

TRAVEL WITH USAC FROM TRADITIONAL COOKERY TO HAUTE CUISINE

For the past thirty years the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) has been sending students to San Sebastian to study the languages and cultures of Spain's spectacular Basque provinces. Since its very inception, the program has included a very popular cuisine class.

It is conventional wisdom that one eats very well all over the Basque country and all who have been there (and their waistlines!) will attest to the quality of the food. What many people do not know about San Sebastian is that in gastronomical circles it is one of the leading cities in the world. From traditional Basque cooking to signature cuisine, not to mention the world-renowned pintoxs and characteristic cider houses, San Sebastian is a veritable gastronomic paradise. San Sebastian can actually boast that it has more Michelin stars per inhabitant than any other place on earth.

Is this meaningful to students on a shoe-string budget? USAC students who study in San Sebastian would answer with a resounding ¡Sí!

One of the goals of the USAC programs all around the world is to offer the students an authentic experience. Clearly, studying in San Sebastian would not be the real deal if students were not able to sample its gastronomical treasures. With this in mind, the USAC program in San Sebastián has organized along the academic year two similar but different cuisine classes. Sisters but not twins, the courses allow students to take part in a gastronomic tour that will take them from the philosophy and the "simplicity" of the *Cofradía gastronómica* to one of the most important and sophisticated projects at the newly created, state of the art Basque Culinary Center.



The two courses invite USAC students to approach food as Basques relate to it, experiencing the entire range of Basque cuisine. Every spring the students can delight in the most traditional and typical Basque dishes made with only four or five ingredients but fresh from the garden and selected from the main market in San Sebastián. This course takes place in a traditional Basque gastronomical society, a kind of club in which a group of mostly male friends gather to discuss, prepare and enjoy food.

In the fall, USAC students will experience a sophisticated but popular new Basque and Spanish cuisine in a course taught at the Basque Culinary Center. The BCC opened its doors one year ago to students who are anxious to learn from some of the best chefs in Spain. It offers Spain's first (and only) university degree in cuisine and restaurant management. The BCC has designed a hands-on course especially for USAC students where they will learn to prepare a three course meal each week at this spectacular new facility.

This extraordinary experience, from the Gastronomic club to the Basque Culinary Center, from traditional cookery to haute cuisine, could only exist in a place where food is, as culinary critic Bruce Palling has noted, "virtually worshiped by the population."

