

COOK LIKE A LOCAL

# SAN SEBASTIÁN

Enjoy fresh seafood, tender beef and plates of expertly prepared pintxos in this vibrant coastal city in northern Spain

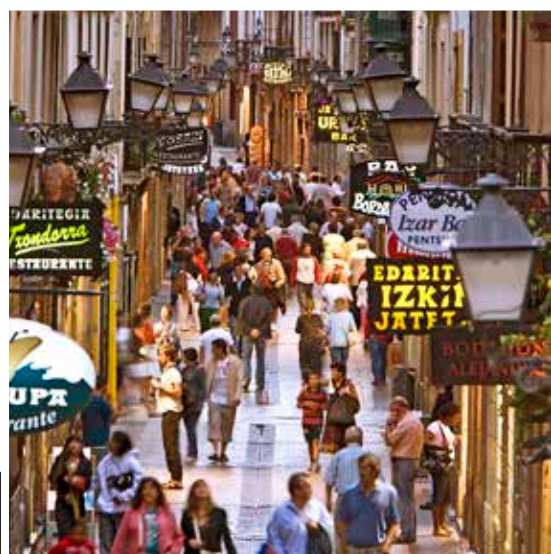


Set on the beautiful Basque coast, San Sebastián has a backdrop of rolling green hills and jagged mountains split by fish-filled rivers. Sitting alongside the cold waters of the Bay of Biscay, the city is supplied with an amazing array of fresh ingredients, and the Basques certainly know how to make the most of their incredible bounty. Food is front and centre here, from the displays of fish, meat and veg at the famous La Bretxa or San Martin food markets, to the 18 Michelin-starred restaurants and the more casual pintxos bars, steak houses and sagardotegia (cider houses), where the local beef is the star attraction.

One of the main draws to San Sebastián are the pintxos – a Basque version of tapas –

available in more than 200 little bars around the old town. From 10am, they're busy with people stopping by for a small glass of local cider or the lightly sparkling white wine, txakoli, and a small bite or two. Pintxos means 'pierced' or 'spiked', as many of the snacks on offer are held together with little skewers or cocktail sticks. Each bar serves a wide selection of cold pintxos, often thick slices of baguette (being so close to France), topped with seasonal ingredients, plus more familiar dishes including tortilla (served oozy in the middle).

Many specialise in only one dish cooked perfectly, and the secret to eating in San Sebastián is knowing where to go for what. House specialities such as gambas ajillo, chunks of charred steak or deep-fried baby squid are cooked to order while you watch.



## Seared beef, grilled pepper and caper berry

15 MINUTES | SERVES 4 | EASY

*Cooking the steak in one piece allows the meat to get beautifully charred on the outside but stay tender within.*

**sirloin steak** 400g in one large piece, fat trimmed  
**olive oil** 2 tbsp  
**garlic** 2 cloves, crushed  
**piquillo peppers** 4, sliced into strips  
**caper berries** 12

• Heat a griddle pan until blisteringly hot. Season the steak all over with lots of ground black pepper.

• Brush the steak very lightly with a little of the oil and mix the remaining oil with the garlic. Cook the steak for 3 minutes on each side for medium-rare (4 minutes for medium). When cooked to your liking, brush the steak all over with most of the garlicky oil and sprinkle with a little salt. Remove to a plate and leave to rest for 5 minutes.

• Cut the steak into small chunks and top each chunk with a twirl of pepper and a caper berry. Push a cocktail stick through everything to hold it together, drizzle over the remaining oil and grind over more pepper.

PER SERVING 218 KCALS | FAT 14.9G  
 SATURATES 5G | CARBS 2.3G | SUGARS 1.2G  
 FIBRE 0.2G | PROTEIN 18.6G | SALT 0.5G

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### Clams with sherry and serrano ham

20 MINUTES | SERVES 4 | EASY

Sweet clams and salty serrano ham are a brilliant match. Serve with a chilled glass of fino alongside.

