

MR PORTER

[Designers](#) [Clothing](#) [Shoes](#) [Accessories](#) [Luxury Watches](#) [Gifts](#) [Grooming](#) [Sport](#) [Lifestyle](#)

[Home](#) > [The Journal](#) > [Daily](#)

THE DAILY

BITE-SIZED STYLE

THE WORLD'S BEST TAPAS

MAY 2018 WORDS BY MR BEN OLSEN

At first glance rustic and rooted in the past, Spain's proud tapas tradition has helped revolutionise our [restaurant](#) scene of late. A clear influence on the small-plate venues now dominating our cosmopolitan inner cities and beyond, the informal tasting and tipping at its heart centres around humble snacks served on bread (montaditos), on sticks (pintxos) or dished up on plates (raciones) that puts Spain's best regional fare within reach.

For the most part, tapas dishes have changed little over the years; a bulletproof roster of bite-size plates designed for sharing, although a handful of [chefs](#) daring enough to tamper with tradition have succeeded in creating their own high-end interpretations. From the classic to the contemporary, we've picked out five world-beating tapas dishes that fly the flag for Spanish cuisine around the world.

Uni panini at El Quinto Pino, New York

Among the authentic tapas served at this pint-sized bar in Chelsea, one dish in particular stands out. Pairing creamy sea urchin, melted butter and punchy mustard oil between a slice of ficelle loaf, the uni panini has acquired cult status among [New York's](#) culinary set. "It's an utterly unique signature that captures the tapas spirit but cannot be found elsewhere," says Ms Alex Rajj, who – alongside her husband and chef Mr Eder Montero – is setting the standard for tapas in the city. "The uni panini was inspired by Asturias," she says. "They eat urchins there but not like this. I wanted to use the ingredients to create an original dish that expressed the joy of the tapas tradition with a mix of luxury and accessibility."

elquintopinonyc.com

Molecular olive at Tickets, Barcelona

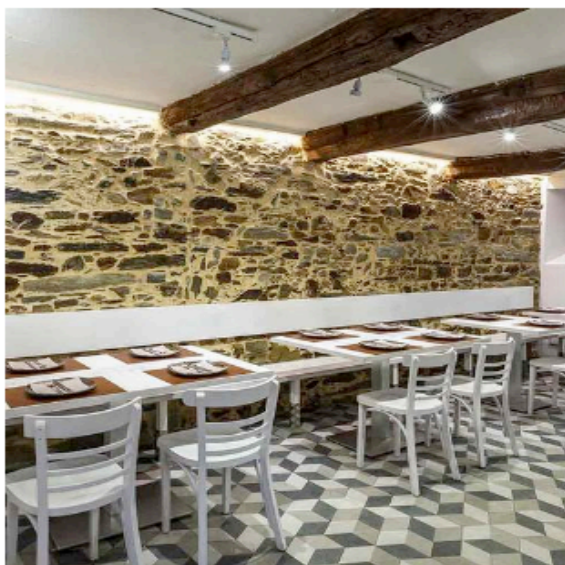


Photographs by Mr Pepo Segura, courtesy of Tickets

Mr Albert Adrià (little brother of El Bulli founder Mr Ferran Adrià) is keeping the family name true with Spain's most innovative take on tapas. With menus at Tickets favouring a deconstructed, molecular approach, Mr Adrià's modern methods have put a new perspective on traditional dishes and ingredients. "Perhaps the most popular choice at Tickets is the Olive-S," says Mr Adrià on a revolutionary dish that uses olive juice to create a solid green form via the spherification process made famous at El Bulli. "The olive is a hallmark of our country and this dish uses only olive juice – that's its magic," says Mr Adrià, "and without doubt it should be accompanied with a Jerez sherry."

ticketsbar.es

Tortilla at Meson O Pote, Betanzos, Spain

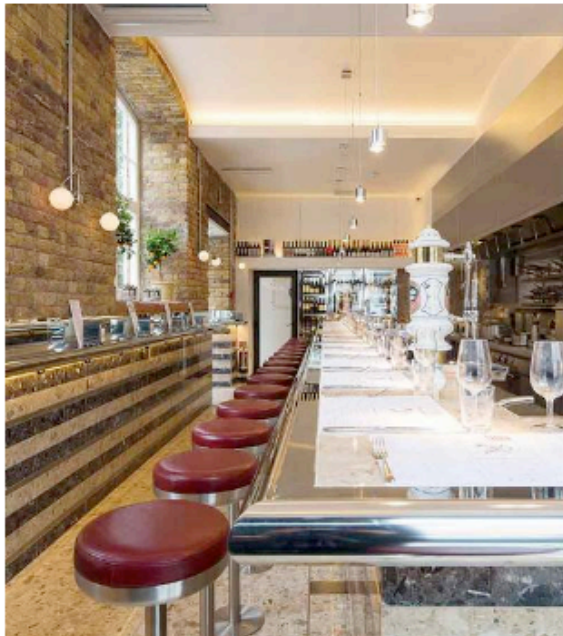


Photographs courtesy of Meson O Pote

A true source of national pride in Spain lies in its tortilla – the simple union of egg and potato in varying ratios that is celebrated at annual awards ceremonies. Last year’s champion was Meson O Pote from the Galician town of Betanzos – not something that head chef Mr Alberto Garcia Ponte takes lightly. “We’ve been making tortilla for 100 years and it was born from local ingredients during times of hardship,” he says. “Ours is special thanks to the care we take in choosing our ingredients while respecting the tradition of tortilla in the town. Tortilla from Betanzos must have a natural yellow colour on the outside and it should be very juicy inside. Cutting a piece should see yolk flood the plate.”

mesonopote.com

Croquetas at Barrafinna, London



Photographs by Mr Greg Funnell, courtesy of Barrafinna

A staple on any tapas menu worth its sal marina, the croqueta’s humble form – breaded and fried cylinders of béchamel – belies its mythical status with many Spanish households possessing their own, sometimes fiercely guarded, recipe. At London’s high-end Spanish chain Barrafinna, head chef Mr Angel Zapata Martin serves different varieties across his three restaurants. “They’re one of our most popular dishes,” says Mr Zapata Martin, who recommends ordering the croquetas alongside a Casa Mariol vermouth. “It’s that perfect mix of hot and crunchy outside and then unctuous and savoury inside,” he says of their appeal. “Breaking into a croqueta with a fork is one of life’s simple pleasures.”

barrafinna.co.uk

Roast octopus at Tagide, Lisbon



Photographs courtesy of Tagide

Spain's neighbours have an equally storied tapas tradition with Portugal's petisco menus influenced by the country's position bordering the Atlantic. Salt cod and clams feature prominently across the region, as does octopus. Try head chef Mr Gonçalo Costa's beautifully simple roasted octopus, which comes in a rich garlicky sauce with roast potatoes and spinach.

restaurantetagide.com

<https://www.mrporter.com/en-es/daily/the-worlds-best-tapas/3445>