

IBERIAN INSPIRATION

ARTISANAL, AUTHENTIC SPANISH FOOD & WINE



Spain's reign as the cultural gateway to the Mediterranean stretches back as far as the eye can see. Its diverse culinary tradition is rooted in the ancient, geographically diverse land that produces an abundance of ingredients combined with craftsmanship developed over centuries.

Whether it's an olive just plucked from a tree or chorizo dried and cured by artisans, these star ingredients share the stage without competing for flavor in Spain's always-inventive cuisine. Sip Cava while sampling Manchego cheese and Jamón Serrano. Try traditional paella with a glass of Garnacha. Or savor Spanish vermouth while snacking on Marcona almonds.

Whatever the pairing, Spain's unique cuisine along with its foodie culture creates the ultimate "Iberian Inspiration." Fortunately, you don't have to cross the Atlantic to taste it. You can sample the best Spanish ingredients and pairings in Southern California, whether it's for lunch, dinner, or a late-night snack.

LA HORA DEL VERMUT





In the United States, vermouth usually plays second chair to lead cocktail ingredients – dismissed as adding little more than acidity to a martini or color to a Manhattan. But in Spain, vermouth is a star in its own right.

White or red wine acts as its base, which is then bolstered with botanicals and spices to create its distinct flavor. Bold and sweet, Spanish-style vermouth is served neat, on the rocks, or stirred with lemon soda over ice.

Madrid dedicates 60 minutes each day to the drink in a treasured ritual known as the “hora de vermut”. Pair the fortified, aromatized wine with small tapas, such as olives and Marcona almonds, for a relaxing midday aperitivo. Or on warm, summery days, sip it with tinned fish, a delicacy prepared in oil, preserved in vinegar (escabeche), and frequently packed with piquant chiles.

An alternate Spanish favorite would be a dry and nutty fino or amontillado Sherry from Jerez. These fortified wines that date back to the 8th century are made from the white Palomino grape, and aged under a protective veil of “flor” (yeast) in the unique solera system of barrels. The result ranges in wines from Fino and Manzanilla (light, dry, and the color of straw) to Amontillado, Palo Cortado and Oloroso (richer in flavor and deeper in color).

Whether you choose to drink vermouth, or sherry, they are delicious with just about any tapa. Follow it up with a siesta, and you’ll be living like a true Madrileño.





ELEGANCE IN A CAN

Spain takes canned seafood to a whole new level. It goes beyond tuna, tinning everything from sardines to mussels to squid. When paired with vermouth, the canned delicacy delivers an unexpected depth of flavor that's more than the sum of its parts.

Packaged in beautiful cans (conservas), tinned seafood is served as an indulgence at tapas bars around the country, but you can buy them at grocery stores everywhere. Just look for the "product of Spain" label to ensure authenticity.





QUESO Y VINO





Spain's two most famous exports – cheese (queso) and wine (vino) – prefer to travel as a pair. Steeped in tradition, both wine- and cheesemaking are 1,000-year-old crafts in the Mediterranean country. Its Manchego and Idiazábal can stand alone or play nicely on a charcuterie board dotted with Jamón Ibérico (Iberico ham), Spanish chorizo, fruit, and croquetas.

Chilled Cava brings out the best in tangy Manchego, while a Txakoli – a dry slightly effervescent and lower alcohol wine from Basque Country – is the perfect complement to a smoky, buttery Idiazábal.



THE MAGIC CURE

France may have invented charcuterie, but few countries match Spain when it comes to cured meats. They're such a staple that Madrid has its own cured meat chain restaurant: Museo del Jamón.

The centuries-old practice creates the perfect finger food, and the most popular varieties include jamón, chorizo, salchichón, lomo, and sobrasada. Each is cured with spices from its home region, which creates unique flavor profiles. Spanish chorizo, unlike Mexican chorizo, is a cured meat that gets its flavor from Pimenton (Spanish paprika).