**olive oil** 1 tbsp  
**onion** ½, very finely chopped  
**clams** 500g, cleaned  
**serrano ham** 50g, chopped  
**garlic cloves** 2, finely chopped  
**fino sherry** 100ml  
**flat-leaf parsley** a handful, roughly chopped

- Heat the oil in a lidded medium pan and gently cook the onion for 5-7 minutes or until softened.
- Rinse the clams in a colander and discard any that are opened and will not close with a sharp tap.
- Add the ham and garlic to the onions and cook for 1 minute. Add the clams to the pan with the sherry, bring to the boil, cover and cook for 4-5 minutes or until the clams have all opened (discard any that haven't). Serve immediately, sprinkled with the parsley.

PER SERVING 153 KCALS | FAT 5.1G  
 SATURATES 1.1G | CARBS 5G | SUGARS 1.7G  
 FIBRE 0.6G | PROTEIN 14.5G | SALT 1.8G



PHOTOGRAPHS: LARA HOLMES, SAM STOWELL, DAVID MUNNIS, AGEFOTOSTOCK/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



### Piquillo pepper salad

10 MINUTES + MARINATING | SERVES 4 | EASY

You can find jars of these sweet red peppers in most larger supermarkets and specialist grocers.

**light olive oil** 4 tbsp  
**garlic** 3 cloves, very finely sliced  
**sherry vinegar** 2 tbsp  
**piquillo peppers** 2 jars, drained  
**flat-leaf parsley** a handful, leaves picked

- Gently heat the olive oil in a small pan and cook the garlic for 3 minutes without letting it brown. Take off the heat, add the sherry vinegar and season.
- Put the peppers on a plate or platter and spoon over the dressing. Leave to marinate at room temperature for 1 hour. Sprinkle over the parsley and serve.

PER SERVING 149 KCALS | FAT 11.5G  
 SATURATES 1.8G | CARBS 9.5G | SUGARS 5.4G  
 FIBRE 0.2G | PROTEIN 1.7G | SALT 0.9G

TURN OVER FOR FIVE OF THE BEST THINGS TO EAT IN SAN SEBASTIÁN »

# 5 THINGS TO EAT IN SAN SEBASTIÁN



**KOKOTXAS**

In Spain, especially in the Basque region, cheeks of hake or cod are considered a delicacy. The almost sweet flesh is gelatinous in texture, making it perfect for the classic pil pil method of cooking, but can also be grilled or fried. Every good restaurant in San Sebastián serves kokotxas in one way or another.



**TXULETA**

Traditional cider houses serve amazing local beef. The meat is aged until it develops a complex flavour not unlike a good blue cheese. The favourite cut is thick slabs of fore rib, grilled over coals to create a charred, smoky crust.



**TORRIJA**

Buttery bread soaked in egg custard with a wonderfully crunchy, caramelised crust. Torrija is served all over Spain but the best versions are to be found in the Basque country, particularly San Sebastián. Torrijas are traditionally eaten around Easter, more often than not for breakfast.



**BRANDADA DE BACALAO**

One of hundreds of salt cod dishes popular in Spain and the Basque region of France. Every region has its own recipe but it's usually a simple emulsion of salt cod, garlic and olive oil. Originally served as a dip with crusty bread, it's now commonly used as a stuffing for piquillo peppers and croquettes, or gratinated as a topping for pintxos.



**PIMIENTOS DE PIQUILLO**

Protected by their own Designation of Origin, pimientos de piquillo are cultivated in and around the village of Lodosa in the Navarre region of Spain. After picking, the small, bright-red peppers are roasted over smoking embers, giving them a subtle yet rich, smoky flavour, before being deseeded and packed in jars or tins by hand. Commonly served in pintxos bars across the north of Spain, their small size and shape make them perfect for stuffing to make dishes such as pimientos rellenos de bacalao (peppers stuffed with salt cod).