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THE END OF A LONG HAUL

CANNED FISH

JEREZ BRANDY. A SPIRIT WITH HISTORY

SEGOVIA, THE CITY OF LIGHT


The world's
most civilized
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La Ina
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Very Pale Dry Fino
SHERRY
SERVE COLD
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3rd quarter 1987

During the 19th. Century and coinciding with the start of the industrial revolution art, cooking and the mechanical sciences were to come together to produce something that would be a revolution in itself. Nothing less than the means of preserving food almost indefinitely.

As in so many things it was the army that first caught on to the advantages the new technique represented as regards feeding large numbers of men constantly on the move. Fortunately however it was soon seen that these advantages were not limited to the battlefield and little by little, over the years, tinned foods have become something we cannot do without in our everyday life.

The Spanish canning industry was one of the first to apply the techniques invented by the Frenchmen Appert and Colin to some of its most highly prized natural resources: fish and seafood. Sardines, tuna, anchovies, mussels etc. continue to be preserved in this way and continue to be prized not just for their convenience but also for the excellence of their taste and quality.

COVER
Fotography by Fernando Briones

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SEGOVIA
THE CITY OF LIGHT

Text: **Pablo Martín Cantalejo**
Photos: **INPROTUR and Sobremesa**

Under the clear skies of Castille stands proud Segovia one of Spain's most historically important cities. Apart from its monuments of undoubted value, it offers many other atractions to travellers, amongst them, the open character of its people and the excellence of its gastronomy.

The Gothic cathedral is the temple with the best location in Spain.

The visitor who approaches *Segovia* by any of the roads that lead to the city immediately receives a beautiful visual surprise which changes, at once, into spiritual rapture because the panorama is so serene and quiet. From this moment on, the visitor will try to strengthen this by getting to know and understand the city without ever imagining that, once immersed in it, he will be totatally captivated by the emotion, the atmosphere, the variety, the richness of its monuments, the beauty of its landscape...

An Iberian settlement from about 700 BC it was taken in c. 80 BC by the Romans. It was occupied at the beginning of the 8th century by the Moors, from whom *Alfonso VI* recaptured it in 1079. Thereafter, the city enjoyed prosperity and a important position in medieval *Castille*, serving as royal residence during the reign of *Alfonso X* the Wise (c. 1284) and as the site of the Spanish mint from 1586 to 1730.

The Roman aqueduct, still in use, is 2000 years old and was built under the Emperor Trajan without the use of mortar.

«From the distant mountains it seems as if a powerful mass of rock had travelled down into the valley», wrote *Azorín* of *Segovia*. There on that valley rises the city, with its towers, gables and belfries, its red roofs throwing off that very special light of *Segovia*, so fine and reverberating.

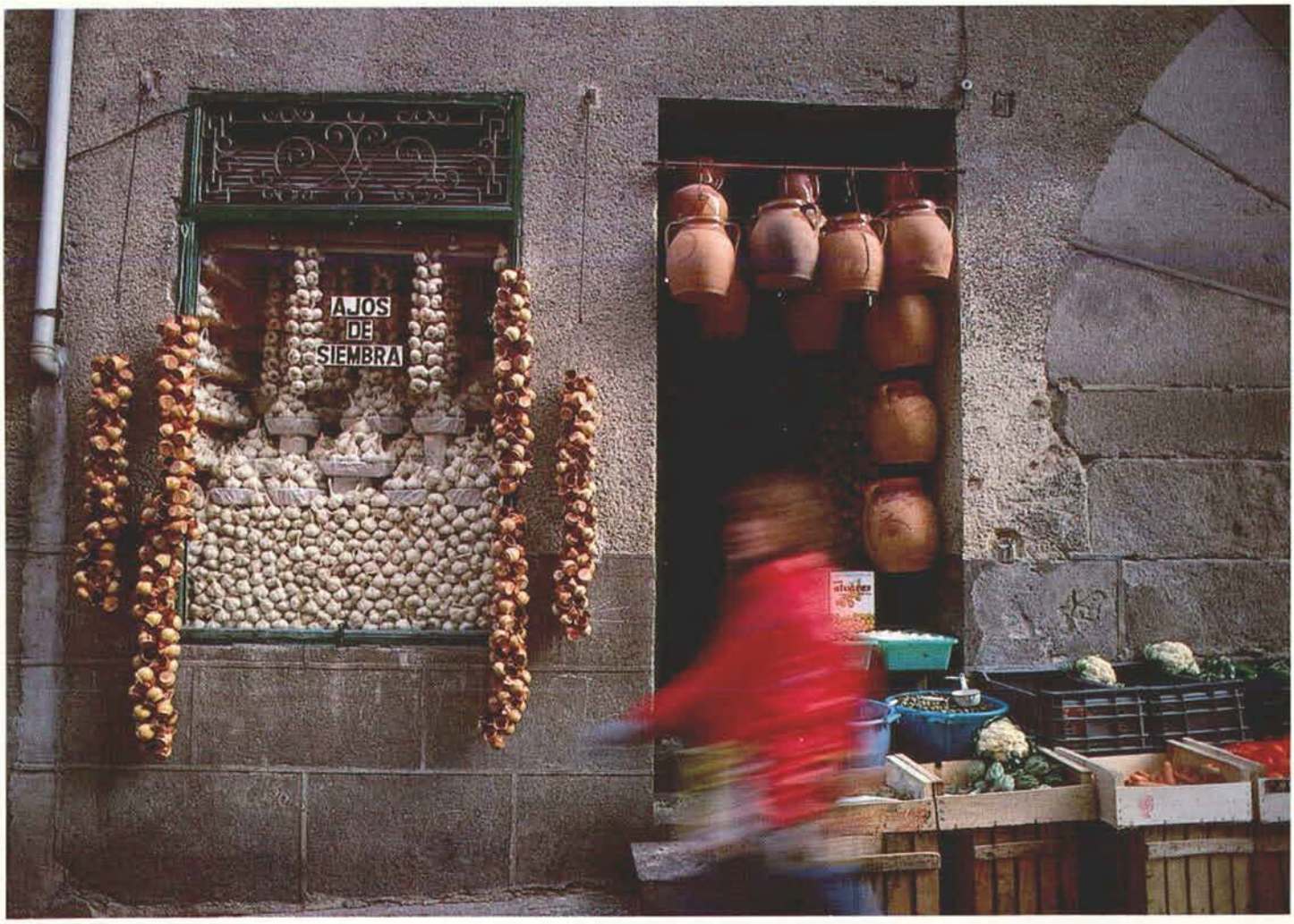
Because *Segovia*, together with its artistic wealth and treasures, has the peculiar gift of clear, transparent, bright, sharp light... a color of sunlight one can almost touch. This is the light that illuminates the heritage of this city, the light which makes the cathedral stones gleam, the walls of the *Alcázar* shine, the light that lends balance to the incredible Roman aqueduct, and to the strongholds and towers and temples of this city.

Segovia, at a distance, is a city of legends where the traveller has so many things to discover, all different, impressive and promising.

ENTRANCE TO THE CITY

The most impressive road into the city is not the usual one, but rather under its greatest monument, the Roman aqueduct.

The structure, for water-conveyance, was built under the Roman Emperor Trajan (AD 53-117), and is still in use. It carries water 10 miles (16 km) from the *Río Frío* to the city. One of the best preserved Roman engineering works, it was built of dark-colored *Guadarrama* granite without the use of mortar. The part above ground is 900 ft (275 m) long and consists of 166 arches more



Segovia is famous for its food: garlic soup and suckling pig.

than 30 ft high. In the center, a dip in the earth necessitated two tiers of arches; there the structure stands 93 1/2 ft above ground level.

THE INTERIOR

This huge stone monument brings us into the heart of the city. The *Azoguejo* is the small square which was used in olden times as marketplace, and is today the focal point of traffic, and the scene from which so many characters were taken into literature by the likes of *Francisco de Quevedo* and other famous authors.

From the *Azoguejo,* three routes can be taken into the upper town, circled by ancient walls and situated on the narrow limestone bridge between the two rivers. All three routes are lined with monuments, noble houses, and lovely spots to stop for a breather, but whatever you do, three things are a must in *Segovia:* the amazing aqueduct, the cathedral and the *Alcázar.*

Palaces and noble houses are spread among the narrow streets of Segovia, surrounding the cathedral, kwown as the Lady of Cathedrals.

The cathedral, known as the Lady of Cathedrals, is the temple with the best location in Spain. In the center of the old town on the *Plaza Mayor,* high on top of a rock surrounded by houses, rises this Gothic temple built in the 16th century to substitute the original church of *Santa María,* which was located in what is today the gardens at the entrance to the *Alcázar,* and which was later destroyed. The first stone was laid in June 8, 1525, and it was opened for worship in 1588, although work continued throughout the 17th century.

The interior light is surprising and the balance and harmony of its proportions is to be noted, with many chapels sheltering lovely sculptured images behind artistic iron grilles. It has some lovely original stained glass windows and the church archives, contain such priceless books as the *Sinodal de Aguilafuerte,* the first book printed in Spain, precisely here in *Segovia* in 1492, by *Juan Parix* from Germany, who was brought here by the Bishop *Arias Dâvila.*

The ancient walls of the city, where the gates of *San Andrés, San Cebrián* and *Santiago* still stand, start off and end at the *Alcázar,* which rose over the ruins of a fortress. Mentioned as early as the 12th century, it was the fortified palace of the Kings of Castile. It collapsed during the reign of *Alfonso X* the Wise, and since then construction and reconstruction have been frequent.

The original building was mostly destroyed by a fire in 1862. Until this date, it housed the Royal Artillery

From the first moment, the visitor will be captivated by the richness of its monuments.

School, founded by *Carlos III*, from this palace *Isabel la Católica* set forth to be crowned queen of Castille at the main square of *Segovia*, and in this palace *Felipe II* married Ann of Austria.

CHURCHES

There are excellent examples of Romanesque art in *Segovia*. Notable churches include those of *San Esteban* with a superb tower, *San Martín, La Trinidad, San Lorenzo* (with its original brick tower), *San Millán* (maybe the most majestic temple in the city), all Romanesque and from the 12th century, and *Vera Cruz* (13th century), the former church of the Knights Templars. The Romanesque church of *San Justo* is notable for its valuable 12th century paintings.

The list is long although not endless: the churches of The Saviour, *Santa Eulalia, San Andrés, Santo Tomás, San Clemente, San Marcos...*

The visitor, when walking around will also find palaces and houses with noble coat of arms on the façades. Together with the monuments and art, one can get «lost» in the narrow streets of the old Jewish quarter, or visit the house where *Antonio Machado*, the poet lived, strolling through secluded gardens and narrow streets, walls with wooden beams and bricks, so old, so medieval, and in the evening, the yellow light of street lamps throwing playful shadows into hidden corners and private gardens, fantastic and beautiful.

SEGOVIA, THE LIVING CITY

One may think that *Segovia* is nothing more than a relic of the past with no life if its own, but the commercial activity of this city today is noteworthy, plus being one of the cities which welcomes more foreign visitors each year. It is famous for its food, and many restaurants take up this fame, from large establishments to small taverns, in all of which the rich products of the land are served, the typical dishes of the province: the most famous being garlic soup, fresh trout, spicy sausage, veal and specially, roasted lamb and suckling pig, all of this topped off with typical sweets for dessert.

THE SURROUNDING AREAS

Before leaving the area, the surrounding valleys and groves of the

Agenda

WHERE TO EAT

The restaurants of *Segovia* vary between the classic old-fashioned restaurants, large and busy —*Cándido* or *Duque*— a «must» for tourists, and other smaller and more intimate establishments that are run by their owners and frequented principally by Segovians. The former maintain an extremely satisfactory level of quality and offer, mainly, the typical dishes of the region.

Among the latter, *César* and *La Cocina de Sant Millan,* boast a different cuisine in which originality and variety is offered. The *Parador Nacional* also stands out as a place where one observes a consistency to be commended.

— Mesón de Candido
Plaza del Azoguejo, 5

— Mesón Duque
Cervantes, 12

— La Cocina de Sant Millán
San Millán, 5

— Casa Amado
Fernández Ladreda, 9

— Parador Nacional
Carretera de Valladolid, s/n

WHERE TO WALK, SHOP AND VISIT

As regards *tapas* (typical snacks) there are some outstanding spots. Near the *Plza Mayor* you can find **Poetas** (Escuderos, 22) a pub-gallery which organises poetry readings. In the Jewish Quarter, the **Tasca la Posada** (Judería Vieja, 1) is well worth a visit with its classic specialities which are both good and abundant. The most popular, however, is **José María** (Cronista Lecea, 11) which also has a restaurant which serves tasty pickled products and a magnificent range of sausage products.

Pleasant spots to have a drink are the **Parador Nacional** and **Lennon** (Fernández Ladreda, 25), a classical English bar.

The typical desserts of *Segovia, Yemas* made of egg, sugar and flour and *Ponche* (a sponge cake soaked in alcohol with cream and covered in marzipan) must be bought in **El Alcázar** (Plaza Mayor) cake shop. **Hija de C. Fernández** (Cervantes, 26) also offers a good *Ponche* and a wide variety of cheeses. There are two good Antique shops, one in the *Plaza de los Huertos* and one in the *Plaza de la merced.* Opposite the Cathedral you can find famous objects made from *Pedraza* tin in **La Casita del Segoviano.**

HOTELS

Parador Nacional
Apartado de Correos 106
Tel. (11) 43 04 62

Hotel Acueducto
Padre Claret, 10
Tel. (11) 42 48 00

Hotel Los Linajes
Dr. Velasco, 9
Tel. (11) 43 12 01

Hotel Puerta de Segovia
Ctra. Soria-Riaza (La Lastrilla)
Tel. (11) 43 71 61

Segovia has the peculiar gift of a light which enhances its monuments.

river *Eresma* and *Clamores,* are beautiful at this time of year.

Nothing has changed in the collection of vegetable gardens and forest walks which make up the valley of the *Eresma.* Where this joins with the *Clamores* we find the rocky outcrop on which the *Alcánzar* stands. Further on, the river changes direction escaping from the boundaries of the city to lose itself in the curves which meander across the plain. This is the tranquil river to whose banks *Machado* dedicated his emotive poetry.

Segovia is different from below. The golden silhouette of the *Alcázar* cuts, majestically and threateningly, into the Castillian skies. In the valley of *Eresma* you can almost breathe the silence. Legends and magic of long ago, superstitions and miracles, abound here.

The sanctuary of *Fuencisla,* church of the patron saint of *Segovia,* is hidden behind a dense grove of trees in the shadow of the looming bulk of the *Peñas Grajeras* from which flow numerous streams and springs. The primitive sanctuary of the 13th century was built in the place where the miracle of *María del Salto* occured. Esther, a Jewess, presumably guilty of adultery, was unhurt after being thrown from a cliff.

Enjoying segovian food is a must for all visitors. The rich produces of the land are served in any of the numerous restaurants.

Segovia is not only a rock enclosed by a wall, but also its surrounding suburbs, more populous than the actual walled city *(San Lorenzo, San Marcos, Santa Eulalia),* districts which have been growing since the Middle Ages, and in which an essential part of Roman *Segovia* is to be found, forming a belt of outlying monuments.

On the banks of the *Eresma,* almost hidden among the trees, remains an old brick mansion, converted now to a flour factory. *Felipe II* had the *Casa de la Moneda* installed under its roof, where, in its time, some of the world's most perfect coins were minted.

Nearby, is the Templar church of the *Vera Cruz,* mysterious, esoteric and disturbing, a regular twelve-sided structure, the same as the mosque of the Rock of Jerusalem. On its roof —according to legend— neither rooks nor black birds land, due to a curse attributed to the first friar of the Temple.

Crossing the river bed of the *Eresma* the landscape becomes beautifully wild. One is taken aback by the starkness of the yellow-grey earth. From the plain of the *Vera Cruz* to the crag which emerges in front of the monastery of *Parral* of from the *Parador,* the panorama of *Segovia* is a always fascinating.

