

THE TAPAS TRAIL

Eating is a way of life in Spain, with a tempting array of tapas available in just about any bar. Now you can sample some of Iberia's finest dishes in a growing number of eateries closer to home. Patricia Langton takes a look at some of the capital's newest Spanish restaurants



Brindisa's larder, heads up the kitchen. The menu features cured meats and fish, regional Spanish cheeses, generous tapas such as carpaccio of cod or sea bream with morcilla (black pudding), and more substantial main courses served with minimum fuss. A well-chosen wine list encourages you to try some of Spain's more unusual grapes. This is a place to enjoy fine Spanish cuisine and not rush it.
7-9 Exhibition Road, SW7 2HQ, 020 7590 0008

TENDIDO CUATRO
A newcomer in 2008, Tendido Cuatro is the latest offering from Cambio de Tercio, which continues to please locals and homesick Spaniards in south west London.

A spacious, colourful restaurant, Tendido Cuatro takes its inspiration from Andalusia, with a brightly coloured interior and open bar/kitchen grill. Waiters dash back and forth with sizzling platters of familiar Spanish dishes cooked 'a la plancha' – garlicky king prawns, Ibérico pork, spicy chorizo and assorted vegetables. To drink, you can start with a glass of dry fino sherry and then select from an ample wine list helpfully

described by style.
108-110 New Kings Road, SW6 4LY, 020 7371 5147

BARRAFINA
Entering its third year, this Soho tapas bar has won a lot of fans thanks to great food, wine and atmosphere. You can select from a list of cold and hot tapas, and there's also a daily choice of tapas featuring fresh fish, meat and vegetables making up a tempting display on the back bar. Much of the food, including mini tortillas, is cooked before your eyes. There are seven sherries, ranging from manzanillas to PX, and a manageable and inspired choice of red and whites all available by the glass.
54 Frith Street, W1D 4SL, 020 7813 8016

IBERICA FOOD & CULTURE
Ibérica opened quietly in October 2008, with high-quality Spanish food and wine at its heart. Located in Fitzrovia, its main feature is an L-shaped bar flanked by tables. A restaurant area on the floor above seats 30.
Jamón is lined up by style and carved to order, but don't miss other great meat and fish tapas, including Galician

octopus and black rice with cuttle fish. The dessert menu is presented with sweet wine recommendations, including sherries. An adjoining delicatessen is full of goodies to take home.
195 Great Portland Street, W1 5PS, 020 7636 8650

CAMINO
The team behind this sizeable bar/restaurant in King's Cross seem to have covered all angles: you can have churros (long, thin doughnuts), tortilla or tarta de Santiago for breakfast, a substantial lunch or dinner, and tapas well into the evening. The wine list takes you right around the country and includes sherry, cava and dessert wines. Weekend lunchtimes are good for

families, and there are DJs and live music in the evenings.
3 Varnisher's Yard, Regent Quarter, N1 9AF, 020 7841 7330

PINCHITO
This corner of Shoreditch, near Old Street, reminds the owners of Pinchito Tapas of the El Born district of Barcelona, home to similar relaxed, unpretentious café bars.
Sizeable tortillas are the first thing to catch your eye as you select from the regular menu and around 10 'tapas del día' on the board. Friendly staff are on hand to explain the food and the wines, including seven sherries, white Albariño and Basque Chacolí wines, and reds from Toro, Montsant and Cadiz.
32 Featherstone Street, EC1Y 8XQ, 020 7490 0121

TRY TIO PEPE WITH TAPAS

Tio Pepe is one of the best-known dry fino sherries. This style of sherry is made from the Palomino grape and aged in large oak barrels under a layer of yeast which gives the wine its nutty, slightly yeasty and tangy character. Refreshingly dry and with a good depth of flavour, Tio Pepe is best enjoyed with food and always chilled. Try it with nuts – especially toasted almonds – olives, cured ham or canapés with smoked salmon and pâté. Keep a bottle in the fridge and enjoy it within a few days of opening. Tio Pepe can be found at most of London's Spanish restaurants and other restaurants with a good wine list. Tio Pepe is available in all good wine retailers for £8.50 (75cl). For more information visit www.tiopepe.co.uk.

Ten years ago the Spanish restaurant scene was hardly visible in the UK, but within five years it had become exciting and lately the choice has got even better, thanks to a flurry of openings. There are now great restaurants for tapas and full meals dotted around the capital and they pride themselves on fine cured meats, speciality cheeses, the freshest fish and imaginative desserts. Wine lists show similar attention to detail; at least five sherries is de rigueur, as well as

good cava and an eclectic choice of white, red and dessert wines. So, let's eat...

CASA BRINDISA
This sizeable bar/restaurant in South Kensington is the latest opening from Spanish food specialists Brindisa. It comes hot on the heels of the smaller Tierra Brindisa in Soho and the more established Tapas Brindisa at London Bridge.
José Pizarro, a chef who has extensive experience in sourcing good local UK produce and with direct access to

