

A SERVING OF SPAIN

Good food is an intrinsic part of Spanish culture – and enjoying the unmistakable taste of Spain at home is easier than you think

From deep and intense preserves and spices to world-renowned cured meats, Spain is home to a range of delectable produce. Nothing reflects the unwavering Spanish passion for achieving culinary excellence quite like their ability to take centuries-old traditions and transform them into refined and sophisticated modern-day versions.

Be it something small, such as olives fermented in piquant spices coupled with a dry sherry, or a spread of tapas dishes fit to grace even the grandest of dining tables, food is so much more than just sustenance in Spain – it's a celebration. If you're looking to bring the same flair to your table, olives and pickles are undoubtedly the simplest way to do it. Here's how you can embrace them like a local.

OLIVES

It's a common misconception that the colour of an olive denotes its variety. Whether your olive is green, black, red or brown simply signifies when the fruit was picked from the tree. It's this variation in ripening times that results in table olives' vast array of textures and flavours. Green olives, for example, are plucked at the optimal ripening stage, while the black variety are picked just before they reach their full ripening potential.

Spain is abundant with delicious olives, and the Manzanilla de Sevilla (a fleshy olive with a fine texture and spherical shape) and the generously sized Gordal olive, famed for its low oil content, are among the best varieties. While producers in southern and northern Spain have garnered their own olive recipes – usually inspired by their ancestry – enjoying them as a simple snack with a refreshing cold beer or fino sherry is popular throughout the whole country.

PICKLES

Sweet and bitter vinegars can be found all across Spain, so it's little surprise that pickling foods has become such a popular custom. It's a curing technique that not only preserves produce but also elevates taste and texture, particularly when it comes to vegetables.

The renowned Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Berenjenas de Almagro aubergines from Ciudad Real, for example, are often fermented in a rich dressing of vinegar, oil, cumin, garlic and pimentón (a powder that's obtained from crushing and drying certain types of red peppers). Guindillas (chilli peppers) from the Basque town of Ibarra are another popular choice. Preserved in white wine vinegar, they make for the perfect tapas addition or as a side with wine and cheese. It's also the garnish of choice for those who like an extra spicy bloody mary cocktail.



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