

# SPANISH CUISINE

Spanish cooking is rich and varied, much like the country itself. First-rate ingredients, the excellence of which are renowned, wise old popular traditions and the promotion of fine new culinary professionals have boosted Spain's gastronomic prestige to the top of the list in Europe over the past few years. In general, there are six major gastronomic zones in mainland Spain.

**The North** is one of the richest culinary areas. The fish and seafood of Galicia, among the world's finest, are prepared in ways that are simply insuperable. Basque cooking is world famous, and its codfish recipes, "pil-pil" or Vizcayan style, and its delicious baby eels are some of Spain's finest food attractions. In Asturias, try "fabada", a magnificent bean stew, and the excellent regional cheeses with a good bottle of cider.

**The Pyrenees** is a zone that specializes in marinade sauces known as "chilindrones". Aragon offers an infinite number of dishes with these tasty sauces as well as the fine ham made in Teruel.

**Cataluña** is the land of casseroles. Besides these typical dishes are its fine sausages, cheeses and regional sauces, some of them world famous, such as "ali-oli", made with garlic and olive oil.

**Valencia** and the surrounding region specialise in rice dishes. Besides their famous "paella", the Valencians are able to prepare exquisite rice dishes with any type of ingredients - meat, chicken, seafood, vegetables or fish. Also exquisite is the rice dish from the region of Murcia known as "caldera", or caldron.

**Andalucía** is the land of fried food. Its fried fish is insuperable. There is also gazpacho, the exquisite cold vegetable soup, and Jabugo ham from the province of Huelva which is a true delicacy.

**Central Spain** is known for its roasts. Lamb, veal, sucking pig, young goat and other meats are slowly roasted in wood ovens to give them an especially delicious texture and taste. The fine hams and cheeses, and some of the Best sausages in Spain, round out this region's culinary offering. Madrid, so closely linked to Castille, deserves special mention. Despite not having a specific cuisine, per se, its strong identity has made a mark on a large number of typical dishes from the city. Among them are "cocido madrileño", a nourishing meat and vegetable stew, Madrid style triple and exquisite sweets. Another important chapter on Spanish cooking must be dedicated to island cuisine.

**The Balearic Isles** have created certain celebrated specialties that have been exported around the world. Among them are mayonnaise, originally created in the city of Mahon, in Menorca. In Mallorca, "ensaimadas" are exquisite light pastries, while "sobrasada" is a tasty sausage.

**The Canary Islands** offer a very imaginative cuisine that has had to overcome the limitations of the islands produce. Many dishes include fish and a famous hot sauce known as "mojo picón". There are also magnificent tropical fruits from the island such as bananas, avocados and papayas.

**Spanish cuisine** consists of a great variety of dishes which stem from differences in geography, culture and climate. It is heavily influenced by seafood available from the waters that surround the country, and reflects the country's deep Mediterranean roots and has an extensive history with many cultural influences which has led to a unique cuisine with literally thousands of recipes and flavours.

## Main Components of Spanish Cuisine

A significant portion of Spanish cuisine derives from the Jewish cuisine and Moorish traditions. The Moors were a strong influence in Spain for many centuries and some of their food is still eaten in Spain today. However, pork is popular and for centuries eating pork was also a statement of Christian ethnicity, because it was not eaten by Judaism or Islam. Several dishes of the American cuisine were introduced to Europe through Spain, and a modern Spanish cook couldn't do without potatoes, tomatoes, peppers or beans. These are some of the primary influences that have differentiated Spanish cuisine from Mediterranean cuisine, of which Spanish cuisine shares many techniques and food items.

The essential ingredient for real Spanish cooking is Olive oil, as Spain produces 44% of the world's olives.

Daily meals eaten by the Spanish in many areas of the country are still very often made traditionally by hand, from fresh ingredients bought daily from the local market. This practice is more common in the rural areas and less common in the large urban areas like Madrid, where supermarkets are beginning to displace the open air markets.

One popular custom when going out is to be served Tapas with Sherry, wine or beer etc. In some places, like Granada, tapas are given for free with a drink and have become very famous for that reason. It should be noted that almost every tapas bar serves something edible when a drink is ordered, without charge.

Another traditional favorite is the Churro, with a mug of thick hot Chocolate to dip the churro in. *Churrerías*, or stores that serve churros, are quite common. The Chocolatería de San Ginés in Madrid is especially famous as a place to stop and have some chocolate with churros, often late into the night (even dawn) after being out on the town. Often traditional Spanish singers will entertain the guests.

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- The use of Sofrito to start the preparation of many dishes.
- The use of garlic and onion as major seasonings.
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- The custom of drinking wine during meals.
- Serving breads with the vast majority of meals.
- Consumption of Salad, especially in the summer.

The consumption of a piece of fruit or a dairy product as dessert. Desserts such as tarts and cakes are typically reserved for special occasions.

### **Spanish Cuisine - History**

The first introduction of a product then unknown to ancient Iberian Peninsula was that of wheat, which was thought to be brought by Iberians from the south of the peninsula.

There are two major diets in the peninsula. One was found in the northwest part of the peninsula, with more animal fats that correspond to the villages in the north. The other could be considered the precursor of the Mediterranean diet and was found in the Iberian part of the peninsula.

