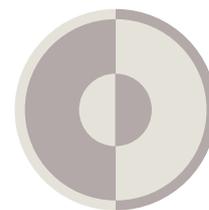


From Tapas



to Tartas

Dishes from Spain made easy
By Lou Dinnella



Forward

There are many great Spanish cookbooks out there. This is not one of them. I am not a chef. I am not a connoisseur. I am just a guy who happens to be in love with Spain, its people, its language, its art, and, especially, its food. So, if you expect to uncover some of the secrets of gourmet Spanish cuisine, or some recipes that require, at least, two years of study at some culinary institute, this book is not for you. However, if you want a book that will provide you with an easy way to prepare, present, and enjoy fabulous tasting Spanish food, this book is for you.

From Tapas (appetizers) **to Tartas** (cakes) means to imply that I have included information about the preparation and presentation of some truly scrumptious appetizers, main courses, and desserts – all with a Spanish flair – Olé!

Remember, Spanish food is not spicy. Garlic and oil are at its base, and while there are seventeen autonomous regions in Spain, all with their local dishes, this book pays attention to none of that. This book is just a compilation of my favorite dishes; dishes that I have enjoyed over the last thirty-five years, and dishes that are easy to prepare and present. Tasty food, easily prepared, and beautifully presented make for a festive gathering. Therefore, whether you just want to impress your significant other, or entertain a group of your friends, the presentations offered here will all lead to a successful gathering. After all – sharing with family and friends – isn't that what it's all about? So, sit back and give the book a perusal. Besides getting extremely hungry, you'll come away with some of the easiest ways to prepare what will truly be a *Fiesta Española*.



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About the author



Lou Dinnella has been a Spain tour operator for the last thirty years. Prior to that, he taught Spanish. Studying in Spain, living there, and traveling to every one of its autonomous regions have given him the opportunity to gain a lot of weight while enjoying some truly great food. He lives in Warwick, New York with his wife Grisell and his son Luis.

A special thanks to: Arancha Moliner, the great photographer who took most of the pictures in this book and Basi Mortimer who did a great job as food stylist. You could find more info on these wonderful people at www.basicatering.com.

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Tapas – Appetizers

The legends of how *tapas* (appetizers) started in Spain are very interesting. One story says that King Alfonso X, back in the 13th century, passed a royal decree stating that all establishments serving wine must also serve a little food with the wine in order to avoid customers getting drunk as a result of drinking on an empty stomach. The inn keepers started serving the wine in its usual pitcher however, they decided to cover (*tapar*) the top of the pitcher with a piece of ham or cheese in order to comply with the king's edict. The cover (*tapa*) would also prevent flies and other insects from landing in the pitcher.

Another legend has King Alfonso XIII visiting the Spanish coastal city of Cádiz. There, he stopped for a glass of sherry. The waiter, who was going to serve the king, realized that the wind was blowing pretty hard. In order to prevent grains of sand from entering the king's glass, he covered it with a piece of ham. When the king received the glass covered with the ham, he asked the waiter why he served the wine in such a fashion. As the king drank his wine and ate the piece of ham, the waiter explained that he placed a cover (*tapa*) over the king's glass so as to avoid grains of sand from entering the king's wine. Alfonso liked the idea and requested another glass of sherry; and the king told the waiter not to forget to serve it with another (*tapa*). The king's entourage requested their sherry in the same manner. This eventually started everyone throughout Spain asking for *tapas*.

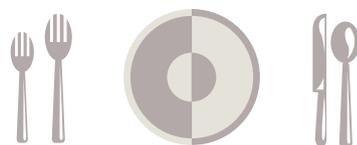
These legends may or may not be true. However, there is no question that *tapas* are an integral part of Spanish life. *Vamos a tapear* (Let's go for appetizers) is a very common, if not daily, occurrence in Spain. There are literally thousands of restaurants throughout Spain serving a myriad of small appetizers. Three or more friends may order five or six different appetizers, sit down and share the different tastes of these fabulous dishes. Of course, wine and, now, beer are necessary components to down what one has consumed. Pieces of bread are necessary, either to make a little sandwich, or to dunk in the sumptuous sauces. The *tapas* often are different from one region of Spain to another, and some regions even have a different term for *tapas*. For instance, in Catalonia it's *pica pica*, and in the Basque country it's *pinchos*. *Tapas* are so important in Spain that certain restaurants, bars, or *mesones* (taverns) serve specialties unique to their regions – a special *queso* (cheese) or *chorizo* (sausage), a locally caught fish, or a specially prepared meat. This usually leads Spaniards to drift from place to place, sampling a few *tapa* specialties of one establishment, having a few drinks, and a lot of conversation before moving on to the next place to repeat the process. *Tapeando* (eating *tapas*) is truly a unique cultural phenomena, and one that is easy to enjoy the world over.

We will present to you thirty different *tapas* that will be easy to prepare, great tasting, and guaranteed to make your guests feel that they have had a unique gastronomical experience. If you are inviting friends over, and are not serving a main meal, then, you may wish to prepare eight to ten different *tapas*, have some wine ready, stack the fridge with beer, and don't forget the bread. *Vamos a tapear!*

Aceitunas



Olives



When it's *tapa* time, it's olive time. The olive is a Spanish staple. Green olives, black olives, purple olives, olives stuffed with peppers, olives stuffed with anchovies – the combinations are endless, and the tastes are fabulous. Even better, the Spanish olives are home grown. It is quite amazing when one drives through certain olive regions – all you see are miles and miles of beautiful olive groves. One time, my family and I were visiting a friend in Rute, Spain. Rute is a small town in the province of Córdoba. We literally drove for almost an hour passing through all these wonderful olive trees. Unfortunately, our son, who was about nine at the time, got car sick. The trek through olive country was a bit much for him. Nevertheless, he, like the rest of us, still considers olives to be one of his favorite *tapas*.

It is a great idea to mix various kinds of Spanish olives in a dish. While taking an olive by hand is completely acceptable, it is not a bad idea to have a supply of colorful toothpicks on hand so that your guests can pick the olive. Also, many olives have pits, so keep some small dishes handy for them. An olive paste is also available – this is great as a spread on thinly cut pieces of baguettes. Bread and olives make a tasty *tapa* combination – add some wine or sangría – and you have a winner.

Aguacate con gambas



Avocado with shrimp

The avocado has always fascinated me. Back in the 60's, I remember that the California Avocado Commission printed a poster, sent free as I recall, of how to grow your own avocado plant. They also extolled the avocado's nutritious health benefits.

Historically, the avocado dates back thousands of years, and originated in south and central Mexico. The Aztecs considered the avocado an aphrodisiac, perhaps more because of its shape than its chemical properties. When the Spanish *conquistadores* (conquerors) came to the New World they could not pronounce the Aztec word *ahuacatl* (avocado) and changed it to how they heard it – *aguacate*. I guess that the *conquistadores* brought avocados back to Spain because *aguacate con gambas* seems to be on the menu in many restaurants, especially in the Costa del Sol.

The best and easiest way that I like to serve *aguacate con gambas* is as follows:

The ripened (soft) avocado is cut in half (if its black inside it is over ripened and will not do). The seed is taken out, of course.

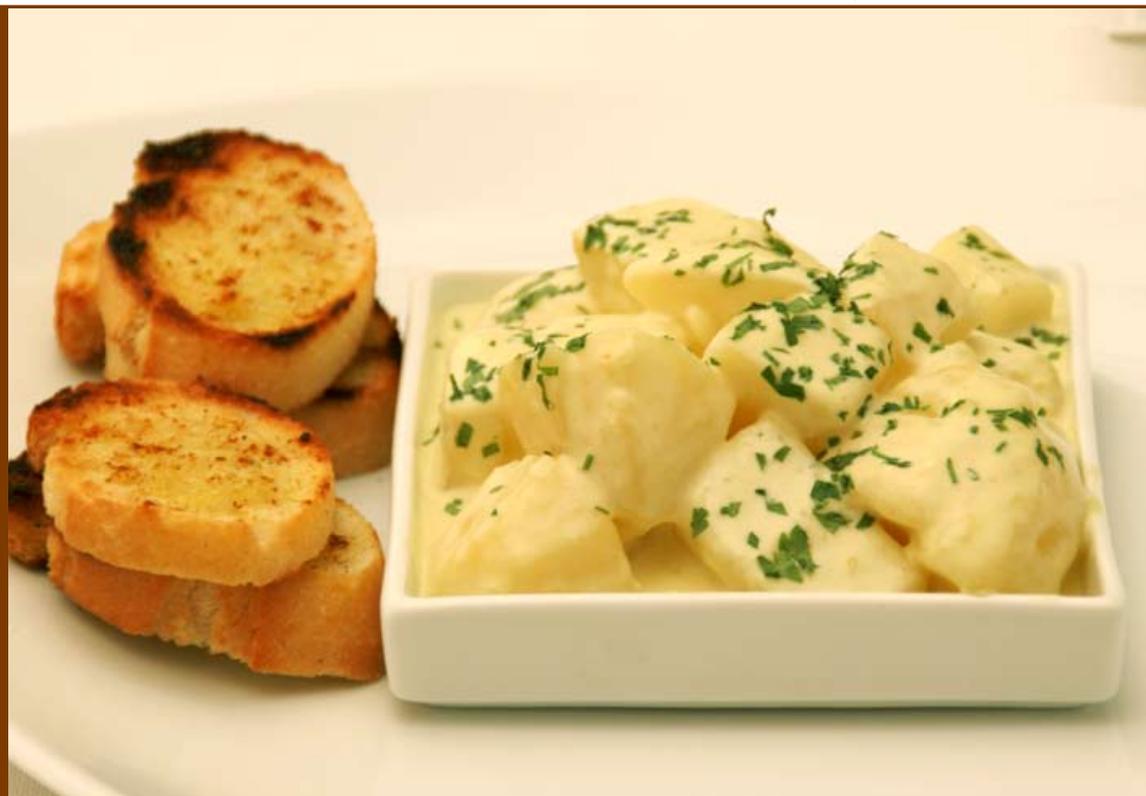
Small previously cooked shrimp are placed, at room temperature, in each of the halves of the avocado.

A sauce made of a mixture of two parts mayonnaise, two parts ketchup, and lemon juice (one lemon should do) is placed over the shrimp.

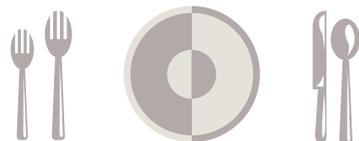
The avocado's skin serves as the bowl – you don't eat the skin.

N.B. You can also serve *aguacate con gambas* as in our picture.

Ali-Oli



Garlic Mayonnaise



This is a great sauce that can be spread on potatoes, fish, chicken, steaks, chops, and bread.

Ingredients:

- 6 – 8 garlic cloves
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon of balsamic vinegar
- 8 ounces of extra virgin olive oil
- A pinch of sea salt.

Place everything in a food processor, as the mixture is blending, slowly add the extra virgin olive oil.

If the mixture is too watery, you can blend into the mixture a small piece of boiled potato to thicken it up.

Almejas en salsa verde



Clams in green sauce

For many years we lived in New Jersey, and we would love to vacation at the famous Jersey shore, where some great beaches would await us in the Wildwood Crest area. After a day at the beach, our friends Andrés (he is from Galicia, northern Spain) and Jackie (she is from Andalusia, southern Spain) would often times invite us to their apartment for one of Andrés' favorite tapas – *almejas en salsa verde*. Here's how he told me to make this succulent dish:

- ✦ Scrub clean with cold water about two pounds of cherry stone clams (the little ones), and then dry them.
- ✦ Take a deep pot and cover the bottom with extra virgin olive oil, chopped parsley, plenty of chopped garlic, sea salt to taste, a cup of Spanish white wine or white cooking wine, and three or four tablespoons of flour. Let this simmer on a low flame a couple of minutes and be careful not to burn the garlic.
- ✦ Add the clams and cover the pot. From time to time check to see if the clams are opening – when the clams open – that is when you know that the feast will shortly begin.
- ✦ Serve each guest about eight clams in a bowl and pour plenty of the green sauce over the clams – dip the clams in the green sauce, dunk the bread in the green sauce, and be sure to accompany this tapa with a chilled Spanish white wine.

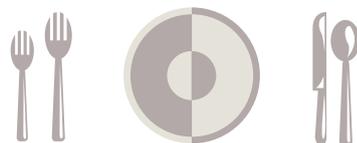
N.B. Do not eat any of the calms that did not open.

The sauce is greenish because of the parsley.

Anchoas



Anchovies



Most Americans probably know about anchovies because they are sometimes placed on pizza. However, in Spain, *anchoas*, by themselves, make a delectable *tapa*.

