

B E S P A I N S A V V Y



GET
SAVVY

Spain has a way of surprising you, whether it's a late-night dinner under the stars, a baffling siesta schedule, or a festive feria bursting with life. We love it all—the volume, the vibrancy, the vale for everything—and we've packed this book with our signature BeSS Style sass to make you smile, learn, and feel like you're already part of the family.

B E S P A I N S A V V Y . C O M



BRENDA AND ELLIE

CO-FOUNDERS OF BESS

The Dynamic Duo Behind BeSS

Meet the creators of BeSS Style, a vibrant blend of insider knowledge and expat spice! Together, we're a dynamic duo—a savvy local who knows every hidden gem in Spain and a spirited expat who's seen it all, from the quirky traditions to the moments that make you stop and say, "Wait, is this real life?"

Our goal? To share Spain with you through the lens of humor, practicality, and unfiltered authenticity. Whether it's decoding the labyrinth of Spanish bureaucracy, nailing the art of the 'dos besos' greeting, or just figuring out why dinner happens at 10 PM, we're here to guide you every step of the way—with plenty of laughs along the journey.

We believe in celebrating the good, rolling with the bad, and savoring the OMG amazing moments that make Spain truly special. With one foot firmly planted in local culture and the other joyfully stomping through expat experiences, we bring you a book that's as dynamic and layered as Spain itself. Welcome to the BeSS Style family—where every page feels like an insider's chat over tapas and tinto de verano!

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1 SECTION

CULTURAL WONDERS

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WELCOME TO SPAIN – PREP THOSE CHEEKS – THE 'DOS BESOS' TRADITION

Welcome to Spain, where personal bubbles are meant to pop and greetings are more of a cheeky affair—literally. If you’ve ever landed in this sunny country and found yourself face-to-face (or rather, cheek-to-cheek) with a stranger, congratulations! You’ve just encountered the delightful and somewhat intimidating tradition of “dos besos” (two kisses).

Let’s break it down: Start on the right, then swing left. It’s like a mini-dance routine for your face, but with no music and a lot of cultural significance. You’ll find yourself cheek-brushing with everyone from your partner’s mom to a new coworker. And here’s the kicker—it’s not even a real kiss. It’s more of a lip-hover paired with a satisfying “muah” sound. Easy, right? Until you accidentally go left first. Cue the awkward tango.

But wait, it gets better. Spain isn’t a one-size-fits-all kind of place. While most regions stick to the classic two-kiss greeting, the Canary Islands might surprise you with just one. It’s like they’re saying, “Let’s keep it simple,” and honestly, we respect that. Madrid? Full-on cheek action. Rural areas? They might skip the formality entirely with a hearty handshake. The key is adaptability, so keep your social radar on high alert.

The Rules of Engagement Not everyone’s ready to join the cheeky cha-cha. If someone extends a hand for a shake, take the cue and pivot gracefully. And then there are those who go for a hug mid-kiss—an advanced maneuver best reserved for close friends and family. Remember: read the room, or rather, the cheeks.

The Cheeky Chaos of Large Gatherings Now, picture yourself at a Spanish party. You walk in, and there’s a sea of faces waiting for your greeting. Do you two-kiss everyone? Short answer: Yes. Long answer: Prepare for a workout. By the time you’ve kissed your way through a room of 20 people, your cheeks might be sore, but your social capital will be through the roof.

Navigating the Kiss Maze Timing is everything. Go in too fast, and you risk a collision. Go in too slow, and you create an awkward pause. And don't even get me started on the horror of going left first when the other person goes right. It's like a game of social chicken, but with more lip-hovering.

Why 'Dos Besos' Is More Than Just a Greeting The 'dos besos' isn't just a hello; it's a way of saying, "Hey, we're all friends here." It's warm, personal, and undeniably Spanish. It breaks down barriers and sets the tone for genuine connection. Sure, it might take some practice to nail the timing, the direction, and the perfect "muah," but once you do, you'll feel like you've unlocked a secret handshake.

Cheek Kissing in the Time of Germs Post-pandemic, cheek-kissing has seen some hesitation, but it's far from extinct. Spaniards have adapted with elbow bumps, air kisses, and even the occasional nod, but many are eager to bring back the tradition. After all, what's Spain without a little cheek-to-cheek action?

