CULTURE, TRADITION, DIETARY HABITS

Religious composition

St. Eulalia's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Barcelona.

The major **religion in Spain** has been Catholic Christianity since the Reconquista, with a small minority of other Christian and non-Christian religions and high levels of secularization as of 2020. The Pew Research Center ranked Spain as the 16th out of 34 European countries in levels of religiosity, which is lower than Italy, Portugal and Poland, but much higher than the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries.[2] There is no official religion and religious freedom is protected: the Spanish Constitution of 1978 abolished Catholicism as the official state religion, while recognizing the role it plays in Spanish society.

Catholicism has been present in the Iberian Peninsula since Roman times.[4][5] The Spanish Empire spread it to the Philippine islands and Latin America, which are now predominantly Catholic countries.[6][7][8] However, since the end of the Francoist dictatorship practical secularization has grew strongly.[9][1][10][11][12][13] Only 3% of Spaniards consider religion as one of their three most important values, even lower than the 5% European average.

A Survey published in 2019 by the Pew Research Center found that 54% of Spaniards had a favorable view of Muslims, while 76% had a favorable view about Jews. Spain has been seen as a *graveyard for Protestant missionaries*: only 1% of the population of Spain is Protestant and 92% of Spain's 8,131 villages do not have any evangelical protestant church.

According to the Spanish Center for Sociological Research, 71.1% of Spanish citizens self-identify as Catholics, (46.6% define themselves as not practising, while 24.5% as practising), 2.3% as followers of other faiths (including Islam, Protestant Christianity, Buddhism etc.), and 25.4% identify as atheists (11.1%), agnostics (6.5%) or non-believers (7.8%) as of October 2019. Most Spaniards do not participate regularly in religious worship. This same study shows that of the Spaniards who identify themselves as religious, 29.1% never attend mass, 30.8% barely ever attend mass, 16.2% attend mass a few times a year, 7.4% two or three times per month, 13.0% every Sunday holidays, and 2.1% multiple times per week.

Although a majority of Spaniards self-identify as Catholics, many younger generations ignore the Church's moral doctrines on issues such as pre-marital sex, sexual orientation, marriage or contraception.[10][11][21][22][12][13] The total number of parish priests shrank from 24,300 in 1975 to 18,500 in 2018, with an average age of 65.5 years.[23][24][25] By contrast, some expressions of popular religiosity still thrive, often linked to local festivals

Religious self-definition in Spain (October 2019 CIS survey)

Non-Practising Catholic (46.6%)

Practising Catholic (24.5%)

Atheist (11.1%)

Indifferent/Non-believer (7.8%)

Agnostic (6.5%)

Other denominations and religions (2.3%)

Did not answer (1.2%)

*(information from Wikipedia free encyclopedia)

While Catholicism is still the largest religion in Spain, most Spaniards—and especially the younger—choose not to follow the Catholic teachings in morals, politics or sexuality, and do not attend Mass regularly.[10][26][27] Irreligiosity, including Agnosticism and Atheism, enjoys social prestige in line with the general Western European secularization.

Culture wars in Spain are far more related to politics than religion, and the huge unpopularity of typically religion-related issues like creationism prevent them from being used in such conflicts. Revivalist efforts by the Catholic Church and other creeds have not had any significant success out of their previous sphere of influence.[27][16] According to the Eurobarometer 83 (2015), only 3% of Spaniards consider religion as one of their three most important values, just like in 2008 and even lower than the 5% European average.[14][29] And according to the 2005 Eurobarometer Poll:

- 59% of Spaniards responded that "they believe there is a God."
- 21% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force".
- 18% answered that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force."

Evidence of the secular nature of contemporary Spain can be seen in the widespread support for the legalization of same-sex marriage in Spain — over 70% of Spaniards supported gay marriage in 2004 according to a study by the Centre for Sociological Research.[31] Indeed, in June 2005 a bill was passed by 187 votes to 147 to allow gay marriage, making Spain the third country in the European Union to allow same-sex couples to marry. This vote was split along conservative-liberal lines, with Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and other left-leaning parties supporting the measure and the center-to-right People's Party (PP) against it. However, when the Popular Party came into power in 2011, the law was not revoked or modified. Changes to the divorce laws to make the process quicker and to eliminate the need for a guilty party have also been popular. Abortion, contraception and emergency contraception are legal and readily available on par with Western European standards.

Catholicism

Main article: Catholic Church in Spain

Eastern Orthodoxy

Main article: Eastern Orthodoxy in Spain

Spain is not a traditionally Orthodox country, as after the Great Schism of 1054 the Spanish Christians (at that time controlling the northern half of the Iberian Peninsula) remained in the Catholic sphere of influence.

The number of Orthodox adherents in the country began to increase in the early 1990s, when Spain experienced an influx of migrant workers from Eastern Europe. The dominant nationality among Spanish Orthodox adherents is Romanian (as many as 0.7 million people), with Bulgarians, Russians, Ukrainians, Moldovans, and others bringing the total to about 1.0 million.

Protestantism

Main article: Protestantism in Spain

Protestantism in Spain has been boosted by immigration but remains a small testimonial force among native Spaniards (1%). Spain has been seen as a *graveyard for foreign missionaries* (meaning lack of success) among Evangelical Protestants. Protestant churches claim to have about 1,200,000 members.[

Popular religion



Nazarenos

However, some expressions of popular religiosity still thrive, often linked to Christian festivals and local patron saints. World-famous examples include the Holy Week in Seville, the Romería de El Rocío in Huelva or the Mystery Play of Elche, while the Sanfermines in Pamplona and the Falles of Valencia have mostly lost their original religious nature. The continuing success of these festivals is the result of a mix of religious, cultural, social and economic factors including sincere devotion, local or family traditions, non-religious fiesta and partying, perceived beauty, cultural significance, territorial identity, meeting friends and relatives, increased sales and a massive influx of tourists to the largest ones. The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is not so popular among Spaniards but it attracts many visitors too. Most if not all cities and towns celebrate a patron saint's festival or similar, no matter how small or known, which often includes processions, Mass and the like but whose actual religious following is variable and sometimes merely nominal.

