

## Maribel's Dining Guide to Vejer de la Frontera and the Costa de la Luz

\*indicates a personal favorite

### *In Vejer*

**El Jardín del Califa**—this restaurant, belonging to the 20-room Casa del Califa Hotel, located in the town's center at Plaza de España, put Vejer firmly on the gastronomic map. As a nod to the town's Moorish past, with Chefchaouen, Morocco as the village's sister city, the restaurant features Moroccan and Middle Eastern cuisine created by a female chef, Khadija Essaadi and a pastry chef from Rabat.

For evening dining it offers a romantic, garden setting amidst palm trees and Moroccan lamps and an atmospheric, ancient vaulted formal dining room, a 16th century former granary.

Come here for tangines, couscous, pastela, baba ganoush, slow cooked red bass from Tangiers and saffron baked leg of lamb. Vegetables come from the local garden, and the free range eggs prepared specially for the hotel guests for breakfast are especially memorable.

Michelin and Repsol guide recommended, the restaurant has hosted many a famous face, including Jude Law, Javier Bardem, Daryl Hannah and Athina Onassis to name only a few...

Open daily for lunch (1-4) and dinner (7:30-11)

*Califa Tapas now occupies the former space of Corredera 55 and is an extension of the Califa restaurant group and is open all year from noon until 11 pm.*

\***El Muro** is Vejer's new kid on the block, opened in 2022, sitting on Paseo de las Cobijadas, at the end of Juan Bueno where it meets Calle Trafalgar. Native son chef, Francisco Doncel, returns to Vejer after supervising the opening of Ibis in the Montenmedio complex on the highway.

This 33-year old chef trained with 12-Michelin starred Martín Berasategui and at Michelin-starred Casa Gerardo in Asturias. Among the dishes sometimes found on his small menu—Retinto beef and almadraba-caught bluefin *canalones*, tuna carpaccio, dogfish ceviche, salmorejo, medallions of Iberian pork, and of course, a rice dish. The artisan bread comes from La Noria. El Muro comes Michelin recommended.

Closed all day Wednesday and Thursday lunch.

\***Casa Varo**—just up this steep incline, Nuestra Señora de la Oliva, on the way to the church and in its shadow, this popular and very attractive spot serves bluefin tuna in many guises (*ventresca, morrillo, carpaccio, tataki*) all year along, as its owner, Juan Varo García is a tuna specialist. In fact, the restaurant is considered the “temple of bluefin” in Vejer. Varo also offers cuttlefish meatballs, grilled razor clams, Iberian pork, the local Retinto beef from La Janda, scrambled eggs with sea urchin and Payoyo cheese and mojama croquettes. It also boasts an excellent wine list. It offers an outdoor terrace on both sides of the street, but it closes from November until mid-March and every Tuesday.

**4 Estaciones**, was opened in 2017 by the Reyes family of Arohaz in Zahora (see below). It’s housed in a corner spot at Calle Juan Relinque, in a small space with the eclectic “shabby chic” decor of an ancient house, with two inside dining spaces and two outdoor terraces on both streets. The current chef, Emilio Fernández Vela, employs local ingredients while giving them an Asian or South American twist with dishes such as a prawn and avocado Saam and chili crab croquettes. Dishes are meant to be shared. Menu in English. Closed Tuesdays.

**Las Delicias**—at Corredera 31, is a former theater with soaring ceilings dramatically transformed by the well known and now local interior designer, Gaspar Sobrino (the stylist for the Inditex group). It offers outside dining on its terrace and live music at night on weekends. Stand-out dishes include the avocado and octopus salad and chilled garlic and almond soup. Open daily for lunch and dinner most of the year.

\***Garimba Sur**—another striking, tiled-lined, designer-done, small plates restaurant-taberna sitting on the town’s beautiful Plaza de España with a lovely outdoor terrace. The lovely interior, like Las Delicias, was designed by Gaspar Sobrino and is owned by Madrid native, now Vejer resident Javier Dueñas. Its eclectic menu includes vegan and gluten free items and its bar specializes in vermouths. Like many eateries in town, it closes during the winter, usually November to mid-February.

