

RAMBLAS RAMBLINGS

Iberia Restaurant's Newsletter, Winter 2011

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RAVENOUS RAMBLINGS

Fiestas

Bienvenidos! Those of you who are acquainted with Jose Luis know that he is a congenial host and loves to throw a good party. His paella beach parties are legendary. He hosts a Thanksgiving feast at Iberia every year, complete with moist turkey breast basted with caul fat and the legs braised in hard cider. Heck, attending his hands-on [Spanish cooking classes](#) is like going to one big party!

Jose Luis' teenage memories of Christmas are of attending mass and exchanging presents on Christmas morning, then trying to rush through lunch with his parents and family friends so that he could see his girlfriend afterwards. Lunch didn't begin until noon and since Spaniards aren't known for fast food, the party would move at a leisurely pace until 7 pm, as everyone enjoyed a feast that included special occasion charcuterie, steamed prawns, smoked salmon, poached fish and a roast.

¿POR QUE?

Why is this called "Ramblas Ramblings"?

Jose Luis was raised in Barcelona, which has a famous street called Las Ramblas. Barcelona is one of my ABSOLUTE FAVORITE cities to ramble through! My short list of why: seafood a la plancha, Art Nouveau, a plethora of festivals and Espai Sucre's multi-course, avant garde dessert tasting menus. This newsletter is meant to be a casual, stream-of-consciousness rambling (much like chatting with Jose Luis in person) and I also happen to be fond of alliterations and puns.

Las Ramblas is home to one of the most amazing markets in the world: La Boqueria, aka Mercat de Sant Josep. It is food porn paradise! With such vibrant and vivid produce and seafood, you can be a terrible photographer taking pictures on a basic cell phone and still end up with some nice images.

As for me, I am a professional food writer and friend of Jose Luis. Our friendship grew out of our shared passion for food and my affinity for Latin culture, particularly languages and dances (samba, salsa, tango). To Jose Luis' dismay, I'm immune to the allure of alcohol, but he has gotten me addicted to the cheese scones (you can buy them frozen and bake them at home!) and bacon-wrapped dates at Iberia. Ever the

charming Latino (wouldn't a non-charming Latin man be an oxymoron?), Jose Luis also likes to give me dating advice, though I haven't yet decided how much of his counsel to take to heart (pun intended).

LIBATIONS

Ponche

Why is there an entire regular section devoted to libations? If you knew Jose Luis, you wouldn't be asking!

Jose Luis says that all the kids in Spain look forward to holiday parties so they can drink the brandy-laced *ponche*. Believe it or not, Jose Luis claims that he does not have any personal *ponche* stories. "I left Spain when I was 20," he said. "So when I got together with my friends, we were eating hot dogs and Coca Cola, sitting on the cathedral steps." As a teen, Jose Luis was not jet setting to Ibiza, though he and his friends sometimes had parties at the beach and consumed sangria, beer, grilled fish and potato chips.

Jose Luis' Ponche de Navidad

1-1/2 quarts orange juice
2 sticks cinnamon
3/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon cloves, lightly crushed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 quart Spanish brandy
1 cup dark rum
1/2 cup Licor 43 (a Spanish liqueur)
2 oranges, peeled and sliced 1/4" thick

Bring orange juice, cinnamon, honey, and cloves to a simmer and reduce by a third. Strain the solids out and add the vanilla. When ready to serve, add the brandy, rum and Licor 43. Serve warm or chilled in a punch bowl with the orange slices.

Jose Luis says, "If serving it warm, do not allow it to boil when you are heating it up because the alcohol will evaporate and where is the fun in that?"

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Newsletter written by Cynthia L.

I am a professional food writer and friend of Jose Luis. Our friendship grew out of our shared passion for food and my affinity for Latin culture-- particularly languages and dances (samba, salsa, tango)—and was cemented over paella at the beach and Iberia's cheese scones.

— Cynthia L.