

Mazzit: Perceptions, Knowledge, and Consumption

Analysis of survey results

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Aims

This report analyses survey responses on the perception of, demand for, and consumptions of *mazzit*.

The main aims of this analyses are to:

- Gauge *mazzit*'s cultural significance
- Assess the population's capacity to identify *mazzit*'s principal ingredients
- Understand sources of knowledge regarding *mazzit*
- Preliminarily assess *mazzit*'s market viability
- Perspective on ingredients' origin

This exercise was conducted as part of the process of acquiring PGI status for *mazzit*.

Survey design and response collection (methodology)

Two version of a survey – one in Maltese and an identical one in English – were prepared using *Google Forms*. The survey was designed drawing on information from oral history interviews conducted with producers of *mazzit* active in Malta during the 20th century, mostly in the post- World War Two period.¹

These electronic online surveys were disseminated using a variety of media, including:

- Public service mailing lists
- Facebook posts and Facebook groups
- Physical Surveys handed out at events
- Word of mouth
- Scannable QR codes linking to the survey hung up at several locations.

A total of 592 responses were collected, of which 516 were in Maltese and 76 in English.

For the purposes of this report, Maltese responses were translated to English, with record being kept of which language each respondent used, and analysed together.

¹ These included producers, sellers, butcher shop owners, and farmers, among other general interviews with elderly locals who had knowledge about *mazzit* or who remembered *mazzit* as part of their childhood.

Findings and Analysis

Demographic information

More than three-quarters of respondents were aged between 30 and 64 (42.4% aged 30-49; 35.5% aged 50-64), with just over a tenth aged under 30²; 12% were over 65.

Respondents were significantly more likely to be female, with only a quarter of participants being male (26%).

A third of participants were from Malta's southern region, with 28.9% inhabiting Malta's central area. Around 14% of participants were from the Northern region, and 15.5% from the South-east; just under a tenth were from Gozo.

A larger proportion of male participants were Gozitan, and male participants were more likely to be aged between 18 and 29 than females participating.

The proportion of participants from different localities did not vary markedly between English and Maltese responses. English respondents were more likely to be aged between 18 and 29, but less likely to be between 30 and 49 years old.

Awareness and cultural significance

95% of participants considered selected a definition of *mazzit* in which the product was referred to as traditional. Almost 90% of participants understand *mazzit* to be "a traditional Maltese sweet-tasting, pig or bull's blood sausage and casings", with 3.4% selecting "a traditional Maltese blood-based sausage" and another 3.0% "a traditional salty blood-pudding similar to those made in the UK or other countries" (3.0%). A mere 25 participants (4.2%) did not feel that any of the definitions posed matched their understanding of the product. The frequency of different options did not vary significantly by age, locality, or response language.

This indicates that the term *mazzit* is more synonymous with the sweet version of the sausage which was produced and consumed in the greatest quantity rather than other forms of blood pudding which were produced by exceedingly small numbers of producers and usually only by personal request to the producer.

In a separate question, participants were asked to identify foodstuffs which they regard as traditional. In this case 81.2% selected *mazzit* as a traditional product, secondly only to Maltese sausage (*zalzett tal-Malti*) which was selected by 92.9% of participants³.

Mazzit was slightly more likely to be identified as traditional by older participants ([Figure 1](#)), and marginally less likely to be regarded as such by participants from Gozo and those who answered the survey in English. Those who selected faux traditional foods⁴ as traditional (n=26) were less likely to regard *mazzit* as traditional, and conversely, individuals who identified *mazzit* as traditional were half as likely to identify any of the faux foodstuffs as traditional.

² Individuals had to be at least 18 years old to participate in this survey.

³ This may in part be due to the name containing the phrase "Maltese"/"tal-Malti",

⁴ Namely pizza, salmon, and popcorn.