**Trafalgar**—also on the same gorgeous Plaza de España square (known locally as the Plaza de los Pescaítos) and next door to Garimba Sur, it offers updated traditional Andalusian dishes. Star dishes: oxtail stew, cuttlefish croquettes and Iberian pork. Desserts are homemade. It opens for lunch and dinner seasonally, usually from right after Holy Week to the end of October.

**La Judería**—found in the ancient Jewish quarter of Vejer, hence the name, at Calle Judería 3, this tavern-restaurant consists of a downstairs taberna where one can enjoy tapas and wine, and upstairs the more formal restaurant with panoramic views as far as Morocco. Come here for an all Andalusian wine list curated by owner Mario de la Juana, including many noted sherries. The kitchen is open non-stop from 1 until 11 pm. Closed Monday.

**Vinográfica**—at Calle Nuestra Señora de la Oliva 27 is housed in the former space of Viña y Mar and is a member of the Judería group. Its claim to fame is “come, bebe y lee”, being the first spot in the province where one can eat, read or buy a book, taste and/or buy wines. Across the street is their new wine shop. Open Thursday to Monday only.

**Mercado de San Francisco**—this market/food court, in its former life was languishing, dilapidated, but in 2013 was resurrected by interior designer Gaspar Sobrino as a gift to the town. It now houses 14 market stands where locals and visitors can feast on local products, bakery products, tapas, fried fish, even sushi and crepes. During the day it also functions as a traditional market and at night, a meeting place for locals and tourists alike to sample small plates.

### ***In Vejer environs***

**\*La Castillería**—you’ll find it hidden away in the tiny, lush hamlet of (Pago de) Santa Lucía, overflowing with avocado and banana trees, an oasis of vegetation, 5 kilometers below the stunning whitewashed hill town of Vejer. It’s widely considered the *star* dining spot in this area, a pilgrimage site for meat lovers from all over Spain and from beyond. This year celebrates 30 years of business.

Passionate owner Juan Valdés closes this, his carnivore’s haven, for six months of the year from mid October to early to mid March in order to travel all around Spain in search of the finest cuts of meat for his next season. Here he has his own maturation chambers where he ages his meats: blond beef from Galicia, local retinto beef that you’ll see grazing near the beaches, veal from Avila, Palurda from León, Frisona beef from Sevilla and other discoveries. Unlike other beef specialists, like José Gordon of Bodegas Capricho in the León province, Valdés is not a proponent of extreme aging for his beef.

The highly acclaimed meat menu here is divided into 3 sections: ovino (lamb), vacuno (beef) and porcino (pork), quite different from the Basque Country’s grill houses that specialize exclusively in beef or oxen rib steaks and grilled fish. From the porcino menu the highlight is roast baby pig, *cochinillo*, from Segovia. Roast

baby lamb chops, *chuletillas*, from Aranda, are featured in the ovino section. There are no fish main courses on the menu but pescatarians will find several starters to their liking, including clams sauteed with fresh parsley. Vegetables also shine here, simply grilled, and hail from Juan's own three vegetable gardens, served with *cecina*, air dried beef or oxen and accompanied by the chef's special enchilada sauce.

The extensive and reasonably priced wine list curated by sommelier Jesús Parrado features labels from all of Spain's appellations and extends to France, South America, Australia/New Zealand & South Africa.

The prime table for two here sits next to the open kitchen so that those lucky diners can contemplate the bearded chef and his staff, including his son, at work at the grills. The attractive open air terrace with its the enormous, ancient tree trunks with a canopy of reeds (a kind of Polynesian look), is reserved for smokers.

A perfect menu for us here: a starter of grilled lamb sweetbreads or grilled white Navarran asparagus (in season), a Galician blond beef loin aged for 45 days, accompanied by a large platter of French fries (extra charge) and for dessert, Payoyo cheesecake topped with forest fruit marmalade. And to drink: Tesalia Arx red from Arcos de la Frontera, D.O. Cádiz.

The chef's wife, Ana Lucía and his daughter, Ana Reyes, run the front of the house.

In 2024 the restaurant opened for the season on Friday, March 1 (always the first Friday in March, but during March & April only offering lunch service. In May it commences its dinner service. One must reserve well in advance, as soon as the booking page opens online for the busy July-August holiday season. This year on February 1, when the booking engine opened for reservations, most tables for the entire summer season had been booked within an hour! La Castillería now sports one Repsol sun and comes Michelin recommended.

