

Spanish culture

Nombres y apellidos españoles – Spanish names and surnames

An old tradition, which is becoming less common, is to name baby boys and girls after their grandparents. In that way a name could be carried on generation after generation, above all male names. But nowadays the name chosen is usually a more personal name for the new baby, following trends and even foreign names from films and programmes on TV or the movies.

Traditionally, the names chosen used to have a patron saint too, who is celebrated on the same day of the year, every year. Whoever is named after a patron saint celebrates their day with a name ay party called **día del santo** or **onomástica** similar to a birthday party, getting a nameday party as well as a birthday party.

The way Spanish people get their surnames is a bit complicated for those who are not familiar with it. Since married women do not get their husband's surnames, but they keep their own, the children of the couple would get as their first surname from Dad, and their second one from Mum. In that way, every one in Spain gets two surnames, giving only the first one to any children they have.

e.g. Juan Pastor Hernandez
Pastor is his father's surname
Hernandez is his mother's surname
So Pastor is his main surname and not a middle name.

His wife is Maria Pérez Hurtado
Their son would be Julio Pastor Pérez

Piñatas, diversion para celebraciones – Piñata, fun for celebrations

For a birthday party and name party, called **día del santo** or **onomástica**, the celebration is no different from a birthday party anywhere else, drinks, food, music, games and very often with a **piñata**.

A piñata is a Mexican traditional game for parties and has the shape of an animal (usually a bull or donkey) made of papier mâché and decorated with very colourful tissue paper. La piñata is empty to put sweeties or little presents inside. It would be hung from a ceiling or high place to be beaten with a stick, in turns by blindfolded party guests. The one who breaks la piñata gets the contents or shares them with the rest of the guests.

Fiestas y festejos – Festivals and folklore

Fiestas take place almost uninterruptedly in different places and at different times of the year, so the visitor will always get the chance to witness one of these magical, spectacular happenings that alter the daily routine of Spanish society.

Folklore is the expression of the most cherished and deeply felt emotions and folk wisdom of the Spanish people.

Almost all the different regions possess a rich store of dance and song which serves as inspiration for many a public performance.

Among the best-known examples of Spanish folk-dances are the Galician (from Galicia) **muñeira**, the Aragonese (from Aragón) and Valencian **jotas**, the Catalanian (from Cataluña) sardana and the Andalusian (from Andalucía) sevillanas.

El Carnaval – Carnival

This is the traditional time of amusement, **fiesta** and celebration before Lent.

In February, masks, **gigantes** (giant pasteboard figures), costumes, grotesques and devils are the central characters in Spain's first festivity of the year.

The more important day is **el Martes de Carnaval** (Shrove Tuesday), although during all of **el Carnaval** every day is una fiesta.

El Carnaval assumes an air of satire and buffoonery in Cádiz, with its **charangas** (bands of streets musicians) and explodes into a spectacle of dance and fireworks in Tenerife and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, which rival each other in and beauty.

El Carnaval finishes on **el miércoles de Ceniza** (Ash Wednesday) which marks the start of Lent – a time of fasting and privation.

La Feria – The Fair

Spring brings an explosion of light and brilliance in festivities like the classically Andalusian **la Feria de Abril en Sevilla** (April Fair in Seville).

Like in the most of the other **ferias** in Spain, at different times of the year, la Feria is a week given over to the local colour of the city's folklore and to unrestrained expression of joy and happiness.

Fiesta all day and night, with the colourful of the typical Andalusian dresses, the horses with their best garlands, the shows, the circus, tombolas, music, singing, **flamenco**, **sevillanas**, **tapas**, drinking and eating, bullfightings, people all around **el recinto ferial** (place where **la Feria** takes place) There's a great atmosphere everywhere.

La Semana Santa – Holy Week

Las Procesiones de Semana Santa (Easter Processions) are the main activities during **la Semana Santa**. The pointed hoods of **los penitentes** are very familiar across the country; so are **los pasos** (the huge floats carrying religious figures).

