

Octopus and baby potatoes served at Sabor, headed up by Nieves Barragán Mohacho. PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCUS COBDEN



TRAVEL

The highlights of Spain's cuisine, according to three London-based Spanish chefs

Three London-based Spanish chefs, whose restaurants bear the 'Restaurants from Spain' certification, discuss their approach to cooking and the diversity of Spanish cuisine.

BY FARIDA ZEYNALOVA AND MATTHEW FIGG



PUBLISHED APRIL 27, 2023 • 7 MIN READ

This paid content article was created for Foods and Wines from Spain. It does not necessarily reflect the views of National Geographic, National Geographic Traveller (UK) or their editorial staffs.

From delicate slices of rich jamón ibérico to a vast array of seafood specialities, the UK's appreciation for Spanish cuisine has gradually evolved beyond the classic staples of paella and patatas bravas. Nowadays, restaurateurs recognise a growing appetite for dishes that showcase the intricacies of Spanish cuisine and reflect the diversity of flavours that can be found across Spain's regions. We speak to three London-based chefs who are helping champion the very best that Spain has to offer.

Angel Zapata Martín

Chef Director of [Barrafina](#) and [Parrillan](#)



Chef Angel is originally from Barcelona, Catalonia. PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG FUNNELL

Tell us a bit about your cooking style.

Accessible and unpretentious. You can tell what you're eating just by looking at the dish – there's no artifice or frills. The most important thing for me is using the best seasonal produce and letting the ingredients shine. I'm drawn towards seafood as I was born close to the best fish ports in Catalonia.

What's your favourite dish on the Barrafina menu?

Aside from the classics, of which I'll never tire – tortillas, croqueta de jamon and gambas al ajillo to name a few – I'd say grilled squid with chickpeas, bomba ibérica (a ball of potato, meat and cream) and mushrooms with cured egg yolk.

What are some of your hero ingredients?

Mushrooms and truffles.

What's the best advice anyone's ever given you?

When I first started cooking, my chef, Jean Paul Marat at Hofmann in Barcelona, told me something I'll never forget: "Be humble; a chef never says no to anything. Try to get over yourself every day."

ADVERTISEMENT



Who do you admire in the world of food?

My all-time hero, a chef I worked with and admired hugely, was Santi Santamaria. The person who inspires me the most now is Josh Niland.

Nieves Barragán Mohacho

Chef director of [Sabor](#)



Nieves holds a Michelin star for her restaurant Sabor in Mayfair, London. PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS TERRY

What kind of food did you grow up with?

My mum used to cook all kinds of things – there were constantly amazing smells in the house. She often made cocido (a kind of chickpea stew with chorizo, black pudding, and swiss chard), and I also loved her flat green bean stew with sweet potato.

What's your favourite Spanish region for food?

Spanish food is so diverse, it's impossible to pick just one. At Sabor, we do a bit of everything – seafood, stews, roasts, rice, frituras; it's food from every corner of the country.

Do you have a favourite Sabor dish?

The menu is governed by the seasons, because I like to take whatever's currently best at the market, bring that back to the restaurant, and cook with it. It's a very seasonal approach and is the reason why we have so many specials that change on an almost daily basis – we normally have eight a day, with two each from the four categories of seafood, fish, meat and vegetables. It's so fun to change the menu regularly, I really enjoy it.

What's the one ingredient you couldn't live without?

Olive oil, specifically Arbequina olive oil – it's a Spanish variety, and the best. I wouldn't even be able to start cooking without it.

José Pizarro

Chef/restaurateur at [José Pizarro Restaurants](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



Chef José grew up in a family of farmers in Spain's Extremadura region. PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON SPOOR

Which dishes remind you of childhood?

My parents were farmers, and I was lucky enough to be surrounded by the smells and flavours coming from the farm [in Extremadura, Spain]. I grew up with stews, soups, grilled dishes, lentils with chorizo... It was simple food but delicious.

How would you describe your ethos?

It's all about searching for the best ingredients and producers. I respect the love the producer has for the ingredient, in the same way that I love and respect cooking. To represent Spanish cuisine now is important, bringing new flavours, new cheeses, new meats, new cuts of Ibérico ham, etc. I always try to educate people through my cooking.

Why do you think there's such an appetite for Spanish food in London?

We love to discover things here and have so many people and different cultures. When I first came to the UK, people thought Spanish food was just patatas bravas and paella, but it's more than that. Spain is so diverse – it has 17 regions. We now have amazing creativity in London, but at the end of the day, it's still all about flavour and simplicity.

What's the one dish you couldn't live without?

Lentils with chorizo cooked by my mum. It's amazing.

For more information on Spanish restaurants, visit foodswinesfromspain.com

Subscribe to the *National Geographic Traveller (UK)* [newsletter](#) and follow on social media:

[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



SHARE | TWEET | EMAIL

READ THIS NEXT



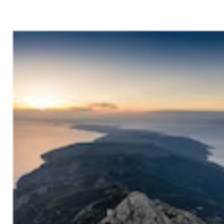
SCIENCE MIND, BODY, WONDER

Is Mounjaro the weight-loss drug we've been waiting...

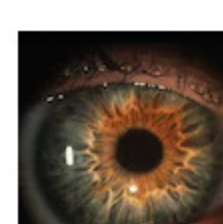
The FDA is evaluating the new diabetes drug Mounjaro as an obesity treatment, and early results show it takes the benefits of Ozempic up a notch. Here's h...



TRAVEL
This Stone has a mysterious past beyond British coronations



HISTORY MAGAZINE
This Persian marvel was lost for millennia



SCIENCE
Why did humans evolve to blink?

LEGAL

- Terms of Use
- Privacy Policy
- Interest-Based Ads
- EU Privacy Rights
- Cookie Policy
- Manage Privacy Preferences

OUR SITES

- Nat Geo Home
- Attend a Live Event
- Book a Trip
- Buy Maps
- Inspire Your Kids
- Shop Nat Geo
- Visit the D.C. Museum
- Watch TV
- Learn About Our Impact
- Support our Mission
- Nat Geo Partners
- Masthead
- Press Room
- Advertise With Us

JOIN US

- Subscribe
- Customer Service
- Renew Subscription
- Manage Your Subscription
- Work at NatGeo
- Signup for Our Newsletters
- Contribute to Protect the Planet
- Pitch a Story

FOLLOW US

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [United States \(Change\)](#)