



10-28-2013

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## Recommended Citation

Stieve, Edwin (2013) "Feast Your Eyes on This—Markets in Ponta Delgada, Azores, and Granada and Barcelona, Spain: A Photographic Essay," *Quadrivium: A Journal of Multidisciplinary Scholarship*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 8.  
Available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/quadrivium/vol5/iss1/8>

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Feast Your Eyes on This – Markets in Ponta Delgada, Azores, and Granada and Barcelona, Spain: A Photographic Essay

Ed Stieve



**Figure 1: Building mural on a large open market in Ponta Delgada, Azores celebrating Clube União Micaelense (known as CU Micaelense or U. Micaelense), a Portuguese football club based in Ponta Delgada, Azores, on the island of São Miguel in the Azores. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**

Before Publix, Winn Dixie and other chain supermarkets emerged in the twentieth century, there were markets on open, cobblestone streets somewhere near the center of many small towns throughout America. But for contemporary Americans, the open-air market has become more remote and might now be a small area in a park or public lot where weekend farmers' markets and flea markets offer a few bins of organic fruits and vegetables and homemade or handmade goods. While the tradition has disappeared from many U.S. cities, permanent, open-air markets still thrive in Africa, Asia, and Europe

where vendors set up carts and stalls alongside or even in streets and alleyways where vehicles are prohibited.

In the U.S., the total loss of this tradition would be unfortunate, as such markets sustain specialized vendors like bee keepers and locally owned businesses that cater to local traditions. Supermarkets and Hypermarkets (supermarkets offering retail goods in addition to groceries) require fruits, vegetables, meats and other mass-produced foods that can hold up through transport to distant store shelves. In addition to traditional freezing and canning, mass food marketing relies on chemical additives and radiation to preserve product shelf life.



**Figure 2: The photo demonstrates the vastness of mass marketing and a suggestion that products are limitless in both quantity and variety in a hypermarket in Portland, Oregon (7404 N Interstate Ave, Portland, OR 97217). Photo: "The New Fred Meyer on Interstate on Lombard," (23 December 2004). Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fredmeyer\\_edit\\_1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fredmeyer_edit_1.jpg).**

Recently, some health-savvy consumers have sought a return to natural foods grown in natural places; *natural*, of course, having wide-ranging meaning. Some shoppers venture beyond Publix's GreenWise Markets looking for meats, poultry and produce at places like Whole Foods Markets. Vegetarians search for certified organic, pesticide-free, locally-grown produce. Omnivores look for free-range or cage-free poultry and meat untainted by antibiotics or chemical preservatives from farmers who practice sustainable farming. In a sense, then, where you shop can become as important as what you actually eat. In contemporary culture, "You are what you eat" becomes "You are where you shop."

Such movements could be a boon to the expansion of open-air markets in America, but only if shoppers are willing to forego the sameness and security of supermarket chains, not to mention the lower prices that come with mass marketed goods.

Still, there are places in Africa and Asia and in the Caribbean where more traditional, open markets flourish. The freshness and quality of the food may be the prime draw for many shoppers, but there are other benefits as well. In some European cities, the large, open market with many vendors

under one roof encourages friendly conversations and exchange of local gossip. The floating markets in some Asian countries speak to the historical importance of water for both sustenance and transportation. Buyers at the souqs of the Middle East must sharpen their bargaining skills to get the best deals. Local markets provide not only a feast for the palate, but cultural lessons as well. The visual diversity of the markets shown in the following photos from a variety of markets around the world reveals not only the diversity of goods, but a glimpse of the diverse people who regularly visit these markets. The sampling of world markets below demonstrate what researchers like Edward Soja call “cultural geography”—how cultural differences are related to the diverse physical spaces they inhabit. For shoppers everywhere, sustaining these open-air markets is a way of searching for both cultural and nutritional diversity.

**World Markets:** Street markets come in many forms and in diverse geographies, as shown in the following photos:



**Figure 3:** San Juan de Dios Market, Guadalajara, Mexico. Seen from above, this market celebrates the colorful diversity of fresh produce. Photo: “Mercadode San Juan de Dios,” (26 June 2006), C. F. Bernal. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MercadodeSanJuandeDios.jpg>



Figure 4: Borough Market entrance, London, England. Located in Southwark, London, the entrance is deceptively formal. Behind this stately entrance are rows and rows of vendors featuring prepared foods and fresh produce. Photo: "Borough Market," (23 July 2005), C. Ford. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Borough\\_market.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Borough_market.jpg)



Figure 5: The market is actually located underneath a railway viaduct and is known "...not just the sheer quality of the food on offer that makes Borough Market special – it is also about the people and the place" ("Borough Market," <http://www.boroughmarket.org.uk/>, 2009). Photo: "Borough Market Interior," (23 Feb 2011), Oxyman. Retrieved from [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borough\\_Market\\_interior\\_-\\_geograph.org.uk\\_-\\_1029742.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borough_Market_interior_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1029742.jpg)



