My Sites | The Times & The Sunday Times | 4 | New | Edit Page | Edit with WPBakery Page Builder | Hi, valentinaverc

Illustration: Elen Winata for News UK

SALAD DAZE

Crimson pomegranates, sweet oranges and antioxidant-packed spinach... winter is a great time to tantalise your taste buds with quality Spanish produce – fresh food at its finest, says **Renate Ruge**

Late summer stretches beyond October in Spain thanks to its idyllic climate, with the warm sun gently ripening fruit and vegetables. Spanish farmers embrace these long flexible seasons, with clever use of water keeping the crops fresh, guaranteeing delicious produce to treat the taste buds.

As vintners pluck grapes from their vines, autumn also brings unmissable juicy stone fruit, with abundant treats such as Claudia plums, perfumed Ercolini pears and the last figs. It's the time when crimson pomegranates, chirimoya (custard apples) and sunset-orange kaki (persimmons) come into their own.

Aubergines peak during winter months too, from September to a second harvest in April/May, while peas popping up from October into the colder months are tastiest. Colourful crucifers, leafy vegetables, flavourful artichokes and crisp salad greens also appear.

The veggies are so good you can eat them on toast... they are a joy to savour

Arabs introduced citrus fruits, pomegranates, figs, almonds and dates to the Iberian Peninsula in the 10th century. They also planted spinach, asparagus and artichokes, laying the foundations for Spain's rich fruit and vegetable heritage. The veggies are so good you can eat them on toast. Simply roast and sprinkle a little salt and extra virgin olive oil. Raw, cooked or enjoyed year-round when preserved, they are a joy to savour.

Added to the natural quality, Spain's commitment to sustainable farming and organic produce has led to technological advancements and innovation in green agricultural practices.

Traceability is key for quality-obsessed producers defending the origin of their crops, giving way to ideas such as paperless labelling using laser technology, with many products, including those featured here, recognised by protected designation of origin (DOP) and protected geographical indication (PGI) quality seals.

It serves to confirm what food lovers have always known: Spanish fruit and vegetables really are second to none.

Top five fruits

Top five vegetables

Chef interview: Angel Zapata Martin

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain | alimentosdespaña

TOP FIVE FRUITS

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022.
Registered in England No. 894646. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

My Sites | The Times & The Sunday Times | 4 | New | Edit Page | Edit with WPBakery Page Builder | Hi, valentinwater
Exclusive Content Activated

PROMOTED CONTENT

Top five fruits

Discover some of Spain's seasonal superheroes – and what you can do with them

1 Kaki (persimmon)

With no pips or stone, the persimmon can be eaten whole. Also known as the star of Valencia after the distinctive shape at the centre of the fruit, it can be enjoyed from mid-October through January. Its sweet, firm flesh is scented with vanilla. The Rojo Brillante variety identifies the vibrant and flavoursome fruit grown only in Spain's Ribera del Xuquer valley.

Health-giving antioxidants including carotenoids also give this high-fibre fruit its vibrant orange colour. This versatile ingredient is equally tasty in sweet or savoury recipes, from tarts and puddings to salads and warming soups.

2 Cherimoya (Annona cherimola)

Nicknamed custard apples due to their creamy, sweet flesh and concentrated sugars, cherimoyas are often served chilled and eaten with a spoon. Brought to Spain in the 16th and 18th centuries from the Andes, this conical tropical fruit with a green, leathery skin grows best at high altitude.

An excellent source of vitamins including mood boosting B6, cherimoyas are rich in fibre, and said to support immunity and promote eye and heart health. Native variety Fino de Jete from Spain's Vende River valley has the largest production, while campas, sofia, negrito and Chirimoya de la Costa Tropical de Granada-Malaga are also top picks, though this compact fruit's appearance is fleeting.

3 Pomegranate

The name of this alluring fruit is derived from the medieval Latin for "seeded apple", pomum granatum. Globally there are 500 varieties, but those grown in Spain from crops dating back to the 3rd century BC are the standouts – the Granada Molbar de Elche variety has protected designation of origin.

This bejewelled beauty thrives under the hot sun, ripening in hues of gold and crimson. It has a juicy pulp, is full of sweet, soft seeds, and is rich in flavour. Bursting with antioxidants, potassium, magnesium, zinc, copper, iron, calcium and vitamins C, B and E, pomegranates are considered superfruits for their anti-inflammatory properties, adding gourmet flavour to salads. Great in syrup, molasses and marinades.

