

BY SIENNA AKORE

La Tomatina

Where does it take place and what is it?

- ▶ La Tomatina is a festival that is held in the Valencian town of Buñol, in the East of Spain 30 kilometres (19 mi) from the Mediterranean, in which participants throw tomatoes and get involved in a tomato fight purely for entertainment purposes.
- ▶ Thousands upon thousands of people make their way from all corners of the world to fight in this 'World's Biggest Food Fight' where more than one hundred metric tons of over-ripe tomatoes are thrown in the streets.



When does it take place and how many people take part in it?



La Tomatina is an annual festival that is held on the last Wednesday of August each year. At around 11am many trucks haul the bounty of tomatoes into the centre of the town, Plaza del Pueblo. The tomatoes come from Extremadura, where they are less expensive. Technically the festival does not begin until one brave person has climbed to the top of a two-story high, greased-up wooden pole and reached the coveted ham at the top. In practice this process takes a long time and the festival starts despite no one reaching the meaty prize. The signal for the beginning of the fight is firing of water cannons, and the chaos begins.

Around 20,000 people visit Buñol every year for La Tomatina.

History of the festival

- ▶ Since 1945 it has been held on the last Wednesday of August, during a week of festivities in Buñol. The tomato fight has been a strong tradition in Buñol since 1944 or 1945. No one is completely certain how this event originated. Possible theories on how the Tomatina began include a local food fight among friends, a juvenile class war, a volley of tomatoes from bystanders at a carnival parade, a practical joke on a bad musician, and the anarchic aftermath of an accidental lorry spillage.
- ▶ One popular theory is that disgruntled townspeople attacked city councilmen with tomatoes during a town celebration. Whatever happened to begin the tradition, it was enjoyed so much that it was repeated the next year, and the year after that, and so on. The holiday was banned during the Spanish State period under Francisco Franco for having no religious significance but returned in the 1970s after his demise.
- ▶ The festival is in honour of the town's patron saints, Luis Bertran and the Mare de Deu dels Desemparats (Mother of God of the Defenceless)

What happens at the festival?

- ▶ At la Tomatina there is Live music, fireworks, and cooking contests precede the actual Tomatina tomato fight. ... The tomato fight continues until 12 noon when another rocket is set off to signal the end of the melee.



What food do they have at la Tomatina festival

- ▶ paella is traditionally eaten during la Tomatina, as there is a paella cooking contest before the big event. Paella originated in Valencia which is very close to Buñol. the dish is made with meat, rice and vegetables cooked together in a large pan.



What do they wear at la Tomatina

- ▶ wear clothes that you don't mind to throw away after the epic fight. Some people wear white t-shirts, some others wear old clothes. Swimsuit under your clothes is not a bad idea because you're going to end up soaked by tomato rain and water hoses.





