tkemali – Georgian ketchup, but so much more... A red or green sour plumb sauce made from the fruit of the tkemali tree. No one leaves the country without a bottle.

DESSERTS

Churchkhela – walnuts on a thread repeatedly dipped into a hot grape mixture, then hung to dry.

Gozinaki – is a traditional Georgian confection made of caramelized nuts, usually walnuts, fried in honey, and served mainlu on New Year's Eve and Christmas.

Pelamushi – Georgian desserts traditionally take their flavor from fruit and nuts rather than butter and eggs. Pelamushi is a Georgian delicacy made from grape juice extract, combined with a mixture of sugar and flour.

For cuisine like this, join us for the best moments of your life...

Travel information

Visa Requirements
Valid passports are required for visitors of all nationalities. Georgia has a liberal visa regime; with visa waiver for the citizens of 94 countries for short-term visits (Not exceeding 90 calendar days in any 180-day period).

For more information please visit the website of the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia:

www.geoconsul.gov.ge

Getting There

By air
Direct flights to Tbilisi are available from Batumi and Kutaisi, as well as from many European and Asian cities. Non-stop flights can be taken from Amsterdam, Munich, Riga, Vienna, Paris, Warsaw, Istanbul, Dubai, Tel-Aviv, Baku, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Kiev, Minsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Alma-Ata, Aktau, Urumqi, Doha, Erbil, Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah, Sharm el-Sheikh, Sharjah and Najaf.

Batumi International Airport
Direct flights to Batumi are available from Tbilisi, Moscow, Kiev, Istanbul, Minsk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.

Kutaisi International Airport
Direct flights to Kutaisi are available from Tbilisi, Kiev, Warsaw, Moscow, Minsk, Budapest and Vilnius.

By land
Daily buses mainly to Tbilisi depart from Baku, Istanbul, Ankara, Trabzon, Yerevan and Athens.

By Train
Georgia is connected to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Trains from Baku are available every day and for more information and timetables, please visit:
www.railway.ge

By Sea
Georgia can be accessed by weekly ferries from Ukrainian ports of Ilychevsk and Odessa.

Accommodation
Major cities like Tbilisi and Batumi offer hotels of all categories from international four-star, to home-stays. In rural regions accommodation is primarily three-star family hotels, bed and breakfast and home-stays.

Cuisine
There are many excellent restaurants in Tbilisi serving both traditional Georgian and international cuisine, while restaurants in different regions of the country mainly offer traditional dishes.

Climate
The climate of the country is extremely diverse, considering the nation's small size. The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range plays an important role in moderating Georgia's climate, protecting the nation against cold air from the north, while the Lesser Caucasus Mountains protect against from the very dry, hot air from the south. Average temperatures in summer range from 19 °C to 22 °C, and in winter from 1.5 °C to 3 °C.

Currency
The official currency in Georgia is the Georgian Lari usually indicated as GEL. Lari is subdivided into 100 Tetri. Major hotels accept credit cards, but please check outside the main cities. Cash point machines are available throughout major towns and cities.

Electricity
Electrical current - 220 Volts, 50 Hz. EU standard plugs work throughout Georgia.

Communications
The country code is +995 and the area code for Tbilisi is 322. Georgian mobile operators (Geocell, Magti-Com and Beeline) cover almost the whole territory of the country and there are many WI-FI zones that enable visitors to use the internet for free.

Health
For the emergency services please call 112 - the Emergency Management Department.

For more information please visit: www.georgia.travel

www.georgia.travel

Hotline (24 hrs.)
0 800 800 909

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