

A few notes on the History of the Spanish Cuisine
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A Brief Look on the History of Spanish Cuisine

The history of the cuisine of Spain specifically comprises the period from which could have been the beginning and origin of the customs surrounding gastronomy. The history of Spanish cuisine, narrated as a whole, did not begin to be treated as such until the mid-nineteenth century.

It can be said that the Spanish cuisine remained unknown and ignored within the European culinary literature until some romantic travelers, who roamed the Spanish territory, started to describe it to readers of neighboring countries. Few details are known about the Spanish cuisine before the 10th Century, and documentary references (usually literary) frequently mentioned ingredients, names of dishes but nothing about the culinary processes involved. However the Spanish culinary evolution since the Middle Ages describes a trajectory that has undergone numerous phases before becoming what is today's gastronomy. The introduction of new ways of cooking from the Arabs and Sephardic Jews, and the cultivation of new vegetables led to new recipes. The progressive incorporation of culinary ingredients from the New World and the influences of European cuisine played also a determinant role in the process of improving the quality of recipes.

All this made possible the creation of a specific culinary school that influenced the French cuisine of the early 12th century; the Spanish gastronomy was subsequently influenced by the Italian and French cuisine in the eighteenth century as it became popular in the court. It is in the period from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries when the major alimentary habits of most European countries are fixed; habits that are known as traditional cuisine.

In the late nineteenth century, some journalists and writers began to write, compile and create a phenomenon that was unknown at that moment. This group of writers was called the gastronomic generation of the 27. These writers regarded the Spanish cuisine as a mixture of the culinary customs of the peoples who settled in the territory throughout history. Its story shows how the culinary concept evolves to achieve a unique characteristic in all its diversity. Despite this, the classic cuisine has very profound religious roots, and it is from the twentieth century when it is known internationally thanks to some of its most typical regional dishes. Later, the advent of the new Spanish cuisine, a cuisine marked by a strong creative spirit and starred by worldwide known Spanish chefs, made this new style famous.



The French influence on the Spanish cuisine The arrival of the Bourbons made possible an approach to French tastes in the court, and the subsequent spread of such tastes to the various segments of the kingdom. One of the king's ministers, the Marquis of Squillace, got hold of the monopoly of supply of bread and olive oil in Madrid, which caused popular revolts, known as the bread riots that were finally named after him.

Notable culinary writers must be borne in mind, such as Fray Raimundo Gómez (under the pseudonym Juan de Altamiras, or Altimiras), who wrote a book entitled "New Art of Cooking" in 1786 The pastry cook, Juan de la Mata, wrote the book "Art of pastry" in 1786; in it he describes recipes from Portugal, Italy, and the book also includes a chapter on coffee, tea and chocolate. It is worth mentioning the «*Constituciones y extravagantes de los monjes de la Orden de San Jerónimo*» and the book "*cozinación*" (cooking) dated in 1740 which describes the typical dishes of eighteenth century in Spain when it was

out of the dominant influence of France at the time.

At that time, the menus of restaurants and hotels were written in French. The classic Spanish cuisine was relegated to rural areas, and spread by word of mouth. King Felipe V's successor, Carlos IV, started the so-called War of the Pyrenees. A conflict that pitted Spain against the revolutionary France, between 1793 and 1795 (during the existence of the French National Convention). Despite the French influence on the Spanish cuisine, it is worth mentioning that France did not participate in the renewal of the Spanish Gastronomy. In this period, though, the Spanish cuisine exerted a latent influence on the French cuisine, and an example of it is the adoption of mayonnaise after the invasion carried out by Marshal Richelieu and those close to Fort San Felipe de Mahon in April 18th of 1756; during this invasion they have the opportunity to taste the sauce called all-i-oli, copied the recipe and took it to France, where it was made known as Mahonnaise (from Mahon), but for a matter of taste they removed the garlic from the recipe.

The common people did not accept the French influence and the uprising of May 2 occurred in Madrid is a proof of it. This same situation of antagonism was also seen in the popular cuisine, which was quite away from the French trends and which was based on abundant stews, cooked in large pots (these stews were, in all their variants, common in all the regions and represented the backbone of the Spanish cuisine of that time), sausages from the slaughtering season, and culinary traditions that remained anchored since the sixteenth century.



The new Spanish cuisine

The new Spanish cuisine is a style that emerged in the late eighties as a result of re-interpreting the classic and traditional Spanish cuisine. The idea is to start thinking about the essence of local products: The autochthonous Spanish style, but with a different concept. The Spanish cuisine begins to incorporate typical products in the haute cuisine.

New structures in the presentation of dishes are becoming common. Garnishing built into the very same dish; soups, as traditional and Spanish as the gazpacho (a peasant's soup) served in a designer bowl-dish. The classic haute cuisine sauces become adapted to the Spanish gastronomy; olive oil is used instead of butter; vinaigrettes and emulsified sauces are reinvented.

Beef- or fish-stock bases acquire new textures; soup-sauces (a concept by Ferran Adrià, El Bulli) found their place in the new Spanish cuisine, a cuisine that defies the classic structure of the menus served up to that moment. New trends and teachings

give way to a new molecular gastronomy. Ferran Adrià's example has set a new trend. He announced the closing of El Bulli in the coming years despite the success obtained in 2010.