SURPRISE WITH GAZPACHO

Spain's most famed cold soup has Roman origin. A peasant dish that makes the most of available produce, which with the discover of America began its transformation into its modern and current incarnation. This chilled soup sparkles with peak-summer ingredients like Roma tomatoes, bell peppers, garlic and slice of bread (preferably crusty), along with the essentials, extra-virgin olive oil and a touch of Vinagre de Jerez (Jerez Vinegar PDO).

There's a key to exceptional gazpacho. Two, really: the freshest ingredients and the best Spanish extra olive oil you can buy. To make, combine Roma tomatoes, cucumber, green bell pepper, garlic, white onion, and a slice of bread in a food processor, and blend until smooth. Too thick? Add water. Too thin? Add bread. Finish with salt, olive oil, and – very important for authenticity – Vinagre de Jerez (Jerez Vinegar PDO) to taste. Chill, and enjoy!



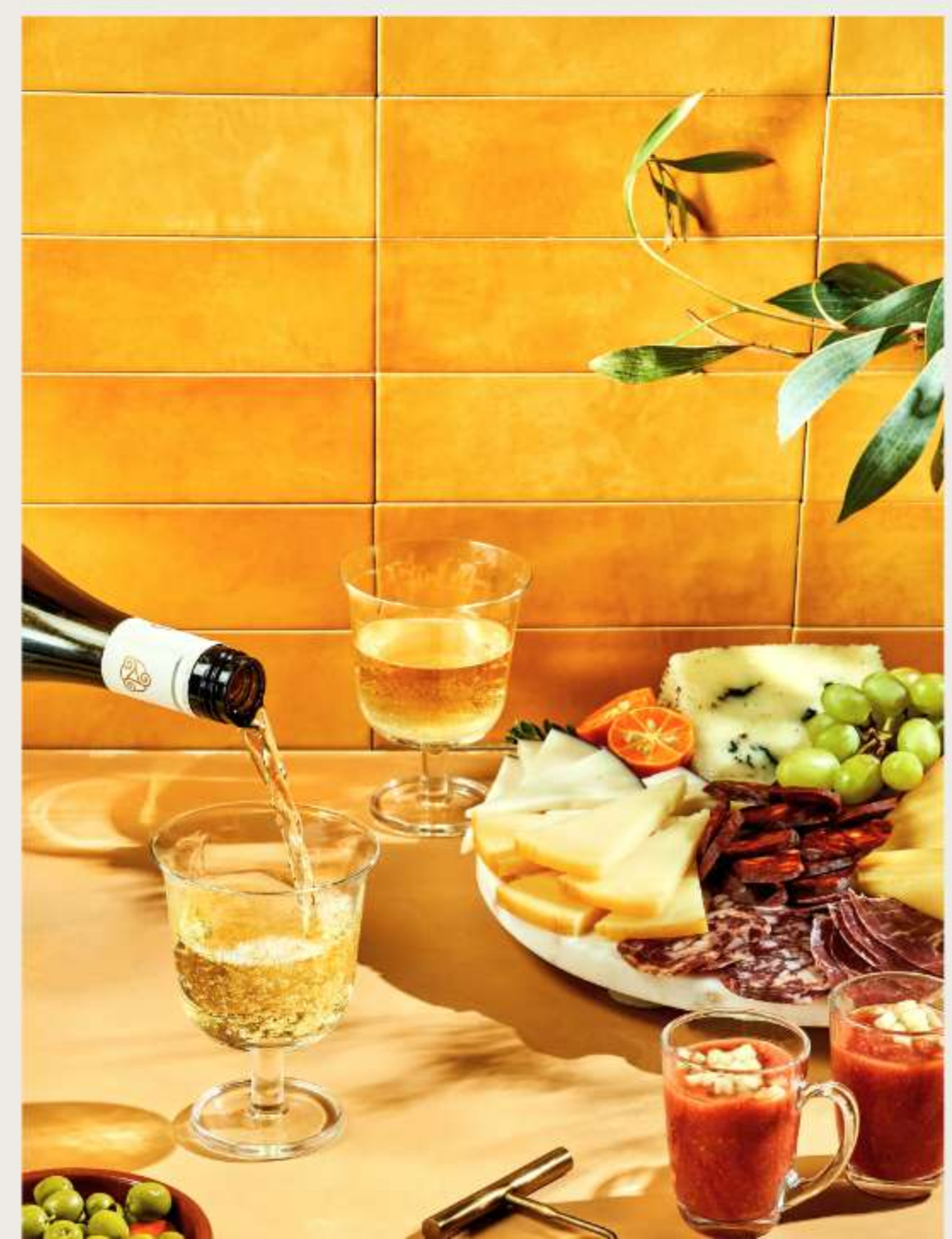


DIVERSE WINES