The figure of the Virgin Mary or Christ on each **paso** is elaborately dressed and jewelled as **las Cofradías** (guilds or brotherhoods) compete for the honour of the best-presented figure.

Los pasos are brought out by **los costaleros** (their bearers) from various churches in the city/town and their **procesiones** are accompanied by the band of music, which every **cofradía** has, walking through the streets to the churches from where they came out.

Las saetas (passionate songs) are sung by people watching **las procesiones** in the streets to stop **los pasos** at various places.

Las Fallas de Valencia – Valencian torches

Fire and gunpowder take centre stage in March. Valencia celebrates its traditional **fallas** during the week leading up to St. Joseph's Day, bringing to the fore all the ingenuity, hullabaloo and passion which this universally famous celebration implies, in the climactic burning of the **ninots** (the satirical papier mâché effigies).

Los Sanfermines – Fiesta of San Fermín

July is the month of **los Sanfermines** in Pamplona. San Fermín (son of a Roman senator and first bishop of Pamplona) is the patron saint of Pamplona and the town holds a fiesta in his honour on 7 July. The festival dates back to 1324. For a whole week there are parades in the streets and music, including huge papier-mâché figures supported by dancers, called **gigantes** (giants). These represent kings and queens. There are also **cabezudos**, large headed figures in military hats. Most Spanish towns hold a similar fiesta for their patron saint's day.

Pamplona is famous for **los encierros** (running of the bulls). Each morning, very early, **los toros** (the bulls) are let loose and are led by people through the principal streets to the bull-ring. Traditionally young men who wish to show their courage, run in front of **los toros** trying to keep ahead of them and avoid being trampled. Although safety rails are erected to keep **los toros** to the route, someone is usually injured during the event. Once into the bullring, the bulls are kept to the evening when the bullfighting will be held by **los toreros** (bullfighters)

El día de los Difuntos – All Souls’ Day

The 1st of November is the day when cemeteries become alive with hundreds of people going there to visit their beloved ones. They bring flowers, candles and tidy the place to let them know they do not forget them.

At home, at night time, people light special candles, one for every person in the family who is no longer with them. Those candles are lit in a bowl filled with water and oil so they last all night through to the next morning.

La Navidad en España – Christmas in Spain

In Spain, the Christmas holiday season is full of the usual Christmas festivities. The more common traditions include incredibly elaborate **Nacimiento** (nativity scenes). They are laid out on tables at home, in doorways and the entrances to houses, in shop windows and in shopping centres.

Christmas trees and lovely Christmas markets are seen in villages and cities with arrangements of fruits, flowers, marzipan and other sweets, candles, decorations and hand-made Christmas gifts. There are lots of special Christmas sweets. **El turrón** (nougat) is essential. This almond-based tablet traditionally comes in two versions: **duro** (hard) with whole almonds in a paste of sugar, honey and egg white, and **blando** (soft) where the ingredients are ground together. **Las figuras de mazapán** (marzipan figurines) are also popular, together with **los polvorones**, soft crumbly cakes made with lard, flour and cinnamon. Nuts and dried fruits have an important place too.

22 de Diciembre

This is a special day for two reasons, school holidays start for students and pupils and **la Lotería de Navidad**, the Christmas lottery is played from very early in the morning. Every one waits impatiently, at home watching T.V. or at work listening to the radio for the winning number to be announced. That can take a few hours. This **Lotería**, by far the biggest in Spain, is a tradition practised by many people who long to win the grand prize, which would make them instantly rich. This tradition dates back to 1763 and now is the symbolic moment in which Spanish people begin to celebrate the Christmas holidays **las vacaciones de Navidad**.