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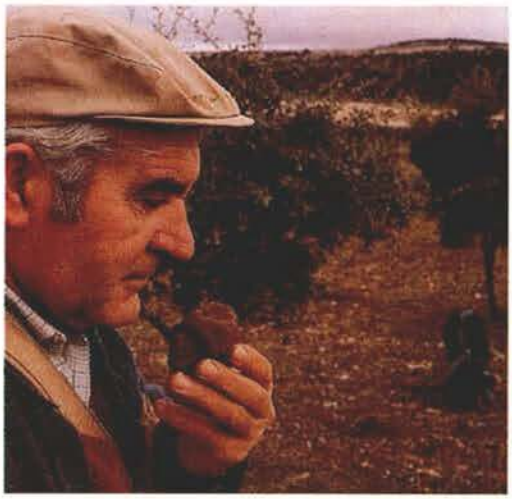
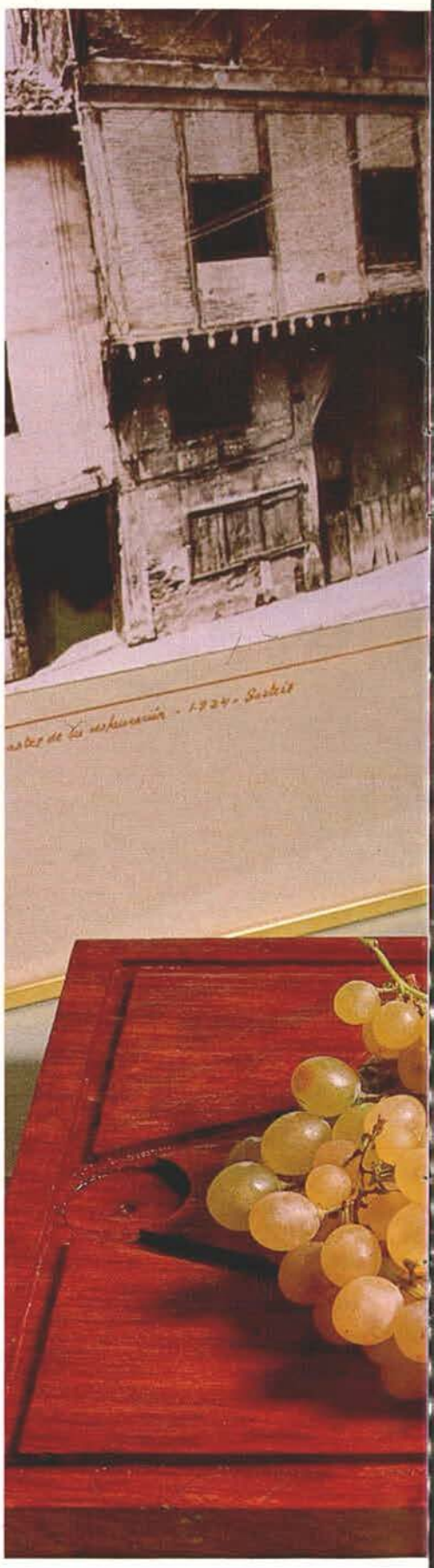


THE DIAMONDS OF CUISINE

Text: **Gonzalo Sol**
Photos: **Félix Lorrio and Antonio de Benito**

Although it was the famous gastronome Brillant-Savarin *who first described this exquisite black mushroom as a real gastronomic diamond, its mysterious aroma was already familiar to the Greeks and Romans. Since those times, the wrinkled truffle, with its aphrodisiac qualities, has come a long way down the road of culinary history, and although the traditional Spanish cookery book has not been generous in using them, our soil does produce truffles of excellent quality. The new chefs, however, are not unfamiliar with such an exquisite delicacy, which is gradually finding its rightful place on the menus of the better restaurants, despite the mysteries involved in their commercialization. Not to mention their high price, which can even rival that of another gastronomic jewel: saffron.*



In Spain, our truffles are black, violet-coloured, ochre, greyish, big, and small; there are winter and summer truffles, truffles which are patrician, and plebeian; truffles for all palates and possibilities. However, with the finest *Périgord* truffle fields almost exhausted as a result of somewhat irrational overexploitation over a long period of time, Spanish truffles have for years now been reaching the most demanding tables in the world in tins, coyly disguised as French, either in the form of *pâté,* or in whole *foie-gras,* the two which consume the greatest amount of truffles. The most luxurious restaurants in other countries acquire natural truffles, in jars and half-pickled, but with their Spanish origin always hidden. Out of the thirty or forty tons of truffles we produce (the statistics are vague and unreliable; the figure is certainly higher), no less than 90 % cross the Pyrenees to be eaten or commercialized by the French. The reasons are very

PRACTICALLY ALL TRUFFLES species can be found in Spain. Most of them are exported.

Up to now, the only way to harvest truffles is using animals with a fine sense of smell: dogs, sows, boards.

simple: truffles are practically unknown to the vast majority of Spaniards, and, in the various Spanish cuisines (popular and middle-class cooking), there are hardly any indigenous recipes using truffles, unlike *Périgord* in France and Piedmont in Italy, where they do exist. In Spain, there has never been any real demand, and, apart from that of certain restaurants, the current incipient demand is still slight and undiscerning.

The Spanish truffle «patch» can be seen quite clearly on the map to spread throughout north-east Spain: the Communities of *Cataluña, Aragón* and *Navarra,* plus the provinces of *Soria, Guadalajara, Cuenca, Valencia* and *Castellón.* Truffles are also to be found in *Extremadura,* but almost exclusively the tupe called Earth Sweetbreads (*Criadilla de Tierra*). It is also found elsewhere, but has little connection with the black truffle, or the white Piedmont truffle. There are botanists, *Cienfuegos,* for example, who claim to have spotted truffles growing in *Murcia* and *Madrid* as well.

It is nowadays possible to grow truffles, and these are actually as good as the wild ones.

TRUFFLES, GREEKS AND ROMANS

One would expect truffles to have been known since the beginning of time. Despite the fact that there are no toxic varieties, the reason for the general ignorance about truffles seem to be similar to that regarding mushrooms: fear. Fear of the forest, the unknown, their black colour, the absurdity of their having no roots, the fact that they actually grow underground... *Theophrastus* of Lesbos was probably the first person to write about truffles in 374BC: *«A rootless vegetable, engendered by autumn rains when accompanied by thunder and lightning». Dioscorides* said: *«Earth truffles are young roots, without leaf nor stem, and of a ruddy colour. It is custom that they be dug up at springtide, and eaten both raw and*

cooked». Pliny, who called them «hardnesses», or callouses of the earth, wrote a lot about them: *«Truffles are begat when in autumn abound rain and thunder. Shall we say that they are a defect of the earth? Forsooth, it is difficult to comprehend that they be of any other sort, yet it cannot be known whether they be created big as when they are found, nor indeed if they have life or not. A short while herebefore, with* Laertius Licinius *being Praetor of Hispania in* Cartagena, *he did break a tooth while eating a truffle wherein lay a coin, the which doth demonstrate that Mother Earth, of her very nature doth harvest in herself and condense herself; yea so it shall be in all things that are born and cannot be sown»* (*Pliny,* Book XIX, Chapter II). The Emperor *Dioclecian,* who went so far as to order the uprooting of entire vinyards in order to prevent the price of wine from falling, froze that of truffles (as well as that of many other products, such as artichoke hearts... but not mushrooms) so as to stop speculation. *Appicius,* the great Roman chef, has passed down to us several somewhat exotic recipes using truffles, about which his commentaries make him the most laconic of the Classical writers: *«Very pricy produce».* It still is: for the 1986 'harvest', according to size and shape (washed or unwashed), and depending on the place of origin and supplier, restaurants paid between 270 and 540 US dollars per kilo.

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

As far as purely morphological aspects are concerned, both internal and external, there is perhaps as large a variety of truffles (underground mushrooms) as surface mushrooms. During the Roman Empire the above-mentioned *Pliny* lists various species according to colour: white, red, black, the summer truffle, and the Lybian African, or desert truffle... In Spain, you can probably find just about all of them except the white one, with its really potent scent *(Tuber Magnatum),* which is to be found in Piedmont. All the others are to be found in Spain, from the most highly-esteemed black winter varieties *Melanosporum* and *Brumale),* both quite delicate, with a pleasing texture and intense aroma, to the pasture truffle *(Hydnotria Tulasnei),* yellowish, very wrinkled on the outside, and not particularly aromatic, and not forgetting the chamois-coloured meandering truffle *(Choiromyces Meandriformis)* without patterning or veins, and of only minor culinary interest, and the above-mentioned Earth Sweetbread *(Terfezia Leonis),* whitish, sometimes pinky, mottled, usually with a small peduncle, like a tiny pear-stalk. Those with the greatest fame (and rightly so), and the most important for their real culinary interest are the *Tuber Melanosporum* and the *Tuber Brumale* mentioned above.

Both of these are genuine delicacies, and very difficult to tell apart, especially when cooked. They are to be found in woods of the *quercus* family (oak, holm-oak, and ilex, especially the latter) as well as near hazel trees and some pines; the earth must be rich in clay and limestone, with some salica. The reproductive spores of truffles need to develop in the open air among the leaves in the undergrowth; as a result, their physical development is fragile in the extreme, as their scarcity well shows.

PLAYING HARD-TO-GET

The extremely powerful aroma of truffles, which can flower on the surface from a depth of 12 up to 30 cms.,

As a guide for those interested and despite the inaccuracy inherent in the changes which take place from one year to another (it is advisable always to phone the local townhalls concerned in autumn to obtain confirmation, or to set in motion the process towards receiving up-to-date information), the following list of truffle markets, marts and villages may be of use:

Gerona: Olot, perhaps the most important.

Lérida: Solsona.

Barcelona: Centelles and Vich.

Huesca: Graus and Benasque.

Castellón: Morella.

Teruel: Mora de Rubielos.

Guadalajara: Molina de Aragón and Peralejos de las Truchas.

Cuenca: Tragacete, Cañada del Hoyo and Valdemorillo de la Sierra.

Soria: Navaleno, where the «crop» is controlled as well as bottled to be put on to the market.

Truffles are to be found near oaks, hazel trees and pines, 12 to 30 cms under the earth, which must be rich in clay.

THERE ARE VARIOUS
ways of eating truffles: roasted, grated, with foie gras.
In any case, with a good wine.

has enabled them, from time immemorial, to be located using animals with a fine sense of smell and a great love of truffles; man obviously chose dogs because they are so obedient. The Iberian sow (any breed of pig is useful, but in any case, the sow is more efficient) is the best animal for this task, but it is far too greedy, and in practice, it is almost impossible for the sow's master to stop them eating the truffles. In Sardinia, they also use nanny-goats, and in *Périgord* they have used boars. Field-rats, wild-cats, lynxes, moles, squirrels and snails are insatiable devourers of truffles, and there are those who, apart from being capricious in their eating habits, are spiteful to boot, and say that there is no more exquiste dish than the squirrel or snail in summer, after they have spent months on a diet of nothing but truffles. If any truffle-gourmet decides to go out and look for them in the country, and he does not possess a truffle-dog (they need a lot of training and can cost about 800 US dollars), once you are in the right geographical region mentioned above, and in an area known to be rich in truffles (having obtained permission from the local town council and the owner of the land) you should go into an oak, holm-oak or ilex wood or grove and start looking for bare patches on the surface of the ground about a metre or two; if the earth there feels soft when you touch it with your fingers, as though it has recently been dug up, there will probably be a truffle underneath which can be removed after digging a little with your hands and testing the earth gingerly with a blunt point or pen-knife. Once you have removed the black fruit, it is a good idea to try to leave the earth as it was before and make some sort of hidden mark: it is by no means impossible that in a year or two's time another treasure might emerge.

Despite the view that has been held since *Pliny's* time, it is, in fact, possible to grow truffles. In quantitative terms, the results are perhaps more difficult than in the case of the truffles' cousin the mushroom, but in qualitative terms, the results are incomparably better; just as the grown mushroom hardly bears comparison with the wild, natural variety, you can hardly tell the difference between a wild truffle and a grown one; when a grown truffle has little aroma, or a poor texture, it may well be because, as can happen with wild truffles, it was not picked at the right time, it is an inferior species, it comes from a poor area, or because it belongs to a lower quality crop or «year».

PROCESSING AND PRESERVING

Once they have been taken out of the earth, truffles should be left to stand for a couple of hours in lukewarm water and then washed thoroughly under the tap using a hard brush. From then on, once they are dry, the possibilities for delight are legion: from roasting them whole in foil, in the oven... or, finer still, in the ashes of the fireplace, to having them in an omelette, or even grated on top of a good plate of fresh pasta, with butter and cheese. In all these cases, especially the first, truffles demand a *grand vin,* ... one of those which takes on the subtle aromas of an autumn wood as they mature. Should you happen not to have the right wine at the time, and wish to keep these black diamonds for a more fitting occasion, there are various systems to prevent dehydration, and general deterioration in quality. Of the best-known methods (brine, bottler *au bain Marie,* in *eau-de-vie,* etc.), perhaps the most recommendable is the following: place the truffles in a small stainless-steel saucepan, making sure that there is neither too much nor too little space between them, and cover with unused, top-quality olive oil. Heat very gently (100 to 120 °C - do not let the oil boil) for about eight to ten minutes, depending on the size of the truffles. Then, allow them to cool, place in a glass jar and store them, even in the refrigerator. What is more, the oil can be used to make superb salad-dressings.

The first written description of truffles dates back to 374 BC «a rootless vegetable, engendered by autumn rains».

AN UNDERGROUND MARKET IN BLACK DIAMOND

There are far more interesting ways of obtaining Spanish truffles than simply going to a good specialized shop,... and far more certain than getting cold in the country with a pen-knife in your hand (do not forget that truffles are picked from the end of November to the end of March). The reference is to markets and auctions held in a semi-clandestine atmosphere either just before dawn, or in the middle of the night, for reasons no-one really knows; gatherings with few people present,... if possible with just one supplier whose name you somehow never get to know, and with just a few buyers, huddled together in some ramshackle bar, or the tiny hall of the truffle-searcher's house. The purpose of the exercise and in this they are successful, is to make sure that nobody knows exactly how many truffles each person has or how many the area has produced, or how many have been brought in from other areas: if the market were transparent, prices would suffer. Efforts are even made so that news does not get out regarding which villages have collected their quota and where the sales operations are going to take place. Until quite recently, all the buyers were French; then the Catalans began to buy for themselves and the French market, and... the odd Basque. In this business you can find real hoarders, intermediaries who even buy «futures», who pay the local council for the exclusive rights over a truffle area (several village in the *Palancares* mountains in *Cuenca* put the exloitation rights of their lands up for auction every year), and then supply the truffles to restaurants and even other intermediaries with greater operational scope. Also for some years now, a Navarrese entrepreneur who began as a hoarder exporting to France, has considerable truffle «patches» in the mountains of *Soria,* which enable him to keep up a regular supply for his customers throughout Europe. It seems absolutely essential to achieve a certain transparency regarding such a «mysterious» supply,... the only way to bring about commercialization channelled towards the consumer, with reliable personal data of all parties involved so as to guarantee the exact type of truffles, their true geographical origin, precise dates of «harvesting», etc.

HOLYDAYS ON HORSEBACK

Text: **Club de Gourmets**
Photos: **Rutas a Caballo, Image Bank and Fco. Ontañón**

Pony-trekking, once one of the most rustic means of transport, is fast becoming one of the most sophisticated. Exploring, on horseback, along trails which are inaccessible to cars is the objective of a growing number of trekkers. This is a way of travelling which combines the two extremes: both refinement and the simple life in the heart of the Spanish countryside.

Pony-trekking has the undoubted ecological attraction of letting people come into close contact with nature. Perhaps this is the reason why the most developed countries are also those most attracted by a return to rural tranquility. Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and France top the list of countries in which equestrian tourism is most popular.

There are three good reasons why Spain is exceptionally well suited to this activity. The first is definitely the splendid horses which are bred here. They are internationally famed for their beauty and stamina. In *Andalucía,* horse breeding is particularly well-established and the admiration in which these noble animals are held comes over as a fundamental part of Andalusian folklore and festivals. The second is to be found in the variety and beauty of the Spanish landscape. Spain is a land of tormented physical features, of high mountains, deep valleys and steep gullies which are almost unapproachable except on horseback. The third reason is the exceptional climate which, mainly in the south, allows trekking to continue almost all year round. In winter it is one of the most agreeable regions of Europe.