With a mild Mediterranean climate, Spain is preternaturally disposed to winemaking. But with 139 designated wine regions and over 200 grape varieties, it has an almost unfair advantage. Unsurprisingly, Spain is the third largest producer of wine in the world, eclipsed only by France and Italy – something the country prefers to blame the Moors for, as they banned wine production during their nearly 400-year occupation.

The best-known grape is the Tempranillo, which translates to “the small early one” – a name that alludes to the variety’s tendency to ripen early. Match your tapas of choice with a Tempranillo wine like Rioja or Ribera del Duero or a chilled white, such as Albariño and Rías Baixas from Galicia or Txakoli from Basque Country.

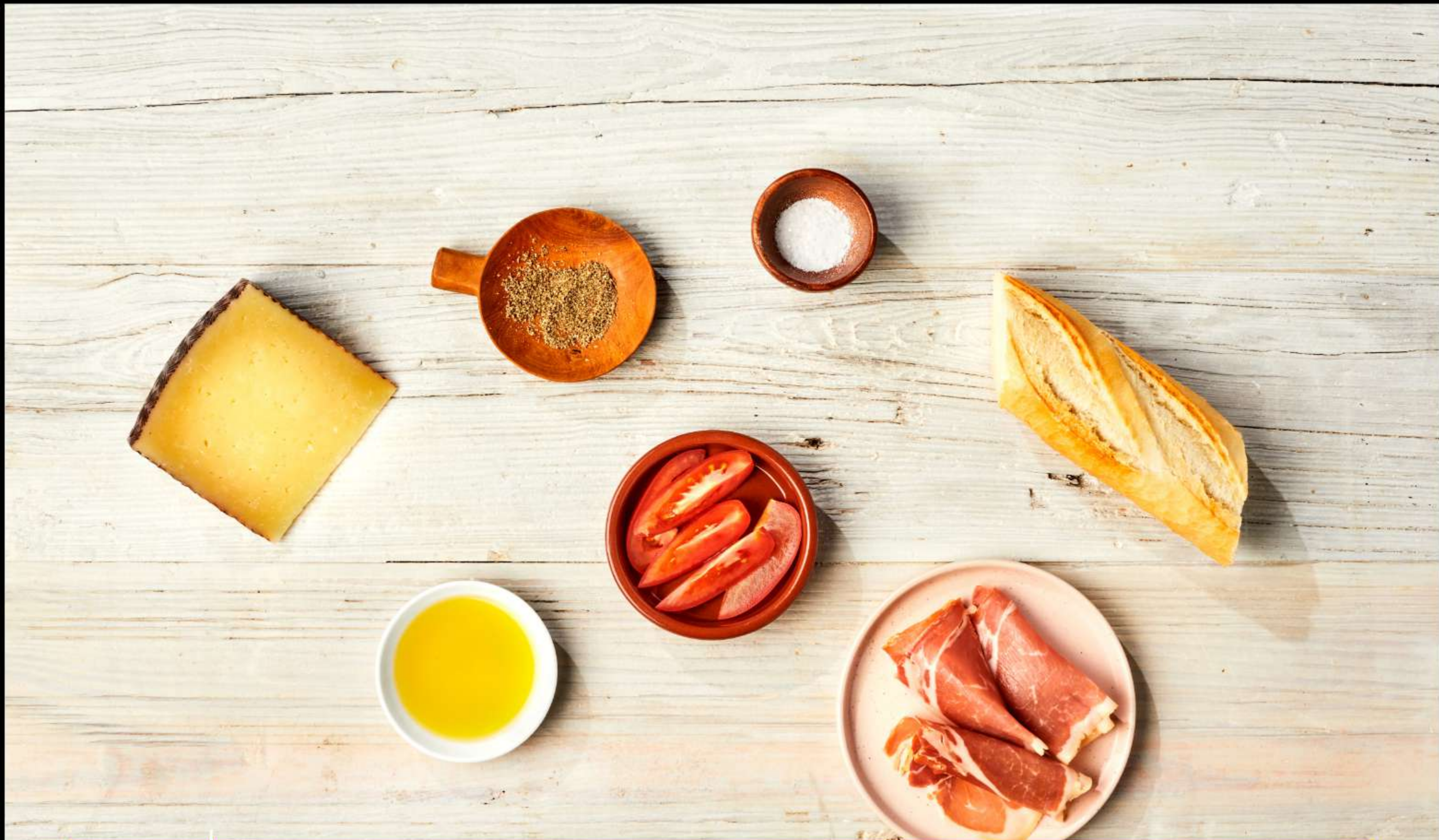
Whichever wine you choose, be sure to look for the Denominación de Origen on each bottle. It’s a stamp of approval from Spain’s wine quality-control system, confirming each bottle’s authenticity and the producer’s adherence to strict growing regulations.





