



The classic made-from-leftovers stew known as *ropa vieja* usually consists of shredded beef or chicken, chickpeas, tomato sauce and boiled potatoes. However, like any good improvised dish, the recipe can vary depending on who's making it.

An Island to be Savoured

THE TRADITIONAL CANARIAN CUISINE OF **TENERIFE** IS SURE TO PIQUE YOUR PALATE. | BY LUCY CORNE

At first glance, Tenerife's appeal seems obvious — wide beaches and year-round sun. A second look reveals hiking trails through pine forests or down steep ravines, boat trips to view dolphins and coastal cliffs and, of course, the allure of the omnipresent peak of Spain's highest mountain, El Teide, towering over it all. But a bit more exploration will establish that the island's culinary charm is as varied as its geographical appeal. Beyond the pan-European cuisine often found along the coast, and the classic Spanish dishes served in many city restaurants, is a menu of traditional Canarian eats waiting to be devoured.



Diners at Restaurante Los Abrigos enjoy fresh seafood with a panorama of the sea and the moored fishing boats that delivered their catch earlier in the day.

THE MAIN COURSE

Canarian cuisine was borne of hardship, as the climate does not go hand in hand with abundance. But the simple dishes are seasoned and spiced to create rustic, often hearty plates that are as much a part of local culture as a trip to the beach. Ubiquitous on the lunchtime table are *papas arrugadas* (wrinkled potatoes): new potatoes, boiled whole, traditionally in something that is not lacking in the Canaries — seawater. These days, generously salted water replaces the oceanic kind, the end result being a perfectly seasoned and delightfully wrinkled potato, usually served with a side of *mojo rojo*. This nicely spiced red sauce features paprika, garlic, chilli and olive oil, and makes for a must-have souvenir. You'll also encounter *mojo verde*, a coriander-based sauce most often used as an accompaniment to fish. Seafood, particularly *bacalao* (salted cod) and *vieja* (parrot fish), is found everywhere, but in a region lacking in pastures, land-based proteins are less common in traditional cuisine. Instead of beef, lamb or pork, the meats are more often rabbit and, above all, goat.

Despite the warm climate, a tradition of soups and stews persists. At the top of your must-taste list should be *ropa vieja*, a quintessential Canarian dish that transforms leftovers into a no-two-recipes-are-the-same stew, featuring shredded meat, chickpeas and whatever happens to be in the fridge. But the most Canarian food of all is one that's referred to as "the bread of the Canaries", *gofio*. A blend of ground, roasted grains, *gofio* is certainly an acquired taste, and one that was acquired by the islands' indigenous inhabitants long before the Spanish conquistadors arrived. It's served at all times of day — with milk at breakfast, blended with water to make a side dish or added to thicken a fish stew. If nothing else, seek out gooey *gofio* sweets at the farmers market in the capital, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, or at the markets in Adeje, San Cristóbal de La Laguna or Tacoronte.

Little Fish, Big Fish

The *chicharro*, a type of mackerel, plays an important role in Tenerife culture. Not only is it munched on as a popular tapas dish, but the fish lends its name as a slang term for the islanders: Chicharreros. There are songs written about these sea creatures and, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, you'll even find a sculpture of the beloved fish leaping out of the waves.

Traditional Restaurants

Find classic dishes at these Canarian eateries:

