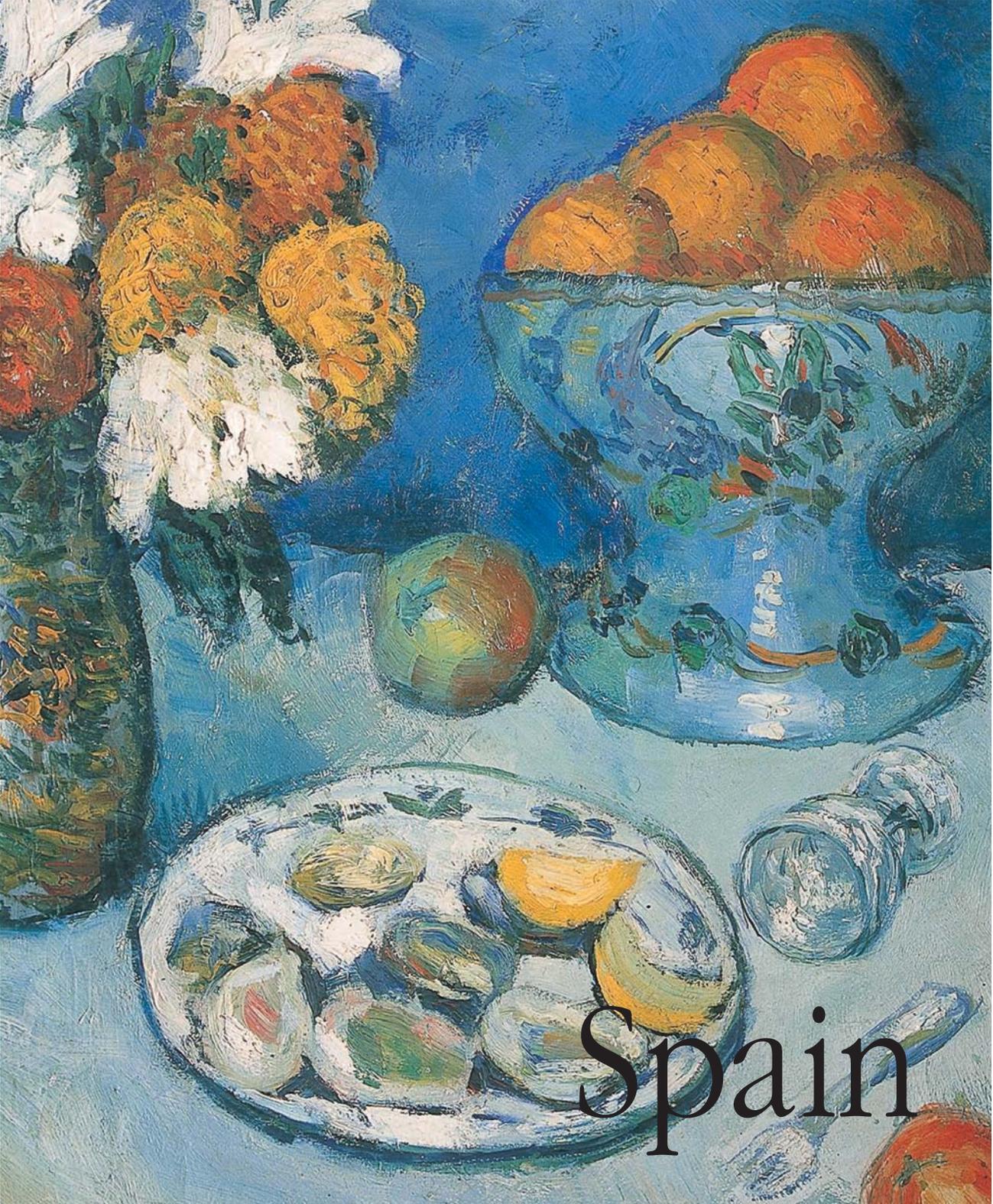


# Spanish Cooking



Spain



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# Spanish Cooking

**F**irst and foremost, Spanish cooking may be defined by two basic ingredients:

garlic and olive oil. As in other Mediterranean cuisines, both elements are indispensable when it comes to creating different combinations and flavours.

However, behind this general definition of the unmistakable character common to the cuisines of Spain and its Mediterranean neighbours, there lies a vast range of variations.

In the main, Spanish cooking stems from popular roots. Although the art of the good table is practised, little is said about it, apart from in the Basque Country and Catalonia, and any refined, receptive palate is guaranteed a succession of unforgettable experiences.

The visitor will find that the Spaniard's eating habits and approaches to cooking vary greatly from one region to another. There is absolutely no connection between the care, solemnity and gastronomic ability displayed when a lunch is organised by a *tripasai* (the term used in the Basque Country to refer to a lover of good food) and the informal culinary approach of the Andalusian, who will be seen in the bars nibbling *pescado*, or fried fish.

When describing Spanish cooking, it has become common practice to divide the peninsula into six conventional culinary segments: the North is the place for sauces; in the Pyrenees,



we find the home of the *chilindrones*, the typical accompaniment used in many of the region's dishes; next, the area for *cazuelas* or casseroles, covering most of Catalonia; then come the rice dishes, found throughout the eastern region; followed by fried dishes in Andalusia and, in the centre, the roast.

Although this clear-cut division has its advantages for practical purposes, it proves too simplistic in other ways. In this guide, we have preferred to adopt a more detailed approach so as to give as comprehensive an insight as possible into Spain's gastronomy, while keeping to the inevitable pattern of segments described above.



# A national dish

The Spanish recipe book contains dishes that have leapt to international fame, like paella and fabada; others, like gazpacho and the Spanish omelette, have enjoyed a more modest degree of popularity. There are, however, a number of less well-known, highly traditional dishes, scattered all over the country. A case in point is the one that might well be considered as the national dish par excellence; the one that might be seen as being characteristic of the entire gastronomic map in that it is to be found anywhere on the peninsula, albeit in versions peculiar to each area. We are talking about the majestic stew, known as cocido, olla, pote, escudella..., depending on the region.

In Spain, stews are made in accordance with a quasi-universal method, consisting of filling the stew pan with three kinds of basic foodstuff – the meat, pulses and vegetables characteristic of each area, and leaving them to cook together under a patient, watchful eye. When ready, the dish is served in separate courses, usually three, known as vuelcos. First comes the soup, made from the stock, then the pulse and vegetables and, lastly, the meat.



Madrid stew



Paella

The feature common to all Hispanic stews or cocidos is the pulse brought to Spain by the Carthaginians: the chickpea, which gives the Madrid and Andalusian stews, to quote just two of the more outstanding instances, that certain something. Then again, we must not forget the equally splendid stews from the North, made with beans.

## SPANISH OMELETTE

1/4 kg potatoes • 6 eggs • 1 dl oil • 1 onion

Peel and wash the potatoes and cut into thin slices. Chop the onion. Pour the oil into the frying pan and, when hot, add the onion. Sauté the onion and then add the potatoes along with salt to taste. Shake the pan gently from time to time until the potatoes are soft.



Beat the eggs in a bowl, add a pinch of salt and then the potatoes. Mix well. Pour the mixture into the frying pan and cook on a high light until brown. Turn the omelette over to stop it from drying up inside.

# Green Spain



As the traditional layout of Spanish gastronomy would have it, the lands of Galicia, Asturias, the Basque Country and Cantabria make up the area for sauces. In actual fact, the common denominator in the culinary arts of these regions is quite simply quality and quantity. Seafood from the Cantabrian Sea holds pride of place on the menus, where the diner is tempted by memorable dishes in which the prime quality of the ingredients is heightened by touches of refined simplicity.

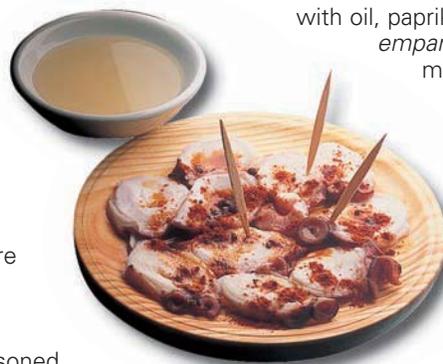
Meat in this, the country's only sizeable area of pastureland that remains green throughout the year, is also worthy of special mention. Here, unlike in other parts of the peninsula, the flavoursome stews are made with dried beans. To liven up his meal, the diner might try any of the light, mild wines, quite different from those found in the interior. When in Asturias, a refreshing option is cider, made from locally-grown apples.



## Galicia

Because of the migratory flows from the lands of Galicia to the four corners of the country, where many Galicians have set up restaurants and taverns, Galician cuisine, based on a mixture of land and sea produce, has become one of the most widespread in Spain.

Octopus is extremely popular in Galicia, where it is prepared *a feira*, a method used in the annual religious pilgrimages. First, it is well pounded to make it tender and then cooked whole. To serve, it is cut into pieces and seasoned



with oil, paprika and salt. Then, there is the crusted pie, or *empanada*, Galicia's most traditional dish. The filling, meat or fish, lends itself to countless variations, all mixed with lots of onion. It is spread between two fine layers of pastry seasoned with saffron and brushed with oil so as to retain the moisture.

However, when it comes to serious eating, the best-known dish awaiting the visitor to Galicia is *lacón con grelos*. *Lacón* is meat taken from the front leg

*Octopus Galician style*



Typical Galician produce

of the pig and then boiled. *Grelas* are the leaves of small turnips. The two ingredients are boiled together and served with a spiced sausage and a few potatoes or *cachelos* per diner. The turnip leaves give the whole thing an unmistakable, slightly bitter flavour.

*Caldo gallego* (lit.: Galician stock) is a common feature on the Galician dining table. Conceived to fight the cold and damp, it is made from cabbage, potatoes and dried beans and, depending on the cook's purse, ham, spiced sausage and pork ribs.

Next comes the superb, vast assortment of seafood, the best in the country. For centuries, Galicia has been exporting seafood and also supplying the capital. A Coruña and Vigo, particularly the town of O Grove, are a seafood lover's paradise: for a moderate price, he may savour oysters or spider crabs, crabs, goose barnacles, clams and lobsters, prepared simply by boiling.

Deserving of special mention when speaking of seafood is the *vieira* or scallop, which is served in its shell. (It was the shell of the *vieira* that the

pilgrims used to wear on their way to Santiago de Compostela). The dish is prepared by making a mixture of onion, finely-chopped parsley and breadcrumbs. The scallop, still in its shell, is covered in this mixture and then baked in the oven.

Turning now to meat, the bullock provides prime cuts, while the Villalba capons, fattened with wheat, wine and chestnuts, are of great renown.

When it is time for dessert, the sweet-toothed Galicians have a wide range of delights to choose from: *tartas espiscopales* (cakes covered in fruit), almond tarts, such as the *tarta de Santiago*, *filloas*, a kind of pancake, ring-shaped pastries known as *rosquillas*, and many more.

As for wines, Galicia is known for its slightly sour Ribeiro, served in small porcelain bowls. Top of the list, however, is the excellent Albariño, a white wine made from grapes which monks once brought to the region from the Rhine and the Moselle.

The region's drinks also include the famous *orujo*, an eau-de-vie made from marc and used to prepare the most popular local drink: *queimada*: the *orujo* is poured into a deep, earthenware dish containing bits of lemon peel, some sugar and a few coffee grains. The whole thing is then set alight.

## HAKE GALICIAN STYLE

1 kg hake • 2 dl oil • 150 g onion  
• 2 kg potatoes • 1 tbsp flour

Seasoning: salt, garlic, parsley, bay leaf, thyme, paprika



Taking the central part of the fish, remove the scales and clean thoroughly. Cut into thick slices.

Heat the oil in a pan over a high light. Add the finely-chopped onion and fry until it starts to brown, shaking the pan gently from time to time. Then add a couple of crushed garlic cloves, a spoonful of parsley and a level spoonful of paprika. At the same time, add the potatoes, cut into slices about 6 mm thick and not too wide. Mix thoroughly, sprinkling with a spoonful of flour. When the potatoes have browned, add just enough water to cover them.

Add salt to taste, six freshly-milled peppercorns and a crushed clove, along with a bouquet garni made up of bay leaf, thyme and parsley.

Leave to cook for 15 minutes and when the potatoes are ready, place in an earthenware dish. Cover with the slices of hake, slightly salted. Now place in the oven for about 10 or 12 minutes.

Serve straight from the earthenware dish.

Among the cheeses produced in the region, one of the best is the strong, smoked San Simón or Perilla, not forgetting the mild, fine-crusted *tetillas*, made from cow's milk.



Pouring cider

# Asturias

There are few other places where the traveller will eat so well for it is here, in Asturias, that one of the most universal dishes of Spanish cuisine is prepared: the renowned *fabada*, which has become so popular that it is sold in tins and exported to places all over Latin America.

