

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 2, Episode 7

Many thanks to listener Ryan V. for the transcript!

Simon: ...were recently disgorged from a cruise – ugh. (beeped curse) I knew I wasn't going to get through that.

Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English Edition of EL PAÍS, and this is ¿Qué? A podcast from El País that tries to break down the ups and downs of all the current affairs in Spain.

Whether you're on a tapas tour in Torremolinos, hiking up the hills of Huesca or were recently disgorged from a cruise ship in Catalonia, we are here for you, contad con nosotros.

So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say, "I don't care what the Spanish traffic authority says, that is not how you drive around a roundabout!"

So this is episode 7 of season 2 of our ¿Qué? podcast and we are hurtling towards the summer. I am here as always with my colleague, my esteemed colleague, Melissa Kitson. How are you Melissa?

Melissa: Good! Hi!

Simon: Yeah, I mean, we are hurtling towards summer but the temperatures on the way down again.

Melissa: Yes, I'm in a cardigan.

Simon: You are. You're in a nice cardigan. I'm in a shirt and woolen trousers. As always, I ask you, our beloved listeners, to rate our podcast and leave a comment and share it on social media. We currently have eleven, eleven ratings on iTunes Melissa. An average of five stars.

Veronica: Not eleven anymore. Fourteen.

Simon: Fourteen! Thank you Veronica, our producer there Veronica telling me it's gone up to fourteen. We've got a couple of reviews. Here is one of them: "I try to keep up with the news from Spain as I visit quite frequently, but my language skills aren't up to doing it all in Spanish. This podcast is a quick, often funny, recap of the top stories with some extra background information to help make things clearer to someone less familiar with the culture." And that is from a listener whose name is "Smarter Donkey." So thank you Smarter Donkey. Keep hitting review and give us your feedback. It really helps other people find the podcast. You can also email us at EnglishEdition@elpais.es or you can tweet me at @simoninmadrid using the hashtag #quepodcast. We got a nice message from someone called "@rriiggstx"...I'm not sure how to pronounce that. "As the tagline says, it's easy to get "lost in translation" when trying to follow Spanish headlines. ¿Qué? podcast fills in the gaps quite well."

Then we heard from Mr. Alan Jones, who was responding to- he was the gentleman who sent us the thing about Melissa calling M-E-P's "MEPS" – He says "Oh no! Please don't apologize, Melissa, the one thing that Simon didn't read out from my tweet was the smiley face at the end! Call 'em MEPS, if you want to. Or maybe call them a few representatives to the EU + 29 wastes of space (you know who I mean)."

He then went on to point out that we've got 77 subscribers on PlayerFM, more than Las Noticias de EL PAÍS

Sound Bite: Que!?

Simon: At which point Veronica our producer got involved in the conversation because she is, of course, the producer and presenter of Las Noticias de El Pais.

Veronica (translated): Good morning, it's Monday the 27th of May, and this is the news from El Pais.

Simon: And she said, "it's not a competition, OK?" to which I responded "everything is a competition."

And we heard from our most prized listener Ryan V, the man who does our transcript. Great transcript work again Ryan V. He writes to say "Hello Simon and Melissa and Veronica - Next time you get a guest, can you make sure that they speak slower?" That was in reference to Matthew Bennett who came on last week to talk about the "*procés*", the trial of the Catalan pro-independence leaders. Ryan goes on to say: "I was flabbergasted at your pronunciation of the word "urinal" Simon. Who in the world pronounces it like that? Is that the queen's proper English?" - You'll have to ask the queen how she says urinal. I'm not sure.

Melissa: I would say urinal.

Simon: Oh! Well there you go. This is what Ryan is saying. He says "Normally I defer to British pronunciations since you have more of a claim to the way the language is spoken than we Americans" – you think!? – "but considering the urinal was invented here in the good ol' U.S. of A. perhaps we've got the rights to this one? Or we could all call it a pissier and go on with our lives."

Thank you very much Ryan. Well, when it comes to English vs American pronunciation, to quote another friend of the show, Eddie Izzard:

Eddie Izzard: You say basil, we say basil. You say 'erbs, and we say herbs, because there's a (beeped curse) H in it!

Simon: And then we also heard from friend of the show Chris Thompson. He sent us quite a – I think by his own admission quite a long and rambling email but it's great. It just goes to show that Chris is very tuned in to Spanish culture and Chris signs off with "Y, esta vez, para evitar las mofas, un apretón de manos" (TRANSLATION: "This time, to avoid teasing, a handshake")

Chris has abandoned his manly hug after our urinal conversation last week and he sends us a handshake. Chris, come on, go back to the manly hug. I liked the manly hug.

