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## LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW? TRY TAPAS THIS SUMMER!

I am currently getting ready for a trip that has long been on my bucket list. After five years of planning and saving, my husband and I are taking a trip to Europe! We are planning to see quite a few cities while we are there and are looking forward to the trip. So, it's safe to say that I have Europe on the brain at the moment. For me, that absolutely includes thinking about food. There are many foods unique to different cities and countries in Europe. In the past, Debbie Rhoades (who wrote this column for many years), has written about some of these different foods. Her column on the Mediterranean Diet is a great read! One of these fairly well known, regionally popular foods, is tapas. Tapas are small plates of food common in Spain, but they are spreading to other parts of the world as well. These small plates are often packed with fresh and intense flavors and can be a great addition to a healthy diet.

As I mentioned, tapas are usually small plates of food served with drinks at bars and restaurants. According to an [article about the history of tapas](#), the practice began in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when the king passed a law that alcohol had to be served with food. The idea was that it would prevent people from drinking too much and engaging in bad or dangerous behavior. The idea caught on and now in many bars, you can find small plates of food being served (often for free) with drinks. In some places, they are simple snacks like nuts, while in other places they can be small bites of very sophisticated dishes. Personally, I have visited Isabella's Taverna and Tapas Bar for some wonderful tapas dinners! If you're interested in trying some tapas, you can find them at 44 North Market Street in downtown Frederick, MD.

When I visited Isabella's, our server encouraged us to order a few plates and then spend some time eating and chatting. They assured us that they would be back if we wanted to order more, so we didn't need to feel like we had to order all at once. So, we had a lovely evening, eating, talking, and ordering other plates when we wanted more to eat. It was interesting to take such a different approach from a typical dinner where you order everything at the beginning and then, if you're like me, feel obligated to eat just about everything you ordered. Instead, it encourages you to spend time enjoying the food you have and only order more if you are hungry for something else.

Recently, in the world of nutrition, more people have started talking about the importance of mindful eating and intuitive eating. The basic idea of intuitive eating is that we should listen to our bodies and eat when we are hungry, but also stop eating when we feel full. This way, we pay more attention to the cues from our body rather than cues from the outside world (like a clock

telling us it is time for lunch or dinner). You can check out <https://www.intuitiveeating.org/> if you want to learn more about this practice. Mindful eating is similar, but it encourages people to pay attention and enjoy what they are eating. For many of us, hectic schedules encourage us to eat quickly without really focusing on the food we are eating. Mindful eating, on the other hand, means slowing down enough to pay attention to flavors, textures, and feelings you experience during a meal. For more details of mindful eating, check out [this article](#). To get an idea of what this looks like in practice, here is an activity you can try:

1. Find a food you enjoy (for me, this would probably be a chocolate chip cookie)
2. Spend some time paying attention to all five senses, but save taste for last! What do you see? How does the food feel? Does it make a sound if you squeeze or break it? How does it smell?
3. Finally, take a smaller bite than you normally would and pay attention to the taste as you chew slowly.
4. Finish the food while eating this way and see if you notice anything about how the experience makes you feel.

To me, tapas seem like a great food to apply some of these concepts! Since they are typically small bites of flavor packed food, they have so many things to smell and notice in one small bite. And eating them a little at a time, while paying attention to the way you feel, can help you acknowledge when you feel full and are ready to stop eating.

Everyone's relationship with food is different, so trust yourself to know what works best for you. But if you're interested in exploring more about these things, try some new ideas! For example, wait until you feel the physical feeling of being hungry before eating at some point this week. Or, try one of these recipes with the mindful eating activity and see how the experience is for you! Even if you don't end up applying these concepts to your daily life, there is still a lot to gain from trying some new things.

## **SPANISH GARLIC MUSHROOMS**

Yield: 4 servings

10 large button mushrooms, quartered  
1 tablespoon fresh, chopped flat-leaf parsley  
5 cloves garlic, minced  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
2 tablespoons dry sherry  
1/4 teaspoon Spanish paprika  
Ground black pepper to season  
Sea salt to season  
1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon dried chili flakes (optional to suit)

Quarter the mushrooms, chop the parsley, crush the garlic.

Over a medium heat, add the olive oil and sauté the mushrooms for a few minutes. Then add the remaining ingredients, except for the parsley. Cook for 5 more minutes, stirring. Then remove the pan from heat, add the chopped parsley and stir through. Serve and enjoy!

Recipe sourced from: <https://lovefoodies.com/champinones-al-ajillo-spanish-garlic-mushrooms/>

## **SIMPLE PATATAS BRAVAS**

Yield: 4 servings

### ***For the Potatoes-***

1 1/2 to 2 pounds Yukon or red skin potatoes (quartered into bite size pieces)  
1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 healthy pinch sea salt  
1 healthy pinch garlic powder

### ***For the Sauce***

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1/2 white or yellow onion (diced)  
3 cloves garlic (minced)  
1/2 teaspoon sea salt  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon garlic powder (plus more for potatoes)  
1 pinch cayenne or red pepper flake  
1 6-ounce can tomato paste\*  
2-3 teaspoons hot sauce  
1 1/2 cups water

### ***For the Topping***

Parmesan Cheese  
Fresh cilantro/parsley

Soak quartered potatoes in very hot water for 10-15 minutes. In the meantime, preheat oven to 450°F (232°C).

Once potatoes are soaked, dry thoroughly and then add to a baking sheet with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil and a generous sprinkling of sea salt and garlic powder. Toss to coat. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown and cooked through, stirring/tossing once. Test by spearing a potato with a toothpick – it should be easy to pierce and remove.

While the potatoes are baking, prepare your spicy tomato sauce. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add onion, garlic and salt and stir. Cook for 7-8 minutes to slowly “sweat” until the mixture becomes translucent and very fragrant. If it begins to brown, turn down the heat to low and stir frequently.

Add paprika, garlic powder, cayenne and stir. Then add tomato paste, hot sauce and water and stir. Cook for 10-12 minutes or until simmering and the flavors are well blended. Reduce heat if it begins to bubble too vigorously. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. For a smooth sauce, puree in a small blender or food processor until smooth. Otherwise, set aside.

Remove potatoes from oven and sprinkle with a bit more salt to taste. Place in a serving dish and drizzle with tomato sauce. Optional additional toppings include parmesan cheese, more hot sauce, and fresh herbs.

Recipe sourced from: <https://minimalistbaker.com/simple-patatas-bravas/>

## SPANISH GARLIC SHRIMP (GAMBAS AL AJILLO)

Yield: 4 servings

4 cloves garlic

1 pound frozen large shrimp (21-25 count) - thawed, peeled, and deveined

Kosher salt to taste

1 teaspoon hot smoked paprika (Optional)

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons dry sherry

1 tablespoon chopped Italian flat-leaf parsley

Slice garlic thinly. Season shrimp with kosher salt and paprika. Mix to coat.

Heat garlic and oil in a skillet over medium heat. Cook until garlic starts to turn golden, about 2 minutes. Add shrimp and increase heat to high. Toss and turn shrimp with tongs until starting to curl but still undercooked, about 2 minutes. Pour in sherry. Cook, stirring continuously, until sauce comes up to a boil and shrimp is cooked through, about 1 minute more. Remove from heat. Stir in parsley with a spoon.

Recipe sourced from: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/266085/spanish-garlic-shrimp-gambas-al-ajillo/>

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