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Eating in Spain

A Taste of the Spanish Gastronomic Pleasures

The Basics of Spanish Cuisine

Cooking in Spain is wonderfully varied and full of richness.. The country is well-known for the unique and authentic quality of its food which is typically prepared using high quality ingredients.

Spanish culinary delights owe much to its location between the Atlantic and Mediterranean. The Mediterranean influence can be seen in the use of garlic and olive oil as the main ingredients. Well, it's worth noting that these ingredients are deemed unmistakable in the Spanish region. This factor is common throughout the other countries in the Mediterranean region. However Spanish cuisine still remains unique and individual throughout the whole country albeit with regional or local variations.

There are ingredients common to Spanish cuisine with vegetables, eggs, beans, poultry, meat, fish, and game all to be found in a variety of dishes. Spain's involvement in the New World introduced many of its favourites such as tomatoes, sweet and regular potatoes, chocolates, vanillas, as well as a wide variety of pepper, beans and zucchini. Also, the Spanish cuisine is renowned for its use of the golden spice saffron, which is commonly employed as a food enhancer.

We all love to Eat well, especially on holiday and most of us love to Drink well from time to time! If you wake up in the wee small hours thinking about good food, then you are going to be very happy with the food you find in Spain.

Spain as far as I know is today's most favoured travel destination of the world's most meticulous chefs. There are many reasons but above all is the fact that Spain boasts a wide and diverse selection of gastronomic pleasures.

What Make Spain a so Special?

The most basic factor is Spain's geography. Bounded by two main bodies of water: the Atlantic in the north and west and the Mediterranean on the south and east it is benefits from near perfect climatic conditions throughout the whole Iberian Peninsular . The history of this area is one of invasion resulting in a diversity of cultural legacies from the Jewish, Latins, Arabs and Christians. Its history also embraces discovery and trading activity with the world over many centuries.

The culinary delights of Spain are not just brought about by its perfect location and the mixture of culture. Much to your surprise, Spain is one of the most popular places in Europe blessed with good climate and great soil. A variety of crops grow on its soil, the reason that Spain is now deemed as the home of heavenly wines, fruits and vegetables, oranges, and olive oil. This condition is even coupled with the culinary interests and desires of the people.

With such factors, it's no wonder that for centuries, Spain is able to produce the most tasty and unique selection of culinary pleasures.

Spain has its own time for eating. In a typical Spanish day, the Spaniards get up early in the morning to start their breakfast, which they call in Spanish as "el desayuno". The breakfast happens any time before the clock hits 11AM. It was during this time when the people in Spain put little importance on their meals regardless of the fact that they often prepare two breakfasts: morning coffee and the true desayuno.

In Spain, there is actually no formal way of taking breakfast. You only need to head directly for a coffee bar or cafeteria and order your favourite Spanish drink, plus a freshly squeezed orange juice, (un zumo de naranja) and sweet roll. Coffee, bread or pastries are basically the most preferred Spanish breakfast.

After breakfast, lunch (almuerzo) is usually served between 2 pm to 4pm and is typically a long affair. For lunch no fewer than three courses are usually served, which is the reason that lunch is considered in Spain as one of the most serious eating event of a typical

Spanish day.

Later in the day there is the merienda or snack, which is often skipped by most Spanish people. The remaining devotees consider this meal should involve a cup of good coffee or tea, plus a slice of cake or something tasty and sweet.

Dinner can begin around 8:30 in the evening and last until 10pm or even later. Eating earlier in the evening you may have difficulty finding a restaurant serving a good selection of Spanish food. If you do you may well find you are eating alone. Dinner time is the busiest time of the day and a reservation is recommended if you are new to the area.

For those who can't wait to eat, Spain has the *tapas*. The tapas actually refer to finger foods that are typically served in cafes and bars. They can be expensive or inexpensive depending on your choice but finding them is easy with lots of bars serving such snacks all day long. Many Spaniards love to eat prior to the evening meal and the bars serving tapas are often crowded in the early evening. When looking for good tapas visit *cervecerias* or bars that specialize in beer, as well as *tascas* and *tabernas*. It is these establishments which actually serve the best tapas in Spain.

What to Eat in Spain

So you've learned about the usual eating time in Spain. The question now is what to eat? Well, there are a lot of answers to that, and this is due to the fact that Spain has a wide selection of specialities for the travellers to choose from. Note that in Spain sausage and lamb are two of the very common dishes. Ham is also served everywhere, as well as tomatoes, beans, garlic, peppers, and olive oils. To mention in particular, below are some of the most specialized in Spain.