*Fabada*, so genuinely and inimitably Asturian, consists of exceptionally soft and delicate dried white beans, known locally as *fabes*, and a number of pork products: cured knuckle, ham fat and black pudding. The key ingredients of this magnificent dish are, of course, the *fabes*, after which it is named, and also the black pudding, which, in Asturias, is dry and wrinkled and miraculously comes back to life as it simmers in the stock. The dish is eaten as a single course and in huge portions, as is the norm in Northern Spain.

In addition to this superb dish, the Asturian menu includes other stews in which the ineffable *fabes* are used. The visitor is strongly recommended to try any or all of the relatively new variations, in which the beans may be combined with clams (*fabes con almejas*), with hen, hare, partridge or other small game. They are a typical feature at any of the region's restaurants.

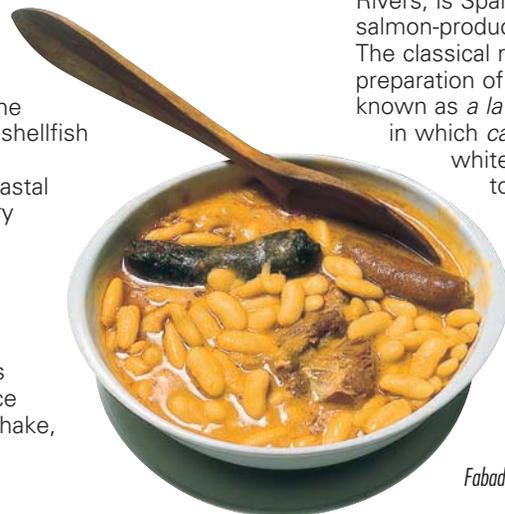
Asturias' succulent fish dishes have a mild, unmistakable taste about them. First and foremost is the *caldereta*, a perfect combination of shellfish and fleshy fish, cooked with other, complementary ingredients. The coastal towns are the best place to go to try this dish, although it is not as easy to find as *fabada*.

Then again, *merluza a la sidra* (hake in cider) is readily available at most restaurants. The secret of this dish lies in the quality of the produce used, the incomparable Cantabrian hake,

and the liquid in which it is cooked, cider made from locally-grown apples. Light and dry, Asturian cider is a basic ingredient in the region's gastronomy and is the most popular drink at bars and taverns, where it flows freely. There is something of the ritual about the way in which it is served: the bottle is held high in one hand while the glass is held at an angle in the other. The idea is to let the cider fall slowly into the glass, without spilling a drop.

Our description of Asturian fish dishes would not be complete without sparing a few words for the various ways of preparing tuna (*ventresca*, in which the fish's belly is used, *el rollo* and so on). However, the star of the show as far as tourism and gastronomy are concerned is salmon, for Asturias, with its well-stocked Nalón and Sella Rivers, is Spain's leading salmon-producing region. The classical recipe for the preparation of the fish is known as *a la ribereña*, in which *cava*, a sparkling white wine similar to champagne, is used.

When travelling round this region, it is a must to choose cream



Fabada asturiana

of rice for dessert. Considered by the locals to be the best in the country, the Asturian version has its own special feature in that it is covered by a layer of caramelised sugar. There are, however, lots of other sweetmeats, such as *tocinillos de cielo* (made of eggs and syrup), *fayules*, *frixuelos*, *carajitos del profesor*, *casadielles* (fritters filled with a hazelnut paste) and many others. As for cheese, Asturias is the home of the strongest in the country and, possibly, in the world: the famous Cabrales, which stands apart from other, no less exquisite cheeses, like Gamonedo, Peñamellera, *afuega'l pitu* and others.

# The Basque Country

Although Basque cuisine has only recently risen to fame, it now occupies the position it deserves at the top of the national gastronomic ranking and there is no question about the region's being a gourmet's paradise.

In the Basque Country, one is hard put to finding somebody who is not well up on the culinary arts. The Basques are renowned for their passionate, caring attitude towards food and their hearty appetite is proverbial. Any time or occasion is right for having something to eat. It is here that we find the *amarretako*, a repast eaten at 10 o'clock in the morning; the *amaiketako*, eaten at 11 o'clock and the *aparimerienda*, a huge early evening meal; and it is here that the country's first gastronomy societies were founded.

This is a cuisine which, while based on tradition, has been enhanced by touches of urban, modern inspiration.

When speaking of Basque dishes, the first ingredient that comes to mind is the humble cod: *bacalao a la vizcaína* (cod Vizcayan style) is, like so many other of the country's great dishes, tantamount to a miracle in that it is so cheap.

It consists of nothing more than cod, dried peppers and onions. The same may be said of *bacalao al pil-pil*, where the cod is gently fried in oil with garlic so that the gelatine from the fish forms a sauce that gives the dish its inimitable finishing touch, a toothsome flavour reminiscent of the sea. This kind of sauce, one of the great discoveries made by Basque cuisine, is used in lots of other fish dishes.

Other exquisite sauces peculiar to the Basque Country include green sauce, served with hake, and black sauce, which bathes baby squid in their own ink.

After cod comes hake, for which the Basques have different names, depending on size and origin. As with a lot of other Basque gastronomic produce, there is strong local rivalry between Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya when it comes to judging which has the best hake. The truth of the matter is that there is no equal for either the one or the other



Baby squid in their own ink

in the rest of Spain, whether it is prepared *al pil-pil*, in green sauce or simply coated with beaten eggs and breadcrumbs and fried.

Perhaps the tastiest hake dish is the one known as *kokotxas*, a refined delicacy prepared with tiny fillets taken from the fish's head.

Now for bream, slit in half and grilled or roasted over an open fire, with a soupcon of oil and garlic. However, if the visitor wants a real treat, he should go for elvers, or young eel, which are briefly dipped into boiling oil containing garlic and hot red pepper and are eaten with a wooden fork.



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Hake in green sauce



Zurracapote

Turning to more ordinary dishes, we find *marmitako*, a seafarer's dish made from tuna and potatoes, and sardines, one of the north's emblems. Here, they are roasted whole, straight from the sea. August is the best time to have them because it is then that they are at their smallest and tastiest. Eating sardines requires a certain amount of courage. Of a strong, lingering flavour, they should be eaten with the fingers if they are to be eaten properly. The best place, of course, is outdoors, where the breeze will carry away their smell and so prevent it from clinging to one's clothes.



Having described the fish dishes, a few words of praise are now in order for the meat, which is of excellent quality and is served in sizeable portions, usually roasted. B erriz is noted near and far for its T-bone steaks. There is also a varied range of poultry dishes, albeit perhaps less characteristic.

Txakol  is a wine produced in the coastal area, in the north of the Basque Country. An extremely tart white wine, it is ideal with fish and seafood. On the subject of wines, it is worth remembering that the Basque Country is home to the Rioja Alavesa, a leading wine-producing area of established repute, supplying the ideal accompaniment for any of the region's culinary delights.

On the cheeseboard, the place of honour is held by the home-made, strong and smoky Idiazabal, made from sheep's milk. As for desserts, although the Basques, generally speaking, are not sweet-toothed, the visitor will find, amongst others, filled sponges from Vergara, rolled wafer biscuits from Bilbao and pears done in the oven.

## COD AL PIL-PIL

- 600 g dried cod
- 1/2 litre olive oil
- 1 bulb of garlic
- 1/2 hot red pepper



Soak the cod in cold water for 24 to 36 hours, changing the water several times.

Before starting to cook, hold the pieces of cod under cold running water until they are perfectly clean. Remove the scales carefully. Rinse the fish once more and place in a pan of clean water. Place the pan on the heat but do not allow it to boil. When foam starts to form, remove the pan from the heat.

Take out the pieces of cod and lay them on a clean cloth to remove excess water.

While the fish is drying, heat the oil, preferably in an earthenware dish, adding the garlic cloves, cut lengthwise, and the hot red pepper. (If the dish is not to be spicy, omit the pepper).

When golden brown, remove and set aside on a plate. Place the pieces of cod skin downwards in the same oil and move the pan back and forth constantly so that the skin releases its gelatine, which works to bind the sauce being formed round the fish. Depending on the quality of the fish, this process takes between 10 and 15 minutes.

As the oil retains its heat for a good while, the pan should be removed from the heat before starting the process.

When the sauce acquires the consistency of mayonnaise, the fish will be ready.

Arrange the garlic and hot red pepper on top of the fish and return to the heat to warm it up again, remembering to keep moving the pan back and forth to prevent the sauce from losing its consistency. The dish may now be served.

# Cantabria

This is an area whose gastronomic personality proves hard to define because it is so closely connected to the approach followed in neighbouring regions, with which it shares practically the same produce. At the same time, the area has been influenced by a good number of Castilian culinary

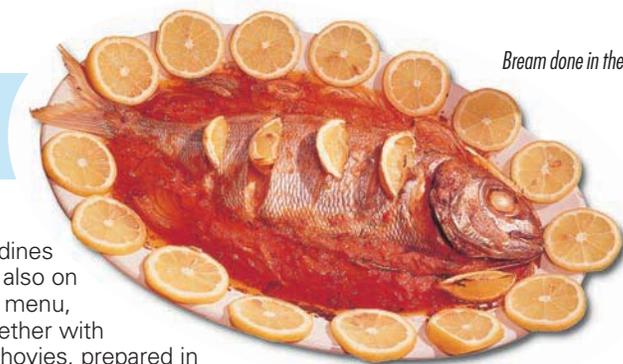
practices. As in the entire Northern part of the country, it is a place where excellent meals can be enjoyed. Again, we come across tuna, hake and bream, not forgetting salmon, which, in these parts, is prepared to an absolutely original recipe known as *arroz santanderino* (rice Santander style), in which rice is cooked with salmon and milk.

Sardines are also on the menu, together with anchovies, prepared in earthenware dishes or made into a pie, or served in yellow sauce, or simply coated with beaten eggs and breadcrumbs and fried. Then there are the traditional *rabas*, or squids chopped and fried. The coast is the place to go to savour the exquisite *marmita*.

The region's most popular cheeses include Tresviso, the cured Aliva cheese and others known as *quesucos*, usually made from cream.

Nevertheless, it is in confectionery that the chefs of Santander bring their most

original ideas into play, as shown by the unbeatable *natillas* (a kind of custard), whose extraordinary virtue lies in the simplicity of the ingredients: eggs and milk; or the *sobaos pasiegos*, buns drenched in butter and eggs. However, reigning supreme on the dessert trolley is the *quesada*, one of the great achievements of Spanish confectionery, made from fromage frais, honey and milk. The only snag is that it does not keep long.



Bream done in the oven



Sobaos pasiegos



Picón cheese from Tresviso-Bejes

# The Ebro

Around the Ebro River lies a highly characteristic gastronomic area, known as the *chilindrón* area, although this is only partly true. (*Chilindrón* is a sauce made with peppers, tomatoes and onions, fried together lightly). Here, a very good table is kept, with solid, plentiful meals. The area produces the great wines, the Riojas, along with other,

less well-known varieties which figure among the strongest in Spain, such as Cariñena. There is also an important cooked pork products industry, the hams and *longanizas* (local spiced sausages) being of particular note.



Ternasco

# Aragón

This region is known for having one of the simplest cuisines in Spain. In Aragón, the mainstay of the dining table is meat, served in the traditional *chilindrón* sauce, which goes just as well with chicken, lamb, pork and even other meats, although perhaps chicken is the best choice. In the mountainous region of Upper Aragón, shepherds' traditional meat dishes are



Sweetmeats

the favourites: *ternasco* (baby lamb which has not gone to pasture), kid *en espeto* (roasted on the spit), shepherd's lamb stew and a dish known as *espárragos montañeses* (lit.: mountain asparagus), which are, in fact, calves' tails.

Towards Zaragoza, we find the astonishingly succulent *magras con tomate*, thin slices of ham lightly fried and bathed in tomato sauce. Then there is an endless list of variations with which to accompany *las migas* (lit.: breadcrumbs), a dish commonly found in the interior of the peninsula although nowhere beyond the borders of Aragon is it served in so many different ways: with bits of ham, spiced sausage, ham fat, black pudding; with chocolate and with grapes. The dish is always made from good, wholesome, country bread, cut into small pieces and browned with the accompaniment of one's choice. In some places, the pieces of bread are soaked in water or milk before they are fried.

Among the delicacies on the Aragonese menu, we find *perdices*

*con chocolate* (partridge with chocolate), a surprisingly successful combination which has become popular in other parts of the country; trout from the rivers of the Pyrenees, thought to be the best and delicious when fried, and the splendid hams from Teruel, cured in the bitter cold of the mountainous region. A curious soup that dates back to the seventeenth century, when it was known as Aragonese soup, is still enjoyed in this part of the country. With liver and cheese as its main ingredients, it is cooked in the oven and served with slices of toasted bread.

Among the vegetables, there is one which is peculiar to the hilly area of Moncayo: borage, tastier than chards or spinach.



## CHICKEN CHILINDRÓN



- 2 chickens, weighing 600 g each • 4 large tomatoes
  - 4 small green peppers • 1 large onion
  - 2 dl oil • 150 g semi-cured ham • 1 glass of wine
- Seasoning: garlic, hot red pepper, salt

Cut the chickens into pieces and lightly fry until golden brown. Set aside. Prepare a fried mixture of tomatoes, green peppers, onions, hot red pepper and lots of finely-chopped garlic. Add to the chicken, mixing well. Allow to cook for five minutes. Now add the semi-cured ham, cut into thin slices, and continue to cook for another five minutes. A small glass of white wine may be added with the ham.