4 Banana

Banana plants bask under the Canary Islands' year-round sun, and plátano de Canarias is the real "top banana". The musa variety grows best at altitudes below 300 metres; green fruit ripens into a deep yellow, perfectly curved skin encases ivory-coloured flesh with a firm, deliciously sweet bite.

When these bananas are picked at their peak, sugar is about 20 per cent. It takes 10 to 12 months of careful cultivation, from seeding the mother plant to the time bunches appear, culminating in tying and deflowering by hand. Short, tasty potassium-rich Canary Islands bananas have fantastic flavour and distinctive brown specks.

5 Citrus fruits (oranges, mandarins and lemons)

With long sunny days and warm winds, Spain's Mediterranean coast has ideal conditions for growing citrus fruit, and Valencia is known as the Big Orange. A perfect balance of acidity and sweetness, cítricos Valencianos is the label to look out for, the mark of the stellar juicy oranges, mandarins and lemons grown in Castellon, Valencia and Alicante.

Inland, the bittersweet oranges from Seville are perfect for making marmalade, plucked from trees that fill the air with heavenly orange blossom scent. Emblematic of Spain, oranges and clementines are perfect sliced into sangria. The citrusy segments also add sweetness to salads.

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain | alimentosdespaña

SALAD DAZE | TOP FIVE VEGETABLES

BACK TO TOP

THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES

GET IN TOUCH
About us | Contact Us
Help | The Times Editorial Complaints
The Sunday Times Editorial Complaints | Place an announcement
Display advertising | Classified advertising
The Times Corrections | Careers

MORE FROM THE TIMES AND THE SUNDAY TIMES
The Times e-paper | The Sunday Times e-paper | Times Currency Services | The Sunday Times Wine Club
Times Print Gallery | The Times Archive | Times Crossword Club | Sunday Times Driving
Times+ | The Sunday Times Rich List | Times Expert Traveller | Good University Guide
Schools Guide | Best Places to Live | Best Places to Stay | Podcasts
Sportswoman of the Year Awards | Times Money Mentor

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022
Registered in England No. 894846. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF
Privacy & cookie policy | Licensing | Syndication | Site map | Topics | Commissioning terms | Terms and conditions | Cookie settings

My Sites | The Times & The Sunday Times | New | Edit Page | Edit with WPBakery Page Builder | Hi, valentinaveri
Manage your notifications

Top five vegetables

When you cook with such versatile, nutrient-packed foods as these, you're bound to get inspiration for your menus

1 Leafy greens

Endive, escarole, crisp romaine, little gem, arugula, round lettuce, batavia, lollo rosso, mache (lamb's lettuce), watercress, antioxidant-packed spinach (introduced by the Moors), chard and curly kale – just a few of a long list of wonderfully fresh, healthy greens grown in Spain.

Mostly are eaten raw in salads, sandwiches or, as with arugula, added as a garnish. Refreshing and filled with vitamins and minerals, the leaves' flavours range from bitter to sweet. Spanish farmers in Murcia, Almeria and Alicante grow some of the best, and the fast turnaround from field to plate is a boon for consumers.

2 Peppers

Usually red or green, full-flavoured Spanish peppers have sweet notes. Once cultivated by Franciscan monks returning from the Americas in the 16th and 17th centuries, capsicum is a key ingredient in paella, estofados (stews) and gazpacho. Those from Najera (La Rioja) and Iberico peppers (Pimiento Asado del Iberico in Leon) are perfect for roasting and canning, while Galicia's swirling rain and sudden bursts of heat yield great-tasting peppers too.

Pimiento de Herbon DOP, commonly referred to as Padron peppers – and as green as the lush northwest landscape they grow in – are served sizzling straight from the pan. Though mostly mild, the heat of the occasional pepper can be eye-wateringly hot. A fun surprise when eating with friends.

3 Broccoli

The flowering head of the Brassica oleracea, from the same family as cabbage, is an antioxidant-rich winter vegetable popular for its nutritional values, as it is packed with vitamins A and C, phytochemicals and anti-ageing qualities.

This cruciferous plant is delicious steamed, served tender (not soggy) and drizzled with olive oil and freshly squeezed lemon, toasted almond flakes or garlicky slivers of chorizo.

Spain is the world's third biggest producer and primary exporter of broccoli. Murcia, tucked in the southeast corner in the Mediterranean basin, is known to locals as "broccoli country". Thanks to the quality of the product, it's enjoying a revival among Spain's avant-garde chefs.

4 Cabbage and cauliflower

Vitamin-rich winter crucifers like cauliflower, red, purple, and white cabbage, curly kale and turnip greens – central to Spanish gastronomy – grow mostly in the country's north and are packed with nutritional benefits. Many are available year-round in vegetable preserves.