\***Venta El Toro**— next door to La Castillería in this tiny hamlet you'll find chef José Andrés' favorite breakfast/snack place that he loves to frequent for owner Maruja Gallardo's acclaimed fried eggs.

She's been frying up (or rather poaching up) these ecological eggs and locally grown potatoes with extra virgin olive oil in her cast iron skillets for 40 years. When her mother died when she was only 13, she dropped out of school and became the cook for her father and many siblings.

Maruja's modest kitchen doesn't have a microwave or a deep fryer. Each day she serves up at least 40 servings of her eggs and potatoes at 6 euros each. Each additional topping costs €1.50. Andrés orders them topped with chorizo, morcilla from Ronda and Iberian ham as an "appetizer" before dinner at La Castillería! For many, this is a 3-story dish with potatoes on the bottom, topped by a fried egg (but without the crunchy edges—the regulars don't want them) and finished off with slices of Iberian ham from El Arahal in Sevilla. She also offers traditional stews such as chickpeas with spinach and the locally famous pork sandwich, *lomo en manteca*.

This modest spot began in 1945 as a wine dispensary and was soon discovered by bullfighters, such as Paquirri, (thus the bullfight posters adorning the walls) and a few famous Spanish actors and now has added a small, plant filled outdoor terrace and another outdoor dining spot across the street, next to the brook.

It's open from 9:30 am-9:00 pm daily except Tuesday.

*Edited to add that Maruja has now retired but her son, Antonio Esquivel Gallardo, has carried on her torch.*

\***Venta Pinto**— on the outskirts of Vejer on the CA-4200 highway, kilometer 7.7, in the village of La Barca de Vejer, this popular roadside inn has transformed itself from a humble, traditional, roadside stopping place for a coffee or a hearty breakfast sandwich to a formal restaurant. The bar-cafetería is always packed with locals and tourists alike, who have heard about its famous sandwiches.

In the formal restaurant from May until late June one can dine on the fresh local *atún de almadraba*, the prized blue fin tuna caught with a unique series of nets, created by the Phoenicians, along with the local Retinto beef from La Janda. Here's the restaurant menu---desserts are homemade.

[sala.pdf](#)

In 2020 the family added a new outdoor patio plus a gourmet shop, **El Colmado de Pinto**, next door that offers its products, like its famous pork loin sandwich, *lomo en manteca*, since many crowded the bar just to buy this famous sandwich for take away (which the establishment mails to fans all over Spain, including to Congress). The Diario de Cádiz calls it "the breakfast of champions".

This acclaimed pork loin sandwich, made from a 50-year old recipe, comes in several different sizes, and the bread comes from La Noria in Vejer.

The Colmado also stocks boxes of *alfajores* from Medina Sidonia, a blend of breadcrumbs, spices, nuts and honey, a popular holiday treat plus Herpac blue fin canned tuna, olive oils and the famous Payoyo cheeses from Grazalema.

Venta Pinto is now run by the daughter of the current owners, Cristina Pinto. It is in its fourth generation of family ownership. It's also won the Premios Gurmé Cádiz popular vote for best traditional *venta* several times and now has a Repsol Guide *solete*. Chef José Andrés, whose family vacations in Zahara, is a big fan. One can reserve online. And it's open daily from breakfast until after the dinner hours.

On Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/ventapinto/>

**Patria**—in the hamlet of La Muela, off the N-340, a 10-kilometer drive northwest of Vejer, this is another highly popular countryside dining spot where a Danish couple, Ase and Thomas Donso, have since 2006 honed a fine local reputation for their all locally sourced cuisine. Here they offer a flagstone veranda for alfresco, candlelight dining on the terrace with fine views of the entire coast.

The owners have started their own winery production, **Etú Vinos** and produce a Sonrisa sauvignon blanc, rosé and red and a Petit Verdot. One can purchase these wines at the winery or at the Vejer market or the Pepe Melero butcher shop in town.

The opening hours vary by month. See them [here](#).

