

# S P A I N GOURMETOUR

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



## PEPPERS

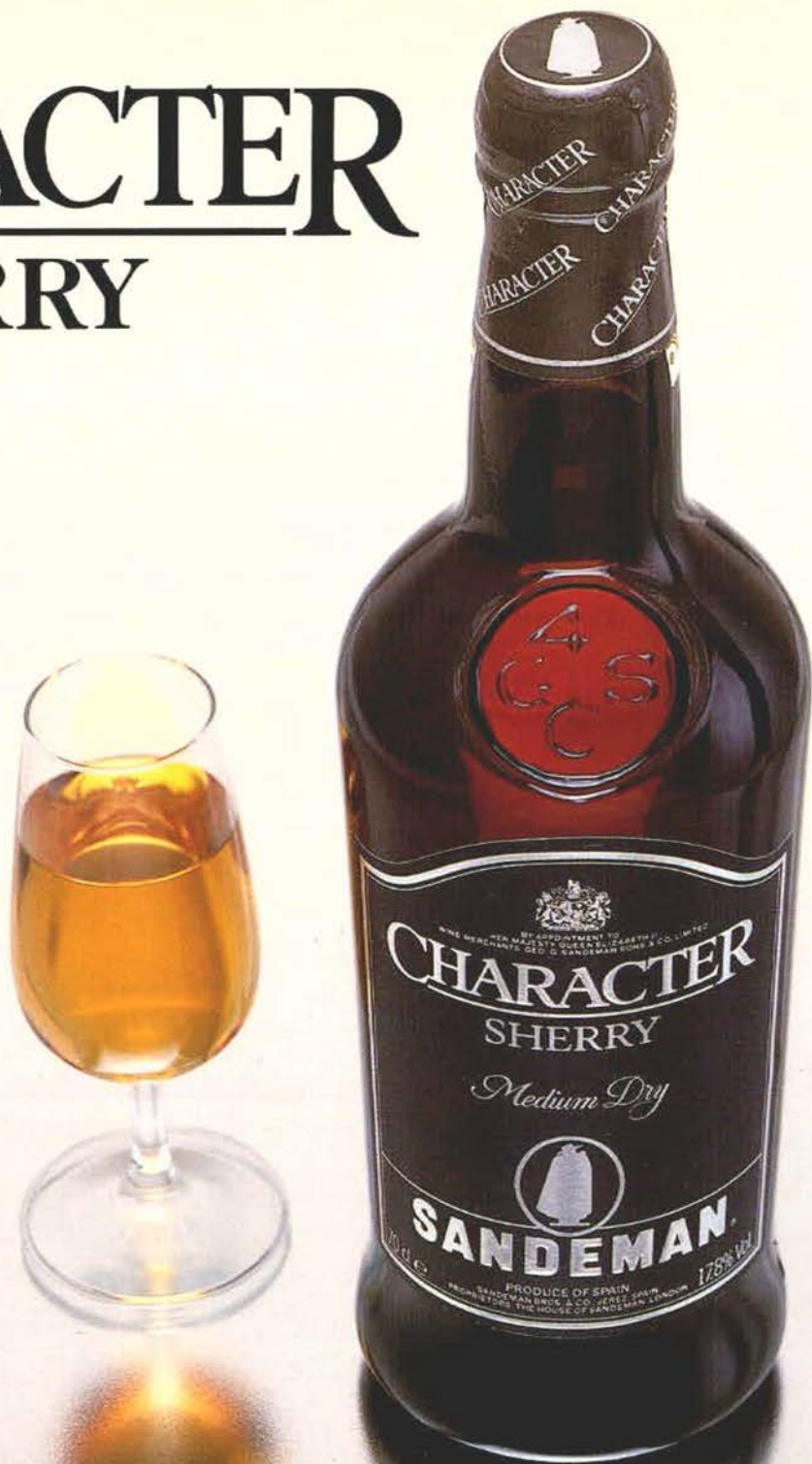
YEAR-ROUND GOODNESS

ALBARIÑO WINE: GALICIA'S SHY STAR

BARCELONA, A CITY ON THE MOVE

# CHARACTER

## SHERRY



**TASTING NOTE:**

**Character is mellow  
but ultimately  
dry on the palate**

# S P A I N GOURMETOUR

**N**ature—despite the bad way it is treated—continues to be generous with Mankind and, with the aid of technology, lavishes many of its fruits on us all the year round—fruits which before were only available at certain times of the year. Such is the case of peppers. Brought from the New World by the Spaniards, this delicious and tasty vegetable has become an essential ingredient of all forms of Spanish gastronomy: roast, fried, stuffed or raw. From Andalusian *gazpacho* to Valencian *paella*, not forgetting *pisto manchego*, no region in Spain can afford to leave peppers out of any of its traditional dishes.