There is yet another reason why this country is particularly suitable for excursions on horseback along routes which rarely cross a main highway and this is the *cañadas reales* (the drovers' roads). It is well-known that for centuries the principal wealth of *Castilla* derived from livestock, especially sheep. Thousands of head of stock roamed the country in search of summer and winter grazing. The migrating flocks were controlled by the *Mesta,* an organisation whose economic power was such that it built many of Spain's imposing Gothic cathedrals out of its own pocket. The *Mesta* demanded its own roads which would permit the enormous herds to make their way

NAME	ROUTE	DATES
ANDALUCIA (13 or 8 days)	Sevilla - Arcos de la Frontera - El Bosque - San José del Valle - Alcalá de los Gazules - Zahara de los Atunes - Trafalgar - Véjer - Medina Sidonia - San José del Valle. Organised by *«Rutas a Caballo»*.	Autumn: 16-18 Sept. 20 Sept.-2 Oct. 4-16 Oct. 18-30 Oct.
PUEBLOS BLANCOS (8 days)	From Arcos de la Frontera to Ronda, riding through the beautiful Serranía of Ronda. Organised by *«Rutas a Caballo»*.	Autumn: 13-20 Sept.
CASTILLA (8 days)	Through the province of Segovia. Leaving from Molino del Río Viejo, crossing the gorge of the River Duratón, and ending in Prádena. Local dishes served en route. Organised by *«Rutas a Caballo»*.	Autumn: 5-12 Sept. 19-26 Sept. 3-10 Oct. 17-24 Oct.
SIERRA MORENA (7 days)	Palma del Río - Sierra de Hornachuelos - Ecija - Visit to the Cárdenas Stud - Córdoba - Visit to the stallions. Organised by *«Equitur»*.	
VALLE DE RASCAFRIA (2 days)	El Paular - Miraflores - Valdemanco - Lozoya - Alameda del Valle - Racafría. Organised by *«Rutas a Caballo»*.	Every weekend
SEGOVIA (2 days)	From Molino de Río Viejo to Pedraza or La Granja de San Ildefonso with special emphasis on local gastronomy. Organised by *«Rutas a Caballo»*.	Every weekend
MONTSENY	Riding holidays in Montseny National Park - Equestrian Centre. Full board and acommodation	All year round

across the country without coming into conflict with the owners of any of the land in their path. And thus the *cañadas reales* came into being, still protected by law, even today, though in varying states of preservation. These natural trails are frequently included in the routes on horseback which cross *Castilla* and in some cases, *Andalucía.*

Little imagination is required to understand the delights of travelling across country, mounted on a fine horse, far from the sound of motor vehicles, along grassy trails never less than 70m wide, with no natural obstacles of any size, passing through beautiful, almost unknown countryside, woods and fields and peaceful villages hidden away, where the inhabitants are working at their traditional agricultural tasks. Accommodation is in top quality establishments: *paradors,* converted mills with every facility available and first class hotels.

Departure is mid-morning, you ride for two and a half hours —stopping when necessary— and, at midday, you halt for lunch. A picnic is waiting for the riders, to be eaten in the tranquillity of the countryside. After time for a walk or a siesta, you set out again to finish the route, which requires between 5 or 6 hours a day in the saddle.

As dusk begins to fall, you will be reaching your hotel where a delicious meal will have been prepared, including some of the local gastronomic specialities. Your luggage will be waiting for you in your room and there is always some evening entertainment. Throughout the excursion a support landrover will always be there to transport the luggage, go on ahead to prepare the picnics, carry first aid equipment in case of emergency and to pick up anyone who is feeling tired or indisposed. The emphasis is on comfort. A guide and an assistant accompany the group, which comprises a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 16 people.

—In 1975, *Rutas a Caballo* (Routes on Horseback), the first agency devoted to this kind of excursions, was opened. Thus began a long and arduous struggle to consolidate the market for a hitherto unthought of form of travel, though today there are a number of agencies in the business. *Rutas a Caballo* offers various itineraries, the most appropriate of which, at this time of year, is the one in *Andalucía,* along the Atlantic coast of *Cádiz,* in outings of either 8 or 13 days. Leaving from *Arcos de la Frontera,* you cross the region of *La*

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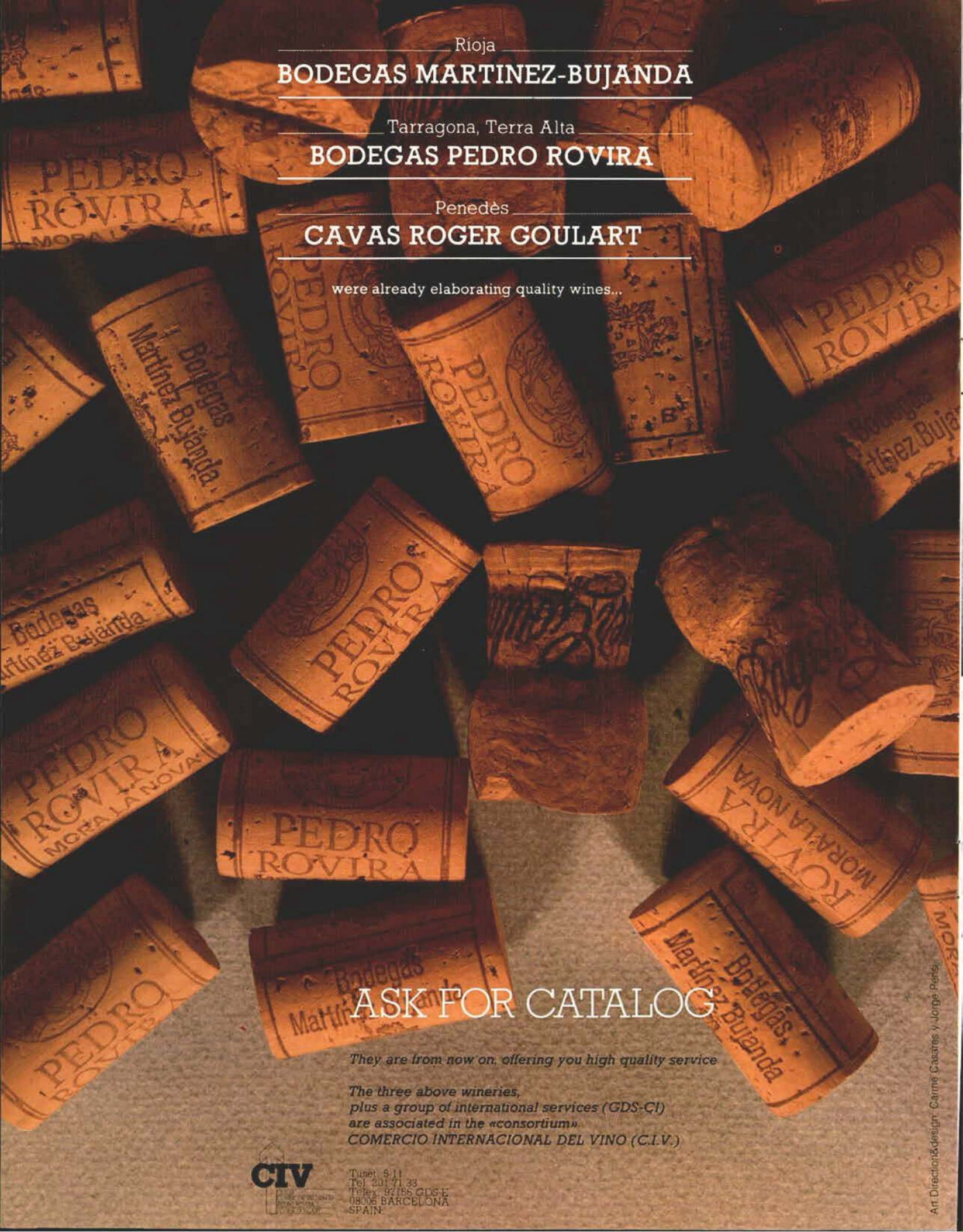
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Frontera towards the coast, passing through *San José del Valle, Alcalá de los Gazules, Zahara de los Atunes* and *Bolonia,* an itinerary of 8 days. You can make the return journey through *Trafalgar, Véjer, Medina Sidonia,* and back to *San José el Valle* to finish 13 days of a trip through one of the most beautiful areas in the country.

At a hotter time of year, one of the weekly excursions through the province of *Segovia* is to be recommended. These leave from *Molino de Ripo Viejo* and go through *Sotosalbos, Pedraza, Sebulcor, Sepúlveda,* the gorge of the River *Duratón, Prádena* and *Segovia.*

The longest excursion, wihch takes place in the month of October, the journey from *Segovia* to *Cádiz* lasting one month, 26 days on horseback and 4 days resting.

One of the most recent innovations of *Rutas a Caballo* has been the installation of an equestrian centre in *Molino Viejo,* near *Segovia,* in an old watermill which has been exquisitely renovated. Here you can get to know all about horses, from learning to ride to more advanced schooling, or trekking, either on one of the short daily excursions of between 4 to 6 hours in the surrounding countryside, or for 8 days, covering a large part of the province of *Segovia* and riding through the spectacular gorge of the River *Duratón.*

Other agencies also organize excursions on horseback in Spain, which proves that this activity is attracting increasing interest from the general public. Places like the *Sierra Morena,* the *Sierra de Gredos,* the Galician river estuaries, the *Picos de Europa,* the Pyrenees, the *Ampurdán,* the Balearics and the *Alpujaras* can all now be visited on horseback.

In conclusion, the excellent cuisine of most of these excursions should also be remembered, offering the experience of regional cuisine in high quality establishments (particularly the dinners), as well as the local wines.

As a minimum number of participants is required for each excursion, the possibility exists of organising a route or a departure date not previously planned by the agency in the case of a complete group.

It is not necessary to be an excellent horseman or woman in order to participate. A knowledge of the rudiments or a few classes before leaving are sufficient. The horses are well-trained and the pace leisurely, along trails wide enough to be a racecourse.

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THE END OF A LONG HAUL

CANNED FISH

Text: **José Carlos Capel**
Photos: **INPROTUR, INFE and Image Bank**

The Spanish continental shelf, the narrow underwater platform which, at a relatively shallow depth, skirts the coast of the Iberian peninsula, is extraordinarily rich in those species of fish which the Spanish call «blue» and Anglo-Saxon call «oily». These migratory fish, succulent and full flavoured and with a high fat content, are deeply engrained in Spanish culinary traditions and eating habits and are particularly good canned.

As they have done for centuries, sardines, tuna, horse-mackerel, anchovies, mackerel, bream, swordfish and others still play a leading role in Spanish cooking, one of the many legacies of the ancient Mediterranean culture.

References found dating back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, others in old recipe books and various masterpieces of Spanish literature attest to his. «Blue» fish are mentioned in the early Medieval *Libro del Buen Amor* (The Book of Good Love), written by the *Archpriest of Hita,* a famed *bon viveur;* they are frequently referred to in the literature of Spain's Golden Age (the 16th and 17th centuries), and inspired couplets, songs and deeply traditional popular festivals.

In past centuries, fishing for these species engendered allied skills and jobs, even cultural activities, and some coastal towns became rich and prospered on the strength of them.

Salted or soused, «blue» fish —chiefly sardines, tuna and anchovies— set the foundations for a trade which was to thrive for centuries.

From the 15th century on, there exists reliable documentary evidence of a flourishing trade, both at home and abroad. Indeed, these fish have the claim to fame of having established the seafood preserving industry.

Ingenious and effective fishing techniques were devised to increase catches, from the legendary *almadrabas,* elaborate fishing nets set in the Gulf of *Cádiz,* to the 18th century seines, a sweep-net technique of Provençal-Mediterranean origin, put into use as

Fish preserving techniques date back to ancient Greece, but have been improved thanks to new mechanized processes.

The secrets of luxury

In the larders of some European gourmets, tins of sardines in olive oil occupy a place of honour alongside pots of *foie gras* with truffles or jars of caviare. A cult has built up around these canned fish, which, with its preaching of the special qualities of the best brands, the correct year and maturity period within the tin, constitutes a kind of gastronomical religion.

All these «experts» —regular customers at London's *Fortnum and Mason, Fauchon* in Paris and other accredited stores— are fully aware that the quality of the product contained in the tins is directly related to the fishes' «age».

These avid gourmets obey an obligatory law: let the contents of the tin age; leave their virtues to blossom in a parsimonious maturing process. Slowly, under the right conditions of damp and heat, there is an osmosis of flavours between the olive oil and the sardines, which gives the fish an increasingly delicate taste that reaches an optimum point over 4 or 5 years.

This process, which may be compared to the aging of the best red wines in the bottle, or the elaboration of the best champagnes in the *cava* method, is not something that can be done in a slap dash manner. The tins must be carefully stored, dated and numbered, then turned over at regular intervals in order to allow the oil to penetrate the very heart of the fish.

This is the method that seems to have been followed in the thirties by *Vyvyan Holland,* the son of *Oscar Wilde,* who organised sardine tasting ceremonies with all the pomp and style demanded by such a great occasion, serving the olive-oil soaked fish on porcelain plates alongside the best-quality crystal glasses. According to all accounts, the favourite sardines of *Wilde's* son had been matured for nearly thirty years.

It may, therefore, seem strange, with such a history, that no aged tins have yet been put up for sale in any auction at *Sotheby's* or *Christie's.*

Perhaps we should revive the old custom of the nineteenth century European nobility, who bought barrels of port wine on the birth of a son, to be opened when he came of age, and apply it to this tinned delicacy...

far away as *Galicia* by Catalan fishermen for catching sardines.

From the earliest times, the abundant catches possible off the Spanish coasts made the development of preserving techniques and transport essential. The earliest preserving method was salting —an age-old, originally Phoenician or Punic technique— and the ready availability of salt along the southern Spanish coasts provided ample raw material. Remember that in Antiquity, salt served the purpose of today's deep-freezes.

A later technique to be used was sousing, an originally Arab method which is mentioned in *A Thousand and One Nights,* and it became one of Spain's major contributions to the culinary world. It kept fish from «going off» and preserved them for considerable periods of time.

The next development arrived in the mid-19th century with the discoveries of Frenchmen *Appert* and *Colin* at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Culinary skill and mechanical science joined forces and laid the foundations for what was to become Spain's modern canning industry.

THE UNDERWATER JOURNEY

The ever-full larder of «blue» fish has been generating a lot of interest in recent years, both for commercial and nutritional reasons.

Although they actually belong to a wide range of families, these gregarious fish share various basic anatomical, biological and functional characteristics.

They are very sensitive to temperature changes in the waters in which they shoal, and impelled by mysterious genetic urges, they travel in vast numbers. In a non-stop underwater journey, they traverse deep areas of open sea until, in the spring and summer months, they approach the coasts where they will spawn.

Attracted by the warm temperatures, they swim higher up in the water nearer the surface, and later head towards the coasts. Voraciously hungry, they gorge themselves to sustain their exaggerated energy output. Gradually, a layer of fat builds up beneath the skin as a protection during their long migration.

The warm waters off the coasts of Spain are particularly enticing and their visits to them are, for obvious reasons, seasonal: the underwater nets and the fishing fleet make substantial

catches at particular times of year.

The migratory habits of the red-fleshed tuna —*Thunnus-thynnus* or blue finfish which leave the cold Atlantic waters every spring and head for the eastern Mediterranean in search of spawning grounds— were already known during the period of Antiquity.

Led by an undeniable primal instinct, they travel vast distances, following the earth's parallels, finally passing through the waters off western *Andalusia* —*Huelva* and *Cádiz*— and beyond the Straits of *Gibraltar*.

Full-bellied and plump, pressing on anxiously, they make for the Straits of *Messina*, their destination on this nuptial voyage, where the males and females will engage in the process of reproduction. Spanish fishermen have their own colloquial terms for these welfed tuna during their outward journey towards the east, and others which apply to the returning fish, much thinner and less succulent now, as they slowly make their way back to the Atlantic, a journey which starts in June and lasts into early autumn.

THE ALMADRABAS

The periodic visits of these deep-sea fish —Phoenician coins bearing a design of two tuna heads have been found off the Andalusian coast— inspired the construction of ingenious fishing-traps —known as the *almadrabas*— which are still in use centuries later.

Fish preserving techniques date back to ancient Greece, but have been improved thanks to new mechanized processes.

They are huge underwater enclosures formed by kilometers of nets, cables and anchors which pin the complex trap to the bed of the continental self; they are veritable underwater mazes with interlinked tunnels and pens through which the tuna pass into a final and inescapable death-trap.

A haul of tuna is a thrilling sight. When the tuna boats raise the net containing the day's catch of a leaping mass of tuna, vigorous battle begins between fish and crew.

Although this age-old method of fishing is coming to be used less and less, thousands of tuna a year are still caught in the *almadrabas* off the coasts of *Cádiz*, particularly in *Barbate* and *Zahara de los Atunes*.

