

FORK IN THE ROAD

Pamplona's bullish food scene

Spanish city sates appetites with delicious sweets, mini concoctions and fine dining

By **TERRI COLBY**
Tribune Newspapers

PAMPLONA, Spain — This midsize city in north-eastern Spain is famous the world over for its July extravaganza known as the festival of San Fermin, or the running of the bulls, where risk and excitement fuel a weeklong party that brings more than 200,000 people to town each year.

One of the most famous visitors, and the man who made the running of the bulls known worldwide, was writer Ernest Hemingway, who first came to Pamplona in 1923.

And when Hemingway was in town and getting out of bed at 5 in the morning, one of the places he was likely to go for coffee, with or without breakfast and with or without alcohol, was Cafe Iruna, which is mentioned frequently in his novel "The Sun Also Rises."

Cafe Iruna still exists in the same place on the edge of the city's main square, Plaza del Castillo. The outdoor tables are a popular place for having a coffee or a drink in fine European style while watching the world go by.

Having a drink at Cafe Iruna, perhaps posing with the Hemingway sculpture inside, are must-do's for visitors. But if you have a sweet tooth, or maybe even if you don't, you absolutely, positively must visit Pastas Beatriz, a bakery on Estafeta Street, which is part of the bulls' route, for the most spectacular treat: *garroticos*, or miniature chocolate croissants.

Neither the Spanish nor the English name does enough to tell you what this small pastry is like. About 2 inches long and an inch wide, these are sold by weight. I bought a box of about 20 of them for 6 euros, not much more than \$6 U.S. at recent rates.

Fresh out of the oven, the crust is the tiniest bit crisp on the outside, with many flaky layers, before you get to the warm, oozing chocolate on the inside. The chocolate is sweet with just a hint of bitter. If I had thought they would have been as good a few days later, many boxes would have been in my luggage to take home.

The shop is owned by sisters Lourdes and Asuncion Gomez, who bought the store in 1990 from original owners Pablo Sarandi and wife, Beatriz. The two sisters start work every day at 5 a.m., using Pablo



TERRI COLBY/PHOTOS FOR TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS

Cafe society is alive and well in Pamplona, especially on the city's Plaza del Castillo, where outdoor tables are a popular place for coffee or a drink.



The most popular item at Beatriz, a popular bakery in Pamplona, are the mini chocolate croissants, or *garroticos*.

Sarandi's original recipes to prepare the *garroticos*, chocolate muffins and tea cookies that cause frequent lines out the door and down the street. But there's more to Pamplona's food scene than sweets, no matter how memorable.

A recent visit during Pamplona's Semana del Pincho, when the city's restaurants and bars create special *pinchos*, gave me the chance to explore while tasting the elaborate little concoctions that send the city's foodies out in droves in the early evening hours for a pincho and a glass of wine. It's a de-

lightful ritual in which you can explore many of the city's restaurants without spending a lot or eating too much.

Pinchos come in many varieties, from the more humble — mini hamburgers albeit with truffle oil at one place — to this year's gold-prize winner from Bar Restaurante Abaco: marinated raw tuna on *banh mi* bread topped with soy gummy candies and microgreens. It's definitely miniaturized haute cuisine.

There are two Michelin-starred restaurants in Pamplona — Rodero and



At the Michelin-starred Rodero, an amuse-bouche of hake ceviche with piquillo peppers is a refreshing start.

Europa — both offering innovative fine dining featuring the freshest ingredients from across the Navarre region, where Spain's highest-quality vegetables are grown.

If you're looking for short day trips, there are several good foodie options, all within about an hour's drive of Pamplona. ■ Check out the Parador of Olite, which offers excellent, traditional in-house dining. But on the way there you should stop at a little cafe called Pastas Urrutia in the town of Ujue for the traditional peasant's food known as

migas. Bread crumbs are mixed with onions, sausage, garlic and tomato. It reminds me a bit of turkey stuffing.

■ At Amaiurko Errota in Amaiur, you can watch corn being ground into meal and fashioned into *talos*, a dish unique to this area. Cheese and ham or sausage are placed in between two grilled corn cakes, kind of like a *quesadilla*. The owners serve local cider with the *talos* at outdoor tables beside a waterfall. It's a hands-on experience in a pastoral setting. To make a reservation, email info@amaiur



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If you go

■ From the U.S., Iberia offers nonstop flights to Madrid, with connections to Pamplona.
■ Food and other tours, including arrangements for watching the running of the bulls from private balconies, can be arranged through Novotur (www.novotur.com/english/).

koerrota.com

■ The Navarre region is home to more than 100 wineries, many of which host travelers for tastings. You can get info from www.bit.ly/LJlvp7a. Two highly recommended for visiting are Bodega Otazu and Lezaun, a family-run winery with a 15th-century cellar where visitors go to get their own wine for lunch.

Colby is a freelance writer.

