

Spanish Import

Spain reigns at the dinner table

Recipe from the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

The setting: a table set stylishly with patterned plateware that stunningly highlights the Moorish influences of southern Spain.

To begin: Simple skewers created from high-end canned Spanish staples like white asparagus, olives and roasted peppers are an effortless starter. The bites pair superbly with a self-serve white-port punch loaded with early-season peaches and effervescent with Spanish sparkling wine.

Then it's on to a creamy white gazpacho made with almonds and grapes, and finger-friendly shrimp *a la plancha* served over toast slicked with saffron aioli. On the side is a delightfully pungent olive, chorizo and blue cheese salad.

Save the dishwashing for later, and instead spoon up apricots roasted in fortified wine and served with Marcona almonds, thick cream and a drizzle of honey.

The Menu

White Gazpacho

Olive-and-Chorizo Salad with Valdeón

Shrimp a la Plancha over Saffron Allioli Toasts

Roasted Apricots with Wine, Thick Cream and Marcona Almonds



Port Punch

Yield: Serves 4

Cook Time: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup Txakolí white wine (or other slightly effervescent and dry, unoaked white wine)

½ cup white grape juice

¼ cup white port

2 tablespoons peach brandy

½ cup club soda or seltzer water

1 lime, quartered

1 ripe peach--peeled, halved, pitted and chopped

4 mint sprigs

Ice

DIRECTIONS

1. In a pitcher or carafe, mix together the wine, grape juice, port and brandy. Top with the club soda. Squeeze the juice of the 4 lime quarters into the pitcher, then add the squeezed lime quarters to the pitcher.
2. Divide the peach pieces and mint sprigs among 4 punch glasses and serve the punch over ice.



White Gazpacho

Yield: Serves 4

Cook Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1¼ cups stale 1-inch bread cubes from 1 to 2 large slices day-old bread
2 cups ice water, plus extra for soaking bread
2 cups skinned almonds (preferably [unsalted Marcona almonds](#))
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
2 small garlic cloves, roughly chopped
½ medium shallot, roughly chopped
2½ cups green grapes, halved
¼ English cucumber, peeled and chopped
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons good-quality Spanish extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
2½ teaspoons sherry vinegar
1 teaspoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, submerge the bread in enough cold water to cover it; set aside for 10 minutes. Drain and then squeeze the extra water from the bread. Set aside.
2. Using a blender, purée the almonds, 2 cups ice water and the salt on high speed until smooth. Add the garlic and shallot and purée, then add 2¼ cups of the grapes, the cucumber and soaked bread and process until totally smooth.
3. With the blender running slowly, drizzle in the olive oil, adding just a little at a time to ensure that the soup emulsifies and is thick and creamy. Strain the soup through a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl. Stir in the sherry vinegar and lemon juice, taste and adjust the salt if needed. Divide the soup among 4 bowls and top with the remaining halved grapes. Drizzle with olive oil and serve.



Olive-and-Chorizo Salad with Valdeón (or Cabrales)

Yield: Serves 4

Cook Time: 7 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 bay leaf
½ pound cured [spicy Spanish chorizo](#) (not raw chorizo), sliced into ½-inch-thick rounds and then quartered
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon finely grated fresh lemon zest
2 celery stalks, trimmed and thinly sliced on a bias
1 cup pitted green olives (such as [Manzanilla](#)), thinly sliced
½ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley
2 ounces [Valdeón](#) or Cabrales cheese, crumbled

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium skillet set over medium heat, add the olive oil and bay leaf and cook for 1 minute.
2. Stir in the chorizo and cook until the chorizo is warmed through, about 5 minutes. Stir in the vinegar and lemon zest and cook until the vinegar is mostly absorbed and the lemon zest is fragrant, about 30 seconds more. Remove the pan from the heat and discard the bay leaf.
3. Stir in the celery, olives and parsley and stir to combine. Turn the chorizo mixture out into a serving bowl. Gently stir in the cheese and serve warm.



Shrimp a la Plancha over Saffron Allioli Toasts

Yield: Serves 4

Cook Time: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

Allioli

Large pinch saffron
2 large egg yolks
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, preferably Spanish
2 teaspoons lemon juice, plus more if needed

Shrimp

Four ½-inch-thick slices country bread
2 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil, preferably Spanish
1½ pounds jumbo 16/20-count peel-on shrimp
Kosher salt
2 lemons, halved
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ cup dry sherry
2 tablespoons roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Make the allioli: In a small skillet set over medium heat, toast the saffron until it is brittle, 15 to 30 seconds. Turn it out onto a small plate and use the back of a spoon to crush it. To a medium bowl, add the saffron, egg yolks, garlic and salt and vigorously whisk until well combined. Begin adding the olive oil a few drops at a time, whisking thoroughly between additions, until the allioli begins to thicken, then drizzle the remaining oil into the mixture in a very slow and steady stream, whisking the allioli until it is thick and creamy. Add the lemon juice, taste and adjust with more lemon juice and salt as needed. Transfer to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

2. Make the toasts: Adjust an oven rack to the uppermost position and the broiler to high. Place the bread slices on a rimmed baking sheet and brush both sides of the bread with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Toast the bread until golden-brown, about 45 seconds. Turn the bread over and toast the other side (watch the broiler closely, as broiler intensity varies), 30 to 45 seconds longer. Remove the bread from the oven and set each slice on a plate.

3. In a large bowl, place the shrimp. Use a paring knife to make a shallow slit down the curved back of the shrimp, removing the vein (if there is one) and leaving the shell intact. Heat a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat until nearly smoking, 1½ to 2 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of the oil and the shrimp. Sprinkle a good pinch of salt and the juice from half of a lemon over the shrimp and cook until the shrimp start to curl and the edges of the shell are browning, 2 to 3 minutes. Use tongs to turn the shrimp over, sprinkle with more salt and the juice from another lemon half and cook until the shrimp are bright pink, about 1 minute longer. Make a well in the center of the pan and stir in the garlic and black pepper; once the garlic is fragrant, after about 30 seconds, add the sherry, bring to a simmer and stir the garlic-sherry mixture into the shrimp. Cook, stirring and scraping the brown bits from the bottom of the pan into the sauce. Turn off the heat and squeeze in the juice of another lemon half. Slice the remaining lemon half into wedges.

4. Spread the top of each slice of bread with a generous spoonful of the saffron alloli. Divide the shrimp among the plates and pour some sauce over each serving. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with the lemon wedges.



Roasted Apricots with Wine, Thick Cream and Marcona Almonds

Yield: Serves 4

Cook Time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup fortified Spanish dessert wine (such as Pedro Ximénez)
- 8 small apricots, halved and pitted
- 2 tablespoons honey, plus more for serving
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 16 pieces
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1½ tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- ¼ cup store-bought fried and salted Marcona almonds, roughly chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°. In a medium-size baking dish, toss together the dessert wine and the apricots. Arrange the apricots cut side up and drizzle with the honey. Add 1 piece of butter to each cavity and sprinkle with the cinnamon. Bake the apricots, using a pastry brush to baste the apricots halfway through cooking, until a paring knife easily slips into their centers and the liquid is bubbling, about 30 minutes. Remove the apricots from the oven and set aside to cool slightly.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the heavy cream, vanilla extract and confectioners' sugar until soft peaks form.
3. To serve, divide the apricots among 4 serving bowls, top with whipped cream and sprinkle with the almonds and a drizzle of honey. Serve immediately.