Your Survival Guide

1. **Start on the Right:** Always, always go right first. It's the unspoken rule, and breaking it is a rookie mistake.
2. **Be Confident:** Even if you're unsure, act like you've been cheek-kissing your whole life. Confidence is key.
3. **Practice Your "Muah":** The sound is half the greeting. Make it convincing.
4. **Don't Overthink It:** Spaniards are forgiving. If you mess up, laugh it off. They'll appreciate your effort.

So, next time you're skipping across Spain, prep those cheeks and embrace the tradition. After all, a little cheek action is your ticket to fitting in, winning smiles, and maybe even a few laughs. Who knew that two little kisses could open so many doors—and hearts?

TO KILL OR NOT TO KILL... THE LINE?

Ah, Spain. The land of siestas, fiestas, and... questionable queuing etiquette. If you've lived here for more than five minutes, you've probably faced the ultimate Spanish conundrum: Do you ask who's last in line ("¿Quién es el último?"), or do you casually slip ahead and hope nobody notices? Spoiler alert: Everyone notices.

Option 1: The Noble Ask If you want to keep your conscience clean (and avoid angry glares), you do the Spanish thing and ask, "¿Quién es el último?" Translation: Who's last? This simple question instantly assigns you a place in the invisible, unspoken line that Spaniards masterfully enforce.

👁️ Pro Tip: Lock eyes with the person ahead of you. They're your new line buddy. You're now sworn allies in this slow crawl to the counter. If they move, you move. If they leave, you become the new último. It's a sacred bond.

Option 2: The Sneaky Slip-In Feeling bold? You might attempt the great Spanish sidestep, sliding into the line without making it official.

But beware—Spanish grandmas (las abuelas) are like hawks, and they WILL call you out. Expect phrases like: "Perdona, pero yo estaba aquí" (Excuse me, but I was here.) Or the terrifying, "Oye, ¿qué haces?" (Hey, what are you doing?) At this point, you either apologize profusely or pretend you don't speak Spanish. Your choice. Spoiler: Abuelas are multilingual in passive-aggressive stares, so good luck.

Option 3: The Social Kill Zone And then, there's the brutal unspoken rule of certain places in Spain: No line survives the chaos.

At the bar: Lines? What lines? You just shout your order and hope for the best. Extra points for waving a 10-euro note.

At the bakery: Expect a polite but firm "¿Quién es el último?" battle every time.

The bus stop: First come, first served? Not in this lifetime. It's every person for themselves when the bus arrives. May the fastest elbows win.



Let's Talk Strategy

Timing Is Everything: Spaniards are pros at making it look accidental. “Oh, am I ahead of you? Sorry!” But we all know they planned it.

Be Assertive (But Polite): A friendly “Disculpa, yo creo que estaba aquí” (Excuse me, I think I was here) can save you a lot of drama.

Blend In or Stand Out: If you're caught sneaking in, smile and play dumb. “Lo siento, ¡pensé que era mi turno!” (I'm sorry, I thought it was my turn!)

Spaniards appreciate a good apology—or a great excuse.

THE SYMPHONY OF SPANISH VOLUME – A FIESTA FOR THE EARS

Let's talk about Spain's unofficial national anthem: noise. Step into any Spanish gathering, and you'll feel like you've been invited to the world's most vibrant, chaotic, and borderline overwhelming concert. Everything here is amplified—the laughter, the debates, and yes, even the arguments that somehow end in hugs.

The Family Reunion Orchestra

At a typical Spanish family reunion, there's no such thing as "one conversation at a time." Instead, you'll find four or five discussions happening simultaneously, all at full volume. Tías (aunts) exchanging gossip across the table, abuelos (grandparents) lamenting modern trends, and a cousin reenacting last night's karaoke session—all competing for airtime. Just when you think you've tuned into one thread, someone locks eyes with you and calls out, "¿Y tú qué opinas?" (What do you think?). Suddenly, you're thrust into the spotlight. The safest response? "Voy por más cerveza" (I'm going for more beer). It's your golden ticket out of any conversational jam.

Restaurants: Where Privacy Goes to Die

Forget intimate whispers or hushed tones over candlelight. In Spain, your croquetas order might be overheard three tables away, and the couple next to you could be passionately discussing last year's vacation—at a decibel level that suggests they're trying to reach Mallorca without a phone. It's not just loud; it's exuberant. Everyone's part of the ambiance, like a shared performance where even the waitstaff gets in on the act.

