

# La Tomatina Festival



## La Tomatina

La Tomatina is a food fight festival held on the last Wednesday of August each year in the town of Buñol near to Valencia in Spain. 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.

Prior to 2013 anywhere from 40,000 to 50,000 (reported to be 50,000 in 2012) people crammed into this huge tomato fight, greatly expanding Buñol's normal 9,000 person population. Since 2013 official ticketing has been in place limiting the number of participants to just 20,000 lucky people.

There is limited accommodation for people who come to La Tomatina, so many people take the easier option of staying in nearby Valencia, just 38 km to Buñol by bus or train. In preparation for the dirty mess that will ensue, shopkeepers use huge plastic covers on their storefronts in order to protect them from the carnage.

## What happens at La Tomatina?

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 soul 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. Once it begins, the battle is generally every man for himself.

After an hour the fighting ends. 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 authorities seem more concerned with cleaning the town than cleaning the visitors, so some people find water at the Buñol River to wash themselves, although some kind residents will hose passers-by down. Once the tomato pulp is flushed, the ground is cleaned due to the acidity of the tomato.

### **The rules of La Tomatina**

- **Do not bring bottles or hard objects as they can cause accidents and hurt other participants**
- **Do not rip other people's T-shirts**
- **You must squash the tomatoes before throwing them as this reduces the impact**
- **Ensure you keep a safe distance from the lorries**
- **As soon as you hear the second shot, you must stop throwing tomatoes**

### **How did La Tomatina start?**

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 Bertrán and the Mare de Déu dels Desemparats (Mother of God of the Defenseless), a title of the Virgin Mary.

### **Source**

<http://www.latomatinatours.com/default.asp> [Accessed 18 August 2015]

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## Reading

Read the text and answer the following questions.

1. Is this statement true or false?

	True	False
La Tomatina is held on the same date in August every year.		

*This question tests your ability to retrieve information from the text.*

2. How many people will attend this festival in 2016?

- a. 40,000 ☐
- b. 50,000 ☐
- c. 9,000 ☐
- d. 20,000 ☐

*This is a multiple choice question which asks you to choose the correct number based on the information in the passage.*

3. What is the purpose of this text and which language features are used to achieve it?

*In this question you will identify the purpose of the text.*

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4. What do you learn about the town of Buñol from this text?

*This is a summarising question. You must select information from the text and convey it in your own words. Do not just copy from the text.*

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## 7. Group discussion

Research one of the festivals below and prepare a presentation for the class.

Include details and information about the festival, what happens, pictures, your opinion on the festival and so forth.

Below are a list of festivals, like La Tomatina, which are linked to food. The teacher could assign a festival to each pair/group or you could choose your own.

1. World Pea Shooting Championship, Witcham, Cambridgeshire, England
2. La Raimá, Pobla del Duc, near Valencia, Spain
3. Fiesta de San Mateo, La Rioja, Spain
4. Setsubun, The Mamemaki Ritual, Japan
5. Candy Throwing Fight, Vilanova i La Geltrú, Spain
6. Battle of the Oranges, Ivrea, Piedmont, Italy
7. Clean Monday Flour War, Galaxidi, Greece
8. Songkran, Bangkok, Thailand
9. World Custard Pie Championship, Kent, England

Group size: pairs or 3

Time: 50 minutes for research and creating a PowerPoint presentation.

## Writing

### 8. Imagine you have attended La Tomatina (or one of the festivals from your research).

Write a review of the festival. Include historical details, details about what happened, positive and negative aspects of the festival and your opinion overall.

Use text/research for ideas.

Plan carefully before writing.

Write 500-600 words.

### 9. 'Festivals such as La Tomatina are wasteful, lacking purpose and are too dangerous. They should be banned.'

Write an essay responding to this statement and whether you agree or disagree. Support your ideas with examples and reasons.

Plan carefully before writing.

Write 500-600 words.