TUNA FOR GOURMETS

The salting and preserving industry in the south west of Spain concentrates its efforts during clearly defined periods of the year, echoing the migratory behaviour of the tuna. Only the oily and flavourful flesh of the outward bound fish is used for some of the specialities that some gourmets demand.

One delicacy, which fetches very high prices, is known as *mojama*. This is made by salting the fresh back flesh of tuna and leaving it to dry in the sun and open air. Its name derives from the Arabic *mussama*, participle of the verb *samma*, to dry.

After being immersed in brine for at least twelve hours, the fillets are washed over and over again and are spread out on driers near the sea.

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The drying period lasts from six to eight days, according to the strength and provenance of the sea breeze blowing along the coast. The moist east winds mean a longer drying period, while the much drier west winds speed it up. The high demand for *mojama* and its slow artisan preparation explain the prices it fetches.

The underbelly of the outward bound tuna gives very smooth and delicately flavoured meat which, poached in salted water and canned in olive oil, is another much sought-after delicacy. It is another artisan product, made on a very small scale, in little factories in *Isla Cristina* and *Barbate,* in the provinces of *Huelva* and *Cádiz.*

Tuna roe, another speciality, and the most sought-after of all the preserved products made from the blue fin is, after being salted and dried, a kind of pressed caviar, deep golden brown in colour and with a full and slightly sharp and metallic flavour.

The cost of upkeep of the legendary *almadrabas* and the diminishing size of catches over the last few decades have seen a decline in their use. Nowadays, the Spanish boats which make up one of the most modern fishing fleets in the world are equipped with all the latest technology, and cast their nets many miles off the European coasts in search of the wandering shoals of tuna.

These boats, most of which supply the important canning industry of *Galicia* and *Cantabria,* catch tons of *yellow fin,* a high quality fish with delicate white flesh which is delicious canned in olive oil.

Equally delicious, canned in oil or soused, is the smooth, tasty meat of the *Thunnus alalunga* or *bonito,* a species which frequents the Bay of Biscay and is caught by the Cantabrian coastal fleets during the summer fishing season which lasts into the autumn months.

THE SARDINE: QUEEN OF CANNED FISH

Sardines, with their sleek blue backs and plump, gleaming flanks, salted or canned, are still the mainstay of the Spanish canning industry.

Salted sardines have been a traditional feature of the Spanish diet for centuries. Sometimes mistakenly called «herring-sardines» because of their similarity to salt herring, they are still a product of major importance, though much less so now than in the past.

«Blue» fish and health

It is common parlance in Spain to refer to «blue» fish. These are fish that contain a high percentage of fats throughout their life cycle —more than 5 mg per gramme of meat— and has nothing to do with the pigmentation of their skin or their taste. «White» fish are considered to be those with a lower fat ratio.

Tunny, sword fish, bream, horse mackerel, mackerel, sardines and anchovies and others form the prodigious family of «blue fish», which are so abundant in the waters of the Spanish continental shelf.

Recent food and diet studies have proved the high nutritional value and health-giving characteristics of the species. Legitimised by conclusive data and definitive laboratory proofs, world-famous experts on nutrition —the Spanish professors, *Francisco Grande Covián* and *Gregorio Varela* amongst others— have instigated a radical about-turn in the old ideas.

It is a scientifically proven fact that eating «blue» fish is enormously advantageous for the organism. Its high content of polyunsaturated fatty acids that can bring down the levels of cholesterol and glycerides in the blood, makes it an efficient aid to avoid cardiovascular problems.

Moreover, its richness in proteins is comparable to that of meat. It contains many nutrients and energy-giving components —liposoluble vitamins, especially A and B— and has several mineral salts —calcium, phosphorus, iodine, sodium and fluoride— as well as albumins with a high biological value.

As if this were not enough, it is very easily digested and is excellent value for money.

When canned, the «blue» fish retain all their nutritional and health-giving properties intact. Tinned tunafish, sardines and anchovies are not only a marvellous popular medicine, but also an easy, tasty and satisfying food.

Loyal gourmet fans keep up the demand for this artisan product from south east *Andalusia*, specifically from *Ayamonte* and *Isla Cristina* in the province of *Huelva*.

After salting, when the fish are buried in coarse sea salt for at least ten to twelve days, they are washed, sorted according to size and packed in wooden barrels so that they form iridescent silvery circles, which are subsequently sent off for sale.

As is the case with tuna, sardines for salting, and specialy for canning, are selected during particular periods: the fish have to be very fresh and caught during the summer months which is when they are at their biological best and their flesh is moist and oily.

Spain's major canning plants for sardines and many other speciality fish products are mostly on the coast of *Galicia*.

They all exert rigorous quality control throughout the various stages which make up the process. Vital importance is given to selecting the fish with a view to ensuring optimum flavour.

FROM QUAYSIDE TO CAN

The production cycle starts with careful selection at the quay-side fish auction. Different products require different sizes of sardine. For quality, Atlantic sardines are better than Mediterranean ones. The canning industry's favourites are 11 cm long.

Once in the factory, the fish go through various processes, mechanized to a greater or lesser degree. Gutting and heading, washing and scaling are followed by immersion in brine, a concentrated solution of common salt, which moderates the flavour of the sardine and gives a sheen to its skin.

They are re-washed and placed on racks to steam in special ovens, then left to dry before canning. Skilled workers then pack the sardines into their cans, like the pieces in an intricate jigsaw.

The fish are then covered in oil or tomato sauce and the cans are hermetically sealed by machine. High-temperature sterilising machines destroy the bacteria, toxins and so on which would otherwise cause the fish to spoil. Once perishable, the fish has now been endowed with extremely long shelf-life.

Protected from oxidation and drying out by the absence of air and light, the organoleptic qualities —smell, colour and taste— of the sardines become stabilised and their nutritional value remains unchanged. They can withstand being transported over long distances to foreign markets and still reach the consumer as juicy and flavourful as ever.

ANCHOVIES: A LUXURY PRODUCT

Anchovies *(englaulis encrasicholus)* are the third «great» of Spain's fish canning industry. They are a luxury product which sell very well on the American, German and Italian markets.

On the Mediterranean coast of *Cataluña* (Bay of *Rosas*) and in *Cantabria (Santoña, Laredo* and *Colindres)*, from early spring to late summer, the little fishing villages devote themselves to canning anchovies, the main source of income for much of the coastal population.

Once landed in port, the anchovies go through a meticulous artisan process. Specialised workers head and gut them one by one, manually, taking care to leave intact the little red vein which runs along the backbone, an important factor in their delicious iodine flavour.

The fresh anchovies are then filled and spread with coarse sea salt and placed in layers in large barrels or containers in which, under slight pressure, the fish start the curing process. After six months, during which they are stored in cellars, the fish are «tanned», and are nearly ready to be put on the market.

Depending on the final product, they are either canned as they are in their salty coating, Catalan-style, or they are cleaned, filleted and carefully packed in olive oil, which is typical of *Cantabria*.

The cured anchovies to be canned in oil are first prepared by removing the salty coating, the skin and the tail, washing in brine and draining.

With exquisite precision, the workers then separate each anchovy into two fillets, arrange them in little tins and cover them with olive oil. The final product is essentialy a semi-preserve and should be kept in the refrigerator to maintain its quality.

Anchovy fillets served on bread spread with fresh butter or on a slice of toast rubbed with a cut tomato and sprinkled with virgin olive oil, as they do in *Cataluña*, are unbeatably delicious.

Cantabrian sardines

1 tin of sardines in olive oil;
sliced bread;
2 hard-boiled eggs;
1 tin of red peppers;
capers;
parsley;
butter;
mustard;
oil and salt.

Finely chop the hard-boiled eggs, the red pepper, the capers and the parsley. Beat the mustard into the butter, until uniformly mixed. Remove the crusts from the bread and cut in half, spreading the slices with the butter and mustard mixture. Split the sardines down the middle and place bread-halves on them, covering them with the chopped ingredients, finally seasoning with the oil and salt.

Potatoes with sardines

1/2 kg potatoes;
1 stock cube;
mayonnaise;
1 tin of sardines in olive oil;
parsley (chopped).

Melt the stock cube in a litre of water. Slice the potatoes and boil in the stock. When soft, drain and mix in the chopped parsley and the filleted sardines. Place in a dish and cover with mayonnaise.

Sardine bread

1 tin of sardines in olive oil;
mashed potato;
25 g butter;
6 soft cheese segments;
2 egg yolks;
juice of one lemon.

Beat together all the ingredients until uniformly mixed. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Grease a mould and sprinkle with grated cheese. Pour in the sardine mixture and leave in the fridge for 2 to 3 hours. Remove from mould imme-

diately before serving, and decorate with mayonnaise and finely sliced lettuce.

Sardine paté

1 tin of sardines in olive oil;
1 tbsp. chopped onion;
6-9 stoned olives;
1 tsp. mustard;
juice of half a lemon;
salt and pepper.

Liquidize the sardines, onion and olives, in a blender, then add the other ingredients. Blend. Leave in the fridge for an hour. Serve as canapés.

Tuna fish pie

For the pastry:
400 g flour;
1 teaspoon baking powder;
1 teaspoon sugar;
1 teaspoon salt;
1/8 l oil;
1/8 l milk.

For the filling:
200 g tinned red peppers (chopped);
2 tins of tuna fish (drained and mashed);
tomato sauce;
1 onion (sliced thinly and sauteed);
1 egg (lightly beaten).

Mix the flour with the baking powder, the sugar and the salt, the oil and the milk, and knead it lightly. Divide the pastry into 2 parts, and roll them out flat with a rolling pin. Place one on a flat oven tray. Cover it with a thin layer of tomato sauce, the onion, then the tuna fish and the red peppers. Cover this with 6 tbsp. tomato sauce and then with the other bit of pastry. Seal at edges. Place a pie-funnel in the centre, to enable air to get out. Glaze with the egg and put into a moderate oven for approx. 1/2 hour.

Tunafish croquettes

2 tins of tuna fish;
50 g butter;
1 medium-sized onion (chopped);
75 g flour;
3/4 l milk (boiling);
1 egg (lightly beaten);
breadcrumbs;
olive oil.

Pour the oil from the tuna fish into a frying pan and heat with the butter. Fry the onions until golden-brown. When soft, add the flour. Mix together and add the milk. Make a smooth cream. Add the tuna fish, mix well and season. Leave to cool, then shape into croquettes, and coat with flour, egg and breadcrumbs. Leave a while before frying them in deep olive oil.

Tunafish cannelloni

2 tins tunafish;
1 large onion (finely chopped);
1 red pepper (finely chopped);
tomato sauce;
bechamel sauce;
2 hard-boiled eggs (finely chopped);
20 cannelloni (boiled al dente);
grated cheese.

Drain the oil from the tunafish and use it to fry the onion and the pepper. Add 2 tbsp. tomato sauce and 2 tbsp. bechamel sauce, the hard-boiled eggs and the tuna fish (also finely chopped). Season. Stuff the cannelloni. In a heatproof dish, place a thin layer of tomato sauce, then the stuffed cannelloni, and cover with the rest of the bechamel sauce. Sprinkle with grated cheese and cook in a low oven for 20 minutes, until golden-brown.

Anchovy banderillas

Banderillas are typically Spanish tit-bits, served with drinks in bars and homes. They nearly always include anchovies with other bits of fresh savouries. All one has to do is to put the ingredients on a stick, forming an imaginative combination of flavours and colours.

The following are some examples:

- Anchovy.
- Gherkin.
- 1 olive.

- Anchovy.
- Red pepper.
- 1 artichoke heart (tinned).

- Anchovy.
- 1/4 hard-boiled egg.
- 1 asparagus tip.
- Mayonnaise.

- Anchovy.
- 1 cocktail onion.
- 1 olive.
- Red pepper.

THE PARADOR OF CHINCHON

MONASTIC TRANQUILITY

Text: Sonia Ortega
Photos: A.T.E.

It is just 45 kms. from Madrid, *yet its gardens, corridors and cloisters are steeped in tranquility not of our time which soon conveys itself to the visitor. It retains the atmosphere of the c. 17th., when this lovely monastery was the home of Augustinian monks and a seat of learning. It has belonged to Spain's National Network of Paradors since 1982.*

Chinchón is a little town in the province of *Madrid*, with only 5,000 inhabitants and a rich historical and artistic heritage. During the week, life follows the usual small-town pattern but at the weekends this is interrupted by hordes of visitors, mostly city-dwellers from the capital. The Spanish catch-phrase «Chinchón: anís, plaza y mesón» —Chinchón: anis, square and inns (it ought to be updated to include «and *Parador*»)— neatly sums up its appeal: good food and drink in a historic setting.

Chinchón is surrounded by the fertile area which borders the river *Tajuña*, a landscape of olive groves and vineyards, and the town itself has as its focus a monumental square on which its steep streets converge.

Although *Chinchón's* municipal records contain a written document dated 1375, the town's documented history really begins in the first half of the c. 15th., in the reign of *John II of Castile*, when it came under the jurisdiction of *Segovia*. By 1449, the castle of *Casasola*, built on a rock and now in ruins, was already in existence.

In 1480, the *Catholic Monarchs* created the feudal estate of *Chinchón*, and granted it to their loyal subject, the Marquis of *Moya*, with permission to build «one or two fortresses» within its boundaries. The castle of *Chinchón*, typically Gothic in its square layout with rounded turrets at the corners, dates from this period. Today, it has lost its battlemented outer walls, though the ground floor is still there and the Marquis' coat of arms can still be seen over the doorway.

THE PLAZA MAYOR

Chinchón's best feature is unquestionably its main square, the *Plaza Mayor*. Set between the quarter of *San Antón* —the original town centre— and *Castillejo*, it was originally on the outskirts and was where livestock fairs were held. It gradually became both the nerve-centre and the geographical centre of *Chinchón*.

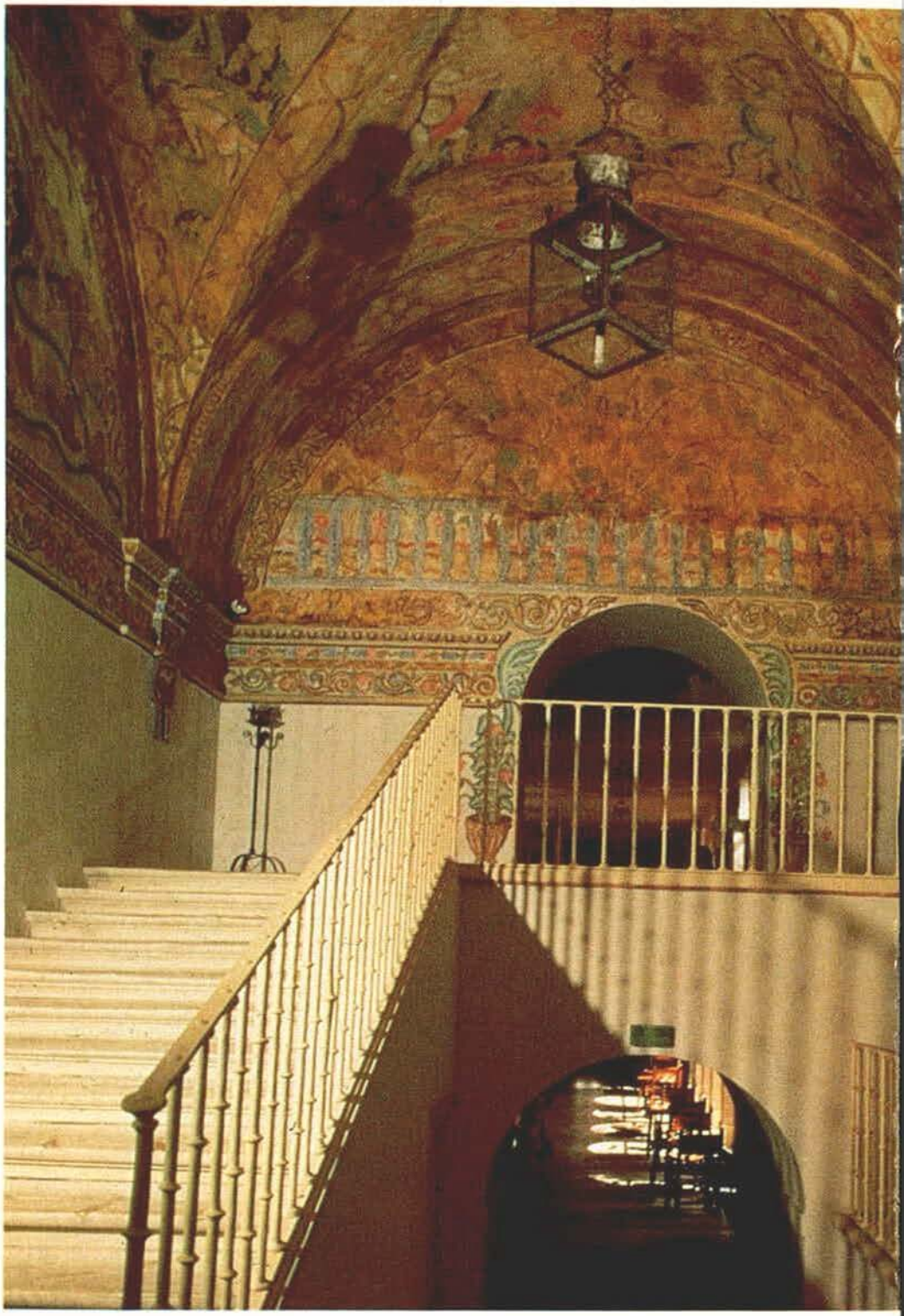
In design, it looks like a vast open-air theatre and in fact was well known in the c. 17th. for the religious performances staged here. Irregular in shape, it

is surrounded by three-storey buildings with square arcades and balconies designed to give a fine view of public spectacles, like bullfights, held in the square below. Bullfighting was already popular in the c. 16th. —a famous *corrida* was held in 1502 in honour of *Philip I the Fair.* There is documentary evidence that the event of running the bulls has been popular in *Chinchón* ever since the c. 17th. It used to take place at night, except on the festival of the town's patron saint, *San Roque,* a celebration which still pulls in the crowds. It was in this square in 1863 that a young novice was severely gored and was lodged and cared for by locals until he recovered a considerable time later. He was subsequently to become famous as *Frascuelo,* one of the stars of bullfighting. At the peak of his fame, he returned to *Chinchón* and showed his appreciation by donating money and by buying himself a house there where he often stayed for long periods of time. He later established a coach link between *Chinchón* and *Madrid.* When competition sprang up, rivalry was carried to hilarious extremes: when the rival started offering free transport to patrons of his coaches, *Frascuelo,* nothing daunted, capped the offer by offering his clients free transport plus a chicken! With such a knack for marketing, it is hardly surprising that *Frascuelo* retained the monopoly.