So it is not surprising that such a wonderful plant has obtained similar success in the kitchens of nearly all other countries, many of which import peppers from Spain, where this vegetable attains excellent quality and is on sale throughout the four seasons of the year.

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## Contents 3.<sup>rd</sup> quarter 1988

### WINES

Albariño Wine: Galicia's Shy Star.	4
The Wines of Somontano. Smooth Wines from Rough Country.	58

### GASTRONOMY

<i>Tapa</i> : Tasting Around Barcelona.	34
Cava Cuisine. Restaurant <i>Jaume de Provença</i> : Creative Catalan Cuisine.	80
	86

### PRODUCTS

Clementines: Citric Sweetness. Flowers of Spain, Eternal Spring.	10
Peppers: Year-Round Goodness.	16
Frozen Seafood from Spain: Freshness Below Freezing Point.	40
	50

### TOURISM

Barcelona, A City on the Move.	26
Climbing in Spain. The Parador of Gredos: A Mountain Hideaway.	64
	74

### RECIPES

<i>TAPAS</i>	
Catalan-Style Avocados	39
<i>Tosta de Escalibada</i> .	39
Prawns Flambé.	39
<i>Exqueixada de Bacalao</i> .	39
<i>Cap i Pota</i> .	39
Cod Fritters.	39

<i>FIRST COURSE</i>	
Sweet Red Pepper Soup.	47
Pepper Salad	47
<i>Pisto Manchego</i>	49
Fish Chowder	57
White Bean Soup	79
Cream of Carrot Soup	85
Cava-Steamed Vegetables	85
Truffles and Mushroom Ragout	85
Codfish Pie	89

<i>MAIN COURSE</i>	
Stuffed Peppers	47
Hake, Basque Style	56
Poached Fish Fillets	57
Fish in Papillote	57
Broiled Swordfish	57
Hake, Bilbao Style	57
Trout in Cebreiro Wine Sauce	79
Hake Mousse	85
Salmon in a Spinach Sauce	85
<i>Capón al Cava</i>	85
Stuffed Rabbit	88

<i>DESSERTS</i>	
<i>Yemas de Santa Teresa</i>	79
Cava Fruit Compote	85
Orange Mousse	89

### MAIN PRODUCERS

Wine of Albariño	91
Clementines	91
Flowers	91
Peppers	95
Frozen Fish	96
Wine of Somontano	96



ALBARIÑO WINE

# Galicia's Shy Star

Text: **José Peñín**

Photo: **Pablo Neustadt**

*Galicia, Spain's green, rainy northwest corner, is the home of Albariño, a white wine on a par with the best in Europe which, hitherto, the gallegos have managed to keep pretty much to themselves.*

Ask any foreign wine-buff to describe the characteristics of a Spanish wine and the chances are that he will outline something typically Mediterranean. And sure enough, the rich, full-bodied wines of the southeast of the Peninsula and even the most sophisticated Riojas and Catalan wines all have, to a greater or lesser degree, an unmistakable "touch of the sun" about them. Yet north of a line drawn from the estuary of the River Miño, on the border with Portugal, to Roncesvalles, historic site of the defeat of Charlemagne's troops in Navarre's Pyrenees, the influence of the Atlantic holds sway. Here, the sun-baked browns, ochres and beiges that so seduced the visiting Romantics of the nineteenth century, give way to a green, rolling landscape with more than a passing resemblance to those Celtic fringe areas Ireland, Wales, and Brittany.



This same line marks almost exactly the pilgrimage route known as the *Camino de Santiago*, or Saint James' Way, along which pilgrims from all over Europe flocked in their thousands in the Middle Ages to what was believed to be the tomb of the Apostle James in Santiago de Compostela. These pilgrims, among them widely travelled Cistercian monks and the famous viticulturalist Benedictines of Cluny, are credited with having introduced vine varieties from the Rhine into Galicia in the twelfth century, recognising the climatic similarities of the two areas. That, at least, is the folk explanation — both picturesque and plausible — of the origins of Galicia's own local varieties. Scientific opinion holds that they are the end product of miscegenation between *vitis sativa*, cultivated on both faces of the Cantabrian Pyrenees, and *vitis silvestris*, which gave rise to several similar grape varieties all



along the Atlantic-facing slopes of France and Spain which, down the ages, have evolved into the varieties found in Galicia today.