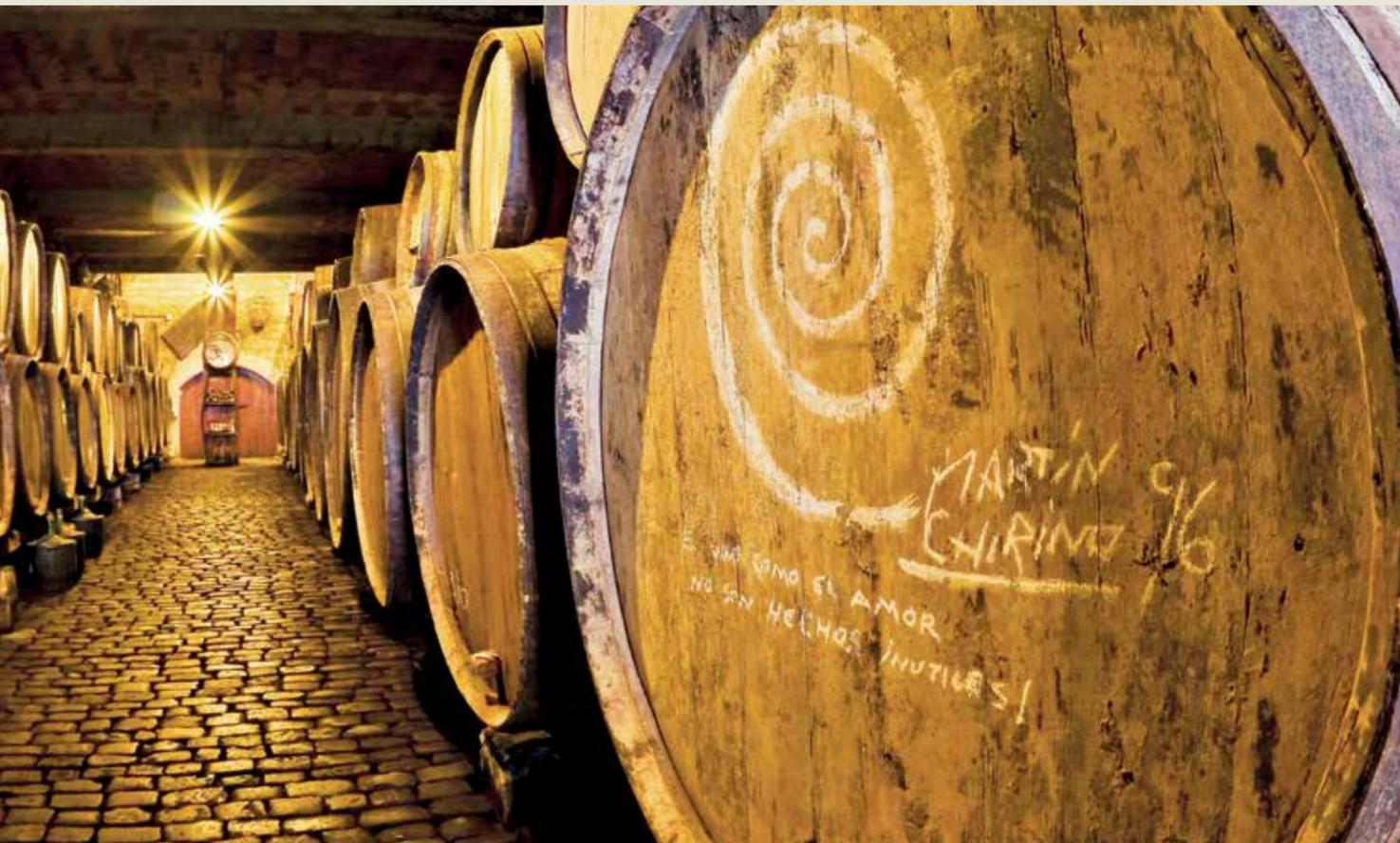
- **Bodeguita Canaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife:** This long-running restaurant is a favourite amongst locals and visitors alike. Traditional Spanish dishes are served alongside Canarian classics, such as *ropa vieja*.
- **La Hierbita, Santa Cruz de Tenerife:** The building might be old — it was the city's first licenced restaurant back in 1893 — but the menu offers a fresh, modern take on Canarian cuisine.
- **Tasca El Tonique, San Cristóbal de La Laguna:** You'll find plenty of mainland dishes on the menu here, but the banquet is best polished off with a local dessert, such as *gofio mousse* or *bienmesabe* (honey custard).
- **Tito's Bodeguita, Puerto de la Cruz:** Enjoy creative tapas and friendly service on the shady patio.
- **El Sombrero, Vilaflor:** It's far from fancy, but if you're looking for a perfect plate of *papas* and a fine example of *mojo*, this small-town joint is just the ticket.



