



PRODUCED BY CONDÉ NAST TRAVELER WITH



A Beginner's Guide to the Spanish Aperitivo

The social foodie moment that should be a part of your daily ritual

Nestled between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean sea lies Spain, a country whose culinary scene has been making international waves for decades. Part of what makes Spain's gastronomy so outstanding is the physical makeup of the country—a range of autonomous communities with varied traditions and regional delicacies—but it is also the longstanding tradition of food as a vehicle for socialization and celebration. Of all of the beloved foodie customs in Spain, aperitivos might just be the simplest, most treasured of all.

Aperitivos, or small bites of food intended to whet the palate before larger mealtimes, have long been a cultural fixture of many European dining scenes. Spain, however, does things a bit differently than its neighbors. Traditionally served before lunchtime, Spain's longest meal of the day, aperitivos are a festive way to turn an average meal into a prolonged social event.

Whether you want to incorporate this beloved tradition into your mealtime rituals or simply seek culinary inspiration from the masters, consider this your official guide to the Spanish aperitivo.

Spain's most beloved aperitivos

Traditionally enjoyed in an informal setting, like at tall tables or on bar stools, aperitivos run the gambit in terms of what can be served. The main requisites are that each bite is small and flavorful so as to not fill one up, but to prepare the appetite for the meal to come. Typical Spanish foods like marinated olives, pickles, or patatas bravas drizzled in a slightly spicy red sauce and aioli are some of the more popular aperitivos.



It would be remiss not to mention the holy grail region of Spanish aperitivos, Basque Country. Here, pinchos—small, aperitivo-like snacks—are often served atop bread at bars and restaurants, held together with a toothpick. Gildas, a pincho of pepper, olive, and anchovy marinated in olive oil, is a bright and flavorful pincho.

What to sip with aperitivos

It isn't an aperitivo if it isn't served with a drink, whether it be a glass of cava, a Fino sherry, or a young red wine. Spanish drinking culture is as refined and exciting as its culinary scene, so you have several options when it comes to finding a great companion for your aperitivo.

Whether you favor white, rosé, or red, Spanish wines are always a winning choice when looking for just the right match for your aperitivo. Wines in Spain are made with dozens of different grape varieties, so there is a flavor profile to match every taste and occasion. A fresh Albariño from Galicia, a seductive aged Tempranillo from La Rioja, or a provocative Garnacha rosé from Aragón will perfectly accompany any Spanish dish. Then there's the typical sangria, wine mixed with soda and fresh fruit, which is a perfectly refreshing choice in the warmer summer months.



Where to try aperitivos

Spain's culinary customs have stolen the spotlight in the US in recent years: Spanish darling José Andrés for proof. Luckily, that means there are several incredibly authentic Spanish food, including traditional aperitivos.