Another trend among Spanish believers is syncretism, often defined as *religión a la carta*. In *religion à la carte*, people mix popular Roman Catholic beliefs and traditions with their own worldview and/or esoteric, self-help, New Age or philosophical borrowings they like, resulting in a unique personal 'soft' spirituality without any possible church. These people typically self-define themselves as Catholics, but they only attend church for christenings, funerals or weddings and are not actual followers. Unbelievers are, by definition, not syncretic or otherwise.

The Basharat Mosque in Pedro Abad, of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, was the first mosque to be built in modern Spain.

Islam

Main article: Islam in Spain

The recent waves of immigration, especially during and after the 1990s, have led to an increasing number of Muslims and Protestants. Nowadays, Islam is the second largest religion, but far behind Roman Catholicism and irreligion. A study made by *Unión de comunidades islámicas de España* showed that there were almost 1,900,000 inhabitants of Muslim background living in Spain in 2016 (4% of the total population.)

The vast majority was composed of immigrants and descendants originating from Morocco and other North African/Arab countries. Almost 780,000 of them had Spanish nationality.

Judaism

Main article: Jews in Spain

Jews in Spain account for less than 0.2 percent of the population, mostly in Barcelona, Madrid and Murcia.

Minor religions

The Buddhist Benalmádena Stupa opened in 2003 in Andalusia is considered the largest in Europe.

Besides various varieties of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and the non-religious, Spain also has small groups of Hindus, Buddhists, Pagans, Taoists, and Bahá'ís.

Buddhism

See also: Buddhism in Europe

Buddhism didn't arrive in Spain until the late 20th century. According to an estimation, there are around 65,000 followers and an indeterminate number of sympathizers.[*citation needed*] However, some of its teachings, like reincarnation or karma, have partially syncretized with the cultural mainstream via New Age-style movements.

Paganism[edit]

Paganism is extremely minoritary in Spain. The most visible Pagan religions are forms of Germanic Heathenism (Spanish: *Etenismo*), Celtic paganism (and Druidry) and Wicca. Spanish Heathen groups include the Odinist Community of Spain — Ásatrú, which identifies as both Odinist and Ásatrú, the Asatru Lore Vanatru Assembly, the Gotland Forn Sed and Circulo Asatrú Tradición Hispánica of which four the first one is officially registered by the State; Celtist or Druidic groups include the Dun Ailline Druid Brotherhood (*Hermandad Druida Dun Ailline*) and the Fintan Druidic Order, both registered. Amongst the Wiccan groups, two have been granted official registration: the Spanish Wiccan Association (*Asociación Wicca España*) and the Celtiberian Wicca (*Wicca Tradición Celtíbera*).

Galicia is a center of Druidry (Galician: *Druidaria*) due to its strong Celtic heritage; the Pan-Galician Druidic Order (Galician: *Irmandade Druídica Galaica*) is specific to Galicia. In the Basque Country, traditional Basque Gentility (Basque: *Jentiltasuna*) and Sorginkery (Basque: *Sorginkeria*), Basque witchcraft, have been revived and have ties with Basque nationalism. *Sorginkoba Elkartea* is a Basque Neopagan organisation active in the Basque countries.

All these communities, orders and brotherhoods are barely more than small scattered groups.

Taoism

Taoism has a presence in Spain, especially in Catalonia. Among Spanish people, it was introduced by the Chinese master Tian Chengyang in the 2000s, leading to the foundation of the Catalan Taoist Association (*Asociación de Taoísmo de Cataluña*) and the opening of the Temple of Purity and Silence (*Templo de la Pureza y el Silencio*) in Barcelona, both in 2001. The association has planned to expand the Temple of Purity and Silence as a traditional Chinese Taoist templar complex, the first Taoist temple of this kind in Europe

A further Taoist temple was opened in 2014 by the Chinese community of Barcelona, led by Taoist priest Liu Zemin, a 21st-generation descendant of poet, soldier and prophet Liu Bo Wen (1311-1375). The temple, located in the district of Sant Martí and inaugurated with the presence of the People's Republic of China consul Qu Chengwu, enshrines 28 deities of the province of China where most of the Chinese in Barcelona come from.[1]

Major Celebrations/Secular Celebrations:

Many of the holidays in Spain are based on religion. Some of the holidays are national throughout Spain and marked (N) others are regional (R)

- January 1: New Year's Day (N)
- January 2: Monday after New Year's Day (R) – Andalucía, Aragón, Asturias, Castilla and León, Murcia and Melilla.
- January 6: Epiphany / Three Kings' Day (N)
- February 29: Day of Andalusia (R)
- March 1: Day of Balearic Islands (R)
- March 20: Monday after Saint Joseph's day (R) – Extremadura and Madrid.
- The most important period of celebration in Spain is Holy Week (Semana Santa), the annual tribute to the Passion of Jesus Christ. As in all countries that celebrate Easter, the dates vary each year between the last two weeks of March to the first two weeks of April. The holidays are: Maundy Thursday - (R) – all regions excluding Catalonia, Good Friday (N) Easter Sunday (N), Easter Monday (R) – Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Catalonia, La Rioja, Navarre and Valencia.
- April 24: Day of Aragon / Day of Castile and Léon (R)
- May 1: Labour Day/Worker's Day (N)
- May 2: Day of Madrid (R)
- May 16: Whit Monday or Pentecost Monday (R) – Catalonia
- May 17: Galician Literature Day (R)
- May 30: Day of the Canary Islands (R)
- May 31: Day of Castilla-La Mancha (R)
- June 9: Day of Murcia / Day of La Rioja (R)
- June 15: Corpus Christi (R) – Castilla-La Mancha
- June 24: St John's Day (San Juan) (R) – Catalonia.
- July 25: St James' Day (Santiago Apostol) (R) – Basque Country and Navarre.
- July 28: Cantabrian Institutions Day (R) – Cantabria
- August 15: Assumption of Mary (N)
- September 1: Festival of Abraham's Sacrifice (R) – Ceuta and Melilla.

