

Title:

Madrid- Gastronomy for Hidalgos

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Summary:

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Article Body:

Your visit to Madrid has all chances to be one full of wonderful sights and experiences, for this city is truly fascinating and colorful. But the cherry on top will assuredly be your discovery of the local cuisine. Those of you with a gourmand inclination will become reluctant to leave restaurants, so you should take with you some vegetarian or diet-dedicated friends which could drag you back to sightseeing or to your hotel.

Getting you ready for the upcoming feast

As a matter of fact, you're probably going to the best food citadel in the whole of Spain. Not that other cities don't have tasty dishes to tempt you with, but the capital has managed to adopt more than a few of the cooking styles from different parts of the country. The local cuisine will offer you recipes from all over the area and not some pale copies of the originals, but goodies as well prepared as in their home regions. Still, cooks in Madrid were never devoid of gastronomical ego, so they have more than a few house specialties in store for you. Just read below and start drooling.

Don't miss out on the must-eat recipes

The banner of Madrid cuisine is the stew or hotpot, so you'd better place it high in your eating priorities list. One of the best dishes of this kind is a kitchen-born miracle called "Cocido Madrileño", with plenty of chick peas and

vegetables it's quite popular in Madrid, among tourists and locals alike, so it must be worth trying at least once. Whether or not you have a pathologic fear of vampires, order some "Sopa de Ajo", "garlic soup", that is. And if you're wondering where the meat is in all of this, let the answer be "callos" a tripe recipe which you'll encounter in many variations, all of them pleasing to the stomach.

La Tapa - The legendary appetizer

If you have never before heard of tapas, you'll likely never forget them after your culinary séances in Madrid. At a first glance, they're no big deal, just some appetizers made from often simple ingredients. Locals eat them anywhere, with almost anything on the side and tourists usually find themselves caught in the same eating routine. You will be amazed by the staggering diversity of the ingredients which go into the various forms of tapas: olives, almonds, lemons, tomatoes, beans and many others.

Tapas started simple. According to history, their no-thrills ancestors were in fact the slices of bread used by bar customers to cover their glasses against the peril of flies while in-between drinks (incidentally, the name tapa comes from "tapar to cover"). And then some bartender became inspired. Little did he know that tapas will evolve into almost becoming a meal in their own right. As a matter of fact, not only will you find a tapa and a glass of wine (or beer) on the menus of almost any bar in Madrid, but some places actually serve only tapas, or a certain breed of them.

Another story tells that tapas were used as pseudo-meals, some snacks gobbled up in between meals by workers to keep them going until the main meal. This eating practice is probably still in full swing.

I'm just here for the meat

Another culinary reason for which you should be glad to be eating in Madrid is that meals prepared here tend to have more vigor and consistency than in other regions of Spain (the South, for instance). In the north and centre of the country, one must have warm, deliciously filling food to better face the challenges of winter or so the story goes. In fewer words, you get to feast on some lip smacking roast meat recipes during your Madrid expedition, whether it's winter or not. Picture it: they put the juicy chunks of meat in an oven, a special one, made of wood, and they leave them in the blessed heat until they become all tender and scented. This special treatment is applied especially to suckling pig and veal, so watch out for dishes based on those.

The sweet end of a culinary adventure

I guess you've already realized by now that Madrid is not the place to indulge

in culinary extravaganzas if you want to go home with no extra-pounds. This warning was quite necessary, as we are about to plunge in the sweet matter of local dessert specialties. Many of these are to be encountered in different seasons, which makes it all the more interesting. For example, you might schedule your next visit to Madrid during the Holy Week just to get a bite of some fresh "torrijas" (they may look like mere bread and butter French toast, but they're surprisingly delicious). If you happen to be in Madrid around Christmas, be on the lookout for "turrón" (nougat in soft and hard varieties) and "mazapán" (highly addictive marzipan). In other periods of the year, you can also get: bartolillos con crema (custard pie at its best; get many, as they're quite small), buñuelos (the whipped cream filling is a delight), rosquillas de anís (doughnuts with an unusual anise flavor), barquillos (a kind of wafers) and plenty of other sweet dangers.

Acquainting yourself with the hidalgos of wine

Such wonderful food can only be complimented by an exceptional choice of wines. Fortunately, the wine-cellar of Madrid will provide you with the finest of the fine. As in the case of food, you can get wines from all over Spain to grace your table. But you should be at least a bit familiar with some of the names designating those regions famous for their vintage.

One such place is Castilla-La-Mancha, renowned for wines that are not to be taken lightly, as they bring fire to your spirit but also burden your head. If such is your choice, ask for bottles produced by Zapardiel, Vinicola de Castilla or Bodegas Félix Solís.

If, when it comes to drinking, you're sure that not only you can take it, but that also your wallet can, order wines from Castilla-León. This is where Spain's most expensive and famous wines are concocted, including the world famous Vega Sicilia Unico Reserva. Beware the price it equals the fame.

Your own Madrid at home through cooking

As wonderful and memorable your excursion to Madrid may be, the time to end it will surely come. And when you are finally at home and you look back to the fun times you had while exploring the Spanish capital, the culinary adventures from those days will be some of your most pleasant memories. Here is a take-away recipe for the whole family:

Buñuelos de Chorizo - In order to prepare these, you need a red sausage (preferably from the Canary Islands, but you can't have it all) and oil. The 5th part of an original red sausage would give you 5 portions of buñuelos. For the batter, you'll use 1 egg, salt and about 100-130 g of flour and one teaspoon of yeast. Slice and dice the red sausage (the slices should be no thicker than your

finger). The yeast, the flour, the beaten egg and the salt should be put together in a mix. In this you will put the sausage slices, and thusly wrapped, you will put the "battered" slices in deep oil and fry them mercilessly, stopping only when they rise. All you need to do is drain them to get rid of the extra-fat and you're free to dig in.

As we've reached the end of this culinary tale, it becomes clear that Madrid is one of the few European cities where you can truly taste the spirit of the country it represents. If you draw your gastronomical strategy like a true gourmand, the time you spent in Madrid restaurants may be at least as well spent as the long hours you dedicated to belly-thinning sightseeing.