



There's something truly special about Spain's food scene.— Shutterstock

# SPAIN'S TOP EIGHT FOOD EXPERIENCES

By Alicia Johnson

Food and wine are national obsessions in Spain, and with good reason. You may experience the best meal ever via tapas in an earthy bar where everyone's shouting or via a meal prepared by a celebrity chef in the refined surrounds of a Michelin-starred restaurant. Either way, the breadth of gastronomic experience that awaits you is breathtaking and sure to be a highlight of your trip. Here are Spain's top eight food experiences.

## Tapas / pintxos

One of the world's most enjoyable ways

to eat, tapas are as much a way of life as they are Spain's most accessible culinary superstars. These bite-sized snacks are the accompaniment to countless Spanish nights of revelry and come in seemingly endless variations. In Andalucia, expect the best fine Spanish olives.

In San Sebastian and elsewhere in the Basque Country (where they're called pintxos), tapas are an elaborate form of culinary art. Other great places for tapas include the Madrid neighborhoods of La Latina and Chamberi, and in Zaragoza.

## Seafood

Seafood is a consistent presence the

length of the Andalucian coast. Andalucians are famous above all for their *pescado frito* (fried fish). A particular specialty of Cadiz, fried fish Andalucian-style means that just about anything that emerges from the sea is rolled in chickpea and wheat flour, shaken to remove the surplus, then deep-fried ever so briefly in olive oil, just long enough to form a light, golden crust that seals the essential goodness of the fish or seafood within.

## Tortilla de patatas

Great for vegetarians and carnivores alike, the Spanish egg-and-potato omelette is especially good when the egg's runny. It's

served as an in-between-meals snack, although it can be a meal in itself.

## Paella

There's something life-affirming about a proper Spanish paella, cheerily yellow like the sun and bursting with intriguing morsels. It seems to promise warm days and fine company. But there's more to this most Valencian of dishes than meets the eye.

Traditional Valencian paellas can have almost any ingredients, varying by region and season. The base always includes short-grain rice, garlic, olive oil and saffron. Although seafood paellas are the most popular form, an authentic paella a la valen-