

## JAVIER CAMPOS IS CROWNED WINNER OF THE 32<sup>nd</sup> HAM CUTTING CONTEST / DEHESA DE EXTREMADURA, AND SANTIAGO SALGUEIRO WINS BURGER MASTERS – NATIONAL GOURMET BURGER CHAMPIONSHIP BY ARCECARNE

Javier Campos has been named Best Ham Cutter at the pioneering Salón Gourmets (SG) competition; Santiago Salgueiro, from La Pepita Burger Bar (Vigo, Pontevedra), has won first prize in the new Burger Masters – National Gourmet Burger Championship by Arcecarne

In addition, the first day of Salón Gourmets hosted the inaugural Tacomanía- Canary Islands Avocado PGI Mexican Taco Championship, won by Daniel Martínez, from the Tatemado restaurant (Madrid); the winner of The Best Navarre Vegetable Stew: Reyno Gourmet Challenge

From today, Monday 13 April, until Thursday 16, Ifema Madrid is once again hosting the world's leading Quality Food and Beverage Fair, which in its 39th edition features 1,993 exhibitors, 55,000 products and an expected attendance of over 110,000 professionals



**Madrid, April 2026.**– On the first day of the 39th edition of Salón Gourmets (SG), two of the most eagerly awaited competitions took place: the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ham Cutting Contest / Dehesa de Extremadura and the Burger Masters – National Gourmet Burger Championship by Arcecarne. These two events put the participants' talent, ingenuity and skill to the test. The newly launched Tacomanía- Canary Islands Avocado PGI Mexican Taco Championship and the Reyno Gourmet Challenge, in which the Best Navarre Vegetable Stew was chosen, also took place. Salón Gourmets will feature Estrella Galicia as its Official Beer and Cabreiroá as its Official Water.

In the 32nd Ham Cutting Contest / Dehesa de Extremadura, first prize went to Javier Campos (Cuenca), whilst Raúl Piriz, from Salamanca, took second prize and Toño Rodríguez, from Casares Costa (Málaga), came third. The winner of the competition, who also took the prize for Best Creative/Artistic Dish—for which he was presented with a certificate and a Dehesa de Extremadura PDO Cebo Campo ham—explained: ‘I am very proud of this award, the result of a great deal of hard work and dedication. I approached the competition with effort and perseverance, which were key to achieving this. When carving, the key is to cut thin slices to best enjoy the ham.’

The contestants had an hour and a half to demonstrate their skills and become Spain’s Best Ham Cutter. Six cutters competed in a skills contest before a panel of professional judges, comprising Francisco Javier Morato Moro, President of the Dehesa de Extremadura PDO, Carlos Briz, Vice-President of the Dehesa de Extremadura PDO, Florencio Sanchidrián, master carver, Elena Arzak, chef and owner of the Arzak restaurant, Fernando Romay, former player for the Spanish national basketball team, Sergio Pazos, actor, Juan José Álvarez, Director General of ASAJA, and Alejandro Hernández, chef at the Versátil restaurant. The jury assessed criteria such as the thickness and size of the slice, the straightness of the cut, the presentation of the plate, cleanliness and speed, amongst others. In the competition, participants had to calculate a 100-gram portion, demonstrate their knowledge of ham culture by answering a related question, and present a dish featuring each of the ham’s sections: the maza, babilla and punta.

At the awards ceremony held after the competition, the winner received a Dehesa de Extremadura PDO Iberian Cebo ham and a cash prize of €1,000, as well as a trophy and a certificate recognising him as Spain’s Best Ham Carver 2026. Second place received a ham stand and a certificate, whilst third place received a set of knives.

This Monday also saw the 16th GourmetQuesos, The Best Spanish Cheeses Championship 2026, the most prestigious cheese competition in Spain. Once again this year, GourmetQuesos has selected the best Spanish cheeses, assessing aspects such as the rind, colour, texture, aroma, flavour, aftertaste and persistence of each sample. Today, Monday, the winners in each category were announced, including the ten Gold cheeses in the Cheese from Spain Awards (ICEX) category and the Champion Gold award, but not the Overall Winner. The top three in each category are in the running for the ‘Best Cheese in Spain’ award, chosen by a panel of 20 professional judges, who will announce the overall winner on Thursday 16 April on the Plató Gourmets stage (hall 7) at 12.30 pm.

### **THE BEST BURGERS GATHER AT THE BURGER MASTERS**

The most eagerly awaited gourmet burger event of the year took place on Monday at SG. At the Burger Masters – National Gourmet Burger Championship by Arcecarne, Santiago Salgueiro, from La Pepita Burger Bar (Vigo, Pontevedra), took first place with a burger made from a blend of four meats — free-range beef, young beef, Wagyu and Angus — and topped with ingredients designed to complement them without overpowering their flavour: glazed mushrooms, potato rösti, sheep’s milk cream cheese and subtle hints of cecina and meat sauce. The result is a balanced creation, where the meat remains the true star. “We created it specifically for the competition and, given the response, we’re not ruling out adding it to the menu soon.” Second place went to Jon Dávila, from Kai Street Food (San Sebastián), and third place to Ramón Francho, from Salvaje Burger (Vitoria). There was also a special mention for Luis Franco, from Monkey Food (Seville, Huelva and Badajoz).

The competition, organised by Arcecarne and Grupo Gourmets, saw six chefs from across the country take part, with just 20 minutes to prepare four burgers. The participants had to create a recipe using meat selected from the extensive catalogue of Arcecarne, the brand behind the event, demonstrating their skill in achieving the perfect doneness, juiciness and flavour, with the aim of impressing the jury, who assessed all these aspects meticulously. The judging panel consisted of Carnivora Gourmets, an influencer; Jhosef Arias, from Grupo Jhosef Arias; and Joaquín Felipe, chef at Atocha 107. In addition, Arcecarne unveiled a newly created type of burger: La Mestiza. The competition concluded with a burger tasting session for the public.

## TACOMANÍA – TACO COMPETITION, ONE OF THE MOST ANTICIPATED PREMIERES

The first day of Salón Gourmets saw the launch of a new competition: Tacomanía- Canary Islands Avocado PGI Mexican Taco Championship. The aim of this championship was to reward the best Mexican taco creation featuring Aguacate de Canarias with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), promoting creativity, technique, flavour and speed of execution. The winner was Daniel Martínez, from the Tatemado restaurant (Madrid), who received a prize of €1,500, whilst second place went to Salvador Melgar, from the CIFP in Santa María de Guía (Las Palmas), who received a prize of €1,000.

## THE BEST MENESTRA IN NAVARRA

Salón Gourmets celebrated the excellence of Navarre's produce by bringing together professional chefs and high-quality ingredients in a single venue. The Best Navarre Vegetable Stew: Reyno Gourmet Challenge showcased the vegetable stew made from Navarre's produce, with six contestants demonstrating their skills in preparing this iconic dish. The participants presented their creations to the jury, which were required to include two seasonal vegetables: Navarre Asparagus PGI, Tudela Artichoke PGI and Navarre Olive Oil PDO. First prize went to Cristina Salas, from the restaurant Habitual by Ricard Camarena (Valencia), who said: "This is the first time I've entered a cooking competition and I'm very grateful for this recognition. In our restaurant, vegetables are the cornerstone of our cuisine; they're what best represent us, and receiving an award for this makes us particularly delighted. What's more, it's an achievement shared with the whole team, who will also be celebrating it in style. Second prize went to José Ignacio Gordo, from Aromas de Rioja by Zenith (Calahorra, La Rioja), and third prize to Carlota Lerma, from the restaurant El Baelo (Torrelodones, Madrid).

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