Several years ago, I participated in a one day cooking class in Santander, Spain. This is the capital of Spain's Cantabrian region. I, along with other participants, had to prepare a full course Spanish meal from scratch. The class was broken down into sections, and I was placed in the section that learned how to prepare anchovies. We were given anchovies, a fish about three inches long. We first rubbed off the scales with a cloth, next we cut off the heads. We were then taught how to cut along the stomach and remove the insides and back-bone. As I remember, we then placed the fillets in a jar, one on top of the other. We then covered the fillets with extra virgin olive oil and added sea salt. We were told to cover the jars. These anchovies would remain in these jars for about six months before they could be served. Fortunately, you and I can just walk to our local supermarket and buy already prepared anchovies that are usually packed in a tin. All we have to do is open and serve. Crackers or bread on the side would be great. They are a tad salty, so be sure to have your favorite beverage nearby.

Berenjena Frita



Fried Eggplant

I love eggplant, and I especially love fried eggplant. I don't know why, I just do. My mother used to get a nice ripe eggplant, wash it off, and then cut the ends off. She would then rub the cut end, in a circular motion, against the bottom she just cut from in order to take the bitterness out. You could peel the eggplant before slicing it or not, and you could slice sideways or length wise. It is not a bad idea to soak the eggplant slices in water and salt (not too much salt) for about one half hour. Then take the eggplant from the water and pat dry with a paper towel. I like thinly sliced eggplant.

Bathe the eggplant in eggs and dip in seasoned bread crumbs.

Then, fry in extra virgin olive oil until golden brown.

You could serve just as is or place your favorite sauce on the side.

I usually eat it as is.

As a *tapa* just make one eggplant.

Boquerones en vinagre



White Anchovy Fillets



Boquerones are basically little white anchovy fillets packed in olive oil and vinegar. They are mild in taste and not salty. Just open up the can, place them neatly in a dish, and your tapa is served. As always, be sure to have some sliced bread and olives on the side.



Calamares Fritos



Fried Squid

When my father used to vacation with us in Spain, he would always order *calamares fritos*. It became an obsession. We would go out to a restaurant for lunch or dinner, and he would very scrupulously look over the menu. We would all be struck by the myriad of choices offered. My father would pour over the list. It would take him at least ten minutes. Then, he would invariably say, "I think I'll have *calamares fritos*." Well, this routine made sense the first time he ordered. But, every time we would go to a restaurant, he would take the same long look at the menu, review the long list of fabulous choices, and say, as if it were the first time, "I think I'll have *calamares fritos*." This went on during lunch and dinner. By the end of the vacation, everyone seated at the table, at the time of ordering, would mimic my father, and in unison say, "I think I'll have *calamares fritos*."

I have to admit that I often times find myself ordering *calamares fritos* as an appetizer – it is another great tasting *tapa*.

Ingredientes – Ingredients

- 1 to 2 pounds of squid cut into rings
- Sprinkle sea salt over them
- Dip them in flour
- Fry in extra virgin olive oil.
- Take off excess oil.
- Serve with slices of lemon
- Squeeze lemon juice over *los calamares*.

Some people like to serve this dish with a side of tomato sauce – this is more Italian style than Spanish.

Champiñones al ajillo



Mushrooms in garlic sauce



Madrid's *Plaza Mayor* (main square) is surrounded by many great restaurants. Descending the steps from the *plaza*, through *El Arco de los Cuchilleros* (The Arch of the Knife makers), you will go to a section that is known for its many *mesones*. A *mesón* (mesones is the plural) literally means inn, but it is more like a small tavern, usually specializing in serving *tapas*. Many *mesones* serve a *tapa* which is their house specialty.

Back in the early seventies, I had occasion to study in Madrid. At that time, it was very common to go to *los mesones a tapear* (to the taverns and eat *tapas*). The downside to all of this was that at each *mesón* you visited, you would not only taste the house specialty but you would also have a little wine, beer or *sangría* to accompany the tasty morsels, before moving on the next *mesón*. After visiting four or five *mesones*, listening to the music, the singing, the conversation, eating and drinking, one would arrive home in the wee hours of the morning. Consequently, not much studying went on the next day. Nevertheless, much linguistic and cultural acquisition was attained the previous night.

One of the *mesones* was aptly called *El mesón del champiñón* (mushroom). I always thought that their obvious house specialty was especially tasty. I do not know their recipe but here is an easy way to prepare this delightful *tapa*.

- ♦ Clean small mushrooms and leave them whole, or clean large mushrooms and slice them thin.
- ♦ Sauté garlic with sea salt in extra virgin olive oil.
- ♦ When the garlic begins to turn a golden brown add the mushrooms.
- ♦ Keep on stirring the mushrooms in the pan until they seem to be ready and add in some finely chopped parsley. This whole process could take three or four minutes.

If you make the small mushrooms and leave them whole, then place toothpicks in them so that your guests can easily grab them.

Chorizo



Pork Sausage

Many years ago, we had a condo on Spain's sun coast – the Costa del Sol. Our place was in the beautiful town of Fuengirola. After spending two or three weeks at this glorious beach town, we would have to return to reality, and get ready to come back home. At that time, there were non-stop flights from Málaga to JFK. The flights usually would leave at around two in the afternoon. This was great. Fuengirola was not far from the airport. We did not have to leave early in the morning to catch a flight, and this gave us plenty of time to close down the condo. More importantly, I had time to go to the store and buy some fresh bread and chorizo (I especially liked the *chorizo de Pamplona*). I would return home and make some *bocadillos* (sandwiches) to take on the plane.

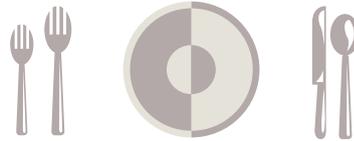
Remember, the plane departed about Spanish lunchtime. Every passenger would be starving. Lunch would not be served until maybe an hour into the flight. As soon as the plane took off, and the seat belt sign went off, I would reach into my carry-on bag and start passing out my famous *chorizo* sandwiches to all my relatives. My son would get the first one. Then, my father and mother, next my in-laws (they were younger than my parents, so the order of distribution was OK), my wife was next, and finally me. As I took the *chorizo* sandwiches out of the aluminum foil, its distinct aroma began to permeate every section of the aircraft. You could see peoples' eyes lighting up – "*chorizo* on board" – where was their sandwich? Alas, only the Dinnella family had sandwiches. Every year, I was convinced that if I were able to make two hundred *chorizo* sandwiches, I could easily sell them to my fellow passengers for ten dollars each – I could pay for my entire vacation. Even the stewardesses were impressed – of course, on one hand, they too enjoyed the smell, on the other, they had to answer many passenger questions as to why they were not being given *chorizo* sandwiches.

There are many kinds of *chorizo*. Most can be sliced and served. Slice them thin, make sure bread is available, and keep the wine handy.

Chorizo a la plancha



Grilled Sausage



- ✦ Cut the *chorizo* sausage either length wise or in quarter inch slices.
- ✦ Place the *chorizo* in a frying pan with a little Spanish extra virgin olive oil.
- ✦ Fry the *chorizo* for about two minutes on each side or until it turns a light golden brown. Use a low to medium flame.
- ✦ Serve as in the picture.

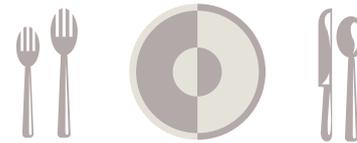
Chorizo a la sidra - Sausage with cider

I have purchased *chorizo* already prepared with cider. If you cannot find this, just add about four ounces of Spanish cider while you are preparing the *chorizo a la plancha* in a frying pan.

There is nothing I like better, on a Saturday afternoon, than to fry up some *chorizo* and make mini hero sandwiches – a glass of cider, wine, or beer is a nice accompaniment.

This dish can be presented to your guests as one of your *tapa* servings. Remember, if you are serving *tapas* you might want to present between six to ten varieties at the same time.

Croquetas de jamón



Ham Croquettes

This *tapa* is going to require a little work but it is worth it.

- ✦ Make mashed potatoes – use four to six potatoes.
- ✦ Dice two or three slices of jamón serrano and mix it into the mashed potatoes. If you do not have serrano ham, any ham will do.
- ✦ Mix in a tablespoon of parsley - fresh is nice but not necessary.
- ✦ Add about two tablespoons of finely chopped onions.
- ✦ Add about a teaspoon of salt and a dash of pepper.
- ✦ Combine all the ingredients. Shape into little rectangular rolls – like the picture.
- ✦ Dip the croquette in a slightly beaten egg and then roll the croquette in seasoned bread crumbs – don't go crazy – store bought seasoned bread crumbs are great.
- ✦ Fry in a pan of olive oil until golden brown. Drain and let dry.

This *tapa* can be served hot or at room temperature.

The same procedure is used to make *croquetas de pollo* (chicken), *croquetas de atún* (tuna), or *croquetas de queso* (cheese).

Espárragos dos salsas



Asparagus with two sauces



This is another one of those ubiquitous *tapas*. It seems that the trick here is to vary the color of the two sauces – so that you have an appetizing dish.

- ✦ Add the asparagus (fresh or frozen) to boiling water for about three to four minutes – they should be hard and not soft.
- ✦ Take the asparagus and place them in cold water so that they do not overcook.
- ✦ Place them on a plate – one sauce could be mayonnaise, the other sauce could be one of horseradish with a little tomato sauce mixed in to give it a different color from the mayo. You may also try any sauce you like – just remember to place the sauce on the side and not over the asparagus - so that your guests may have a choice.

If you look under the section of salads, in this book, you will find an even easier way to prepare this *tapa*.

Gambas al Ajillo



Shrimp in Garlic Sauce

This is a dish that always tastes great in Spain. Yet, in this country, often times, falls short of expectations, and I cannot understand why. It is so simple to make.

I like to use small sized shrimp – better cleaned and uncooked. However, you can use defrosted shrimp even though these have usually been cooked prior to being frozen. I normally like to calculate six shrimp per person.

- ✦ Take a frying pan and place extra virgin olive oil in it – how much you ask. Place enough to cover the pan and remember that you are going to use this oil not only to cook the shrimp but to dip bread in afterwards. However, you do not want too much – it is better to place less oil than more.
- ✦ Add thinly cut slices of three or four freshly peeled garlic cloves.
- ✦ Add sea salt – again you be the judge as to how much.
- ✦ Add some chopped parsley.
- ✦ Add a little pepper – like salt and pepper.
- ✦ Begin to heat this up with a low flame and stir gently.
- ✦ When the garlic begins to turn a golden color – add the shrimp – be sure that the shrimp are not wet. Stir the shrimp in this sauce for about three minutes. Then stop heating.

You could either place the shrimp with the garlic sauce in a nice dish for all to pick at or you can get little clay dishes and give individual servings. The shrimp will taste great and dunking a piece of bread in the sauce is also fantastic. This dish needs to be served hot.

A variation to *gambas al ajillo* is *gambas al pil pil*. It is the same thing except that you add a very small piece of chili pepper to the frying pan during the cooking process to spice it up a little.

Jamón Serrano



Serrano Ham



If you have eaten quality *jamón serrano*, you can die and go to heaven. This may sound like a great exaggeration – but many people the world over would probably agree.

Jamón serrano is dry-cured Spanish ham. It might be blasphemous to say but, it is similar to Italian prosciutto. The curing process takes months and months. The hams are salted and hung to dry and cure. When I first heard the word Serrano, I thought it referred to a person's surname. It refers to the mountainous regions in Spain that provide the best drying conditions.

Usually *jamón serrano* is served in thin slices. You can buy this exquisite ham in deli cut slices. Some specialty shops sell the entire leg. However, then, you would need a *jamonera*, a mechanism to hold the leg in place before, with a sharp knife, you could cut your own slices. This is the way it is done in most restaurants in Spain.

This tapa is a must. Be sure to have bread, olives, cheese and your favorite drinks on hand.

An added benefit is that since *jamón serrano* has little moisture, it makes a great sandwich for the kids to take to school, or to bring on a picnic.

Judías verdes con jamón



String beans with Ham

I can remember the first time I had this *tapa*. I was having dinner with my friend Don Davis and he invited my family to his favorite restaurant in Benalmádena. He suggested that we have some *tapas* prior to dinner and *judías verdes con jamón* was one of his favorites. I could not believe the taste – it was a great choice.

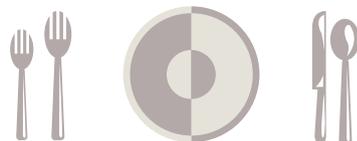
- Prepare your string beans fresh or frozen as you usually do – boil them with sea salt in the water.
- In a separate pan, sauté finely chopped onions with any kind of diced ham and season with sea salt. Use a low flame.
- When the onions begin to become golden in color, add the string beans. Make sure you strained the string beans from the water in which they were boiled.
- Mix the string beans with the oil, onions, and ham for about five minutes, and then serve warm. You could either serve this in a big bowl, family style, or serve in individual dishes.

You might think in terms of one pound of string beans, one onion, several slices of ham, and a pinch of sea salt.

Lomo



Pork Loin Sausage



The word *embutido* in Spanish refers to sausage like meats, i.e. meats, fats, and condiments stuffed in a casing. *Lomo* is an *embutido* made of cured pork loin, paprika, garlic, salt, and a little fat. *Lomo* has less fat than *chorizo*. It should be served the same way as *chorizo*.