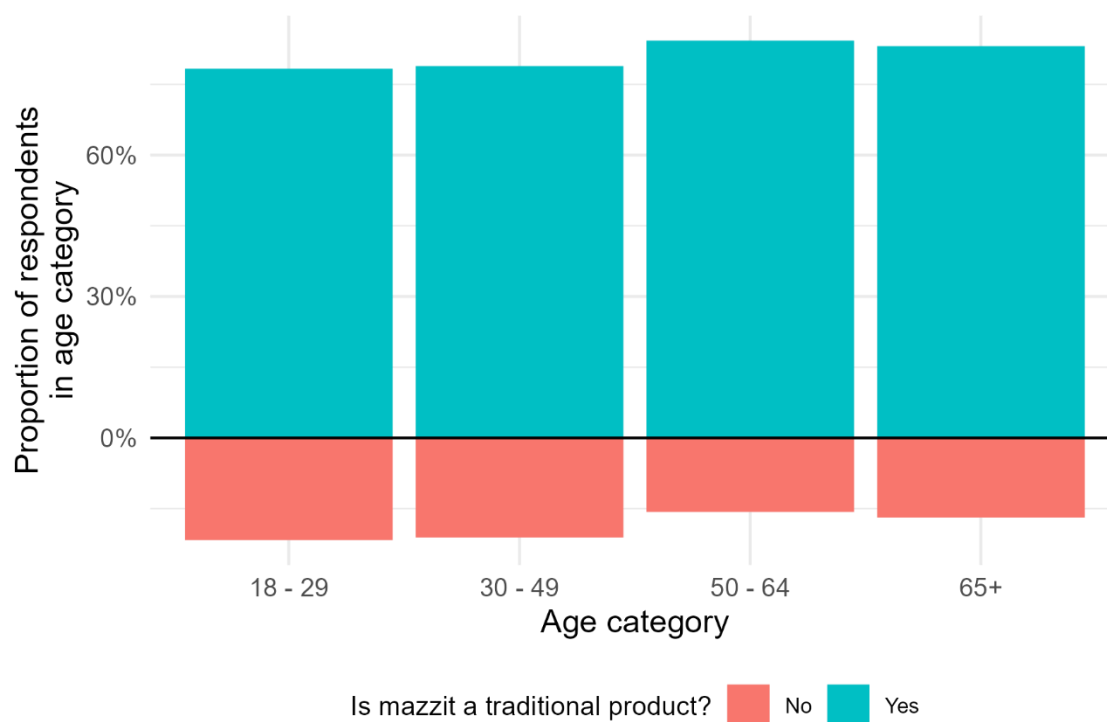


Figure 1: Stacked bar charts showing the proportion of participants who regard mazzit as a traditional product (in blue), disaggregated by age category.

Ability to identify ingredients

When asked to identify the ingredients of *mazzit*, raisins and Maltese white onions were most frequently selected (by 89.9% and 63.5%, respectively). The three other incorrect options posed were comparatively scarcely selected, with flour selected by a sixth of participants and milk and mint by less than 5%. The higher selection of raisins compared to Maltese White Onions is likely due to the common Maltese adage ‘Fl-aħħar tal-*mazzita* ssib iż-żbiba [At the end of the *mazzit* you will find the raisin]’.

The ability to correctly identify *mazzit*’s ingredients appeared to increase slightly with age, with the frequency of selecting mint – which is not an ingredient in *mazzit* – being lower amongst older cohorts (Figure 2). Male participants appeared more likely to select the correct ingredients, but also more likely to select the incorrect ones, possibly suggesting that the difference is due to male participants being more confident rather than heightened awareness. Those who responded in Maltese appeared markedly more able to correctly identify *mazzit*’s ingredients, bar in the case of Maltese white onions, an ingredient of *mazzit* selected 10% more frequently amongst those who responded in English. This may be related to the fact that this option included the term “Maltese”, which could have inclined those with less knowledge on the product to select this. Furthermore, those who defined *mazzit* as “a traditional Maltese sweet-tasting, pig or bull’s blood sausage and casings” were able to identify its ingredients with more accuracy than others.