Foods found in archaeological excavations include diverse types of legumes, onions, and garlic. The olive was introduced by the Phoenicians.

### **Spanish Cuisine - Typical Dishes**

Among the multitude of recipes that make up the varied cuisines of Spain, a few can be considered common to all or almost all of Spain's regions, even though some of them have an origin known and associated with specific places. Examples include the Potato Omelette ("tortilla de patata"), Gazpacho, Paella, Stew, Sausages - such as Chorizo, Embutido, Morcilla, etc. and Cheese. There are also many dishes based on beans, chickpea, lentil and green beans, with many regional variations; and bread, that has numerous forms, with distinct varieties in each region. The regional variations are less pronounced in Spanish desserts and cakes: as in flans, custard, rice pudding, etc. are some of the most representative examples. Others include:

- Chuletillas (grilled chops of Lamb)
- Gazpacho (cold bread and tomato soup)
- Bean Stew
- Jamón serrano (cured ham)
- Lechazo asado (roasted Lamb)
- Shellfish
- Paella (saffron rice)
- Pescaito Frito, marinated battered fried fish, typical from Málaga
- Tortilla española (egg omelette with potatoes)
- Turrón a dessert with almonds and honey, typical of Christmas
- Calamari (Fried Squid)

### **Spanish Regional Cuisine**

Olla podrida(a rich stew of bacon, fowl, ham, meats, and vegetables), excellent embutidos of Iberian pork, cheeses (including the indispensable

- La Rioja (autonomous community) above all its international wines, as well as its vegetable soups, its pepper and its potato dishes.
- Murcia (autonomous community) products of its rich gardens, such as Zarangollo - fish and lamb stews; and the wines of Jumilla.
- Madrid (autonomous community) famous for its chickpea stew, Tripe dish, strawberries, etc.

Today, Spanish cooking is "in fashion", and postulated the supremacy over French cuisine.

### **Most Popular Dishes**

#### ***Arroz a la cubana***

Arroz a la cubana, which means Cuban-style rice, is a dish consisting of rice, tomato, sauce, fried egg and fried banana.

#### ***Chorizo***

Chorizo is a term encompassing several types of pork sausages originating from the Iberian Peninsula and known as Chouriço in Portugal, which have in common the use of pimentos to color them red. It can either be a fresh sausage, in which case it must be cooked, but in Europe it is more frequently a fermented cured sausage, in which case it is usually sliced and eaten without cooking. Spanish chorizo gets its distinctive smokiness and deep red color from Pimenton, smoked Spanish Paprika. Chorizo can be eaten as is (sliced or in a sandwich), simmered in apple cider or fried. Like breakfast sausage, it is used as an ingredient of other dishes. It also can be used as a partial replacement for ground beef or pork.

### ***Gazpacho***

Gazpacho a cold breadsoup, also known as gazpacho, is a cold, liquid that is popular in warmer areas and during the summer. Gazpacho descends from an ancient concoction based on a combination of stale bread, garlic, olive oil, salt and vinegar. With the Columbian Exchange tomatoes and the bell peppers were brought to Europe.

In the United States and other countries, there exists the common misconception that the fundamental ingredient of Gazpacho is tomato. While tomato is an important ingredient of the most commonly-known form of Gazpacho, it is still the original ingredients mentioned above which define this recipe. In Andalusia, there are many types of Gazpacho, many of them not including tomato at all. One very popular type of Gazpacho is White Gazpacho or Ajoblanco Malagueño made principally with almonds, bread, garlic, vinegar and oil.

### ***Paella***

Paella (pronounced [pa'e? a]): is a rice dish, originally from Valencia (city in Spain) where it is eaten especially on Sundays and during the Falles. There are many variations of it with different ingredients.

The name paella is the word for "frying pan" in Valencian (from Latin patella). However, the dish has become so popular in Spain that the word paellera is now usually used for the pan and paella almost exclusively for the dish. In the Valencia area, nevertheless, the name paella is commonly used for both the pan and the dish.

Paella is usually garnished with vegetables and meat or seafood. The three main ingredients are rice, saffron and olive oil.

### ***Tortilla de patatas***

Spanish Omllette : is a popular dish that can be served either cold or hot. It is also served as a Tapas dish. Although potatoes and eggs are the basic and often the only ingredients of a tortilla de patatas, other vegetables can also be found accompanying it such as onions, bell peppers, chives, artichoke, ham or even Chorizo, which is then called tortilla paisana. In Spain the dish is also sometimes called tortilla española (Spanish omelette) to differentiate it from tortilla francesa (French omelette) which is made only with eggs or the Tortilla. It should not be confused with the Mexican Tortilla, made of unleavened flour.

### ***Sweet flan***

Carmelize  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar in pan.

In a separate bowl beat six eggs until lemon colored.

Add  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar, 1 quart milk (whole), and 1 tsp. vanilla. Mix thoroughly.

Pour mixture into pan (on top of the carmelized sugar).

Bake at 325 degrees 1 hour (or longer) until knife inserted in flan comes out clean.

This is smooth and light.