




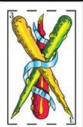
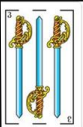















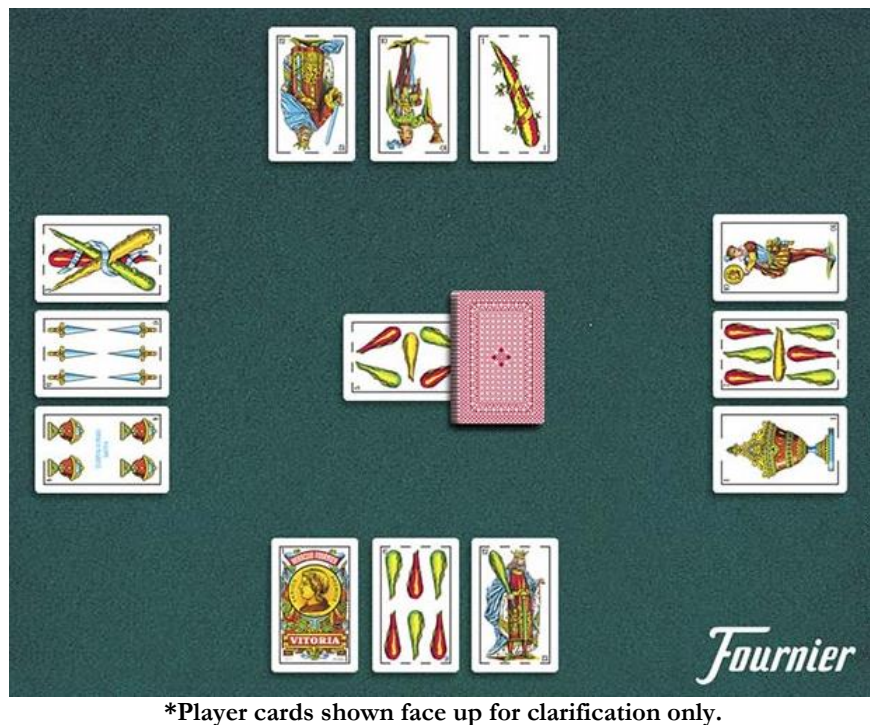
BRISCA

By: Galin Hernandez, 12/1/2019

Brisca is a Spanish variant of the Italian card game “Briscola”. Although there is evidence of card games in Spain dating as far back as the 15th century, the earliest official reference to any card game in Spain appears in the 1837 law of Juan I, which forbade the use of cards. Brisca centers on a trump suite (Mano) where not all of the cards are dealt at the beginning of the game, but rather taken from the deck as the rounds are played. It is normally played by two or four players. It uses the “Spanish Deck” of cards which has 40 cards, numbers 1 thru 7 and 10 thru 12. There are no 8 or 9 cards in the deck. The aim is to collect more points than the opponents.

The Cards: The most common design of the deck was created by Augusto Rius, has been marketed by Fournier since 1889 and has lasted until today. Originally there were no numbers on the cards but these were added in 1989. Cards are divided in to four suites named Oro (Coin), Bastos (Clubs), Espadas (Swords) and Copas (Cups). It is believed these represent the four social classes during the feudal era; Royalty, Commoners, Military and Clergy. One interesting feature is the use of “*pintas*”, which are broken lines on the top and bottom of the face of the cards. Another interesting feature is that there are no female characters in the deck, a common theme taken from the feudal era. Cards have specific point values. The 1 card (As) is worth 11 points, The Three (Tres) card is worth 10 points, the King (Rey) is worth 4 points, the Knight (Caballo) is worth 3 points and the Prince (Sota) is worth 2 points for a total of 120 points. The other cards have no point value.

				As 11
				Tres 10
				Rey 4
				Caballo 3
				Sota 2
Oro	Bastos	Espada	Copas	Puntos



*Player cards shown face up for clarification only.

Dealing: With team play, the players draw a card and the highest card becomes the dealer choosing where to sit while his teammate sits in front of him. The opposing team player who drew the highest card sits to dealer’s right. The cards are shuffled and the deck is cut with no fewer than four cards. The dealer gives each player three cards, one by one in a counter-clockwise direction, turning the next card face up which becomes the trump (Mano) suite and remains visible at the center of the table. After each game, the turn to deal passes from to the player on the right and the sequence is repeated.

Playing: In teams, the player to the right of the dealer starts the game by placing a card face up on the table, with the others typically playing in a strict order to the right. Each player places a card face up on the table, when it is their turn. The round is won by the highest point trump card (Mano) played or, if no trump (Mano) is played, by the highest point card of the suite first placed faced up on the table. Then, starting with the winner of the round, each player draws a card from the deck. The next round starts by the player who won the previous one. That player can play any card, with the others continuing in a strict order as previously explained. When the round ends, the player/team with the most points wins that round.

Any player can take the trump (Mano) card from under the deck replacing it with the seven of the same suite as long as he has just won the previous round and has not taken a card from the deck. The seven, or any smaller card, can be replaced by the two of the same suite. This can be done until somebody has drawn a card from the deck to start the second to last round. A round ends when there are no more cards left to be played. The game ends when one person/team reaches a specific number of points, say 200 or 300 points.

Conquista: The “Conquista” is when a player holds the 1, 3 and King of the "Mano". When this happens, the player with this hand automatically wins the game even if the other player/team has more points.

Signals: In Puerto Rico players are allowed to talk to each other during a game but in other places they are not. However, information can be passed between teammates by signals. Some common signals are:

Raise the eyebrows	Has the As of the “Mano”
Wink one eye	Has the Tres of the “Mano”
Pout the lips	Has the Rey of the “Mano”
Distort the mouth	Has the Caballo of the “Mano”
Show tongue	Has the Sota of the “Mano”
Twist head	Has the AS and Three of any suite except the “Mano”
Blink	No “Mano” card held
Sigh	Play a card with points that is not “Mano”
Stare	Asking what cards they hold

How I learned the game: Although this may not be how the game is played in other places, it is how my Great-Grandmother Agripina “Abuelita” Pumarejo Cruz (1891-1987) taught me how to play many years ago in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. She told me her Grandfather Manuel Pumarejo Rosa (1838-1898) taught her the game when she was very young. She loved the game and was passionate about it. Her spirit lives on within me when I see these cards or the game being played.



With “Abuelita” at her house, circa 1984

References:

www.enforex.com/culture/playing-cards-spain.html

Oxford Dictionary of Card Games, David Parlett, pg. 47 - Oxford University Press 1996 [ISBN 0-19-869173-4](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198691734)