Overlooking the *Plaza Mayor* stands the Church of *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción,* stone-built between 1534 and 1626, with magnificent windows and cornices. Its floor-plan is in the form of a Latin cross, the sturdy walls of whose central nave support a vast semicircular dome. The high altar features a splendid *Goya, The Assumption.*

Despite severe damage during the 1808 War of Independence against the French, *Chinchón* still boasts several more historic buildings. The *Convent of the Madres Clarisas.* founded by the first *Count of Chinchón,* is worth a visit. It is a Baroque building with walls of brick

The reconstruction work involved in converting the old monastery into a Parador *has been impeccably done. It's difficult to tell where the old ends and the new begins.*



and stone-work. It houses *Alonso del Arco's* panel, the *Divino Pastor.* Equally interesting are the *Casa de la Cadena,* or House of the Chain, a three-storey c. 17th. Baroque building with a coat of arms over its square-arched doorway, and the *Tower of Santa María de Gracia.*

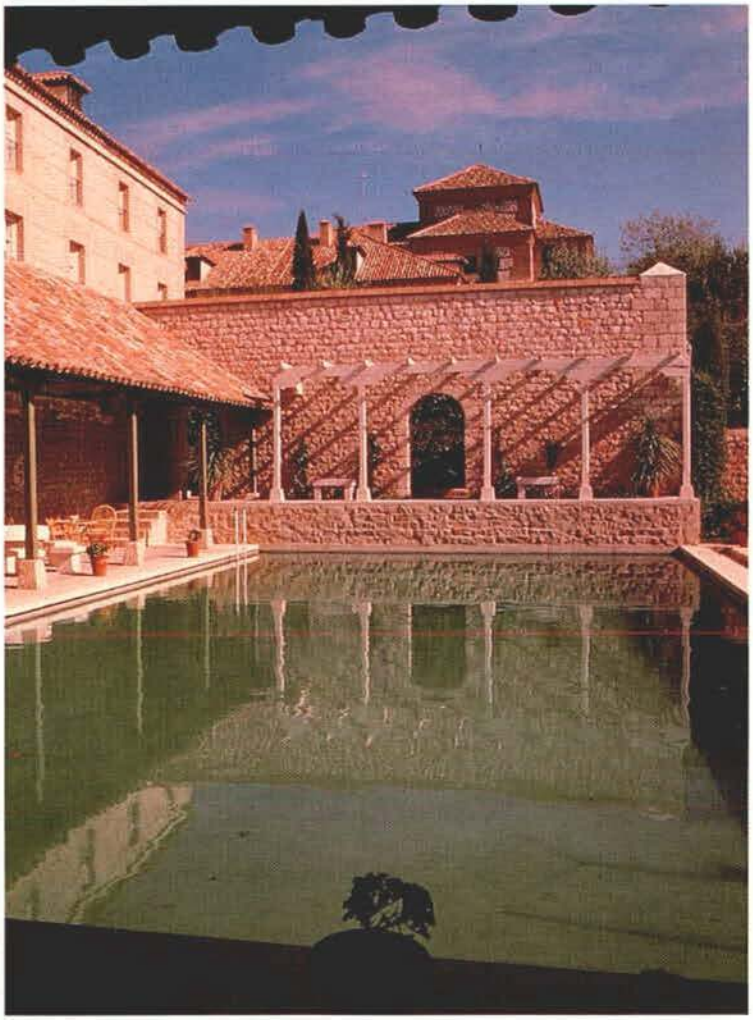
THE PARADOR

The *Parador,* a former Augustinian monastery, stands on a little street which leads off one side of the square. The monastery was originally founded by the first Lord of *Chinchón,* the Marquis of *Moya,* in a place called *Los Solares.*

The c. 17th. monastery was built on a new site, of brick with inset rubble-work. Here, the Augustinian monks taught various academic subjects contributing significantly to the cultural development of the *Chinchón* of the time.

As a consequence of Mendizábal's expropriation law in the c. 19th., the State seized the property. It was subsequently presented to the town of *Chinchón* by the Regent, *Don Luis María of Borbón,* 13th Count of *Chinchón,* to serve as the local count-house and prison. It was later left empty, and the monastry and its garden were eventually taken over from the local council for use as a *Parador.*

The church of *Santa María del Rosario,*



now separated from the *Parador,* has a single nave with side-chapels, a barrel-vaulted ceiling with skylights and a cupola over the transept which features the coats of arms of the family of *Cabrera-Bobadilla,* the lords of *Chinchón.*

The reconstruction work involved in converting the old monastery into a *Parador* has been impeccably done, especially bearing in mind that just a few sections of original brick had survived. Following their pattern, architect *Juan Palazuelo* carried out the rebuilding work so painstakingly that it is virtually impossible to tell where the old ends and the new begins.

The former cloister is now a beautiful glazed patio, with a fountain in the centre. Around it stand the dining-room and the bar, decorated with the simplicity of style that the context demands.

OLD SOLUTION TO NEW PROBLEMS

When architect *Juan Palazuelo* set about the reconstruction of the old monastery, he was faced with two problems: he somehow had to fit a bar and a swimming-pool into what he aimed to make as faithful a reconstruction as possible. He finally came up with the solution: although monasteries did not have bars, they did have pharmacies. So he designed a bar in which the counter is a chemist's shop and the shelves which hold the bottles and glasses have been made to resemble the shelves which held jars of medicinal herbs in olden times.

He solved the swimming-pool problem by basing his porticoed design on the old public wash-houses in neighbouring towns. Both solutions work beautifully and do not jar with their surroundings despite being essentially out of keeping with the monastic spirit.

Equal pains have been taken with the garden where the monks once grew

their supplies of fruit and vegetables. As it is today, the garden has that air of quiet seclusion that one always associates with the monastic life and so rarely finds in the modern age. Here it seems the most natural thing in the world to sit reading in the shade of a cherry tree to a background of birdsong.

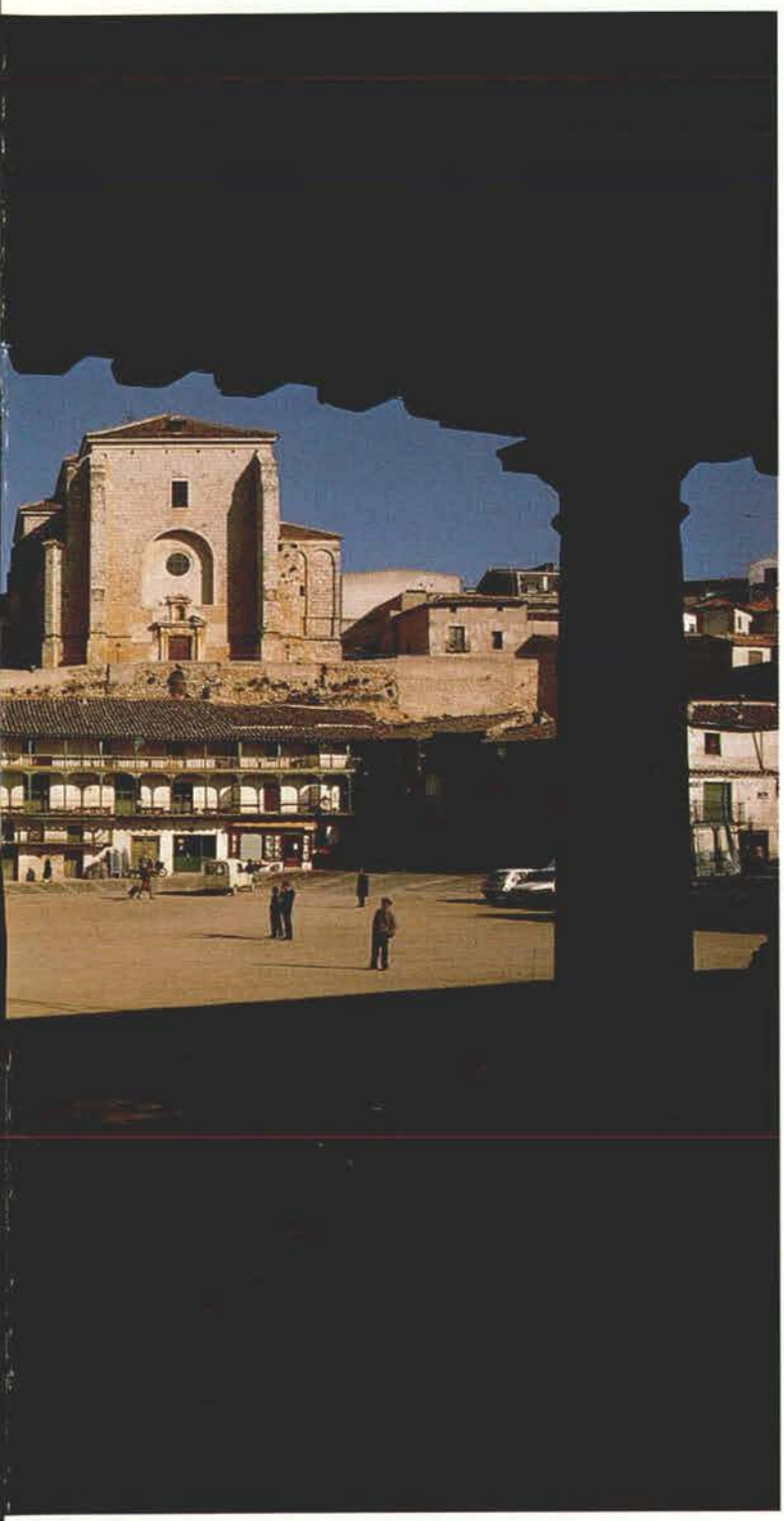
GASTRONOMY

But *Chinchón* has other atractions. It is famous for its food and drink. The logan *«Chinchón: anís, plaza y mesón»* refers to the many little bars and restaurants spread throughout the town, especially around the *Plaza Mayor*. Visitors should treat themselves to roast baby lamb, beans, *pepitoria* (chicken in a sauce of almonds, garlic, egg and saffron) and the various sweets and desserts for which the town is renowned. *Rosquillas* (little fried ring-shaped cakes), *yemas* (egg-yolk sweets) and *pestiños* or *hojuelas* (honey-coated fried puff-pastries) make the perfect dessert after the delicious simple dishes typical of *Chinchón*.

The *Parador's* restaurant, in its lovely setting, offers a wider-ranging menu and serves both traditional —note the chef's recommendations— and international dishes.

Chinchón is set in a wine-growing area and still produces the anis liqueur for which it is traditionally famous, though to a lesser extent now than in its hey-day (see below). Another typical product is the curiously shaped bread made in the bakery on the square. The loaves are elaborately plaited and twisted —some of them of enormous size— and are so decorative that they are sometimes put on display instead of being eaten.

Another good buy in the square is the local garlic. Known for its excellent quality and durability, it is pure white in colour with a good strong flavour.



CHINCHON ANIS LIQUEUR

THE TRADITION LIVES ON

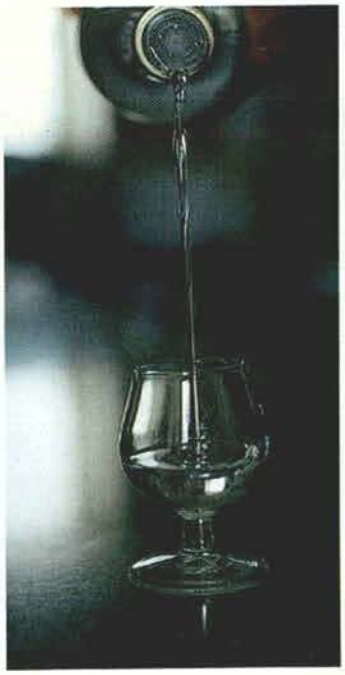
Text: **Sonia Ortega**
Photos: **Pablo Neustadt**

Chinchón is famous throughout Spain, and much of the rest of the world, for its anis. *Chinchón's* anis liqueurs have an interesting history and a long pedigree.

In olden days, there were hundreds of copper stills hereabouts in the homes of local wine-growers, probably sustaining a tradition which dated back to Arab times.

Documents dated 1777 state that in that year the Mayor of *Chinchón* and its wine-growers agreed to supply the Royal Household with no less than 10,000 *arrobas* (over 100,000 litres) of anis liqueur.

Being in a wine-growing area, there was no difficulty in obtaining supplies of alcohol from distilled wine. This was then subjected to a second distillation with aniseed, *pimpinella anisum*, popularly known in Spanish as *matalauva*. The whole process was carried out on an artesan scale.



However, this flourishing industry was somewhat nipped in the bud by the passing of the Alcohol Law of 1904 with its stringent tax clauses. Many of these little domestic distilleries were forced to give up producing the traditional anis liqueur. Some of the wine-growers set up a factory in the castle of the Counts, but it was short-lived thanks to the founding in 1911 of the *Sociedad Alcoholera de Chincón* (The Chinchón Alcohol-Producers' Company) which absorbed the vast majority of local growers.

The company's aim was to sell the left-overs from the wine-making process at a good price and to buy top quality alcohol. However, the company records for 1912 state that the *Sociedad Alcoholera de Chinchón* also intended carrying on production of the traditional liqueur, and it installed a still in that same year.

Although the *Sociedad Alcoholera de Chinchón* later

ceased to be a consortium of growers and passed into private hands, it could be said to have spawned the anis distilleries which are still in operation today and which, for the most part, make anis which stands out as special from that produced elsewhere in Spain. One reason for this is that they use only aniseed, a difficult plant to grow, harvested by hand from one annual crop. In other parts of Spain, star-aniseed *(Illicium verum)* is used, and the French use fennel. Whilst distilleries elsewhere are tending more and more towards the use of extracts, those in *Chinchón* still for the most part use the distillation method, exclusively so in the case of *Alcoholera de Chinchón.*

Another of its special characteristics is its high alcoholic strength —a feature which it shares with the anises of *Rute* and *Cazalla* (Andalusia)— though there is a tendency to make it weaker. Sweet anis is 38° proof and the dry between 45° and 50°. The star of all *Chinchón's* anises is a «special dry» which, by royal consent, has an amazing 74° of alcohol. Sweet anis only came into production from 1920 on, when a sugar and water syrup was mixed with the distilled product until the required alcoholic strength was reached. It tends to be favoured by drinkers with a more delicate palate. Drunk on its own or with ice, it is delicious as a *digestif* with coffee after a meal.

