# Farm life and Eco rural activities in Alicante

**THE SHEPHERDING**

A traditional thing in Alicante that started many years ago is the shepherding.
A long time ago, the shepherds guided the sheep flocks to help them survive and find their way.
Nowadays you still see this activity in many urban zones thanks to some people that did not want to lose this amazing job or hobby.
The breed is usually Guirra sheeps as they adapt easily to the environment.
Sometimes they even organize school activities to see a day of a shepherd's life. It is very interesting!



**ALMOND HARVEST**

Almonds are very popular in the region of Alicante.
It´s because we use them for many things and the climate is perfect for them.
They grow in mountain areas as they don't mind of the drought and warmness. Almond trees bloom in the months of
February and March and they get the almonds in the months of August and September.
There are many varieties of almonds, but the most used one is the Marcona almond. We use them for a typical sweet from Alicante, "turrón". Marconas are special because of their softness and oily texture and their sightly sweet flavour.





**TERRACE FARMING: AN ANCIENT AND ESSENTIAL PRACTICE**

You may wonder what terrace farming is. It is an ancient agricultural technique based on plots of land that have been levelled into steps on a slope, usually in mountainous or steep areas. This technique started in Spain a long time ago and is still used nowadays.

Although it is very strange to see for people who don't know about agriculture, it has a lot of advantages such as allowing farming on hills.
Moreover, terraces slow down the water and prevent it from flowing downhill too quickly, and this helps fertile soil from being washed away by water.



Terrace farming creates small habitats for animals too, helping to protect nature. It is beautiful to see them in the mountains, as they create a unique historical landscape.

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**RICE CULTIVATION IN THE ALBUFERA OF VALENCIA**

Rice cultivation in the Albufera goes back to the 15th century, when humans started converting wetlands into controlled agricultural land. Over time it has improved and now the mechanisms are better. The system has been adapting to climate and water conditions and it has worked almost continuously up to today.

In the first place, workers prepare the fields and food them with shallow water. Then, they plant rice seeds in the water and it grows while the fields are still flooded, even though farmers control the water level during growth. Before harvesting, the fields are drained and then it's all ready to pick up the rice. This rice is used to cook meals, but the most relevant one is paella, a delicious typical dish in the Valencian Comunity.

Rice cultivation provides jobs and biodiversity support (it is an important habitat for migratory birds and aquatic species). In addition, it keeps rural land productive instead of unused and it's a unique natural and cultural landscape.





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**POTTERY**

Pottery is the art of creating things with clay with a pottery wheel, a rotating base where the artists place the clay and mold it. This art comes from the Neolithic, from places like Asia, Mesopotamia or Egypt. It arrived in Alicante in the 13th century. The headquarters of this art in Alicante is in Agost, a village in the northwest of Alicante.

In order to do some pottery, first, you need some clay and a pottery wheel. The first step is kneading the clay to make it elastic. The second step is putting the clay on the pottery wheel and press it strongly to make the form of the object. The most common object to make with a pottery wheel is a glass or something similar. To make a glass, you have to press the center of the clay, so that the walls appear and go up. It is advisable to put some water to lubricate it.

The next part is reducing the pottery wheel speed and pass a nylon thread under the glass to separe it. Then, you have to place it at the sunlight so that it dries up. Finally, you have to bake the object, take it out of the oven, decorate it and bake it again. Thus, you will have a glass or a similar object made by you.



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## ARTISANAL CHEESE MAKING



Artisanal cheese making is a typical activity in the interior of Alicante, from mountainous places like Tibi, a village in Alicante.

To make artisanal cheese you must have the next items: a big pot, a wooden spoon or spatula, a kitchen thermometer (optional), a strainer cheesecloth or muslin, a mold (optional) and the following ingredients: 5l of whole milk, a few drops of lemon or vinegar and some salt. The first step is heating the milk at about 35º. Then, add the rennet. You have to let it rest so that the rennet makes effect. Next, cut the result in little pieces, drain the result and compact it. Finally, let it rest again and you will have some typical Spanish cheese.

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## LEMON CULTIVATION IN ALICANTE



In the province of Alicante, lemon cultivation is one of the most important agricultural activities, especially in fertile irrigated areas such as Orihuela and the Vega Baja region.

This crop requires a mild climate, plenty of sunlight, and a constant supply of water, so it is mainly grown in irrigated fields using efficient systems like drip irrigation.