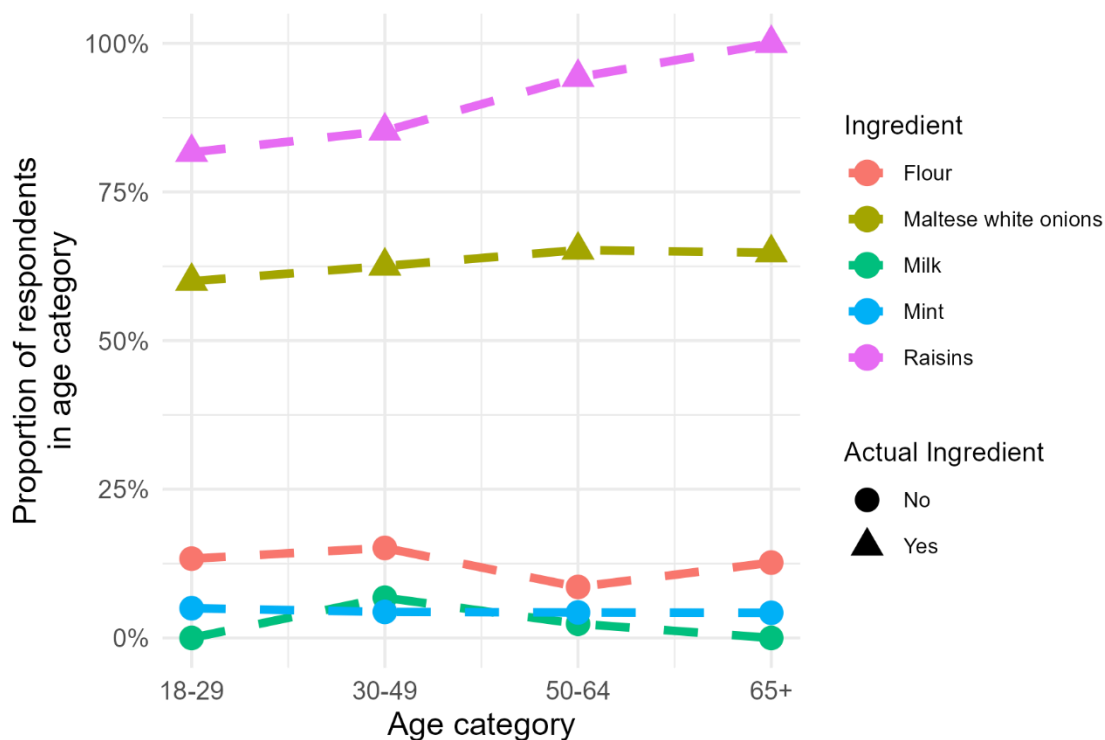


Figure 2: Line graphs showing the proportion of participants in each age category who identified each ingredient as constituent of mazzit. The proportion of participants correctly identifying the actual ingredients of mazzit increases with age.

These trends confirm the historical trend of *mazzit* over recent years, with an older local population being more exposed to *mazzit* as it was still a part of everyday life up till the 1990s, with a younger local population and expats at times lacking sufficient exposure to *mazzit* to answer this question correctly. The relatively not so small percentage indicating flour as an ingredient could be added to the confusion of respondents between production and consumption as traditionally at consumption stage, the *mazzit* was often sliced and coated in a flour-based mixture in preparation for frying.

No marked differences between localities was noted.

Sources of information

When asked where they had heard about *mazzit*, three-quarters of participants indicated that they had known about it since childhood, with 45.6% selecting that they had heard about it from their parents. 5.7% reported having heard about it via the media or news, and a further 1.0% hearing about it at school. Only 1.5% of respondents had never heard of *mazzit*.

Younger respondents were the more likely to have heard about *mazzit* from their parents, whereas the likelihood of having known about *mazzit* from childhood increases with participants' age (Figure 3). All but one of the participants who stated they had never heard of *mazzit* were aged between 18 and 29, suggesting that awareness is lower amongst younger cohorts of the population. This suggests an agreement with the historical trajectory already mentioned as *mazzit* was a common staple in the diets of the older Maltese, with consumption declining with subsequent generations as the effects of globalisation on local food consumption and dietary habits became more marked. As such the younger generations have to learn about old traditions through retellings of daily life from the subsequent generation rather than being exposed to *Mazzit* naturally as part of their childhood as with the older generations.