- September 2: Day of Ceuta (R)
- September 8: Day of Asturias / Day of Extremadura (R)
- September 11: Day of Catalonia (R) – marks the anniversary of the recapture of Barcelona in 1714.
- September 15: Day of the Bien Aparecida (patron saint) (R) – Cantabria
- October 9: Day of Valencia (R) – commemorates King James I entering the city of Valencia to free it from Moorish rule in 1238.
- October 12: Spain's National Day / Columbus Day – commemorates when Columbus landed in the New World in 1492 (N)
- November 1: All Saints' Day (Fiesta de Todos los Santos) (N)
- December 6: Spanish Constitution Day (N)
- December 8: Immaculate Conception (N)
- December 25: Christmas (N)
- December 26: Saint Stephen's Day (R) – Catalonia.

Folk traditions – customs

Typical Day in Spain – The Real Customs, Traditions & Rituals

1 A Light Breakfast First Thing – Highly Likely at 8am

Breakfast in Spain is a light affair, consisting of coffee with bread or a pastry. Fruit, yoghurt and cereals are gaining in popularity. You might have a freshly-squeezed juice or you might wait to order one out later. Remember if you work here, there is very little of the 9-5 timetable in Spain. The working day is either 8am-3pm or else 10am-2pm and 5pm-8pm. Even if you are on holiday, these times will impact on your day **typical day in Spain** – so pen them down somewhere.

2 Getting Dressed (Smartly – More Than Once) – Highly Likely at 9am

Whether dressing for work or leisure, smart casual is the default dress code for all – although children are often dressed very formally at weekends. And the older generation tend to dress formally also with good suits and coats worn by the men while the women have the hair-dos and are dressed very smartly. Something you many not notice is the number of times that people change their clothes in Spain especially in a small town or city. Take a typical Saturday or Sunday. One outfit is worn for popping out to the shops, maybe something else smart worn for lunch – and in the evening, something even more dressier might be worn for the evening stroll. Those going out

later might even change again. If you're planning a trip soon, read our tips about what to pack and wear in Spain.

3 Hit the Bar in the Morning (for Coffee & Something to Eat) – Highly Likely after 11am

By the time you have mastered where you are and what you are doing for the day, (unless you had a large buffet breakfast at the hotel), it's probably time for a second coffee, out this time, with something to eat. The mid-morning snack is more filling than the first breakfast – as the bars are heaving with tasty savoury offerings including breakfast rolls stuffed with jamon serrano and an array of freshly-made tortillas. You can read all about Spanish tortilla here.

If it's your first day in Spain, you might be asking yourself whether you need to order in Spanish. Staff working in the tourism industry usually have quite good English. As you peruse the offerings at the bar, bear in mind that you might be looking at words in Basque, Catalan or Gallego. Everybody will understand Spanish but it might be nice to say 'hello' and good-bye' in the regional language – so listen to what you hear around you.

Christmas in Spain

Each year between December 24 and January 6, Spain comes alive to celebrate Christmas, or ***Navidad*** in Spanish. During this time of the year, everyone strives to fill their days with happiness, joy, and family harmony, although some are more successful than others.

Spanish holidays are a mixture of Christian and pagan traditions. According to Catholic tradition, Christmas is celebrated on December 25 in honor of the day Jesus was born. December 31 is New Year's Eve, or *Nochevieja* in Spanish, the time to say goodbye to the year that's coming to an end and welcome the new year. But the holiday season doesn't end there! January 6 is a very important holiday in Spain called *el Día de los Tres Reyes Magos* (known in English as Epiphany or Three Kings' Day).

Although Christmas Eve isn't until December 24, Christmas always comes to Spain a few days early, on December 22. That's the day the winning numbers of the hugely popular Spanish Christmas Lottery are drawn and announced in song by schoolchildren on live TV. In the months leading up to this event, many Spaniards buy lottery tickets and wait to see if their number will be lucky that year.

Once the lottery prizes have been announced, the holidays have officially started, and everyone starts making final preparations for the big celebrations.

Christmas Eve, or *Nochebuena* in Spanish, is celebrated on December 24 and is generally a family affair. Usually, members of the extended family gather around a feast of meat, wine, typical foods not eaten at other times of the year, and all kinds of desserts.

For devout Catholics, there's an important event after dinner: it's time to go to a special midnight mass called the Misa del Gallo. Church-goers celebrate the birth of the Son of God by singing famous and traditional Christmas carols accompanied by guitars, hand drums, and tambourines.

In many homes, especially ones with children, *Nochebuena* is a very exciting night: it's when Santa Claus (in Spanish, Papá Noel) brings gifts to all the children who have been good during the year. Some regions of Spain have their own traditions: in the Basque Country, it's Olentzero who leaves the gifts, while children from Cataluña and Aragón receive gifts from Tió de Nadal.

At this point, Christmas has only just begun! December 25 is Christmas Day.

Even after the enormous Christmas Eve dinner, on Christmas Day the family comes together to eat again, but not as much as the night before. Especially in families with young children, this day is a time to show find out what Papá Noel brought everyone. The streets fill with children trying out their new roller skates, bikes, and remote control cars.

Even after December 25, there are still plenty of Spanish Christmas traditions to uphold before the end of the year. **On December 28, Spain celebrates *el Día de los Santos Inocentes* (Holy Innocents' Day)**. This is another Catholic tradition that has evolved over time and been adapted to the modern world. Today, it is celebrated as a kind of Spanish April Fool's Day when people play pranks (*bromas* o *inocentadas*) on each other. On this day, don't believe everything you see or hear — chances are good that somebody's pulling your leg.

We've finally made it to December 31, the last day of the year. While *Nochebuena* (Christmas Eve) is celebrated as a family, *Nochevieja* (New Year's Eve) is celebrated with friends.

After dinner and time for socializing, Spaniards spend the final moments before the clock strikes midnight preparing to ring in the new year. People gather in plazas or homes to eat the *12 uvas de la suerte* (**12 lucky grapes**). During the last 12 seconds of the year, everyone eats 12 grapes so that luck will be on their side for the whole year to come.

After midnight, the new year begins and people go out to celebrate it in style. For many, January 1 is a day to sleep in and recover from the night before.

But Christmas still isn't over!