A beautifully restored 17th-century hacienda houses Tenerife's wine museum, known as la Casa del Vino La Baranda. Inquisitive guests can learn about the island's viticulture and, of course, taste.

Presidential Wines

The tiny town of Taganana in Tenerife's north-eastern corner is best known locally for its superlative hiking and its potent blackberry wine. But in 2014, another local vino got an unexpected boost when former US President Barack Obama selected a bottle of Táganan — a white wine hailing from Tenerife — while dining in a New York restaurant.



The fifth generation of winemakers at Bodegas Monje family winery still uses classic oak casks for the ageing process.



Salty papas arrugadas, paired with a slightly spicy red sauce or a refreshing green one, are a quintessential Canarian dish.

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THE BEVERAGE LIST

You're on holiday, so it's possible that you might fancy the odd tittle with dinner — or lunch. Luckily, the Canarians are partial to a sip here and there, too, and whether you're into wine, beer or spirits, there's a glass of locally produced nectar with your name on it. Tenerife's lagers, Dorada and Reina, go a long way towards slaking thirst in the Canarian heat, but they're not the only beers on offer. Craft beer culture is awakening on the island, with one rising star, Tierra de Perros, an eco-friendly brewery in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

If you fancy something that gives a little extra kick, island rum is the order of the day. You'll likely encounter a *chupito* (shot) of honey rum if you dine at a resort restaurant. The digestif, called *ron miel*, is commonly served at the end of a meal in more tourist-friendly establishments. Aged rum is blended with local honey to create a smooth drink that goes down easily after a plate of gofio or pairs quite perfectly with sweets or pudding. It's not the kind of beverage you order a few of, though. For that, perhaps turn to the golden rum of local distillery Guajiro. Served over ice or mixed with a splash of Coca-Cola, golden rum is pretty much the classic Canarian drink.

Wine is also a standard on the Canarian dinner table. Vines have been grown around the Canaries for centuries, and there are several wineries dotted across Tenerife. The best place to begin is the marvellous Casa del Vino La Baranda in El Sauzal, near

Tacoronte. Following a walk through the island's viticultural history in the small museum, settle in to try the local vintages. The tasting menu changes regularly, but always features about a dozen wines sourced from across Tenerife. Sniff, swirl, sip and spit as you learn about the local wine industry and nibble on plates of dried fruit, nuts and cheese from surrounding farms. Next door, Casa de la Miel details local honey production, with all manner of honeyed goodies on sale in the shop. El Sauzal is wine country, so if you haven't had your fill of vino already, try Bodegas Monje, established in the 1950s and offering a rather unusual range of wines aged on the ocean floor, as well as more familiar tipples.

DESSERT

Canarian folk are notorious within Spain for their sweet tooth, and there's no better way to indulge than with a bowl of *bienmesabe*. With a name that literally translates to "it tastes good to me", you know you're in for a treat. The gooey pud features honey, almonds, egg yolks and a generous dose of sugar, and is sometimes served as a sauce — delicious over ice cream. Honey and almonds play heavily in Tenerife's biscuits and cakes, which you can often find in the island's farmers markets. Perhaps the best place of all to taste the traditional sweet treats though, is in pretty Vilaflor, known for its long-standing bakery, Dulcería Vilaflor. ■

Lucy Corne is a freelance writer who fell in love with the Canary Islands on a summer holiday and ended up living there for four years. She has travelled extensively, but pops back to the Canaries for a plate of papas arrugadas now and then. Read more of Lucy's work on her website, lucycorne.com.

Eduardo Grund/age fotostock; Lucy Corne

AREA RESORT



CLC Paradise (PDI)

Located on a hilltop commanding panoramic views, the resort has spacious private balconies that make the most of an area renowned for its delightful scenery. Parents can relax while youngsters participate in a programme of activities and swim in a children's pool. Just a short drive away, visitors can explore the marina at Puerto Colón and the offerings of Playa de las Américas, including duty-free shopping.

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