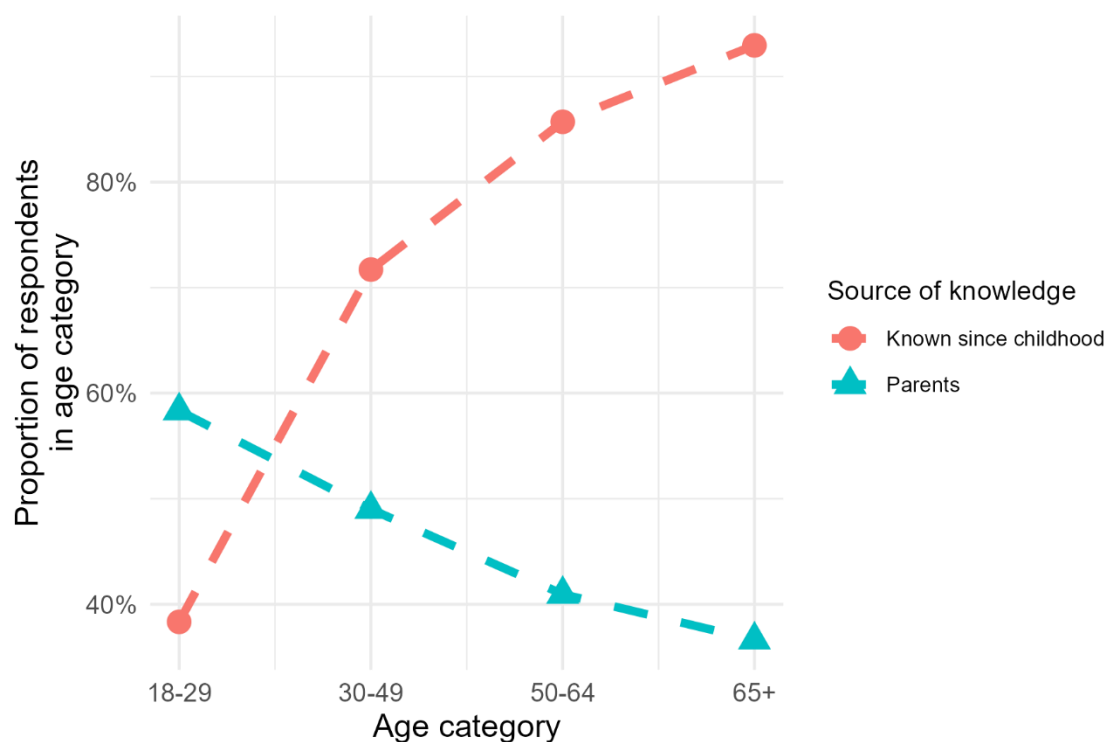


Figure 3: Line graph showing the proportion of participants in each age category citing their parents and knowledge from childhood as how they heard about mazzit.

Those who responded in English were twice as likely to have not heard of *mazzit*, though even amongst this cohort only 2.6% had never heard of this. Participants from Gozo were less likely to have heard about *mazzit* from their parents (3.1%, as opposed to 4.6% amongst the full sample), and more likely to not have heard of *mazzit* (5.5%, as opposed to 1.5% in the full sample). The higher percentage of people in Gozo not hearing about *mazzit* can be attributed to the limited slaughter of livestock at the Gozo abattoir and the challenges of transporting uncooled blood from Malta to Gozo.

Market Viability

More than three quarters of respondents reported having tasted *mazzit* before; more than half said they consume or previously consumed it regularly. Of those who stated they consume/d it regularly, 70.2% said they consume or used to consume *mazzit* once a week, with only 11 respondents consuming (or having consumed) it more frequently than this. 83 individuals of those participants who said they consume *mazzit* regularly (27.8%) did not answer the question as to how frequently they consume/d *mazzit*, suggesting that they do so less frequently than once a week⁵. The frequency of reports of once weekly *mazzit* consumption is synonymous with the old custom of eating *Mazzit* on a Sunday morning.

Significant differences were observed between those who responded in Maltese and English; the former cohort were more likely to have tasted *mazzit*, and significantly, only 12.2% of those who responded in English consume *mazzit* regularly, rising to 56.8% amongst Maltese respondents. The likelihood of having tasted *mazzit* increases with participants' age, as does the likelihood of consuming *mazzit* regularly (Figure 4). Gozitan participants were less likely than others to have tasted *mazzit* as well as consume *mazzit* regularly, suggesting that the product may be in short supply on the sister island due to the aforementioned availability issues.

⁵ The lowest frequency option presented to participants was 1 per week.