THE CHEF RECOMMENDS...

Mojete Manchego

For 4 people:
1 kg. red peppers;
200 gr. tuna in olive oil;
50 gr. ripe tomatoes;
150 gr. black olives;
4 harld-boiled eggs;
Sherry vinegar;
Salt;
Olive oil.

Bake the peppers, skin them and cut into strips. Scald and skin the tomatoes and dice them finely.

Once they have cooled, mix the tomatoes, peppers, tuna and olives. Season with salt, dress with olive and vinegar and mix well. Place in a serving dish and decorate with slices of egg.

Chicken in Pepitoria

For 6 people:
1 large chicken, cut up;
2 dl. olive oil;
50 gr. flour;
1/4 l. white wine;
3 hard-boiled eggs;
20 gr. almonds;
1 sachet saffron;
1 1/2 l. chicken stock;
Parsley and 6 cloves garlic.

Season the chicken, brown it in the olive oil and set aside. In the same oil, fry the garlic, gradually mixing in the flour until it turns golden. Add the stock and allow to cook gently for 15 minutes. Sieve the sauce, then return it to the heat, adding the chicken pieces. Allow to cook for 1 hour.

Using a mortar and pestle, crush the saffron, the yolks of the 3 boiled eggs, the almonds and the parsley. Add the mixture to the chicken 5 minutes before the end of cooking time. Before serving, sprinkle the dish with the finely-chopped egg whites.

Spanish Custard wtith Pestiño Biscuits

For 4 people:
Custard
1 l. milk;
250 gr. sugar;
6 egg yolks;
2 whole eggs;
30 gr. cornflour;
Orange and lemon peel;
Powdered cinnamon.

Heat the milk to boiling point with the pieces of orange and lemon peel. In another saucepan, mix together the egg yolks, whole eggs, sugar and cornflour and heat gently, stirring to prevent lumps. Add the mixture to the boiling milk and stir well until it thickens. Set aside until cool, then pass it through a fine sieve and place in individual dishes.

Pestiño Biscuits

250 gr. flour;
50 gr. lard;
1/4 l. white wine;
1/4 l. orange juice;
Generous shot of anis;
Olive oil for frying.

Make a pastry with the first five ingredients and allow to stand for 5 minutes, then roll our very thinly with a rolling pin. Cut the pastry into diamond shapes measurign about 12 cm. per side, then roll up each diamond from point to point to form a slightly flattened cigarette-shape. Heat lots of olive oil and when it is very hot, deep fry the *pestiños* until golden. Drain then well and dip each one in a mixture of sugar and cinnamon. Place a couple on top of each dish of custard and serve.

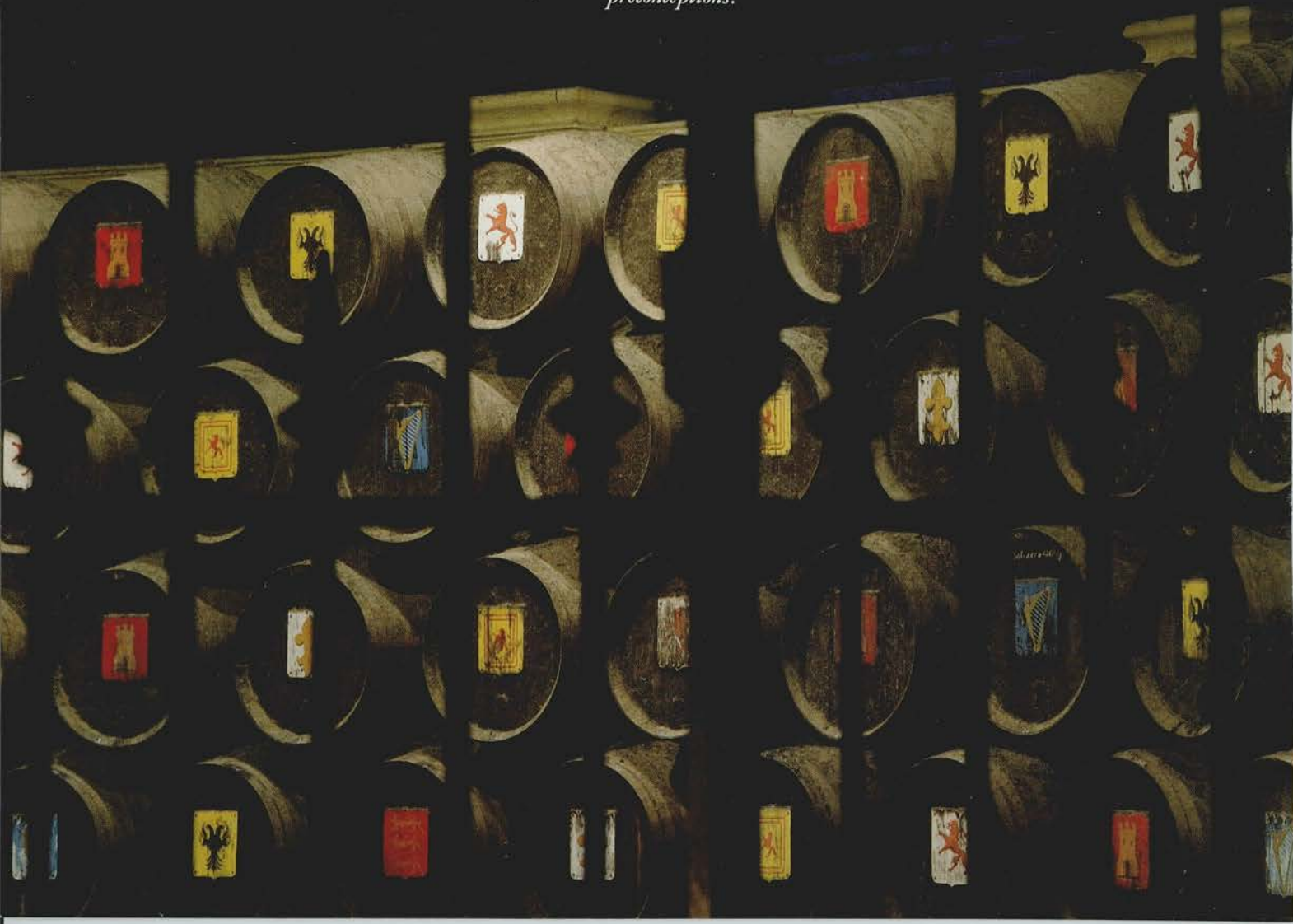
A spirit with history

JEREZ BRANDY

Text: **Nicholas Faith**

Photos: **Club de Gourmets and INFE**

To many people, Spanish brandy is automatically associated with sweetness and stickiness. This view springs from an inherited belief that all grape spirits not made in France must inevitably be second-rate, if not downright impure. Spanish brandy-makers are mounting an increasingly effective challenge to all these preconceptions.



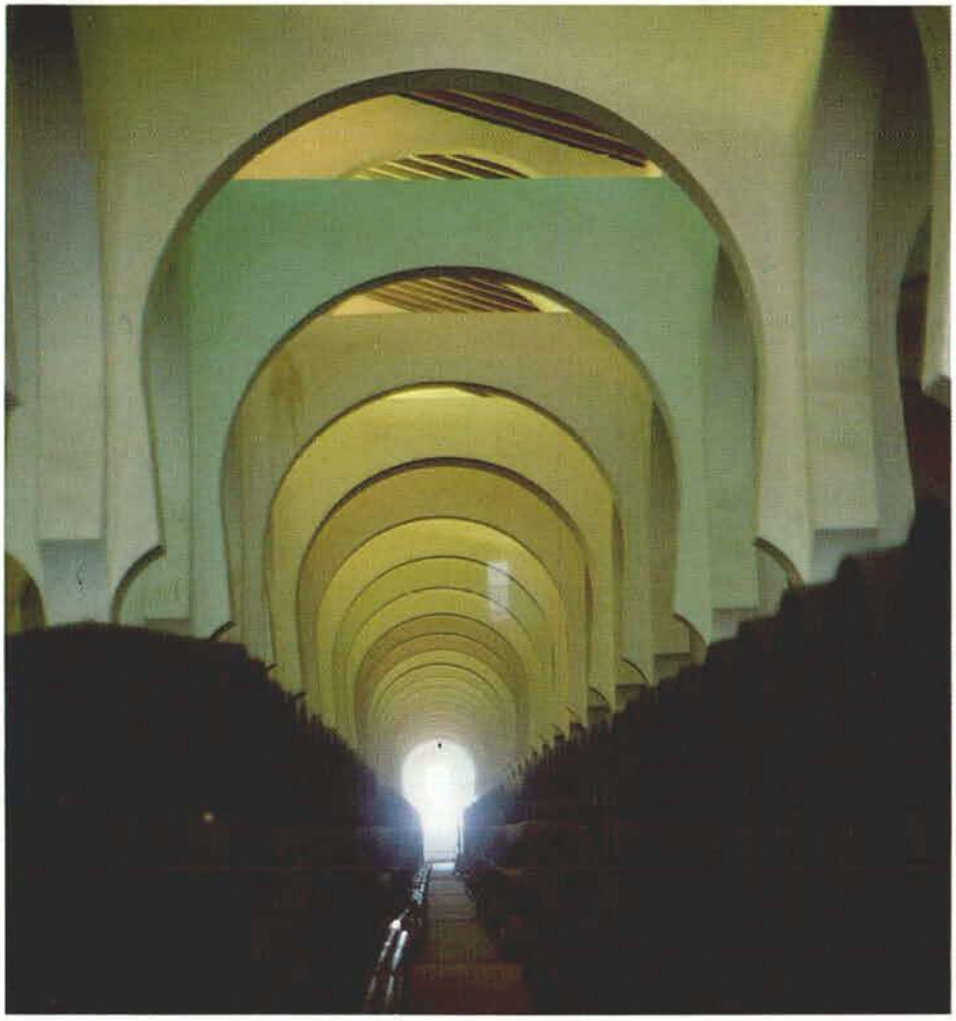
Spanish brandy is important, bigger business than that of any other European country. In the decade which ended in 1985 Spain's brandy makers sold an average of 162 million bottles at home and a further 22 million outside the country. Moreover the basic quality is high-partly because, at the moment, Spain is the only European country in which «brandy» refers only to spirit made exclusively from grapes and not containing any neutral spirit. It helps that the business is concentrated in the hands of a dozen or so companies, who are also major producers of Sherry. They have both strong, world-wide marketing networks, and a keen desire to ensure that their name is not hurt by being attached to a sub-standard product.

Not surprisingly, over the past half century Spanish brandies have come to dominate the market in Latin America and more recently they have been challenging the previous French supremacy in Germany and Italy.

Spanish brandies vary enormously, in style and in the way they are distilled. Indeed there is a fundamental gulf between the vast majority, marketed by the Sherry producers, and the products of two Catalan companies, *Torres* and *Mascaró*. But these two are so different from their *Jerez* colleagues that they form the subject of a separate article.

Spanish brandy is made exclusively from grapes, not containing any neutral spirit.

Whatever the distinctions between the many different *Jerez* brandies, they



As with Sherry, the oldest brandy in a* solera *can be a century old.

do all offer an alternative range of experiences to their French rivals. They are almost invariably warmer, richer, fuller and, in many cases, deliberately sweeter. *«According to the experts»,* wrote *Manuel González y Gordon* in his *«Sherry, a noble wine»: «the three rules for good brandy are that it should be fiery on the tongue, velvety on the throat, and warm on the stomach».* By obeying such rules it can never offer the subtleties of the very finest and oldest *Cognacs* or *Armagnacs,* but these are very much in the minority; and in return it can offer a higher degree of reliability than French brandies together with —and *González* was being rather unfair to his own country's products— an unmistakeable velvetiness of its own, on the palate as well as on the nose.

THE ARAB INFLUENCE

Historically Spanish brandy is both younger and older than its French equivalents. The Spanish, especially in the south, learnt a great deal from the Moors, who brought scientific learning into the country they occupied for several centuries. *Jerez,* in the south, was re-conquered by the Christians in the 13th century, but remained on the very frontier for several centuries thereafter (hence the name, *Jerez de la Frontera*). Yet the Arab influence permeated through political boundaries. Among the lessons learnt by the Christians was how to distil alcohol —itself a word of Arab origin, as are the two names for a still: *al-ambiq*— which became the word alambic, while the Spanish have clung to another Arabic word, *alquitara* to indicate a pot-still and the spirit it produces.

In the last quarter of the 19th century brandy ceased to be an additive to wine and became a saleable product.

In Spain the origins of distillation are generally associated with a celebrated late 13th century Spanish doctor, *Arnau de Vilanova. «But it is impossible to say»,* writes *Manuel González, «whether Vilanova was the initiator and passed his knowledge to the Arabs or vice-versa».* By the late 16th century distillation was profitable enough for the Jesuits to be granted the proceeds from an excise tax on spirits levied to help them found a college in *Jerez.* In the following couple of centuries a particular type of spirit, distilled to about 65 per cent, became known as *Holandas.* Originally the spirits was imported (from Holland, as the name implies) to fortify the wines of *Jerez* before they were exported as Sherry. By the middle of the 19th century the *Jerezanos* were producing their own *Holandas,* mainly from the *vin de presse,* the last squeezings of the grapes used for Sherry, and exporting the spirit, as *Holandas,* to Holland. Because of its relative weakness, it was, and remains, clearly distinct from higher-strength spirits known, then as now, as *aguardiente* or *destilados.*

In the last quarter of the 19th century Spanish brandy ceased to be a raw material, an additive to wine, and was transformed into a saleable product. Myth has it that *Pedro Domecq Lustau,* a member of the distinguished family of Sherry shippers, could not find a buyer for a couple of casks of brandy *Holandas,* forgot about them for several years, then was so struck by their bouquet and flavour that he decided to bottle their contents and sell them as brandy. Thus was born *Fundador,* the pioneering Spanish brandy, first marketed in 1874 and still synonymous with Spanish brandy in many countries of the world.

THE PHYLLOXERA LOUSE

Domecq's timing was perfect. The year before he sold his first bottle the phylloxera louse had started to ravage the vineyards of the *Charente,* the home of *Cognac,* and by the end of the decade the supply of *Cognac* had started to dry up. Buyers started a frantic search for replacements from vineyards not yet attacked by the louse. Since it did not reach *Jerez* for another twenty years, the *Jerezanos* enjoyed an —inevitably brief— boom. The trade in *Jerez* brandy as an alternative to *Cognac* was

pioneered by *Francisco Ivison O'Neale*, a noted figure in the Sherry trade who deliberately and craftily used a vague brand name, *La Marque Speciale,* which ommitted both his name and any indication of the geographical origin of the brandy. Naturally the other Sherry houses followed his lead. The famous firm of *Terry,* for instance, started distilling brandies which it described as «made from the best wines of *Jerez*» as soon as it was founded in 1883.

During the boom, numerous *Cognac*-type stills were manufactured, often to French designs, although some I saw at *González Byass* were adapted so that the wine was heated only once, and not twice as in *Cognac* itself. The new brandy was then matured, *Jerez* fashion, in *saleras,* with the same three rows of casks. As with Sherry, the oldest brandy in a *solera* can be a century old. At *González Byass* I tasted a brandy from a *solera* started in 1886. The brandy was a splendid deep chestnut brown colour, with a touch of red and had a lovely warm feel when you smelt it, but, unsurprisingly after 100 years, tasted of pure, bitter, tannic wood.

