

Tapas Fiesta

Easily the most popular tourist activity in Spain is tapas. That's probably because tapas are one of the most popular activities for people who live in Spain as well. "Tapa" means a lid or top. It started with bartenders offering small bites of food to go with wine and serving the food on plates set on top of the wine glasses. This kept the flies out of the wine. Over the years tapas have evolved into a true culinary art form with endless possibilities. Tapas are so popular in Spain and the rest of the world that chefs and home cooks have come up with all kinds of complicated techniques, ingredients, and variations. There's no way I can give you the full range of tapas in one chapter, but I wanted to show some of the most traditional and popular tapas to help you have put on an easy tapas party when you serve Jenner Family Estates Basque Brothers Red Wine Blend to your guests.

Here are the tapas I served to wine club members at my tapas fiestas in 2025. I've selected and adapted all of these recipes to make them as easy as possible with minimal kitchen equipment. This might sacrifice a little flavor or originality here and there, but I think you will be happy with the results and the lighter workload in the kitchen.

Pa Amb Tomàquet

Pa amb tomàquet (pom toe ma KET) is a standard tapa throughout Spain but is a staple in the Northeast state of Catalonia. The beauty of this dish is that the two ingredients (tomatoes or bread) are so basic and simple but the way you combine them takes them from foods to amazing cuisine. It's quick, easy, and pretty much foolproof (if you don't burn the bread), which is what I'm trying to achieve with all these tapas recipes. I want you to spend your time enjoying the food with your wine rather than fretting over the recipes and cooking techniques.

Ingredients

- 1 pound loaf of ciabatta bread
- 2 or 3 large ripe tomatoes
- 8 cloves garlic, peeled
- 3 TBS Lodi olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 tsp kosher flake sea salt

Cut the tomatoes in half across their equator (leaving the ends in tact). Using a grater with medium holes, hold the tomato half and slide the cut face against the grater, extracting the pulp and juice from each tomato into a bowl. Discard the tomato skins. Add 1/2 teaspoon of salt to the tomato pulp and stir.

Cut the loaf of bread in half horizontally (as if you are making a huge sandwich). Cut each half into 2-inch wide slices and put them on a baking sheet (cut side facing up). Put the baking sheet in the oven set to broil for about 2 to 4 minutes. You want the toasted bread crusty and golden with the edges browned.

Rub the cut face of each piece of bread with a garlic clove. The rough bread will "sand off" the garlic such that one clove should coat two bread pieces before it is too small to hold. Transfer the bread pieces to a serving plate.

Spoon about 1 to 2 tablespoons of tomato mixture over each piece of bread and completely cover the face of the bread. Drizzle about a teaspoon of olive oil over each piece. Sprinkle 3 or 4 flakes of kosher flake sea salt on each piece of bread.



Tips and Tricks

When selecting the tomatoes for this dish, you want huge ripe tomatoes with thick skin and lot of juice. Don't use Romas or small tomatoes on the vine.

This isn't something you can make a head of time other than to have the bread cut, the tomatoes grated, and the garlic cloves peeled. You need to toast the bread right before you serve it so that it's warm when your guests bite into it.

If your party is important and you must serve a perfect dish, you may want to have a spare loaf of ciabatta bread handy in case you burn the bread in the broiler (this tip wouldn't be here if it hadn't happened).

Tortilla Española

Tortilla Española is the most popular tapa in Spain. It's actually one of the most popular *foods* in Spain. Most households make this at least once a week for breakfast or picnic lunches. The nice thing about this dish is that you can make it in the morning before your party (or even the day before) and just heat it up when you're ready to serve (or serve it cold like they do in Spain). There is often a little confusion between this dish and *tortilla de patatas*, also know as a “Spanish omelet.” The Spanish omelet is just egg and potatoes, while Tortilla Española has onions. You can try making both and see just how much flavor the onions add. The potatoes and the savory flavors of the onion make this dish pretty filling so it will easily feed four people as a breakfast dish and eight people as a tapa.



