



It was the bit of Spain I'd always wanted to visit – and now the Costa de la Luz is the place I most want to return to. The stretch of


Atlantic coast from Portugal to the Strait of Gibraltar, it's a hallowed spot for seafood geeks like me, with celebrated langoustines and even-more-celebrated bluefin tuna. (Each May, following ancient tradition, fishermen set up a labyrinth of nets, the almadraba, to catch tuna migrating to the Mediterranean.) The area is also home to the Sherry Triangle – the three towns where the drink has been made for centuries.

In lockdown, flicking through the pics, my family relived last year's trip several times: our small son catching his first wave in a surf lesson (watersports are big on this wild 'n' windy, golden-sand coastline); mummy and daddy looking comically flushed at an 11am sherry tasting... If we get to go back, perhaps we'll visit the bits we missed last time. But mostly I want to eat that seafood fresh from the ocean, in the sunshine. And if we don't manage to make it any time soon – well, thanks for the memories...

THE VIEW I WANT TO SEE AGAIN

We quickly became blasé about the vistas from the whitewashed hill town of Vejer de la Frontera ("What's that you say? Swathes of olive and orange groves, stretching down to the crashing waves of the Atlantic? Whatever..."). How I'd love to be up there again now, though... We'd head for the **Casa del Califa hotel** (califavejer.com), once the home of a Moorish bigwig, where the food pays homage to the land across the strait. The view from its rooftop teashop, La Tetería, has the power to re-blow an already blown mind, plus the mint tea is excellent (no booze before →


PHOTOGRAPHS: iStock/Getty Images, Les Dunn



LOOK BACK IN HUNGER

THE PLACE I LONG TO GO BACK TO

A holiday abroad isn't on the cards for many this summer, but that doesn't mean you can't fondly remember past trips and dream of those to come. In this travel special, Les Dunn talks about his yen for Spain's Costa de la Luz, while editor Karen and delicious fans reveal the places they can't wait to return to – and what they'll eat when they get there. Still frustrated by being stuck at home? Discover books that let you travel in your imagination






ARABIAN NIGHTS
There's a Moorish vibe at La Casa Del Califa hotel in the hill town of Vejer



FUTURE PLANNING

- **FLY** Iberia flies to Jerez from Heathrow. Or fly to Malaga, from where Tarifa is a 1 hour 40 minute drive. Check skyscanner.net for the best flight deals.
- **STAY** In Tarifa, the charming Posada la Sacristia is close to everything. Doubles from £68; lasacristia.net. Casa del Califa in Vejer costs from £85 a night. In Sanlúcar, on Airbnb there are light, bright, central apartments sleeping four from around £60/night.

driving back down that steep, twistily narrow road, thank you...)

THE GASTRO-TOUR I'D DO

In Sanlúcar de Barrameda, one of the three sherry towns, we'd take a €14 tour of the musty, mysterious bodegas (cellars) of the vast **La Gitana** (lagitana.es), and hope we got the engaging Victor Vidal again – he guided us expertly through five tastings including some rare, long-aged sherries out of the barrel. If time was short, though, we'd book a visit at the tiny **La Cigarrera** (bodegaslecigarrera.com), where you grab a quick taste, have a look at the bijou bodega, buy a bottle and go whistling on your way.

THE SQUARE I WANT TO EAT TAPAS IN

As well as being a sherry town, Sanlúcar handily happens to be one of the greatest places in Spain to eat tapas, too. I'd hope our luck was in and that we'd manage to grab an outside table at the perma-busy **Casa Balbino** in Plaza de Cabildo, a 'temple to tortillitas'. These crispy shrimp fritters (see recipe, opposite)

go well with a chilled glass of manzanilla, the town's signature, fino-like dry sherry, but I reckon we'd have them with Barbadillo, a simple white wine made by the town's biggest sherry producer. I can almost taste it now...

If Casa Balbino was bursting, we'd mosey across to **Barbiana** (barbianasanlucar.com), where the papas aliñas (dinky local potatoes with a simple dressing) topped with mackerel are much more mmm-inducing than my description makes them sound... Afterwards we'd stroll up to the Barrio Alto for a cortado coffee in the shaded gardens of the **Ducal Palace of Medina Sidonia** (ruralduquesmedinasidonia.com), now a tasteful hotel.

THE SPECIAL PLACE I'D BOOK A TABLE

Until we ate at **El Campero** (restauranteelcampero.es) I didn't realise I'd only scratched the surface of tuna eating. In this Scandi-ishly cool modern restaurant in Barbate, the historic centre of the costa's tuna fishing, you get to go deep. The almadraba bluefin tuna is

served in 25 different ways, in all manner of obscure cuts. We ordered something that translated unsexily into English as 'fatty gill'. It looked a bit like a weird rib-eye steak and had a meaty succulence unlike any tuna we'd had before. El Campero isn't cheap, but tuna isn't cheap, and surely few restaurants on earth cook it this well.

