



Spanish Cuisine: A Mediterranean Diet

History and Influences ^{1,2}:

Regarded as the healthiest diet in the world, Spain's food traditions stem from hundreds of years of evolution from the many conquests and invasions that preceded it. The Romans introduced wine and olive oils, the Arabs gifted the Spaniards Gazpacho, almonds and much more, and its finest production, ham, was provided by the Christians. With the discovery the America's, foods like potatoes, chocolates and peppers were imported into Spain. All these influences combine together to make the beautiful Spanish tradition it is today.

A day in the life of a Spaniard ^{2,3}:

Breakfast:

- Occurs from 8am – 10am
 - Usually the shortest and least important of meals
 - Sometimes skipped
- Consists of:
 - Coffee, hot chocolate, or fresh juice with croissant, pastry, or toast with ham and tomato

*Since most people have a light breakfast, Spaniards will usually have a Pausa del Café (Coffee Break) which is a beverage and small snack

Lunch (Most important meal of the Day):

- Occurs from 2pm – 4pm
- Comprising of a three-course meal:
 - First course
 - Soup or salad

- Second course
 - Fish or meat
- Third course
 - Deserts such as fruit, Flan, rice pudding, or cake

*Like the Pausa del Café, another snack time can be held between dinner and lunch called La Merienda

Dinner:

- Occurs 9pm – 10pm but can be as late as midnight during summer
- Meals are similar to lunch but consist of one course

*All meals are served with Bread

Signature Dishes ⁴:

- Paella
 - Originates from Valencia
 - A dish prepared in a very large pan consisting of rice, chicken/rabbit, seafood, and vegetables
 - Yellow rice color comes from saffron



- La Tortilla Espanola
 - A potato omlette shaped and served like a cake
 - Can be sliced in half to create sandwiches
- El Flan
 - A jello-like caramel crème served with cinnamon



- El Jamon Iberico
 - The hind leg of a pig that is cured by being hung up
 - Served in slices and can be eaten as a tapa or in a sandwich
- El Gazpacho
 - A soup made with skinned tomatoes, olive oil, raw vegetables, green peppers, and garlic

La Siesta 2,4:

- In tradition, the famous event occurs after lunch that started by farmworkers who wanted to rest and digest before continuing a day's work.
- It doesn't have to include a nap, but businesses are shut down for 2 hours to allow workers to travel home to eat with their families and is considered important in their culture

The Art of Snacking 1,4:

- Tapas are smaller sized dishes of finger foods
- Going out for tapas consists of hopping bar to bar and sharing these plates with friends
 - Originated in the Southern City of Seville
 -

Sobremesa, translating to “Over the table”, is the idea of staying after the meal has finished to converse and enjoy each other's company which is considered precious

- This can last up to hours if the conversation is good

The Best Diet in the World

5,6:

- In 2019, the US News and World Report ranked the Mediterranean diet as the healthiest diet of 2019
- The Spanish Society of Endocrinology and Nutrition states that this diet prevents illnesses like diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases
- This diet is thought to be responsible for making Spain the healthiest place to live and is expected to lead in life expectancy
- Spain currently ranks 6th in life expectancy with an average lifespan of 83.61 years (US is ranked 39th at 78.93)

Citations:

1. Spanish Food History. Spanish-Food.org. <https://www.spanish-food.org/spanish-food-history.html>. Accessed September 25, 2020

Fun Fact 2:

- There is an average of 1 bar for every 129 Spaniards
- In Spain, most bars are restaurants where you go for food, drinks and other social events

The NAOS Pyramid 7:

- The Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Obesity (NAOS) is a food pyramid similar to the US but more aligns with the Mediterranean diet
- Has three categories: Daily, Weekly, Occasionally
- Messages of the pyramid
 - Eat plenty of cereal, preferably whole grain
 - Try and eat 5 portions of fruit and veggies everyday
 - Divide food intake to 5 or 6 small meals
 - Eat fish two to four times weekly
 - Drink 1.5 liters of water daily



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11. NAOS Food Pyramid. Food and agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/index.php?>. Accessed September 26, 2020