Football Fever: Decibels and Dedication

Let's not forget football. If you're within a kilometer of a match-winning goal, you'll know it. Forget subtle cheers; expect a symphony of airhorns, honking car horns, and shouted declarations of undying love for Sergio Ramos. It's less of a celebration and more of a full-blown sonic experience.

The Rules of Engagement

In Spain, volume isn't just about noise; it's about passion. Conversations aren't just spoken—they're performed. Every dialogue is a stage, every table a theater. Talking about your day? That's your monologue. Sharing a funny story? Cue sound effects, hand gestures, and maybe even a reenactment of that epic paella mishap. Spaniards don't just tell; they show.

The Science of Volume

You might wonder why everything has to be so loud. The answer? Connection. Loudness is a way to pull people closer, to make sure everyone is included. It's the sonic equivalent of a warm embrace, and even though it might feel overwhelming at first, it's impossible not to be swept up in its charm.

How to Blend In Without Going Deaf

1. Match Their Energy: Don't fight the noise; join it. Raise your voice, laugh louder, and jump into the conversation.
2. Master the Art of Interrupting: In Spain, interrupting isn't rude; it's a sign of engagement. If you've got something to say, dive in.
3. Carry Earplugs (Just in Case): If you need a break, step back and recharge. No one will judge you.

Why It's All Worth It

Spanish volume isn't just about being loud; it's about being alive. It's how locals say, "We're here, we care, and we're loving every minute of it." It's passion, connection, and a zest for life all rolled into one glorious cacophony. So, the next time you're seated next to a boisterous Spanish family, lean in (not that you'd have to lean far) and enjoy the impromptu Spanish lesson. It's not just lively banter; it's a masterclass in living joyfully out loud.

In Spain, life isn't meant to be whispered. It's meant to be shouted, celebrated, and shared. So, grab a seat at the table, raise your voice, and join the fiesta. After all, who needs an inside voice when life's this good?

DINNER TIME – SPAIN’S DELICIOUSLY LATE SHOW

Dinner in Spain isn’t just a meal; it’s a performance, a ritual, and occasionally, an endurance test. Show up to a restaurant at 6 PM, and you’ll be greeted with raised eyebrows and an empty dining room. Dinner here doesn’t start until 9 PM—and that’s the warm-up. True Spaniards don’t even think about sitting down until 10 PM, when the night sky is your chandelier, and the hum of conversations is your background music.

The Science of Spanish Dining

The Spanish dining schedule is a masterpiece of delayed gratification. Lunch, the day’s true star, takes center stage around 2 PM and often involves multiple courses, a bottle of wine, and maybe even a *sobremesa* (post-meal chat). By the time dinner rolls around, hunger has taken a backseat to celebration. It’s less about sustenance and more about connection, conversation, and, of course, culinary delights.

A Rookie’s Mistake

Picture this: you’re wandering the streets of Barcelona, stomach growling, and spot what looks like an open restaurant.

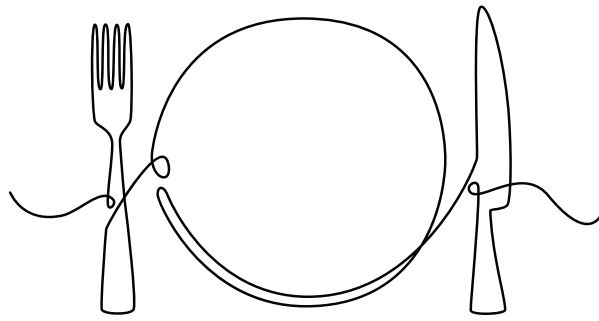
You walk in, only to find the staff leisurely setting tables and sipping coffee. “*Mejor vuelve luego*” (Come back later), they say with a knowing smile. Rookie mistake. Dining early in Spain is like trying to dance flamenco without the music—it’s just not done. Early birds get the coffee shop; night owls get the feast.

The Magic Hour

When the clock strikes “*hora de cenar*” (dinner time), something magical happens. Tables fill with plates of *jamón ibérico*, *gambas al ajillo*, and *patatas bravas*. The air buzzes with laughter, debates, and the clinking of glasses filled with Rioja or Albariño. This is when Spain truly comes alive, and dining turns into an art form.

Sobremesa: The Encore

If you think dinner ends with dessert, think again. *Sobremesa*—the post-meal chat—is the soul of Spanish dining. It’s the time for unhurried conversations, heartfelt confessions, and, occasionally, solving the world’s problems. No one’s checking their watch; they’re too busy savoring the company.



