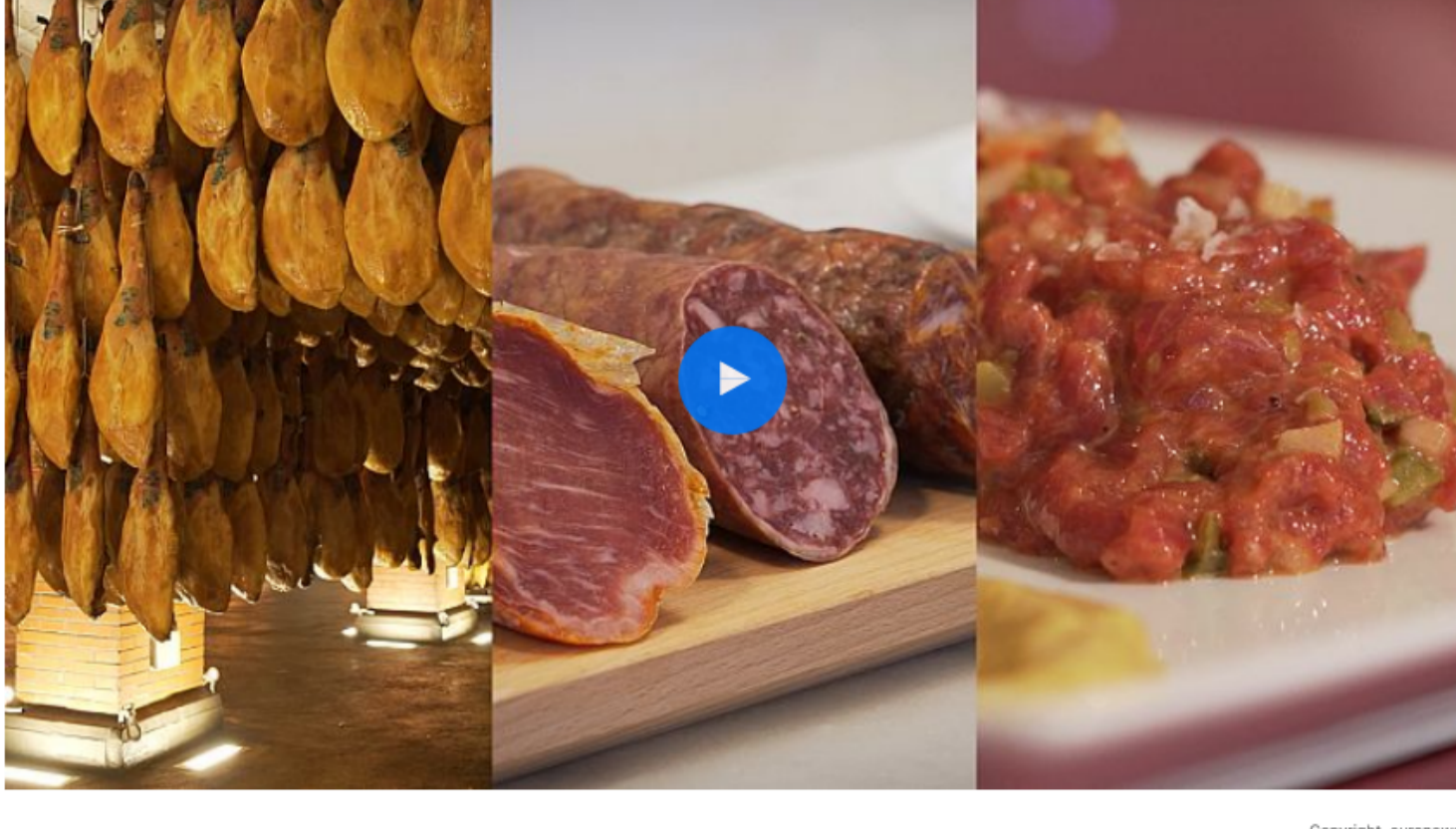


BUSINESS

## Discover the secrets behind Spain's Iberian delicacies

By [Cristina Giner](#) • Updated: 02/03/2023In partnership with [FWS](#) Foods and Wines from Spain [alimentos de España](#)

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Iberian cuisine is synonymous with Spanish gastronomy, and an essential part of the nation's food culture.