### ***El Palmar beach (the closest beach to Vejer)***

**Casa Francisco el de Siempre**—just 10 kilometers from Vejer and perched at one of the coast's most dazzling beaches, this restaurant, opened in 1950, directly faces the ocean and is a local favorite for its rices, paella and tuna dishes, especially its rice with bluefin tuna. It opens for both lunch and dinner except Wednesdays, and it also features a tapas bar. Closed during the winter season from December to the end of February and closed Wednesdays. Michelin recommended.

**El Alferez**—it's separated from the beach by a highway but also offers local grilled fish and crustaceans, almadraba tuna in many variations and rice with Scarlet prawns. The decor feels more sophisticated than its neighbor, it also offers a tapas bar and it receives a nod from the Michelin guide and one sun from the Repsol guide. Its signature dish: *salteado de atún rojo*. Its opening season is usually first of March to first of December. Closed Tuesdays.

<https://www.restauranteelalferez.com>

**Casa Juan**—another beachside restaurant from 1979, neighbor to Casa Francisco, it too specializes in almadraba-caught bluefin tuna and rice dishes with two terraces (one chill out downstairs and one upstairs) facing the ocean. It was redecorated in 2018 by the same architectural studio that redesigned El Campero. One can also dine at the attractive bar. Homemade desserts. Closed from December through February.

**Valhalla Gastro Beach Club** is the second beach club to be opened on the Costa de la Luz by the prestigious Azotea group of Madrid (not Sevilla), coming after its Club del Cuartel del Mar on Barrosa beach. Like its sibling, here you'll find an elaborately designed space created for fine dining, for relaxation and enjoying the amazing sunset of *Cadizfornia*. Plus Valhalla offers a huge pool surrounded hammocks and Balinese beds and a chill out zone serving a variety of craft cocktails. Certainly this season, *THE place to be!*

### ***In Medina Sidonia***

\***Venta la Duquesa**—on the A-396 highway south of town at kilometer 7.7, it is run by female chef, Miriam Rodríguez Prieto, who trained with the Roca brothers of El Celler de Can Roca and formally trained as a pastry chef at the prestigious Hofmann cooking school in Barcelona. The vegetables come from the restaurant's own garden, and the beef served is local retinto from La Janda. During the fall/winter, game dishes, such as creamy rice with rabbit or partridge (*perdiz de monte*), venison and wild mushrooms are featured. Desserts are outstanding, such as the rice pudding with lemon cream. Despite its moniker as a *venta* (=rustic roadside watering hole), this is a sophisticated dining venue. Repsol guide recommended. Menu in English. Open for lunch and dinner but closed Tuesdays. In August, open daily. One can book online 24 hours in advance. It won the jury's vote for best *venta* this year from Premios Gurmé Cádiz and comes Michelin and Repsol guide recommended.

### ***Conil de la Frontera***

\***La Fontanilla**—is found not in town but instead facing the Fontanilla beach below the Hotel Fuerte Conil. This lovely seafood restaurant, founded in 1964 by the Pérez Rubio family, serves almadraba-caught bluefin tuna in seventeen different guises. Make sure to ask for the almadraba menu. Its *atún encebollado*, or tuna smothered in a rich onion sauce, is outstanding, as is the tataki of tuna loin with soy, honey and sesame seeds. Other outstanding fish dishes include the mustard sea bass and crustacean specialties include a seafood paella, *arroz marinero*. A popular starter—the shrimp croquettes. The pretty and relaxing all

blue and white dining room is open directly to the beach. There is also a tapas bar inside.

Closed on Wednesdays except for July/August. Closed in December and January. It comes Repsol guide recommended.

**Feduchy**—at Pascual Junquera 2 in the center of town, housed in a cream colored 18th century stone building with lively terrace and with a branch, a beach bar or *chiringuito* on Fontanilla beach, are Conil's two high season hot spots. During the day creative tapas are served and in the evening craft cocktails. It has received a "solete" from the Repsol guide. In winter it only opens on Fridays/Saturdays/Sundays. The rest of the year it opens daily except Wednesdays except in July and August when it opens daily.