A PASTORAL PICNIC

For a perfect picnic lunch, Spanish-style, think in multiple courses – all fresh, all paired with the perfect beverage. The true beauty of Spanish cuisine is that even the most simple dish delivers flavors full of depth. Case in point: the bocadillo (aka a sandwich). Traditionally, made with a baguette-style loaf, bocadillos are highly customizable and can be stuffed with fillings like Spanish chorizo, Serrano ham, or tuna. But, really, anything delicious goes.



JAMÓN Y QUESO

Baguette
Jamón Serrano
Manchego
Olive Oil
Sea Salt
Black Pepper

ATÚN CON TOMATE Y OLIVA

Baguette
Spanish Tuna in Olive Oil
Tomato
Olives
Sea Salt
Black Pepper

ANCHOAS Y PIPARRAS

Baguette
Anchovies in Olive Oil
Guindilla Ibarra Peppers in Vinegar
Olive Oil
Sea Salt
Black Pepper

A LITTLE MOUTHFUL

The bocadillo, which translates to “little mouthful,” is hundreds of years old. Today, the sandwich is one of Spain’s most popular snacks, and it’s a lunchtime staple in many Spanish cities. What makes the bocadillo so distinctive is not just a nice crusty bread, sliced long, but the ingredients that fill it. Think of these options: jamón Serrano, sardines and cheese (such as Manchego, Murcia al Vino, Mahon, Arzua Ulloa and many more). If you’re looking for a fresh take on your regular lunch, look no further than a bocadillo overflowing with authentically sourced Spanish ingredients.



SANDWICHES AND CERVEZAS

Wine may get all the buzz, but beer, too, is beloved in Spain, especially on warm days and during fútbol games. In fact, beer was popular in the region until the Romans replaced it with wine. But in the 16th century, King Charles V began importing





beer and opening breweries around the country. It was then Spanish beer was born (again).

The 19th century marked the beginning of Spain's cerveza boom. Famous breweries like Mahou, Damm, Cruz del Campo, and Águila opened their doors, and Spain's distinct lager style, rubia, emerged.

Just know there are right and wrong answers when ordering beers in rival cities. When in Barcelona, go for a Damm. When in Madrid, order a Mahou. And you'll always fit right in.

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