Alright, so let's move on to our two stories, the first of which is that old chestnut. Franco! He's back again. As Chevy Chase used to say on Saturday Night Live, Franco is still dead, but where is he? Melissa, fill us in.

Melissa: He is still in the Valley of the Fallen. So, he was meant to be exhumed on Monday, but that did not happen. Instead we learned about a dispute between the Spanish government and Father Santiago Cantera, who is the prior at the basilica at the Valley of the Fallen.

Father Cantera is staunchly opposed to Franco's exhumation and has refused to cooperate with the Spanish government's plans to exhume him from the Valley of the Fallen. This is despite pressure from Church leadership in both Madrid and Rome. Cantera once ran as a member of the neo-fascist party Falange and in January, he also refused the government access to Franco's tomb.

Now it has come to light that last year in October, he got into yet another spat with the government after a group of senior civil servants from Spain's Patrimonio Nacional (or National Heritage) agency made an unannounced visit to the Valley of the Fallen basilica.

Father Cantera was not informed and took it very badly. So badly in fact that he sent a letter to the president of the Patrimonio Nacional, a man named Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán, in which he argued the visit was "neither lawful nor legitimate" and demanded the agency hand over the keys to the Basilica.

Armiñán obviously refused to do this. So the keys remain with the agency but this dispute highlights just how difficult the process of Franco's exhumation has become.

The court wants to avoid a situation where Franco has to be reburied in the Valley of the Fallen because his family has won their case in court.

So, the Supreme Court is expected to reach a final decision on all these appeals in the coming months. Until then, visitors at the Valley of the Fallen can continue to see Franco's tomb, which has fresh flowers placed on it every day.

Simon: I reckon one day we might find the prior of the Valley of the Fallen glued to Franco's tomb.

Melissa: Chained.

Simon: Yeah, exactly! I mean, he's putting up quite a stiff opposition to this whole process. So there's been a lot of reaction from the Supreme Court ruling last week the crusading judge Baltasar Garzón, who's the man who tried to have Pinochet famously extradited from the UK all those years ago. Writing in EL PAÍS he pointed out the fact that the judges in their ruling didn't refer to Franco as a dictator and they also – this is really controversial – they described him as the head of state from the 1st of October 1936 which is in the middle of the Civil War and one of the historical memory associations said in reference to that, that is like saying that Tejero, who is the Civil Guard leader who tried to stage that coup in the early 80's in Spain, that's like saying that Tejero was the speaker of the Congress of Deputies or of the government during a few hours. It was a bizarre thing to say.

Judges' associations also got in on the issue. They said that it seems sarcastic that the urgent protection of the interests of the dictator's family are given priority compared to the disinterest and abandonment by the state of the families of victims of so many forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. And it says that, you know, these families are still waiting justice and reparations all these years after the Civil War and after the Franco dictatorship. The Popular Party has referred to getting Franco out of the Valley of the Fallen as acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's "obsession."

One of the historical memory associations said that the court had suspended democracy with its decision, and the Franco foundation – because, as difficult as it might be to believe there still is a Franco Foundation existing in Spain – said it was satisfied with the setback for Sanchez. It used the Spanish words "varapalo" and "fanfarronada." So, whatever you want to say about the Franco Foundation they do have fantastic vocabulary.

But this looks like it's just going to run and run. I think with the state of politics in flux as it is, perhaps it was better for this not to happen while we don't have a government. Maybe it will be better in the long run for this to happen when there is a stable government in place. There is obviously – there is a will, there is a political will there for it to happen. Can you imagine if you were exhumed and then re-buried in the Valley of the Fallen which, potentially, could happen and that is one of the arguments that the Franco family have used in their court cases. I mean, you know, not to – the Franco family, Franco's grandchildren, as I think we've mentioned, they are somewhat of a rogue's gallery. They kind of – they remind me of the family in Arrested Development the TV show. They're just like this – you know, they've got a lot of money, they've got a lot of sway still, and they've just been, you know, they've played it very well in terms of making this process as difficult as possible for Sanchez. So, let's see what happens. I mean, it's going to be down to the courts, but I would suggest that the political situation is going to have quite a lot to do with that.

Alright, now, completely different subject. There was a great piece this week, I believe it was from Icon, was it?

Melissa: Mm-hmm.

Simon: From the, yeah, one of EL PAÍS's glossy magazines, about Spanish weddings, and specifically, about the finances of Spanish weddings. So, tell us about this Melissa.

Melissa: Wedding season is upon us and, you know if you have an invitation, you might be asking yourself, "How much money are you expected to give as a present?"

Now, according to statistics compiled in the Essential Weddings Book, a couple spends an average of €169 per guest for a wedding in Madrid. The total cost of a wedding in the Spanish capital is around €24,000. But, unfortunately for couples, 5% of guests apparently do not give anything.

