

How Acclaimed Chef Katie Button Entertains With Food & Wine From Spain

FWS Food & Wines from Spain + alimentos de España + **FOOD&WINE**



You deserve something special this season—and [Spain Food Nation](#) is here to help. We partnered with them to show you how simple it can be to elevate your celebrations this winter.



With the holiday season in full swing, this is the perfect time of year to use the best foods and wines of Spain to amp up any party or casual get-together. To help provide some expert guidance, we enlisted the help of Chef Katie Button, an internationally renowned chef with four James Beard nominations, two Spanish restaurants in Asheville, North Carolina, a business that sends the best of Spain across the United States, and a wine club that mines the entire depth and breadth of Spain's incredible diversity of terroirs.

Button has made a career of exploring all that Spanish food and wine have to offer, making it available to her growing base of customers and fans. She's done it by staying true to the roots of what makes Spanish food and wine so special—and so perfect right now, when meals with friends and family take on even greater significance. "The whole concept of Spanish food is about letting the product sing and shine," she said. "There's something mind-blowing about that: When you have your best ever bite of the best prawn or anchovy, or whatever it is, but the base behind it is so simple."



Embrace the Elemental

The most beloved Spanish dishes are typically built on a base of simple yet impeccable ingredients. Sure, molecular gastronomy reached its peak in Spain, with restaurants like El Bulli and Arzak leading the way. But today, it's the more elemental aspect of Spanish food that has reached a worldwide audience and caused an entire generation to fall in love with it.

When Chef Button lived in Spain, she and her husband Félix loved nothing more than tapas-bar-hopping. "Strolling around the markets, and then hopping from one tapas bar to the next, we would stand outside or inside, grab a small glass of Sherry and have bites on sticks, little skewers or some *croquetas*, and watch the people walking around on a Sunday," she reminisced. "And I just loved everything about it."

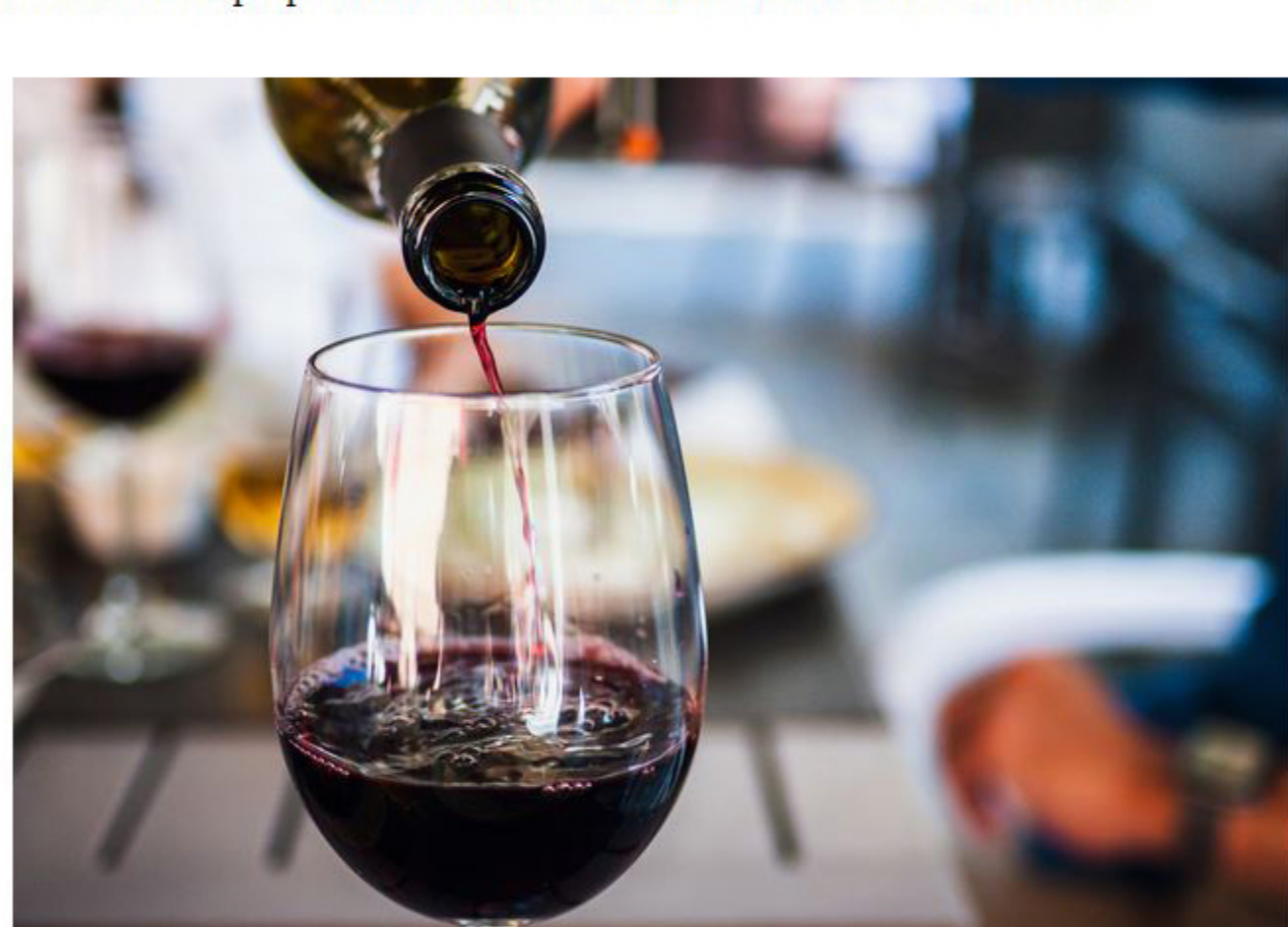
It's easy to recreate that experience at home—even on this side of the Atlantic. In fact, you can provide your guests with a virtual trip to Spain with just a few basic ingredients. Generously heap the highest quality of *jamón* you choose in the middle of the plate (*Serrano* is among the most affordable, and it's a deeply savory treat, whereas *Iberico*, which is produced from acorn-fed free-range pigs, is an indulgence on the level of caviar or truffles). Surround it with other Spanish classics: Marcona almonds; some rough chunks of Manchego, Mahon, Cabrales, or other top-quality Spanish cheeses; a jar of arbequina olives; hunks of bread; and a dish of premium Spanish extra virgin olive oil for dipping. You also can't go wrong with *pan con tomate*, which is nothing more than lightly grilled baguette slices rubbed with the flesh of a halved tomato and drizzled with extra virgin olive oil. You can also scrape a raw garlic clove over the top, but that's a personal choice; either way, it's a simple yet transporting treat.



