

Six of the best restaurants in San Sebastian

1. Arzak

One of the San Sebastian area's trio of three-Michelin-starred restaurants, this restaurant made Juan Mari Arzak's name synonymous with exceptional food. The kitchen he heads up with daughter Elena is famous for using the very best local ingredients to conjure dishes that tend towards the dramatic — the culinary equivalent of an opera. Older children are more than welcome here if they're up for relatively complex dishes (four courses from £199; arzak.es).

2. Bergara

The influence of Nueva Cocina Vasca (“New Basque Cuisine”) has long been felt lower down the local food chain, especially at the well-regarded Bergara in Gros. Like many Spanish bars it's somewhat brightly lit, but at least you get a good view of the ornate pintxos. Take a seat at one of the shared benches to try delicately crisp battered prawns or a mini jamón-filled croissant, a reminder that the French border is mere miles away (pintxos from £3; pinchosbergara.es).

3. Bodega Donostiarra

With its sheltered outdoor tables and exquisite all-day food, it's no wonder there's often a queue outside this Gros bar. Try a Gilda, the pintxo named after the titular character of a 1946 Rita Hayworth film, or one of the “complete” tuna sandwiches. No bland lunchbox staple, these come stuffed with guindilla peppers and dripping with good olive oil and vinegar. More substantial meals include a rice dish made with squid (pintxos from £2, mains from £10; bodegadonostiarra.com).

4. Asador Alaia

Sharing Monte Igueldo's knock-out view of San Sebastian is this traditional restaurant, its sizeable terrace perfectly situated for a leisurely lunch overlooking the bay. Standout dishes include the seafood paella — a more luxurious version, made with lobster, can also be pre-ordered. As you'd expect from an asador, or grill, the meaty mains are excellent, too — try the ox chop or the suckling veal ribs paired with a reasonably priced rioja (mains from £10; restaurantealaia.com).



Gatzupa

5. Gatzupa

Chef Bruno Oteiza spent 25 years in San Sebastian and 25 in Mexico before bringing together his culinary influences at this cool, modern restaurant, a relative newcomer in Gros. The bar is atmospheric and informal, serving pintxos and tacos bursting with fresh Central American flavours, plus punchy cocktails such as a tamarind margarita. For a more leisurely meal try the slow-cooked pork ribs, served with various sauces and ideal for sharing (pintxos from £2, mains from £10; gatzupa.com).

6. Bar Nestor

Said to be the best tortilla in Spain, the signature dish at this old town bar is a real event, prepared fresh only twice a day. Arrive at 12pm or 7pm to put your name down for a slice of the perfectly cooked egg and potato omelette. Super simple, it's the epitome of what San Sebastian does best: quality ingredients, prepared with utmost care. As there's only one tiny table, expect to stand (pintxos from £2; bar-nestor.negocio.site).