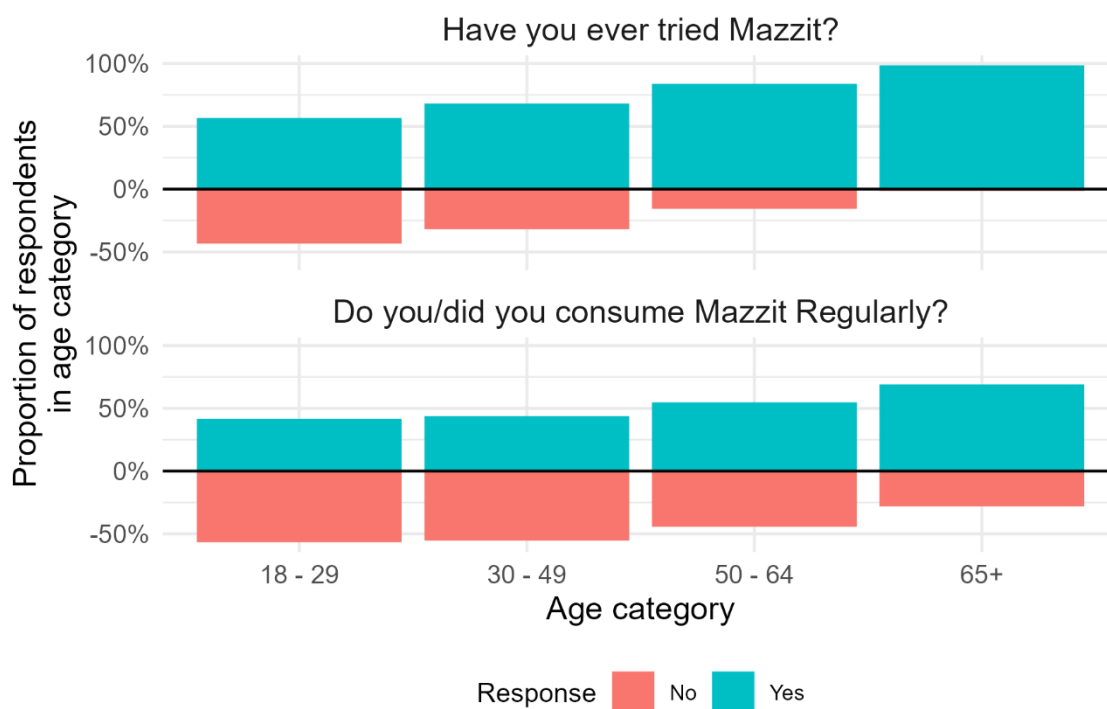


Figure 4: Stacked bar charts showing the proportion of participants in each age category who have tried, and regularly consume/d mazzit.

The vast majority of participants said they would buy *mazzit* if they came across it whilst shopping; a third stated they were very likely to buy it if they were to come across with, with another 30.1% saying they are likely to. 22.8% of participants, however, claimed to be very unlikely to buy it, and another 13.5% unlikely to do so (amounting to 36.3% combined). Just short of half of respondents are likely (27.4%) or very likely (21.6%) to look to purchase *mazzit* specifically, whereas a fifth of participants are unlikely to do so, and another 29.1% very unlikely to do so.

The likelihood of buying *mazzit* – both when coming across and searching for it specifically, though particularly in the latter case – appears to increase with age, as shown in (Figure 5). This is likely due to older generations being more accustomed to *mazzit* as a food item to be consumed regularly (specifically on Sunday mornings). The fact that Gozitan participants are not markedly less likely to buy *mazzit* reaffirms that it is probably low supply, rather than differentiated consumer tastes or preferences, which is limiting consumption in Gozo. Participants from Northern Malta seem more (25.0% likely, 26.2% very likely, compared to 27.4% and 21.6% amongst all respondents) likely to go in search of *mazzit* in particular, confirming the historical predisposition for limited supply in the area and with major production being concentrated in the southern areas.