Mastering the Art of Spanish Dining

1. Start with a Vermú: This pre-dinner drink sets the tone. Pair it with olives, anchovies, or any tapas that catches your eye.
2. Pace Yourself: Spanish dinners are marathons, not sprints. Tapas, entrantes (starters), and mains are just the beginning.
3. Save Room for Dessert: Even if you're full, say yes to tarta de queso (cheesecake) or flan. It's not just dessert; it's a bridge to sobremesa.
4. Embrace the Late Hours: Forget your bedtime. In Spain, the best moments happen after midnight.

Why It's Worth the Wait

Spanish dining isn't just about food; it's about life. It's about turning a simple meal into a celebration of flavors, friendships, and fleeting moments. It's the kind of experience that makes you forget time, work, and the fact that you'll need an extra café solo tomorrow morning.

So, the next time you're tempted to eat dinner before sundown, resist! Grab a vermú, enjoy the wait, and prepare to savor the night. Because in Spain, dinner isn't just a meal—it's a masterpiece painted in laughter, flavors, and unforgettable memories.

FERIA MYTHS AND REALITIES – SURVIVING THE ULTIMATE SPANISH FIESTA

Ah, the feria. A whirlwind of frills, flamenco, and fun that will leave your heart singing and your feet sore. Whether it's the legendary Feria de Abril in Sevilla or a smaller town celebration, this is where Spain's spirit comes to life. But let's be real: the feria comes with its own set of myths, a sprinkle of chaos, and enough rebujito to fuel a dance marathon. Let's separate fact from fiction, BeSS style.

Myth 1: You Need a Flamenco Dress

Nope. While donning a traje de flamenca (flamenco dress) is definitely a head-turner, it's not a requirement. Plenty of locals show up in casual attire, and honestly, after dancing sevillanas for hours, you might envy their sneakers. That said, if you do opt for the dress, prepare for compliments, photos, and the occasional tourist asking if you're a professional dancer. Bonus: those polka dots and ruffles? Instant Instagram gold.

Myth 2: Casetas Are VIP Clubs

This one's only partially true and mainly in Sevilla. Some casetas (party tents) are private, but there are always public ones where anyone can join the fun. Pro tip: If you're crashing a private caseta, charm your way in with a smile, a willingness to dance, and maybe a bit of flattery. Spaniards are suckers for enthusiasm. Just remember, the open bar isn't really open for you... unless you make some fast friends.

Myth 3: You'll Leave Early

Ha! Good luck. The rebujito flows, the music plays, and suddenly it's 4 AM. You're debating whether to order churros or keep dancing. The feria has a magical way of bending time, and before you know it, the sun is rising, and the churro stand is your final stop. Siesta before fiesta isn't just a saying; it's survival advice.

Myth 4: It's All Flamenco, All the Time

Wrong again. Yes, sevillanas are the heart of the feria, but don't be surprised to hear reggaeton, pop, or even rock blasting from some casetas. It's a musical melting pot, and the only rule is to keep dancing. Whether you're twirling to traditional tunes or shaking it to Bad Bunny, the vibe is all about joy.

The Essentials for Surviving the Feria

1. Bring a Fan: Not just for show—it's your lifeline in the Andalusian heat.
2. Comfy Shoes Are Your Best Friend: Heels look fabulous but won't feel fabulous after six hours of dancing.
3. Hydrate (With Water, Too): Rebujito is refreshing, but your body will thank you for alternating it with H2O.
4. Learn the Sevillanas: Even if you're not a pro, knowing a few basic moves will earn you major respect (and a lot of smiles).

The Chaos and Charm of the Feria

The feria is a sensory overload in the best possible way. You'll get lost (literally—these grounds are massive), you'll make new friends (likely in a churro line at 5 AM), and you'll probably spend more money than you planned. But you'll also leave with stories that will last a lifetime, like the time you ended up leading a sevillanas circle or accidentally joined a family reunion in a caseta.

Why It's Worth It

The feria isn't just a party; it's a celebration of life, love, and the Andalusian way of embracing every moment. It's chaotic, colorful, and completely captivating. So, grab a fan, some comfy shoes, and your best "let's do this" attitude. The feria awaits, and it's calling your name with the rhythm of a thousand guitars and the laughter of a million memories.