FAST FOOD
Kerry J. Byrne

A-peel-ing tradicion
Toro in the South End celebrated a messy Spanish tradition recently: the calcotada, or spring-onion festival.
“It’s superfun,” said chef Jamie Bissonnette, who suggests Memorial Day as a great time to try your own calcotada.
Calcots are similar to scallions: long and thin, with green tops and white bottoms. They’re charred on a grill, then wrapped in newspaper to steam. The charred edges are torn off and the soft, smoky centers are dipped in a traditional romesco sauce. It’s messy enough to require bibs.

The onions are washed down with wine sipped from a porrón, a hand-blown, glass pitcher with a long, tapering spout meant to be passed at communal dinners: guests can drink from it without their lips touching the bottle.

TORO’S SPRING ONIONS WITH ROMESCO SAUCE
For the sauce:
24 hazelnuts
24 almonds
2 Fresno or red jalapeno chilies
6 Nora peppers (or substitute dried anchos)
1/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil
12 cloves garlic
4 tomatoes, roughly chopped
4 pieces ciabatta or hearty white bread, toasted
16 oz. water
1/4 bunch parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Heat grill to high. Toast hazelnuts and almonds in a skillet then set aside. Roast Fresno or jalapeno chilies on grill until charred then peel and clean. Clean and seed Nora peppers, then steep in hot water approximately 20 minutes, then saute in hot pan with olive oil. Add garlic and saute for 3 minutes. Add tomatoes, bread, roasted Fresno chilies, nuts and water. Stir for an hour over low heat. Blend all ingredients and add parsley. Adjust with olive oil and water to reach desired consistency. Makes 3 cups romesco.

For the onions:
3 lbs. spring calcots (or spring Vidalia onions with green tops)
Canola oil to taste
Salt and pepper to taste
Newspaper
Season onions with oil, salt and pepper. Char onions on grill until blackened and tender. While still hot, wrap in newspaper and let sit at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with romesco sauce on the side. Serves 6 to 8.

SPRING AWAKENING: Toro patrons recently celebrated calcotada, or the spring-onion festival, with grilled calcots served with a peppery romesco sauce.