24 de Diciembre

The Christmas Eve is an important family celebration in Spain with a big meal prepared to share with all the family. They sing carols, playing typical Christmas instruments and have a jolly time. The main meal takes place on **la Nochebuena** and consists of a major dish of cold meats (**chorizo, jamón Serrano, lomo, salchichón, salami**) and seafood as starters. The main course consists of **carne** (meat) such as **cordero** (lamb), **pavo** (turkey), **cerdo** (pork) or **pescado** (fish) such as **bacalao** (cod), **salmon** (salmon), **trucha** (trout), **marisco** (shellfish). **Sidra y champán** (cider with champagne) would be the chosen drink for the Christmas toast though plenty of fine Spanish wines are consumed with the meal.

The Christmas Eve gaiety is interrupted at midnight by the ringing of bells calling families to **La Misa del Gallo** (Midnight Mass).

Papá Noel, Father Christmas is well-known and he delivers toys and presents on Christmas Eve, but the real stars are **los Tres Reyes Magos**, the 3 Wise Men.

25 de Diciembre

In the morning, children and grown-ups open their presents left by **Papá Noel**, having all day to enjoy them in peace.

El día de Navidad Christmas Day is a national holiday so shops are closed, yet it is not a day of great celebration but rather a quiet day when people go out for a walk, drop into a bar for a few drinks, visit family and friends. It is becoming more common to see families eating out for lunch on the afternoon of Christmas Day.

28 de Diciembre

El día de los Santos Inocentes Innocents' Day

On the 28th of December is when the Catholic Church in Spain commemorates the story of the King Herod's slaughter of the innocent children of Judea.

Like April Fool's Day in Britain, Spanish people play **inocentadas** (practical jokes) on each other.

A typical example is sticking **un monigote** (a cut-out paper figure) with a pat on someone's back when they are greeted. Whenever someone falls for **una broma** (a trick), the practical joker cries out '**¡inocente, inocente!**'.

Newspapers and radio stations, however, can play more serious jokes on people, like their favourite football team has lost or won.

31 de Diciembre

La Nochevieja New Year's Eve is a big celebration all over the country with streets parties and special nights in hotels and clubs everywhere. Until midnight people tend to stay at home to have dinner with the family and on the stroke of midnight it is the tradition to eat **las doce uvas de la suerte**, the 12 grapes of luck. **Las uvas de la suerte** are essential on New Year's Eve, a tradition introduced in the early 20th century. It is said to bring **Buena suerte** good luck if eaten at each stroke of the 12 bells at midnight (12 seconds before el Año Nuevo).

In Madrid and other main cities revellers congregate in the main square and eat the grapes along with **sidra** or **champán** to celebrate the entry of the New year, then head out into the night until day has broken.

5 de Enero

The best-loved tradition among children during Spanish Christmas is **los Tres Reyes** - the 3 wise men. These **Tres Reyes** are the ones who followed a star to meet the new **Rey de Reyes** (King of Kings) and offered him **tres regalos** 3 gifts: **oro** (gold), **incienso** (frankincense) **y mirra** (and myrrh) to **El Niño Jesús en Belén** (baby Jesus of Bethelam).

When **Diciembre** comes, all the children start to write their letters to **los Reyes Magos** or one of their favourite **Rey: Melchor, Gaspar or Baltasar**. They write about the things they would like to receive on the morning of **el 6 de Enero**, and also about their behaviour during they year. There are **cabalgades** all over Spain this evening, where sweets are thrown from the floats to all people who come out to watch. Before going to bed, children place their shoes in a visible spot in the house, under a window or near a balcony in the hope that **los Reyes magos** will fill them with gifts.

6 de Enero

On the morning of **el 6 de enero**, children and adults find their regalos inside and outside the shoes. If someone behaved badly during the year, **los Reyes Magos** will bring **carbon** (coal carbones), although nowadays nobody seems to misbehave as every one gets a present. For breakfast or after lunch, families often have the typical dessert of the day, **el Roscón de Reyes**, a large ring shaped cake that is decorated with candied fruits, symbolic of the emeralds and rubies that adorned the robes **of los Tres Reyes**. Somewhere inside the cake is a surprise and the person to find it will be crowned **rey** or **reina** king or queen for the rest of the day.