Ingredients

3/4 cup Lodi olive oil

1-1/4 pounds waxy potatoes (red or gold, about 3 medium sized potatoes)

1 large yellow onion

6 large eggs

1 tsp sea salt

Poaching the Potatoes and Onions

Cut the onion to a small dice. Rinse the potatoes and pat them dry. Peel each potato and cut it into quarters. Cut each quarter down the middle then cut each of those pieces into 1/4-inch wide pieces. Put the potato pieces in a bowl of water for at least 30 minutes to an hour. Remove the potatoes to a paper towel and dry them.

Add the olive oil to a non-stick 10-inch fry pan and turn it to medium heat. Add the onions. Once you start seeing the oil bubbling, let the onions poach in the olive oil for 5 to 6 minutes until they are translucent but not browned. Add the chopped potatoes and stir until they are coated in the olive oil. Cook the potatoes for 22 to 24 minutes, stirring every couple of minutes. While the potatoes are cooking, crack the eggs into a 4-quart mixing bowl and whisk. Remove any shell fragments.

You can tell that the potatoes are done by piercing them with a toothpick. It should easily go through all the potatoes, especially the larger pieces. When the potatoes are done, remove the pan from the stove to a trivet. Using a spider strainer, transfer the potato and onion mix into the bowl with the eggs. Use a spoon to transfer as many of the onion bits as you can. Drain excess oil from the pan. This should leave about 2 tablespoons of olive oil in the pan. Add the salt to the egg/potato/onion mix, stir and let the mixture set for 5 minutes.



Shaping the Tortilla

Put the same non-stick fry pan back on the stove and heat to medium-low. Add the egg and potato mix to the pan. Smooth the surface so that it is uniform thickness. After about 2 to 3 minutes, gently run a spatula around the outside of the egg mixture to make sure the eggs are not sticking to the pan. The mix should begin to slide around a little in the pan. After 4 to 5 minutes, it's time to flip the tortilla. Put a plate (that is larger than the fry pan) over the fry pan. Holding both the plate and the fry pan handle, flip it over so that the tortilla is resting in the plate. Add a little olive oil to coat the fry pan and slide the tortilla back into the fry pan. Put the pan back on the stove. Use a spatula to shape the edge of the tortilla so that is rounded and not taking the shape of the fry pan. Cook the other side for 4 to 5 minutes.



Serving

Slide the tortilla to a serving plate and cut into 8 slices (like a pizza). In Spain, they usually serve it cold.

Tips and Tricks

If you want to make this dish more than once, you can buy a set of double nonstick fry pans that connect together, like [Magefasa Frittata 9.4 inch](#). This makes turning the tortilla a breeze and helps make this rather difficult dish foolproof. Having a set of pans like this also opens you up to a whole new world of frittatas. Make sure **the first pan you use is slightly smaller in diameter than the second pan**. When the first side is done, attach the second pan and, in one quick move, flip the pans and set the other pan on the stove. Remove the first pan and finish the frittata.

When you pour the hot potatoes and onions into the eggs, you might think that it would cook the eggs. It does somewhat, but that is part of the process of cooking the frittata. After sitting 5 minutes, the mixture will start to thicken but it will still easily pour into the pan.

The instructions say to cook the egg/onion/potato mixture 4 to 5 minutes on each side. Depending on your stove, you may need to cook the second side a little longer. You can tell when the first side is ready to turn when you see a little steam coming out from the sides or from a hole in the center. You can tell when the second side is done when the runny egg mix around the edges begins to firm up and holds its shape as you form the rounded edge with the spatula. It will still be a little creamy inside, but that's what you want.

I try to cook with minimal salt, so I only use just enough to properly prepare the ingredients (preservation, texture, brining, enhancing aromatics, de-bittering, and such). I prefer to flavor dishes with herbs and vegetables rather than salt. In this dish, I only use a teaspoon of salt. However, most Americans are used to having lots of salt in their restaurant and prepared foods. If you find it too bland for your taste or if your guests ask for salt when eating this, you can use 2 teaspoons of salt in the future.

Spanish Deviled Eggs

We've all had deviled eggs sometime in our lives. Nothing much to write home about--unless you make them Spanish style. Each of these little bites is infused with the pepper flavors of Spain in a creamy, soft, attractive, bite-sized package.