All kinds of greens are grown here and are used to advantage in the vegetable hotchpotch.

On the more exotic side, a stranger to these parts will be fascinated by a much-loved traditional dish: lamb's head baked in the oven; not to mention the humble culinary creation known as *regaños*, consisting of a bread roll filled with a couple of herrings and strips of red pepper.

*Fried dish from Aragon*

Aragonese wines are as plentiful as they are good. The visitor may enter any bar or tavern, confident that he will find wine of exceptional quality. The best-known inside Spain is Cariñena, with up to 18° vol.

When it is time for dessert, a good choice is peaches in wine, *frutas de Aragón* (chocolates filled with crystallised fruit) and *guirlache* (almond brittle).

# La Rioja



When speaking of this region, there is no alternative than to start with the

product that has traced its character and made it famous beyond Spain's borders: wine. Rioja wine has a long history behind it, with documents dating back to the twelfth century. Even today, it is still made in the traditional way at many cellars. For the most part, the wines produced in the Rioja area are reds and rosés of a moderate alcoholic strength, between 12 and 14 degrees, highly aromatic and mild on the palate.



La Rioja produce

Rioja cuisine is remarkably varied and replete with dishes made from the produce grown in the area's market gardens. Particularly noteworthy is the local vegetable hotchpotch.

It is a cuisine with a personality and style of its own, the term *a la riojana*, being added to a whole range of meat, poultry and vegetable dishes, such as, for instance, *callos a la riojana*, a local tripe dish.

Potatoes with spiced sausage, stuffed peppers, chops roasted over a vine shoot fire and chitterlings are just some of the dishes on the La Rioja menu.

As for dessert, the diner has a choice of traditional confectionery, including a sweet known as *pardalejo* and delicacies made from marzipan. La Rioja produces some of the best fruit, used by the cooks to make some quite remarkable combinations.

# Navarra

In this area, cuisine draws on the best of several sources, having been

influenced by Basque, French and Aragonese cooking. The visitor will not be disappointed by the highly-varied, broad spectrum of dishes, particularly *trucha a la navarra* (trout Navarre style), which has become popular throughout Spain as the best way to prepare the fish. However, for those in search of excellence, Navarra, where the dish was originally conceived, is the place to go. The recipe is quite simple: the fish is left to soak in wine for a while and then filled with a slice of ham, dipped in flour and fried lightly.

In the area round La Ribera, vegetable hotchpotch, consisting of asparagus and artichokes combined with broad beans and peas, becomes an unforgettable experience. Naturally, there are variations on this basic recipe and it is not unusual for the dish to contain pieces of meat or ham. The region also produces other delicious vegetables, such as *pochas* (early white beans) and *piquillo* peppers from Lodosa.

Meat dishes include chops Navarra style and *cochifrito navarro* (small pieces of fried lamb). Among the stews, we find the Brussels sprouts potage, which bears a close resemblance to the French *garbure*. This is a dish for true vegetable-lovers as it contains Swiss chard, spinach, mallow, sorrel and lettuce.



Peppers

Wild fowl dishes are deserving of a special mention when speaking of Navarra, where they are held in great esteem. This is unusual in present-day Spanish gastronomy, mainly because of the scarcity of the right ingredients. It is extremely popular in this region to go on wild fowl shoots, quail, turtle dove and wood pigeon being the main prizes.

They are all used to produce succulent dishes. The best time to eat quail is September, which is when they are at their biggest. Here, they are wrapped in vine leaves and then roasted. Turtle doves are seasoned with herbs and then



Trout Navarra style

grilled or roasted over an open fire. Both recipes use one part oil to one part lard, along with vinegar and red wine. Like partridge, quail and turtle dove may also be prepared the old way, by bathing them in chocolate sauce, likewise used in hare and rabbit dishes. Although these dishes are not very common nowadays, they are still prepared for special occasions.

The region's range of dishes is rounded off with the Roncal cheeses, considered to be among the best in the country, and a highly characteristic sausage known as *chistorra*, prepared over an open fire and eaten as a starter or a mid-evening snack.



# Catalonia



Bread with tomatoes and ham

**O**f all the cuisines on the peninsula, that of Catalonia is unquestionably the most sophisticated, complete and richest. Through time, more has been written about Catalan cooking than about any other of Spain's regional cuisines. It is, in a word, a privileged domain on account of its geographical position, which, in the course of history, has brought it into contact with other countries, especially France and Italy.

The mainstay of its principal dishes consists of four basic sauces: first and foremost, *samfaina*, followed by *sofrito*, *picada* and *ali-oli*. *Samfaina*, a sauce made from a highly characteristic, lightly-fried mixture of tomatoes, peppers and aubergines, is served with a whole range of dishes and is strictly Catalan. *Sofrito*, however, made with garlic, onions, tomatoes and

parsley, is widely used in Spanish cooking in general. *Picada* is prepared with garlic, parsley, roasted almonds and crushed pine seeds; and lastly, *ali-oli*, an admirable dressing which probably dates back to Roman times. Consisting of olive oil and garlic, patiently mixed together in the mortar until a creamy paste is formed, it goes perfectly with meat and fish alike.

In Catalonia, the visitor will come across a number of rice dishes, a choice of meat dishes, especially poultry, although veal is a good choice in Girona, and also lots of fleshy rock fish, skilfully prepared to produce the tastiest of meals. He will also be struck by a vast assortment of sausages, especially the one known as *butifarra*, which, roasted or fried with *mongetes* (white beans), makes for a modest yet flavoursome dish peculiar to the area. Vic is the place for sausages, above all *salchichón* and *fuet*. Another widespread culinary tradition is *pan con*

*tomate*, consisting of rubbing tomato into a slice of bread and sprinkling oil and salt on top. It may be served with a slice of ham, an omelette or whatever happens to come to hand.

Although wines are superb throughout the region, top of the list come the ones from Priorato: unusual, full-bodied, mild reds, difficult to find outside Catalonia. Another typically Catalan feature is the *porrón*, or glass jar with a long spout for drinking from. The drinker holds his head back, tips the jar and allows the wine to trickle to the back of his throat. The *porrón* is not so common as the *bota de cuero* or wineskin but, whichever method is chosen, the wine somehow tastes better than when it is drunk from a glass.



# Girona

**W**hen surveying Catalonia as a whole, the gastronome will find his paradise in Girona, which lies partly in the Pyrenees and partly on the Mediterranean and is a zealous custodian of its culinary traditions. In the inland area, known as Empordá, poultry dishes take centre stage. It is the place for huge, imposing turkeys, geese, ducks and poulards served with elaborate, unforgettable stuffing made from pears, turnips, apples, olives... The Christmas turkey, stuffed with sausages, *butifarras*, raisins and pine nuts, is known to all. As the area was once densely populated with game, there is a long-standing tradition of dishes such as rabbit with herbs, hare with chestnuts and partridges Olesa style. Cooks take pleasure in mixing different flavours: sweet and savoury, fish and meat. A good example of this is the craziest dish in the entire Hispanic recipe book: the little-known *mar i muntanya* (lit.: sea and mountain). Extremely common on the Costa Brava, it consists basically of chicken and lobster, although it lends itself to countless variations.



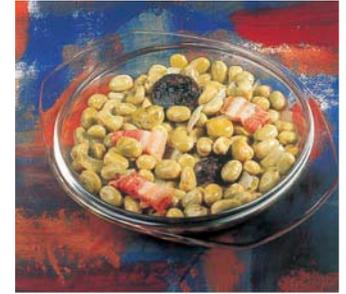
## BROAD BEANS CATALONIAN STYLE

1 kg broad beans • 1/4 kg fat bacon • 3 spiced sausages  
• 1 dl oil • 1 onion • 1 glass eau-de-vie  
• 2 glasses white wine

Seasoning: garlic, salt, pepper, mint

Shell the beans and start to cook in salted water. When the beans are half-done, pour away most of the water, leaving just enough to cover them.

Mix the oil with a couple of cloves of garlic, the onion (finely-chopped), pepper and mint and stirfry gently. Add the glass of eau-de-vie and place the beans in the mixture. Now add the fat bacon and the spiced sausages, cut into thin slices, and return to the heat until cooked.



Beans Catalonia style

As far as fish are concerned, Girona, along with its Costa Brava, surpasses the other Catalan areas with its magnificent *suquets*, a fisherman's dish made from a variety of rock fish cooked in a thin stock and served in a thick *sofrito*. Also recommended are the glorious, thick angler soup and the lobster, unequalled in the rest of the region. In Girona, it is prepared with roasted almonds and garlic, grilled over an open fire and served with *ali-oli*.

## Barcelona

A city with a long gastronomic tradition behind it, Barcelona reached its heights in the culinary arts in the nineteenth century, when countless restaurants, considered to be among the best in Europe, started to spring up in the city.

Any description of Barcelona's dishes inevitably begins with *escudella i carn d'olla*, which, up to the 1930s, was eaten on a daily basis in the city. Nowadays, although it is still regarded as the typical Catalan dish par excellence, it is not readily available at restaurants.

*Escudella* is the Catalan version of the *cocido* and follows the same principle of cooking meat and vegetables together. It consists of two *vuelcos*, or courses: a thin

noodle and rice soup and then, the meat and vegetables. Unlike other *cocidos*, it contains no spiced sausage or black pudding but is made instead with white and black *butifarra*. It also features the famous *pilota*, a ball made from minced meat, parsley, breadcrumbs and egg. This version of the *cocido* quite possibly contains more ingredients than any of the others made in the rest of Spain. I quote the full list: bullock meat, hen, fat bacon, pig's ear and trotter and non-fat ham, white and black *butifarra*, ham bones, marrowbone, chickpeas, beans, potatoes, cabbage, egg, turnip, carrot, garlic, flour, pepper, cinnamon and parsley.

It was the people of Barcelona who invented the tasty *fideos a la cazuela* (noodles cooked in an earthenware dish). As usual in this part of the country, this



dish is accompanied by a variety of flavoursome morsels, such as pork ribs, sausages, *butifarra*, ham and fat bacon, along with the customary *sofrito* of onions, peppers and tomatoes.

In addition to the *escudella* and *butifarra* with beans described in the introduction, typical Catalan dishes include the mouth-watering *habas a la catalana* (broad beans Catalonia style). The beans, the area's favourite vegetable, are prepared with lots of herbs and spices (thyme, rosemary, mint, cinnamon and bay leaf) and *butifarra*.

For dessert, a classical choice is *crema catalana*, similar to *natillas* (a kind of custard), covered with a layer of caramel. The most traditional sweets, however, are the cakes, prepared all year round for the various feast days: *pa de pessic*, *coques* for St. John's Eve, *panellets*, made from almonds and pine seeds and eaten typically in November; and, at any time of year, *mel i mató* with cottage cheese.

San Sadurn d'Anoia is the place where the famous *cavas*, or sparkling wines, are produced.



Beans with butifarra

# Lleida

Lleida's cuisine is reminiscent of the solid, mountain dishes, in which meat, game and delicious trout are the key ingredients. The best place to enjoy all this is a Pyrenean eating house with a first-class cook, remembering that meals of

this sort have to be ordered in advance. The diner will thus have the chance to try *cassolada*, a combination of potatoes, vegetables, fat bacon and ribs; or lamb's head and trotters with *girella*; lamb's hooves with turnips; and, above all, the superb hare and chamois *civets*.

Rice is a common ingredient in the recipes of this area, where it is eaten with rabbit, cod and pork. True to Catalan tradition, the rice is always served in lots of stock. Among the range of sausages, we find the truly Catalan *girella* and the *xolis*.



Mussels

balls. One of the more original dishes is the one known as *calçots*, sweet, young onions grown from the shoots of an old onion. In Valls and the area surrounding Poblet and Santa Creus, they are known by the name of *calçotada*. It is a traditional yet exotic dish in that the onions, fresh from the garden, are roasted on a tile. They are then served straight from the tile with an oil and almond sauce.

However, the salient feature of Tarragona's cuisine is rice and a delectable sauce. Rice dishes include a traditional seafarer's dish, *rossejat*, prepared with fish stock; black rice with cuttlefish; and, above all, one of Spanish cuisine's great fish and rice dishes, one which is very much in the background and yet is the king of them all: *arroz abanda*. A word of warning: it should be eaten only at restaurants where it is known to be a speciality. In Tarragona, the area round Cambrils is the best bet. *Arroz abanda* is a dish for discerning palates: it may be served on its own or, if preferred, accompanied by the fish with



# Tarragona

The menu in this province tempts the diner with dishes like rabbit with garlic and tunnyfish boiled with potatoes, *bull*, made with tunnyfish, courgettes and snails, not forgetting the cod fritters and

which it has been boiled. In this recipe, the seafood used must be of top quality and of as many different kinds as possible: grouper, angler, conger eel, giant prawns, Norway lobster, squid, lobster... The complete dish consists of a small portion of rice, cooked in the same pan as all the other ingredients, and a separate dish containing the seafood, which is served with *ali-oli* and another sauce known as *romesco*, Tarragona's great contribution to Mediterranean cooking.

