

# SPAIN

## Through the lens of top 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



IMAGES: MARCUS COBDEN; GREG FUNNELL; JASON SPOOR.  
INTERVIEWS: FARIDA ZEYNALOVA



**ANGEL ZAPATA MARTIN**  
CHEF DIRECTOR OF BARRAFINA  
AND PARRILLAN

**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, the Frenchman Jean Paul 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."

**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. [barrafina.co.uk](http://barrafina.co.uk) [parrillan.co.uk](http://parrillan.co.uk)



**NIEVES BARRAGÁN  
MOHACHO**  
CHEF DIRECTOR OF SABOR

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

**Do you have a favourite dish on the Sabor menu?** 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. [saborrestaurants.co.uk](http://saborrestaurants.co.uk)



**JOSÉ PIZARRO**  
CHEF/RESTAURATEUR AT JOSÉ  
PIZARRO RESTAURANTS

**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. [josepizarro.com](http://josepizarro.com)

For more information on Spanish restaurants, visit [foodswinesfromspain.com/rfs-certification](http://foodswinesfromspain.com/rfs-certification)