Recetas de cocina – Recipes

Tortilla española – Spanish omelette

Ingredientes: Ingredients:

Huevos	5 eggs
Patatas	450 g potatoes, sliced
Cebolla	1 onion, chopped
Aceite de oliva	6 tablespoons olive oil
Sal	Salt

Heat oil in a large, heavy frying pan, preferably non-stick. Add potatoes, cook over a low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add onion and cook for 10 minutes more, until soft but not brown, stirring occasionally.

Drain off and reserve oil. In a bowl, beat eggs. Wipe pan with absorbent kitchen paper. Add sufficient reserved oil to cover base in a thin film. Add the potatoes and onion, heat for 2 minutes and then, add egg mixture, spreading it evenly in pan. Cook over moderate heat, shaking pan occasionally, until underside is set and beginning to brown.

Cover pan with a large plate and hold in place with one hand. Quickly turn pan upside down so omelette falls onto plate. Return pan to heat, add a little more oil, then slide omelette into pan, cooked side uppermost. Cook until lightly browned underneath. Slide onto a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Paella

Ingredientes: Ingredients:

Pollo	1 kg chicken, cut into small pieces
Cebolla	1 onion, chopped
Ajo	3 cloves garlic, chopped
Tomates	3 big red tomatoes, peeled and chopped
Zanahorias	4 small carrots, sliced
Guisantes	1 small tin of peas
Arroz	350 g risotto rice
Caldo de pollo	1.75 litres/3 pints boiling chicken stock
Aceite de oliva	4 tablespoon olive oil
Pimenton dulce	1 tablespoon paprika
Azafran	Large pinch saffron threads, finely crushed
Sal	Salt
Pimienta	Ground black pepper

Heat oil in a 40 cm paellera or 4 litre wide shallow casserole pan. Add chicken and cook for about 10 minutes until lightly browned.

Put in a plate and add onion, garlic and tomatoes to the casserole. Fry for 5 minutes, then stir in paprika followed by rice. Stir for 2-3 minutes.

Add chicken and carrots into casserole with pepper, stir, add stock. Dissolve saffron in 2 tablespoons stock, then add to paella. Boil for 8-10 minutes.

Add peas. Gradually turn down heat and simmer for 8-10 minutes until rice is tender and liquid absorbed. Cover, remove from heat and leave for 5-10 minutes.

Gazpacho

Ingredientes:	Ingredients:	
Tomates rojos	750 g beefsteak red, soft	tomatoes
Pimiento verde	1 green pepper, chopped	
Ajos	2 cloves garlic, chopped	
Pepino	1 whole cucumber	
Pan	2 slices firm white bread, crusts removed, broken into pieces	
Aceite de oliva	3 tablespoons olive oil	
Vinagre	2 tablespoons brown	vinegar
Cubitos de hielo	Ice cubes, to serve	

Peel and chop tomatoes and half cucumber. Put in a food processor or blender with the remaining ingredients, except ice cubes. Mix until smooth.

Pour soup through a nylon sieve (but not necessary), pressing down well on contents of sieve. If necessary, thin soup with cold water, then chill well. Dice the other half of cucumber, without peeling. Adjust seasoning of soup, if necessary, then pour into cold soup bowls. Add ice cubes and serve with diced cucumber.

Sangria

Ingredientes:	Ingredients:
Vino tinto frio	1 bottle red wine, chilled
Cascara de naranja	2 strips orange peel
Cascara de limon	2 strips lemon peel
Zumo de naranja	Juice 4 oranges
Zumo de limon	Juice 2 lemons
Azucar	2 tablespoons caster sugar
Gaseosa fria	3 cups soda water, chilled
Menta	Mint sprigs
Trozos de naranja y limon	Orange and lemon slices
Cubitos de hielo	6-8 ice cubes

Put ice cubes in a large cold bowl, pour in the wine and add strips orange and lemon peel.

Put orange juice in a small bowl, add sugar and stir until sugar dissolves. Stir into wine with lemon juice. Top up with soda water.

Pour into a large, cold serving jug. Decorate with mint springs and orange lemon slices