Ingredients

12 eggs
24 small green pimiento stuffed olives
4 ounce jar Dromedary sliced pimientos
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1/2 tsp Tabasco sauce
1/2 tsp smoked Spanish paprika
6 TBS mayonnaise

Preparing the Eggs

The best eggs for this appetizer are grade A large that have been sitting in your refrigerator for about a week. Really fresh eggs are sometimes harder to peel when hard-boiled. The best way to hard-boil eggs is with an egg cooker, like the Egg Genie. You can also put six eggs in a medium sauce pot, cover them with water to about one inch above the eggs, bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, then turn off the heat and cover the pot for 12 minutes. Do the same with the other six eggs. Whichever way you cook the eggs, when you pull them out of the boiling water, put them in a bowl of ice water, and let them sit until the ice melts, then cool them in a refrigerator before peeling.

To peel a hard-boiled egg, gently tap the egg on your cutting board to crack it. Gently roll the egg around on the cutting board with just enough pressure to crack the shell all over into tiny pieces. Pick up the egg and rotate the egg on your fingertips, gently pressing the shell to loosen the membrane from the egg white until a piece of it comes loose from the egg white. You should then be able to grab this piece and peel the rest of the shell fragments off the egg without breaking the white. Rinse the egg and your fingers to make absolutely sure that all shell fragments are gone.

Cut each egg in half, lengthwise. Gently scoop out the yolk into a mixing bowl and set the white half in a deviled egg tray.

Preparing the Flavors

Drain the liquid from the jar of sliced pimientos and empty the jar onto a few paper towels. Remove 24 to 28 of longest sliced pimientos and put them on another paper towel. Dry them and set them aside for garnishing the eggs. Dry the remaining pimiento pieces with a paper towel, cut them into a fine brunoise, and put them in the mixing bowl with the yolks. Cut 12 green olives in half and set them aside for garnishing the eggs. Cut the remaining 12 green

olives fine brunoise and put them into the mixing bowl with the yolks. Season the yolks with salt and pepper. Add the Tabasco sauce and cayenne pepper to the yolk mix. Add the mayonnaise and stir the yolk mix until it has a uniform consistency.

Using a couple of soup spoons (which hold about a tablespoon), scoop about one and a half tablespoons of mix with one spoon, then use the second spoon to shape the glob into a tiny football and gently slide it into the hole of an egg white half, creating a round mound of yellow mix. Fill all the other egg white halves. Lightly dust each egg with paprika. Gently press a green olive half on top of each yolk mound and wrap a pimiento slice around it. Put the eggs in the refrigerator for at least an hour to get the tray cold and to firm up the yolk mixture.

Tips and Tricks

If you want to get fancy and know how to use a cake decorator bag, you can put the yolk mixture in it and squeeze a nice uniform glob of mix into each egg half. I don't use this, because there is just enough yolk mix to fill all the eggs. If you put the mix in a cake decorator bag, you will lose about 1 or 2 egg halves worth of mix.

I usually boil 3 or 4 extra eggs, because not every boiled egg will peel perfectly and some whites often get damaged. I put these yolks in the mix and throw these whites away. That ensures that I have enough yolk mix.

Salmorejo

Salmorejo (sol-more-A-ho) is a cold tomato soup that's served just about everywhere in Andalusia, the southern part of Spain along the Mediterranean coast. It's a hearty appetizer for everyone but perfect for your vegetarian guests (just don't put the meat on theirs). Because tomatoes are the main ingredient, the flavor of the soup will depend on how good your tomatoes are. Try to find ripe heirloom tomatoes or tomatoes fresh from your garden with lots of flavor. A "cored" tomato means that you cut out the hard white piece inside the tomato that connects to the stem. You can either use a pairing knife to cut out the top or take this piece out when you cut the tomato into pieces.



Ingredients

1-1/2 pounds ripe heirloom tomatoes, cored and coarsely chopped
5 ounces (about a half loaf) stale bread with the crust removed and cut into 1-1/2 inch pieces
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, crushed and peeled
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup cold water
2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped (optional)
1/4 pound diced serrano jamón, finely chopped (optional)

Making the Soup

In a blender, add the tomatoes, bread, olive oil, garlic, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Blend on high speed until it is thick and creamy, similar to the consistency of yogurt. If the soup is too thick, add up to 1/3 cup of cold water and blend. Pour the soup in their serving bowls (about 4), cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour. Garnish with the hard-boiled eggs and ham (except for vegetarians). Drizzle a little olive oil over the eggs and ham and grind a little black pepper over the garnish.