January 5 is a very exciting day for the youngest members of a Spanish family. All afternoon, each city organizes a special event in which large floats parade through the streets carrying musicians, artists, people in costume, and, most importantly, the Tres Reyes Magos (the Three Kings), who wave to all the children of the city. After the

parade, families return home for an early dinner so the children can clean their shoes and leave them in the living room. This way, when the *Tres Reyes Magos* visit the home in the wee hours of the morning, they'll know where to leave the presents for each member of the family.

When they wake up on the morning of January 6, children across Spain jump out of their beds and run to the place they left their shoes the night before to see what gifts the Three Kings of Orient have left for them.

The only bad thing about the afternoon of January 6 is that children know that their vacation is ending and school is about to begin again, and adults are reminded that they'll have to get back to the daily grind. Little by little, everything goes back to normal… until the next Christmas season.

Easter in Spain

Locally known as Semana Santa (Holy Week), Easter is the most important celebration in Spain, and stands out for its epic brotherhoods' processions and unique, age-old traditions specific to each region.

The atmosphere that characterizes the festivities is usually solemn, the picture spectacular, and everything seems fully immersed in emotion. Don't let yourself be fooled, though – this is still Spain, which means neither the strong religious beliefs nor the somberness of the moment can hide the nation's fervor for pomp and lively fiestas.

These being said, let's take a closer look at the distinctive customs and traditions that accompany Semana Santa in various Spanish provinces.

Semana Santa in Andalusia

Although each Spanish region, and even city and village, has its own particular customs and practices during this time of year, Semana Santa celebrations are nowhere else as elaborate and spectacular as they are in Andalusia, the sunny south of the country.

Here, the most important Catholic holiday is commemorated with a week full of color, art, religious fervor, and extravagant processions. The most spectacular events take place in Malaga and Seville, where the streets are taken over by flamboyant parades and intricate religious displays depicting biblical scenes.

Like everywhere in Spain, the festivities begin on Palm Sunday (*Domingo de Ramos*) and last until Easter Monday (*Lunes de Pascua*), with the most dramatic and passionate parades held on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

In **Malaga**, Semana Santa is celebrated with various religious and military parades accompanied by music, inviting incense, and floral scents, as well as lots of color and cheer.

One of the most distinctive features, however, is the presence of *tronos* – huge ornate floats that are carried through the streets of Malaga by hundreds of church members. These remarkable thrones depicting scenes from the Passion are escorted by groups of penitents wearing long purple robes and women in black holding lit candles. From time to time, the silence is broken by spontaneous *saetas* – typical Spanish religious

music with flamenco influences, usually performed from a balcony during a major public procession.

Although Easter celebrations in Malaga are of huge proportions, it's the **Seville Semana Santa** that has crossed the boundaries becoming a world-famous event. During the Holy Week, the gorgeous Andalusian capital comes to life with thousands of pilgrims that gather here from all corners of the world to witness the city's extravagant *pasos*.

A *paso* is an enormous float adorned with life-size wooden statues of biblical characters, designed especially for religious processions. In Seville, they are considered genuine artistic masterpieces, some of them dating back as far as the 16th century. Each movable float belongs to a brotherhood, or *cofradia* (there are over 50 in Seville), and has its own distinctive characteristics. A common feature, however, is the team of *costaleros* who convey the *pasos* on their necks and shoulders through the crowded streets.

The highlight of Holy Week in Seville is the night of Maundy Thursday, when all the processions start their march to the Cathedral. Known as La Madruga, the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday is the most important and spectacular moment of Seville's Semana Santa. On the dawn of Good Friday everybody gathers in front of Seville Cathedral to commemorate the trial and all the events that have led to the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.

This tense and solemn atmosphere changes dramatically on Easter Sunday (*Domingo de Resurrección*), when the news of the Resurrection of Christ brings plenty of joy and excitement in people's hearts. The sober processions are replaced by lively and colorful parades; the floats are festooned with flowers; the weighty silent is expelled by exultant music; and people indulge themselves in all kinds of traditional sweets and pastries such as *torrijas* (slices of bread soaked in milk and eggs, and fried in olive oil) and *pestihos*.

Semana Santa in Castile and León

While the Semana Santa festivities in Andalusia are the most spectacular, the ones in Castile and León are often regarded as some of the most authentic, solemn, and austere in the entire country. Among the cities that hold remarkable processions are León, Zamora, Salamanca, Toledo, Avila, Segovia, and Valladolid.

In Salamanca, Zamora, Toledo, and Valladolid, Semana Santa has been declared Fiesta of International Tourist Interest of Spain.

Around 22 dramatic processions of pasos accompanied by ancient wooden sculptures of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary in grief, along with hundreds of penitents carrying flags, crosses, or candles make **Semana Santa in Salamanca** one of the most important celebrations of its kind in the northwestern autonomous community of Castile and León.

The events unfold against a spectacular background and feature a series of particularities, including the processions performed by the University of Salamanca's Brotherhood of the Students and the extraordinary artistic value of the *pasos,* which have been created by famous Spanish sculptors such as Mariano Benlliure, Luis Salvador Carmona, or Alejandro Carnicero, and are regarded as some of the best artworks of the Castilian School of Imagery.

The age-old rituals that date back to the 13th century, along with the richness historical and architectural details of Salamanca's UNESCO-listed Old Town add a dose of drama and splendor to the unique atmosphere.

Things are a little different in the Romanesque city of **Zamora**, where the penance processions are usually basked in silence, meditation, and soberness; or in **Toledo**, where the artistic churches and narrow medieval alleyways lit up by candles make for a fantastic backdrop for the nocturnal processions that the town is known for.

In **Valladolid**, where Holy Week is the most important Catholic event of the year, art and religion blend harmoniously to create dazzling images and to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. Most of the processions are considered exquisite displays of Castilian religious sculpture, featuring spectacular statues and floats created by famous Spanish artists many centuries ago.

A completely unique tradition here is the *Sermón de las Siete Palabras* (Sermon of the Seven Words) – a local ritual held in the morning of Good Friday in Valladolid's Plaza Mayor after being proclaimed throughout the city by brotherhoods' members on horseback. Another peculiar feature of Semana Santa in Valladolid is the performance of various theatrical plays that illustrate scenes from the Passion.