**Figure 6: Floating Market, Bangkok, Thailand.** This photo reveals the importance of space in a large Asian city. Wares are offered along docks as shoppers move from stall to stall in boats along a crowded canal. Photo: “Floating Market Outside BKK,” (7 August 2006), Jarcje. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Floating\\_Market\\_outside\\_BKK.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Floating_Market_outside_BKK.jpg)



**Figure 7: Fish Market at the beach, Nouakchott, Mauritania.** Open air markets serve as a place for communities to gather and chat as well as shop. The more contemporary cement building has a sense of permanence, a kind of newness to it. The traditional clothing of shoppers and vendors celebrates older cultural traditions. Photo: “Fish Market at the Beach in Nouakchott,” (10 March 2011), Blofeld. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fish\\_Market\\_at\\_the\\_beach\\_in\\_Nouakchott.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fish_Market_at_the_beach_in_Nouakchott.jpg)



Figure 8: Souq Al Mubarakeya, Kuwait City, Kuwait. Photo: "El Mubarakeya Market, Kuwait," (7 June 2008), Aziz. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elmubarakiya-market-kuwait.jpg>



Figure 9: The variety of dates for sale here rarely appear outside Middle Eastern countries, where dates are an important staple. Photo: "Date Seller," (30 May 2006), Trammell Hudson. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Date-seller.jpg>

During summer 2012, a trip to the islands of the Azores and cities along the Spanish coast offered a unique opportunity to experience the beauty of large, open-air markets filled with people and produce, conversations and cakes. More organized, not to mention more sanitized than some markets elsewhere in the world, the markets of the Azores and Spain truly are as much a feast for the eyes as for the stomach and soul.

## Scenes from open-air and street markets in Ponta Delgada, Azores

The Azores are an archipelago of nine volcanic islands in the Atlantic about 900 miles west of Lisbon, Portugal known as the Autonomous Region of the Azores, one of the two autonomous regions of Portugal. Ponta Delgada is the largest city in the archipelago on the island of São Miguel. As you sail into the harbors of Horta and Ponta Delgada, the two principal ports in the Azores, the volcanic islands emerge in a smoky green mist. Only a few miles off the coast, the waters are nearly a mile deep, and whales, especially Sperm Whales at times surface from the depths.



**Figure 10: Off the coast of the Azores. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 11: Bananas are plentiful in several street side markets on the island of São Miguel. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 12: Pineapples being sold at the markets on the island of São Miguel. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 13: Another view of the same market in Punta Delgada. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 14: Besides fruits, vegetables, meats and other foods, it's common to see local street vendors with carts of clothing and household goods. Ceramics are also a popular commodity in the Azores. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 15: Graffiti and street art in bold colors decorate walls outside a market in Punt Delgada, Azores. Images represent the popularity of seafood and the importance of sea life in the Azores. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**

## Street Markets in **Granada, Spain**

Located 100 miles from the Mediterranean coast and the capital of the [autonomous community of Andalusia, Spain](#), Granada is perhaps best known for its Calat Alhambra, a palace and fortress complex within the city. The Moorish tradition in Spain is everywhere obvious in architecture and design, reminders of the strong influence of Muslim culture in Spain dating back to 8<sup>th</sup> century when Muslim armies invaded the Iberian Peninsula bringing with them a caliph who encouraged learning and tolerance. The tradition dominated much of Spain until 1492 when ...”the united Christian armies of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella conquered the last independent Moorish kingdom” (Smith, (25 March 2013).

Street vendors and markets offer a variety of produce, clothing, and ceramics. The hot chocolate and churros served at one of the many chocolaterias are favorites for locals and tourists. Younger locals who sometimes stay up until the early morning hours will stop by the chocolateria for an energy boost before heading to work at 9:00 a.m.



Figure 16: A variety of teas and other food items are sold informally by street vendors in the old quarter of Alcaiceria, south of the Cathedral of Granada. Photo: Stieve personal collection.



**Figure 17: Informality and innovation are essentials with limited space and resources in this narrow Granada alleyway. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 18: Despite the informal look, vendors take great pride in artfully organizing produce; vendors are also quick to scold customers who attempt to touch merchandise. Note the purple, early figs (brevas nuevas). Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 19: The beauty of market stalls is not only visual. You can buy a single orange or plum or purchase a more exotic fruit to savor as you admire the view of this alley market in Granada. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 20: Nowhere is the Moorish influence in Granada more apparent than in the traditional blue pottery and dishware sold from shops that spill out onto the streets under the watchful eyes of vendors. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 21: Fabrics, clothing, and accessories spill out from shops in this Granada alleyway. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 22: Traditional breakfast fare of *chocolate con churros* (chocolate and churros) at a café in Granada. Unlike American hot chocolate, the chocolate served with donut like churros is rich, dark, and sweet—and worth stopping for at a café or chocolateria on a side street or alleyway. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**