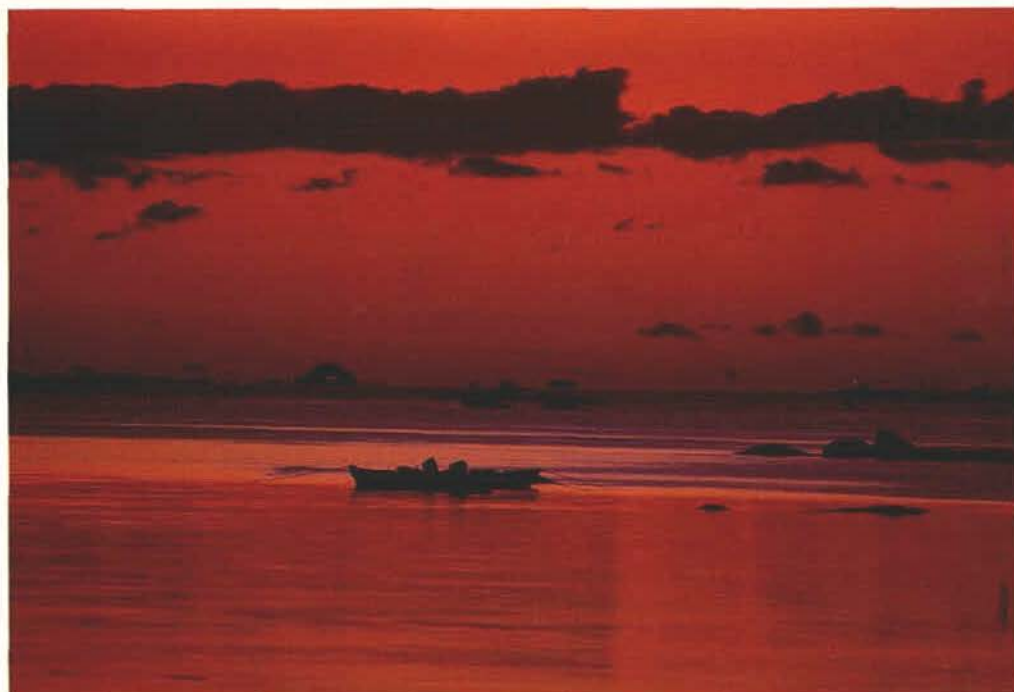
After phylloxera decimated the vineyards of Europe in the late nineteenth century, these native varieties — Treixadura, Torrontes, Albariño, Brancellao, Caiño and Espadeiro — exclusive to Galicia have been cultivated alongside hybrids and Mediterranean grapes to plump out local production in terms of both colour and quantity. Yet Galicia, tucked away in the northwest corner of the Peninsula, has gone on in its own quiet way producing, from its own indigenous grapes, what are arguably the best white wines in Spain and which can only be described as having star potential. But Galicia is an area which keeps very much to itself, and its white wine output has hitherto barely met the huge local demand, leaving little for the rest of Spain not to speak of further afield. Given this assured market, there has been little incentive up to now to raise oenological or technical standards so that modernisation and quality control are somewhat patchy. Traditional rustic equipment functions side by side with the latest in stainless steel, and the wines produced range from the sharp-nosed yellow to the most crystalline and delicate, of a quality which would make the winegrowers of Alsace look to their laurels.

#### **ALBARIÑO — A GALICIAN ARISTOCRAT**

The aristocrat of all Galicia's native varieties is the Albariño, which has all the upper-crust attributes that one expects of a noble grape: character in the skin, pulp rich in both sugars and acidity, and the density and innate elegance which make for wines worthy of being drunk alone. Even when elaboration is less than perfect, the quality manages to shine through so that a yellow, cloudy wine is saved by a slight carbon dioxide -prickle- and a hint of acidity. What makes the quality factor even more amazing is that Galicia's vineyards are subjected to up to 2,000 litres of rain a year.

Together with Müller-Thurgau, grown in England, and Muscadet, typical of the Loire, Galicia's Albariño is one of the tiny group of varieties which can withstand the rigours of an Atlantic climate. It has certain advantages over the other two. Müller-Thurgau, rather lacking in the personality department, needs help in the form of chaptalisation, or the addition of sugar to the must before fermentation begins, to push up its alcoholic strength to a commercially acceptable level. Muscadet poses problems for growers in that it only thrives some hundred kilometres from the ocean, supported on trellises low enough to duck the winds from the west but high enough off the ground to avoid the damp.