Winter in Galicia is synonymous with dark, leafy bunches of berza (curly kale) and grelos (turnip greens) – lacon con grelos (ham with turnip greens) is a popular dish. Madrid's favourite stew, cocido Madrileño, is served with white cabbage, while in Cantabria, cabbage is combined with white beans, potato and pork to tasty effect. A national favourite at Christmas is red cabbage, which is sautéed with apples, raisins and pine nuts.

5 Artichoke

Part of the thistle family, the artichoke reveals its flavour layer by layer, its tender heart reached by unwrapping petal-shaped bracts. Soft green and purple, this versatile vegetable can be grilled, baked, stuffed or boiled – perfectly paired with ham and a glass of fino.

Fresh and canned artichokes are considered a delicacy in Spain, with the best hailing from the east and north. The dinamica de Tudela variety from Bencarlo, Castellon (Alcachofa de Benicarlo) and those from Tudela in Navarre (Alcachofa de Tudela) are harvested from mid-October to December when the frost arrives, and these winter crops are then preserved to enjoy all year round. A second budding picked between February and June is eaten fresh.

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain | alimentosdespaña

TOP FIVE VEGETABLES | MEET ANGEL ZAPATA

BACK TO TOP

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022
Registered in England No. 894846. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF

PROMOTED CONTENT

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSE CASTRILL

HEAVEN ON A SMALL PLATE

Catalan chef Angel Zapata Martín knows a thing or two about tapas. Here he reveals why this cuisine is so special to him

Renowned Catalonian chef Angel Zapata Martín is chef director at London's five Barrafina restaurants (and two of Parillan). His authentic Spanish tapas are so good, the Dean Street restaurant has been awarded a Michelin star. Celebrating the flavours of Spain, dishes – such as grilled squid with chickpeas and pancetta or prawn and piquillo pepper – take diners on a food journey through Angel's home country.

He has worked with the late Santi Santamaría – the first Catalan chef to get three Michelin stars at his restaurant Can Fabes – and later with chef Pierre Gagnaire. He has also taught at Barcelona's Hofmann School and its one Michelin-starred restaurant, before working in France, Panama, Latin America, Dubai and the Balearics until meeting restaurateur Sam Hart and settling in London.

Respect for traditional tapas is demonstrated at Barrafina, with menus featuring regional Spanish classic dishes and a unique specials board that changes daily.

"Spanish cuisine is so special to me: the location and weather are beautiful, dishes are clean and simple and the food offering so diverse. The Mediterranean side gives you incredible seafood, rice dishes and calderetas (stews); the centre has fantastic frituras (fried food), which is a real art to master.

"Castilla la Mancha and Castilla Leon are very well known for asados (roasts using stone ovens) such as suckling pig, and their famous culture of smoking and preserving, while the south has amazing sauces like salsa verde. The coast from the Basque country all the way to Galicia through Asturias, Cantabria, Navarre has amazing seafood such as scallops, and species vary from one place to the next.

"In cooking, freshness, seasonality and simplicity matter the most to me. At Barrafina, what we get today, we cook today – making the best of the freshest produce, producing dishes balanced with a squeeze of lemon or vinegar for acidity, finished simply with parsley.

"My trips back home always inspire creativity and give me new ideas and ways of doing things. I'm from Catalonia but I'm also at home in Ibiza and the Balearics, so my heart is split. My roots are far reaching – my mum is from Andalusia, my dad from Extremadura.

"I fell in love with my uncle's cooking growing up, and my style is very much Catalan thanks to my mentor Santi Santamaría. Obsessed with using hyperlocal produce, he made me appreciate quality ingredients in dishes using classic French techniques but rooted in Catalonian tradition.

"In cooking, freshness, seasonality and simplicity matter the most to me"

"People sometimes confuse Michelin-star quality with modern food, but for me, tradition and simplicity bring excellence as well as modern techniques – being authentic and respecting where recipes come from.

"At Borough Market, we do a chicken dish, and as everyone in England knows how to make roast chicken, ours has got to be good! Crisp-skinned, roasted with onions and pine nuts, lemon juice and a touch of cinnamon. Another is albondigas (meatballs) mar y montaña butifarra, featuring elements from the sea and land.

"My body craves Spanish fruit and vegetables. It's in my DNA. I love cherimoyas (custard apples) though not many people know how good they are. The same goes for persimmons. I'm a persimmon freak. The green unripe ones made into marmalade are mind-blowing.