*Romesco*, a sauce found all along the Mediterranean coastline, may be bought ready-made. As it is exported, it now appears in cookery books round the world. There is somewhat of a controversy about true *romesco* sauce and its many variations: some say that all that is required is oil, hot red pepper and bread; others prefer to add garlic, almonds,

cognac and vinegar and then cook all the ingredients together. As the case may be, *romesco* sauce takes its name from the special hot red pepper used in its preparation and, together with *ali-oli*, is the unquestionable champion of Mediterranean eating habits.

Tarragona is the home of Priorato wines, excellent reds of about 14° vol., together with others of up to 20° vol., approaching the moscatel tradition which we shall find in the eastern part of the country, or Levante.



**G**astronomy in this geographical area can be defined in one word: rice.

The Valencian has learnt to handle this foodstuff so well that he infallibly obtains perfect results, whether he combines it with a long list of other ingredients or prepares it practically on its own.

In a word, rice is an experience in itself in Valencia, the origin of one of the greatest dishes in universal gastronomy, *paella*, now the most famous dish in Spanish cuisine. However, it is made in so many different ways in so many different places that, at times, it does not lend itself to easy recognition.



Typical Valencian kitchen

# Comunidad Valenciana

## Castellón

**I**n the inland area of this province, round the Maestrazgo, a range of meat dishes is available, especially lamb, and high-calorie potages made from potatoes, cereals and flour, almonds and walnuts. Then there is roast kid, stuffed meat and tripe. As for stews, the one known, incidentally, as Castellón, with white beans, bullock's meat and fat bacon, is found all over the province. Nevertheless, the commonest dishes are the ones based on rice, some of which are extremely original: rice with green beans and snails and the most unusual *arroz empredado*, made with

tomatoes and cod and covered with white beans. Both inland and on the coast, rice *marinière* is a favourite, although, while they are by the sea, seafood-lovers may also like to savour the giant prawns, known to be particularly succulent in this area.

The cheeses are also worth trying, although they are little known outside the region. For something different, the diner might order *collá*, curds made with the pistils of wild artichokes. Popular sweetmeats include *mostatxones* and *puntas de diamante*.

Ternasco



Giant prawns

## Alicante

**C**uisine in this area has been built round recipes from La Mancha, Valencia and Murcia and it is not easy to find truly local dishes in bars and restaurants. A case in point is *paella alicantina*, which is prepared with chicken and rabbit instead of with seafood. The same is true of other dishes, which,

nevertheless, are worth mentioning: *bajoques farcides*, or peppers filled with rice, pork, tomatoes and spices; potages made with pulse, rice, potatoes and broad beans; and *la pericana*, a winter dish which is eaten during the olive harvest to test the quality of the oil and is made up of cod, oil, dried peppers and garlic.

For a special meal prepared in honour of a guest or to celebrate an occasion, we find the original *cocido de pelotas*. With a perfectly-balanced, appetising aroma characteristic of all the dishes in this region, *cocido de pelotas* is prepared with chicken or turkey, lean pork and bacon fat, chickpeas and spices and served with the

festive *pelotas* or balls, made from beaten egg, lean pork, blood, breadcrumbs and parsley.

Elche, the city of palm trees, guards its own special treasure: an original rice dish requiring the help of all the family on account of its painstaking, delicate preparation. Known as *arroz con costra*, it has become popular throughout Levante, although it is here in Elche, its place of origin, that it is enjoyed at its best.

All the same, it is in desserts that Alicante has made a name for itself. The area produces superb dates, which are distributed all over Spain, and also that ancient fruit, the

pomegranate, which is, unfortunately, slowly slipping into oblivion. But, above all, Alicante is known worldwide for its nougats, or *turrónes*.

It is almost certain that this sweetmeat is of Arab origin. Alicante produces two kinds: the one named after it, Alicante *turrón*, whole almonds embedded in a solid mixture of honey and sugar; and the Jijona *turrón*, in which the almonds are finely ground. Other *turrónes*,

soft in texture, like the chocolate, fruit and coconut varieties, are modern inventions which bear no resemblance to the traditional *turrón* other than in name and shape.



Turrónes



#### Rice dishes



## Valencia

As far back as the fifteenth century, Valencia was renowned for its good food. Nowadays, however, any description of Valencian gastronomy must refer first and foremost, almost exclusively in fact, to *paella*.

*Paella* is a recent invention, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, when it was first made in the area round the Albufera.

As with other Valencian rice dishes, the secret of a good *paella* lies in the cook's ability to give the rice that very

special texture. The grains should be loose, dry and soft and take in the flavour coming from that array of ingredients which, like some of the Catalanian dishes, banishes from our minds any clichés about Spanish gastronomy being too austere.

The truth of the matter is that there is no set recipe for this legendary dish, the standard-bearer of the country's gastronomy. In any event, a good *paella* may contain chicken, pork, crustaceans, molluscs, eel, squid, beans, peas, artichokes and peppers, not forgetting the saffron, the

golden secret to a good rice dish, shared by the chefs of Valencia, Milan and Marseilles.

After the glowing *paella* comes a vast assortment of rice dishes, with all kinds of accompaniments. We find *arroz amb fessols i naps*, or rice with beans and turnips served in lots of stock, until recently the market gardener's usual meal. A rich variation on the same theme contains pig's trotters and ear and black pudding. The dish is known familiarly as *arroz en oros y bastos*, literally, rice with gold coins and clubs, two of the suits in a pack of Spanish playing cards.

Then there are special rich dishes for days of fasting, made with dried kidney beans and potatoes; with snails and spinach; with cuttlefish and cauliflower; or with chickpeas and a couple of slices of tomato and so on. The complete list would go on forever. However, for the sake of brevity, we shall just mention two great classics: rice Alcira style, baked in the oven and similar to the Elche dish, described above; and rice *rosetxtat*, also done in the oven.

Although rice in its many forms is top of the bill, the Valencian menu also offers fish dishes, bathed in a popular sauce called *all-i-pebre*, a combination of garlic, oil and paprika. It goes particularly well with eel, prepared in these parts *al ast*, i.e., roasted or grilled on skewers made from the wood of the ash tree. Red mullet and cuttlefish are also extremely common. As for fowl, duck from the Albufera were once considered a great delicacy and today, although they have disappeared from the area, some excellent recipes have survived, including the old, Valencian way of doing *pato a la naranja* (duck in orange sauce).

The Valencians are also fond of desserts, many of which are made specially for feast days: roasted almonds, toasted bread, *monas de Pascua*, a typical Easter sweet, *arnadi* (made of gourd and sugared chestnuts), *suspiros*, sweet egg rolls and a huge variety of sponges and pastries.

Valencia boasts a wide range of white wines, light and dry in Albaida, Cheste and Liria, where *oloroso* is also produced. For reds and rosés, the best places are Utiel and Requena, where annual harvest festivals are held.

The locals set up a fountain flowing with free red wine. Our description of Valencian gastronomy would not be complete without a few words for one of the area's most popular drinks, *horchata*, or orgeat, made from earth almonds. A sweet, light, refreshing drink, it is enjoyed in summer all over Spain.

## VALENCIAN GARDEN PAELLA

As this "paella" is prepared with seasonal ingredients, it lends itself to many variations. However, the recipe given below may be considered as standard.

### INGREDIENTS FOR SIX PORTIONS:

- 600 g rice • 480 g rabbit • 600 g chicken • 24 snails • 180 g shredded tomatoes
- 180 g "garrofo" beans (special for "paella") • 180 g "tabella" beans (ordinary white beans)
- 6 tbs olive oil • A few strands of saffron • 1 tbs sweet paprika
- Salt and yellow "paella" colouring • 200 g "ferraaura" (special green beans for "paella")



Preparation: Heat the oil, with a pinch of salt, in the "paella" pan and add the chicken and rabbit. Fry on a low light until golden brown. Now add all the beans, fry a little longer and add the tomato. When the tomato has fried, add the paprika and quickly pour in 2.5 to 3 litres of water.

When the water comes to the boil, add the snails (cleaned and cooked beforehand), the saffron, the colouring and a little salt. Leave to simmer for 15 minutes and then spread the rice evenly round the pan. Cook on a high light for six minutes and then turn the heat down and continue to cook until ready.

Note: The correct amount of water and the right temperature cannot be determined with accuracy. With "paella", it is a question of practice making perfect.

# Murcia

**D**espite the fact that Murcian cuisine is extremely characteristic of Spain, with great respect for its own traditions, it is also one of the lesser known. Naturally enough, here we find a Levante style of cooking, based on market garden produce with a subtle Arab touch. The way in which the Murcian chef uses his key ingredients, the pepper and the tomato, differs greatly from the approach of his Aragonese and Rioja counterparts.

There is no lack of rice dishes in the region and some say that, as far as this speciality is concerned, Murcia beats Valencia. Indeed, the visitor to Murcia will be spoilt for choice: rice with chicken, rabbit, grey mullet (one of the region's characteristic fish, whose roe make for a delicious titbit, a great favourite with the locals) and all kinds of vegetable; not to mention the delicious *arroz al caldero*, made with fish caught in the area.

The quality of Murcia's vegetables is excellent. They are enjoyed at their best in the magnificent hotchpotch and in dishes like fried artichokes with tomatoes, aubergines in marinade and cauliflower in a cream sauce. Broad beans are added to

omelettes, stir-fried or eaten raw in a salad dressing. The visitor should also make a point of trying *michirones*, or dried beans cooked with hot spices.

Omelettes are made with an astonishing variety of fillings: from broad beans, as mentioned above, to garlic shoots, peppers and tomatoes. Asparagus and a host of other ingredients are added to scrambled eggs. The market garden produce is so exquisite in this area that a very simple dish, consisting of lettuce hearts split into four and dressed with oil, lemon and pepper, is known by the high-sounding name of garden partridge.

Fish dishes are beyond description, ranging from the small, good-tasting Mar Menor prawn and the pricey grey mullet roe to the more accessible gilthead with peppers and sea bass coated in sea salt and baked in the oven.



Murcia salad



Murcia produce

Stews and potages in the Levante style are common, while meat dishes revolve round lamb, chicken and rabbit, often prepared with tomatoes and peppers. Murcia is also known for its unusual *pastel de carne*, made from veal, spiced sausage, hard-boiled eggs, brains and minced pork, all wrapped in light puff pastry and baked in the oven. It has a simpler, more modern version, called *pastel de Cierva*.

Murcia produces its own peculiar range of sausages, such as the smooth, spicy *longanizas* and black puddings, which seem to have a lingering sweetness about them.

As in Valencia, Murcian sweetmeats have come under strong Arab influence. So much is this so that there is one known as *pan de Alá* (lit.: Allah's bread). Other delights include fig bread, walnut cakes, *tocino de cielo*, made from eggs and syrup, *roscos de vino* (a kind of doughnut drenched in wine) and a range of jams and syrups.



Gourd dish



Produce from Mar Menor and La Huerta

Wine production covers both ends of the scale: on the one hand, we find Jumilla, one of the strongest in the country; and, on the other, unbeatable rosés and clarets, unquestionably the best on the peninsula, alongside the Cigales wines from Valladolid.

### RICE IN THE MAR MENOR STYLE

- 6 red mullet • 6 whiting • 3/4 kg grey mullet • 1 sea spider • 1 angler tail
- 1 "rubio" (a bony, saltwater fish) • 2 "ñoras" (a variety of hot red pepper)
- 1 John Dory • 1 onion • 1/2 kg potatoes • 400 g rice • 200 g "ali-oli"

Seasoning: garlic, bay leaf



It is these fish, found in the Mar Menor, that give the dish its very special flavour.

Place the angler tail, sea spider, "rubio", John Dory, together with the onion, cut into four, a clove of garlic, a bay leaf and the potatoes in a pan of salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer for half an hour. Then add the whiting, red mullet and grey mullet and leave to simmer for another 10 or 15 minutes. Fry the "ñoras" and chop finely, mixing them with two cloves of crushed garlic, and add to the pan.

Remove the pan from the heat and take out the fleshy fish, the angler tail and the potatoes. Taking care to remove the bones, leave these ingredients in a little stock, near the heat.

Strain the rest of the stock, crushing any remaining pieces of fish. Cook the rice in the stock. When the rice is cooked, there should still be plenty of liquid in the pan.

The rice is served as the first course, followed by the fish, which should be arranged on a separate dish with the potatoes. Serve with a strong "ali-oli" sauce.

# Andalusia

Associated for culinary purposes with fried dishes, Andalusia has a rich, traditional cuisine which is not necessarily found in all of its eight official provinces and is not easily accessible to the visitor.

