**Spanish Customs: Coffee - the Most Important Drink of the Day**

Just as the streets in Italy smell of garlic, in Spain, the streets smell of coffee. Spaniards start their day with a good cup of coffee. It must be freshly ground and brewed in an espresso machine. The place where you drink coffee is also important because it's best enjoyed in a bar or café. I have to disappoint all fans of instant coffee. In Spain, there isn't much choice when it comes to this type of beverage. You can notice it by looking at the store shelves – only whole beans, ground coffee, and capsules.

What type of coffee is the most popular in Spain? Spaniards prefer:

• Cortado, which is espresso with a small amount of milk

• cafe corto, which is a "short black"

• cafe largo, which is a double espresso

• bombon, which is coffee with condensed milk (only for lovers of very sweet coffee)

Spaniards drink an average of 2-3 coffees a day. It's customary to have a cup of coffee after lunch. If you want to learn about other types of coffee and Spanish customs regarding beverages popular in Spain, I encourage you to read an article about which drinks are worth trying in this country.

**Interpersonal Relationships in Spain**

Spaniards are a people who easily make new acquaintances. Why is it easier for them than for us Poles? Because Spaniards are talkative and curious (to say the least, nosy). It's not surprising that the lady in the bakery or greengrocer asks about the private life of the customers. Of course, not intrusively. Why is it so important to be open and talk to everyone, whether in a store, bank queue, or at a bus stop? This way, Spaniards build a network of contacts and acquaintances. You never know when you'll need a plumber, electrician, or clerk who may turn out to be the son or husband of the lady in the store. It's always better to have recommendations.

**"A good morning" is not enough**

In Spain, there is a rule that if you meet a friend on the street, you should stop for a few minutes of chat. If you don't do that, you'll be considered rude and grumpy. In informal conversations, Spaniards often shorten greetings to just "buenas". If you're in Catalonia or Valencia, you may hear "adeu" or "deu" for goodbye, which simply means "adios".

**Yell, Gossip, and Complain**

Spanish streets are very loud and it's not because of cars. It's hard not to hear laughter, arguments, and people calling out to each other on the street. In a bar or restaurant, you can't hear the person sitting at your table, and sometimes you can't even hear your own thoughts. Generally speaking, you have to shout – my vocal cords often can't handle it.

Spaniards gossip, regardless of gender. After all, it's best to talk about absentees, and other people's lives and problems are much more interesting than your own. As evidence of this, I'll tell you about a strange situation (strange for a Pole). A few years ago, some friends and I went to a New Year's Eve dinner at a restaurant, and one couple didn't show up. Of course, they informed us of their absence at the last moment. Everyone (almost everyone) started to speculate about what could have happened, until one of the friends blurted out that the couple was in the process of separation. And so the whole New Year's Eve was spent discussing (read gossiping) about the absent couple. Don't try to change the subject in such situations, it won't work.

If you think that we Poles complain a lot, it means you don't know enough about Spaniards. The difference lies in what we complain about. They complain little about health, and if they do, they do it in a joking way. Reasons for complaining include weather (it's either too hot or too cold), work (or rather the lack of it), low pensions, political corruption, and the ever-present crisis.

**Spanish Customs: Celebrating Food**

Eating is very important in the life of Spaniards. The celebration of lunch normally lasts about an hour and a half (sometimes even longer)! Weekend outings to restaurants with friends are also very popular. Later, everyone at work comments on where they went, what they ate, and whether they recommend the place. With each passing year, the demands of Spanish palates grow, hence restaurateurs compete with each other in culinary innovations. It's not surprising to me that so many restaurants have Michelin stars.

In my opinion, you won't find better prepared seafood dishes than those served in Spain. I used to dislike shrimp and all kinds of mussels until I tried them in Spain. Don't be afraid to try new dishes. One dish that positively surprised me is called "rabo de toro", which is bull's tail. Of course, I should also mention Spanish desserts, which may seem quite sweet to us Poles.

The only thing Spaniards can't live without is food. It's no wonder that Spanish cuisine is considered one of the best in the world.

**Fiesta and Siesta**

Spaniards are a nation that likes to have fun and spend time with family and friends. It may seem that Spaniards hardly work, because practically every month there is some national or regional holiday, or the patron saint of a city or village. Any reason to celebrate is good. It's also a pretext to eat well and drink a little more. I've heard from many Spaniards that no matter how deep the crisis is, the fiesta must go on. One of my favorite events in Spain is the Fallas festival in Valencia.

After partying, it's time to rest. Is it true that Spaniards sleep during siesta? Yes and no. In the summer at noon, after a good lunch, you feel like taking a nap, but that doesn't mean that all Spaniards sleep at that time. In many places, siesta is a time for lunch and waiting out the hottest hours, usually in front of the television.