*If you find yourself in Conil during the next edition of the Route of the Bluefin Tuna from early May-early June, you'll find up to 40 participating bars that advertise "300 ways to eat tuna".*

### ***El Colorado (near Conil de la Frontera)***

\***Venta Melchor**—on the old Cadiz-Algeciras highway N-340 at kilometer 18 (twelve kilometers from Chiclana next to Calas de Roche), founded in 1960 as a roadside inn and today in the hands of the founder's son and his wife, Juan Carlos Almazo and Petri Benítez.

It has become one of the most popular and best traditional *ventas* in the region, known for its delicious stews (*comida de cuchareo*) such as chickpeas with oxtail, game dishes such as partridge or rabbit, almadraba-caught tuna, especially the tartare, shrimp fritters with Scarlet prawns and vegetables from their own garden (artichokes locally known as *alcuaciles* and eggplant). The wine list comes primarily from local producers. It was recently highly recommended by Spain's leading gastronomic critic, Carlos Maribona. Its all white glass terrace has been recently renovated. Open daily except Mondays for lunch and dinner. Repsol guide recommended.

### ***Barbate***

\***El Campero**—at Avenida de la Constitución, is THE TEMPLE for lovers of bluefin tuna caught according to the ancient *almadraba* tradition. In fact, it's widely considered one of the top seafood restaurants in the entire country. Although the fishing town of Barbate is a workaday place that won't win any beauty awards, gourmands from all around make the pilgrimage here to feast on its almadraba-caught tuna. During the late spring-early summer almadraba harvest of



the migrating bluefin tuna, the specimens are fast frozen at 60 degrees below zero so that the tuna can be available “fresh” all year long.

El Campero’s owner and tuna guru Pepe Melero butchers the tuna into some 25 different parts, the fatty belly (*ventresca or ijada*) and the nape of the neck (*morillo*) being two of the most coveted. Even the sperm (*huevas de leche*), roof of the mouth (*paladar*) and heart (*corazón encebollado*) have its fans, and he offers these parts up into 40 different dishes, both traditional and Japanese style. Nose to tail eating. No wonder the bluefin tuna is called the “Iberian pig of the sea”. Each year the chef, Julio José Vázquez, attempts to surprise diners with new textures and new tuna body parts.

He also offers a degustation menu consisting of 12 different tuna dishes and two desserts, but for most, it’s best to dine a la carte so as not to become overwhelmed (and our waiter agreed).

The elegant restaurant is accompanied by a newly redesigned and spacious bar with high tables and a large bar, where one can try these tuna dishes in miniature style (70 different dishes of tapas and raciones) and be well cared for and superbly advised by the attentive wait staff.

This is one not to miss on any trip to the Costa de la Luz, but be aware that during the almadraba season and July-August it can get extremely busy, heaving with diners, so best to reserve far in advance. There is an outdoor terrace for the overflow. Tables can be booked online, but the restaurant will follow up with a phone call to reconfirm.

It also closes in the winter in November and opens up again in mid to late February.

The restaurant has been awarded with one Repsol sun and has earned a place in the top hundred European restaurants by Opinionated About Dining.

**Yoko Barbate**—this is the fairly recent solo venture of Cádiz chef Alvaro Rivera Malia on Avenida Virgen del Carmen. He honed his skills at Madrid’s Michelin-starred Kabuki and restaurants of the Adrià brothers’ former dining empire, El Barri, in Barcelona. He prides himself on offering the finest quality ingredients: almadraba-caught bluefin tuna, blond Galician beef, Delta del Ebro rice and of course, he includes teriyaki, nigiris, sashimis and sushi, fusing Japanese and Mediterranean cooking. And to drink, both sherries and sakis. The 40-seat dining room has an open kitchen and chef’s table, serving two tasting menus, plus a summer terrace. He won the prize from the jury of Premios Gurmé Cádiz this year

for “best creative restaurant” in the province. He also boasts both a Michelin recommendation and one Repsol sun.

### **Zahora (next to the camping Caños de Meca, near Barbate)**

**Arohaz**—this small 6-room hotel/restaurant/gastrobar complex sits a short drive from the beach and has been bestowed a Bib Gourmand designation for value in the Michelin guide.