"Melons are a favourite too, as well as figs and quince. I'm also a big fan of artichokes in salad or tortilla. Meaty red capsicums are available year-round and always taste great; then there are cardos (cardoons).

"The bitxo de Tiurana – tiny, hot Spanish chillies – really remind me of home, adding unique and powerful flavour rather than heat to dishes. I love pimientos too. Spanish preserved foodstuffs are world-class, following great traditions.

"Cooking with the best, whether it's a leek or a tomato, is very Spanish. I have clear memories of my grandmother preserving sun-ripened tomatoes in their own juices that we would enjoy all year round – just amazing."

A taste of Spain

These delicious recipes make stars of the vegetables they contain – and they are super easy to make too

CHORIZO WITH MINTED PEAS

CHARRED LEEKS WITH ROMESCO

Illustration: Elen Winata for News UK

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain | #alimentosdespaña

TOP FIVE VEGETABLES | SALAD DAZE

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022.
Registered in England No. 894646. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

My Sites | The Times & The Sunday Times | 4 | New | Edit Page | Edit with WPBakery Page Builder | Hi, valentinaverc

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC ATKINS

HEAVEN ON A SMALL PLATE

Catalan chef Angel Zapata Martín knows a thing or two about tapas. Here he reveals why this cuisine is so special to him

Renowned Catalonian chef Angel Zapata Martín is chef director at London's five Barrafina restaurants (and two of Parillan). His authentic Spanish tapas are so good, the Dean Street restaurant has been awarded a Michelin star. Celebrating the flavours of Spain, dishes – such as grilled squid with chickpeas and pancetta or prawn and piquillo pepper – take diners on a food journey through Angel's home country.

He has worked with the late Santi Santamaría – the first Catalan chef to get three Michelin stars at his restaurant Can Fabes – and later with chef Pierre Gagnaire. He has also taught at Barcelona's Hofmann School and its one Michelin-starred restaurant, before working in France, Panama, Latin America, Dubai and the Balearics until meeting restaurateur Sam Hart and settling in London.

Respect for traditional tapas is demonstrated at Barrafina, with menus featuring regional Spanish classic dishes and a unique specials board that changes daily.

"Spanish cuisine is so special to me: the location and weather are beautiful, dishes are clean and simple and the food offering so diverse. The Mediterranean side gives you incredible seafood, rice dishes and calderetas (stews); the centre has fantastic frituras (fried food), which is a real art to master.

"Castilla la Mancha and Castilla Leon are very well known for asados (roasts using stone ovens) such as suckling pig, and their famous culture of smoking and preserving, while the south has amazing sauces like salsa verde. The coast from the Basque country all the way to Galicia through Asturias, Cantabria, Navarre has amazing seafood such as scallops, and species vary from one place to the next.

"In cooking, freshness, seasonality and simplicity matter the most to me. At Barrafina, what we get today, we cook today – making the best of the freshest produce, producing dishes balanced with a squeeze of lemon or vinegar for acidity, finished simply with parsley.

"My trips back home always inspire creativity and give me new ideas and ways of doing things. I'm from Catalonia but I'm also at home in Ibiza and the Balearics, so my heart is split. My roots are far reaching – my mum is from Andalusia, my dad from Extremadura.

"I fell in love with my uncle's cooking growing up, and my style is very much Catalan thanks to my mentor Santi Santamaría. Obsessed with using hyperlocal produce, he made me appreciate quality ingredients in dishes using classic French techniques but rooted in Catalonian tradition.

PHOTOGRAPHY: © TIM ATKINS

CHORIZO WITH MINTED PEAS

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

4 cooking chorizos, cut in three
2kg fresh peas in their pods
2 large tomatoes
100g jamon serrano, diced very finely
200g shallots, diced very finely
50g garlic, sliced
1.2l chicken stock
1 handful of mint leaves, finely chopped
Olive oil

METHOD

1. Pod the peas and blanch in salted boiling water for half a minute. Drain, transfer to a bowl of iced water and drain once cool. Store in the fridge in a container lined with kitchen paper
2. Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Cut small, shallow crosses in the base of each tomato and add to the water, blanching for 30 seconds or so. Transfer to a bowl of iced water to chill quickly
3. Once cold, peel the skins away from the tomatoes and cut in half. Remove and discard the seeds and core and dice the flesh. Weigh out 200g of the tomato concasse and save any extra for other dishes
4. Add a dash of oil to a large saucepan and place over a medium heat. Once hot, add the jamon, shallots and garlic and cook together until the ingredients reach a deep golden brown colour – this will enhance the flavour of the final dish
5. Add the tomato concasse, cook out for a few minutes and add the stock. Bring to the boil
6. Meanwhile, add the chorizo pieces to a hot, dry pan and fry on all sides until cooked through and crisp on the ends
7. When the stock is boiling, add the reserved peas and leave to reduce until thickened to a loose sauce consistency. Sprinkle in the mint
8. To serve, divide the sauce and peas between bowls and add three pieces of chorizo per plate. Serve immediately