The Moors taught the Christians how to distil alcohol. Of arab origin is also the name for a sitll: **al-ambiq.**

Even when the growers in *Cognac* started to replant their vineyards with grafted vines and *Jerez* was hit in its turn, a residual business remained. In the 1920s *Manuel González* emphasised how local brandy has *«a virtual monopoly of the home market and is also much appreciated in other countries»*. The trade had obviously grown up, although the production process itself had changed greatly. In *González'* words: *«Some of the* Holandas *used are made in* Jerez *itself and pure wine alcohol is also produced in small quantities, but as alcohol is a natural product used principally for the fortification of wines it is generally brought in from other districts of Spain (principally* Ciudad Real *and* La Mancha*) where wine can be obtained more cheaply than from* Jerez*, Sherry being naturally considerably more expensive than ordinary table wines.»*

BRANDY AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The wine no longer came from *Jerez* itself and a variety of spirits, some relatively pure, some more unusual, were being employed. But there wasn't much of it. It took the Spanish Civil War to revive the industry, as the troops on both sides demanded liquid sustenance. Afterwards, production of *Jerez* brandies more than doubled between the mid-1940s and 1960 as Spanish workers grew accustomed to taking a *café-coñac* on their way to work in the mornings (in the Basque country you have only to ask for a *completo* and you get coffee, brandy and a cigar). But the business really took off only in the 1960s. By 1970, the Spaniards were drinking 140 million bottles of brandy a year, a far higher rate of consumption that any country in the world. Most of the benefit went to a handful of firms. Ironically the marketing hotshots from the international groups which controlled some of the Sherry shippers completely ignored the business, they were too obsessed with the idea that *Cognac* was the only grape spirit which was worth marketing. So the field was left open to Spanish-owned firms, especially *Domecq, Osborne, Bobadilla, Terry* and *González Byass,* which then, as now, dominated the Spanish brandy scene. Indeed it was often only the profits to be made from brandy which kept them afloat during the bad years of the 1970s when *José María Ruiz Mateos* was forcing the price (and quality) of Sherry on a relentless downward spiral.

Production of Jerez *brandies more than doubled between the mid-1940s and 1960.*

In their home market these firms are now facing, for the first time, the possibility that *Cognac* may start to make an impact on the Spanish scene, but the taste is so different that the impact may be limited (until Spain's entry into the EEC *Cognac* was far too expensive for the average Spanish drinker). More worryingly, the sale of brandy in Spain, like that of so many other «brown» spirits, is, if not falling, certainly not growing. Taxes have increased in a series of sudden leaps which have not helped the sellers to plan their businesses —the duty, a mere 20 *pesetas* a litre in 1970, is now 550 *pesetas*— with more to come when Spain harmonises its tax levels with those of other EEC countries. Even today —what with ever increasing welfare and luxury taxes— half the price of brandy is accounted for by taxes of one sort or another.

NEW TASTES FOR CHANGING TIMES

Within Spain the tastes have changed. The brandies are mostly less sweet than they were in the 1930s when *González* noted that outside Spain *«many markets prefer their brandies less sweet than the Spanish domestic customer»*. Social customs have also changed. Brandy used

mostly to be drunk in bars but in the past ten years there has been a gradual increase in the takehome trade which now accounts for nearly half the brandy drunk in Spain. The shift has favoured companies like *Osborne* or *González Byass* with strong sales forces marketing a whole range of products to grocers and supermarket chains. These days the market for cheaper brandies is dominated by *González Byass's Soberano, Terry's Centenario* and *Osborne's Veterano.*

There are two superior grades, which as we shall see, are made very differently from the cheaper type. The second grade, the *reservas,* are big sellers, accounting for over two million cases of brandy a year, itself more than twice the total production of *Armagnac*). *Osborne's Magno* dominates this sector; while the tiny market for *Gran Reservas* is largely claimed by *González Byass's Lepanto,* a very different style of brandy-although a different type altogether, *Cardenal Mendoza,* from the small firm of *Sánchez Romate,* has a cachet all of its own.

The Spanish brandy makers are also trying, with some success, to spread the message abroad. Historically most export markets were in Latin America, but for some years now simple lack of foreign exchange has prevented these, still loyal, customers, from buying nearly as much as they would like-or as they did years ago. But the Spanish are making new converts in other countries like Italy and, above all, Germany, a country which produces brandies of its own which are far inferior to the best the Spanish can offer.

HOW THE BRANDY IS MADE AND WHAT IT TASTES LIKE

These days virtually all so-called «*Jerez* brandy» is only matured in the town. The grapes are grown, the wine fermented, and the spirit distilled, in *La Mancha*, a vast arid plain a hundred miles south of *Madrid.* Because the country is dry and under Spanish law no irrigation is permitted, the vines are planted sparsely and produce very little wine. There are a lot of them. In her invaluable book *«Wines, Vines and Grapes», Jancis Robinson* reckons that nearly half a million hectares are planted with the rather characterless *Airen* grape to satisfy the distillers' needs.

None of the firms owns any vineyards in *La Mancha,* and the wine is fermented by cooperatives (one of which pressses a hundred million kilogrammes of grapes every year). But most of the major firms now possess their own stills in *Tomelloso,* the little town which is the centre of the business. Although the wine used is the same —rather stronger and less acid than that used, say in *Cognac*— it is distilled in four differents ways, only one of the reasons why the styles of *Jerez* brandies vary so considerably. It can be distilled either continouusly or in batches in *Cognac*-type stills. If continuous stills are used they can either brew the historic *Holandas,* which at 65-70 per cent alcohol, is much the same strength as the raw product of the *Cognac* still. Or they can produce *aguardiente,* spirit of 95 per cent alcohol, which retains fewer of what are called *congeners,* the minute particles of solid substances which give the spirit its character and which are steadily removed as the spirit gets stronger. If *Cognac* stills are used (and they are still wood-fired, a practice demanding great skill to keep an even flame and one which has quite died out in *Cognac* itself as gas has replaced solid fuels) then the spirit can be distilled once, or, as in *Cognac,* twice.

By 1970 the Spaniards were drinking 140 million bottles of brandy a year.

Obviously, the lower the strength of the raw spirit, the more potential character there is to develop. But every firm has to balance this desirable result with the need to produce an economic spirit; and it is far cheaper to use a continuous still than a pot-still which has to be reheated every time it is used. *Holandas* represents an acceptable compromise. Because it is made in a continuous still it is relatively economic to produce, yet because it is distilled only to 65-70 per cent it retains enough character to make it the base for most of the middle level Spanish brandies, the *Reservas.* The *alquitaras,* made in *Cognac* stills, have even more potential character, especially if they have been distilled twice, though this is a rarity.

THE SOLERA EXPERIENCE

However it is made, newly distilled Spanish brandy, like every other noble spirit, whether it be *Cognac,* or malt whisky, or *Bourbon* whisky, needs to be kept for a number of years in oak casks to develop its final qualities. But because *Jerez* brandies are matured in *soleras*, their ageing is different from any other brandy (or whisky for that matter). The first difference lies in the sheer speed. The *Jerezanos* contrast dynamic ageing in *soleras* with the «static» ageing found in *Cognac, Armagnac* and Scotland. Sometimes the spirit is moved between casks three or four times a year. But whatever the frequency, dynamic ageing exposes the brandy to the air far more than static and this contact speeds the maturation

However it is made, newly distilled Spanish brandy, like every other noble spirit, needs to be kept for a number of years in oak casks to develop its final qualities.

Clarín

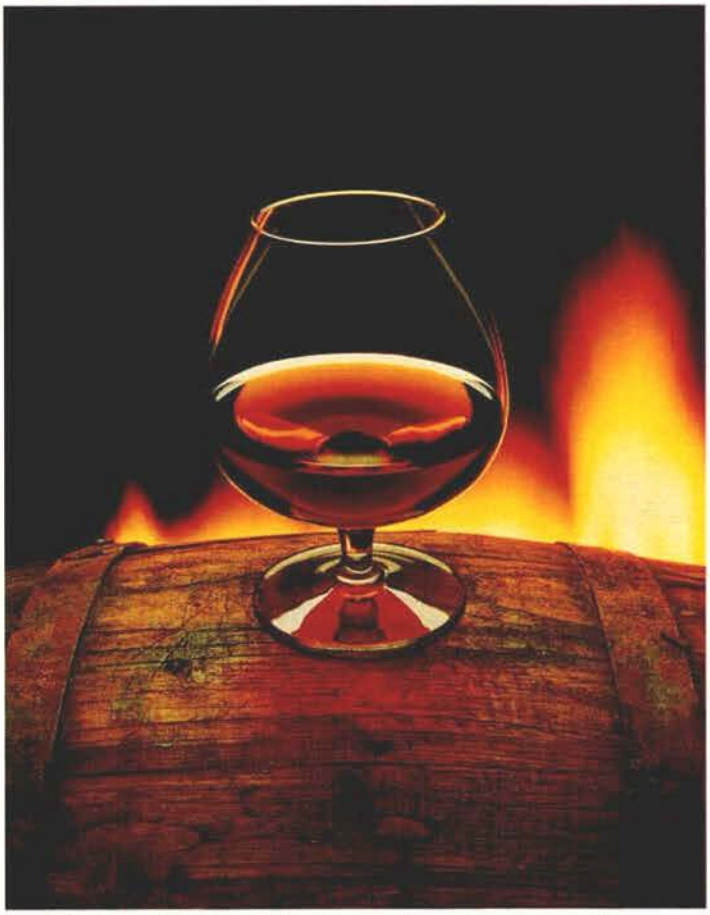
DOMECQ Cosecha de la Tierra

by three of four times. While it takes three years or more to produce a drinkable *Cognac,* a one year old *Holanda* is already developing into a drinkable product, while a two year old *Alquitara* is as mature as a three or four year old *Cognac*-even if the French brandy was distilled the same way as the Spanish. The *solera* system has another advantage. It guarantees a much greater uniformity of style than is possible with static ageing, in which every single cask has its own personality and blending demands the balancing of thousands of different casks.

But although all Spanish brandies share the common solera experience, each house has its own specialities. The two extremes are represented by two of the biggest houses, *Osborne* and *González Byass. Osborne* is the firmest of all believers in adding fruits to their brandies. Soon after distillation, *Osborne* adds a whole cornucopia of macerated plums, almonds and other fruits and nuts. To ensure their quality, *Osborne* produces these fruits and nuts itself. So what goes into the *solera* is an immature version of the final product, to ensure that the public buys only a well-matured, well-blended brandy. Every care is taken-the air in the bodegas, for instance, is kept deliberately pure, to ensure that the brandy keeps its strength. Not surprisingly, all the firm's brandies share a common unmistakeable style, a richness and nuttiness, like the best sort of caramel, although they are never unnaturally sweet.

González Byass aims at the opposite, a much drier style, owing a lot, perhaps, to the family's English connections (though even the *Gonzalez'* produce one typically Spanish brandy, the caramelly *Conde Duque*). But their pride and joy, *Lepanto,* shows how fine and delicate a Spanish brandy can be-not surprisingly, it is the universal favourite of Anglo-Saxon connoisseurs. It is pure *Holandas,* and, unusually, some of it comes from Sherry grapes. It is a very light clear gold colour, with a well-aged aroma, with some of the vanila taste found in the finest *Cognacs.* When you drink it, *Lepanto* is rich and oily, what connoisseurs call «elegant».

Half way between the two come the brandies made by *Domecq.* Although *Fundador* has slumped badly in Spain itself, it remains, to my taste anyway, by far the best of the cheaper Spanish brandies. The reason is simple: whereas most of its rivals are made from the less characterful destilado, *Fundador* contains up to half *Holandas,* which retain much more of the character of the original grapes. So, while it is full and rich, it has no artificial sweetness. This naturally rich yet delicate style carries through to the firm's more expensive brandies. their finest, *Marqués de Domecq,* is the classic example of modern Spanish practice, showing to the full the natural sweetness deriving from the vinosity of the wood.



All Spanish brandies share the* solera *experience, but each house has its own specialities.

The *Domecqs* take their brandies seriously-*Beltrán Domecq Williams* is probably the greatest expert on the subject in *Jerez.* His spiritual predecessor was *Don Gonzalo Bobadilla,* a trained oenologist (a rarity in the *Jerez* of his youth, sixty years ago), who was a pioneer in making dry, modern style Spanish brandy, sold by his family firm. *Bobadilla's* brandies owe everything to the grapiness of the spirit and the nature of the wood, and nothing to any additives. Yet the classic *Bobadilla,* the *103 Etiqueta Negra,* is rich and dark.

These are only my selection, and I have left to the last the only Spanish brandy which has become something of a cult, *Cardenal Mendoza,* made by *Sánchez Romate,* a small firm owned by three wealthy families. They started producing *Cardenal Mendoza* a hundred years ago purely for their own enjoyment, and even today they make less than 50,000 cases of it a year. But it is not only the small production which makes it so sought-after anywhere in the world where Spanish is spoken (and increasingly in Germany and Italy as well). *Cardenal Mendoza* has a unique taste, as if *Oloroso* Sherry had been distilled. And indeed, the *Oloroso* taste is no accident. The spirit is lovingly double-distilled and aged «statically» in oak casks for several years before being transferred to the solera where it is kept in casks which have previously contained *Oloroso* Sherry.

It shows. The final result may not please Anglo-Saxon ascetics, obsessed with the idea that dryness is an essential ingredient in any fine wine or spirit; but it has a genuine dignity of its own, like a fine Spanish cathedral, too florid perhaps for severe northern tastes, but nonetheless the proud product of self-confident civilisation.

They had clear ideas about wanting to make their living from goats: they are intelligent, independent and appreciative animals.

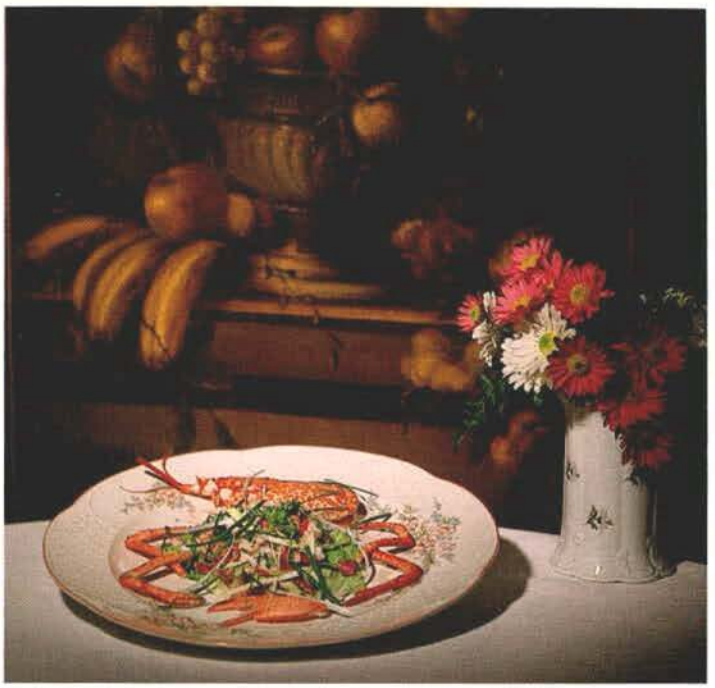
CHARACTER
SHERRY

TASTING NOTE:

Character is mellow but ultimately dry on the palate

ARZAK

Paths of Glory



Text: **Rafael Chirbes**
Photos: **Antonio Girbes**

Juan Mari Arzak was born, forty-four years ago, in the house which is now occupied by his restaurant. His grandparents were *restaurateurs*, so were his parents, and he has succeeded in becoming the undisputed star of Spanish cuisine. For a large part of the year it is difficult to find a free table in his establishment. The critics idolize him and he wins prize after prize. He is spoken well of even by those who have never actually eaten there. He is the only chef to have become widely-known. Even people who do not belong to the world of gastronomy recognise his face and talk about his personality. For many, paying a visit to his restaurant is far more than just a whim, it is a real goal. Behind this legend there is a lot of hard work as well as a special ability for knowing how to get into the public eye. *Juan Mari* imported the *nouvelle cuisine* movement and he was the most inspired and successful of the Basque group who laid the foundations of Spanish dining habits during the period known as «transition», after Franco's death. He has paid close attention to his image in the Basque Country, in the rest of the Spanish peninsular and in Europe. Recently, he celebrated his success in being named founder member of the Spanish group of *«Eurotocas»*, the chefs of the Common Market which is presided by *Jacques Delors*. Once again he has managed to capture the attention of the press, and once again he has surrounded himself with his Basque friends who were associated with him in the adventure of bringing the *nouvelle cuisine* to Spain. He is photographed with *Bocuse* and *Guérard*. He is alert to all the aromas wafting over from European ovens, and, in Spain, he is the first to incorporate them into his dishes. His restaurant offers more than just cooking: it represents the guarantee of good taste for a new social class.

He was born on 31st July, 1942 in *Alto de Miracruz, San Sebastián,* in the same house in which he continues to receive his guests and which was founded by grandfather, on one side of the road leading to France. *«He was called Joseba»*, explains *Juan Mari Arzak, «and he was the one who set all this up; my parents carried it on and now, here am I, and I hope that one day my daughters will be taking over».*

Juan Mari's father was called *Juan Ramón,* although in *San Sebastián* everyone knew him as *Juanito.* He was to die at a very early age; when the present owner was only nine years old. It was left to his mother to carry on the business while her son continued his studies, first in *San Sebastián* and later with the Augustinians in *El Escorial,* Madrid. Nobody would have expected him to finish up in the kitchen because at that time the restaurant held no attraction for him. He went on to study in the College Draughtsmen's


Juan Mari Arzak

in *Madrid*. He helped at home during the holidays, but only because it was expected of him. His mother —who was an excellent cook— had specialised in preparing banquets and she wasn't able to persuade *Juan Mari* of the attractions of all that bustling activity.