THE ICE CREAM I'D EAT AT THE BEACH

El Campero is on a back street, so we'd hold off on pudding and, instead, head to Barbate's beachfront drag to buy a cone at **Pepe El Malagueño** (41 Paseo Marítimo). They do an intense dark chocolate that will last you a good walk along the soft golden sand.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD BAR I'D VISIT

We'd walk to Sanlúcar's out-of-the-centre **La Taberna Der Guerrita** (guerrita.es), not just to up our phone-steps quota but because we know it's worth it. Owner Armando Guerra, whose father ran the place before him, inherited a high level of sherry connoisseurship and barrels from the family's soleras (blended vintages) line the bar – to not order sherry in here is unthinkable. The dish to have is the fritura mixta, a pile of deep-fried local seafood, but it's as much about enjoying the atmosphere of a properly local joint.

THE SEASIDE CAFÉ FOR A SUNDOWNER

If the Costa de la Luz were for sale on Rightmove, it would have 'southwest-facing coastline' as a USP, which is to say it's well stocked with beach cafés for sunset watching. **El Chiringuito** in Tarifa is by a causeway that divides the Mediterranean and Atlantic oceans. You can discern the different colours of the two bodies of water, and you can watch them change as the sun sets – a phenomenon enhanced by one of El Chiringuito's massive G&Ts. Oh, to be back there now, condensation-dripping goldfish bowl in hand... One day. *Many restaurants are now open but check websites before planning a visit.*

RECIPE TAKEN FROM MOORISH BY BEN TISHIL/COMSBURY ABSOLUTEI. PHOTOGRAPH: KRIS KIRKHAM



TRAVEL IN YOUR KITCHEN

Shrimp and cumin fritters (tortillitas)

SERVES 4-6 (MAKES 16). HANDS-ON TIME 10 MIN, SIMMERING TIME 30 MIN



Find tiny raw frozen shrimps in the freezer section of Asian supermarkets. Or cut raw frozen prawns into small chunks.

- 75g chickpea (gram) flour
- 100g plain flour, sifted
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 125ml dry white wine
- 175g small peeled raw shrimps (see tip), thawed if frozen
- 2 spring onions, finely sliced
- ½ tsp cumin seeds, crushed
- ½ tsp sweet smoked paprika
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Lemon wedges to serve

1 Put the flours and baking powder in a bowl, then whisk in 150ml cold water and the wine to give a batter with the consistency of thick cream. If using small shrimps, make sure

the heads have been removed. Add the shrimps, spring onions and spices, then season with salt. Stir to mix, then set aside to rest for 10 minutes.
2 Line 2 large baking sheets with kitchen paper. Pour 1cm vegetable oil into a large, deep, heavy-based frying pan set over a high heat. After a few minutes, check the oil is hot by dropping a little batter into it – it should sizzle straightaway.
3 Mix the batter again then, in 2 or 3 batches, drop spoonfuls into the oil and spread them lightly with the back of the spoon to form thin fritters. Cook for 2-3 minutes or until they puff up, turning so they're browned on both sides with crisp edges.
4 Remove from the pan straight onto the prepared baking sheets to drain. Sprinkle liberally with salt and serve immediately with lemon wedges to squeeze over.
PER SERVING (FOR 6) 184kcal, 4.9g fat (0.5g saturated), 9.8g protein, 20.1g carbs (0.8g sugars), 0.3g salt, 2.2g fibre



WANT TO LEARN MORE COSTA DE LA LUZ COOKERY?

As travel opens up a bit more, well regarded Vejer cookery school Annie B's Spanish Kitchen is offering a new private, socially distanced three-night break for couples, staying in their guest annex, for €750pp. Go to anniespain.com and search 'dos copas'.

Turn the page for more inspiration →

5 reads to whisk you away this summer

There are certain books that, from the first sentence, have the power to transport you to another place. Here are Phoebe Stone's fiction choices for travel-hungry food lovers

10 PLACES delicious. **FANS WANT TO GO BACK TO...** But what will they eat?

Portugal. 🇵🇹 Black pig cheeks with clams 🍷
The Marmiteman
@RICHARD1974

Bagels in Central Park ❤️
Leah @Lea_Rob

Berlin. currywurst with fries and a glass of beer bigger than my head 🍷
Katherine P @katherine_lpl

Aperitivo in Italy (plus gelato, pizza, arancini... you get the idea!)
Sam @samivell

Osaka. 🇯🇵 Takoyaki 🍷
Nichola Barron
@Nichola_Barron

Pasta in Florence!
Melita Wheeler @MelitaW17

Hong Kong to see my daughter and eat salt-and-pepper fried squid, quaffing Tsing Tao
Angela @pantryprovidore

New Zealand's South Island and a mutton shortcrust pie with black sauce
Anne Keenan @agkeenan

Sicily, Ristorante da Vittorio in Menfi, yes please right now 🍷
Thomas @thomasTMFmorley

South of France for a large bowl of moules frites, some runny cheese, a crisp muscadet and proper ripe peaches. And a decent French baguette, and a cassoulet, the ripe cherries and and...
Walking Picnics
@walkingpicnics 🍷



EDITOR KAREN BARNES SHARES THE DESTINATIONS SHE'S DREAMING OF MOST

Much as I detest packing, musing on my choices has made me yearn to sweep months of dust off my old red suitcase, throw in the necessities and hotfoot it to the airport

1 THE ISLES OF SCILLY for sunsets, walking among agapanthus flowers to white-sand beaches and turquoise waters – and sweet crab and lobster, caught here and sold in Island Fish, a tiny family shop, on the island of Bryher. The Crab Shack eatery at Hell Bay is a must too.