León, the city that plays host to Spain's finest cathedral built in French-style Gothic architecture (Santa María de León Cathedral), boasts a wonderful variety of Holy Week processions and rituals. The most remarkable of them is by far *El Encuentro* – the solemn moment when the *pasos* of Saint John and La Dolorosa meet in Plaza Mayor.

Semana Santa in Murcia

Holy week in the region of Murcia is marked by a number of events and religious processions that generally stand out due to their strict order and distinctive characteristics, closely related to the area's history and culture.

The streets of **Lorca** are taken over by penitents, horses, and chariots, as well as colossal floats carrying fantastic baroque statues depicting scenes from the Old Testament. The most prominent features of Lorca's wonderful biblical parades are the great rivalry between the city's main brotherhoods – the Whites and the Blues, as well as the striking Semana Santa costumes, which are typically embroidered on silk and decorated with religious scenes. There are also a couple of small museums in Lorca dedicated to these exquisite outfits.

Cartagena's Holy Week processions are especially famous for their rigor, symmetry, and outstanding attention to detail. Each brotherhood in town is divided into small groups, whose members are meant to take care of a single float while wearing identical clothes. All groups march to the rhythmic beat of the drums and when they stop, they do it in unison with a military-like precision.

Another unique characteristic of the Semana Santa parades in Cartagena is the display of lavishly decorated floats filled with flowers, huge chandeliers (*cartelas*), and painted wooden sculptures created by both talented contemporary artists as well as classics such as Francisco Salzillo, Federico Coullaut-Valera, or Mariano Benlliure.

The charming university town of **Murcia** celebrates Easter with the same stately and elegant processions that characterize the region, but thanks to the multitude of masterpieces by Francisco Salzillo – the city's famous son, they seem even more

spectacular in their baroque splendor. Handing out sweets is another traditional custom at Murcia's Semana Santa parades.

Other Semana Santa Festivities in Spain

The destinations above feature some of the most famous and spectacular Easter festivities in Spain, but there are many other towns and villages throughout the country that are worth a visit during this special time of year.

Designated a Fiesta of International Tourist Interest of Spain, **Holy Week in Viveiro, Galicia** makes for a fascinating religious and cultural experience, offering an eye-catching visual spectacle and great atmosphere.

Other notable Semana Santa festivities are held in **Hellín (Province of Albacete)**, where spectacular *tamboradas* complement the processions, and **Castilblanco de los Arroyos** – a small city in the Province of Seville, where they have a very unique custom of manufacturing Judas dolls (*Juas*) that are later placed in various corners of the city and set on fire.

Although not as spectacular as in other Spanish regions, **Semana Santa in Catalonia** has its fair share of peculiar celebrations. For instance, the **Silence Procession in Badalona** dates back to the 17th century and distinguishes itself for being extremely quiet and lit only by candlelight.

Other noteworthy festivities include: **Tarragona's Procession of Loneliness** where only women can take part, the **Death Dance in Verges,** and the Andalusian-style processions in **L'Hospitalet de Llobregat**, near Barcelona.

Spanish Eating Customs: Meals

A normal day's breakfast- or desayuno- typically consists merely of a cup of coffee, although it's also commonplace to accompany your steaming café con leche with a croissant or other pastry. While an American traditional breakfast has pancakes, bacon, and eggs, the Spanish "traditional" breakfast consists of the vastly popular churros, served sprinkled with sugar or dunked in hot chocolate.

Spaniards eat their lunch, or comida, between 2:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon. Serving as the day's main meal, it is traditionally quite a bit larger than the dinner meal, or cena. A typical lunch will have several courses. The first course is the lighter part of the meal, usually consisting of a salad or soup, while the second course is normally your typical fish or meat dish. A dessert can be a simple piece of fruit, a typical Spanish flan, or a sweet pastry or cake.

While there are of course many people who eat full meals, the Spanish dinner (cena) is traditionally much smaller than the midday comida. It often consisting of something lighter like a salad, a sandwich, or a selection of tapas. Spaniards eat late for this final meal of the day- even more so on weekends and during the summer- sitting down to eat anytime from 9:00 until 11:00 in the evening.

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While there are of course many people who eat full meals, the Spanish dinner (cena) is traditionally much smaller than the midday comida. It often consisting of something lighter like a salad, a sandwich, or a selection of tapas. Spaniards eat late for this final meal of the day- even more so on weekends and during the summer- sitting down to eat anytime from 9:00 until 11:00 in the evening.

Spanish Eating Customs: Tapas

A tradition begun long ago in the southern city of Seville, Spaniards have since perfected the art of snacking. Going out for tapas consists of travelling from bar to bar and sharing plates of the bars' specialties with a small group of friends. Learn more about tapas!

Spanish Eating Customs: *Sobremesa*

The name says it all. The word sobremesa literally means "over the table" and refers to the art of conversation after a meal. Instead of taking the last bite and leaving, Spaniards often stay at the table conversing, savoring each other's company, and perhaps sharing a drink. If good conversation ensues, be prepared to stay for hours!

Spanish Eating Customs: Wine

Whether out at a restaurant or in the home with the family, it is very typical to drink wine along with a meal. So common, in fact, that restaurants offering a menú almost always include wine in the advertised price.

Spanish Eating Customs: Coffee

Coffee is quite the Spanish phenomenon. Many Spaniards drink several cups of their favorite caffeinated beverage in the course of a single day. Coffee also traditionally follows a Spanish meal and is served after the dessert. To fit in with the locals, ask for a café con leche (coffee with milk), a café solo (coffee without milk), or a café cortado (coffee with some milk).

Spanish Gastronomy

Spanish cuisine is heavily influenced by historical processes that shaped local culture and society in some of Europe's Iberian Peninsula territories. Geography and climate

has had great influence on cooking methods and available ingredients. These cooking methods and ingredients are still present in the gastronomy of the various regions that make up Spain. Spanish cuisine derives from a complex history where invasions and conquests of Spain have modified traditions which made new ingredients available. Thus, the current and old cuisine of Spain incorporates old and new traditions.

