



Trotting the Globe!

SPANISH FOOD – SOME HIGHLIGHTS!

Spanish cuisine consists of a great variety of dishes. Food in northern Spain is very different from that in the south. And the coastal areas of Spain have different types of food than those of the interior. (The same can be said of large cities versus small, rural areas.) The differences in cuisine really stem from three important things: **geography, climate and culture**. In terms of geography, seafood is very important in Spain's coastal areas – fish, shellfish, and even unique things like octopus! In terms of climate, the southern region is warmer, more Mediterranean-like, and is therefore perfect for growing olives. (Spain produces about 45% of the world's olive oil, by the way!) Or, in the northern Rioja area, grapes grow well – and thus the area has a winemaking tradition. (Spanish wine is becoming more and more popular, around the world, these days - with “vino tinto,” or red wine, a favorite!) In terms of culture, Spain has an extensive history with many cultural influences – such as its Jewish and Moorish traditions. The Moors were a strong influence in Spain for many centuries and some of their food is still eaten in Spain today. And, when the Spanish starting exploring the “New World” and the Americas, back in the late 15th century, they brought back several native foods – such as potatoes, tomatoes, beans and peppers. No true Spanish cook could get along without these essential ingredients! And let's not forget ham (or jamón), which is also very important to Spanish cuisine and is, by far, the country's favorite meat.

A Sampling of Spanish Cuisine

Paella

Rice-based dish (often considered Spain's national dish) with spices, vegetables, and different types of meat (like chicken, sausage, sometimes rabbit) – or, instead, with seafood, like shrimp and mussels.

Tortilla Española

Not like a Mexican tortilla at all! It is more like an omelette – egg based with potatoes.

Gazpacho

A cold soup with a tomato base and vegetables.

Jamón (Ham!)

Ham is EVERYWHERE in Spain – although it is different from American-type of ham. It is typically dry-cured. Jamón ibérico and jamón serrano are favorite varieties.

Churros

A long, skinny, curly donut – often dipped in thick, hot chocolate. Sometimes filled with chocolate or dulce de leche.

Cheese

There is a wide variety of cheese in Spain, with Manchego being the most famous.



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Olives

Olives are grown in southern Spain, but are served throughout the country. And, of course, Spanish cooks use a lot of olive oil in their cooking!

Flan

A custard dessert (made with eggs) and a caramel syrup topping.

Sangria

A refreshing wine-based drink, with plenty of fresh fruit, often brandy, and sometimes a sparkling water or soda.

Wine and Sherry

Spain is the third largest producer of wine in the world. Some favorite varieties include Tempranillo and Cava. Sherry, a fortified wine, is also produced in Andalusia.



Seafood paella



Flan



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SIESTAS! ... AND LATE DINNERS!

The Spanish typically take a siesta every afternoon. This is when stores and offices shut down for several hours in the mid to late afternoon. After this break (which usually includes a late lunch and relaxation time!), they then go back to work for several more hours. This then means that the Spanish also tend to eat dinner VERY late! They usually eat after 8:00 p.m. and typically between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m.!

TAPAS!

Adult Spaniards like to go to bars, before dinner, and eat delicious appetizers called tapas. Typically, something edible (and tasty!) is usually served when one orders a drink in Spain (wine, beer, sherry, etc.). In the Basque Country, they have appetizers called “pintxos,” which are served, buffet-style, on top of the bar. A patron grabs a plate and serves themselves a number of small, delicious hors d’oeuvres!

NOTE: Spain has more bars per inhabitants than any other country except Cyprus!

Snack Ideas

Here are some easy ideas for Spanish snacks:

- Make tapas! This can be very easy, with just slices of bread, cheese and ham. You can also add a dish of almonds or olives.
- Churros and hot chocolate (if you can’t find churros, take a donut and cut it into slices)
- Flan – while this can be difficult to make, a lot of grocery stores sell pre-packaged flan (usually in the dairy section)
- Sangria (kid-friendly, of course!). This is very easy to make and refreshing. Buy a variety of fruit (grapes, orange slices and even maraschino cherries are a good choice); have the student put these in a glass and mash lightly with a wooden spoon; add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of orange juice and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of grape juice; finish with a splash – about a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup - of sprite. Stir gently and add ice.



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GAZPACHO RECIPE

Gazpacho is a wonderful, delicious cold soup with a tomato base – that also happens to be really healthy and good for you! This is fun to make with kids, but make sure an adult cuts the veggies – and supervises use of the blender or food processor.

Ingredients:

- 1 cucumber – peeled, sliced in half (length-wise), seeded and roughly chopped
- 1/2 red onion – roughly chopped
- 1 red pepper – roughly chopped
- 1 28 ounce can of whole, peeled tomatoes
- 1 11.5 ounce can of tomato juice
- 2 garlic cloves - minced
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt – or more, to taste
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper – or more, to taste
- *Optional: chopped green onions, avocado slices, croutons, and sour cream for the top*

Directions:

Put half of the chopped vegetables in a food processor or blender. Put half the can of tomatoes in and half the can of tomato juice. Pulse until everything is blended – but still has a coarse texture to it (you don't want it smooth!). Pour this in a large bowl and do the next batch of veggies, tomatoes, and tomato juice. Blend again and pour into the large bowl. Add the vinegar and olive oil and mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Place in the refrigerator for several hours to chill (at least 2 hours – or even overnight). Pour into bowls and (OPTIONAL) top with chopped green onions, slices of avocado, croutons and even a dollop of sour cream!

And, remember, whenever serving food, ALWAYS check to make sure your students do not have any food allergies or other relevant issues.