

## La Ruta PDX: Spanish Cuisine Fest in Portland

*“Las penas con pan son menos,”* is a common Spanish saying that translates as, “Sadness with bread is less,” or “Sorrows with bread are lessened.” With an abundance of bread and other delicacies at La Ruta PDX, the gastronomic food festival centered on Spanish cuisine, there was no room for sorrow.

The timing couldn't have been better; Portland had just enjoyed a week of festivities after being selected the U.S. site of Spain's [World Tapas Day](#). Many of the Spanish chefs stayed on for La Ruta PDX 2017.

The festival was held over four days at sites throughout Portland, Oregon and included film screenings, wine, sherry and *sidra* (Spanish cider) seminars, a trade show, and chef dinners hosted by Portland and Spanish chefs. The final event was held outdoors at Director Park in downtown Portland, providing an afternoon of fabulous bites from 19 restaurants and artisan producers, and sips from Spanish and Oregon breweries, wineries, and cideries.

Add live entertainment, including flamenco from Espacio Flamenco, chef panels, and more, and you've got the makings of a vibrant addition to Portland's food and festival culture.





## **The Bites**

With as many participants as there were for this event, I just can't showcase them all. There truly wasn't a dish presented that I wouldn't be pleased to order in a restaurant or learn to make at home. The chefs were prepared for the crowd and provided a steady stream of food and conversation.

New Jersey-based Importers Forever Cheese showcased products from Mitica, and Culinary Collective showcased products from Aneto and Matiz España. You won't go wrong with any of these Spanish food products at home. Their products can be found online and in stores around the country.



Pollo Bravo's Josh Scofield shared a Catalan *butifarra* sausage *bocadillo* with romesco, *queso de cabra*, and fried onions. As good as the sausage was, the crisp-fried onions made the dish extra special. ¡Delicioso!

Someone had to do it, and Grassa's Rick Gencarelli was up to the challenge—he roasted a whole



pig and served it with sherried corn and pickled peaches.

Olympia Provisions' Eric Joppe made a refreshing cold cucumber and almond soup with chorizo, preserved lime and yogurt.



Marché's Rocky Maselli shared a citrus-cured anchovy crudo, and Kachka's Bonnie Morales fried

up savory salt cod *croquetas*, garnished with red pepper, pea tendrils and a saffron-sunflower mayo.





I loved the Sephardic lamb hand pies from Mediterranean Exploration Company's Kasey Mills. He made these on-site and cooked them in a wood-fired travel oven.





Toro Bravo's Pat Manning prepared a wonderful tender octopus *mollete*. And I'll admit I made a second pass at Alma Chocolate's booth. They're one of Portland's best artisan chocolatiers.







Chop cooked fresh mini-coils of chorizo on an outdoor grill.

Carlo Lamagna (R) of Twisted Filipino and Clyde Common prepared a tender and flavorful pork collar adobo.



Philippe Boulot from Multnomah Athletic Club put out a wonderful display of mussels, served with a crisp mussels remoulade.





Biwa and Parasol does small Japanese-fusion plates, and shared a tasty *escabeche*-like lightly fried mackerel soaked in sweet vinegar, with vegetables.

Good paella was a must, and Scott and Emily Ketterman's catering company, Crown Paella, did a lovely job preparing a seafood paella on-site. Crown Paella specializes in Spanish paella and tapas—talk about perfect placement.





## Libations

On a comfortably warm summer day, great beverages, alcoholic and non- were a must, and the festival had a line-up for any palette.

Oregon's Gilgamesh Brewing brought a lemon lager that paired well with many of the food offerings. Roseburg, Oregon's Abacela Wines brought some of their excellent wine. One of my favorite Portland cideries was on hand as well; Reverend Nat's brought along Sidra Bravo.



James Asbel of Ciders of Spain, a Portland-based distributorship dedicated exclusively to Spanish sidras, brought along a selection from his portfolio. With 40 years of experience in the industry, I was more than happy to take his lead through the tasting. Yes, he “threw” a cider for me, and yes, I drank the small glass immediately in one fell swoop. My favorite was the Fanjul, a traditional, wild-yeast, unfiltered cider that had all the wonderfully rich sour and funky flavors I was looking for. The three ciders from Angelón also represented Spanish ciders well.