Jabugo, in the southwest, Guijuelo, in the west and Los Pedroches, to the south are three of Spain's four Protected Denominations of Origin of Iberian ham. These regions are home to the secrets of Iberian ham, sausages and cuts of meat.

Spain's native Iberico pigs are raised in stunning holm oak-tree grasslands. In the vast landscape, fallen acorns carpet the ground in autumn and winter - which means a feast for the pigs when September arrives.

"The Iberian pig is often referred to as the happy pig, not only in terms of animal welfare but also because it enjoys the pastures, the grass and above all the acorns," said Juan Antonio Ballesteros, the International Director of Cooperativa Ganadera del Valle de Los Pedroches (COVAP).



Spain's native Iberico pigs - Euronews

These hungry pigs can walk several kilometres in search of the sweetest acorns. Exercise and natural pastures mean leaner meat with healthy fats.



Juan Antonio Ballesteros, the International Director of Cooperativa Ganadera del Valle de Los Pedroches (COVAP) - Euronews

"The most important time of the year is called *montanera*. From September to November, the animals walk 12 to 14 kilometres a day, and they graze on acorns and grass all day long," Juan Antonio Ballesteros told Euronews.

### Jabugo's Iberian ham

The region of Jabugo is one of the most renowned areas for Iberian ham, whose origins, as with many salty dishes, come from the need to preserve the meat.

Cinco Jotas has been producing it for 140 years, but the curing process hasn't changed.

"Here each piece of ham is unique. It comes from a pig that has lived in free-range conditions, which has its own individual behaviour, each one behaves in a unique way... hence the craftsmanship behind the production of Iberian ham," explained María Castro Bermúdez, the communication director at Cinco Jotas.



María Castro Bermúdez, Communication Director at Cinco Jotas - Euronews

The drying and curing process needs time and a suitable temperature. Pieces can dry for up to five years, and mould accumulates to give the ham unique flavours.

Just as bakers test their bread, the ham is tested daily. The aroma indicates when it's ready to be eaten. But carving is an art in its own right. A steady hand ensures the best slice.



A small, thin, translucent slice of Iberian ham brings out all the flavours - Euronews

"It takes a lot of practice to always get a small, thin, translucent slice that you can see through so that it melts in your mouth and you can appreciate all the flavours of the ham," said María Castro Bermúdez.

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### Guijuelo sausages

Some of Spain's most well-loved sausages are made in Guijuelo.

The raw material is the same; excellent meat from acorn-fed pigs. But the process is quite different. It's not cured in salt and the seasoning is at the heart of the recipes.

"One of the great secrets when it comes to making Guijuelo sausages and loins is the spices," revealed Manuel Castro, CEO of Lisardo Castro. "And then each producer has their own secret formula!"

They cure in dryer rooms like ham but the process is quicker.



Manuel Castro, CEO of Lisardo Castro - Euronews

"Our sausages and loins take between three and six months depending on the quality, for the acorn-fed sausages, it takes two months- a bit longer than the *cebo* sausages", Manuel added.

Cold meats must be cut into fine slices and are ideal for starters or aperitives.

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"As you can see, it is made from the best pieces of Iberian loin. The colour is given by the *pimentón de la Vera* paprika, and also in the *salchichón*, we can see the black pepper," he added.

### Steak tartare in the Valley of Los Pedroches

In the Valley of Los Pedroches, chef José Tirado has created an uncommon but excellent recipe.

"I'm preparing a sirloin steak tartare - 100% Iberian, 100% pork meat," the chef D'Tapas at COVAP explained.



José Tirado, Chef D'Tapas, COVAP - Euronews

This uncooked recipe highlights the quality of the Iberian meat and secures the place of Iberian food at the diner table of any gourmet worth their salt.

"It's a healthy meat that provides protein, vitamins, minerals, potassium and it's really good," José added.