But Albariño itself is far from trouble-free. In the demanding climate of the Salnés valley, beside the Atlantic, growers



*Albariño grapes are currently cultivated in the area covered by the Rías Baixas D.O., namely the coastal strip between the Ría de Arosa and...*



have to keep constant guard against fungal diseases. The vines are trained on concrete or granite posts 1.80 m high so as to absorb as much sunshine as possible, each planted 4 m apart, their shoots meeting in between along linking wires. In winter, when the vines have been cut back, the whole elaborate support structure is revealed.

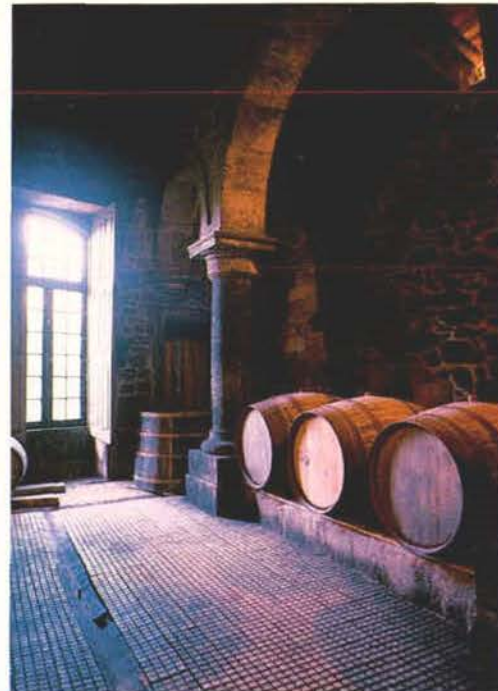
### A NEW DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN

Albariño grapes are currently cultivated in the area covered by the Rías Baixas D.O., namely the coastal strip between the Ría de Arosa and the Miño estuary in the province of Pontevedra. Albariño is concentrated mainly around the River Salnés, between the fjord-like *rias* of Arosa of Pontevedra, where in fact it is the only variety grown. This geographically complex region embraces several microclimates, and rain and cloud are a constant and unpredictable threat. The fact it is further south than other winegrowing areas of Europe means that it can expect more sun, yet within this stretch of coast, only 86 kilometres long and densely populated, some areas run the risk of losing entire harvests to rain whereas others can be confident of a quality crop.

The fact that the area under Albariño has increased from 300 to 2,000 hectares in just eight years is a significant indicator of its profitability, and it is sure to increase still further before 1992, the year in which Spain becomes a full member of the EEC, when further new planting will be prohibited by Community regulations.

Commercially speaking, the area is experiencing something of a boom, with both plantable land and Albariño grapes (the most expensive in Spain) fetching high prices. Soaring production has taken Galicia by surprise and has introduced an element of competition into a market hitherto ready to absorb every drop of Albariño wine, regardless of quality. This has led not only to an insistence on higher quality but also to an extension of the market into other parts of Spain. Today's Albariño is appreciably better than what was on offer just two years ago. Thanks to the boom, this short period of time has seen the installation of modern wine-making equipment which is giving admirable results both in terms of transparency of the wine and the retention of the complex primary aromas typical of this variety.

But abandoning age-old methods of vinification for modern ones has its pros and cons. The advantages of guaranteed light, luminous wines are marred by loss of personality. As yet, what could be thought of as the Albariño of the future is still in the experimental stage. Some wineries go in for decanting the must before fermentation begins, others de-stalk and macerate the skins, whilst others neither de-stalk nor macerate. The high acidity of these Atlantic wines makes malolactic fermentation an essential feature of vinification. This bacterial process converts the fruit's harsh malic acid into the much gentler lactic acid so



*...the Miño estuary in the province of Pontevedra. This geographically complex region embraces several microclimates, and rain and cloud are a constant threat.*

# Background notes

## Wine-Producing Zone

The Denomination of Origin Rias Baixas embraces some 5,500 ha in the province of Pontevedra, made up mostly of a western coastal strip except in the south, where it follows the right bank of the River Miño inland.

The area under Albariño is mostly concentrated in the Salnés valley, while the district known as El Rosal, on the Miño estuary, is more given to Treixadura, Loureiro and Espadeiro.

## Climate

The climate is influenced by the proximity of the Atlantic and is wet, with between 1,150 and 2,500 mm of rainfall a year. It can be very sunny and warm in summer, though always punctuated by unpredictably cloudy and rainy days.

## Soil

The soil is sandy and granitic, high in acidity and low in lime.

## Vine Varieties

Albariño does well in a rainy environment when grown in sturdy soil which is cool but not too wet. The grapes grow in small bunches and are relatively sparse compared with the productivity of vines grown in a high rainfall area in general. The vines develop slowly and their shoots are allowed to grow long since

they are trained over 1.80 m-high pergolas.