It is here that the country's best wines, known to foreigners better than any other in Spain's vast range, are produced. The wines from Jerez, in the province of Cádiz, are possibly the most acclaimed in universal literature, from Greek texts dating back to the fourth century B.C., through the centuries to Shakespeare and down to the present day.

The unique winemaking method smacks of the miraculous in that the wine does not come from a given crop, as is usually the case, but from a succession of mixtures that have evolved through time. The result is a range of wines with subtle variations. A total of 10 types are recognised under official classification.

They are wines to be sipped and savoured at leisure while having a quiet chat. They may be drunk alone or accompanied by a *tapa*, a tasty morsel or snack made from anything and everything and of which the Andalusians are particularly fond.

From wine, we move onto ham. The best in the country, unmistakable and undoubtedly superior to any of the other of the peninsula's hams bearing the same name, is produced in Jabugo, Huelva. Not far behind as regards quality is the ham from Trevélez, Granada. Both should be served in paper-thin slices.

Now for the renowned *pescaíto frito* or fried fish, an art in which the people of Cádiz and Málaga are the experts, although it is common throughout Andalusia.

In Cádiz, this food is available at specialised bars and taverns known as *freidurías*. It has a certain something about it that cannot be set down in a recipe. Perhaps it is the way in which the fish is cut, the temperature of the oil or the



Andalusian restaurant



Fish roasting on spits



Sacromonte omelette

Things are different at the Málaga *freidurias*, where the fish is, nonetheless, equally delicious. Here, the anchovy holds pride of place. Fried in their dozens, the anchovies have the appearance of sea foam or, in Spanish, *espuma de mar*, the name appearing on menus to refer to a dish of *chanquetes* (young anchovies).

Fried fish is also popular in Seville. Here, the fish is cut into pieces, covered in a special batter known as *adobo* and then dipped into the frying pan.

Another important feature of Andalusian gastronomy is *gazpacho*, a favourite dish with Spaniards during the summer. It is a soup which may be prepared in lots of different ways, although Córdoba is perhaps the best place to try it. The traditional ingredients are bread, oil, garlic and water and, very often, tomato, but it may be livened up with peppers and cucumber.

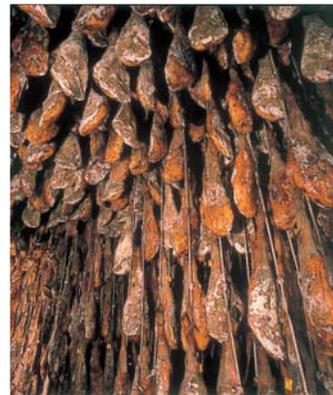
Among the many, well-established variations, we might quote *salmorejo cordobés*, one of the traditional dishes to have miraculously survived the passage of time in this province. Like all Andalusian *gazpachos*, it is a cold dish and is made from tomatoes, bread, oil, garlic and pepper. It has the consistency of a thick purée.

Back in Málaga, we find *ajo blanco*, not so well-known as the typical Andalusian version but equally refreshing and perhaps more original. Ingredients include almonds, oil and cloves of garlic, all well-spiced and patiently crushed in a mortar until they blend into a paste to which cold water is added. It is then garnished with a few grapes to give it a touch of refinement.



If the visitor has a liking for more substantial dishes, he should head for the province of Cádiz, whose cuisine is, beyond any doubt, the richest and most varied in Andalusia. Here, apart from *pescaito frito* and the best crustaceans and molluscs to be found along this coast (giant oysters, baby prawns, shrimps, tiny clams and crabs), he may choose from dishes like kidneys in sherry, pigeon pie, cow's tail Jerez style and squid with broad beans. He may also have the courage to try an age-old, traditional dish, a whole new experience for the palate: *caldillo del perro*, which, strange as it may seem, translates literally as dog's soup. Served at bars and taverns in fishermen's districts, it has a taste somewhere between tart and salty. Although few ingredients are required (onion, freshly-caught whiting and orange juice), it is by no means easy to prepare.

Amid the hoard of grand Andalusian recipes, we come across two dishes from Granada, home of the area's other great cuisine. We are referring to *habas a la granadina* (broad beans



Jabugo ham

mixture of aromas given off by the different fish as they all sizzle together in the same frying pan: *mojarra* (a type of bream), sole, mullet, red mullet, whiting and many more.



Granada style) and the Sacromonte omelette. The beans are prepared with Trevélez ham and the Albaicín bouquet garni, made up of bay leaf, mint and parsley. The recipe, together with the Catalan version, is the best in Spain for preparing this vegetable.

The refined Sacromonte omelette, made for special occasions, should not be confused with the one known as *paisana*, commonly found on menus at bars and restaurants. The Sacromonte omelette contains fried, breaded brains, veal or lamb testicles, potatoes, sweet red peppers and peas, all finely chopped and sautéed before landing in the pan where the eggs await them. The dish is a ritual associated with the famous gypsy cakes of Sacromonte; hence its name. The Granada omelette is a variation, containing lamb's sweetbreads and chicken kidneys and livers prepared in white wine.

Another top dish in Granada is *cazuela de fideos*, a spicy combination of noodles, broad beans and cod, prepared and served in an earthenware dish. Along the coast, round Motril and

Almuñécar, it is worth watching the preparation of the popular *moragas de sardinas* (roasted sardines) and *espetones de boquerones* (anchovies). The fish are left whole and pierced by a stick which is then sunk into the sand. They are left to roast over the heat from live coals placed beneath them.

In Almería, cuisine has come under the influence of both Murcia and Granada. Similarly, in Jaén, another borderline province, dishes are a mixture of features taken from the recipes of La Mancha, Granada and Córdoba. One of Jaén's most traditional dishes is *espinacas al estilo de Jaén*, where the main ingredient is spinach, prepared in plenty of oil with a mixture of crushed dried peppers, garlic and bread crust. In this, the country's leading olive-growing province, olive oil is used lavishly, especially in salads like *pipirrana*, made with green peppers, onions and tomatoes, cut into small pieces and sometimes prepared in a marinade.

As for Córdoba, traditional recipes have, to a large extent, been forgotten and nowadays, the region's great dish is *estofado de rabo de toro* (a potage made with the tail of a bull or a bullock).

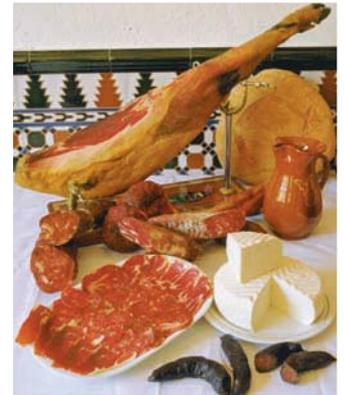
Naturally associated with bullfighting, it makes for a heavy, succulent meal, albeit somewhat on the greasy side.

Apart from the *gazpachos* described above, the province is known for its veal with artichokes, pigeons with olives and pig's trotters done in the oven. Then, of course, we have the wines, which, with their own, peculiar personality, rival those produced by the province's renowned neighbour, Jerez. Córdoba wines are dry and extremely aromatic, of high alcoholic strength. They carry the appellation d'origine Moriles-Montilla and there are four types: *fino*, *amontillado*, *oloroso* and old *oloroso*. The hills of Montilla produce the best: Montilla Albero and Moriles Albero.

Another important wine-producing province is Málaga, with its *moscatel*, one of the masterpieces of national production. Made from the grape of the same name, there can be little doubt that it is the finest in the world. Málaga wine

has the consistency of a liqueur, warm in flavour and dark in colour. It is commercialised under four different *appellations*: Málaga, Málaga Virgen, Lágrima Christi and Pedro Ximénez.

In Huelva, as if the magnificent Jabugo ham were not enough, we also find a range of fish dishes: porgy in onions, sardines in pepper, porgy in paprika, clams with rice and the various ways of preparing *chocos*, a kind of squid commonly found on this coastline. *Chocos* are tastier and make for a greater delicacy than their more familiar relatives.





Other Seville dishes include *menudo gitano*, where the main ingredient is tripe; *cocido a la sevillana*, where the meat is fried and served with beaten eggs; veal filled with a mixture of wine and olives; and duck with olives.

Andalusia has an endless list of sweetmeats steeped in Arab tradition, which, in many cases, has been admirably preserved by the nuns belonging to the many convents in the area, especially in Seville.

This province produces Andalusia's most popular sweetmeat, *tortas de aceite* (olive oil cakes), once an essential part of anybody's breakfast in the country's leading capitals and now commercialised all over Spain. We also find *polvorones*, traditional during the Christmas season; *cortadillos*, with a filling made of pumpkin and syrup; *alfajores*, *mostachones* (sponges for dunking) and, from the convents, *yemas de San Leandro* (made from sugar and egg yolk).

And lastly, Seville, the official capital of Andalusia. It was here that the *tapa*, a tasty snack eaten at practically any time of day, was invented. Although this custom has spread throughout the country, nowhere else has the art of the *tapa* been mastered with such skill and variety.

If, after a round of *tapas*, the visitor still feels ready to face a meal, he will find a number of typically *sevillano* dishes to choose from: the renowned *huevos a la flamenca*, a wise, yet simple recipe which has become popular all over Spain and, in the process, has been subject to countless variations. Essentially an egg dish, *huevos a la flamenca* requires careful preparation. The eggs are baked in the oven, on a bed of tomatoes, spiced sausage, ham, green beans, chips, asparagus, finely-chopped sweet red peppers and peas. The dish should be eaten as soon as it comes out of the oven.

### ANDALUSIAN GAZPACHO

1/4 kg tomatoes • 2 peppers • 1 clove of garlic  
 • 5 tbsp oil • 2 tbsp vinegar  
 • 150 g breadcrumbs



Chop the garlic and pepper into small pieces and crush well with a mortar and pestle, adding a little salt. Add the tomato, also in pieces, and the bread, soaked beforehand, and continue crushing.

Add the oil gradually, stirring the mixture constantly at the same time. When all the oil has been absorbed, add cold water and then strain. Now add vinegar and salt and serve well chilled with croutons.

# Castile-León



*Roast lamb*

**A**s in the case of Andalusia, a vast area is covered by the cuisine of

Castile-León. Here, however, eating habits change little from one province to another, with the exception of León and Salamanca. The other provinces (Burgos, Soria, Avila, Segovia, Zamora, Valladolid and Palencia) fit perfectly into the gastronomic division we are about to describe, generally accepted as the area of the roast.

The first thing that comes to mind when speaking of Castilian cuisine is the chickpea because, although it may seem rather commonplace, it has been a basic foodstuff in the diet of this region's inhabitants for centuries.

Indeed, this pulse, brought to Spain by the Carthaginians, is the main ingredient of all the Castilian stews which, until not so long ago, were



*La Granja beans*

eaten daily in all homes. They always contained cabbage and, depending on the household budget, black puddings, spiced sausage and meat.

Castilian cookery books also contain recipes for other pulses of equally fine quality, such as beans and lentils, prepared with spiced sausage and pig's tail and/or ear throughout the region.

Having spoken of pulses, now is the time to look at the bread and the wine. Bread is the emblem of Castile –land



*Ávila desserts*

of bread– and nowhere else in Spain is it baked so well, although today, it has perhaps lost the importance of yesteryear. Wine, however, is still as great as it ever was. Castile and León overflow with superb wines carrying certificates of quality (Rueda, Ribera de Duero, Toro, Bierzo, Cigales and Cebreros). There is a full range of whites, rosés and reds, all top quality and highly acclaimed.

Nevertheless, amid the broad spectrum of Castilian and Leonese culinary arts and customs, there is one



which outshines the rest, at least from the point of view of the tourist: the traditional sucking pig and lamb roasts.

In Castile and León, there are two itineraries for those wishing to enjoy either on both of these roasts. If lamb is preferred, the visitor

should make his way to the magical triangle formed by Segovia, Soria and Burgos, making Segovia a priority. The Castilians always roast



*Roast sucking pig*

their lamb suckling in an earthenware dish. The method is quite simple: they spread lard all over the lamb, spray it with salted water and then roast it until it is just right.

Visitors keen to try sucking pig should head for the area round Segovia, Arévalo and Peñaranda de Bracamonte. To meet customary requirements, the pig should be between 15 and 20 days old and weigh from three to four kilos. Preferably, it should be roasted in an old-fashioned, thyme-fired oven and, when cooked, it should be tender enough for the chef to be able to slice it with the edge of a plate in what has



Crayfish from the Pisuegra

become a spectacular rite requiring a certain degree of skill.

Having said all this, it should be pointed out that, despite the fact that Castile is a good distance from the coastline, it has some excellent fish dishes. One that has become popular all over Spain is the cod dish, *bacalao al ajoarriero*, so named because it used to be the staple diet of the Leonese muleteers as they journeyed through Extremadura, Andalusia, Navarra, the North and La Mancha.