Be sure to slice it thin and serve it as it appears in the picture. This is a real easy tapa to serve, just slice it thin, have some crackers or thinly sliced bread at hand, and you are ready to go.

Mejillones a la Vinagreta



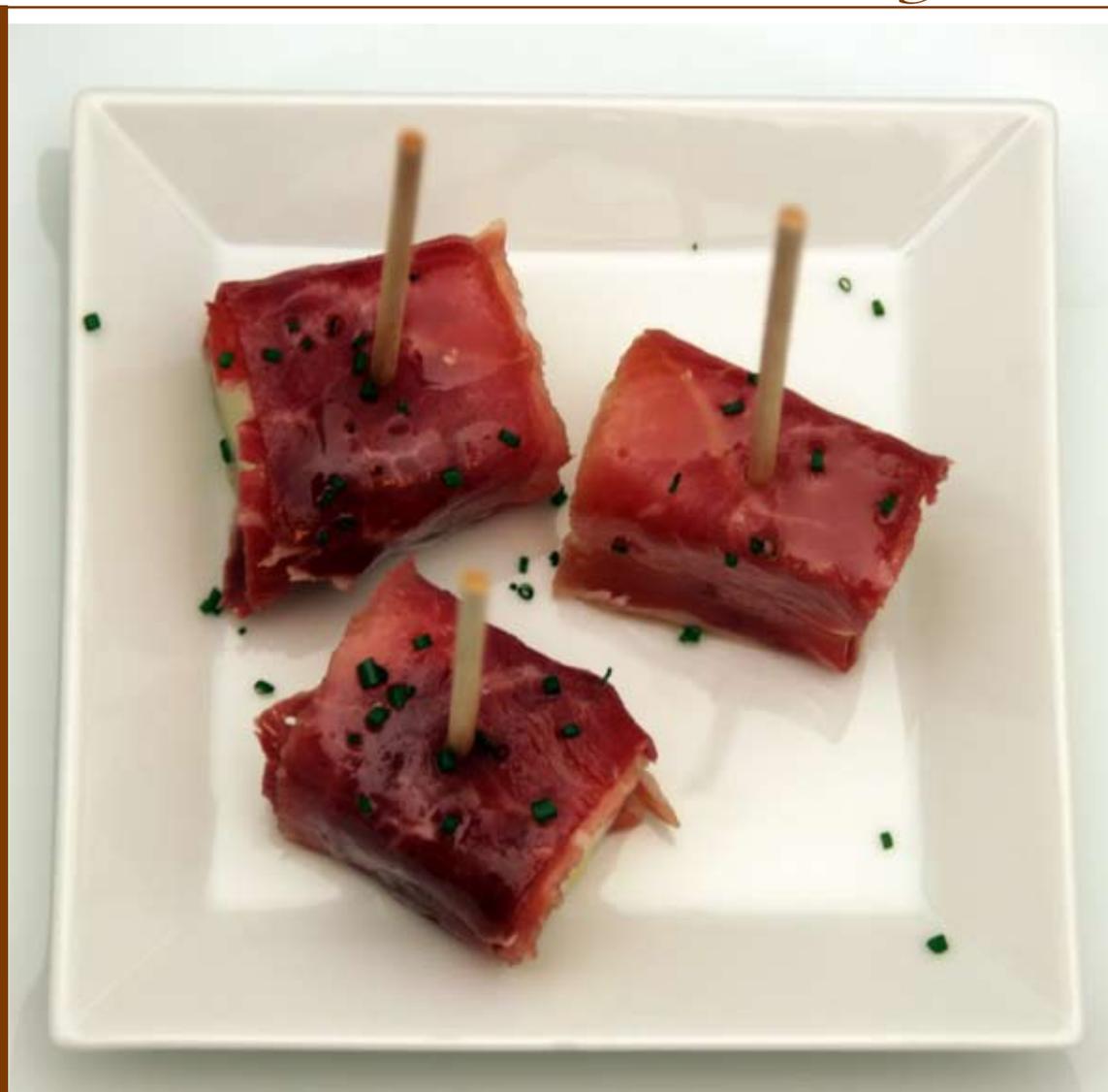
Mussels Vinaigrette

I have been lucky enough to travel in Europe, and in one of my excursions to Belgium, I heard the expression that in Brussels you must eat mussels. Indeed, it is true, besides being a great play on words, the mussels in Brussels are fantastic. You sit down in a restaurant and are served a big deep pot of steaming hot mussels in a sauce that is exquisite with a loaf of bread and you really have a scrumptious meal. I do not want to take anything away from our Belgium brethren, their preparation is gourmet and is a meal unto itself. However, in Spain, a great *tapa* to make is *mejillones a la vinagreta*. It is light, tasty, and easy to make. Remember, it is a *tapa* and not a meal.

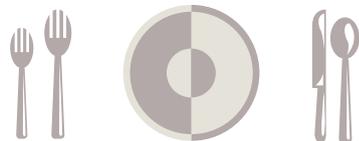
- ✦ Scrub the mussels clean. I have found that in some areas stores have mussels in a nice bag practically scrubbed clean.
- ✦ Place the cleaned mussels in a pot with water and sea salt and steam the mussels open. once the shells open stop, discard the water and any mussels that did not open. Let the open mussels drain and cool.
- ✦ While you are waiting for the mussels to cool, finely chop half an onion, a quarter of a green or red pepper, several strands of parsley, and a quarter of a clove of garlic. Mix this in a bowl with about four tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil and four tablespoons of balsamic vinegar, and add salt to taste.
- ✦ Take the cooled mussels, still in their shells, and, with a spoon, sprinkle the above mixture over the mussels. Then, squeeze a lemon over the mussels.

This *tapa* can be served at room temperature or slightly chilled in the refrigerator. You might want to calculate allowing two to four mussels per guest.

Melón con Jamón



Melon with ham



I am not certain what makes this such a refreshing *tapa*. It must be the combination of honeydew with serrano ham. The preparation for this is super easy. Take a honeydew, slice it and place a thin slice of serrano ham over each slice. The idea is to eat a piece of melon with a piece of ham.

I have to say that every time I have had this in Spain, the melon has always been sweet. Unfortunately, I find that American honeydews are usually not so sweet. Ask your grocer to pick you a sweet one. Also, do not serve the melon cold, it should be a room temperature and so should the ham.

Pan con aceite



Bread with olive oil

It is very interesting to visit Spain and stay in one of the government owned *Paradors*. *Paradors* are hotels that the government has made out of, in many cases, old castles or historical monuments.

Besides great accommodations, *Paradors* are also noted for their great culinary preparations. Since they are spread throughout Spain, they often times serve specialties of the regions in which they are located.

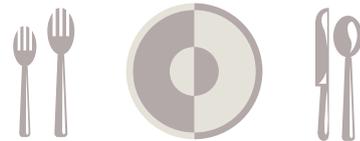
There is a common thread in all the *Paradors*. No matter where they are located, they all serve extra virgin olive oil at all their meals. The idea is to take bread, any kind, and dip it into the oil. Usually, one mixes salt (sea salt if possible) and pepper in the oil before dipping. The taste is a gastronomical feast. The bread should be fresh and if it is warmed even better.

It is said that Spain is the world's largest producer of *aceite de oliva* – olive oil. Let's state the obvious, olive oil comes from olives, and Spain's Mediterranean climate and soil makes it an ideal area for olive growing. There are literally many different kinds of olives, and many different Spanish olive oil brands. There are yearly competitions to see which region or grower produces the best one. Color, taste, etc. all are factors. For me, any Spanish extra virgin olive oil is great. Extra virgin olive oil has the best taste and the least acidity. It comes from the first pressing of the olive and, therefore, is a completely natural product. Regular olive oil comes from combining extra virgin olive oil with refined olive oil. Many people feel that cooking with regular olive oil is fine, it definitely is less expensive. However, I feel that cooking with extra virgin olive oil lends to a better tasting and healthier food. It reduces the risk of arterial sclerosis and other circulatory ailments, and even reduces cholesterol levels. At this point, I feel the need to say that you should check with your doctor for his/her opinion. In either case, *pan con aceite* is delicious.

Pan con tomate



Bread with tomato



In Barcelona, *pan con tomate* is a staple. Basically, take warm slices of bread, rub with tomato and garlic, lightly cover with extra virgin olive oil, and sprinkle a little sea salt – that's it.

An interesting way of serving this *tapa* is to provide your guests with some slices of warmed bread, several halves of tomatoes, some pieces of thinly sliced garlic, a cruet of oil, and a little dish of sea salt – and let them make their own *tapa*. Of course, you show them how to do it. Take the bread, rub the tomato into the bread so that the bread sops up some of the juice and seeds, take the cruet of oil and lightly pour over the bread, add some of the thinly sliced garlic and sea salt – and you have another great dish.

Patatas Bravas



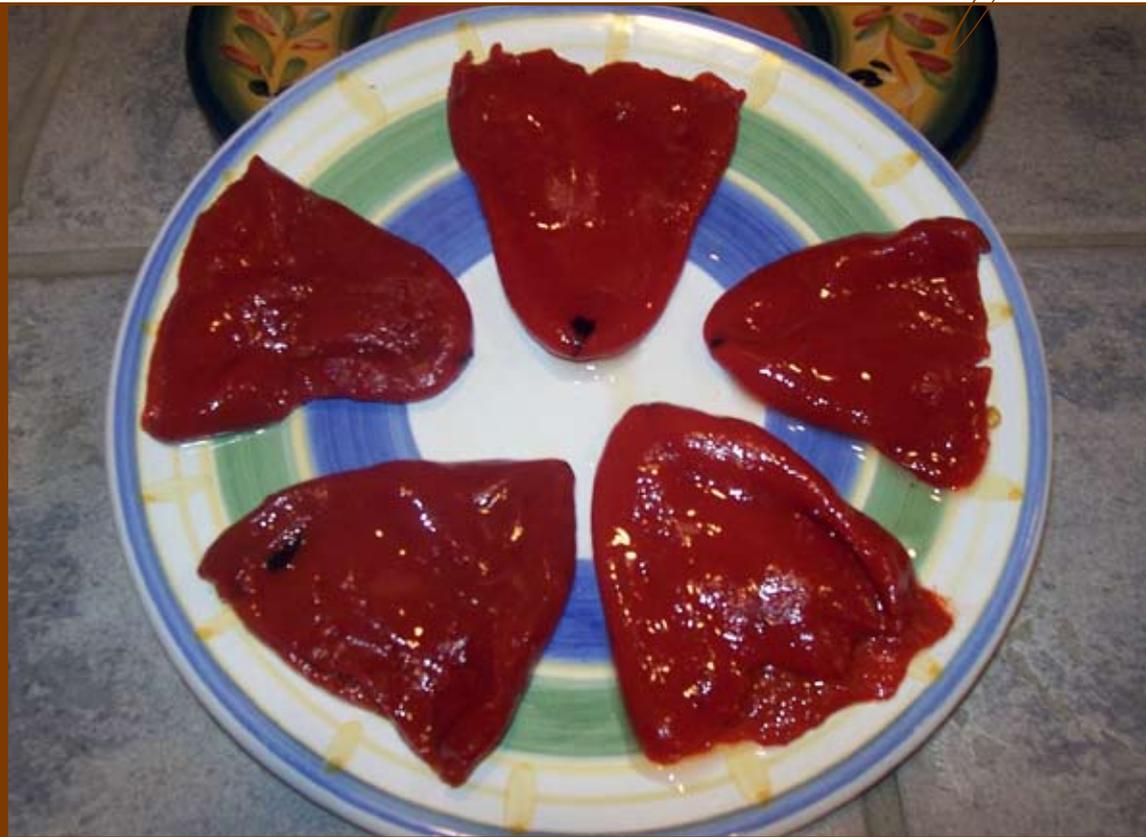
Spicy Potatoes

Patatas Bravas seems to be one *tapa* found in all regions of Spain. Please remember that food in Spain is not usually spicy – this dish is one of the exceptions

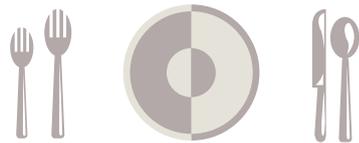
- ✦ Cut 2 potatoes into varied sized cubes
- ✦ Fry the potatoes in extra virgin olive oil until golden brown
- ✦ Dry them off with paper towels
- ✦ In a separate pot sauté some garlic in extra virgin olive oil, add tomato sauce, add a little vinegar, paprika, and a couple of drops of Tabasco sauce. Pour this sauce over the potatoes

I personally do not like food that is too spicy - so I suggest that you go light on the paprika and Tabasco.

Pimientos del Piquillo



Piquillo Peppers



There is a village in Navarra, Spain called Lodosa. It is known for its unique red pepper which is triangular in shape and has a curved point (*piquillo*).

These thin fleshed mild peppers are slow roasted and placed in a bottle with their own juice, and they are absolutely delicious.

