

As you read, try to visualize each event of La Tomatina, and imagine that you are there!

# La Tomatina



La Tomatina is a [food fight festival](#) held in August each year in the town of [Buñol](#) in the Valencia region of [Spain](#). Tens of thousands of participants come from all over the world to fight in a gooey battle where more than one hundred tons of over-ripe [tomatoes](#) are thrown in the streets.



The week-long festival features [music](#), [parades](#), [dancing](#), and [fireworks](#). On the night before the tomato fight, participants of the festival compete in a [paella](#) cooking contest. It is tradition for the women to wear all white and the men to wear no shirts. This festival started in a casual way in

1945 but wasn't officially recognized until 1952.



Approximately 20,000–50,000 tourists come to the tomato fight, multiplying by several times Buñol's normal population of slightly over 9,000. There is limited accommodation for people who come to La Tomatina, and thus many participants stay in Valencia and travel by bus or train to Buñol, about 38 km outside the city. In preparation for the dirty mess that will ensue, shopkeepers use huge plastic covers on their storefronts in order to protect them. They also use about 150,000 tomatoes, just about 90,000 pounds.



At around 10:00 AM, the first event of the Tomatina begins. The first feat is for the crowd to figure out how to get people to climb up a greased pole with a ham at the top. While this is happening, the group works up a frenzy singing and dancing while being showered from hoses. Once someone is able to release the ham from the pole, several trucks haul the bounty of tomatoes into the center of the town, Plaza del Pueblo. The tomatoes come from Extremadura (another region of Spain), where they are less expensive and are grown specifically for the festival as they are not of good taste for consumption. The signal for the beginning of the fight is firing of water cannons, and the chaos begins. Those who partake in this event are strongly encouraged to wear protective [safety goggles](#) and [gloves](#). In addition, they must squish the tomatoes before throwing for safety precautions. After exactly one hour, the fighting ends when the water cannons are fired once more to signal the end. At this point, no more tomatoes can be thrown. The cleaning process involves the use of [fire trucks](#) to spray down the streets, with water provided from a Roman aqueduct. The participants all run in a mad rush down to the riverbed to jump in and rinse off, causing the river to run red with tomato juice.



The tomato fight has been a strong tradition in Buñol for nearly 100 years. 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 chaotic aftermath of an accidental tomato truck spill. One of the most popular theories 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.

Source: <http://www.latomatinatours.com/>