Do the Can-Can!

The canned fish and vegetables of Spain may very well change your life. That, at least, is what happened to Chef Button. "The coolest thing about Spanish food is the simplicity—the quality of the product," she said. "They have history, centuries of preparing preserved foods, canned seafood or vegetables. The white asparagus that they pack by hand in cans; whoever thought of hand-packing of cans? There's so much history in that."

That history is finally making its way to fans of Spanish food in the United States. The canned fish of Spain is bound to be a revelation—sweet and dense tuna, silky squid, mussels in *escabeche*; all of them get the royal treatment, marinating in world-class Spanish olive oil and needing nothing more to be savored than perhaps a squeeze of fresh lemon and a toothpick to spear each bite. And, of course, some good bread to sop up all that delicious oil when the fish has been eaten.



Pair With Abandon

The wine culture of Spain, like the food, is all about excitement and affordability. While it's possible to spend a lot of money on certain exalted bottles, the vast majority of Spanish wine actually represents some of the best value in the world. Where else, for example, can you find a red that's both enjoyable on release and also capable of aging for decades, all for less than the cost of a great steak at your local grocery store? Yet Rioja Reserva does just that, as do the profound reds of Priorat, Ribera del Duero, Toro, and all the other Spanish wine regions. "Every single style of wine that you can imagine," Button said, "can be found in Spain."

Now that the holidays are here, Spanish wine is custom-made for the kind of expansive meals that mark the season. Whether you're hosting a casual tapas party around the coffee table or serving a more elaborate feast—paella for New Year's Eve is guaranteed to start the year in style—the options, when it comes to Spanish wine, are limitless: kicking off dinner with a few fizzy glasses of Cava, followed by a crisp, lifted Albariño from Rías Baixas, then a generous yet structured red from Montsant before wrapping it all up with a nutty, off-dry Sherry. More and more people are discovering just how exciting these wines are, and with services like Button's [Curate Spanish Wine Club](#) sending the best bottles straight to the consumer monthly, it's never been easier to start a collection.

"I cannot wait for the day that a friend rolls up with a tortilla española or a quart of gazpacho. That's what I see as the next thing: You're having friends over and they're bringing you a package of jamón Ibérico, or Marcona almonds, or whatever is on everybody's charcuterie spread." She paused, then added: "When Spanish food and wine are fully integrated in homes—that's where we're headed, that's where it's going. Which means that life will become all the more delicious for all of us." And now is the perfect time to do just that.

Craving something Spanish this season? Visit [Spain Food Nation](#) to start planning a celebration for your taste buds.