You can serve them right out of the jar, or you can fry them in a little extra virgin olive oil and serve them hot. Talk about an easy to serve *tapa*!

If you want to get fancy, you can stuff the pepper with crabmeat.

If the jar you buy says *pimientos del piquillo* but they are not from Lodosa, that is okay, they will probably still be pretty good.

Pimientos al ajillo



Peppers in garlic sauce

It does not matter if you use red peppers or green peppers or mix them to make this *tapa*. Just wash and dry the peppers and cut them into strips (throw the seeds away).

Now fry them in extra virgin olive oil, garlic, sea salt and pepper. Be careful not to burn the peppers – so fry using a low flame. The peppers are ready when they appear soft and flat. These peppers are delicious as a *tapa* and they are also great when combined with sandwiches.

Pimientos de Padrón



Peppers from Padrón



In Spain's northern Galician region, there is a town called Padrón. There grows a small, mildly sweet green pepper best grown in the town that bears its name. When people refer to this great *tapa*, they often use the following saying: *Pimientos de padrón, unos pican otros no* which means: Padrón peppers, some are hot while others are not. So, it is always fun to watch people eating these Padrón peppers because you will see people stuffing themselves, then all of a sudden, they will stop to drink something or eat a piece of bread, that is when you know that they got one of the hot ones.

I must admit that getting these padrón peppers in the U.S. is rather difficult. Even in Spain, there are a lot of imitations of these peppers. However, while there is nothing like the real thing, the imitations are pretty good.

Pimientos de Padrón are really simple to make. It is a great idea to serve them along with some bread, and some great chilled Albariño wine.

The Recipe:

- Take two pounds of peppers – wash and dry.
- Heat extra virgin olive up in a frying pan, when the oil begins to sizzle, add the peppers, sprinkle some sea salt on them and keep on stirring until the peppers blister.
- Place the peppers and oil in a dish and serve. Eat them by holding the stem.
Remember, *unos pican otros no*.

Pisto Manchego



Ratatouille Manchego Style

This *tapa* originated in Spain's Manchego region. I always found this to be a unique tasty dish. Although, this *tapa* requires a little more work than many of the others presented, it is truly worth the effort.

Ingredients:

- 2 ripe tomatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 green pepper
- 1 red pepper
- 1 zucchini
- 4 garlic cloves
- 2 teaspoons of sugar
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Dice all the ingredients into small pieces

Sauté the garlic and onions in the extra virgin olive oil for a couple of minutes

Add the peppers and continue to sauté for another 3 minutes

Add the zucchini and continue to sauté for 3 more minutes

Add the tomatoes, cover the pan and let simmer for about 10 minutes

Add the sugar, salt, and pepper, and stir for about 1 minute.

The pisto is now ready - serve with bread and be prepared for a delicious taste.

Pulpo a la gallega



Octopus Galician Style



The north western part of Spain, Galicia, is noted for its fish dishes. One great *tapa* is *pulpo a la gallega*. In 2002, my wife and I organized a trip to Santiago de Compostela, Galicia's capital, for Spanish teachers. The local tourist board was kind enough to arrange several events for us, one being a lunch invitation to Roberto's—a famous restaurant on the outskirts of Santiago. There, chef Roberto gave us some hands on experience as to how to prepare this great tasting *tapa*.

I am not going to tell you how to cook octopus, and then cut it up in the oval pieces needed to make this dish. If you ask at your local fish market, supermarket, or on the internet, you can find *pulpo* all set to go. Once cooked, all you have to do is sprinkle some sea salt, sweet *pimentón* (a paprika like spice), and extra virgin olive oil on each piece. Serve on a wooden board with toothpicks in each piece.

Queso Manchego



Manchego Cheese

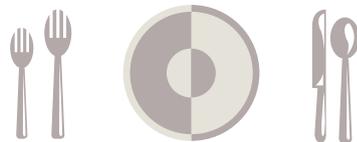
Everytime I think of Spanish cheese, I think of Don Quijote de la Mancha. While Miguel de Cervantes, the renowned Spanish writer, made the whimsical character of Don Quijote (The Man from La Mancha) a world famous literary figure, perhaps the region of La Mancha is even more famous for its great tasting cheese made from the milk of sheep (*ovejas*). As a *tapa*, *queso manchego* is usually served in thinly sliced triangular pieces. Bread, olives, serrano ham, and even a little extra virgin olive oil over the cheese are nice accompaniments. Most gourmet cheese sections of US supermarkets have *queso manchego*.

Please do not limit yourself to *manchego*. Spanish cheeses truly reflect the varied terrain and climates of the country. Cheeses are made from sheep's milk (*queso de oveja*), goat's milk (*queso de cabra*), cow's milk (*queso de vaca*), and mixtures of these milks. A great deal of regional pride and government regulations go into these cheeses. I like to think that all these cheeses are great, it just depends on what you are looking for – a hard or soft cheese, a semi-cured or cured cheese – in the end, it all comes down to personal taste. Nevertheless, for starters, *queso manchego* is a spectacular cheese *tapa*.

Quesos Variados



Cheese Varieties



Spain has some of the greatest tasting cheeses in the world. Every region of Spain has its own specialty cheese and there are well over one hundred varieties throughout the country. The taste truly depends on a myriad of factors such as is the cheese made from the milk of a cow, sheep, goat or a combination. Also, the climate of the region, the type of grazing land available, the method of production (there are still many small farms in Spain where cheese is made by hand as opposed to an industrial type of production) all play major rolls in determining the taste. Is a cheese by tradition soft, medium or hard is another factor. I will provide you with a small cursory idea about Spanish cheese. Just remember that every cheese is great, in the end it becomes your personal preference as to whether you buy one cheese over another. The wonderful part about this is that it is a lot of fun to scout out and try different cheese in your quest for the types of *quesos variados* you wish to serve.

Cheese	Region	Type/Shape	Milk
Cabrales	Asturias	Blue Cheese	Cow
Mahon	Menorca	Many varieties	Cow
Manchego	La Mancha	Round wheel	Sheep
Roncal	Navarra	Cylindrical	Sheep
Tetilla	Galicia	Nipple shaped	Cow
Murcia al vino	Murcia	Cylindrical	Goat

Tortilla Española



Spanish Omelet

One time, one of our wonderful friends from Spain was visiting us with her family. We took advantage of the opportunity, and asked her to prepare for us one of our favorite *tapas* – *tortilla española* – Spanish omelet. Not only did she make a great omelet but, she gave us her recipe and some tricks to make it easy.

- ✦ Peel four pounds of potatoes, wash and dry them.
- ✦ Cut the peeled potatoes into small slices.
- ✦ Dice two large onions.
- ✦ Mix the potatoes and onions together, salt to taste.
- ✦ Preheat about twenty ounces of extra virgin Spanish olive oil. When the oil is hot, place the potatoes and onions in the frying pan making sure that they are covered by the oil. Slowly cook over a low flame. Maria says that the idea here is not to fry the potatoes and onions but rather to just make sure that they are cooked. This will take about twenty minutes.
- ✦ Once cooked, strain the oil from the potatoes and onions and allow them to dry.
- ✦ Beat 8 eggs and add salt.
- ✦ Take some of the drained oil and cover the bottom of your frying pan and preheat.
- ✦ Take the eggs and mix them with your potatoes and onions. Then, put them into the frying pan.
- ✦ Now, the tricky part.
Once the bottom of the eggs seem cooked, omelet style, take a plate and cover the top of the frying pan dish side down. Flip the omelet into the plate and quickly let the uncooked side of the omelet slide back into the frying pan. Keep frying the omelet until cooked. This could take between five to eight minutes per side. Be careful not to burn the omelet.

Once the omelet is cooked take it out of the frying pan and let it sit in a dish. The tortilla could be eaten warm but it is more often eaten at room temperature. Place your leftovers in the refrigerator, and the next morning serve it cold with a side of bread, queso manchego, chorizo, or jamón serrano. This recipe makes two omelets and serves about ten people.



Sopas – Soups



When I think of soup I normally think of a piping hot liquid that will warm my innards, as I gaze upon a frozen field of snow. This is not necessarily Spain's reality. There is a famous Spanish expression which says: *nueve meses de invierno y tres de infierno* (nine months of winter and three of hell). This implies that in some areas of Spain piping hot does not work. For instance, the summer heat of southern Spain's *Andalucía* region, where temperatures could reach 100 degrees in the shade, requires a cold revitalizing soup like *gazpacho*; while the cold damp winter of *Galicia*, one of Spain's northern regions, mandates a hearty meat and bean based concoction, like *caldo gallego*, to warm the cockles of the heart and enable the human spirit to carry on..

I have included five typical soups of Spain that are healthy, hearty, tasty, easy to prepare, and will give your guests a great feel for *España*.

Ajo Blanco con uvas – White Gazpacho with grapes

Caldo Gallego – Galician Broth

Consumé al jerez – Beef Broth with Sherry

Gazpacho – Gazpacho

Sopa de ajo – Garlic Soup

Ajo Blanco con uvas



White Gazpacho with Grapes

Ajo means garlic and *blanco* means white. Nevertheless, *ajo blanco* translates as white gazpacho because it is made in a similar way. This is another delicious soup from Andalucía.

Ingredients:

- + 3 slices of white bread (cut off crust) doused in water
- + 3 cloves of garlic
- + 4 ounces of blanched almonds
- + 2 ounces of extra virgin olive oil
- + 1 ounce of vinegar
- + 1 quart of cold water
- + Add sea salt to taste

Place all ingredients in a blender and liquefy. When you serve this dish place four seedless green grapes in each bowl.

Caldo Gallego



Galician Soup



On a cold and rainy day, one rather normal for Galicia, it is great to sit down and have *caldo gallego*. The recipe below really will not give you the true taste of this sumptuous soup simply because to taste a real *caldo gallego* you have to go to Galicia. The locally grown beans, potatoes, and greens have a taste that is unique to Galicia. Nevertheless, the recipe will warm you up and come close to the original.

Step 1

Place a large pot with about 7 cups of water on a stove using medium heat.

Step 2

Add

1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil

1 finely chopped clove of garlic

1 sliced onion

3 peeled and sliced turnips

4 medium sized peeled potatoes – cubed

8 ounces of chopped turnip greens (or collard greens)

12 ounces of smoked ham

2 finely sliced chorizos

4 chicken bouillon cubes

a sprinkle of pepper

Bring this to a boil and then let simmer for about one hour.

Step 3

Add 12 to 16 ounces of white beans or cannelloni beans, add a pinch of sea salt, and stir.

Then, cover the pot and let simmer under low heat for about 15 minutes.

Step 4

When you serve, make sure to place a smattering of all these ingredients in each bowl.

Gazpacho



Gazpacho

Envision an Andalusian farmer working his fields. It is about two o'clock in the afternoon. The sun is practically at its zenith. A small woman leaves her little country house with a tin pot and a loaf of bread. She walks a very long distance and finally arrives at the base of a rather large olive tree, whose broad branches provide affordable shade from the debilitating rays of the southern sun. She calls to her husband.

This is the first rest from the hours of grueling work a farmer must endure. As he encounters his wife under the tree with its welcoming shade, a light set of kisses is their first greeting. Together they sit down.

She pours, into two tin cups, a cold soup that will replenish the vitamins her husband has lost from his day's toil. It will refresh and invigorate. After a half an hour's rest, and a little sleep, the *gazpacho* has made its magic. The farmer returns to his labor completely restored.

The above account is fictitious but the benefits of *gazpacho* are not. Following is a recipe that will afford you the gastronomic delights of this nutritious dish.

Ingredients:

4 ripe tomatoes

1/8 of a green pepper

One ounce of extra virgin olive oil

Twenty ice cubes

One piece of white bread doused with balsamic vinegar

3 cloves of garlic

The seeds from one cucumber

Three ounces of balsamic vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

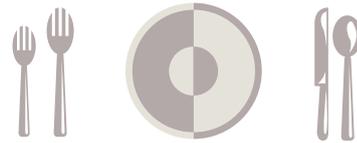
Place all ingredients in a blender and liquefy. That's it! The recipe serves four. Your *gazpacho* may be garnished with finely sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, peppers, and croutons.

N.B. When I lived in Spain, as a student in the early 70's, Senora Molina gave me this recipe. The only difference is that she would add about twelve unbleached almonds to the blender.

Sopa de Ajo



Garlic Soup



One year the daughter of one of our friend's from Madrid stayed with us. On one occasion, my wife served a French onion soup in those individual ovenproof soup bowls. Visa, the daughter's name, (yes, like the credit card,) said, (and maybe she was fourteen,) that the way we served the French onion soup reminded her of how she likes to eat garlic soup. She then asked us permission to make *sopa de ajo* the next night, and so she did, and it was wonderful. This is her recipe.

In a frying pan:

- Take Italian bread and cut slices that would fit in the bowl.
- Put a couple of tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, about 2 chopped cloves of garlic and basically make croutons by placing the bread in the olive oil and garlic and lightly browning both sides.
- Take the bread out of the pan and sprinkle some paprika over it and put it to the side.

