

## The slow death of Spain's two-hour lunch breaks

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

With a partner, ask and answer these questions.

How long is your lunch break?

*E.g. thirty minutes, one hour, ninety minutes, I don't have a lunch break*

Where do you usually eat lunch?

*E.g. in the canteen, at my desk, in the park, at a restaurant, at home*

What do you usually eat for lunch?

*E.g. a sandwich, a three-course meal, the lunchtime specials, soup, a salad*

#### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

gentrification

feature

rents

afford

generation

realizing

1. the number of years that usually pass between the birth of a person and the birth of that person's children \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
2. an important part or aspect of something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. money people pay to live in a house or use a building for business \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
4. when an area of a city where poor people live becomes an area where middle-class people live \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
5. If you can \_\_\_\_\_ something, you have enough money to buy it. (para 3)
6. knowing and understanding something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)

maintain

survive

gig economy

take over

retire

temporary

7. something that you only have for a short or limited time \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
8. a labour market where there are a lot of short-term work contracts or freelance work and not many permanent jobs \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
9. provide someone with the things that they need to live \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
10. stop working, especially because you are old \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
11. begin to do something that someone else was doing \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
12. continue to exist and stay in business \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)

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#### No more two-hour lunch breaks: the slow death of Spain's *menú del día*

Stephen Burgen

11 November, 2019

- 1 Food is at the heart of Spanish culture. The three-course *menú del día* (menu of the day) has been an important part of Spanish restaurants and social life for generations.
- 2 The restaurants that serve these *menús* – which are simple and good value for money – have been a feature of city life for a long time. But now they are in danger because of rising rents, changing tastes and working hours, tourism and gentrification.
- 3 The fixed-price *menú del día* was introduced in the mid-1960s to offer a meal that all Spaniards could afford.
- 4 Millions of Spaniards who had long days, working from 9 am to 2 pm and 4 pm to 7.30 pm, went to these family-run restaurants in their lunch break.
- 5 But now working life has changed. Fewer people take a two-hour lunch break. “People are realizing that an hour is long enough for lunch,” says José Luis Casero. Many people now believe that the long working day is old-fashioned and not good for work–life balance.
- 6 Also, fewer Spaniards have full-time jobs or any job at all. Thirty-three per cent of jobs created since 2012 are temporary, and many are also part-time. Many people working in the gig economy do not get paid lunch breaks.
- 7 Restaurants that serve *menús del día* often make just enough to maintain the families that run them. When owners retire, their children often do not want to take over the family business.
- 8 All over Spanish cities, family restaurants are being reopened as a kebab shop or, in tourist areas, a tapas bar. “There are certainly fewer *menús del día* in major Spanish cities than there were 15 years ago, but there are also fewer Spanish and Catalan restaurants,” says Sally Davies, author of the *Time Out* guides to Madrid and Barcelona.
- 9 “There’s been a large increase in the number of Asian and South American restaurants, in particular, and those are less likely to serve a *menú del día*.”
- 10 But there are still some traditional places where workers can eat a *menú del día*. Bar Restaurant Cervantes in central Barcelona has survived by not changing at all. Cervantes has been a family-run restaurant since the early 1980s. It is now managed by the Esteve sisters: Glòria, Cristina and Gemma. The €13 *menú* of classic Spanish and Catalan dishes is written in chalk on a board in Catalan.
- 11 “I cook more or less what my mother cooked,” says Glòria. “People like that. It’s all homemade.”
- 12 “We don’t mind if tourists come, but we don’t need them,” adds Gemma. “I grew up right here; it’s a family restaurant. All kinds of people eat here, from company managers to builders. There are people who come to Cervantes for the first time and say: ‘Wow, I didn’t know this sort of place still existed.’ ‘Well,’ I say, ‘we’ve always been here.’”

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#### 3 Comprehension check

Choose the correct options to complete the sentences about the article.

1. Food is **not important** / **very important** to the Spanish people and Spanish culture.
2. In the 1960s, most restaurants in **the Spanish countryside** / **Spanish cities** started to offer three-course lunchtime menus.
3. The three-course lunch menus became an important part of the working day for people who had a **long** / **short** lunch break.
4. Many workers now think that a two-hour break is too **long** / **short** for lunch.
5. People who work in the gig economy often do not get **a paid** / **an unpaid** lunch break.
6. **Family-run** / **Fast-food** restaurants often close because the younger generation don't want to take over the business.
7. There are now **more** / **fewer** restaurants that offer *menús del día* than there were 15 years ago.
8. Bar Restaurant Cervantes in Barcelona still offers a *menú del día* that is **made by the mother of the family** / **homemade**.

#### 4 Using the key words

a. Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete these sentences.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ are so high in this part of the city.
2. We'll never be able to \_\_\_\_\_ a flat there.
3. Three \_\_\_\_\_ of the same family live in the house next door.
4. The manager is so unfriendly. I don't know how the hotel has \_\_\_\_\_ for so many years.
5. My husband's got a new job. It's only \_\_\_\_\_, but it's better than nothing.
6. Dorothy has been working at the bank for thirty-five years, but she's planning to \_\_\_\_\_ next year.
7. Many people are \_\_\_\_\_ that plastic is bad for the environment.
8. David is hoping that his son will \_\_\_\_\_ the family business one day.

b. Now use some of the key words in sentences of your own.

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#### 5 Discussion

- **Is there a canteen where you work?**
  - o If so, what can you eat there?
  - o If not, where do people go for their lunch?
- **Describe your usual working hours.**
  - o Who decides what hours you work, you or your company?
  - o Would you like to work from 9 am to 2 pm and then 4 pm to 7.30 pm every day with a two-hour lunch break?
  - o What would be good, and what would be bad, about these working hours?

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### KEY

#### 2 Key words

1. generation
2. feature
3. rents
4. gentrification
5. afford
6. realizing
7. temporary
8. gig economy
9. maintain
10. retire
11. take over
12. survive

#### 3 Comprehension check

1. very important
2. Spanish cities
3. long
4. long
5. a paid
6. Family-run
7. fewer
8. homemade

#### 4 Using the key words

1. rents
2. afford
3. generations
4. survived
5. temporary
6. retire
7. realizing
8. take over

#### 5 Discussion

**Teacher's note:** if the students are not currently in work, the discussion topics can easily be adapted to talk about situations students have experienced in the past at their former places of work.