The arrival of Europeans in America, in 1492, initiated the advent of new culinary elements, such as tomatoes, potatoes, maize, bell peppers, spicy peppers, paprika, vanilla and cocoa or chocolate. Spain is where chocolate was first mixed with sugar to remove its natural bitterness. Other ingredients traveled to the Americas, such as rice, grapes, olives and many types of cereals.

Many traditional Spanish dishes such as tortilla de patata (an omelette made with potatoes), would not be possible without the discovery of America. Gazpacho, salmorejo, and pan tumaca are made with tomatoes, which traveled from America to Spain during the discovery of America.

Andalusia



Gazpacho



Migas

Andalusian cuisine is twofold: rural and coastal. Of all the Spanish regions, this region uses the most olive oil in its cuisine. The Andalusian dish that has achieved the most international fame is gazpacho. It is a cold soup made with five vegetables, vinegar, water, salt, olive oil, and stale bread crumbs. Other cold soups include poleá, zoque and salmorejo.

Snacks made with olives are common. Meat dishes include: flamenquín, pringá, oxtail stew and Menudo Gitano (also called Andalusian tripe). The hot soups include cat

soup (made with bread), dog stew (fish soup with orange juice) and migas canas. Fish dishes include: fried fish, cod pavías, and parpandúas. A culinary custom is the typical Andalusian breakfast, which is considered to be a traditional characteristic of laborers which is extending throughout Spain.

Cured meats include Serrano ham and Iberico ham. Typical drinks in the area include anise, wine (Malaga, Jerez, Pedro Ximénez, etc..), and sherry brandy.

Aragon

The Aragonese cuisine has a rural and mountainous origin. The central part of Aragon, the flattest, is the richest in culinary specialties. Being in a land where lambs are raised on the slopes of the Pyrenees, one of its most famous dishes is roast lamb (asado de ternasco). The lamb is cooked with garlic, salt and bacon fat. Pork dishes are also very popular. Among them: Magras con tomate, roasted pork leg and Almojábanas de Cerdo. Among the recipes made with bread are: migas de Pastor, migas con chocolate, Regañaos (cakes with sardines or herring,) and goguera. The most notable condiment is garlic-oil.

Legumes are very important but the most popular vegetables are borage and thistle. In terms of cured meats, ham from Teruel and Huesca are used often. Among the cheeses, Tronchon is notable. Fruit-based cuisine includes the very popular Fruits of Aragon (Spanish: Frutas de Aragon; candied fruits) and Maraschino cherries.

Asturias

Asturian cuisine has a long and rich history, deeply rooted in Celtic traditions of northern Europe. One of its most famous dishes is the Asturian bean stew, known as "fabada". Fabada is the traditional stew of the region, made with white beans, sausages such as chorizo, morcilla, and pork. A well-known recipe is beans with clams. Asturian beans ("fabes") can also be cooked with hare, partridge, prawns or octopus. Also of note are Asturian stew (made with white beans, cabbage, potatoes and a variety of sausages and bacon) and vigil stew. Pork-based foods, for example chosco, Asturian-style tripe and bollos preñaos (chorizo-stuffed bread bums) are popular.

Common meat dishes include: carne gobernada (roasted veal meat), cachopo (a crunchy, crumb-coated veal steak stuffed with ham and cheese) and stew.

Fish and seafood play also an important role in Asturian cuisine. The Cantabrian Sea provides a rich variety of species, including tuna, hake and sardine.

Asturian cheeses are very popular in the rest of Spain. Among them, the most representative is Cabrales cheese, a pungent, blue cheese developed in the regions near the Picos de Europa. Other popular cheese types are Gamonéu, Afuega'l pitu, and ahumado de Pría. These can be enjoyed with the local cider, a low-alcohol drink made of Asturian apples, with a distinctive sourness.

Asturian cider, made of a special type of apple, is traditionally poured ("escanciada") from a certain height, usually over the head of the waiter/server: one hand holds the glass, slightly tilted, under the hip, while the other hand throws the cider from atop, the arm usually stretched upwards. When the cider falls into the glass from above, the drink "breaks", getting aerated and bubbly. It is consumed immediately after being served, in consecutive, tiny shots.

Notable desserts are frisuelos (similar to crêpes, usually filled with cream or apple jam), rice pudding (white rice cooked with milk, lemon zest and sugar), and carbayones (puff pastry cakes filled with almond mash and covered with sugar glaze).

Balearic Islands

The Balearic cuisine has purely Mediterranean characteristics due to its location. The islands have been conquered several times throughout their history by the French and the English, which left some culinary influences. At present are well known: the sobrassada and arròs brut, mahón cheese, Gin de Menorca ("pelota"), and mayonnaise. Among the dishes are tumbet, frit mallorquí, and roasted suckling pig.

Among the desserts we can find: ensaïmada, tambor d'ametlla, and suspiros de Manacor.

Balearic food is an example of the famous Mediterranean diet due to the importance of olive oil, legumes, unrefined cereals, fruits, vegetables and fish.

Basque Country

The cuisine of the Basque Country has a wide and varied range of ingredients and preparations. The culture of eating is very strong among the inhabitants of this region. Highlights include meat and fish dishes. Among fish, cod is produced in various preparations: bacalao al pil pil, cod Bilbao, to name a few. Also popular are anchovies, bream, and bonito. Among the most famous dishes is the seafood changurro. Among the meats are: the beef steaks, pork loin with milk, fig leaf quail, and marinated goose.

Canary Islands

The Canary Islands have a unique cuisine due to their geographical location in the Atlantic ocean. The Canary Islands were part of the trading routes to the American Continent, hence creating a melting pot of different culinary traditions. Fish (fresh or salted) and potatoes are among the most common staple foods in the islands. The consumption of cheese, fruits and pork meat also characterizes Canarian cuisine. The closeness to Africa influences climate and creates a range of warm temperatures that in modern times have fostered the agriculture of tropical and semitropical crops: bananas, yams, mangoes, avocados, and persimmons which are heavily used in Canarian cuisine.

The aboriginal people, Guanches, based their diet on gofio (a type of flour made of different toasted grains), shellfish, and goat and pork products. Gofio is still consumed in the islands and has become part of the traditional cuisine of the islands.