Hemingway-eye view of Pamplona will cost

By **TERRI COLBY**
Tribune Newspapers

PAMPLONA, Spain — A festival held every July in this northern Spanish city has become one of the most famous in the world thanks to one of the most well-known writers in the world.

Ernest Hemingway described the running of the bulls at the Festival of San Fermin in his novel "The Sun Also Rises." Each year, hundreds of thousands come to Pamplona to watch a smaller number of risk-takers tempt fate in front of the sharp horns of bulls headed for death.

Hemingway first came to Pamplona in 1923 and described the festival like this: "A spectacle capable of getting you out of bed at half past five in the morning for several days in a row."

Tourists can visit Hemingway haunts like the Cafe Iruna or the Gran Hotel La Perla (www.granhotellaperla.com), where Hemingway frequently stayed and where his usual room has been

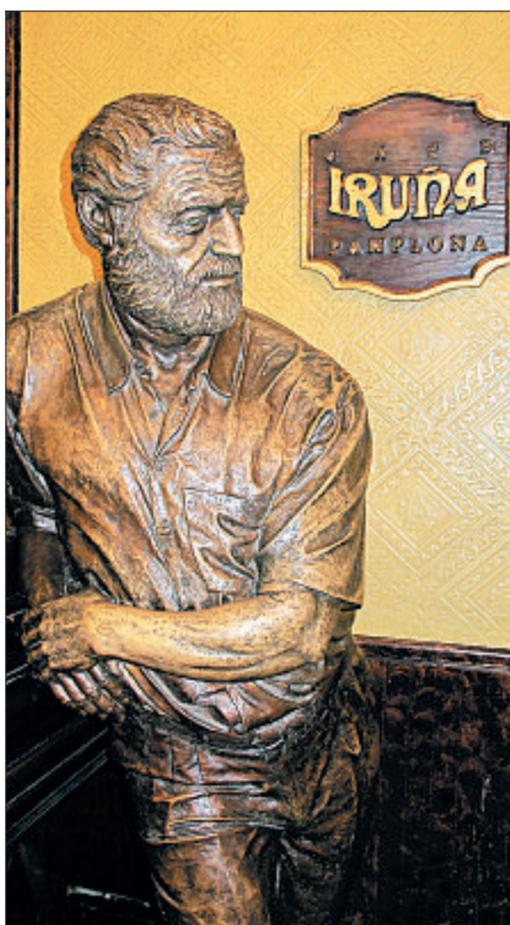
refurbished to look as it did when he spent time there. That is, except for the bathroom, which is luxurious and modern.

La Perla is the only five-star hotel in town, and if you want to stay in Hemingway's suite during San Fermin, it will cost you a pretty penny. Besides the literary history, the room has a balcony overlooking Estafeta Street, where the bulls and the runners are nearly close enough to see them sweat. Even at 2,750 euros (about \$3,150) per night, the Hemingway Suite is booked for the opening days of the festival.

But at the time of publication, it was available for the last three nights of the festival: July 12, 13 and 14.

So if you want to watch men named Nick or Jake or Rick look straight at death, and drink beer as the sun rises on the Plaza del Castillo, and write prose that is short and fine and strong, this might be for you.

Colby is a freelance reporter.



TERRI COLBY/TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS

Ernest Hemingway, who first went to Pamplona, Spain, in 1923, still haunts the Cafe Iruna in the form of a statue.

So you want to run with the bulls ...

By **TERRI COLBY**
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Thinking of running with the bulls? Don't.

Locals will tell you it's dangerous. Between 200 and 300 runners are injured each year, about 10 being gored. The last death was in 2009. But if your mind is made up, here are some things to know.

■ You must be at least 18 and not still drunk from the night before. Cameras, sandals and backpacks are banned. Police will pull you out of the route and perhaps fine you for violating these rules. Don't touch a bull after it passes you; it could cause them to turn around.

■ Starting on the second day of San Fermin, July 7, the bulls (and people) run every morning for the duration of the festival. Six bulls, plus some steers that help to keep the bulls running in a pack, take off precisely at 8 a.m. with the sound of a rocket and begin the half-mile course. Between 2,000 and 5,000 people are poised to run a portion of the route, most

of them doing it for the first time. It is over in 3 minutes.

■ Runners should be in place by 7 a.m. Know that no one runs the whole route. You pick a section that is best for you based on how you choose to run. Each section is different; narrower or wider, flat or on an incline, curved or straight.

■ It's best to watch from the street or a balcony at least one time before you decide to make the run so that you can see how it all works. Also, if you get knocked down during the run, try to move to the side and keep your head covered. Don't try to get up. ■ The traditional costume is worn by nearly everyone, runners and observers alike: white pants and shirt, red bandanna and red waist sash. But unless you want to look like a tourist, don't put your bandanna on until the festival is officially opened during a ceremony at noon on the first day, July 6. And tie your waist sash on the left side.

The festival runs each year from July 6-14