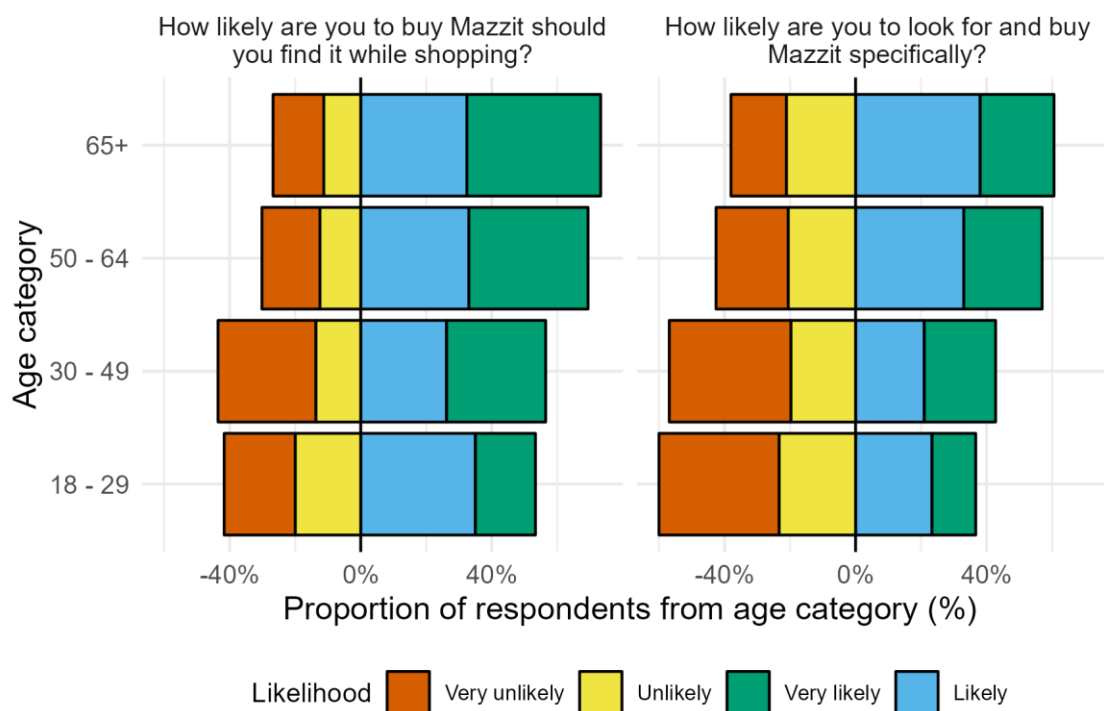


Figure 5: Likert bar chart showing the responses of participants in each age category regarding their likelihood of purchasing mazzit if they came across it, and their likelihood of searching to purchase mazzit specifically.

Ingredients' origin

The primary ingredient in *mazzit* is the blood of swine or male bovines; 93.6% of respondents felt that it is important that this blood is fresh and local. A slightly lower proportion said the blood should always be local, with only a tenth of participants being indifferent as to the country of origin of the blood; only 1 participant said that the blood should be imported.

As to the origin of the casing and onions used in the preparation of *mazzit*, a slightly lower but similar proportion said that these ingredients should be locally sourced (79.2% and 79.1% respectively). In each case, just under a fifth of participants were indifferent to the geographic origin. The emphasis on being locally-sourced is less pronounced but still large in the case of salt; 68.4% said it should be local, with almost all other participants being indifferent to its sourcing.

On the whole, more than 4 out of 5 participants feel that the primary ingredients of *mazzit* – the blood, onions, and casing – should be locally sourced.

No clear trends on the basis of age or sex were apparent, though those who responded in Maltese emphasised the ingredients being locally sourced more frequently (+6.1% for onions +9.0% for blood, +18.4% for casings). Furthermore, barring the case of onions, Gozitan respondents tended to place more emphasis on ingredients being local. This echoes the fact that Maltese white onions were primarily sourced from the Area around Siggiewi in Malta and from a Gozitan perspective they are imported from Malta.

Limitations

Despite the widespread cultural appreciation of *mazzit* as part of Maltese traditional cuisine, there is no previous survey of this type to compare the results to and establish further historical trends leading up to the modern day. Archived material however makes cursory mentions of *mazzit* and gives some indication on consumption patterns, which corroborate the identified trends.⁶ The trends established in the survey are also similar information provided by *mazzit* producers during various interviews.

⁶ In a report dated to the 11th of June 1956 by Mr. R. Biasini on the Public Abattoir (NAM, GMR/1874/1956 Inspection of the Government Abattoirs and Recommendations For Improvements) he noted that 100% of animal blood is collected during winter, the season in which *mazzit* was traditionally made as the Maltese summer would be too hot for the perishable *Mazzit*. Buttigieg and Gambin in *Storja tal-kultura ta' l-ikel f' Malta* mention the once weekly consumption of *Mazzit* on a Sunday. Other mentions dating back to the 18th century however do not establish consumption and production patterns.