## The Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria, Barcelona, Spain

Located on La Rambla, a popular pedestrian street mall in central Barcelona, the Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria (popularly known as La Boqueria) serves as the most popular and visited market in the city. As you enter the market's main gate, you walk off La Rambla and into a culinary showcase with rows of vendors behind deli cases and stalls filled with produce, meats, dried fruits, candies, and juices. Shoppers can buy these items and take them home or have a quick lunch after selecting salads, fruits or other prepared foods at counters along the perimeter of the market. The market's name likely derives from the Basque word *Boq* (goat) since goat meat was sold here as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (La Boqueria). In later centuries, the space served as the location of a Carmelite religious order, Sant Josep (Saint Joseph) Convent, built in 1593 (La Boqueria). Hence the official name and its mixed heritage. In the market, vendors display their wares with signs sometimes both in Spanish and Catalan, as well as in English, catering to international shoppers and sightseers visiting the popular market.



**Figure 23: Balcony view of the tree-lined La Rambla, a pedestrian mall in central Barcelona stretching more than half a mile between the ancient quarter Barri Gòtic and El Raval. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 24: Entrance to La Boqueria from La Rambla. Pickpocketing has been a problem from time to time along the crowded La Rambla where pedestrians share the busy mall with slow-moving traffic. By late afternoon, shoppers and sightseers pack into the market. Stalls inside the market overflow with hanging meats and colorful produce. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 25: Once inside La Boqueria, stalls packed with artfully displayed produce welcome visitors. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 26: Interior of La Boqueria. A sign above in English caters to international tourists and foodies who frequent the market as do local shoppers who are probably more interested in the wide variety of dried fruit below, a popular item in Spanish markets. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 27:** With their appealing shapes and vivid colors, stalls inside La Boqueria appear more as works of art than commodities. Note that prepackaged fruits invite consumption at the market. Photo: Stieve personal collection.



**Figure 28: A bronze pig outside a La Boqueria deli case packed with meats celebrates the Spanish obsession with pork products, especially ham (*jamón*). Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 29: Meat cases in La Boqueria are filled with a variety of pork products with nearly every bit of space being used above the counter as well. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 30: One can enjoy a sandwich at La Boqueria made from fragrant breads. As with many European communities, a variety of traditional breads and baked goods are offered in almost every market. The baker's guild in Barcelona was founded in 1200 AD. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**

In operation since 1848, the Mercat Santa Caterina is another one of Barcelona's major market places. Located in La Ribera just off the Via Laietana, the Mercat de Santa Caterina's recent renovations feature a colorful undulating roof (List of Markets in Barcelona).



**Figure 31: Barcelona, Mercat Santa Caterina exterior. With its distinctive undulating roof, the market features many of the same culinary sights and smells as the larger and better known Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria. Motorcycles and bicycles parked outside serve as reminders of an emphasis on alternative transportation in Spain's larger cities. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 32: Barcelona, Mercat Santa Caterina interior. With an estimated 215 million olive trees, Spain is the largest producer of olive oil, much of it consumed by Spaniards themselves (Spanish olive oil history). Served plain or with spices and cured using different techniques, the sheer variety of olives is apparent in every market. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 33: The Spanish love of sweet foods is apparent in this close-up of a confectioner's wares in the Mercat Santa Caterina. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 34: Another stall in the Mercat Santa Caterina with a favorite: sweetened, dried fruits and candies. Photo: Stieve personal collection.**



**Figure 35: Spices sold in bulk are common in Spanish markets as shown here. A favorite condiment "Pimenton" was brought from the Americas to Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and can be found in three versions, mild (*Pimentón Dulce*), moderately spicy (*Pimentón Agridulce*), and very spicy (*Pimentón Picante*.) Some forms such as *Pimentón de la Vera* have a distinct smoky flavor and aroma as the spice is dried with smoking, typically using oak wood (Sierra). Photo: Stieve personal collection.**

Traveling through Sardinia in 1921, D.H. Lawrence captures a view and flavor of street markets strikingly similar to what one might see in the preserved in the markets of the Azores and Spain today:

The near end of the street was rather dark and had mostly vegetable shops. Abundance of vegetables—piles of white and green fennel, like celery, and great sheaves of young, purplish, sea-dust-coloured artichokes, nodding their buds, piles of great radishes, scarlet and blue purple, carrots, long strings of dried figs, mountains of big oranges, scarlet large peppers, a large slice of pumpkin, a great mass of colours and vegetable freshnesses...The q-b at once wants to buy vegetables. 'Look! Look at the snow-white broccoli. Look at the huge finocchi. Why don't we get them? I must have some.'

Although shopping at Publix may be pleasant because of price and convenience, a stroll through the markets of the Azores and Spain provides a window into the cultures of these areas in addition to an opportunity to purchase fresh meats, poultry, produce, breads and spices. Each photo offers a glimpse into the simple beauty of food artfully displayed. There's a story behind every stand and stall. What story does where we shop today reveal about us?

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