Tips and Tricks

It's important that the bread be hard and crusty to distribute its crumbs evenly in the blender. If you must get fresh bread the day of your party, just cut it into 1-1/2 inch cubes and toast it for 15 minutes in the oven at 300 degrees.



Sausage Starter

This is a recipe from my *Lodi Wine and Food* book that was a hit the first time I made it. In Spain, they do this with chorizo, but I like the smoked andouille from Lockeford Sausage. It has a softer texture, a slightly spicy flavor, and a perfect fat content that makes a rich pan sauce. For this tapas version, I made a small change from the recipe in my book. I substituted red wine for most of the red wine vinegar in the original recipe, which was paired with Petite verdot (a dark, rich, herbal, floral wine). This tapas dish is intended to be served with our Basque Brothers red wine blend, which is mostly Zinfandel, so I don't want the vinegar to overwhelm the delicate fruit aromas of the wine. This recipe has just enough vinegar to "pop" the sauce. Also, for this presentation, I cut the sausage pieces across (90 degree angle) rather than on the bias (45 degree angle) to make smaller bite sized pieces.

Ingredients

1 pound Lockeford andouille sausage (2 links)
1 TBS canola oil
3 cloves garlic, cut fine brunoise
1 tsp smoked paprika
6 TBS Jenner Family Estates Basque Brothers red wine blend
2 tsp red wine vinegar
2 sprigs fresh thyme leaves, cut fine brunoise

Preparing the Flavors

Cooking will go quickly, so do your *mise en place* and have everything (including a 10-inch fry pan) next to the stove about 30 minutes before your guests are supposed to arrive. Cut the sausage links into 1/4 thick slices. Remove the thyme leaves from the stems, discard the stems, and cut the leaves fine brunoise.

Cooking the Sausage Slices

Heat a 10-inch fry pan to just below medium heat. When hot, coat the bottom of the pan with canola oil. Drop half the sausage slices into the pan. Cook until they are slightly browned (about 2 to 3 minutes), but don't allow them to turn black. You should see the sugars caramelize, the sausage slices shrink slightly, and some of the fat render in the pan.

Turn the slices over and cook the other side and cook for about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the slices from the pan and cook the remaining sausage slices the same way. When all the sausage slices are cooked, put them back into the pan. Add the garlic and paprika and mix well. Cook about 20 to 30 seconds until the garlic is fragrant. Add the wine, vinegar, and thyme to the pan and stir to deglaze the fond (brown stuff stuck to the bottom). Coat all sausage slices with sauce. Cook, stirring frequently, about 4 to 5 more minutes until the liquid is *almost* gone ("au sec") but still retains enough sauce to coat all the pieces. Stir to coat all the pieces and remove the pan from the stove and set it on a trivet.

Serving

You could just set the serving bowl on your reception table next to a cup of toothpicks and let people pick up the individual pieces themselves. Make sure there is at least one toothpick for every sausage slice. A better way to serve it as part of a tapas party is to skewer two or three pieces with a toothpick and lay out the skewers in rows on a large serving plate.

Tips and Tricks

If you don't live in Lodi, you can use Bruce Aidell's Cajun style andouille sausage, which is available most anywhere.

If you use a regular chorizo sausage, especially one from Spain, this recipe may not work. A lot of the authentic Spanish chorizo sausages need to first be marinated in red wine, then their casings must be removed before cooking the slices in the fry pan.

Cooking the sausage pieces to render the fat takes a good chunk of time away from your guests. If you have a large skillet or sauteuse pan, you can cook the sausage pieces together in one pan about an hour before your guests arrive. Remove the cooked sausage pieces to a bowl and cover with foil to keep them warm. Turn the stove off and cover the pan. When it is time to serve the Sausage Starter, heat the pan to just below medium heat. When it's hot, resume cooking the sausages by pouring them into the pan and adding the garlic and paprika (then continue with adding the wine, vinegar, and thyme and reducing the sauce). That way, you will only need to be away from your guests for about 8 minutes. If you are really in a time crunch and have a lot of guests, you can cook these before your guests arrive, stack the pieces on toothpicks, spread them out on baking pan, cover them with foil, and put them in an oven set on "warm." That should hold them for an hour or so.

Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes

Here's a little something to liven up your tapas party after the guests have all arrived and have tasted a couple of your amazing dishes. The acid in the tiny tomatoes combined with a nice tangy, salty Spanish olive tapenade perfect pairs with a Spanish style wines. The cream cheese filling complements the tapenade with a sweet and savory bite. Scooping out the insides of the tiny tomatoes is pretty tedious and takes some time, but you can prepare these the morning (or even the day) before your party. I've included recipes for two great, easy to make fillings. Note that **each filling recipe makes enough to fill all 30 tomatoes**, so you may need to adjust the quantities of ingredients depending on how many tomatoes you need.



Ingredients

10 ounce package of cherry tomatoes for each filling (about 30 tomatoes)

Olive Tapenade Filling

1/2 cup Spanish olives stuffed with pimiento
1-1/2 tsp capers, drained and dried
1 tsp brandy
1/4 tsp lemon zest
2 TBS Lodi olive oil

Cream Cheese Filling

1/2 cup Philadelphia cream cheese
4 TBS grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp dried parley flakes
1 TBS fresh dill, cut fine brunoise
1/2 tsp garlic powder
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1/4 tsp paprika

Remove and discard the stems from the tomatoes (if they have them) and wash the tomatoes. Using a serrated knife, cut a thin slice off the top and bottom of the tomato. You will see a membrane running across the tomato. Cut this membrane on both sides using a sharp knife. Gently rotate the end of the knife inside the tomato to loosen the pulp and seeds until they pop out, then discard them. Be careful to not cut the side of the tomato or punch through the bottom.



Turn the tomato upside down and cut a *very* thin slice off the bottom so that the tomato will set flat on the serving plate and roll around. Be careful not to cut through to the inside of the tomato. Set the hollow tomato upside down on a paper towel for 5 minutes to dry. Repeat for all tomatoes.

For the olive tapenade filling, cut the olives and capers into a fine brunoise. The finer you cut them, the easier it will be to fill the tomatoes. Add the brandy, lemon zest, and olive oil to the olive/caper mix in a small bowl and blend to a uniform consistency. Using a small teaspoon, fill each tomato with about a quarter teaspoon of filling. You may have to push the filling into the tomato then top with another 1/4 teaspoon or your finger.

For the cream cheese filling, mix all ingredients until they are a uniform consistency and put them into a zip-loc bag. Squeeze the mix to one bottom corner of the bag. Cut the corner off the bag, making about a 1/4 inch hole. Squeeze about a half teaspoon of mix into each tomato half.



Tips and Tricks

Buy the largest cherry tomatoes that you can find, but they still need to be bite-sized. Each stuffing recipe is enough to fill all the tomatoes in a 10 to 12 ounce pack (about 30 tomatoes).

When you first try to blend the cheeses, it may seem like they will not go together and there may be lots of crumbs in the bowl. Keep working the cream cheese with a fork and at some point everything will suddenly blend. When pushing the cheese mix out of the bag, you will need to constantly work the filling to the cut end of the bag so that there will be enough pressure to push the mix out the hole. Just keep practicing and you will get the hang of it.

The trick to this dish is to hollow out enough of a space for a full dollop of filling. You will probably need to practice on a carton of cherry tomatoes to get your technique. I have a small serrated knife (Mercer M23610) specifically designed for tomatoes, which makes all this precise cutting work much easier. Tomato knives are hard to find at stores, but you can order one online. I eat a lot of tomatoes so I use it all the time.

Chorizo and Manchego Montadito

A *montadito* is a Spanish open-faced sandwich or a small, bite-sized tapas-style snack that features a topping "mounted" on a piece of bread. Here is a quick and easy flavorful savory tapa that everyone will love. Boar's Head makes both the ingredients, uncured chorizo and Manchego cheese, which you can find at just about any grocery store. You can simply leave the meat off some of the montaditos to please your vegetarian guests.