Greatest hits here: almond gazpacho with shrimp and melon, Iberian pork, cuttlefish pizza, retinto beef-filled canelones, gazpacho sorbet with poached egg and Payoyo cheesecake with beet ice cream. It shares the same owners with 4 Estaciones in Vejer. It closes from the end of October to the end of February. During the summer season it opens daily except for Tuesdays.

### ***Zahara de los Atunes***

\***Hotel Antonio**---is found on the southern end of Zahara, not in the center of town but instead on the road leading to the resort of Atlanterra. This highly regarded hotel-restaurant has been family-run for decades and is now in the hands of the grandson of the founder. It consists of a very comfortable bar area with high tables with leather banquettes and a lovely, traditional, ocean-view dining room. Along with El Campero, this is considered the coast’s top dining spot and a meal here should not be missed. It regularly wins awards for its original bluefin tuna tapa creations, such as the *latapatún*, served in a tin can and its tuna yogurt. In fact, there are 15 different tuna dishes on the menu. And José Andrés and family consider it home during their august vacation on the coast. Menu in English. It boasts one Repsol sun. The hotel & restaurant open each season in mid-March and close at the end of October.

**Tía Juana**—at Pérez Galdós 11 in Zapal, the fishermen’s quarter of Zahara specializes in tapas and small plates meant to be shared. Some of Austrian chef Manuel Auer’s stand out dishes: mini hamburgers, cazón en adobo (marinated dogfish), tomato stuffed with tuna mousse, tataki of smoked tuna. Its outdoor terrace faces the dunes.

### ***Chiclana de la Frontera-Novo Sancti Petri***

\***Cataria**—the signature restaurant of the 5-star Hotel Iberostars Selection Andalucía Plaza, supervised by the owner-chef, Aitor Arregi, owner of one of the finest seafood temples in the Basque Country, the Michelin-starred Elkano in Getaria, Gipuzkoa.

The newly remodeled and expanded hotel and restaurant sit in the Marbella-style luxury resort development of Novo Sancti Petri on the beautiful, 8-kilometer long Barrosa beach.

Like its cousin in Getaria the claim to fame here is charcoal-grilled local fish, here from the Bay of Cádiz rather than from the Cantabrian sea: *urta, borriquete, san pedro, salmonetes, mero, pargo, corvina, ortiguillas* (sea bream, donkey fish, John Dory, red mullet, grouper, red snapper, sea bass, sea anemones) served completely unadorned, without sauces or accompaniments.

All the whole fish is priced by the kilo, and the offerings will depend on what is available from the pier that day.

The special grills were assembled in the Basque Country and brought down the 1,000 km, that separate Getaria from Cataria and the charcoal comes from Extremadura.

Cataria has received one sol in the 2020 Repsol guide and is Michelin recommended. It closes for the season on September 1 and reopens in the spring, sometime in April (exact date unknown). During its season it opens for dinner only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and for lunch and dinner on weekends. Closed Wednesdays.

**Alevante**—inside the Hotel Meliá Novo Sancti Petri in the same beachside location as the Iberostars Hotel above, this 5-star too boasts an acclaimed gastronomic-luxury restaurant brought to the hotel by 3-Michelin starred Angel León, “the chef of the sea” of Aponiente in El Puerto de Santa María.

Here the chef serves to only 38 diners his “greatest hits” via one degustation “Grand Menu” only: an 18-course tasting menu for €175 with optional wine pairing for a total of €270.

The restaurant opens for the season in mid March and closes in early October and opens daily for dinner only except Sundays when it remains shut. Reservations can be booked online, but beware that there is a stiff cancellation fee if not cancelled 5 days in advance.

The restaurant holds 1 Michelin star and 1 Repsol sun.

## ***Barrosa beach in Chiclana's resort of Novo Sancti Petri***

**El cuartel del mar**—this formerly military garrison belonging to the Guardia Civil-turned chic coastal “hot spot” lies south of the two aforementioned hotels, directly on La Barrosa beach next to an ancient watchtower in the same development of Novo Sancti Petri.