In a soup pot:

- Take about 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil and 2 cloves of chopped garlic, heat it up and add 1 pinch of paprika, a pinch of hot pepper, and a pinch of sea salt.
- Finally, add about 40 ounces of chicken broth and bring the whole mixture to a boil.

In individual bowls:

- Take the croutons and place them in the bowls.
- Pour the soup into the ovenproof bowls and crack an egg into each bowl.
- Take the bowls and place them in a preheated 450 degree oven.

Let this bake for about six or seven minutes.

Take the bowls out of the oven and place them on a dish and serve – what a fabulous treat!

Consumé al jerez



Beef both with Sherry

My cooking philosophy basically tries not to reinvent the wheel and tries to keep things as simple and easy as possible. After all, I want to enjoy the food and the company and not be overwhelmed by them.

So, this is real simple. Make a beef broth from a bullion cube, serve in individual bowls and add an ounce of sweet sherry (I prefer red here). If you want to get a little fancier, add a slice of a hard boiled egg, and if you have some previously cooked or baked ham, add a few small chopped pieces. But, even if you only serve the beef broth with the sherry – you are home free. If you are serving this family style, I would add the sherry after you prepared the broth.



Ensaladas – Salads



Besides its health benefits, there is nothing like a great *ensalada* to add color to a table. I hate to sound like a broken record but, the addition of a Spanish extra virgin olive oil will really enhance the taste. Some of the most commonly served *ensaladas* are:

Ensalada Mixta- Mixed Salad

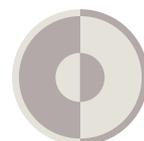
Ensalada de espárragos –Asparagus Salad

Ensalada de tomate – Tomato Salad

Endalada rusa- Russian Salad

Ensalada de aguacate – Avocado Salad

Ensalada Mixta



Mixed Salad

Every time that I am in Spain and I hear someone ask for *ensalada mixta* as a salad dish to be eaten prior to the main meal, I am taken aback. The *ensalada mixta* is a meal unto itself. I love to have this dish as a main meal for lunch during the summer – it is refreshing and healthy. This is one *tapa* that seems to be prepared in the same manner no matter where you are in Spain.

Ingredients:

- ✦ Your favorite lettuce
- ✦ Sliced tomatoes
- ✦ Pieces of green and red pepper
- ✦ One or two sliced hard boiled eggs
- ✦ Some chunks of tuna (from a can in oil)
- ✦ Three or four white asparagus
- ✦ A small can of kernel corn
- ✦ Extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and salt to taste

Ensalada de espárragos



Asparagus Salad



When I think of asparagus in Spain, I think of the running of the bulls. Now, I can understand why, if you have never been in Spain, this might cause some confusion. Perhaps, even if you have been in Spain, this can be confusing. Allow me to explain. The running of the bulls, as made famous by Ernest Hemingway, in his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, takes place in Pamplona, Spain at the beginning of July. Never having been in the proper shape, either physically or psychologically, to run through the narrow streets of Pamplona in front of six enraged bulls, I have, when in Spain, watched this event on the TV. The event runs for seven days, and every morning, at seven o'clock, I would put the TV on to see and hear the rocket blast that tells the shepherd to open the gates and let the bulls out. This same blast alerts the San Fermes, as they are called, that they should start running for their lives. I think when Hemingway wrote about this, there were maybe two local kids who would run in front of the bulls. Now, there are thousands – all trying to make it to the bull ring alive. I know, you are asking, what does this have to do with asparagus. Well, Pamplona is located in the province of Navarra, Spain, and Navarra produces some of the best asparagus in the world. They grow a white asparagus underground, so that it is not burned by the sun, and they harvest it by hand – what a fabulous taste! The advertiser, on TV, for the running of the bulls, is the organization of producers of asparagus from Navarra – and that is why I associate asparagus with the running of the bulls.

This is a real easy salad to make – just be sure to buy white asparagus from Navarra, take them out of the jar and serve.

Ensalada de aguacate



Avocado Salad

The Spanish *conquistadores* discovered the avocado when they came to the new world. The Spanish word *aguacate* comes from the Nahuatl (indian word) *ahuacatl* (testicle) which describes the avocados shape. When you choose your avocado, make sure that it is neither hard nor mushy. All you do is cut it in half, take out the seed, peel off its hard skin, and slice it. Pour extra virgin olive oil over the slices and salt to taste.

Ensalada de aguacate con gambas Avocado Salad with Shrimp

Another great salad idea is to use large ripe avocados, cut them in half, remove the seed, leave the skin on. Place the entire half in a dish, fill with small shrimp, cover with a mayo dressing flavored with tomato sauce, and eat with a spoon. The hard green skin is not eaten, it is used as a natural container to hold the avocado and shrimp.

The Avocado Houseplant

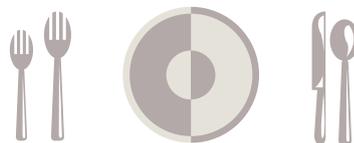
- Take the seed, wash it off, take off the brown skin.
- Place three toothpicks in the lower end of the seed and place the avocado in a glass of water in a dark spot.
- The seed will start to grow roots in the water (refill water as necessary), when the seed opens and a stem starts to grow, transplant to a pot with dirt and treat as a normal house plant.



Ensalada de tomates



Tomato Salad



Slice a tomato really thin, cover with extra virgin olive oil, sea salt, and pepper and you are in heaven. What can be more simple? Talk about something refreshing, and tasty – and it does not matter if the tomato is red or green. I have had this in the rustic setting of a small town in southern Spain called Rute, and I have had this in some of Madrid's finest restaurants – some people like to add vinegar and oregano – but it's not necessary – just slice, sprinkle and enjoy.

Ensalada rusa



Russian Salad

This salad is very popular in Spain and I think that it does not have anything to do with Russia. It is a great tasting salad and easy to prepare.

After they cool down:

- ✦ Dice about one pound of potatoes that have been boiled in salted water and place in a bowl
- ✦ Add about 4 ounces of tuna in oil from a can,
- ✦ a tablespoon of chopped parsley,
- ✦ four tablespoons of cooked peas,
- ✦ three tablespoons of chopped cooked carrots,
- ✦ two hard boiled eggs, sliced,
- ✦ two teaspoons of grated onion,
- ✦ one teaspoon of capers,
- ✦ one clove of mashed garlic,
- ✦ one tablespoon of balsamic vinegar,
- ✦ sea salt and pepper to taste.
- ✦ Then, mix with about one half a cup of mayonnaise, serve when ready



Pescados y Mariscos



Fish and Shell Fish

Being surrounded on three sides by water makes ships and fishing a natural for Spain. The fresh catches of the day are on display in restaurants and markets throughout the country, even in the heart of landlocked Madrid. Since fish is such an important part of the Spaniard's everyday diet, freshness is truly guaranteed. I'll state the obvious, the fresher the fish, the tastier the fish. In the United States, it seems that we are either eating fish or shell fish that have been frozen, or that have been laying around a tad longer than necessary. In either case, I will share with you some great and easy fish/shell fish dishes – the caveat is that you need to use the freshest possible product.

Lenguado Menier – Fillet of Sole in Butter Sauce

Paella de mariscos – Shellfish Paella

Pez Espada a la plancha – Grilled Sword Fish

Vieiras al horno – Baked Scallops

Zarzuela de mariscos – Shellfish Medley

Lenguado Menier



Fillet of Sole in Butter Sauce

After Spain's heavy lunches, it is impossible for me to have a heavy dinner. Yet, one has to have something to eat for dinner. Here is where *lenguado menier* fits the bill. It is a light, tasty, and healthy dish (OK, perhaps the butter might be a little problem for some), and it is a dish easy to prepare. While the sauce has its origin in France, *lenguado menier* has a Spanish flair.

Ingredients:

- Fillets of sole
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt
- Flour
- Chopped Parsley
- Butter

Wash off the fillets and dry them. Lightly brush them with olive oil, sprinkle some sea salt, and dip them in flour. Sauté the floured fillets in a few tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil that has already been heated. After sautéing them, on both sides, take them out of the pan. Place them to the side and gently pat them down to take away excess oil. You really do not want the fish to be dripping in oil – the taste of this dish revolves around the butter sauce.

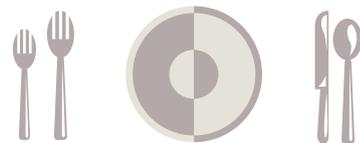
To make the *menier*:

Take three or four tablespoons of butter, melt in a pan adding a handful of chopped parsley, the juice of a freshly squeezed lemon, and sea salt to taste. Stir constantly and be careful not to burn the butter. Drizzle this sauce over the plated *lenguado* – serve with a side of asparagus and a tomato salad. Some of my friends like to add a finely chopped clove of garlic as they are making the *menier* sauce – your choice.

Paella de mariscos



Shellfish Paella



Paella originated in Valencia, Spain, and I've eaten some great *paellas* there. However, quite frankly, the best *paella* I've ever had was made by a local Andalusian in the Hotel Las Piramides in Fuengirola, Costa del Sol – go figure!

The word *paella* means frying pan in Valenciano (the language spoken in Valencia). However, today the word *paella* stands for the rice based meal that is made in a *paellera*, a round flat pan especially designed for the preparation and cooking of this meal.

The original *paella* was made with rice, rabbit, chicken,, and whatever else was on hand. Today, there are many varieties of this flavorful dish. Not being a purist, I love *paella de mariscos* and I use only the shellfish that I like – so feel free to add or subtract according to your taste.

Paella de mariscos



Shellfish Paella

Some things you'll need – you definitely need to buy a *paellera*, use short grained rice (there are many brands that sell rice specifically marketed as rice for *paella*), and you must use saffron.

The Ingredients:

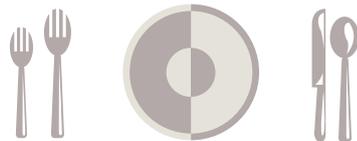
- + Extra virgin olive oil
- + 2 finely chopped cloves of garlic
- + ½ cup of chopped onion
- + ½ cup of chopped ripened tomato
- + Pimientos de piquillo
- + 1 cup of rice
- + 1 teaspoon of saffron
- + 3 cups of chicken broth
- + 4 skinless drumsticks
- + 1 package of frozen peas
- + 2 pieces of chorizo
- + 8 peeled shrimp
- + 12 scrubbed cherrystone clams – or the smallest clams you can find
- + 8 scrubbed mussels
- + 4 washed lobster tails (defrosted)
- + Sea salt

Place the *paellera* on the stove, lightly cover the bottom with extra virgin olive oil, sauté the garlic, onions, 2 pieces of pimientos de piquillo, 1 ripened tomato and the sea salt, add the drum sticks and chorizo – and cook with a low flame. Then, add I cup of broth with the cup of rice – mix in about 12 strands of saffron, add the defrosted peas, and keep on stirring. As the rice and the rest of the mixture sop up the broth, add in the second cup of broth plus another pinch of sea salt – keep on mixing everything – use a wooden spoon. At about the 20 minute mark, add the third cup of broth plus the clams , mussels, lobster tails, and shrimp being sure to cover them with the rice. When the mixture has soaked up all the broth – the *paella* is ready – add strips of piquillo.

Pez Espada a la plancha



Grilled Sword Fish



Pez Espada is not the most popular fish eaten in Spain, but I've chosen a sword fish recipe since it is a really easy fish to buy and can be purchased in steak form. The recipe that I provide here can be applied to any fish that can be fried or grilled.

All you need to do is marinate the fish in extra virgin olive oil and sea salt. You can marinate the fish for 5 minutes or 50 minutes – the longer the better. Then place the fish in the frying pan or on the grill under a low flame. Cook it up for just a couple of minutes on each side. As the fish is cooking add some chopped parsley and a couple of cloves of chopped garlic. Plate and serve with boiled or grilled asparagus on the side and have a half of a lemon ready for each diner so that they can squeeze it over the fish and asparagus. ¡*Qué aproveche!* (Bon appetite).

Vieiras al horno



Baked Scallops

In 1978, my wife and I were passing through La Coruña, Spain (Galicia). This is a really great city to visit. We love its port and its main square, *La Plaza de Maria Pita*. It is also where you can visit the only functioning lighthouse which dates back to Roman times – *La Torre de Hércules*. In recent years, the main avenue has been lined with beautiful old-fashioned looking street lamps. As usual, I digress. My wife and I were hungry and we plopped ourselves down in a restaurant in the heart of the port. We saw many locals ordering *vieiras al horno* and it looked so good that we ordered the same. To say the least, we were not disappointed, and what's more, it's real easy to prepare.

- Use one pound of bay scallops, these are the small ones.
 - If you cannot find bay scallops, use the regular sized ones but cut them into small pieces.
- Finely chop 2 onions, 2 cloves of garlic, and a handful of parsley.
- Mix the scallops with the above plus add a handful of seasoned breadcrumbs, salt and pepper.
- Place this mixture in a scallop shell or baking dish.
- Drizzle each scallop with extra virgin olive oil and a drop of vinegar.
- Bake in the oven at 375 degrees for about 15 minutes.

