The architectural diversity of Barcelona’s markets reflects the city’s history and developments in construction techniques. From the elegant iron architectures of historic markets to the reinforced concrete structures so characteristic of the local markets built in the 1960s and 1970s.

**First markets** (late-19th century)

The first two municipal markets in Barcelona, Sant Josep – La Boqueria and Sant Antoni, featured iron structures apart from later designs. The Boqueria’s original square stands out, surrounded by large iron columns on three sides, whereas Santa Catarina has a white façade with a succession of entrance arches and a continuous balustrade at the top.

**Iron and masonry markets** (late 19th – early 20th century)

After a few decades in which new markets were opened, there is a period of building in the middle of Franco’s dictatorship. Unlike the previous markets, these were smaller in size and, instead of metal, they used the most characteristic building materials of the 20th century, namely reinforced concrete. The first interesting from an architectural point of view but, in some cases, notable for the texture of the concrete facades or the slabs at the roof.

**Markets for various structures and major refurbishments** (beginning of the 21st century)

The policy to modernise and update Barcelona’s municipal markets is based on some common, general objectives, each market may vary in particular actions appropriate to the characteristics of the building and location, resulting in substantial differences between each of the projects. In some cases the work has been more superficial, focusing on maintenance and updates, while much more important works has been carried out on other markets, such as the case of Sant Antoni. There are also some instances where the market has remained on the same site but a completely new construction has been built.

Barcelona, however, has other specialised markets such as the Ciclocarrils and the Ciclotrade markets in Sant Antoni where, after moving from site to site throughout the 1970s and 1980s, finalised their current location in the 1990s. The Boqueria de Santa Caterina mainly offers clothing and accessories while the Ciclocarrils or Ciclotrade market sells mainly every year by more than 20,000 visitors, specializes in antique and second-hand books, magazines, comics, postcards, stickers, stamps and multimedia products. The reform of the Sant Antoni market building and the creation of the “Super” or “super-local” led to the sale in the area also a new opportunity for these two markets being remarried.

In addition to contributing to the quality of life of citizens as promoters of a healthy, balanced diet, very often Barcelona’s markets also act as a focal point for each district, with other activities such as the sale of products, and major refurbishments.
Remodelling:
Original project:
Lluís Clotet and Ignacio de Falguera. 1840 / 1914
Josep Mas i Vilà / Antoni BOQUERIA
La Boqueria and Santa Caterina were the first two open markets in the medieval city that was razed to the ground in the early 18th century after Catalonia’s defeat in the War of the Spanish Succession (1707–1714).

Example
Idelfons Cerdà’s project for the Eixample district in Barcelona (1859) proposed that each group of 10x10 blocks would have a market and other public facilities in the centre. This was never implemented in its entirety but, nevertheless, the district has five evenly distributed markets ranging in size from one of the smallest, Plaça Reial, to the most recent and also one of the largest, Plaça de Catalunya.

Old towns
Most of the old towns and villages on the plain of Barcelona didn’t join the city until the late 19th century, when their mayorities joined in 1887 (Horta joined in 1889 and Sarrà in 1920). But most of them had already built their own municipal markets while they were still independent, following the style of the time based on slender iron structures and spacious interiors.

New districts
Between the 1960s and 1970s Barcelona grew rapidly due to immigration from all over Spain. The need to supply this new population led to the construction phase for the city’s markets and more than twenty were opened. All of them are made from reinforced concrete and have modern dimensions (less height and surface area) and not so many stalls than the large markets at the end of the 19th century. Some of them have been recently remodelled or even rebuilt.

Non-food markets
In addition to its food markets, Barcelona also has several non-food markets specialising in certain products. The Encants de Sant Antoni in the ancient Raval district is the largest and second-hand market in the city, the Encants de Sant Antoni focus is books, magazines, stickers, comics, films and video games, and as the name suggests, the flower stalls on the Rambles, organised as another single market, are dedicated to flowers and plants.

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