What's more, Spanish weddings are becoming more expensive and it's increasingly difficult for couples to cover the cost of the wedding with the money from their guests. So, if you are invited to a Spanish wedding, EL PAÍS spoke to two experts who gave their advice. Are you ready?

Simon: Get your wallets everybody!

Melissa: If you are a close family member of the bride or groom, the minimum is €500 per couple. Apparently between €500 and €1,000 is the norm. So, this is sort of thinking that you and your partner are going to the wedding so it's not- you know, I guess you could divide the money between you and your partner but it is, does seem like quite a lot.

If you are the best friend of the bride or groom, you are also expected to spend at least €500 per couple.

Now, if you are a distant friend or relative or workmate, the norm is that you give a minimum of €150. And if you are going with your family, you're meant to pay €150 for each adult and €100 for each child. So, you know, imagine a family with two kids, that's €500.

Now this – I didn't realize this, to be honest - if you are a family member or best friend but can't go to the wedding you are still expected to give a gift, in this case at least €100.

Simon: Wow! Now...I have a lot to say, a lot to say on this subject. Me and Rosa, me and my wife Rosa, we got married here in Spain in the year 2011 and I, first of all I would like to thank everyone who came to our wedding. Thank you all for our gifts, and also now invite you to turn off the podcast for the last, the rest of this conversation. Now, the time was that people would do a wedding list, and this is the tradition in the UK and that's what people used to do here, but no one needs a wedding list anymore. Everybody lives together before they get married and everyone, you know, tends to have what they need. I mean, you know, we have IKEA now, you don't need to get some fancy dinner set. So, it's much more sensible for people to give money, I think.

I mean, In the UK we don't have a tradition of this and you know people - sometime they have to put off getting married for years just because they literally are not going to be able to, not going to be able to pay for it. I see more now in the UK where people are doing that thing like "Oh, you know we really don't need a gift but if you'd like to give a contribution to our honeymoon fund then that's great," and what they mean by honeymoon fund is, "Please help us pay for our wedding!" I mean, that is really what it is. Now, we didn't expect, you know, we had a lot of people that flew in from, oh god we had people flying in from - We had a big group of friends from Oklahoma, and we didn't expect them to you know give us any money. They did give us gifts which was really, really nice. You know, and I think to be honest, just a - something thoughtful sometimes is actually just as, or nicer than, you know something that someone's actually thought about. But it's interesting, it's very good fun keeping a list of who gave what.

Melissa: Like Santa.

Simon: yeah, exactly! And to go back--and the funny thing about that list is sometimes – this is a little confession – we check back on that list before we go to that person's wedding and say "how much did they give us?" just to adjust our amounts accordingly. But, the thing is, I'd say the amounts now in that article seem incredibly high but now weddings are getting out of control. I mean, we kept ours fairly simple. There's a few things that we didn't have there that I kind of

regret now. Like, we didn't have someone doing a video which I kind of regret that. But thing that it mentions in that article like "El fotomaton" like that, one of those-

Melissa: A photobooth.

Simon: Yeah, like a photobooth, which I always seem to see at all weddings now. And then of course you've gotta pay for the buses to ferry people back and forth or five hours of free bar. In fact, at our wedding the woman in charge actually came up to me at one point and was like "umm, do you want to extend the free bar or not, because, you know, it's getting time" and I just looked around and it was carnage and I was like "yes, yes" I mean what was I gonna say? We actually drank the bar dry of beer. They said that'd never happened. So, it is incredibly expensive, and if you can cover it with your guests' contributions then that is fantastic. I mean, what better gift. I mean, God, you know, as long as you're making sure you're giving your guests an absolutely fantastic party, I don't think anyone would begrudge you contributing to the wedding. But, here's a controversial question: should you get the money back if the couple gets divorced?

Melissa: Nooooo!

Simon: Definite no?

Melissa: No. Big no.

Simon: I don't know man. I don't know!

Melissa: It's just saying like, you're paying for the party and for the experience, you're not like, investing in them as a kind of stock.

Simon: Alright, so we're definitely ruling that one out. OK. I shall uh, I shall-

Melissa: Do you have some friends that? -

Simon: I don't want to give any examples! I have felt, you know, maybe we should get something back. Anyway, I'll just put that out there. Maybe we can debate that another time.

Alright, so on that controversial note, we shall wrap up episode 7 of season 2. My name is Simon Hunter

Melissa: I'm Melissa Kitson

Simon: And this was Qué? A podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to those of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation.

This is an EL PAÍS production, it was recorded right here in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our producer Verónica Figueroa, who is the person who sets the recording date and the time, and you can listen to it on your favorite podcast app.

You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant. We'll be back next week with a brand new host of issues. Thank you for listening, adios!

Melissa: ciao!