## Characteristics of the Wine

This monovarietal is high in acidity which is nicely balanced by the smoothness produced by malolactic fermentation. This process gives the wine a certain density, a greenish yellow colour and an aroma, at its best, of ripe apple, hay and fennel. The wine owes its body and personality to maceration of the skins. It has something of the fruitiness of a Sauvignon and the richness of a

Riesling. The vintage is generally sold eight months after harvesting.

## Vinification

The introduction of new technology has done a great deal to define the vinification method which achieves the best results from Albariño. This differs from the usual method for white wines in that it involves cold-macerating the skins and inducing malolactic fermentation. This method, in combination with restricting alcoholic fermentation to 25 days, would seem to be the ideal.

## Serving Temperature and Gastronomy

Albariño should be served at 8° C. Its acidity and body place it in the category of wines worthy of being drunk alone, but it also goes beautifully with shellfish and grilled fish.



JAVIER BELLOSO

that overall acidity is made more palatable. It is usually a feature of the elaboration of red wines and white Burgundies, and can be risky without adequate technical back-up, fortunately now accessible in Galicia.

It seems that the best way of preserving the personality of the variety while applying modern technology is to press the grapes until they yield just 40 % of their must and then cold-macerate the skins for six to eight hours, keeping fermentation short. Maceration is a traditional part of the vinification process in these parts and gives variable results. It allows the aromas contained in the skins to be released but carries with it the risk of the absorption of the tastes and smells of the dregs if racking off is delayed.

## STEERING THE COURSE

The only threat to Albariño's future is overproduction. Seduced by a market apparently ready and waiting to pay high prices for a bottle of Albariño, producers are building wineries quite out of proportion

*Today's Albariño is appreciably better than what was on offer just two years ago. The installation of modern winemaking equipment is giving admirable results.*



to the area's capacity. Certainly there has been no problem up to now in selling 12,000 bottles at a good price, but since the injection of the competitive element into the market, the 500,000 bottle target at maintained prices that some cooperatives are aiming at has to be recognised as unrealistic.

Albariño's success depends on keeping production diverse and small-scale, albeit using the most modern equipment, and not trying to override the risks of the unpredictable climate to which it owes many of its finest attributes. This is an area where one simply has to take the rough with the smooth, where a superb harvest one year can be followed by a disastrous one the next. Europe has learned the lesson that in the wine-world, the market alone cannot be allowed to call the tune.

Informed opinion seems to agree on two points: that this winegrowing area should preserve its small-scale production pattern and that producers should aim for quality above all else. Theirs is, after all, arguably the best white wine in Spain and certainly one of the best in the world, as the world is about to discover.



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C L E M E N T I N E S

# CITRIC SWEETNESS

Text: **Sonia Ortega**  
Photos: **Félix Lorrio**

*It's juicy, sweet, flavourful, easy to peel and has no pips... What more could you ask of a fruit, which —apart from all this— is also brimming over with vitamin C? That is why the clementine is finding an increasingly welcome reception on all markets.*

*Although it needs careful cultivation as well as a very specific climate, the clementine has found its perfect habitat in the Valencian Region, where the harvest is getting bigger each year.*

**V**alencian farmers often say that if it's a good year for the orange, it's a good year for everything. And they have good reason. The fortunes of their region of Valencia are inextricably linked with the orange crop there. More than two hundred and fifty years of organised orange growing and more than one hundred and seventy exporting on a regular basis have turned these lands into a real -orange nursery-.

It was the Arabs who first brought oranges here, establishing an entire irrigation system, with carefully planned canals and ditches, some of which are still operational. Since then, the Valencian growers have defended their crop with aggressive tenacity, showing a daring, enterprising spirit that has led them to adopt the most up-to-date farming techniques and use their fields as testing grounds for all the new orange varieties that have been discovered over the years.

Although the orange continues to be the queen of these lands, the clementine is already gathering forces and becoming a serious pretender to the throne.

A relative youngster in the citric family, the clementine is a fairly recent hybrid between the mandarin and (probably) the sour orange. It owes its name to a monk called Clemente who, apart from running an orphanage in Messerghin (Algeria) was also an amateur mandarine farmer. And it was in his garden that, by pure chance, he discovered the first clementine. To start with, it did not seem too different from a





***THE IDEAL CLEMENTINE*** is almost a reality thanks to the accumulation of positive factors: state-of-the-art research, propitious weather and soils, and aggressive farming policies.