A sauce called mojo (from Portuguese origins) is very common through the islands and has developed different varieties adapted to the main dish for which it is being used. Fish dishes usually require a "green mojo" made from coriander or parsley, while roasted meats require a red variety made from chilli peppers that is commonly known as "mojo picón".

Some classic dishes in the Canary Islands include papas arrugadas, almogrote, frangollo, rabbit in "salmorejo sauce", and stewed goat.

Some popular desserts are: truchas (pastries filled with sweet potato or pumpkin), roasted gofio (a gofio-based dough with nuts and honey), príncipe alberto (a mousse-like preparation with almonds, coffee, and chocolate) and quesillo (a variety of flan made with condensed milk)

Wineries are common in the islands. However, only Malvasia wine from Lanzarote has gained international recognition.

Cantabria

A popular Cantabrian dish is *cocido montañés* (highlander stew), a rich stew made with beans, cabbage, and pork. Seafood is widely used and bonito is present in the typical *sorropotún* or marmite. Recognized quality meats are Tudanca veal and game meat. Cantabrian pastries include *sobaos* and *quesadas pasiegas*. Dairy products include Cantabrian cream cheese, smoked cheeses, *picón Bejes-Tresviso,* and *quesucos de Liébana*. *Orujo* is the Cantabrian pomace brandy. Cider (*sidra*) and *chacoli* wine are also favorites.[6][7]

Cantabria has two wines labelled DOC: Costa de Cantabria and Liébana.

Castile-La Mancha

In this region, the culinary habits reflect the origin of foods eaten by shepherds and peasants. *Al-Manchara* means in Arabic, "Dry Land". Which indicates the arid lands and the quality of its dishes. It is said that the best La Mancha cuisine cookbook is the novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes. Wheat and grains are a dominant product and ingredient. They are used in bread, soups, gazpacho manchego, crumbs, porridge, etc. One of the most abundant ingredients in Manchego cuisine is garlic, leading to dishes such as ajo arriero, ajo puerco, and garlic marinade.

Some traditional recipes are gazpacho manchego, pisto manchego, and migas ruleras. Also popular is morteruelo, a kind of foie gras manchego. Manchego cheese is also renowned.

Given the fact that its lands are dry, and thus unable to sustain large amounts of cattle living on grass, an abundance of small animals, such as rabbit, and especially birds (pheasant, quail, partridge, squab) can be found. This led to game meat being incorporated into traditional dishes, such as Conejo al Ajillo (rabbit in garlic sauce), Perdiz Escabechada (marinated partridge) or Huevos de Codorniz (quail's eggs).

Castile and León

In Castile and León characteristic dishes include morcilla, (a black pudding made with special spices), *judión de la granja*, *sopa de ajo* (garlic soup), *Cochinillo asado* (roast piglet), *lechazo* (roast lamb), *botillo del Bierzo*, *hornazo* from Salamanca, *Jamón de Guijuelo* (a cured ham from Guijuelo, Salamanca), *Salchichas de Zaratán,* other sausages, Serrada cheese, Burgos's soft cheese, and Ribera del Duero wines.

Major wines in Castilian-Leonese cuisine include the robust wine of Toro, reds from Ribera del Duero, whites from Rueda, and clarets from Cigales.

Catalonia

The cuisine of Catalonia is based in a rural culture; it is very extensive and has great culinary wealth. Notably, it was in Catalonia where the first cookbook was written in Spain. It has a triple cuisine: seafood, mountain and interior. Among the most popular dishes include: escudella and bread with tomato. Bean omelette, coca de recapte, samfaina, thyme soup, and caragols a la llauna are famous dishes. Notable sauces are: romesco sauce, aioli, bouillabaisse of Catalan origin and picada.

Cured pork cuisine boasts botifarra (white and black) and the fuet of Vic. Among the fish dishes are: subsequent de peix, cod stew, and arròs negre. Among the vegetable dishes, the most famous are calçots and the escalivada (roasted vegetables). Among the desserts are: Catalan cream, carquinyolis, panellets, tortell, and neules.

La Rioja

La Rioja is recognized by the use of meats such as pork, and their cold cuts made after the traditional slaughter. The lamb is perhaps the second most popular meat product in this region (Sarmiento chops) and finally, veal is common in mountain areas. The most famous dish is Rioja style potatoes and Fritada. Lesser known are: Holy lunch and Ajo huevo (garlic eggs).

Pimientos asados (roasted peppers) is a notable vegetable dish.

La Rioja is famously known in Spain for its red wine, so most of these dishes are served with wine. Rioja wine has designated origin status. Another well-known dish is Rioja stew.

Extremadura

The cuisine of Extremadura is austere, with dishes prepared by shepherds. It is very similar to the cuisine of Castilla. Extremaduran cuisine is abundant in pork; it is said that the region is one of the best for breeding pigs in Spain, thanks to the acorns that grow in their fields: Iberian pig herds raised in the fields of Montánchez are characterized by dark skin and thin legs. This breed of pig is found exclusively in Southwestern Iberia, both in Spain and Portugal. Iberian pork products such as sausages are common and often added to stews (cocido extremeño), as well as cachuela (pork liver pâté seasoned with paprika, garlic and other spices).

Other meat dishes is lamb stew or goat stew (caldereta de cordero and caldereta de cabrito). Highlights include game meats such as wild boar, partridge, pheasant or venison. Famous cheeses are Torta de la Serena and Torta del Casar. Among the desserts are: Leche frita, perrunillas, and Pestiños (fritters), as well as many sweets that have their origins in convents. Cod preparations are known, and tench is among the most traditional freshwater fish, with fish and vegetable dishes such as moje de peces or escarapuche.

Soups are often bread based and include a variety of both hot and cold ones. Pennyroyal mint is sometimes used to season gazpachos or soups such as sopa de poleo. Extremaduran ajoblanco (ajoblanco extremeño) is a cold soup different from Andalusian ajoblanco since it contains egg yolk in the emulsion and vegetables but no almonds.

The Northeastern comarca of La Vera produces pimentón de la Vera, smoked paprika highly valued all over Spain and extensively used in Extremaduran cuisine. The region is also known for its vino de pitarra tradition, home-made wine made in small earthenware vessels.