It looks really cool when you see this dish in the scallop shells. Serve two shells per guest. A glass of chilled white Albariño wine goes great with this - a sprite or seven-up also works.

Zarzuela de mariscos



Shellfish Medley



The *Zarzuela* refers to an opera like event where the action alternates between drama (sometimes comedy) and music. I guess that this dish is named *zarzuela* to reflect the alternating tastes of the various shell fish included. The translation of *zarzuela de mariscos* is usually shellfish stew but I have altered the usual recipe to reflect my personal taste, and I hope you enjoy.

First make a yellow rice.

Take a big pot, add 3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, and sauté one diced onion, one finely chopped garlic clove, one diced large ripe tomato, and one piquillo pepper. Then add 4 cups of chicken broth (even though this is a shellfish dish, I do not like to use fish stock – it makes the taste too fishy for my taste), 12 strands of saffron, 1 cup of rice and sea salt to taste. Follow the cooking time on the rice box.

Second, use the following shell fish:

- + 4 lobster tails (in shell)
- + 8 jumbo shrimp (shells on)
- + 16 scrubbed mussels
- + 24 scrubbed cherrystone clams

I like to prepare these the way I make *almejas en salsa verde*.

Please remember not to use any clams or mussels that do not open.

Once the rice is done, serve it in a plate and add one lobster tail, 4 shrimp, 4 mussels, and 8 clams per plate – *sabroso* (tasty)!





Carnes y Pollos



Meat and Poultry

There was a time in Spain, after its Civil War, when every thing was pretty scarce. Also, since Spain did not enter World War II, and the allies did not look favorably upon the fascist regime of Francisco Franco, the Marshall Plan, while helping out our European enemies, did nothing for Spain. It therefore took Spain a little longer to recover from the economic effects of its internal struggle. I mention this because it seems to me that the quality of Spain's home grown meat left a lot to be desired and this, in my mind, was true for several decades after this event. However, today, Spain has some of the world's best tasting meat. Its veal, pork, lamb, and beef are truly outstanding in quality. Couple these meat products with Spain's outstanding sauces and you have some great tasting dishes.

Chuletillas de Cordero – Baby Lamb Chops

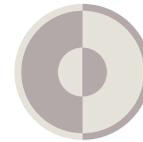
Pollo Asado – Roasted Chicken

Muslos de pollo al ajillo – Chicken legs in garlic sauce

Solomillo – Sirloin Steak

Pepito de Ternera – Veal Sandwich

Chuletillas de Cordero



Baby Lamb Chops

Around the corner from where I lived on *Calle San Bernardo*, in Madrid, there was a *mesón* called Mesón Mosto. It was definitely a place for locals. One of their best dishes was *chuletillas de cordero* (baby lamb chops). They were so tasty that you could almost eat the bones. I asked the owners their secret, and they said that the first secret was the ingredient. These were milk fed lambs. You sometimes see the word *lechal*, and this means milk fed. The second secret was that the chops were marinated in plenty of freshly squeezed lemon juice for a couple of hours. All they did was to add some sea salt, a little pepper, and fry them in extra virgin olive oil adding more freshly squeezed lemon juice. Do not overcook the chops, and do not serve them dripping with olive oil. Once you plate them, you may add some more freshly squeezed lemon juice. Squeeze the juice right from the lemon. These *chuletillas* can also be cooked on the barbeque. Serve them with *patatas fritas* (French fries), some *pimientos del piquillo*, and a simple *ensalada* (salad), and you have a great light dinner.

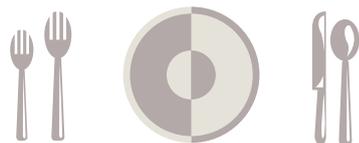
N.B. The *chuletillas* also taste great with *ali-oli* sauce or *Chimichurri* sauce.

Chimichurri sauce: coarsely blend a handful of parsley, eight cloves of garlic, a teaspoon of oregano, a pinch of paprika, a dash of cayenne pepper, and two teaspoons of sea salt. Once this is done, place mixture in a bowl, and add one-quarter of a cup of balsamic vinegar, and three-quarters of a cup of extra virgin olive oil-stir and let stand for about fifteen minutes.

Pollo Asado



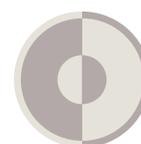
Roasted Chicken



When we had a *piso* (apartment) in Fuengirola, Costa del Sol, Spain, we would generally visit during the summer. *La Costa del Sol* (the sun coast) is exactly that – the southern part of Spain's coast that basks in the sun all year long. Our vacations would last for three to four weeks, and we learned that we needed to hire someone to cook and clean or else it really was not a vacation. We were very lucky to have a woman from the port city of Málaga who was a pretty good cook. When we really did not want a heavy lunch or dinner, we would indicate that to Aurora, that was her name, and she would always suggest a *gazpacho, pollo asado, patatas fritas y ensalada* (gazpacho, roasted chicken, home made French fries, and a simple salad of lettuce and tomato with oil and vinegar).

The *pollo asado* always tasted great and it was really simple to make. All she would do is place a lemon, bay leaf, about ten cloves of garlic, and a bullion cube inside the chicken. Then she would put olive oil on the chicken and sea salt, and into the oven it went. The result was a really tasty chicken dish.

Muslos de pollo al ajillo



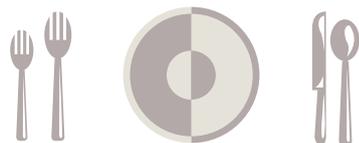
Chicken legs in garlic sauce

I tend to like anything in garlic sauce. My wife likes to make this dish, and while she usually does not like to share with me her cooking techniques, I've watched her long enough to observe that she takes the skin off the drumsticks, and throws the skin away. She then washes off the poultry and places the drumsticks in a glass baking dish whose bottom is covered with extra virgin olive oil. She turns the legs in this oil. She then generally sprinkles sea salt, pepper, chopped parsley and a little oregano over the legs. Then I observe that she squeezes three or four lemons over the legs. Finally, she cuts up about twenty cloves of garlic and adds that to the mixture. It seems to me that she places this dish in a 350 pre-heated oven for about 15 to 20 minutes. She then takes the dish out of the oven, turns the legs over, and repeats the cooking process. The result is a fabulous tasting *muslos de pollo al ajillo*.

Solomillo



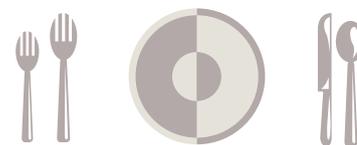
Sirloin Steak



In July of 1972, I was walking with some friends in Madrid's *Plaza Mayor* and we went down the staircase under *El Arco de los Cuchilleros*, a very famous archway in Madrid's main square. At the bottom of this staircase, and in the ensuing streets one can find many *mesones* (restaurants specializing in *tapas*). We came across a restaurant called Casa Paco. My understanding was that Paco was either a retired bull fighter or he had something to do with bull fights. Whether this be true or not really does not matter but I think it truly enhances the story. Anyway, we were led to believe that this restaurant was his retirement business, and since he had been associated with bulls, his restaurant had some of the best steaks in the world. I believe that I even met Paco himself. My understanding is that Paco has since passed on but that his relatives continue to run this great restaurant. As I recall, Paco had his picture taken with famous people who had eaten in his establishment, and these pictures were hanging all over the walls. Getting back to that night, we decided to skip the *tapas* and go for the steaks. The waiter brought uncooked meat to our table to show us its great quality and to ask us how much meat we individually would like to order. I knew that a kilo was 2.2 pounds, but I still get confused as to the breakdown of kilos to grams. For some reason, we all ordered 500 gram portions. Moments later, the *solomillo* was brought back, it still looked uncooked but it had been seared in oil and salted, and then brought to us in plates that were extremely hot. The idea was that the plate's heat would finish the cooking process. You could even ask for another heated plate if you needed your steak to be cooked more. I cannot begin to describe how delicious these steaks tasted. The accompaniment was home made potato chips and a salad consisting of lettuce, tomatoes, oil, and vinegar.

While *solomillo* translates as sirloin, it always reminds me of filet mignon. Also, *solomillo* can be of beef, oxen, pig, etc. I like to take filet mignon and say that it is *solomillo*. I take the steak and marinate it in extra virgin olive oil, sea salt, pepper, chopped up garlic cloves, chopped parsley and I squeeze a lemon in the marinade. I then let it sit in the refrigerator for an hour – the longer the better. Afterwards, depending on the season, I either grill on the BBQ or in the frying pan – always using the remaining marinade while the steaks are cooking. I serve them with home made potato chips and a simple salad.

Pepito de Ternera



Veal Sandwich

I really wanted to present a veal dish in this section. I was thinking of something elaborate, but then it came to me. One of the best veal dishes in Spain is a veal sandwich. This may not seem like much but, quite frankly, it is one of the best evening meals one can have, especially after having had an extremely heavy lunch – which is generally the norm in Spain. *El pepito de ternera* probably originated when some local named Pepe (the American equivalent of Joe) decided that he just wanted to eat a thin slice of veal (scaloppine style). So Pepe or Pepito (used as a term of endearment) probably told the local short order to fry him a thin veal scaloppini with some salt and pepper on it, and maybe add a little slice of green pepper; all of this to be placed in a sandwich of French bread. These first *pepitos* (sandwiches like Pepito liked) were most likely eaten as a light lunch or perhaps an evening snack. Pepito may have had a glass of wine or beer to accompany his invention. Well, over the last five decades or so, the *pepito de ternera* is everywhere. I cannot relate how many nights, when we have been in Spain and not exceptionally hungry, the *pepito* became our main meal. On these nights, my son Luis would love to have a *caldo con jerez* (beef broth with a touch of sherry wine), followed by a delicious *pepito de ternera*. Of course, being American, he would also have a coke too, although, he was crazy about *Fanta de naranja* (Fanta orange soda). We have Fanta here but it always seems to taste better in Spain. Another little trick with the *pepito* is to place the sandwich on the grill or in the pan and press down on it – this warms up the bread and spreads the juices into the bread's mass making for a real juicy tasty sandwich.



Postres – Desserts



If you have a sweet tooth, you will love Spanish desserts. I have included *turrón* (hard nugget candy) – just buy the package, open it up and serve, *flan* – a custard with a taste of Spain, *macedonia* – fruit salad, *buñuelos* – doughnuts, and *tarta de Santiago* – St. James Cake.

Buñuelos – Doughnuts

Flan – Custard

Macedonia – Fruit Salad

Tarta de Santiago – Almond Cake

Turrón – Nougat Candy

Buñuelos



Doughnuts

On many a hot sunny afternoon, we would hop in our car and drive to the nearby white Andalusian mountain village of Mijas. From there we could see the Mediterranean while, at the same time, be bathed by its cool breezes. We would sit down at a table in the *plaza*, near the town's little chapel, and order *café con leche* (espresso with boiled milk). As we waited for our order, several elderly village ladies would be huddled over barrels containing heated oil. They were preparing to make *buñuelos* – freshly made doughnuts. These *buñuelos*, sprinkled with powdered sugar, would be a great accompaniment to our *café con leche*. This would be a great afternoon *merienda* (snack), and considering that the custom is to have dinner about 10 pm – this really would hold us over. At the time, we would buy a dozen for about a dollar. Many years have passed, and we have since sold our condo. But, the wonderful memories of eating *buñuelos* in Mijas linger in our family's mind.

Thinking back on this experience, *buñuelos* look and taste very much like my Aunt Marion's Italian *zeppole*. So, to be perfectly honest, I am going to share with you my Aunt Marion's secret *zeppole* recipe and pass it off as a recipe for *buñuelos* – the taste is the same and this recipe is easy. Please remember that since it is a secret recipe, I will share it with you however, you must promise to reveal it only to your first born.

The Secret Recipe

- + 2 cups of Presto Flour (self rising)
- + 4 tablespoons of confectionery sugar
- + 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract
- + 4 eggs
- + 1 ½ pounds of ricotta cheese

Mix all together and let stand for 15 minutes

Heat Crisco Oil to about 350 degrees

Using a teaspoon, scoop the batter up and let fry until golden brown

Make sure the insides are cooked

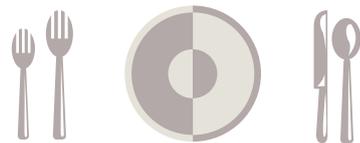
After frying, sprinkle with confectionery sugar.

Buñuelos may be served at breakfast, as a snack, or as a dessert.

Flan - Custard



When I was growing up in Brooklyn in the 50's, I used to love the homemade custard that the German Delicatessen would make. Many years later, when I first had *flan* in Spain, it reminded me of that dessert. Another translation of *flan* is crème caramel and perhaps that was what my local deli was making. The recipe that I use here I stole from my Cuban born wife – so it is really not a truly Spanish recipe. However, the taste is right on.