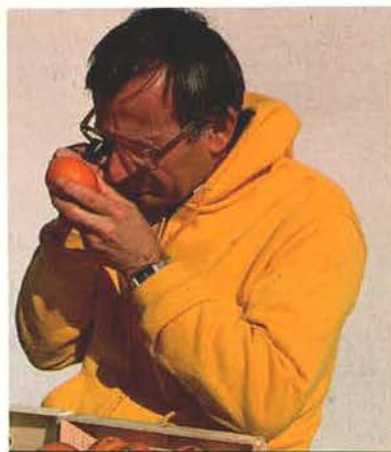
*The normal harvesting dates in the past used to be around the middle of November, but they now begin in mid October and even earlier.*

mandarine. But it had a much brighter future ahead of it...

Mandarines had already been cultivated in The Spanish Levante for several decades. They were introduced into Europe relatively recently; some say in 1850, whilst others insist that the first crops were already flourishing in certain Mediterranean regions as early as 1800, probably in Sicily. Whatever the case, although this fruit—whose name must have been the work of some high official of the Celestial Empire—was much appreciated for its taste and flavour, its mass of pips and its poor resistance to travel made it hard to commercialise. The providential appearance of the clementine was able to compensate and overcome all these weak points, albeit only partially to begin with since, although they were harder and travelled better, the first clementines also had pips.

These first clementines reached Valencia where they were planted experimentally. The results were good, and, bit by bit, they became more popular. At the same time, research began, with cross-breeding, graftage, etc. to improve the species. The first attempts were aimed at growing a pipless fruit. When this was achieved (more than thirty years ago), the next step was to get a more precocious fruit in order

*A relative youngster in the citrus family, the clementine is a fairly recent hybrid between the mandarin and—probably—the sour orange.*



to bring forward the harvest. This is of enormous economic importance, since it means that the fruit can enjoy a longer season on the market, with all the benefits that entails.

The leader in all this research, and one of the world's foremost pioneers in agricultural research, was the Institute Valenciano de Investigaciones Agrarias or IVIA, which has more than sixty researchers involved in its search for the perfect clementine, as well as instructing researchers and farmers from other countries of the world.

#### **IDEAL WEATHER AND SOIL**

Of course, research would be fruitless without Mother Nature's helping hand. And there, Spain is especially fortunate. The Spanish Levante, which stretches from the south of the province of Tarragona to the north of Murcia, has the ideal weather and soil conditions for growing clementines. It is an area where there is a balanced climate of temperate summers and mild winters, not too cold but not too hot either, since hot tropical winters are not indicated for the clementine.

Although some citrus fruit trees have lived for up to five hundred years, the



*Before leaving the country, the clementines pass through strict hygienic controls by Spanish authorities.*

average productive life of a clementine tree is 25 to 30 years, producing between 70 and 80 kilos of fruit a year on average and, in exceptional cases, up to 100 or even 120 kilos.

But in order to get these sorts of crops, the clementine needs a lot of attention lavished on it, especially when it is pruned with very special treatment. It is more difficult to grow than other citrus fruits. If it is to be grown successfully, it requires just the sort of know-how and interest that the Levantine farmers have developed over the years of experience with oranges.

As with the orange, Valencian growers lost no time in planting the new varieties of clementines as they developed. It could be said that Valencian farming is the most aggressively progressive in all the world. The old-style peasant farmer, opposed to any change or novelty, has never existed here. The Head of the IVIA Citriculture Department clearly explains this atypical situation: *Here we have a period of three years to characterize each new variety, because that's how long you really need to learn to solve the problems that come up. Well, sometimes, before these three years are up, there are a whole lot of farms already growing the variety, because these farmers practice tremendously aggressive*

*The clementine owes its name to a monk called Clemente, who was an amateur mandarin farmer. In his garden, by pure chance, he discovered the first clementine.*



*farming policies. I'd say that nothing like this happens in any other country in the world, not even in Israel or the United States do they change their varieties so often or try out new products—hormones, fertilisers, pest control, etc.—like they do here. As soon as one finds something new, the word gets round like it was dynamite, people start talking, they discuss it, etc., despite the fact that grafting is a very complicated, costly technique. You could almost say that, the farmers are almost, ahead of us, the researchers.*

#### IMPROVING THE SPECIES

This accumulation of positive factors—state-of-the-art research, propitious weather and soils, and farmers willing to take a gamble on the future—has made it possible for the species to be improved so far that the -ideal clementine- is almost a reality. No efforts have been saved along the way. Most endeavours have been aimed at lengthening the season, both by bringing it forward and pushing it back. The normal harvesting dates in the past used to be around the middle of November, but they now begin in mid October and, for some of the especially pre-

# spania

MANDARINAS  
CLEMENTINAS

Comité de Gestión  
de la Exportación de  
Frutos Cítricos



cocious varieties, even fifteen or twenty days earlier.