Paella –

Spain is the home of paella. Yes, according to several claims, the paella was first invented in the province of Valencia and was originally prepared without seafood, but with meat. Many Spanish have been attracted to this favourite, and paella until these days still holds the first place. The paella, however, is now prepared in a bit

different manner. The Spaniards usually cook it with rice and saffron as the primary ingredients. Then, there are the seafood, vegetables, beans and sausage. In a typical Spanish meal, it is served in a flat and special pan and is usually prepared for two or more people to feast in.

Empanadas –

You're familiar with empanadas, right? Well, the empanadas hold a very special place in most of the Spanish restaurants and bars. They are made from fish and meat and served in special dishes.

Albondigas –

The albondigas are the typical meatballs you may have consumed in one of your visits to a Spanish restaurant. This speciality is often served in different style. Many of the restaurants in Spain serve it from large to small bacon wrapped and with sauce. Also, it is served as a form of tapa, so don't be surprised when you see it as a part of your special tapas.

Gazpacho –

If you love soups, gazpachos could be your best option. This is served as a cold soup made from peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes that are combined together. Many of the Spanish families also prepare this with bread which for many is a popular version of gazpacho, the Salmarejo.

Pimientos de Padron –

In Spain, this typically is small green peppers that is fried and deep fried in oil. You can see this everywhere and since they are made of pepper, they are naturally spicy.

Tortilla –

Have you tasted tortilla? Well, this is very common in Spain and this is made from baked potato and egg. For the Spanish, tortilla is one of the best tapas available. It appears as a baked cake and tastes so good. When served fresh, tortilla is a very delicious part of a light lunch and dinner. Many have also said that it is perfect for

every vegetarian.

Queso Manchego –

This is simply a milk cheese made from sheep's milk. People of all ages in Spain eat this.

Flan –

Of all the Spanish desserts, this is the most popular and the most consumed. Flan is simply made from caramel custard.

Roast Meats –

This is but another Spanish favourite and this comes in all sorts, be it lamb, sucking pig, veal or beef.

Seafood –

Currently, many have been drawn to seafood in Spain. However, unlike the rest of the world, the Spanish only prefer seafood such as the lobster Catalan, angulas or the tasty baby eels, anchovies that are served fresh, and shellfish, as well as the so-called hake a la Gallega, which is often served at Galicia.

There are other varieties of food to eat in Spain. If you want to have a good lunch or dinner, you can have a serving of green salad or a bowl of gazpacho, whichever you prefer. After that, you can taste some roasted meats and end your meal with a flan. What's nice to know about these specialities in Spain is that they are often served at a pretty low, fixed price.

Other Eating Tips

When eating in Spain, it is important to note that tipping is a common thing. The tip should be left for the waiters or bartenders, and there are some instances when restaurants and bars include service in the bill, making the tip a bit open. This is also true in hotels and taxis.

Other than tipping, it is always important to note that most of the restaurants and bars in Spain accept Mastercard and Visa, while others do not. If it happens that you have an American Express, then note that it is not commonly accepted anywhere in Spain.

So that's it. Eating in Spain is very much interesting and even fun. And with lots of options available out there, you can be assured that you can have one of the best dining experiences of your life. So while in Spain, eat to your heart's desire.



Menorcan Food

As a result of its cosmopolitan history the food and drink of the little Island although basically Catalan cuisine has now developed a uniquely Menorcan slant.

Add to this the influences of tourism and the standard international hotel buffet and one realises that many visitors spend a fortnight in Menorca without really seeing, let alone sampling, its delicious dishes.

Menorca National Dishes

So where does one start when looking for a typically Menorcan Meal? Firstly there is Sépia al Forn (baked cuttlefish), followed by Tumbet (a baked vegetable dish) and to finish Ensaimada (spiral-shaped buns) and Cuscusso (a Christmas dessert).

Menorca's many invaders left behind a culinary legacy which has survived to this day. Typical of the Menorcan resourcefulness they have combined the the local ingredients such as garlic, olive oil and tomatoes with pepper brought back from the new world, almonds and cous cous from the time of Arab rule and dairy products introduced by the British who brought with them Fresian cows.

Menorcan Seafood

Menorcan food is dominated by the sea, as is most of Menorcan life. Fornells may be noted for its spiny lobsters but mussels, mussels, squid, sole, bass and mullet are in abundance in Menorcan water. Spanish food is famous for its paella but Menorcan paella is a feast of local seafood.

Lobster



Lobster is such an important ingredient in Menorcan dishes that it deserved a special

mention to show the care that is taken in the Island to protect its exquisite lobster stew.

The specimens used are from the species of European origin, known scientifically as *Homarus Gammarus*, and come to the rocky coasts to feed on small animals, such as small cuttlefish, mussels and sea urchins.

