

PARTS UNKNOWN FOOD TV POP CULTURE

Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown in San Sebastián: Just the One-Liners



Bourdain tours the food-obsessed Basque Country of Spain and France

by Chris Fuhrmeister | @ccfuhr | May 7, 2017, 10:01pm EDT

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CNN

The second episode of *Parts Unknown* Season 9 sends Anthony Bourdain to San Sebastián, Spain, and the surrounding Basque Country. The host takes in breathtaking views of rolling green hills and winding coastline in a region that is a gourmand's paradise.

France has long been held as the capital of Western cuisine, with Spain seen as a rising challenger in recent years. So it's fitting that Basque Country, which is split by the French-Spanish border and predates both nations, offers some of the best dining in Europe. In San Sebastián, Bourdain spends time with chef Juan Mari Arzak, whose eponymous restaurant boasts three Michelin stars, and his daughter/fellow chef Elena. The three walk the city's streets, popping into several bars and restaurants for *pintxos*, small bites similar to the tapas that are found elsewhere in Spain. Sea urchin with onion and cava, crab tartlets, and seared wild mushrooms and foie gras with raw egg yolk are among the many snacks consumed.

Throughout his journey, Bourdain dines with authors Edorta Jiménez and his daughter, Irati, travel agent Gabriella Ranelli, shipwright Xabier Agote, documentarian Olatz González Abrisketa, and chefs Virginia Irizar and Victor Arguinzoniz.

The central theme of this episode is a question: Why? Why is the cuisine of Basque Country so good? Why is every single ingredient of the highest quality? Why does everyone in the region care so much about what they are eating? Everywhere Bourdain turns, he finds simple, impeccable plates of food, and he poses these queries over and over again. "I think it's just, we wouldn't have it any other way," Irizar tells the host. "It's as simple as that."

Here, now, are 11 of the best Quotable Bourdain moments from *Parts Unknown: San Sebastián*. Do share your thoughts on this episode in the comments below.

The Quotable Bourdain: San Sebastián

- Bourdain on trying to determine when Basque language and culture originated:** "The best answer anyone can give you is, 'long, long ago.'"
- Bourdain on the incredible dining culture in San Sebastián:** "You could make the argument that there is no better place to eat in Europe than the city of San Sebastián. There are more Michelin-starred restaurants per capita here than anywhere on Earth, but even the everyday joints are superb. The love of food, the insistence on the very best ingredients, is fundamental to the culture and to life here."
- Bourdain on the celebrity status of 74-year-old chef Juan Mari Arzak, a master of Basque cuisine:** "Walking anywhere in San Sebastián with Juan Mari Arzak is like walking through Chicago with Michael Jordan or Washington, DC, with George Washington. He's the godfather, universally beloved and respected."
- Bourdain on San Sebastián's history as a port city:** "This used to be the center of the world for boat-building. Bad times for the Spanish navy was good times for the Basque because if a lot of ships are sinking, that means more work here."
- Bourdain on the tableside deconstruction of a whole grilled turbot at Elkano in the seaside village of Getaria:** "That was like an anatomy lesson."
- Bourdain on his relationship with Arzak:** "I first came here in, I think, 2001, 15 years ago. You know, my father died very young. I'd like [Arzak] to know, since the first time I came here, I feel like he's looked after me like a father. He's been loyal and a good friend and supporter. I want him to know I appreciate it."
- Bourdain on how French Basque differs from Spanish Basque:** "Things are different here. The relationship between Basque and French cultures has always been more graceful, less contentious, and you can see it, and feel it, and taste it at the table."
- Bourdain on San Sebastián's growing reputation as a culinary capital:** "It's going to be a problem, because you're going to have millions and millions of tourists coming here to eat — every year, more."
- Bourdain on Basque Country's members-only dining clubs that were once all-male (but now practice gender equality):** "So-called bro food, in fact, pre-dates the advent of the kobe slider or donkey sauce and, probably, even the high five."
- Bourdain, channeling his inner millennial while eating grilled beluga caviar:** "Excuse me, I'm going to have to take a picture of this. I want to make other people feel bad about what they're eating."
- Bourdain, speaking to the viewer, in an effort to keep Basque Country pure:** "Don't come here."

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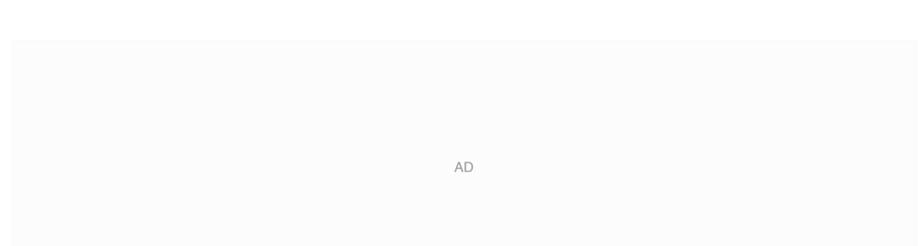
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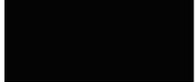
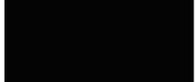
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