Cod is not the only fish to be found in this region's recipe books for the Castilians and Leonese are also extremely



fond of trout, which abound in the rivers. Nor is there any shortage of crayfish, served exquisitely in a mouth-watering red sauce. The best crayfish are said to come from the Tormes River, although it is on the banks of the Pisuegra River that an annual *fiesta* is held in honour of the creature. Unfortunately, stocks are slowly being depleted on account of its widespread popularity. The list of Castilian dishes goes on to include hen fricassee, stewed partridge and quail, garlic rabbit and, from Ávila, delicious veal. However, we must not forget the popular Castilian soups, made with bread, stock (from a chick pea stew, if possible), ham and garlic. In some recipes, a poached egg is



added. In Castile and León, garlic is a fundamental ingredient and, although it is used to the same extent in other parts of the country, here, there is a difference: it is treated as a food in itself.

## CASTILIAN GARLIC SOUP

- 100 g oil or 1 tbsp lard • 100 g diced ham
- 100 g stale bread, cut into slices • 1 tsp sweet paprika
- 3 cloves of garlic • 6 eggs • 1 l water



Heat the oil and add the garlic, cut into fairly thick slices. Before it starts to brown, add the ham and the stale bread. Fry gently for a couple of minutes and add the sweet paprika, followed by the water and a pinch of salt. When the pan comes to the boil, poach the eggs.

Having surveyed the general scene, we should now take a close look at cooking in two areas, which, while part of Castile in geographical terms, are to be considered separately when it comes to gastronomy. We are referring to the provinces of León and Salamanca.



León produce

## Cooking in León

This land, proud of its noble past and replete with reminders of the Middle Ages, when the great feudal lords and the rich monasteries brought refinement to local eating habits, has a twofold gastronomy. Firstly, in the region of El Bierzo, we find dishes of a marked Galician influence: *empanadas* (fish or meat pies), *lacón con grelos* (salted boiled ham with turnip shoots) and octopus, prepared in exactly the same way as in Galicia. Secondly, in the

area round Astorga, known as la *maragatería*, we find *cocido maragato* (the local version of the chick pea stew), the Riaño vegetable hotchpotch and the cod dish described above, *bacalao al ajoarriero*.



Salted boiled ham with turnip shoots

## Specialities from Salamanca

The people of Salamanca are great meat-eaters and are always ready to eat anything from pork, beef and lamb to poultry and game. Their cuisine successfully combines pulses with meat to produce filling, wholesome meals. Restaurants keep zealously to local tradition,

one of the main dishes being *chanfaina salamantina*, made with rice, giblets and lamb's innards and bits of spiced sausage. Guijuelo is noted for the prime quality of its hams and spiced sausages. We also find *farinatos*, a sausage which is fried and served with a couple of eggs, and a wide variety of meat dishes, each



© Carlos Navajas / ICEX

with a character of its own: stewed calf's tail, stewed tongue, ragout, calf's jowls fried in beaten eggs and

breadcrumbs, lamb hotchpotch, roast kid, stuffed chicken Salamanca style and a long etcetera.

## Cheeses and sweetmeats from Castile and León



Burgos cheese

To complete the gastronomic map of Castile, we should mention the cheeses, which, while not so renowned as those of La Mancha, are not far behind when it comes to quality. Castile produces first-rate, creamy, cured cheeses, in addition to a soft type on the lines of cottage cheese, quite uncommon in the rest of the country. The best-known are the ones from Villalón, in Valladolid, and Burgos.

Sweetmeats include *almendras garapiñadas* (sugared almonds) from Briviesca, in Burgos, popular the length and breadth of the country; *mantecadas*, a kind of bun made in Astorga, in the province of León, and *yemas de Santa Teresa*, a sweet made of sugar and egg yolk in Ávila.

Easter sweetmeats



# Extremadura



Shepherd's breadcrumbs (*Migas del pastor*)

pilgrimages. It is made by frying pieces of lamb yearling seasoned with paprika to give them a red colour. When serving, a tiny amount of the oil used in frying is allowed to drop onto the plate.

These are meals for high days and holidays. More everyday dishes include the exquisite lamb's tails Extremadura style, made in the pot with a thick sauce which complements the tender, juicy tails.

As might be expected, practically all the parts of the pig are used in one way or another, in addition to sausage-making. We find *picadillos* (minced pork dishes), ears fried in beaten eggs and breadcrumbs and served in a sauce; tails with tomatoes; lean pork with potatoes; *pastorejos*, slices cut from the pig's jowl and served with fried eggs; and a kind of thick, wholesome soup known as *cachuela*, consisting of the pig's blood, liver, stomach and so on. Handed down through time by shepherds and goatherds, all these dishes are meant to be eaten by those with a strong

stomach and are certainly not recommended for people with digestive problems.

While speaking of traditional, country cooking, we should spare a few words for *migas* (lit.: breadcrumbs), an extremely attractive, humble dish, eaten and enjoyed all over the inland area of Spain. In Extremadura, where it is prepared with particular skill, the dish used to form part of the daily diet in many households. First, the breadcrumbs are softened in water and then gently fried with pieces of streaky fat bacon and dried peppers. Nowadays, *migas* are a speciality prepared as well as ever at bars and restaurants, but they must be ordered in advance.

Cod in the convent style



© A. de Benito / ICEX

**E**he pork products of Extremadura are a source of national pride. Fed until only recently on acorns from the area's meadows and reared freely all over the countryside, Extremadura's pigs produce sausages, hams and spiced sausages of incomparable quality: hams from Montánchez and spiced sausages from anywhere and everywhere, made in so many different ways, sweet and sour, hot, sweet, fat, medium-sized, thin and twisted into plaits. Nor must we forget *lomo embuchado*, a long, hard sausage made from the loin of the pig, the white sausage, the original *morcillas patateras* (black puddings made from different parts of the pig and boiled potatoes) and the pâté, made in Mérida and distributed in many parts of Spain.

The region has a highly traditional, albeit short, list of dishes: *caldereta*, a Cáceres dish whose main ingredient is kid; *frite*, a lamb dish more commonly found in Badajoz; pot stews; *migas* (based on breadcrumbs); and *gachas* (a form of porridge).

To make *caldereta*, the kid is chopped into pieces and fried. It is then seasoned with paprika and stewed. Before serving, it is dressed with a mixture of crushed livers, raw garlic and red peppers. This is a shepherd's dish, formerly cooked in an iron pot over a campfire and enjoyed in the shade of a holm oak. *Frite*, also a country dish, is associated with



## KID OR LAMB CASSEROLE EXTREMADURA STYLE (CALDERETA EXTREMEÑA)

1 kg kid (or lamb), cut into small pieces • 1 kid's (or lamb's) liver  
• 1 glass "pitarra" (local home-made wine) or a suitable substitute  
• 1 dl oil • 1 sweet red pepper

Seasoning: garlic, bay leaf, black peppercorns, paprika, salt



Heat the oil in an earthenware dish, fry a couple of garlic cloves and reserve. Now add the meat, a soupcon of paprika and a few bay leaves and allow to brown. Pour in the "pitarra" or substitute and leave to cook until it evaporates. Now add the water gradually, making sure that the sauce thickens well.

When the meat is tender, roast another three garlic cloves and, using a pestle and mortar, crush them well, together with the garlic reserved earlier. Add the liver (roasted beforehand), a few black peppercorns, a drop of oil and the sweet pepper. Pound well with the pestle until a consistent mixture is obtained. Add the mixture to the meat and leave to cook until the sauce is of the right thickness. Serve.

In the *gazpacho* made in Extremadura, the tomatoes are left in pieces instead of being crushed with the rest of the ingredients. Unlike the Andalusian version, this one contains onion. Then there is the original, quite fascinating soup known as *sopas engañadas*, made from peppers, pickled spring onions, figs and grapes.

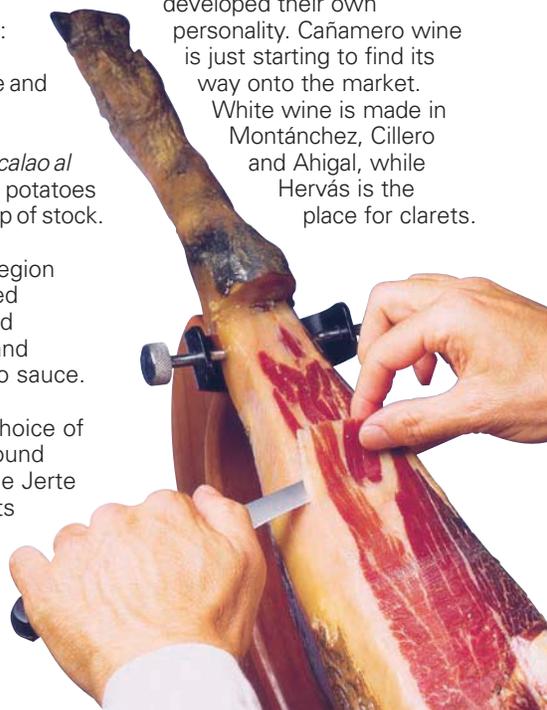
A few fish dishes appear on the menus, such as river fish in garlic, characteristic of the province of Badajoz. The fish is cooked in a mixture similar to the one used in *gazpacho*, with lots of crushed garlic, and, as such, the dish might well be described as a fish *gazpacho*. Cod is found in a couple of recipes originating in the region's convents: *recado de patatas*, prepared with a sauce and potatoes coated with beaten eggs and breadcrumbs; and *bacalao al convento*, or cod with potatoes and spinach and a drop of stock.

Also popular in the region are frog's legs, coated with beaten eggs and breadcrumbs, fried and served with a tomato sauce.

Desserts include a choice of fruit from the area round Don Benito, while the Jerte Valley is known for its extensive cherry orchards.

The region's gastronomy has been enhanced by sweetmeats evolved by shepherds and goatherds, who use flour and lard as their main ingredients. We find *roskas de candelilla* (a form of doughnut), *bollos de chicharrones* (a flat roll made from lard, eggs, flour and aniseed or cloves), *escaladillas* (made from a dough drenched in orange juice and then fried), sponges, *bollos de leche* (milk buns) and *huevillos* (a small, egg-shaped delicacy).

Although Extremadura produces good wines, they have not, generally speaking, been commercialised. Rough, of a high alcoholic strength, they have somehow developed their own personality. Cañamero wine is just starting to find its way onto the market. White wine is made in Montánchez, Cillero and Ahigal, while Hervás is the place for clarets.



Montánchez ham



# La Mancha

As far as gastronomy is concerned, La Mancha, like Castile, covers a number of provinces: Toledo, Albacete, Ciudad Real and, with their own, individual features, Madrid, Guadalajara and Cuenca. The dishes, made to recipes handed down through the ages, are plain and satisfying.

La Mancha's cuisine, proud of its own personality and traditions, combines modern ideas with a deep respect for recipes laden with history. This approach is the secret behind most of the great dishes deriving from Hispanic gastronomy.

Coming first in our description of La Mancha's cuisine are the *gazpachos*, a dish also found in other areas of the country, such as Extremadura, Alicante, Murcia and Teruel. However, the origin of this dish lies here in La Mancha, in Albacete to be more precise, where it may be enjoyed at its best.

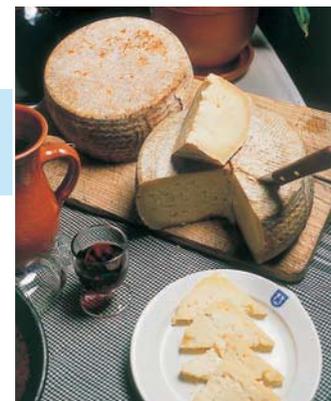
In La Mancha, *gazpachos* are a winter dish made from a wide variety of ingredients. Although the dish is traditionally associated with shepherds, it contains plenty of everything. Found only on the menus of the more stylish restaurants, of which, fortunately, there is no lack in the region, *gazpacho* is very much a seasonal affair.

Like all La Mancha's recipes, it goes back through the centuries, appearing in *Don Quixote* as *galianos*, and requires a long, painstaking preparation which has something of the ritual about it. First of all, a large, flat piece of unleavened dough, the *torta*, is made. Nowadays, ready-made *tortas* from La Roda, known as *tortas de Ceceño*, are available at shops in Madrid. The dough is baked slowly in a fully-heated oven until it measures half a metre or even one and a half metres, depending on the occasion, and should be no thicker than the edge of a coin. Great care is taken so that it does not break. It is allowed to cool and part of it is crumbled and part, broken into small pieces. In the meantime, pieces of rabbit, hare, pigeon, chicken or any other poultry that happens to be to hand are cooked with peppers and tomatoes. All this is carefully spooned on to the crumble until all the liquid is absorbed. It is usually served on the pieces of bread, although some cooks prefer to remove any sizeable pieces of meat and serve them as a second course. Strictly speaking, the terms *galianos* and *gazpachos* refer to the pieces of bread soaked in the stock and the tiny bits of poultry. The result of this rather elaborate recipe is a flavoursome, extremely delicate dish.

Far commoner and subject to endless imitations is *pisto manchego*, so popular that it now appears as a regular thing on meal tables all over Spain. There are many variations, all of Arab origin, but the true La Mancha *pisto* consists solely of green and red peppers, tomatoes and a tiny amount of courgette. It is sometimes livened up with onion, ham, beaten egg or tuna marinade.

