

From city to suburbs on the Tapas trail

Samuel Spurr

Walking south along George Street and then turning right into Liverpool Street, it is hard not to notice you are in Sydney's Spanish heart. Lining this street and the adjacent Kent Street are Spanish restaurants, tapas bars and famous of all institutions, The Spanish Club.

This Spanish 'Quarter' comes alive with the advent of the World Cup or La Liga Finals, as a beacon to people hailing from Valencia to Madrid, Barcelona to Malaga. Whether it's the Spanish rhythm attracting revellers or the glorious food, this pocket of Sydney's CBD is authentically Spanish and warmly welcomes old friends and new to its footpaths.

Just as the 'Calles' lead from Puerta Del Sol outwards into Madrid, so too has the Spanish Quarter stretched its arms out into Sydney suburbs. Spanish cuisine, offering infamous dishes such as tapas and paella can be found nestled amongst suburban restaurant strips.

Ana Martin, co-owner of Muse Café in Summer Hill, provides an opportunity to sample traditional

Spanish dishes including tapas. Succulent lemon-garlic mushrooms, grilled chorizo and spicy potatoes await in her warm, cosy café.

Ana, originally from Spain, has a regular crowd of clients at the café and notes the social aspect of tapas as one of the reasons it is so popular.

"People are able to share meals and try a variety of simple dishes that are full of flavour," says Ana.

The history of tapas is vague and mysterious whilst the ritual of tapas is hazy at best. Just as every town in Australia is accustomed to having at least one local pub, so to does Spain have its 'local', a tapas bar, where friends can meet and converse. These tapas bars or 'Tascas' as the Spanish refer to them, allow for the indulgence in tapas and the opportunity to meet and catch up. Meaning 'cover' or 'lid' in Spanish, the word 'tapa', as the story goes, refers to the old habit of covering one's beverage with a slice of bread or piece of ham.

Ana points out that a tapas menu can be very diverse, admitting from her own experiences that many traditional recipes don't always tempt Aussie tastebuds and are



quickly wiped from the specials board.

For those unfamiliar to the tapas of España you can expect dishes created from cheeses, olives,

traditional meats, seafood and potato.

Serving a similar purpose as the siesta in Latin countries, this tasty cuisine allows for the regeneration

of weary spirits and the rekindling of old friendships. Adding the perfect mix of food and drink makes a tapas experience absolutely 'delicioso!'