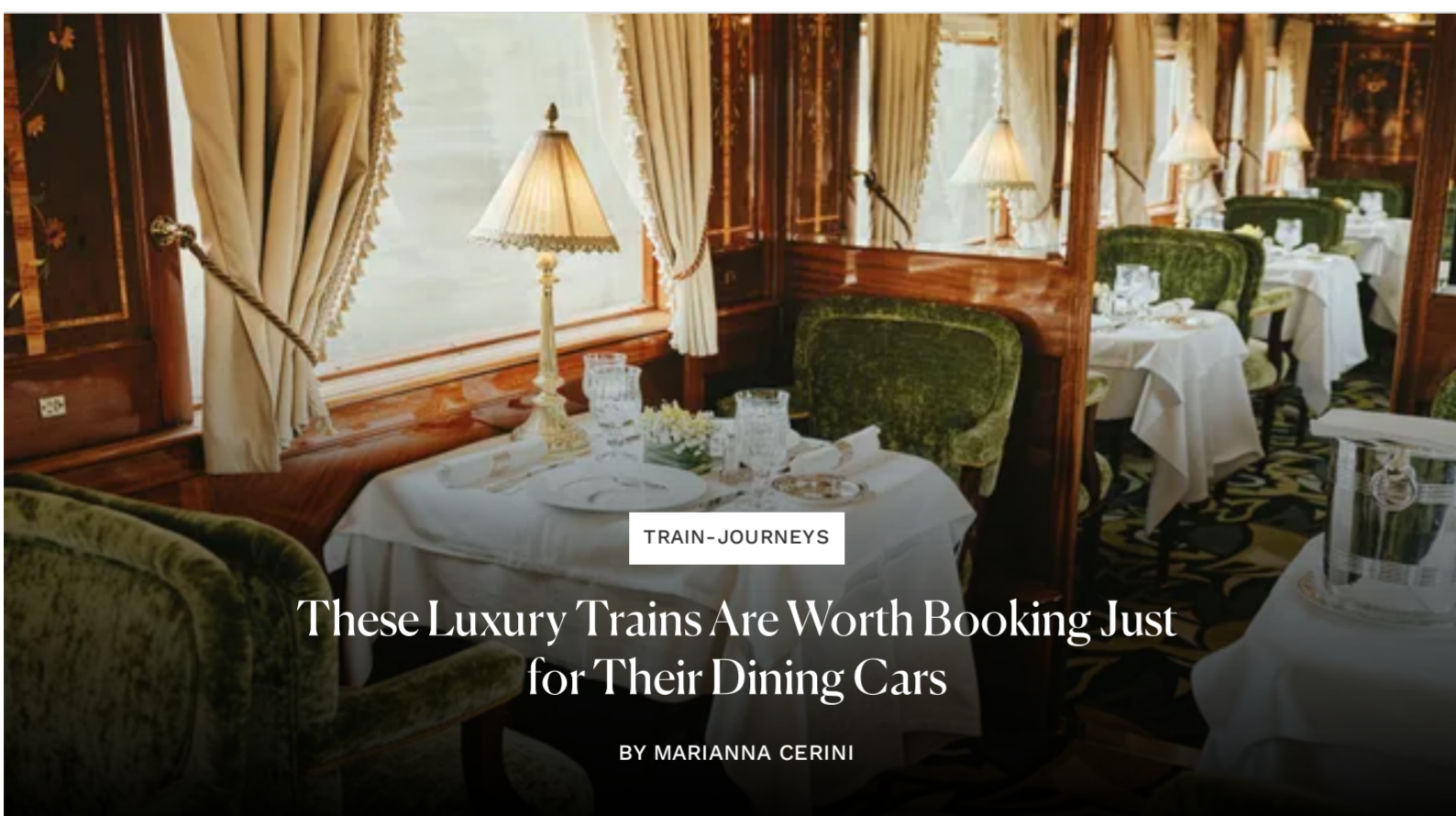


In Washington DC., Andres' own **Jaleo** is an ode to Spain's delightful tradition of small bites. Everything at this decades-old institution is intended to be shared, and the environment is lively and unfussy, a remnant of the social nature of mealtime in Spain. At **La Taberna del Alabardero**, which opened in 1989, you'll find traditional cold soups like gazpacho and salmorejo as well as Cantabrian anchovies, Jamón Ibérico, and Idiazábal cheese.

For the New York set there's **Mercado Little Spain**, another José Andrés masterpiece. The lively food hall is the perfect place to gather with friends, families, or co-workers to sample a myriad of delicious aperitivos before lunch or dinner. In Piermont, New York, **Basque Tapas Bar** recreates northern Spain's beloved region in a homey dining environment. Guests can start off with garlic prawns or baby cuttlefish before being served Basque-style sea bass, among other dishes.