Galicia

Pulpo a la Gallega, Galician octopus with pepper, olive oil and potatoes

Galician cuisine is known in Spanish territory because of the emigration of its inhabitants. One of the most noted is Galician soup. Also notable is pork with turnip tops, a popular component of the Galician carnival meal laconadas. Another remarkable recipe is Caldo de castañas (a chestnut broth), which is commonly consumed during winter. Pork products are also popular.

The seafood dishes are very famous and rich in variety. Among these are: the Galician empanada, Galician octopus, scallops, crab, and barnacles. Among the many dairy products is Queso de tetilla. Orujo is one of Galicia's alcoholic drinks. Sweets that are famous throughout the Iberian Peninsula are the Tarta de Santiago and Filloas (crêpes).

Cattle breeding is very common in Galicia, therefore, a lot of red meat is consumed; typically consumed with potatoes.

Madrid

Madrid did not gain its own identity in the Court until 1561, when Philip II moved the capital to Madrid. Since then, due to immigration, many of Madrid's culinary dishes have been made from modifications to dishes from other Spanish regions. Madrid, due to the influx of visitors from the nineteenth century onwards, was one of the first cities to introduce the concept of the restaurant, hosting some of the earliest examples.

Notable dairy products are: rice pudding, meringue milk, cheese, and curd. Some important fruits and vegetables are Aranjuez strawberries and melons. Madrid is rich in religious confectionery, with sweets such as chocolate con churros and buñuelos. The nutritional value of the madrilian cuisine was discovered by the American epidemiologist Ancel Keys in the 1950, the Spanish cuisine being later often mentioned by epidemiologists as one of the best examples of the Mediterranean diet.

Murcia

The cuisine of the region of Murcia has two sides with the influence of Manchego cuisine. The region of Murcia is famous for its varied fruit production. Among the most outstanding dishes are: Murcia tortilla, zarangollo, mojete, eggplants cream, pipirrana, etc. A typical sauce of this area is the cabañil garlic, used to accompany meat dishes.

Among the culinary preparations are: the michirones (dried beans cooked with bay leaves, hot peppers and garlic). Among the cooked include the olla gitana, cocido murciano con pelotas, mondongo, etc. Among meat products from Murcia are black pudding, which is flavored with oregano, and pastel murciano made with ground beef. Among fish and seafood are the golden salt, the Mar Menor prawns and baked octopus. Rice dishes are common and include Caldero, the Arroz empedrado, rice with rabbit and snails, rice scribe, and widower rice.

Among confectionery products are exploradores and pastel de Cierva. They are typical cakes in Murcia gastronomy and are found in almost every pastry shop in Murcia. They are both sweet and savoury at the same time.

Desserts are abundant; among them are paparajotes Orchard, stuffed pastries, and various other pastries. This region also has wine appellation of origin, as the wine from Jumilla, Bullas wine and wine Yecla.

Navarre

The gastronomy of Navarra has many similarities with the Basque cuisine. Two of its flag dishes are: Trout Navarre Style and Ajoarriero, although we must not forget the lamb chilindrón or relleno. There are very curious recipes such as the Carlists eggs.

Salted products are common and include: chorizo de Pamplona, stuffing and sausage. The lamb and beef have, at present, designations of origin. Among the dairy products are: Roncal cheese, the curd or Idiazabal cheese. Typical alcoholic drinks include claret and pacharán.

Valencia

Main article: Valencian cuisine

The cuisine of Valencia has two components: the rural (products of the field) and the other coastal, which is seafood. One popular Valencia creation is paella, a rice dish cooked in a circular pan and topped with vegetables and meats (originally rabbit and chicken). Dishes such as arroz con costra, arròs negre, fideuá, arròs al forn, and rice with beans and turnips are also common in the city.

Coastal towns supply the region with fish, leading to popular dishes like "all i pebre" typical of the Albufera, or fish stew. Among the desserts are coffee liqueur, chocolate Alicante, arnadí, and horchata. Notably, during Christmas, nougat is made in Alicante and Jijona; also well-known are peladillas (almonds wrapped in a thick layer of caramel).

Notable Spanish chefs

- Ferran Adrià of El Bulli, Girona (closed).[11]
- Juan Mari Arzak, *Arzak*, San Sebastián, Guipúzcoa (1989).[12]
- Santi Santamaría, *El Raco*, Can Fabes, Barcelona (1994).[13]
- Martín Berasategui *Berasategui* Lasarte, Guipúzcoa (2001).[14]
- Carme Ruscalleda *Sant Pau* Sant Pol de Mar, Barcelona (2006).[15]
- José Andrés *Minibar by José Andrés* Washington D.C.. Andres is a student of Adrià. He hosts *Made in Spain* on PBS.[16]
- Karlos Arguiñano, celebrity television chef.[17]
- Sergi Arola, *La Broché*, *Arola* and *Sergi Arola Gastro*. Arola is a student of Adrià who has been awarded two Michelin stars.[18]
- Penelope Casas, New York-born cookbook author.[19][20][21]
- María Mestayer de Echagüe (Bilbao b. 1878 d. 1956), also known as "Marquesa de Parabere", the author of a two-volume cooking encyclopaedia entitled *La Cocina Completa*. There are sections dedicated to the pantry and table etiquette.[22][*self-published source*]
- Ángel Muro, a 19th-century food expert and author of the book *Practicón*.[23]
- Simone and Ines Ortega, authors of *1080 recetas* (*1080 Recipes*).[24]

- Manuel Maria Puga and Parga, an early 20th century food expert and author of *La cocina práctica*.[25]
- Ilan Hall, *Casa Mono*, Manhattan, NY, winner of *Top Chef* Season 2.[26]
- Joan Roca, Jordi Roca i Fontané and Josep Roca i Fontané. El Celler de Can Roca, "Rocambolesc", "Can Roca", "Mas Marroch" and "Cap Roig", in the province of Girona, and he restaurant "Roca Barcelona" in the province of Barcelona. Three Michelin stars in 2009. In 2013, El Celler de Can Roca was selected as the best restaurant in the world by *Restaurant* magazine