2 ITALY to Le Marche to visit friends for home-cooked food on a wooded hillside in the middle of nowhere, with plentiful chilled pecorino to drink. Restaurant-wise, it will be Dei Priori in the sleepy village of Monte San Martino for pasta Angelica (Mama Priori's richly flavoured ragù – just enough to coat her glorious pasta). For a posh meal, Il Tiglio, up in the mountains at Montemonaco, if for no other reason than to have dessert painted on the table in front of me again. Last time it was €38 for nine courses and the food was extraordinary.

3 CAPE TOWN for small-plates joy (truffled pork croquettes, polenta chips and spice-dusted corn 'ribs') under the vines at Bertus Basson's Spek & Bone in Stellenbosch (bertusbasson.com). On another day, brunch at Tokara

vineyard (the drive there is spectacular), taking home a bottle of their fruity-peppery olive oil (tokara.com), then a tree-shaded wine tasting at La Motte vineyard, Franschoek (la-motte.com).

4 MYKONOS for lunch at Kiki's, overlooking the sea, in the north at Agios Sostis. Kiki's is the best kind of rustic: no electricity, everything cooked on the charrill. The taverna opens at lunchtime and closes at 7pm (no lights). In non-pandemic times, scores of people arrive on foot and on scooters to queue well before opening time (the wait is eased by free glasses of rosé on ice). What I'll order: a huge pork chop or a whole seabass, stuffed with lemon, doused with olive oil and cooked to perfection over the coals.

5 TAMARIU, northern Spain, for umami-rich paella at any one of the seafront restaurants, preferably while there's a fiesta going on. Or a salad made with shavings of local jamón and fresh peaches followed by shiny-eyed mackerel from the market in Palafrugell, cooked on the barbie. *Check restaurant websites for reopening dates (some in Tamariu are already open).*

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A white-sand Scilly beach and lobsters in the shop on Bryher; La Motte wine cellar and Tokara vineyard in South Africa; Kiki's on Mykonos; Il Tiglio in Le Marche and the view from Karen's friends' house there; mackerel in Palafrugell market

NAPLES

The Wedding Officer by Anthony Capella (Sphere 2007)
ON THE MENU In this steamy read, serious-minded British soldier James, posted to Naples in 1943, has his appetite awakened when he meets gifted cook Livia.

A TASTER "The secondo was followed by a simple dessert of sliced pears with rosemary and honey. The flesh of the fruit looked as crisp and white as something Michelangelo might have carved with."

TOKYO

Strange Weather in Tokyo by Hiromi Kawakami (Granta Books 2020)
ON THE MENU Tsukiko reconnects with her old Japanese teacher over snacks and saké in a local bar.

A TASTER "I loved my mother's yudofu. In a small cup she mixes saké with soy sauce, sprinkling it with freshly shaved bonito, and then warms the cup... She heats the whole block of tofu without cutting it, so I can then ravage the firm cotton tofu with the tips of my chopsticks."

BANGKOK

Bangkok Wakes to Rain by Pitchaya Sudbanthad (Hodder & Stoughton 2019)
ON THE MENU An evocation of the city through the centuries as seen through many eyes, including those of Nee, a protestor in the 1970s, and her restaurateur sister Nok.

A TASTER "Nok came up with new specials – curried banana flowers, lime-drenched seafood salads with fresh fish roe... She perfumed coconut milk with pandan leaves. Customers' eyes widened when they held the bowl to their nose and smelled sun-warmed fields."

TEHRAN

Together Tea by Marjan Kamali (Ecco 2013)
ON THE MENU Darya is obsessed with finding a suitor for her

exasperated business-student daughter Mina. When they go home to Iran from their adopted home in New York, they begin to understand each other better.

A TASTER "The guests heaped their plates with rice and gormeh sabzi, rice and barberries, and poured Darya's walnut and pomegranate sauce on top of their saffron rice. They drank Baba's illegal wine and insisted everything was the best they'd ever had."

BARBADOS

The Star Side of Bird Hill by Naomi Jackson (Penguin Books 2016)
ON THE MENU It's 1989 and, separated from their troubled mother for the summer, Brooklyn sisters Phaedra and Dionne are sent to Barbados to stay with their grandmother.

A TASTER "They were overwhelmed by the smell of food in the church hall. There were the legendary fish cakes women from Bird Hill were known for... Dionne could smell the yellow cakes with pineapple filling..."

MOST RECENT/READILY AVAILABLE EDITIONS FEATURED