The building was unoccupied for 30 years and in ruins when last year it was completely redesigned by the Azotea group of Madrid (not of Sevilla) as a deluxe and highly Instagram-able *chiringuito* (beach bar-restaurant) and event space. During its first summer, it has become the place “to see and be seen”, especially at cocktail hour with its DJ chill out music. A world famous bartender was brought in from the Amalfi coast, and to guarantee high quality cuisine, the executive chef, Manuel Berganza, who trained with Sergi Arola and Quique Dacosta and garnered a Michelin star in New York at Andanada 141 has designed a creative menu sourced from local purveyors. Standout dishes: tuna tartar, grilled artichokes with Payoyo cheese, creamy rice with Scarlet prawns, grilled baby clams with sherry and carrot cake. Many wines are local.

It opens Wednesday-Sunday continuously from noon until 1:00 am during the season.

## ***Bolonia beach***

\***Las Rejas**—at Calle Lentiscal 8 in the middle of this sleepy village (actually named Lentiscal rather than Bolonia) famous for its enormous, 30-meter high sand dune and the spectacular Roman ruins of Baelo Claudia, sitting right on the beach and 25 minutes northwest of Tarifa. It's been in business since 1986 and is now run by the two Domínguez siblings, Carlos and José and José's wife, Angeles. The kitchen is in the hands of Angeles and Moroccan chef Yasim Hajjah.

Among its very traditional specialties are its squid croquettes, cuttlefish in its own black ink, its soupy rice with lobster (*arroz caldoso de bogavante*) or with Scarlet prawns (*carabineros*). Its line-caught catches of the day brought directly from the pier in Barbate and displayed at the entrance (the local fish=gallineta) are fried whole with scales intact. Its tuna in lard (*lomo en manteca*) is served with roasted peppers, accompanied by their acclaimed French fries and rustic brown wheat bread, *pan de macho*, from Tarifa.

And the shrimp fritters (*tortillitas de camarones*) are said to equal those of Casa Balbino in Sanlúcar.

For dessert: homemade almond nougat flan and lemon tart.

This simple, light-filled and friendly restaurant has been frequented by three-Michelin-starred chefs Ferran Adrià, Juan Mari Arzak and Angel León, along with José Andrés. In the fall and winter the restaurant only opens on weekends/holidays. From May 1-October 15 it opens daily except Mondays/Tuesdays. The menu has been translated into English.

An article by gastro critic José Carlos Capel: [https://elpais.com/elpais/2021/06/16/gastronotas\\_de\\_capel/1623823293\\_488096.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2021/06/16/gastronotas_de_capel/1623823293_488096.html)

## ***Tarifa***

**La Pescadería**-- at Paseo de la Alameda, in the center of town, is arguable Tarifa's finest seafood restaurant. The Argentinian creator, Victor, is an avid bluefin tuna fan and serves it in many guises, along with his celebrated rice dishes and other seafood local to the Strait of Gibraltar. Recommended by the Repsol guide, it offers a large outdoor terrace.

**Bibo Beach House**—Michelin-starred chef Dani García's Tarifa branch of his popular beach house in the Hotel Puente Romano of Marbella set here on the wind surfing Playa Valdevaqueros. Just like his mothership, it has a youthful informality, with sea views and an eclectic menu from around the globe. Here you'll find some of the chef's most popular dishes, such as guacamole, Iberian ham croquettes, marinated dogfish or an oxtail brioche. It only opens during the summer season.

## ***Shopping on the Costa de la Luz***

**Cestería tradicional**—a basket workshop shop in Vejer at Calle Trafalgar 7

**Pastelería La Exquisita (hermanos Galván)**—at Altozano 1 is considered the best sweet shop in town and has been going strong since the 1940s. It's famous for its *tortas vejeriegas*, made with cinnamon, flour, lard and sugar. Inside you'll find vintage photos of the town and original pastry making instruments.

**Vejer Artesanía** is a shop on the Plaza España in Vejer selling crafts from local artisans and Moroccan ceramics.

**Herpac**-At Calle Ancha 92 in Barbate this company, made famous for their super freezing method of preserving the bluefin tuna caught here in the spring in the traditional almadraba method, has a retail shop just around the corner from the central market, Mercado de Abastos. Here they sell their wonderful canned and

preserved bluefin tuna, such as bluefin tuna in olive oil, *mojama* (air dried tuna) and *atún en manteca* (tuna preserved in pork fat).