*Moje manchego*, a cold, runny dish containing black olives, is not to be confused with *mojete*, made from potatoes sizzled in oil with garlic, paprika, tomatoes and bay leaf. This rather plain dish is sometimes made more tempting by the addition of a poached egg.

Other regional dishes commonly found on the menus of traditional restaurants include *asadillo de pimientos*, red peppers roasted and bathed in a dressing of garlic, tomato and oil; *salpicón*, chopped veal mixed with onions, tomatoes, garlic, parsley and pepper; and the popular dried cod



Marzipan

dishes, *tiznao* and *ajorriero*. To make *tiznao*, the cod is first cleaned, crumbled and grilled. It is then cooked in an earthenware dish containing the ubiquitous pepper, tomato, onion and garlic.

All over La Mancha, the visitor will be greeted by the popular garlic soup, made with or without cumin seeds and paprika. This soup will be described in greater detail a little further on. A dish made from breadcrumbs, *migas de pastor*, differs little from *migas* prepared elsewhere. When soaked in milk, they are called *canas* (white) and, when done in chocolate, they are known as *mulatto*, on account of their brown colour.

La Mancha gazpacho



Typical Almagro dishes

The people of La Mancha are extremely fond of marinades, made both with meat (chicken and partridge) and with fish (trout and tuna). Worthy of special mention is the aubergine marinade, made in Almagro to an Arab recipe and frequently found all over inland Spain at fairs and taverns.

Some provinces have their own particular speciality, like stewed partridge, *morteruelo* and *tojunto*.

In Toledo, home of the red partridge and, for some time now, a national and international game reserve, this fowl is stewed in a skilful yet extremely way, using bay leaf, pepper and garlic. *Morteruelo* is a greasy, toothsome dish for those with a hearty appetite. Associated traditionally with the province of Cuenca, it contains plenty of pig's liver, giblets, game and spices and is reminiscent of foie gras on account of its compact, creamy texture.

Lastly, Ciudad Real makes its own, special contribution to the cuisine of La Mancha in the form of what is known, to use the authentic term,

## PISTO MANCHEGO

Aubergines, tomatoes, courgettes, peppers, onions, oil or lard  
(Proportions as required)



Cut the onion into medium-sized pieces and chop the peppers into small squares. Fry lightly and, when they are almost cooked, add the courgettes and the aubergines, diced beforehand. When all the vegetables are tender, add the tomatoes (skinned and chopped into small pieces). Allow to reduce until fried and add salt to taste.

as *tojunto* (lit.: all together). To make this dish, found in all the provinces of La Mancha, wild rabbit is cooked until tender with garlic, onions, green peppers and a generous amount of oil, all together, as it were. Based on a similar idea is *to crudo* (lit.: all raw), a salad made with a variety of ingredients. An excellent kid recipe is used in the province of Guadalajara, where the meat is roasted country-style with thyme and mountain herbs or done in garlic.

Cheeses are an important item in the gastronomy of La Mancha. Of excellent quality, they are made from sheep's milk and are produced all over the region. There are two types: cured and creamy. The cheese of La Mancha, one of the most popular among Spaniards, lends itself to a singular method of preservation: if stored in jars of oil, it keeps for up to two years, in addition to acquiring a special taste that is pleasing to the palate.

The region's sausages are also worth trying.

The sweet-toothed will enjoy the *mantecados* (made from flour, almonds and lard), the *bollos de aceite* (small buns made with oil) and the honey-coated, fried pastries. Nor should they miss the *bizcoch manchega*, a sponge soaked in milk containing sugar, vanilla and cinnamon, and the *bizcochos borrachos* (sponge cakes soaked in a liqueur). In pride of place, however, is the marzipan from Toledo, made with sugar and almonds.

La Mancha is a major producer of top-quality wines bearing the *appellations d'origine* of Valdepeas and La Mancha. These are the wines that are usually served in Madrid and all over the region during the *chateo*, a custom consisting of going from bar to bar and having a glass of wine at each.



# Madrid

Now it is time to turn our attention to Madrid, which, although located in La Mancha, has its own particular gastronomy on account of its status as the nation's capital.

Traditionally, Madrid's cuisine is a reliable compendium of dishes peculiar to each and every region in Spain. The city's restaurants combine their magnificently prepared regional dishes with a wide range of ideas taken from international cuisine.

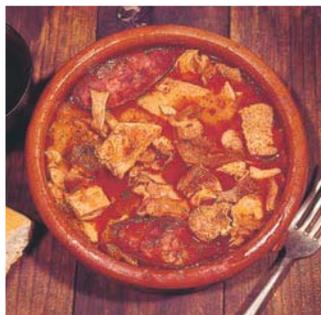
However, so as not to diverge from the purpose of this guide, our description will keep to what may be strictly considered as Madrid gastronomy.

First of all, it should be pointed out that Madrid cuisine is very much on the lines of the cuisines of La Mancha and Castile, albeit adapted to suit the character and needs of a capital city.

It is in Madrid that garlic soup, which is eaten and enjoyed all over Spain, has reached the category of a gastronome's dish and has become a constant in restaurant reviews. Meanwhile, the regional versions still retain something of the Madrid spirit of tasty simplicity. When Alexander Dumas visited Spain, he was



Specialities. Chinchón Parador



Tripe Madrid style



so taken with garlic soup that he tried to introduce the French to it while singing the praises of its health-giving qualities. The fact of the matter is that the soup consists solely of bread, garlic, oil and paprika, the success of its preparation depending entirely on the skills of the cook.

As for fish, although bream is essentially a Christmas dish, it is also eaten at other times of the year. In Madrid, it is simply sprinkled with breadcrumbs and parsley, garnished with lemon and done in the oven. Although this recipe bears no resemblance whatsoever to the Basque method, the result is equally delectable.

The other two treats on the Madrid menu are *cocido* (chick pea stew) and tripe. Madrid people have their own recipe for tripe (*callos a la madrileña*), using tomatoes, onions, bay leaf and thyme as the basic ingredients, to which black pudding, spiced sausage and bits of ham are frequently added.

Madrid's *cocido* is known near and far as being one of the best, perhaps on account of the quality of the water once used in its cooking, the Lozoya water, which softens the chick peas better than any other. Apart from chick peas, the Madrid *cocido* contains potatoes, cabbage, turnips, beef, marrowbone, streaky fat bacon, spiced sausage and black pudding.



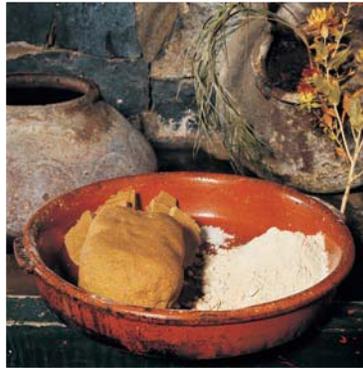
Traditional Madrid biscuits



# The Canary Islands

**A**lthough the two leading agricultural products of the Fortunate Isles, the tomato and the banana, are of excellent quality, they are not used as key ingredients in Canarian cooking. It is a centuries-old cuisine, combining peninsular influences (especially Castilian, Extremaduran and Andalusian) with, understandably, methods peculiar to the autochthonous race, the Guanches, of whom little else is known. From among the oldest recipes, which, incidentally, give us an insight into life on the island in former times, *gofio* should be first on our list.

Consisting of roasted wheat, barley, corn or chickpea flour, *gofio* has long been the basis of the ordinary Canarian's diet. It is made into a dough with water and milk and shaped into a fairly large ball to be eaten at the meal table as a substitute for bread.



*Gofio*



*Mojos*

*Mojos*, used so often in Canarian cuisine, are perhaps its most typical feature. Served with meat, fish, potatoes or whatever happens to be handy, *mojos* are a dressing made from oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and all kinds of spices, depending on the type of *mojo* desired: paprika, for *mojo colorao*; hot red pepper for *mojo picón*; coriander for *mojo verde*. They give the dishes an exotic touch, far removed from the flavours found on the peninsula.

The dish of greatest peninsular influence is the ubiquitous Canarian pot stew, *cocido* or *puchero*, to which locally-grown produce, such as pumpkin, yams, pears, sweet potatoes, potatoes and tender chickpeas, is added. It is prepared with fish caught in the nearby waters (salted, not fresh). The fish is boiled with potatoes and served with a *mojo* (a traditional Canarian dip).



*Canarian pot stew*



*Canarian boiled dish*

## VIEJAS WITH WRINKLED POTATOES

1 kg "viejas" • 1 kg potatoes • 1/2 kg salt  
Seasoning: parsley, oil, vinegar, hot red pepper

"Vieja" is a white fish, extremely popular with the islanders.

Heat some water in a large pan and, just as it is coming to the boil, add the fish with a touch of salt and a sprig of parsley. Bring to the boil and, when cooked, remove the fish and place on a serving dish.

At the same time, cook the potatoes in the following way: leaving the skins on, wash them and place in a pan containing enough water to cover them and half a kilo of salt. Leave them to cook until the skins go wrinkly. Remove from the heat and drain off the water. Place on the serving dish with the fish. Each diner dresses his portion with oil and vinegar to suit his taste. Normally, some red pepper is added.



Canarians make a wide range of stocks and soups, the most popular and original being the *jaramago* potage, made with hedge mustard, one of the islands' characteristic plants. Equally exquisite is the watercress potage.

Other typical dishes include *escaldón*, consisting of milk boiled with *gofio*; and *papas arrugadas* (lit.: wrinkled potatoes), which are simply potatoes boiled in their skins and often served with one of the *mojos*.

One of the more unusual pork products is the sweet black pudding, containing, believe it or not, sugar, sponge cake and raisins.



Canarian wine cellar



When it comes to wines, the malmseys always had an excellent reputation, especially the ones made on Lanzarote and Hierro. Today, acceptable wines are still made, along with a first-class rum.

Confectionery is as plentiful as it is varied. Bread is made with a surprising range of ingredients: potatoes, milk and lemon, banana, while desserts include banana tart, yam with honey, *tirijaras*, *turrón de gofio* and many more.

# The Balearic Islands



*Majorcan ensaimada*

**A**lbeit for different reasons, such as its long history, its exquisiteness and the imaginative handling of ingredients, cooking on the Balearic Islands is just as exotic as it is on the Canary Islands. Unfortunately, it is not easily available at restaurants and bars unless ordered in advance.

Here, we find a marked prevalence of pork and vegetables and a delight in adding a touch of sweetness to meat and fish, very much in line with the Mediterranean approach to gastronomy.

One of the most international sauces, mayonnaise, is named after Mahón, the capital of Menorca, because it is thought to have originated there. It should also be said in passing that each of the three main islands, Majorca, Menorca and Ibiza, has its own, individual cuisine, all of which nevertheless fit into a single category. Although the islands cover a tiny geographic area, researchers have gathered a total of 600 recipes, a figure which gives a clear idea of the wealth of local dishes.

On Majorca, soups are a favourite. There are two kinds: the thin one, made from fish, *cocido* or meat; and the one considered as being truly Majorcan, stodgy and on the dry side, hard to find nowadays.

The origin of this soup probably lies in the old cabbage soup. Ideally suited to the quiet, bucolic, easy-going life of the Majorcan countryside, it is made from greens, mainly cabbage, and slices of bread soaked in the vegetable stock, whose flavour is heightened by the addition of paprika, tomatoes, garlic and so on. When ready, it has the consistency of a blanc-mange, light and smooth yet extremely juicy.

Following the soups comes the pork, known locally as *porcella* and used in countless dishes such as the *rostida* or local roast. To make stuffing, an incredible mixture is used, consisting of pig's liver, eggs, bread, spices, apples and plums. Naturally enough, Majorca produces the islands' most famous sausage, the soft *sobrasada*, orange-coloured on account of the paprika used in its making.

For vegetable addicts, the supreme dish is the *tumbet*, which is a kind of pie consisting of a layer of potatoes covered by a layer of lightly-fried aubergines and topped with a sauce made from tomatoes and peppers. It is then boiled for a few minutes. Aubergines, a frequent ingredient in Majorca's cuisine, are also prepared with a meat or fish stuffing and then baked in the oven.

Egg dishes include the renowned eggs Sóller. In this recipe, the eggs are fried and served on pieces of *sobrasada* and then covered in an elaborate sauce made from vegetables and milk. Visitors might like to try the glorious hen filled with pomegranate sauce, turkey breast in almond sauce, pigeon with chestnuts, all of which are proof of the exquisite taste of the Majorcans when combining sweet with savoury.





Seafood Paella. Majorca



In confectionery, the star of the show is the *ensaimada*, a delicate, elaborate cake made, like the multitude of different pies, with lard.

On Menorca, one is struck by the great variety and quality of the seafood dishes, such as the lobster bouillabaisse, prepared with peppers, onions, tomatoes, garlic and a herb liqueur. The islanders are also proud of their rice with lobster, tunny with mayonnaise, partridges Menorca style and mutton done in the oven with *sobrasada*. The Mahón cheese most certainly should not be missed.