The same emphasis is placed on trying to stretch the season out. Until only a few years ago, it finished no later than February, but bit by bit it has been lasting longer until it now ends in March, and expectations are that it could soon move into April and even later. The IVIA does not think it impossible that one day farmers will be seen harvesting their clementines in June. In short, they are trying to space out the production so it does not flood the market all at once but is dosed out over a longer period in order to improve its marketability.

Size is another important factor in the research being carried out. By mutations or improvements on existing varieties, some excellent varieties have been bred for their taste and flavour, but they have had to be rejected due to their small size, as happened with the 'Guillermina' variety. For although the clementine is a naturally small fruit, consumers like something to get their teeth into so it is important that it not be too small, especially for export purposes. A good-sized clementine is considered to have a diameter of roughly 6 cms. (3 1/4"); a small clementine is 5 cms. (3") or smaller in diameter.

As to taste and flavour, the researchers think that the current clementine is of exceptionally high quality, and as long as consumer preferences do not suddenly change enormously, clementines will continue to taste the same, have the same acidity, flavour, etc. as the ones you can currently buy on the market.

**FROM TREE TO MARKET**

For the moment, however, consumers seem to be happy with what researchers have done, the proof of which can be seen in the constantly increasing production and exports of Spanish clementines. When the farmers produced 100,000 tonnes one year, they thought they must have reached the maximum limit. They had not. During last season (87-88), more than 700,000 tonnes were produced, of which roughly 560,000 tonnes have been exported.

Before leaving the country, the clementines pass through strict hygienic controls by Spanish authorities and by authorities from the receiving country. When exports cross the ocean (to Canada and the USA mainly), controls are even more exhaustive to avoid transporting any bacteria to which Mediterranean crops may be immune

while American ones may not. That is why, ever since clementines began to be exported en masse to the United States five years ago, when the harvesting begins each year, two USDA inspectors (United States Department of Agriculture) make a special trip to the port of Castellón. These two inspectors must check the quality, size, absence of disease, etc., of the fruits before they are loaded into big refrigerated containers and set off to their destinations.



*The Spanish Levante has the ideal weather and soil conditions for growing clementines. There is a balanced climate of temperate summers and mild winters.*

EVOLUTION OF SPANISH CLEMENTINE EXPORTS	
Harvest	Tonnes
1982-83 .....	395,686
1983-84 .....	563,478
1984-85 .....	421,980
1985-86 .....	434,616
1986-87 .....	515,000
1987-88 .....	560,000

Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

In the ships, the clementines are subjected to 'cool treatment'. This does not entail giving them a cold shoulder, but merely ensuring they are kept at a specific temperature according to tables showing standard relationships between how long the journey lasts and how cool the fruit should be kept. If a journey takes twelve days, the clementines in its cargo will be stored at minus 1.1° (30° F), whereas if they are going to be at sea for fourteen days, the temperature would be 1.8° C (35° F). The treatment also gets rid of any larvae of *ceratitis capitata*, better known as the 'Mediterranean Fly', that might have got into the fruit.