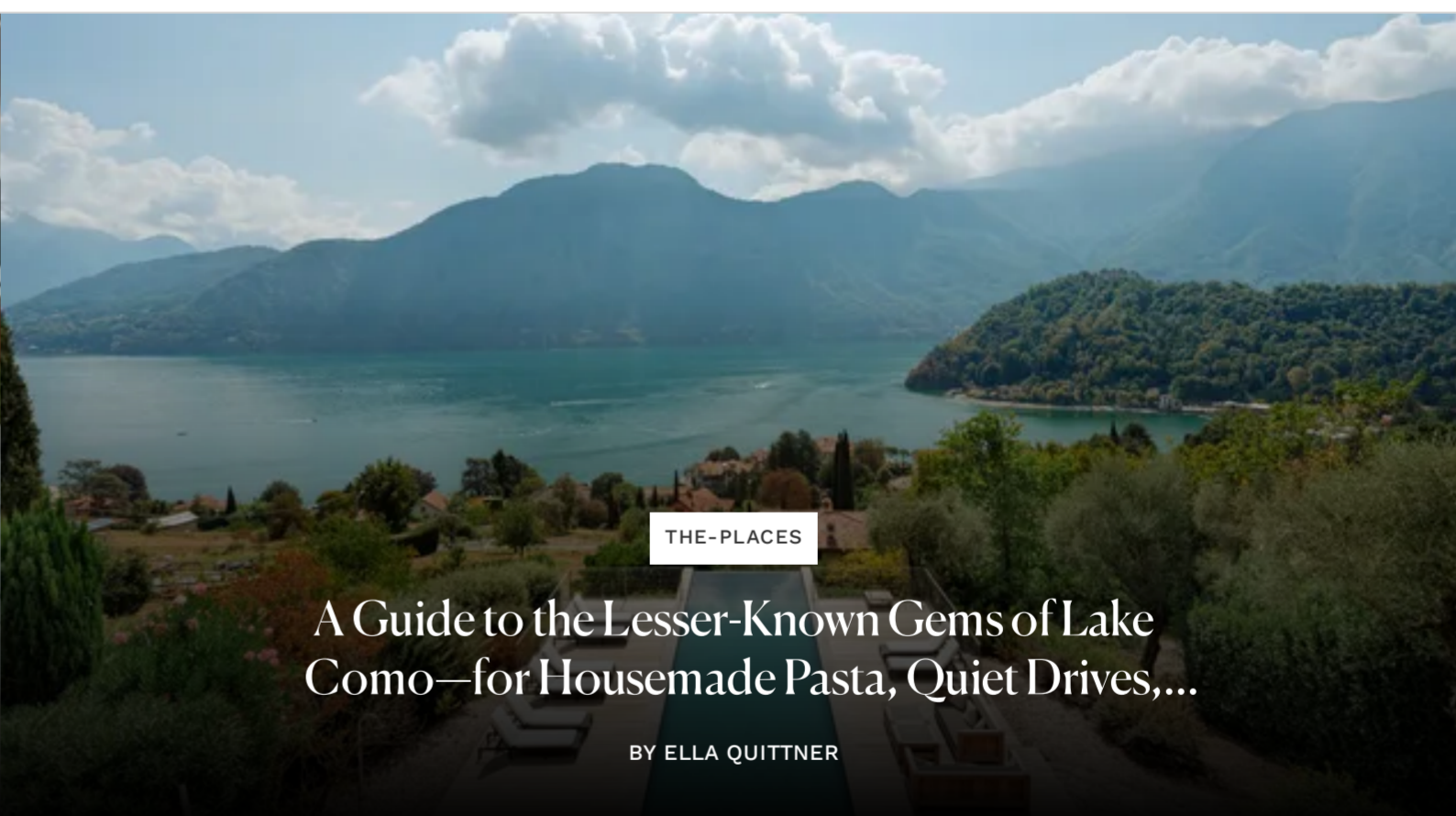
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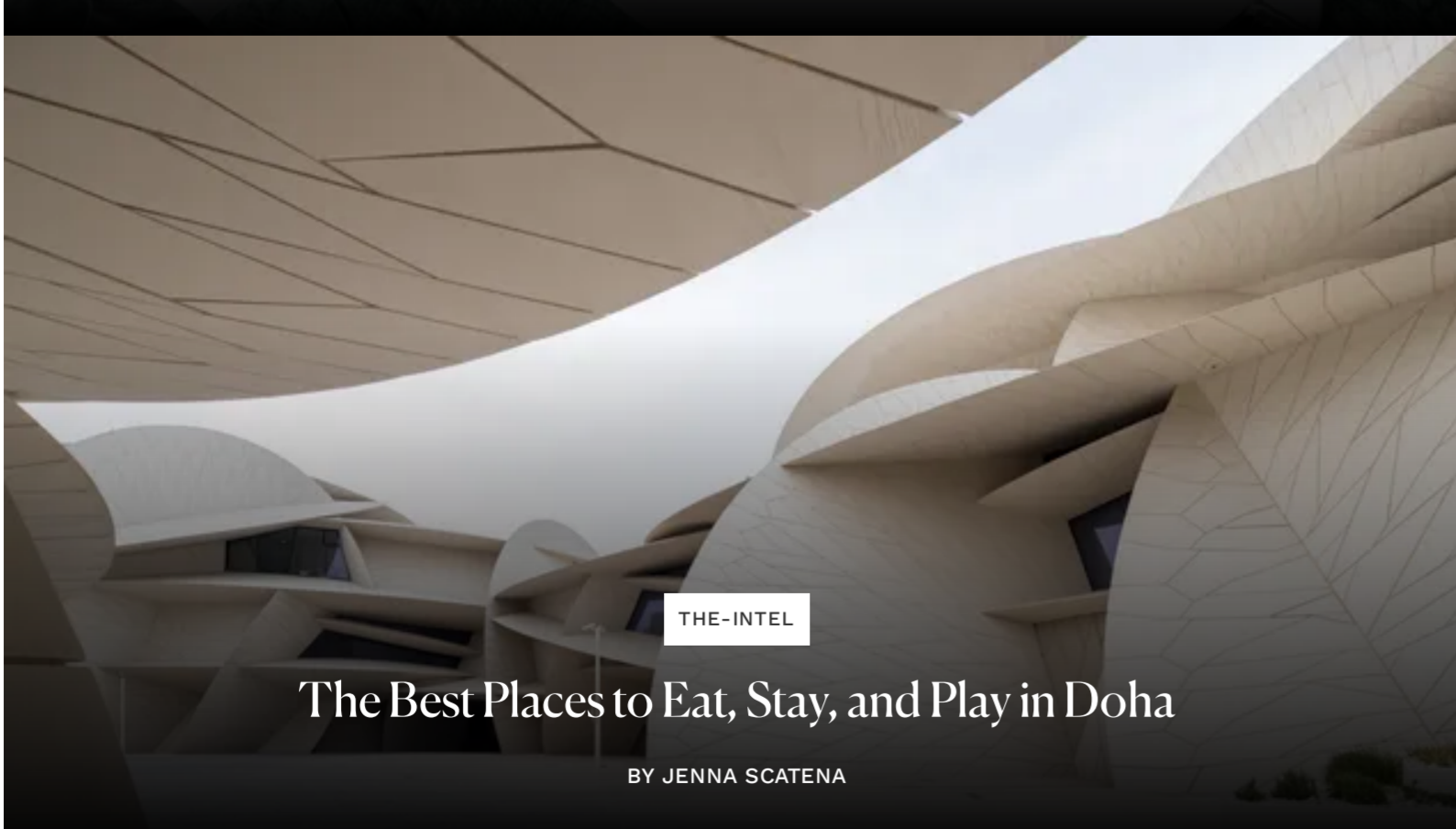
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