Lobster bouillabaisse



Similarly, on Ibiza, fish dishes are the salient feature on the menus: *burrída de rajada*, ray boiled and seasoned with a mixture containing chopped almonds; lobster Ibiza style, prepared with squid and a herb liqueur; and *guisat de marisc*, a succulent bouillabaisse made from all kinds of seafood.

Common to all the Balearic Islands is a wide variety of *coques*, very much on the lines of the Catalan version. *Coques* are made with a rectangular pastry base covered with a mixture of finely-chopped vegetables and fish or meat.

## TUMBET

Tomatoes, aubergines, red peppers, potatoes, oil or lard  
(Proportions as required)

Peel and chop the tomatoes and fry slowly until a fairly thick sauce is obtained. Slice and fry the aubergines and the potatoes: the aubergines should be fried very lightly while the potatoes should be allowed to cook until soft. Dice the pepper and fry gently. Now arrange the potatoes in a layer in the bottom of an earthenware dish, cover with a layer of aubergines and place the peppers on the top.

Cover with the tomato sauce and allow to cook for 5 to ten minutes. Serve straight from the earthenware dish.



The only island to produce wine is Majorca. There are, however, other, more unusual drinks on the Balearic Islands: the popular *pallofas*, made with the gin produced on

Menorca, which has a long, English tradition behind it; and Ibiza's heady herb liqueur, which some people prefer to water down with a few cubes of ice.

# Wine

Unquestionably, one of the Spain's greatest gastronomic attractions is to be found in the quality and diversity of its wines. Highly acclaimed down through the centuries, Spanish wine comes in about a hundred varieties, some of which have attained international standing.

## ANDALUSIA

has the following appellations *d'origine*: Jerez-Xérès-Sherry, Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Málaga, Montilla-Moriles and Condado de Huelva.

Highly individual in character, Andalusia's wines are the best-known beyond Spain's borders. The unique production method could be said to be almost miraculous in the sense that the wine does not come from a given crop, as is usually the case, but is derived from different mixtures evolving through the years. Aged in oak vats, the wines may be classified into 10 types, each with its own subtle difference: *Fino*. Of a pale, straw-like colour; dry, light and extremely aromatic. From 15° to 17° vol.

*Amontillado*. Amber in colour. From 16° to 18° vol. *Olorosos*. Of a deep golden colour. Full-flavoured yet light.

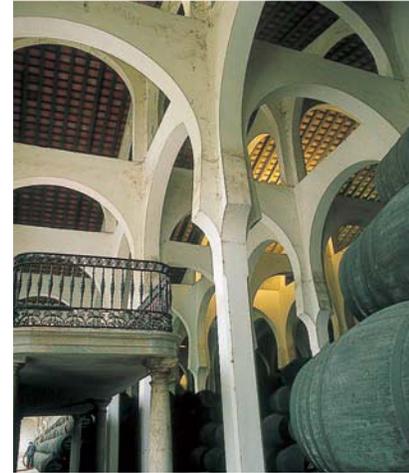
From 18° to 20° vol. *Palo cortado*. Midway between *amontillado* and *oloroso*.

*Raya*. Part of the *oloroso* group but not so delicate and aromatic. *Pedro Ximénez*. Sweet and highly aromatic.

*Moscatel*. Sweet raisin wine. *Cream*. Wine made by adding alcohol to must which has just started to ferment.

*Color*. Wine made by fermenting fresh must and adding concentrated must.

*Manzanilla*. Produced in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, this is a very pale, dry wine with 15° to 17° vol.



Wine cellar. Jerez de la Frontera

The Moriles-Montilla wines come from the province of Córdoba and, with their own peculiar personality (dry and extremely aromatic, of high alcoholic strength), are similar to those produced in the neighbouring area of Jerez. Lastly, the moscatel wines. Produced in Málaga, they are warm and sweet and dark in colour. They are commercialised under various appellations: Málaga, Málaga Virgen, Lágrima Christi, Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel.

So as to guarantee the quality and control of Spanish wines and provide consumer guidance, Instituto Nacional de Denominaciones de Origen (the National Appellations d'Origine Institute, Spanish initials, INDO) has been created. The institute's catalogue of wine-producing areas and maturation methods contains the official list of Spanish appellations d'origine. At the present time, there are 50 of these areas, which are favoured by physical and climatic conditions or by specific production methods resulting in highly characteristic wines.

Below is a brief description of the appellations d'origine, which, for convenience, have been grouped under regional headings.

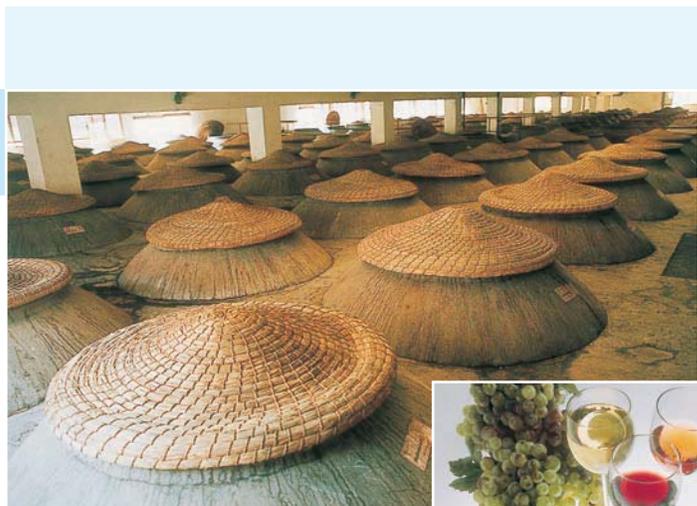


## ARAGON

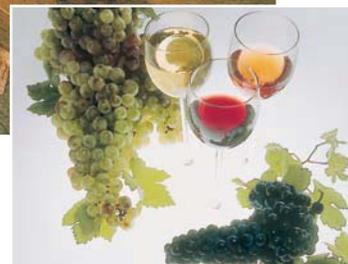
*Appellations d'origine:* Campo de Borja, Cariñena, Calatayud and Somontano. Here, the wines are of a strong, red colour and high alcoholic strength. Densely aromatic and full-flavoured, they are ideal with meat dishes and heavy, spicy stews.

## LA MANCHA

*Appellations d'origine:* Mancha, Méntrida, Mondéjar, Valdepeñas and Almansa. This area is the main source of Spanish wine as it has a vast production area covering the provinces of Toledo, Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Albacete. Generally speaking, these popular, good-quality wines are mild and dry with only the slightest touch of acidity. The best-known are the light reds and whites from Valdepeñas. They should all be drunk when still young (one or two years at the most) and their alcoholic strength ranges between 11° and 13°.



*Winery, Valdepeñas*



## CASTILE

*Appellations d'origine:* Cigales, Rueda, Ribera del Duero, Toro and El Bierzo. This area produces reds and rosés of 11° to 17° vol., including some of international renown, such as those from the area round Valbuena, Quintanilla de Arriba and Quintanilla de Onésimo. The ageing process, to which they are ideally suited, takes place in Bordeaux barrels and underground cellars. As production is on a small scale, they reach



*Ribera del Duero wines*

astronomical prices. White wines are produced in Rueda. Very pale and transparent, they are of excellent quality. From 11.5° to 14° vol.

Full-bodied, dry wines are also produced in the area.

*Rueda wines*



## LEVANTE

*Appellations d'origine* of Alicante, Valencia, Jumilla, Bullas, Utiel-Requena and Yecla, covering a fairly varied range of wines. Alicante wines are reds and rosés of high alcoholic strength (from 12° to 16°). In the main, Valencias are crisp, dry whites. The Jumilla wines, from the area in Murcia of the same name, are noted particularly for their maturation in oak barrels, although younger wines are also produced. Deep red in colour, Jumillas are heavy wines of high alcoholic strength. Utiel-Requenas are also reds, but lower in alcoholic strength. Under the Yecla *appellation*, extremely pleasant, smooth reds, rosés and clarets are produced.



*Jumilla wines*



*Cava*

## CATALONIA

*Appellations d'origine:* Ampurdán-Costa Brava, Alella, Costers del Segre, Conca de Barberá, Pla de Bagés, Penedés, Priorato, Tarragona and Terra Alta. Superb reds, whites and clarets are produced throughout the area, where the art of winemaking goes back centuries. The most highly revered are the Penedés and the Prioratos. Particularly noteworthy among the Penedés wines are the whites. Made from a combination of three different kinds of grape grown in the region, they are smooth and fruity and have an alcoholic strength of 10° to 13°.

The method followed to make Priorato wines is probably the oldest of all those now used in Spain. Standing out from the rest are the dark, velvety reds with their complex aroma. They are full-bodied wines of high alcoholic strength. The Tarragona *appellation* is a good choice for whites, ideal with fish or as an appetiser.

The first-class *cavas*, or sparkling wines, made in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia (Barcelona), have become popular both within and without Spain.



## LA RIOJA

*Appellation d'origine:* Rioja. This area, crossed by a small river, the Oja, lends its name to Spain's richest area in the production of table wines. In accordance with its wines, it is divided into three sub-areas. Firstly, Rioja Baja, where fruity, full-bodied wines of higher alcoholic strength than the rest are produced. Secondly, Rioja Alta, the area for *añadas* (one-year old wines) and *reservas* (wines aged for at least two years in a barrel, plus one year in bottles), producing wines in a range of red hues, of moderate alcoholic strength, highly aromatic and with a balanced, unmistakable taste. These wines are ideal for oaking. Young white wines are also made here. Thirdly, Rioja Alavesa, where young red wines with a pleasing touch of acidity are produced.

This *appellation d'origine* covers the top-quality wines known as special reserve, coveted by all. Special reserve wines come in three categories, each of which corresponds to a different maturation period:



*Navarra wines*

*Crianza:* These are wines aged for at least one year in a barrel and stored in bottles for another year. They are usually made with grapes from the third, fourth or fifth crop.

*Reserva:* Aged for at least two years in a barrel plus one year in bottles.

*Gran reserva:* Oaked for at least three years plus one year in bottles in the famous underground *calaos* (cellars) of La Rioja. These wines make for the best vintages.

Spain's prize possession in the field of gastronomy, the wines of La Rioja, born of the area's physical conditions and the skills and techniques deployed in their production, now occupy the place they deserve among the world's top table wines.

## NAVARRA

*Appellation d'origine:* Navarra. This area is known essentially for its red wines, whose alcoholic strength can be up to 14.5°. They combine perfectly with the invigorating local meals.



*La Rioja wines*



*Ribeiro jugs*

## GALICIA

*Appellations d'origine:* Rías Baixas, Ribeiro, Ribeira Sacra, Monterrei and Valdeorras. The wines made in this area are light whites and reds. Pleasantly acidic and of low alcoholic strength, they are perfectly suited to Galicia's traditional cuisine.

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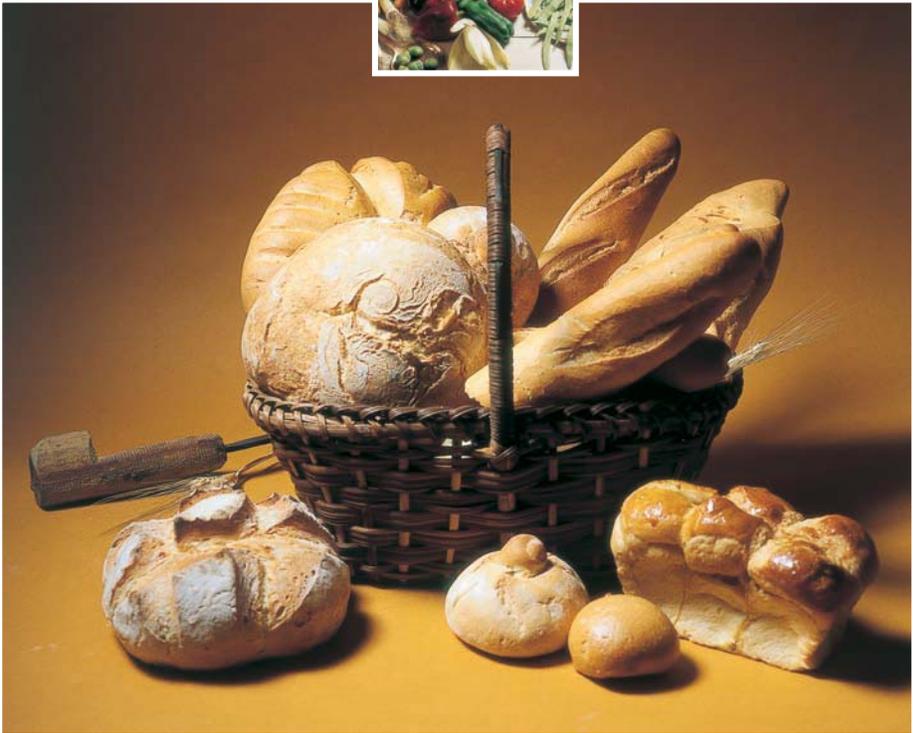
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# Spanish Cooking



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