It can grow up to 50 cm long and its shell is reddish or lilac-coloured with spines to defend itself. It is caught the traditional way, with baskets placed like traps on the sea bed.

Its weight ranges from 400 to 600 grams. this crustacean is protected in the Balearic Islands and can only be caught from the 1st March to the 31st August. However it is forbidden to catch specimens which have not yet reached 19 cm in length.

Lobster Stew (Caldereta Langosta)

To be fair anywhere along the Menorcan coast can provide you with the traditional lobster stew, as well as other food and drink, but Fornells is an especially charming fishing village. Here you can he takes the opportunity of enjoy this delicacy in one of the few special restaurants in the bay, on its terraza or outside terrace, overlooking the sea with its fantastic views.

Lobster is the basis for this delicious stew which is similar to a French fish stew called Bouillabaisse. Many of the restaurants keep their lobsters on display in large fish tanks and clients can choose the one they like most for their dish. In order to establish if the lobsters are fresh they should be lifted up by their front claws to see if they move their tail energetically. If they do not, they are not fresh lobsters!

It is strongly believed that the King of Spain, King Juan Carlos, visits Fornells, in the north of the island whenever he is holidaying at his Palace in nearby Mallorca, especially to enjoy the exquisite lobster stew.

Menorcan Meats

Meat and meat products served in restaurants, tend to come from traditional Menorcan farms, known as Llocs. These are characterised by their extensive fields for grazing and breeding. Menorcan calves ('vedella menorquina'), Menorcan lambs, a first-class breed of pig, plus various types of fowl such as chickens, capons and turkeys can all be obtained locally.

In Menorca your meat is likely to be accompanied by salsa de grevi which is a phrase coined from the period of British rule. Sausages are also a menorcan favourite from Sobrasada, raw pork with hot peppers to botisfarro, known as blood pudding.

Order a plate of cold cuts (surtido de flambres) and you are likely a selection of local sausages along with your cured ham and Mahon cheese.

Menorcan Tapas

Menorcan tapas can be made using octopus, snails and tripe or simple as a cold potato omelette. Pa amb oli is bread dipped in olive oil and seasoned with garlic. These delicacies are sometimes topped with fresh tomatoes, cheese or ham.

Formatjades and Empanadillas are small pies made with spinach, cheese, sausages or tuna. They can be bought from local bakers along with bocadillos (filled rolls).

Menorquina

Menorcan Ice Cream, Menorquina, is famous throughout Spain as are the company's sorbets and their range of frozen deserts.

Menorcan Desserts

Traditional local deserts are sweet biscuits such as amargas and carquinyols which are almond macaroons. Ensaimadas come in many varieties often filled with fruit and nuts in a light spiral pastry. Cucusso is another local dessert made from almonds with honey and raisins.

Menorcan Cheese

Queso Mahon is considered to be a very special cheese. It even has its own denominacion de origen. Recent developments have turned a cottage industry into a mass production process which allows the cheeses to be exported worldwide.

The yellow rind is coated with oil as it matures for two years. Cheeses range from young mild cheeses such as tierno through semi-curado to curado to anejo, a fully mature example.

Menorcans use the tierno variety to stuff their turkeys at Christmas.

Menorca Wines

Like its neighbouring islands, Menorca has an age old tradition of wine making amongst its food and drink industries. This tradition was interrupted at the end of British rule and on a number of other occasions. In recent years vineyards have begun to cultivate different varieties of grapes and open wine cellars boosting an old tradition with new vigour.

Currently there are four wineries and their associated vineyards on the island. Vine Sa Cudía in S'Albufera des Grau Nature Park, Viñas Binifadet near the village of Sant Lluís, Ferrer de Muntpalau in the town of Es Mercadal and Bodega Vi de S'Illa in Alaior. All of these enterprises offer guided visits around the wine cellars and vineyards culminating in a wine tasting session.

Due to these enterprising initiatives Menorca now has an Illa de Menorca as a brand which includes white wines such as Chardonnay, Macabeo, Malvasía, Moscatel, Parellada and Moll, and red wines from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Monastrell, Syrah through to Tempranillo.

Menorca Liqueurs

Nowadays there are a number of locally made liqueurs based on Mandarin, Orange, Peach and lemon juices.

Estomagale

There is also Estomagale a mild drink with a unique taste and texture. Calent an artisan drink which combines herbs, anis, cinnamon, wine and saffron in a warm infusion. Tradition states that this drink has been prepared since antiquity, when the island was famous for its wines, and Calent based drink was prepared to give to their friends on holidays and especially at Christmas time.

Menorca Gin



No book on Menorcan food and drink is complete without the mention of Gin.

