

## Catalonia

### Tortilla de Espárragos

asparagus omelet

*I ate this wonderful omelet at Casa Leopoldo in Barcelona early one spring, when the season's first asparagus and green garlic appeared at La Boquería market. If you cannot find green garlic (ajos tiernos in Spanish), a combination of garlic chives and garlic cloves will capture a similar aroma.*

½ lb (250 g) pencil-thin asparagus, tough ends removed

6 tablespoons (3 fl oz/90 ml) olive oil

8 green (spring) onions, including tender green tops, finely chopped

½ cup (1½ oz/45 g) coarsely chopped green garlic shoots, or 2 or 3 cloves garlic, minced

12 garlic chives, if using garlic cloves

7 large eggs

salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

🍷 Bring a saucepan three-fourths full of water to a boil. Add the asparagus, boil for 3–4 minutes, and drain. Place under cold running water to halt the cooking. Drain again and cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) lengths. Set aside.

🍷 In a frying pan over low heat, warm 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the green onions and the green or regular garlic and sauté until tender, about 8 minutes. Add the chives, if using, and the asparagus and sauté to warm through, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat. In a bowl, lightly beat the eggs until blended. Add the asparagus mixture. Season with salt and pepper.

🍷 In an omelet pan or a frying pan over high heat, warm the remaining 3 tablespoons oil until very hot. Pour in the egg mixture and reduce the heat to medium. Cook until the underside is golden, about 6 minutes. Run a spatula around the edges of the pan a few times during cooking to loosen the eggs. Invert a large plate on top of the pan, invert the pan and plate together, and lift off the pan. Slide the omelet back into the pan and return it to low heat. Cook until pale gold and just set, 2–3 minutes longer.

🍷 Slide the omelet onto a serving plate, let cool slightly, and then cut into wedges to serve.

serves 6

## Basque Country

### Champiñones al Ajillo

garlicky fried mushrooms

*Mushrooms grow wild in the abundant forests of the Basque country and Catalonia, and the people of both regions are crazy for setas (wild mushrooms). Boletus edulis (porcini or ceps), girolles (chanterelles), and rabassoles (morels) are among the most prized. While this dish is served all over Spain, in these regions it reaches its apex of flavor and appreciation.*

Al ajillo is used to indicate a style of cooking in which foods are fried in oil with garlic and maybe a bit of chile. Shrimp (prawns), squid, chicken, and mushrooms are often served this way. These garlicky mushrooms are wonderful eaten just as they are, with bread for sopping up the juices, or spooned over grilled bread. Chanterelles, portobellos, and cremini combined with the more common white cultivated mushrooms will result in a flavorful dish.

5 tablespoons (2½ fl oz/75 ml) olive oil

2 tablespoons minced garlic

¼ cup (1½ oz/45 g) diced bacon or ham (optional)

1 lb (500 g) assorted fresh mushrooms (see note), brushed clean and halved if small or sliced

¼ inch (6 mm) thick

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) dry white wine or dry sherry, if needed

¼ cup (½ oz/10 g) chopped fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley

salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

🍷 In a large frying pan over medium heat, warm the oil. Add the garlic and the bacon or ham, if using, and sauté until warmed through, about 2 minutes.

🍷 Raise the heat to high, add the mushrooms, and sauté briefly, stirring occasionally, until tender, 4–6 minutes, depending upon the type of mushrooms and the thickness of the slices. If the mushrooms haven't given off much juice, add the wine or sherry and continue to cook until the liquid is absorbed. Add the parsley and stir well.

🍷 Sprinkle with salt and pepper, transfer to a serving dish, and serve at once.

serves 4–6