Step 1 - Make the caramel

Cover the bottom of your mold with sugar and add just enough water to cover the sugar. Place the mold on your stove under low heat and allow the sugar to turn a caramel brown. Take care to keep swirling the water and the sugar (which is now caramel) all around the mold so that the caramel is more or less evenly spread all over the inside of the mold. Once this is done, place it to the side.

Step 2- Take

- + 2 cans of evaporated milk
- + 1 cup of whole milk
- + ¼ teaspoon of salt
- + 3 sticks of cinnamon
- + Mix these ingredients in a pot and place them on the stove and bring to a boil.

Step 3- In a separate bowl combine

- + 1 can of condensed milk
- + ¼ cup of sugar
- + 6 eggs
- + 8 ounces of whipped cream cheese
- + A splash of vanilla extra

Step 4

Slowly pour what you have done in Step 2 through a strainer into the bowl that you are using in Step 3 – once that is done, whisk the ingredients thoroughly.

Step 5

Pour Step 4's mixture into the mold. The mold should be placed in another pan with water in it (bain-marie) and this should be placed in a pre-heated 400 degree oven for about one hour and one-half. After about an hour, you should check the consistency of the flan by gently sticking a knife in the *flan* – once that it is observed that there is no liquid on the knife – the *flan* is done.

Step 6 – Take out of oven and let cool before serving. Fridge the leftovers.

Macedonia



Fruit Salad

Often times, you see *Macedonia de frutas* on a menu. However, this is redundant. A *macedonia* is a fruit salad, so if you see or say *macedonia de frutas* you are really saying a fruit salad of fruits – dah! Anyway, I include *macedonia* here because it is really simple and healthy. All you have to do is cut pieces of your favorite fruits, fresh or canned, throw them in a bowl, add orange juice, some squeezed lemon juice, three tablespoons of sugar – mix it all up, place it in the fridge and serve cold. To give the *macedonia* that Spanish flavor, you could add some Spanish white wine, a little *licor 43*, and/or some *cava*. My suggestion for fruits are apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, blueberries, kiwi, pineapple, maybe some type of melon, and seedless grapes.

Tarta de Santiago



Almond Cake



Tarta means cake, and *Santiago* refers to Saint James the Apostle. *Santiago* went to Spain to spread the “Good News”. Most of his evangelizing took place in Galicia – the region in Spain’s northwest corner. Eventually, he returned to Jerusalem and was martyred. His body was spirited back to Spain but the grave site was lost. In the early part of the 9th century, a light from the stars shone down on a field showing shepherds where the apostle was buried – thus the name *Compostela* (field of the star) – *Santiago de Compostela*. Around this time Spain was warring against the Moors, and *Santaigo* appeared in a battle mounted on a hoarse and carrying a red cross. The enemy was defeated and as a result, *Santiago* went on to become the patron saint of Spain.

La Tarta de Santiago can be found throughout Galicia – it has a great taste and is truly a nice tribute and a daily reminder of Spain’s patron saint. It is also rather easy to make.

Ingredients:

- + ¼ lb of finely ground almonds
- + ½ cup of sugar
- + 4 small eggs (separated)
- + 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- + 1/8 teaspoon lemon grind (grated)

Mix the egg yolks, sugar and lemon.

Once mixed, stir in the cinnamon and ground almonds.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff. Then fold the egg whites into the almond mixture.

Grease an 8” pan and pour in the mixture.

Bake at 350 degrees for 40 – 45 minutes.

Cool slightly and remove from the pan.

When the cake has completely cooled, cut out the Orden de Santuago cross and use a stencil when sprinkling on powdered sugar.

N.B. This recipe was given to me by my friend Marie Tirrell who along with her husband Tony love Galicia and who both have a true feel for its gastronomic delights.

Turrón



Nougat Candy

One Christmas, back in 1986, we were in our *piso* (condo) in the town of Fuengirola, Spain. We went to visit the *portero* (super) of our building and his family. My son was just shy of being two years old. As we entered the household, the portero, his wife and kids all greeted us with kisses and shouts of *Feliz Navidad* - Merry Christmas!. No sooner than we passed the threshold of their apartment, their youngest son, Alejandro, stuck a piece of this hard nougat candy in our son’s mouth. We were horrified. Surely, our son would choke to death. Our only son, born prematurely, at twenty-five weeks, weighing only 950 grams, five and one-half months in the hospital before coming home, and now this - *turrón* forced in his little mouth. To our surprise, he was able to chew/chomp-on this lovely nougat, and he’s been doing so ever since.

What is *turrón* (*turrónes* is the plural)? *Turrón* is a confection of nuts or fruit pieces in a sugar paste. It comes in hard (*turrón de alicante*) or soft varieties (*turrón de jijona*), and it tastes great. The best part about it is that you just take it out of the box, break it up, and serve. There is even a chocolate kind that melts in your mouth. While you are looking for *turrónes*, you may come across *mazapanes* and *polverones* – also great tasting treats. These sweets are most popular during the Christmas holidays. However, many stores carry them all year long.



Bebidas – Drinks



Bebidas (drinks) refers to any kind of drink. However, in this section, I am referring to mostly alcoholic beverages. I do not intend to give a history of some of Spain's most famous alcoholic beverages, and I do not think it is fair that the reader should be subjected to definitions of what these beverages are or how they are made. Instead, I have compiled a listing of some of Spain's most famous brand named drinks that, if you are so inclined, you and your guests should try.

I suppose that the most famous Spanish *bebida* is *sangría*. However, Spanish wines, brandies, sherris, and cavas are close behind. Its cider and licors are also great tasting.

When drinking, we should give *un brindis* (a toast). Here is one of Spain's most famous: *Salud, dinero, y amor, y tiempo para disfrutarlos* (Health, money, and love, and time to enjoy them.)

Café - Coffee

Cerveza - Beer

Jerez - Sherry

Sangría - Sangría

Vino - Wine

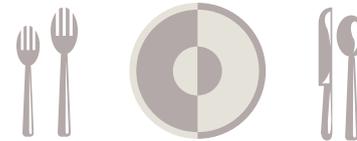
Cava- Cava

Coñac – Brandy

Licores - Liqueurs

Sidra – Cider

Café



Coffee

There are many wonderful coffee houses in the United States. However, I always like the coffee in Spain better. I am not certain if it is the bean mixture or the machines they use to make the coffee that gives "their" coffee that great taste. Whatever it is, it is truly appealing to my palate.

There are basically three types of coffee served in Spain

Café or *café solo* – this is served in a small demi-tasse cup. We would call it espresso.

Café cortado or *un cortado* – served as above but with a drop or two of boiled milk.

Café con leche – This is a double espresso served in a regular coffee cup and then boiled milk fills the rest of the cup.

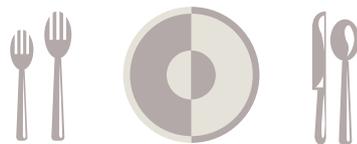
Add sugar as desired. You can purchase a coffee maker that does espresso – they are rather inexpensive, and do not forget to purchase coffee that is ground especially for espresso. This coffee is stronger than our regular American blends – so be careful, especially if you would like to get to sleep before dawn. They also sell decaffeinated espresso coffee.

There are other types of coffee combinations – some are made with evaporated milk, some have ice cream – but these are local inventions. *Un café*, *un cortado*, or *un café con leche* are common throughout Spain. In Spain, coffee is never served with the meal (except with breakfast), it is served after the meal. Remembering that lunch is the main meal, *café con leche* is not usually requested afterwards.

Cava



Cava



The Penedes region of Catalonia, which lies about 40 kilometers southwest of Barcelona, is world famous for its sparkling white wines. These wines are made in the *methode champenoise*, which means using a similar method by which champagne is made. This sparkling white wine is called *cava*. Years ago people would refer to *cava* as Spanish champagne, but this is no longer legal to do since champagne is made from grapes from the champagne region of France, and the French took umbrage at, in their opinion, their neighbors trying to usurp their type of sparkling wine. To avert a world war, the sparkling white wine that is from Spain and that tastes like champagne is called *cava* – and it tastes great. There are three types: *brut* – extra dry, *seco* – dry, and *semiseco* – medium. The two most common brands that I have seen in the US are Codorníu and Freixenet, there are other brands and they all seem to be great. A *votre sante*, oh excuse me that's French for Salud!

Cerveza



Beer

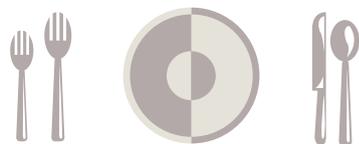
With all the great wine in Spain, why drink beer, and years ago wine was so inexpensive that it was cheaper than beer and soda. I am not certain how the economics work today, but Spain makes nice tasting beer and Spaniards drink a lot of it. I do not think that we want to get into a competition with German and Belgium beers, but if it's hot and you want something thirst quenching and good tasting, Spanish beer will do the trick. To ask for a *caña* (a small glass of draft beer) is pretty common. The word *caña* might change from region to region, example, you can also hear the word *tubo* (draft beer served in a glass that reminds one of a tube). *Cerveza* means beer and, when ordering, it usually refers to bottled beer. Some famous brand name Spanish beers are Cruzcampo, San Miguel, Mahou, Estrella Galicia to name a few. If you are planning a Spanish *fiesta* and want to serve beer, any of these will do. Do not get too excited if you cannot find a Spanish beer in your local store, just substitute your favorite.

N.B. *Una clara* (a clear one) is a favorite drink made by mixing draft beer with *casera* (a Spanish soda) – use Sprite or Seven-up instead.

Coñac



Brandy



The word brandy is Dutch in origin, and dates back to the name given, by Dutch traders, to the type of wine that comes from the distilling of fermented grape juice and which is aged in wooden oak casks which, through a long process, gives the wine its color, taste, aroma, and flavor. Remembering that the Moors were in control of large parts of Spain between the 8th and 15th centuries, and that their scientists were at the vanguard of medicine, brandy was initially developed by them as a medicinal.

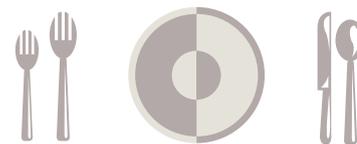
We mentioned that brandy is aged in oak casks, this process is called *solera* whereby the ageing takes place in a series of barrels containing increasingly older wines. Fruit is often added to produce distinct flavors. The normal aging process is for a minimum of six months, brands marked *reserve* have been aged for a minimum of one year, and *gran reserve* requires a minimum of five years of aging. Truly fine brandies can be aged between twelve and fifteen years or even longer.

Since I believe that every person is entitled to their own opinion of what they think tastes, smells, and looks great, I will mention some of the more popular brand names, and leave the taste testing to you.

The brands are Soberano, Carlos I, Lepanto, Veterano Osborne, Gran Duque D'Alba, and Cardenal Mendoza.

N.B. In Spanish you can use the word brandy, with a Spanish pronunciation, to mean brandy or the word *coñac* which derives from the region in France noted for its brandy.

Jerez



Sherry

When I think of sherry, I think back to my high school days. My class was assigned to read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." I was told that *amontillado* was a uniquely tasting sherry wine. After reading the story, I thought that this sherry stuff must be a really great wine if Poe's sicko narrator, Montresor could lure the unsuspecting Fortunato to his death by enticing him to visit his family's catacombs deep beneath Montresor's *palazzo* – just to taste the *amontillado*. I asked my father if I could taste some sherry. He said, "have a glass of wine, that sherry is too sweet." So I went without. Then, in my senior year of high school, I went to Most Holy Trinity High School, in Brooklyn, New York, my homeroom teacher, Brother Charlie Roggemann, was asked what he wanted for Christmas, and he said, "The only thing that I want is a bottle of Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry." He told us how this English company would transport the sherry from Spain to England. The sherry would be stored in oak casks (made in America) in a 13th century monastery. It would then be bottled and shipped all over the world so that people of fine palates, like his, could enjoy its taste. So my class bought him a bottle of Harvey's for Christmas, and since he was also our French and English teacher, I believe we all did pretty well grade wise that year. (The grade part is not true).

Years passed and I still hadn't had the opportunity to taste sherry until my first trip to Spain back in 1969 (maybe) – I don't recall the exact year. But, I do remember stepping into a bar and ordering a sherry. To my surprise, it was not sweet. So I asked the bartender about sherry, and he gave me a quick lesson, and I will share it with you.

Sherry comes from the Jerez, Spain. The name of this town during Spain's Moorish period was Xerez (pronounced Shareesh). Eventually, the spelling was changed to Jerez and the pronunciation of the word sherry relates back to the Arabic. The wine is made from the Palomino grape which comes from that region. It is not an easy wine to make, and it can be made to taste dry to sweet, to light to dark in color. The flavors can vary from hazelnut to raisins.

Sherry is a great cocktail, aperitif, or cordial. It is not served as a table wine. I will not mention brands or types, the fun is in the experimenting. Personally, I like sweet sherry over ice. It is always a good idea to ask your local store for their recommendations.

Licores



Liquers



Personally, I am not a big drinker. Nevertheless, an occasional after dinner liqueur can provide a great taste and greatly aid the digestion of a sumptuous meal. With this in mind, I would like to present you with three very popular *licores* from Spain.