Ingredients

2 6-ounces blocks of Boar's Head manchego cheese

8-ounce link of Boar's Head Superiore Chorizo Spanish Style Sausage

1 French baguette

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Cut the baguette into 1/3 inch thick pieces. Place the bread pieces on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. The bread should become crispy but not browned.

Cut the rinds off the cheese blocks and cut the cheese into approximately 1-inch by 3/4-inch pieces about 1/8-inch thick. Cut the sausage into 1/8-inch thick slices and cut each slice in half.

Lay a piece of cheese on each toasted bread piece and top with a piece of sausage. The cheese should just cover the bread piece and the sausage should be a little smaller than the cheese. Lay these out in a baking sheet and cover with foil.

When you are ready to serve, set the oven to broil and slide the baking sheet into the oven. Watch the montaditos while they are under the broiler to avoid burning them. Just cook until the tops of the sausage and cheese start to glisten and the cheese begins to melt (about 3 to 5 minutes).

Cabrales Cheese and Sherry Montadito

Here's a special treat for your guests if you want the authentic Spanish experience and are willing to pay extra for it. Cabrales is Spain's most famous, and famously pungent, blue cheese. It is made by local farmers in the Picos de Europa mountains of the Asturias region from a blend of raw cow, goat, and sheep milk. Then it's aged between 2 and 4 months in natural limestone caves. It's not injected with penicillin like other blue cheeses but rather develops its mold spores from the outside inward. Serving this cheese infused with sweet PX (Pedro Ximénez) sherry on a piece of toast will finish your tapas party like the final burst of fireworks on the fourth of July.

Ingredients

8 ounces Cabrales blue cheese
2 TBS Pedro Ximénez sherry
2 TBS fresh parsley, cut fine brunoise
1 French baguette

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Cut the baguette "on the bias" (at a 45 degree angle) into 1/3 inch thick pieces. Place the bread pieces on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. The bread should become crispy but not browned.

There are a couple of ways to divide the cheese, depending on what works best for you. One way is to put the cheese in a small mixing bowl and smash it with a fork until it is in crumbles. Slowly add the sherry while stirring and smashing the cheese to get the cheese and sherry evenly mixed. Scoop about 1 tablespoon of cheese mix on each piece of toast and garnish with a few parsley flakes. The cheese can be a pretty crumbly, so if it is too dry to mix, another method is to slice the cheese into thin rectangles the size of the baguette pieces, lay them out on a non-stick baking sheet, then drizzle with sherry and let it sit for about 5 minutes. Scoop each piece with a spatula and lay it on a piece of bread.

Serve the remaining sherry to pair with this montadito.

Tips and Tricks

Cabrales cheese is very difficult to find in America. Even Amazon.com doesn't really have any to speak of. My source, La Española Meats (Harbor City, California), ships it to you in quarters of a wheel, which are about 1-1/2 pounds each.

Beware. This tapas dish is not a budget recipe. It will set you back a C-note if you get a good quality PX sherry. However, you get a lot of cheese and sherry for the money, and this is a culinary experience you won't soon forget. I served it with Lustau Selecccion de Centenario Pedro Ximenez 'Murillo' Sherry. You also need to eat the cheese within a couple days of receiving it, so you can't keep nibbling over days or weeks. You might want to have one or two other Cabrales cheese dishes ready to make when you receive the cheese.

Chilly and humid conditions in the caves of the Catilla-León region in the Picos de Europa mountains facilitate the growth of bluish-green penicillium mould on this highly prized cheese. A finished Cabrales can be characterized by its strong, penetrating aroma and sharp, acidic, slightly salty taste. It pairs well with red wine, fresh figs, salami, sweet sherry and dry sausages. The cheese is treasured as a base for sauces, for melting over grilled or roasted meats and goes well along with baguette slices, crackers, or fruit. A traditional Cabrales used to be sold wrapped in moist leaves of *Acer pseudoplatanus*, but today regulation requires the cheese be sold in a dark-green-colored aluminum foil with the stamp of the PDO Queso de Cabrales.