A locally made liqueurs is gin, made from grapes and perfumed with juniper berries. The

Gin Xoriguer distillery has been making this drink now for almost a century. Minorcan gin (Gin Xoriguer) originated during the times of the British rule in the 18th Century. Thousands of English sailors and soldiers arrived on Menorca to garrison the island. During their time off they visited the Taverns and wanted to drink the fashionable drink of that time, gin. Gin was unknown on the island but local tradesmen soon devised a way to produce the drink using imported juniper berries water and plant-based ethyl alcohol.

They used old copper stills, into which high quality wine alcohol, juniper berries from the mountains and other aromatic herbs were placed. The resulting distillation was then stored in large oak barrels before being bottled.

Minorcan Gin can be drunk neat, although it is traditionally drunk with soda and lemon peel or with lemonade as 'pomada.

Where to Eat in Menorca

Club Nautic Cas Quinto

High class exclusive seafood restaurant with outstanding views of Ciutadella harbour. The food is as outstanding as the views and the house speciality lobster stew is a must.

Address: 8 Cami de Baix, CiutadellaPhone: +34 971 382773

Sa Figuera

Noted for its Fresh Fish and excellent service, it boasts a set menu of 4 or 5 starters followed by one main course. It also offers a selection of top class white wines.

Address: 99 Carrer Marina, CiutadellaPhone: +34 971 382112

Itake

In the heart of Mao harbour area it likes to be different. As well as serving traditional recipes with a modern twist, it also expect ostrich, kangaroo and other 'alternative' dishes. Address: 317 Moll

de LlevantPhone: +34 971 354570

Es Port

Operating its own boat indicates that the fish at this Fornells restaurant is going to be fresh. With seating available inside or out, the latter provides an opportunity to observe the quayside strollers.

Address: 5 Avenida Poeta Gumersindo Riera, FornellsPhone: +34 971 376403

Moli Des Raco

Traditional Minorcan dining, at a reasonable price. Located in an old windmill in [Es Mercadal](#), its specialities include Partridge with

Cabbage and Roast Suckling Pig.

Address: 53 Carrer Major, Es Mercadal Phone: +34 971 375392

Pizzeria La Caprichosa

Famed for its Minorcan-style pizzas, but also serving a selection of budget meals of grilled meats. The terrace tables are literally four paces from the harbour. Inside seating is in a cave-like environment. Address: 44 Muelles Cales

Fonts, Es Castell Phone: +34 971 366158

Cafe Style Eating

Bar Los Claveles Segafredo

Follow the smell of freshly made bread to this bakery, cake and coffee shop in the centre of Mao, very popular with locals and visitors. Address: 28 Carrer Vives

Llull, Mao, Phone: +34 971 350653

Bar Cafeteria Es Bruc

The outside terrace is only metres from the beach. A beautiful spot for a cup of coffee, a glass of wine or a bite to eat.

Address: At the entrance to Urbanisation Saint Tomas Beach, San Adeodato, Es Migjorn Gran Phone: +34 971 370488

Café Bar Ca Na Divina

Locals' favourite in the old quarter of [Alaior](#). Small and friendly with a good selection of Minorcan pastries and a summer terrace. Address: 9 Plaça

Constitucio, Alaior, Phone: +34 971 371348

Cova D'en Xoroi



Bar by day and disco by night. Minorca's most famous night life hotspot is located in a cave halfway down a sheer cliff that plunges into the sea. Legend has it that a pirate sheltering there met a watery death. It's a wonder more revellers don't follow suit. Address: 75 Caretaker Nova, Carla en

Porter, AlaiorPhone: +34 971 377236

Mambo Bar

A stylish nightspot in Mao harbour with a commendable selection of cocktails, malt whiskies and rum. Considered by some as the 'Café del Mar' of Minorca due to its panoramic terrace and music production. Address: 209 Moll de Llevant,

MaoPhone: +34 971 356782

Casino Maritim Menorca

Try your luck on the green baize of Mao's blackjack, poker and roulette tables. Restaurant and bar also on-site.

Address: 287 Moll de Llevant,Phone: +34 971

364962Internet: www.casinomaritimo.es

Jazzbah

Best of the nightspots in Ciutadella's buzzing Pla de Sant Joan. Classy, though a little on the costly side, you do get live jazz thrown into the price. Away from the live music, there's a chill out room for simpleunwinding.

Address: 3 Pla de Sant Joan, CiutadellaPhone: +34 971

Pedro's

Large nightclub near Ciutadella featuring an eclectic blend of diversions, from karaoke to flamenco, foam parties to lasershows. Address: D'en

Clates, Cala SantandriaPhone: +34 971 480248

Scandals

Popular snooker and pool bar withbig-screen football. Serves snacks by day,full meals in the evening. Address:

Carretera San Felipe, Es CastellPhone: +34 971 365313