Gadira—the competitor company of Herpac, sharing in the almadraba ultra freezing and canning trade, also has a shop in Barbate at Avenida de Andalucía 6 and in Conil de la Frontera at Calle Catadores 11.

**El Colmado de Venta el Pinto**—attached to the much-loved roadside inn in La Barca de Vejer (mentioned above) is the family's delicatessen. Here they sell their famous *lomo en manteca* (pork loin preserved in red colored Iberian pork fat) sandwiches, their homemade desserts, cured meats from Paco Melero in Vejer, artisan cheeses (Payoyo), rustic country bread, honey, olive oil, canned bluefin tuna and local Arabic-origin sweets, such as *alfajores* from Medina Sidonia (made of breadcrumbs, spices, honey, hazelnuts and almonds) in the shape of small rolls and the Andalusian Carnival, Easter and Christmas favorite, *pestiños*. The former are in the shape of small rolls and made of honey, almonds, hazelnuts, flour, breadcrumbs and spices. The latter are made with flour, yeast, orange zest, anise and cinnamon or other spices like sesame and fried in olive oil then glazed in honey or dusted with powdered sugar.

**Confitería Sobrina de Trejas**—in Medina Sidonia at the Plaza de España specializes in *alfajores*. This family-run bakery has been making them for 5 generations. Open daily from 10 am-8:30 pm.

**Quesería El Cabrero de Bolonia**—an artisan cheese producer in the hills, some 6 kilometers high above Bolonia beach that has one of the few remaining flock of Payoya goats, 200 of them, that graze in the protected El Estrecho Natural Park. One can purchase these delicious cheeses (*el cremoso de Bolonia* is their biggest hit) there in the shop or in the CAUR shop in Conil.

**\*La Cremita**—the finest bread maker on the coast, Daniel Ramos produces 40 different types of artisan bread in his wood-fired oven, *picos*, *torrijas* (*pain perdu*) and *regañas* and showcases his wares at distinguished restaurants such as Cataria, Aponiente, Alevante, el Cuartel del Mar, El Campero, El Faro de Cádiz and Lú Cocina y Alma.

You can find these creations at the following shop in Chiclana de la Frontera: at Calle doctor Pedro Vélez, next to the Cervecería Manguita. His workshop is located at Ronda de Levante 8 in an industrial area, open from 8 am-3 pm Monday-Saturday.

**Paco Ortega Productos Selectos**—in the center of Conil de la Frontera, at Calle Antonio Ligeró 6, a gourmet shop selling the finest products from the province and beyond: Iberian ham, cheeses, wines, etc.

### ***Wineries***

Several wineries in the Chiclana-Conil de la Frontera are open to visitors.

Recommended:

**Primitivo Collantes**---produces finos, olorosos, amontillados and cream sherry plus white wines fermented in wine skins for one year. Located at Calle Ancha 1.

**Manuel Aragón**—on the Cádiz-Málaga highway, is more than 100 years old and produces palo cortado, oloroso, Pedro Jiménez, muscatel and amontillado and has received high marks from the prestigious Guía Peñín. The winery can be visited with a prior reservation from Monday-Saturday from 10 am-2 pm.

**Sancha Pérez**—is both an organic olive oil (Arbequina olives) and wine producer. Grapes grown here include Tintilla de Rota, Petit Verdot, Tempranillo, Albariño, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, and they are now producing a white wine made from Palomino and Pedro Jiménez.

Cádiz province table wines to enjoy at local restaurants:

### **White**

Forlong

(palomino-Pedro Ximénez)

As de Mirabrás by Barbadillo

(palomino)

Barbazul

(chardonnay)

Entrechuelos

(chardonnay)

Cortijo de Jara

(gewürztraminer)

Socaire by Primitivo Collantes

(palomino)

Ube Miraflores

(Palomino)

### **Rosé**

Huerta de Albalá  
(syrah)

**Red**

Forlong Assemblage  
(Tintilla-syrah-merlot)

Barbazul  
(cabernet sauvignon-merlot-syrah)

Garum  
(merlot-syrah-petit verdot)

Taberner Huerta de Albalá  
(syrah)

Arx Tesalia  
(syrah-tintilla de Rota-petit verdot)