FROM DRAUGHTSMAN TO CHEF

His vocation was to come from another source. Although this Basque chef refuses to abandon his homeland, in spite of very tempting offers, the call of the kitchen came, originally from the heart of the Castillian *meseta*. *Juan Mari* used to stay in *Madrid* with a friend of his —*Javier Sobrón*— who had a hotel in *San Sebastián* and who was a student in the School of Catering. *Javier* achieved what *Juan Mari's* mother had been unable to. He suggested to *Juan Mari* that he should drop his studies to become a draughtsman, which, incidentally, he found profoundly boring, and persuaded him to apply for a place in the same school as himself, outlining some vague future projects. This was the day on which the foundations were laid for the creation of the new Basque cuisine, which was to blow like a whirlwind through Spanish kitchens.

«It was there that I began to realise what cooking could really mean. I was lucky. I was helped by a lot of people like José María Centeno, Manuel Garcés *and* Don Pedro Unsain. *These were the men who showed me how to love my profession. They taught me techniques, but above all, they taught me the love of the trade. In the* School of Catering *there were true professionals who could have earned more elsewhere, but who stayed because they were more interested in passing on their knowledge. I believe it was one of the few schools where this ocurred.»*

Already, in that period, *Juan Mari* had realised that it was necessary to study abroad. He went from the *Costa Brava* to England, and from there to France. In France he was to learn most of his techniques both in the kitchen and out of it. He continues to learn, although on talking to him, he assures us that he prefers and is more interested in Galician cooking —with its stews, *empanadas* (flat pies) and fresh products— than French cooking; *«I also think Catalan cooking is magnificent, it's taken huge strides towards refinement, and then Andalusian cooking too, their* gazpachos *(cold soups) and unequalled style of frying fish. Spain is a mosaic; in France the food is very monotonous: you eat the same thing in* Les Landes *or in* Perigord *or in* Brittany. *There is one cuisine which I like very much and that's the Chinese, with its infinite variety of colours and flavours».*

The chef's aims were now clear. The school and his travels had led him back home. He had realised that the locale in which his mother had kept up the tradition for so long would make the perfect setting for what he wanted to do. He had to break with the narrow constraints of the past, but only little by little as he began to feel his way forward. *«I began by setting up a rotisserie, which nobody had at that time, and I gradually introduced new dishes onto the menu* —patés, *desserts— and I put an end to the banquets.»* His travels had served to orient his growing professional pride towards a clear goal. He had realised that traditional recipes were not necessarily impervious to innovation and that the very concepts of how a dining-room functioned could be changed. He felt the urge for change but he had still not quite found the philosophy which was to underlie it. At this point began the second and definitive stage of the father of the Spanish *nouvelle cuisine*.

***Pigeon and aubergine* charlotte.**

THE NEW BASQUE CUISINE

«The magazine Club de Gourmets *had organised a conference at which I was invited to give a lecture. I met* Bocuse *there and I heard about a new way to approach cooking. My colleague,* Subijana, *was also there. We spent a long time talking things over during those few days and on our return we felt obliged to do something. We called up some ten or twelve friends in the area and together we created the new Basque cuisine.»*

And thus the fires were lit which were to put an end to the idea of the old Spanish restaurant. The flames of the fire which broke out in *San Sebastián* were fanned by a growing specialisation on the subject among the press.

The circumstances could not have been more favourable. Spain was stirring out of the slumber which had engulfed it for almost 40 years. Everything Basque was fashionable. The *pastel de cabracho* (a creamy fish *paté*) became all the rage, and at the same time, the symbol of high quality fare.

Much has happened since those times and the old house in *Alto de Miracruz* has become a permanent sanctuary and from there *Arzak* scans the kitchens of Europe; from his restaurant *«open to the whole world. I have friends of all ages and ideas. Through my way of life and my profession, I have done all I could for Basque culture and that's enough for me. Because I'm a hundred percent Basque. I was born here, I live and work here. My cooking was born of traditional Basque cooking. A nation is what it eats, and what it eats reveals what it is».*

He would never leave his Basque homeland. He has been offered excellent conditions elsewhere and refused: *«I am not particularly ambitious and things are going well for me. I know that there are Basques who have gone to cook in* Madrid, *but of course, if things aren't going too well then you have to go, and you're neither a better nor a worse person for it. Everything depends on your luck. I was lucky, I inherited this and it had all been done for me. I have cooked dinners in* Madrid. *I enjoy going but I don't think I could live*

there. I like this, my roots are here. It wouldn't be the same.»

In *San Sebastián, Arzak* goes wind-surfing, goes to the cinema, eats with his friends, plays cards from time to time, listens to *Mozart, Rod Stewart* or *Nicanor Zabaleta,* does his shopping in the markets of *La Brecha* or *San Martín,* and admires many of his colleagues in the profession, whose names he keeps to himself for fear of leaving some out. *«I am nothing more than a good cook, who does things as well as he can and who has been lucky.»* This man has achieved a lot. He has managed to stay at the top even when things Basque are no longer so fashionable in Madrid.

Warm lobster salad

For 4 persons:
Two 700 g lobsters;
1 Lettuce;
1 Endive;
Watercress;
Leek, sliced lengthwise;
Chervil;
Cocktail sauce;
Walnut oil;
Jerez vinegar;
Salt.

Chop the endive and lettuce, add the leaves of the watercress and palce in a bowl.

Put the live lobsters in cold water and salt, and heat. When the water begins to boil, continue boiling for another 5 minutes.

Allow the lobsters to cool, cut in half, separate the tail, shell the claws carefully, keeping them whole, remove the meat from the head, fillet the tail and put the head, claws and other parts into a dish. Dress with oil and vinegar.

Prepare a cocktail sauce of mayonnaise, tomato concentrate, orange juice and cream.

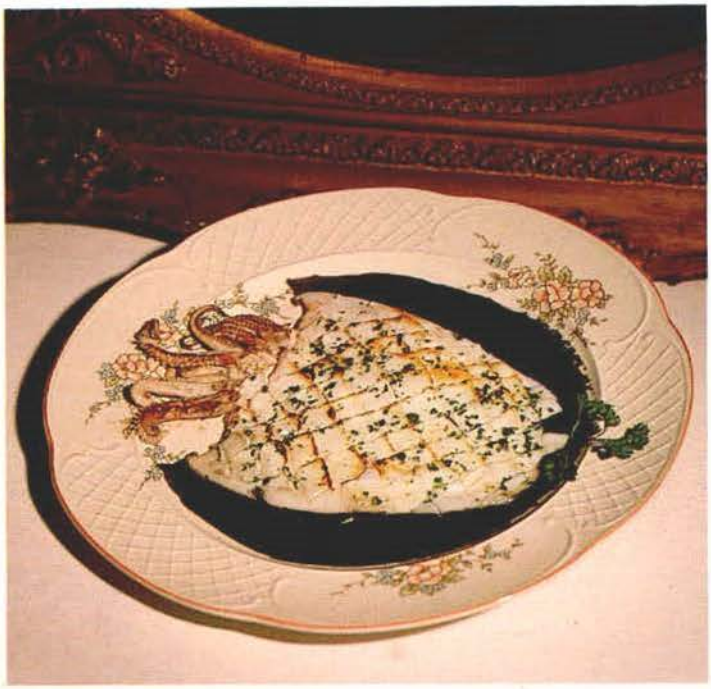
Dress the lettuce, endive and watercress with the walnut oil and *Jerez* vinegar and add a little salt.

Pile all this onto a serving dish, place the slices of lobster tail on top, after warming in the oven with a little vinagrette. Pour on a little cocktail sauce, add the sliced leeks and spring onions and decorate with the legs, head and a little chervil.

Beguiaundi (large squid), grilled with a warm vinaigrette

For 4 persons:
Four 500 g squid;
2 green peppers;
1 onion;
2 cloves of garlic;
1 tomato;
1/2 glass of red wine;
1 dessertspoon parsley;
132 dl olive oil.

Clean the squid. Remove the fins and half of the tentacles and leave for the sauce. Reserve the other half for the marinade.



Beguiaundi (*squid*) *with a warm* vinaigrette.

Open the squid, cut into the shape of a rectangle and marinate with half the tentacles in pure olive oil, crushed garlic and finely chopped parsley.

Put the oil, chopped onions, green peppers and garlic, and the sliced tomatoes in a saucepan and heat. Add the fins and remaining tentacles. Simmer slowly until the onions are cooked, add the 1/2 glass of red wine and allow to simmer for a further 15 minutes.

Grill the *begiaundis* with the tentacles. Pour the sauce into the bottom of the dish and place the squid and tentacles on top. Serve very hot.

Pigeon and aubergine charlotte

For 6 persons:
2 pigeons;
4 aubergines;
1 tomato;
1/4 kg carrots;
1/4 kg leeks;
1/4 kg onions;
1/2 l red wine;
1 *bouquet garni;*
1 green leek;
Parsley, thyme;
2 dl olive oil;
Chicken stock;
Forcemeat for filling the mould:
1/4 l cream;
1/2 boned and skinned chicken
bunch of parsley;
1 clove of garlic;
2 shallots.

1. Make the forcemeat by chopping the shallots, parsley, garlic and chicken into small pieces, place in a food processor and blend with the cream. Leave in the refrigerator to settle.

2. Slice the aubergines, fry the slices and leave them on paper for the oil to drain off and for them to cool.

3. Take a charlotte mould, grease with butter, line with the aubergines and coat with the forcemeat. Put to one side.

Clean the pigeons, truss them, toss in seasoned flour (salt and pepper) and brown in the frying-pan with a little oil.

In a saucepan, heat the onions, leeks, carrots, tomatoes and bouquet garni; when soft, add the pigeons, red wine and stock to cover, and reduce. Simmer until the pigeons are soft.

Take out the pigeons, remove the skin and bones and shred the meat.

Drain the vegetables, reserving the juices for making the sauce.

Mix the vegetables with the pigeon meat and place in the mould, covering with forcemeat left over from coating the mould earlier. Place in the oven in a *bain marie* for 20 minutes at approximately 200 °C.

For the sauce, take the juices, reduce a little and blend with some cornflour or butter.

Heat in a *bain marie* and remove the mould, place in a serving dish, add the sauce and decorate with springs of chervil or similar and some glacéed shallots.

Bilberry cheesecake

For 6 persons:
250 g flour;
150 g butter;
1 egg;
100 g sugar;
1/2 kg fresh, uncured cheese;
1/2 dl milk;
1/4 dl cream;
4 leaves of fine gelatine;
150 g bilberry jam.

Make a nest of the 150 g of flour, put the 150 g of butter in the centre with a spoonful of water, one spoonful of sugar (25 g) and the egg. Mix well to make a solid ball of pastry and place in the refrigerator to cool for two hours.

Roll out the pastry on a well-floured surface so that it does not stick and place in a tin of 24 cm in diameter. Once in the tin, prick the pastry base with a fork, cook blind for approximately 15 minutes in an oven at 225° and leave to cool.

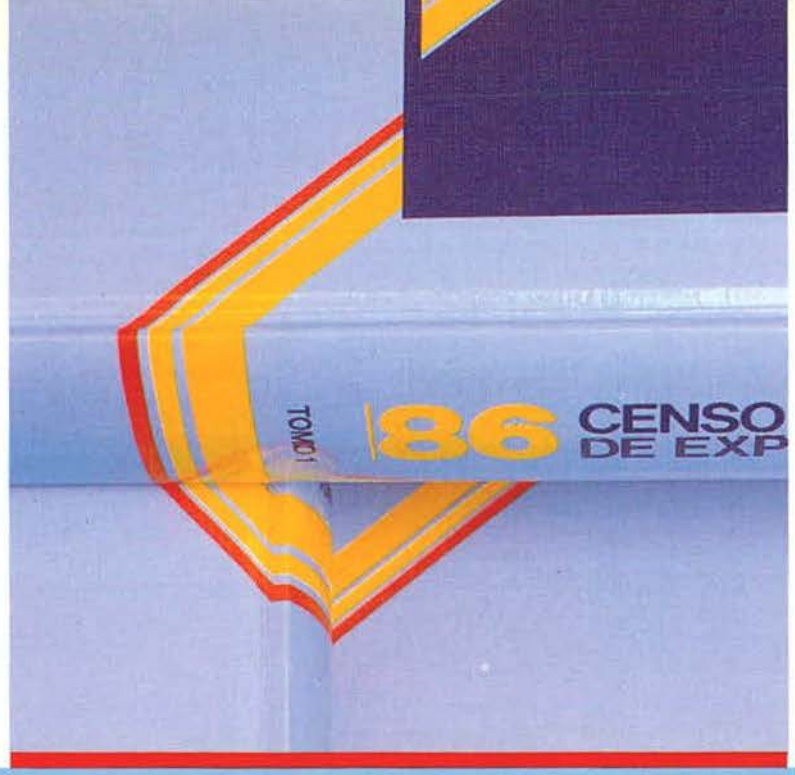
Meanwhile, prepare the cheese topping. Soften the gelatine in cold water, mix the milk and cream, warm slightly and add the softened gelatine. Heat very carefully until the gelatine has completely dissolved, remove from the heat, add the remaining sugar and the cheese, mix well to achieve a smooth cream. Pour the cream into the cooked pastry base and leave in the refigerator until it sets.

When it is firm, beat the bilberry jam a little so that it spreads easily, and spread evenly over the cheesecake.

Chilled
TIO PEPE

The natural aperitif.

GONZALEZ BYASS
SHERRY & BRANDY



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SALAMANCA

Wickerwork and chestnut

Text and photos: **Ministerio de Industria y Energía**

The skilled hands which in the province of *Salamanca* work the wicker, the rush, the chestnut and other vegetable fibres, are to be found in two main nuclei: *Villoruela* and the surrounding villages, and certain locations in the mountain range of *Peña de Francia*. In *Villoruela* the whole village makes its living out of the preparation and working of wicker —not its cultivation, because this has practically died out— but although it provides sufficient for them to live on, they have certainly had to earn it first. Almost every house in the village is a workshop, always family run, in which men and women spend hours and hours, with no thought of days off, holidays or even, at times, weekends. Thus they create chairs, armchairs, headboards, tables, sofas, trunks, toybaskets, coathangers... which are then distributed by six wholesale intermediaries throughout Spain and to some countries abroad. Influenced by *Villoruela*, many of the surrounding villages, though lacking its craft traditions, but with the same desire to get ahead, have also decided to devote themselves to the production of wickerwork.

In *Peña de Francia* the situation is quite different. Chestnut has always been worked there, following the ancient techniques, (not for nothing are many of its villages called generically *del Castañar* «of the chestnut»). It is still worked in the old way by Domingo, for example, the basket-maker of *Miranda del Castañar,* who, at eighty years old, still appears in his little workshop at the far end of his delightful village every day. The articles which he produces continue to be of every day use and it is not difficult to find them: a *pannier* slung over the back of a mule, a basket across the shoulders of the labourer returning with his basketful of cabbages, or a little basket in a woman's lap for keeping her needlework.

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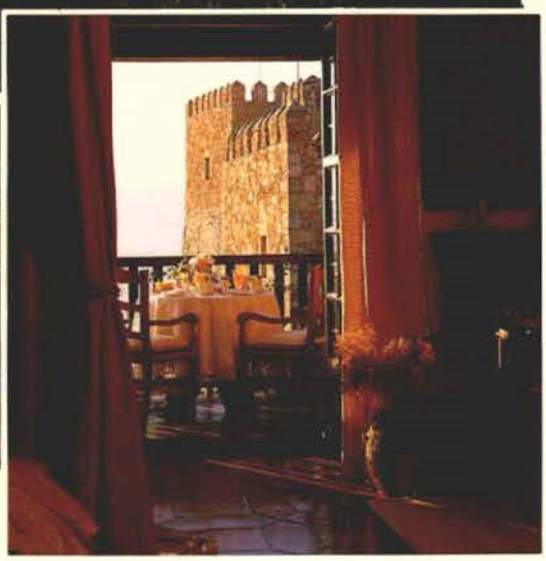

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