Years ago, I went through a “sherry phase,” but after sampling the various Spanish sherries Toni



Ketrenos from Winebow Group brought along, I'm due for another look.

Reps from a host of additional wine distributorships, including Estelle Imports, shared Spanish wines—and their extensive knowledge.

### **Entertainment: Live Music, Flamenco and Chef Panels**

No matter how great the food and drink is, a festival needs live entertainment—and there was plenty on hand. Pepe Raphael donned his flashy style and great smile, and led a talented group of young musicians from My Voice Music in song. Espacio Flamenco held the crowd in rapt attention with dramatic and skilled performances. The family-friendly event also included face painting for the kids and a flamenco class.

Luke Burbank from *Live Wire* led a panel of some of the traveling Spanish chefs, including Chef Ambassador, Mikel De Luis, as well as Spanish Journalist, Alex Cardona and Toro Bravo's John Gorman. Hearing their impressions of their visit to Portland, especially after having had the chance to chat with members of this merry group, was a great way to say good-bye—for now. It's clear relationships were made between these chefs and there will be more collaborations in the future.



## About La Ruta PDX 2017

La Ruta PDX is the brainchild of John and Renee Gorman. The two co-own Toro Bravo, Inc., the restaurant, events and design group, which includes some of the Portland's best restaurants. The Portland Kitchen was chosen to benefit from the event.

John, also Executive Chef for the company said, "Renee and I talked about organizing a festival like this, and she said, 'That's a good thing to do, maybe in a year or two.' Months later...well, we ended up making it happen a lot sooner."

In its first year, the festival was well-organized and well-received (most events sold out). The plan is make the fest an annual event, and I've no doubt it can become a mainstay in the city's gourmet food offerings.

Portland loves Spain and with the enthusiasm the city is showing for all things Spanish, Spain is no doubt feeling that love!

## For More:

- La Ruta PDX: A Gastronomic Festival, [www.larutapdx.com/tastes-of-spain](http://www.larutapdx.com/tastes-of-spain)
- Espacio Flamenco, [www.espacioflamencopdx.com](http://www.espacioflamencopdx.com)
- Toro Bravo, Inc., [torobravoinc.com/](http://torobravoinc.com/)
- Portland Kitchen, [www.theportlandkitchen.org/](http://www.theportlandkitchen.org/)
- Spanish Tourism Board, [spain.info](http://spain.info)

## The Food:

- Alma Chocolate, [www.almachocolate.com/](http://www.almachocolate.com/)
- Culinary Collective, [www.matizespana.com/](http://www.matizespana.com/)
- Forever Cheese, <http://forevercheese.com/>
- Biwa and Parasol, [www.biwaandparasol.com/](http://www.biwaandparasol.com/)
- Kachka, <http://kachkapdx.com/>
- Grassa, <http://grassapdx.com/>
- Marché, <https://marcherestaurant.com/>
- Pollo Bravo, [www.pollobravopdx.com/](http://www.pollobravopdx.com/)
- Olympia Provisions, [www.olympiaprovisions.com/](http://www.olympiaprovisions.com/)
- Mediterranean Exploration Company, [www.mediterraneanexplorationcompany.com/](http://www.mediterraneanexplorationcompany.com/)
- Toro Bravo, [www.torobravopdx.com/](http://www.torobravopdx.com/)
- Twisted Filipino, [www.facebook.com/events/](https://www.facebook.com/events/)
- Chop, <http://chopbutchery.com/>
- Multnomah Athletic Club, <https://themac.com/dining>
- Crown Paella, [www.crownpaella.com/](http://www.crownpaella.com/)

## The Libations:

- Estelle Imports, [www.estelleimports.com/](http://www.estelleimports.com/)
- Ciders of Spain, [www.cidersofspain.com/](http://www.cidersofspain.com/)
- Abacela Wines, [www.abacela.com/](http://www.abacela.com/)
- Bodega Roda, <http://roda.es/en/the-winery/>
- Winebow Group, [www.thewinebowgroup.com/our-companies/](http://www.thewinebowgroup.com/our-companies/)
- Gilgamesh Brewing, [www.gilgameshbrewing.com/](http://www.gilgameshbrewing.com/)
- Reverend Nat's Hard Cider, <http://reverendnatshardcider.com/>

*-All photos by Nancy Zaffaro.*