Anís (Anisette) – a clear licorice tasting liqueur made from aniseeds. Great served alone, over ice, or just add a drop or two to your espresso. Buy *anís dulce* - it has less proof and I believe is better tasting than other types of anisette. Believe it or not, I once went to a museum in Rute, Spain (in the province of Córdoba) - the museum was called *El museo de anís*. It was closed, but our friend, who was from Rute, knew the owner, called him at home, and said that he had some Americans with him, and that he had to show us the museum. My wife and I were rather embarrassed, imagine, putting some one out like that. To our surprise, Anselmo, the owners son, opened the museum, gave us a private tour and tasting. Afterwards, we thanked him profusely and indicated that we really felt awful to have bothered him – in a typical Andalusian style, he told us that it was no bother, and then he insisted on inviting us over to his place where his parents and other relatives were having a *tapas* style lunch. We said that we would not think of intruding, Anselmo kept on insisting – we went. What a great day! So, every time I have *anís*, I not only think that I am enjoying a great licorice tasting liqueur, I am brought back to that day when we not only experienced a private tour of an anisette factory, but, how fortunate we were to experience the wonderful hospitality of Andalusia.

Cuarenta y Tres (Licor 43) – Liqueur 43 – The golden color of this liqueur, its over forty three secret ingredients of fruits and herbs, its hint of vanilla flavor, its history dating back to 200 B.C. are all integral parts that help make 43 a world famous liqueur. A little *cuarenta y tres* over ice placed in a large glass makes you want to sit back and dream of flamenco dancers.

Pacharán - this is a liqueur from the northern province of Navarra. This is made from a berry called sloe. The sloe is a wild fruit which comes from the Blackthorn shrub. These berries are pressed and infused with alcohol and anise. After a maceration time of between one and eight months, it is ready. This liqueur has great digestive properties.

Sangría



Sangría

In the United States, mention the word *sangría* and the image of a *fiesta* immediately comes to mind. Many restaurants serve *sangría* even though they do not serve Spanish food. *Sangría* is one of those drinks that has become truly world famous, and it all started in Spain, hundreds of years ago, and was made popular in our country when it was served at the New York World's Fair in 1964. I do not know what recipe they used then but I will share with you how I was told to make it from one of my dearest Spanish friends.

- ✦ Take a beautiful pitcher and add any bottle of Spanish red wine.
(You can use Spanish white wine but then you are making *sangría blanca*.)
- ✦ Add a table spoon of Gran Manier.
- ✦ Add two tablespoons of sugar.
- ✦ Add apple and orange slices.
- ✦ Let sit for several hours or overnight.
- ✦ Stir before serving.

Sangría needs to be served cold – you could add ice cubes. In a pinch – you can make *sangría* on the spot. The great thing about *sangría* is that you can make it any way you want – experimenting is part of the fun.

Sidra



My first opportunity to taste Spanish *sidra* (cider) was many years ago, in Madrid, in a restaurant called *Casa Mingo*, located on *Paseo de la Florida*. This is an old style *taberna asturiana* (Asturian tavern) famous for its cider, roasted chicken, and *chorizo*. The rustic setting of small Castillian wooden tables and chairs, with barrels of *sidra* strategically positioned around the restaurant's interior, gives one the feel of a *sidrería asturiana* (an Asturian cider place). The taste of the roasted chicken and *chorizo* are enhanced by the bottles of chilled cider. The alcohol content is very low, so even children can have a glass. Many years later, I had occasion to visit Asturias, and it was really incredible to see that cider was everywhere. It is also interesting to note that in the north the cider bottle is raised high above one's head and allowed to fall into the glass which is held below waist level (*escanciar la sidra*). This is done so that the cider hits the glass, mixes with the oxygen, and is allowed to mix with the cider's carbonation, thus, enhancing the cider's flavor. Another action that is sometimes observed is people throwing the last drop of the glass on the floor. This dates back to the time when everyone shared the same glass, and this was a way of washing off the germs before passing the glass to the next person. I do not recommend trying to *escanciar la sidra*, and I definitely suggest that you do not throw the last drop in your glass on the floor. However, I strongly, recommend buying several bottles of Spanish cider, available in most supermarkets, and keeping them in the fridge. You can serve this at a meal or with *tapas*. *Salud!* (To your health.)



Vino

In the early seventies, I remember being invited to a colleague's house for dinner. When we sat down at the table, her husband, rather flamboyantly, opened a bottle of wine. He immediately passed the cork under his nose. As he proceeded to give me a history of this fine wine, he poured some of the wine into a rather funny looking glass. He held up the glass, swirled the wine around inside it, and made some comments about the wine's color. He again swirled the wine in the glass and sniffed the contents. Finally, he put the glass to his lips, and poured some of the wine into his mouth – but just a little. He was passing the wine over what must have been a very refined palate. He closed his eyes, and after a few seconds, he pronounced that this wine was worthy of our consumption- all this from a Brooklyn accountant.



During the whole time of this ceremony, I was spellbound. Quite frankly, I was astounded. What a procedure! He then asked me what I thought about the wine. I did not know what to say. So, I took the easy way out, I responded, "no, no, you tell me what you think." Well, he tilted his head as if he were a mafia don, and gave his approval. Of course, I agreed with his opinion. After all, he was the host, and it was his wine. I was delighted that I brought pastry and not wine. But, I could not let it go. I had to ask him. I said, "how long have you been drinking wine?" He said, "I never had a glass of wine until two years ago, and with all humility, I have become an expert." I should have just moved on. But no, I had to say that I had been drinking wine since I was practically a baby, and my grandfather, who used to make his own wine, and was from "the old country" would always say, "you taste the wine, if you like it, it's good, and if you no like it, it's bad." I was never aware of vintage, bouquet, color, grape type, region, soil content, and what's this with smelling corks. I guess that all this proves is that I was truly a Brooklyn bore, completely unsophisticated in the oenological culture. And unfortunately, thirty some years have passed since this incident, and my understanding of the ways of the oenophile have not improved. However, I still think that my grandfather's adage holds true – "if it tastes good, it's good, if it tastes bad, it's bad." My advise is that we, of the regular world, should not be swayed by hype. I happen to love a sweet wine called Malaga Virgen, and I like it served chilled. If you don't like it – that's OK – try another type of Spanish wine. The important thing to remember is that Spain produces some of the best wines in the world, and you are certain to find the one that will become your favorite, and when you taste it will transport you to the land of castles and dreams.

Some personal favorites;

Vino Tinto (red wine) – Marqués de Riscal from La Rioja Region

Vino Blanco (white wine) – Any Alvaríño from the Galician region

Vino Rosado (rose wine) – I don't have one

Vocabulario – Vocabulary

A

a – to
aceite – oil
aceite de oliva – olive oil
aceituna – olive
aceitunas – olives
aguacate – avocado
ajillo – garlic style
ajo – garlic
al – to the
- style
a la – to the
- style
al ajillo – in garlic sauce
- garlic style
al horno – baked
- oven style
Al pil pil – parika
a la gallega – Galician style
a la sidra – cider style
ali-oli – garlic mayonnaise
almejas – clams
amargo – bitter
amor – love
anchoas – anchovies
Andalucía – Andalusia, a
southern
area of Spain
arco – arch
asado – roasted, cooked
atún – tuna

B

bebida – drink
bebidas – drinks
berenjena – eggplant
blanco – white
blanca – white
bocadillo – sandwich
bocadillos – sandwiches
boquerones – white anchovy
fillets
brava – spicy
brindis – a toast
buñuelo – doughnut

C

café – coffee
café con leche – coffee with milk
café solo – espresso
calamares – squid
caldo – broth
caldo gallego – Galician style
soup
caña – draft beer

carne – meat
casera - a soda like Seven-Up
cerveza – beer
Champiñones- mushrooms
chimichuri – a sauce made of parsley,
garlic, olive oil,
lemon juice, salt,
pepper and cayenne

chorizo – sausage
a thief (slang)
chuletas – chops
Chuletas de cordero – lamb chops
chuletas de puerco – pork chops
chuletas de ternera – veal chops
chuletilas – baby chops
con – with
conquistadores – conquerors, those
who came from
Spain to conquer the
New World

consumé – consomé, broth
consumé al jerez – consomé
with sherry
cortado – espresso coffee with a small
amount of steamed milk

costa – coast
costa del sol – sun coast
La Costa del Sol – the Sun Coast
– the beach area
in Spain's
Andalusian region
that touches the
Mediterranean

croquetas – croquettes
cuarenta y tres – forty three
cuchilleros – knife makers
cuchillo – knife

D

de – of, from
delicioso – delicious
dinero – money
disfrutar – to enjoy
dos – two
dulce – sweet

E

en – in
ensalada – salad
embutido – meat stuffed in casing
escanciar – to pour
España – Spain
español - Spanish
española – Spanish
espárragos – asparagus

F

Fanta – a brand of soda
fanta de limón – lemon soda
fanta de naranja – orange soda
feliz – happy
Feliz Navidad – Merry Christmas
fiesta – party
flan – custard
frito – fried
frita – fried

G

Galicia – an area in the northwest
of Spain
gallego, a – someone or
something from Galicia
gambas – shrimp
gazpacho – a cold vegetable soup

H

horno – oven
al horno – baked

I

infierno – hell
ingredientes – ingredients
invierno – winter

J

jamón – ham
jamón serrano – cured ham
serrano style
jerez – sherry
- a town in Andalusia Spain
judías – string beans

K

kilo – 2.2 pounds

L

lenguado – fillet of sole
lenguado menier – fillet of sole
menier style
licor – liquor
lomo – prok loin

M

Macedonia – refers to ancient
Greece
Macedonia de frutas – fruit salad
Mancha, La – an area in
central Spain
manchego – someone or something
from La Mancha
mazapán – marzipan, a sweet made
of sugar and almonds

Vocabulario – Vocabulary

mariscos – shellfish
mejillones – mussels
melón – melon
menier – a butter sauce
mes – month
mesa – table
meses – months
mesones – taverns
mixta – mixed
muslos – legs
muslos de pollo – chicken legs

N

naranja – orange
Navidad – Christmas
nueve – nine

O

olé – bravo, hurrah
Orden de Santiago – Order of
Santiago

P

pacharán – a liquor with
digestive qualities
Padrón – a town in Galicia
famous for its peppers
paella – a rice based dish
with shellfish, chicken,
sometimes rabbit
paellera – the pan that makes
the paella
pan – bread
para – for, in order to
papa – potato
patata – potato
pepito de ternera – a veal sandwich
pescado – fish
pez – fish (alive)
pica – it's spicy, spicy
pica-pica – appetizers
picar – to be spicy
pimienta – pepper (the spice)
pimiento – pepper
pimientos – peppers
pimientos de Padrón – peppers from
the town of Padrón
pimentón – paprika
piquillo – little beak, peppers
from northern Spain,
hand picked and roasted
over an open fire
pinchos – appetizers
piso – condo, apartment
pisto – ratatouille

pisto manchego – ratatouille
manchego style

plancha – iron
a la plancha – grilled
plaza – square
plaza mayor – main square
pollo – chicken
polverones – sugar cookies
portero – super of a building
postre – dessert
pulpo – octopus

Q

¡qué aproveche! – hardy appetite,
queso – cheese
queso manchego – manchego style
cheese – usually
made from
goat's milk
quesos variados – various types
of cheeses

R

reserva – reserve (from a specific
reserve of aged wine)
rusa – Russian

S

sabroso – tasty
salsa – sauce
salud – health, God bless you
a la salud – to your health
salud, dinero y amor y tiempo para
disfrutarlos – a toast saying, health,
money and love, and time to enjoy
them
sangría – wine with sugar,
fruits and ice
Santiago – James, St. James, a
famous pilgrimage
city in Galicia,
Spain
seco, a – dry
semiseco – semi dry
sidra – cider
sidrería – a tavern serving cider
solomillo – filet mignon
sopa – soup

T

taberna – tavern
tapas – appetizers
tapar – to cover
tapear – to go and eat tapas
tarta – cake
tartas – cakes

tarta de Santiago – cake from
Santiago
de Compostela

tiempo – time, season
tinto – dark
tinto de verano – red wine
mixed with casera
tomate – tomato
torre – tower
torre de Hércules – Hercules
Tower located
in La Coruña

tortilla – omelet
tortilla Española – Spanish style
omlet – made
with onions
and potatoes

tres - three
tubo – tube, glass, beer
turrón – nougat candy
turrón de alicante – hard
nougat candy
turrón de jijona – soft
nougat candy

U

uvas – grapes

V

vamos a tapear – let's go eat tapas
variado – varied
verde – green
vieiras – scallops
vinagreta – vinaigrette
vino – wine
vino blanco – white wine
vino rosado – rose wine, blush
vino tinto – red wine

W

X

Y

y – and

Z

zarzuela – a Spanish comic opera,
a mixture of different
things
zarzuela de mariscos – a mixture
of shellfish