Illustration: Elen Winata for News UK

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain #alimentosdespaña

TOP FIVE VEGETABLES | SALAD DAZE

BACK TO TOP

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022.
Registered in England No. 894646. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

My Sites | The Times & The Sunday Times | 4 | New | Edit Page | Edit with WPBakery Page Builder | Hi, valentinaverc

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSE ESPAÑA

HEAVEN ON A SMALL PLATE

Catalan chef Angel Zapata Martín knows a thing or two about tapas. Here he reveals why this cuisine is so special to him

Renowned Catalonian chef Angel Zapata Martín is chef director at London's five Barrafina restaurants (and two of Parillan). His authentic Spanish tapas are so good, the Dean Street restaurant has been awarded a Michelin star. Celebrating the flavours of Spain, dishes – such as grilled squid with chickpeas and pancetta or prawn and piquillo pepper – take diners on a food journey through Angel's home country.

He has worked with the late Santi Santamaría – the first Catalan chef to get three Michelin stars at his restaurant Can Fabes – and later with chef Pierre Gagnaire. He has also taught at Barcelona's Hofmann School and its one Michelin-starred restaurant, before working in France, Panama, Latin America, Dubai and the Balearics until meeting restaurateur Sam Hart and settling in London.

Respect for traditional tapas is demonstrated at Barrafina, with menus featuring regional Spanish classic dishes and a unique specials board that changes daily.

"Spanish cuisine is so special to me: the location and weather are beautiful, dishes are clean and simple and the food offering so diverse. The Mediterranean side gives you incredible seafood, rice dishes and calderetas (stews); the centre has fantastic frituras (fried food), which is a real art to master.

"Castilla la Mancha and Castilla Leon are very well known for asados (roasts using stone ovens) such as suckling pig, and their famous culture of smoking and preserving, while the south has amazing sauces like salsa verde. The coast from the Basque country all the way to Galicia through Asturias, Cantabria, Navarre has amazing seafood such as scallops, and species vary from one place to the next.

"In cooking, freshness, seasonality and simplicity matter the most to me. At Barrafina, what we get today, we cook today – making the best of the freshest produce, producing dishes balanced with a squeeze of lemon or vinegar for acidity, finished simply with parsley.

"My trips back home always inspire creativity and give me new ideas and ways of doing things. I'm from Catalonia but I'm also at home in Ibiza and the Balearics, so my heart is split. My roots are far reaching – my mum is from Andalusia, my dad from Extremadura.

"I fell in love with my uncle's cooking growing up, and my style is very much Catalan thanks to my mentor Santi Santamaría. Obsessed with using hyperlocal produce, he made me appreciate quality ingredients in dishes using classic French techniques but rooted in Catalonian tradition.

PHOTOGRAPHY: IFAUL WINCH-FURNESS

CHARRED LEEKS WITH ROMESCO

SERVES 10

INGREDIENTS

5 leeks
Olive oil, salt and pepper
1 garlic head, cut in half horizontally
3 tomatoes
1 tbsp ñora pulp (red pepper paste)
15g fried almonds
10g hazelnuts
15g fried bread
50ml Arbequina olive oil
15ml Jerez vinegar

METHOD

1. Grill the whole leeks on a barbecue or in the oven until the outer layer is charred. Immediately wrap them in aluminium foil (while they are still hot)
2. When the leeks have cooled, peel off the outer layer and cut them into 4cm pieces. Keep them aside
3. Drizzle the half garlic head with olive oil and season with salt and black pepper. Wrap in aluminium foil and roast in the oven at 180C for 30 minutes
4. Roast the tomatoes with olive oil, salt and black pepper at 180C for 25 minutes (they should be very charred)
5. Peel the tomatoes and keep the pulp
6. Blend all ingredients apart from the leeks to make your romesco, season with salt and pepper
7. Spread a thick layer of romesco onto your chosen dish and place the leeks on top

Illustration: Elen Winata for News UK

Find out more about tantalising Spanish produce at foodswinesfromspain.com/spainfoodnation

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain #alimentosdespaña

TOP FIVE VEGETABLES | SALAD DAZE

BACK TO TOP

© Times Newspapers Limited 2022.
Registered in England No. 894646. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.