Lemon trees can produce fruit for most of the year, depending on the variety, allowing continuous production.

Lemons are also very important economically, as they are widely exported to other European countries.

This crop is a good example of how traditional agriculture is combined with modern techniques to make the best use of resources, especially water.

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**OLIVE OIL PRODUCTION**

Olive oil is one of the most representative products of Mediterranean agriculture and culture in Alicante. Olive trees are mainly grown in inland areas such as Villena and Alcoy, where the dry climate and terrain are ideal. This tree is highly adapted to low water conditions, making it a sustainable crop. Olive harvesting takes place in winter and is often done using traditional methods such as hand picking or shaking the branches. After harvesting, the olives are taken to mills, where they are pressed to produce virgin or extra virgin olive oil.

This product is essential in the Mediterranean diet and has great nutritional, cultural, and economic value, especially for rural communities.





**TOMATOES, A MUST IN ALICANTE**

Tomatoes are a very typical fruit/vegetable in Alicante.

It is because the climate is just the one that they need, warm and sunny weather. It has been a long time since tomato farming has been a tradition in Alicante.

Many people have family gardens where they grow their own tomatoes.

The most iconic and grown tomato in Alicante is the Muchamiel tomato, since they are bigger and have a special and intense flavour.





**WINE CREATION**

Wine, one of the icons that represents Spain. Alicante has a large history about wine production. It was in the 19th century that it stood out the most.

Most of the production of wine show up in coastal and wetland areas, specially for sweet wines, and in inland areas, mostly for red wines. The grape primarily used for the production of these exquisite wines is the Monastrell grape.

From this point on, wines like Muscat whites are recognized and distributed in many areas and even worldwide.



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**ORANGE CULTIVATION**

Valencia is one of the main citrus producing regions in Europe and exports oranges worldwide. The fields are full of trees that are grown using techniques passed down through generations. Harvesting is usually done by hand, which helps maintain the quality of the product.

This crop has been key to the local economy for centuries. In addition, it is part of the typical Valencian landscape.

Orange groves are a symbol of the Valencian countryside and local identity. Oranges are used in traditional dishes, desserts, and even local festivals.

Families often pass down orange farms through generations. In some rural areas, harvest season is still celebrated as an important community event.



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**BEEEKEEPING**

The Valencian Community is home to one of the oldest known representations of honey collection, found in the Cueva de la Araña (Bicorp), dating back to about 9,000 years. Beekeeping began thousands of years ago, ancient civilizations like the Egyptians already kept bees for honey.

It is practised in Spain. In the Valencian Community, it is very common due to the climate and orange trees. The region has many citrus fields, perfect for bees.

Beekeepers keep bees in wooden boxes called hives and bees collect nectar from ßowers and turn it into honey. Beekeepers also take care of the bees and collect the honey carefully. In Valencia, it is often combined with agriculture and it has been practised for generations.





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**THRESHING**

The threshing is a traditional method to separate cereals or legumes. For that, the first step is to grind the cereals with a gadget called roller. The roller "in Spanish, "rulo" is a gadget made of stone that spins over the cereals to crush them. After this, the cereal is placed under a table with little rocks embedded and it ends up separing.
Finally, the farmers do a special move, they throw the cereal against the wind, the seeds fall on the ßoor and the rests are moved by the wind.





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**BROAD BEANS**

Broad beans are another typical crop, closely linked to traditional farming and self-consumption. They are planted during the colder months and are very resistant plants, capable of withstanding low temperatures, which makes them ideal for winter cultivation.

They are easy to grow and do not require much care, so they are commonly found in family gardens. Harvesting usually takes place in spring, when the pods are still tender.

In Alicante cuisine, broad beans are eaten both raw, often with a bit of salt, and cooked in a variety of traditional dishes, especially rice dishes and stews. They represent a sustainable and local form of agriculture based on seasonal products.



**GREEN GARLIC CULTIVATION**

Green garlic is a typical seasonal crop in the local agriculture of Alicante. It is usually planted in autumn, taking advantage of the mild temperatures, and harvested in winter or early spring, before the bulb fully develops.

This crop is relatively easy to grow and requires less water than many others, making it well suited to Alicante dry climate. It also grows quickly, which is why it is common in small family gardens. In local cuisine, green garlic plays an important role because of its mild flavour and it is widely used in traditional dishes such as rice recipes, scrambled eggs, and stews, forming part of the base of Mediterranean cooking.



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