

FLAMENCO GUITAR

A variation based on the classical guitar, the flamenco guitar is quite similar to its classical counterpart in construction and dimensions. The characteristic flamenco tone, however, is quite distinctive and is achieved through a different combination of woods and construction. Originally conceived as an inexpensive guitar, using local woods and lacking the elaborate inlays associated with classical instruments, the flamenco guitar has, over the years, evolved to the point where it is fully the equal of the classical guitar with regard to detailing and quality of construction. In general, however, the best flamenco instrument from a particular maker are less expensive than his best classics.



The most obvious difference between the flamenco and the classical guitar is the use of Spanish cypress for the sides and back of the flamenco. Though other woods, such as cedar and maple, are occasionally used, cypress remains the standard. The sides are somewhat shallower than on the classical guitar and overall construction is lighter.

Pegheads on flamenco guitars are traditionally solid, with ebony or rosewood pegs used for tuning rather than machines. Though wood pegs have been favoured for the better balance they give when playing in the flamenco position (and, according to some authorities, for better tone), the trend has been toward machine heads as well as toward the classical playing position.

String height is low, both over the fingerboard and the bridge saddle itself. The former facilitates fast fingering at the expense of a small amount of string rattle-tolerated by most players. The low height of the saddle makes it easier to tap the guitar top while playing and, in addition, is a factor in developing the flamenco tone.

Tap plates, or *golpeadores*, traditionally white, are now almost universally of clear plastic. Three variations are commonly used. The most common type consists of one plate below the treble strings. A double tap plate consisting of two separate plates on either side of the bass and treble strings affords further protection. A last version is the full width tap plate which extends beneath the strings as well as on either side of the first and sixth strings.