

## CHAMARITA

(Portugese)

1/3

The Portugese people in California perform the Chamarita (sometimes spelled Chamarrita) in conjunction with their observance of the Holy Ghost Festival, held in the spring or summer months. Most of these people came to Northern California from the Azore and Madeira Islands where this festival has been continued to the present time. There are many variations on the legend connected with the origin of the celebration.

As one story goes, there occurred during the reign of Queen Isabella, of Portugal, a severe famine. Hope was almost gone, when during a service of prayer for relief, three ships laden with food came into port. In an expression of thanksgiving, a special mass was held and the queen placed her crown upon the altar. Following the service, there was feasting and dancing. The Holy Ghost Festival derived from this event has continued in one form or other among many Portugese groups - especially those of the colonial islands. The Chamarita is the special dance associated with the occasion.

In the San Francisco Bay Area the dance is danced in both slow and quick tempi, depending on the background of the particular group, or their musicians. It is danced in their social-fraternal-religious group halls, or in front of either these halls or the church. Often they meet at the hall first and the musicians play the music on the way to the church, but no dancing is done en route.

The dance has many figures, called by a patriarch - or other respected leader - who dances in the circle. It is not uncommon for the dance to continue for 15 minutes or more. The selection of figures given here are those commonly done, and taken over by the folk dance groups of northern California. A typical sequence to fit an available recording is given (Staff FD-1).

MUSIC: Record: Staff F-D-1 or Standard T-125 (Identical recordings), Victor 77861-B, Columbia 14670-F.

Sheet: Several versions are available using different tunes, or variations of the "familiar" tune.

FORMATION: Large single circle of couples, with lady at ptr's R, all hands joined, hands held approximately shoulder height with elbows bent; all facing ctr of circle.

STEP: Chamarita Step: takes 2 meas of 3/4 meter, or 6 counts. Can start either ft. Example: Step fwd R (ct 1), hold (ct 2), close L to R (ct 3), step fwd R (ct 4), hold (cts 5,6); the following step will be done on opposite ftwk. Except where otherwise specified all steps start with the free ft in the direction of travel. In social dance pos, start M-L, W-R. The Chamarita Step has a definite "up" feeling, with a slight lift on the hold counts (2 and 5-6), by raising on the supporting ft. Although a relatively slow step, it has a wonderful "lilt" to it.

# CHAMARITA (Continued)

## CALL

### Steps

### PATTERN

2/3

- RODO CHEIA  
8 CIRCLE R. Ptrs sway slightly, so as to be able to nod or acknowledge ptr on 1st step, then corner on 2nd step, and continue alternating ptr and corner.
- ENTRANCA  
8 WEAVING. Allemande R your ptr (use pigeon wing hand pos) (2 steps), travel to corner (1 step), allemande L your corner (2 steps), travel to ptr (1 step), allemande R your ptr again (2 steps) and retain ptr's R at end. Whole figure takes 8 Chamarita steps - use the palm-to palm hand position throughout.
- AO CENTRO  
8 TO THE CENTER. Holding ptr's R hand, and facing each other, starting M-L, W-R, move twd ctr of circle and at same time turn slightly to face the ctr, do one Chamarita step twd ctr. M may stamp his L on ct 4 (not W). On ct 6 ptrs turn twd each other to prepare to move out of ctr. Move away from ctr using 1 Chamarita step starting M-R, W-L, and reversing action above, but no stamp. Repeat the in-and-out movement 3 more times, for a total of 4 in-and-outs.
- SOLTA  
4 SOLO. Ptrs face each other, W dances bwd, M fwd, both LOD. W holds skirt and M may hold hands high and snap fingers on cts 1 and 4. M is chasing and flirting with girl. 4 Chamarita steps. All make a half turn, to face their corners, and chase corner girl 4 Chamarita steps. Caller may call REVOLTA to bring about change of direction - some do not.
- AO CENTRO  
8 TO THE CENTER - ALL HANDS JOINED. In a single circle of joined hands, all dance 1 Chamarita step twd center, and 1 back. On cts 5-6 the free foot is allowed to swing freely slightly fwd (do not exaggerate this swing) when moving in, and is held alongside the supporting foot when moving bwd. This is done a total of 4 times.
- VALSA  
8 WALTZ. (This indicates the waltz dance position, not waltz steps). Taking closed social dance position, starting M-L, W-R, do 4 CW turns as a cpl, utilizing 8 Chamarita steps, progressing around the circle LOD.
- AO CENTRO  
TO THE CENTER - DANCE POSITION. Retaining closed dance position, but opening out slightly to face center of circle do 1 Chamarita step twd ctr. Turn abruptly to face out, raising joined hands slightly, and do 1 Chamarita step out. This is done a total of 4 times.
- BRACOS POR  
CIMA DA  
CABECA  
8 SEPARATE CIRCLES AND BASKET. W separate from ptr and move diagonally in and to R to join hands and form inner circle moving to R. Circle joins up as W are moving to R, do not move in, then join hands and move to right. Keep it a flowing movement. M move to L and join hands

CHAMARITA (Continued)

3/3

as soon as they can. 4 Chamarita steps. Caller usually calls REVOLTA (but it may be ommitted) and all reverse direction of travel, ending up making a basket on 4th Chamarita step, with M's R arm and hand going over his ptr's head, and then all hands are brought waist lever, M holding M, W holding W.

A ESQUERDA 4 TO THE LEFT. Retaining basket, all move to L, starting L foot. 4 Chamarita steps.

A DIREITA 4 TO THE RIGHT. Direction of circle is reversed, with all swinging L ft around to start circle to R (LOD) with L ft.

MAO DIREITA 8 GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT. Face ptr and start a grand right and left, starting with ptr's right hand, next girl left, etc, alternating hands, with one person per Chamarita step. Grand R and L continues for 8 hands (8 Chamarita steps), passing the 8th person, and moving on to the 9th person for next figure.

VOLTA 4 RIGHT HAND TURN. Taking 9th person's R hand, they make one CW turn with 4 Chamarita steps. This is a slow turn, using all 4 steps, and gives lots of time for good partnership eye-contact. At end drop hands and face each other.

FOJE 4 DOSADO. With same ptr as previous figure, move about each other as in a dosado, but with both facing the ctr of the circle. This means that the M's back is to the W as she moves behind him (instead of back-to-back as in a true square dance dosado). Use all 4 Chamarita steps to do the figure, ending back in own places, and acknowledge ptr at end of music. M may bow from waist, W curtsy in simple manner.

The above sequence of figures exactly fits the music of the Standard T-124 recording. This is just a pleasant sequence to do this recording. Any sequence of steps is correct as prompted by the caller. To other recordings more or fewer figures are required, and to this recording the sequence can be changed at the caller's whim.

Basic description and history given above, from Folk Dance Federation of California, DANCES FROM NEAR AND FAR, Volume III.

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