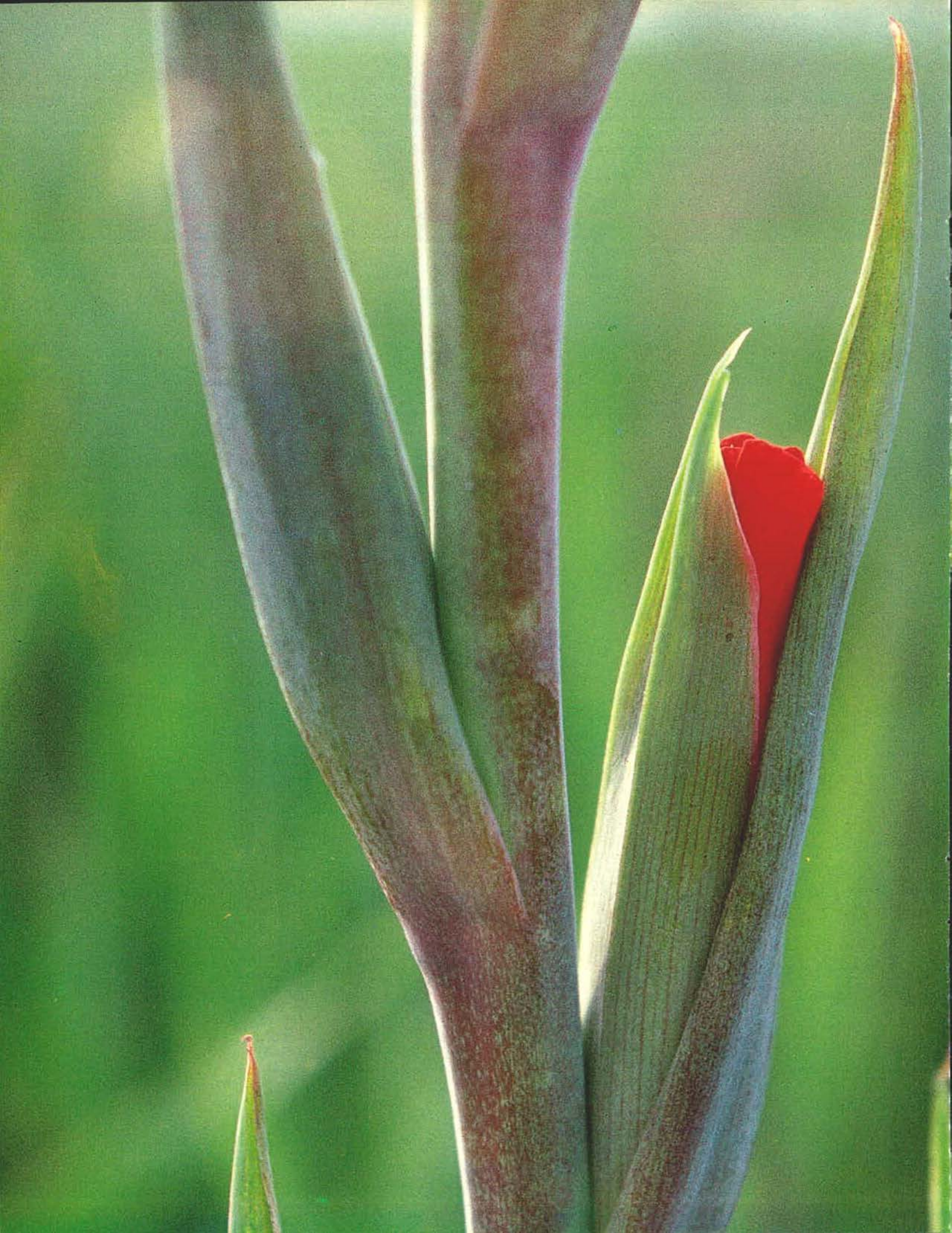
Sea transport, however, is only used for 4 % of all Spanish citric exports. The other 96 % are sent overland: 30 % by rail and 66 % in trucks. Although both modes of transport take about the same amount of time, the fact that trucks can offer door-to-door delivery is a definite advantage. In just 33 hours, Spanish clementines can be in the central market in Paris, and 48 hours are more than enough to reach almost all the rest of western Europe. The Spanish Connection works fast and fresh.

Europe is Spain's largest customer of clementines, with France being the biggest consumer, followed by Belgium, the Netherlands, W. Germany and the UK. The United States and Canada are more recent

customers for clementines, but ever since they got the taste, their imports have been going up and up.

**A MANDARIN SWEET**

-The clementine, a mandarine sweet- was one of the slogans the Spanish exporters used for their clementines. And the word 'sweet' is a key to the clementine's success. Children love sweets and they love clementines. In fact, they are the biggest consumers of citrus fruits in all the countries of the world, and clementines are ideally suited to their needs: they are easy to peel (no need for a difficult, dangerous knife); they are sweet-tasting; they have no pips to choke on and, moreover, their size makes them possible for a child to eat one all alone, without anyone's help and without any messy waste. Although the clementine tastes best as Nature made it, it can also be prepared in different ways: pressed into a tangy fruit juice, put in a fruit salad or even in a flan or on a cheese-cake. Whatever you do to it, it will always taste good, look good and be rich in vitamin C.



## FLOWERS OF SPAIN

# ETERNAL SPRING

Text: Sonia Ortega  
Photos: Félix Lorrio

*The trees may begin to lose their leaves and the wild flowers become but a distant memory in the wintry fields, but Nature never ceases to keep her colourful hand busy, and her beauty continues to bloom in hothouse flowers. In the depths of winter, there are still regions with privileged weather, where flowers grow the whole year round in the open air or in greenhouses where no heating is needed other than light and sun that shines twelve months a year.*

*The Canary Islands and the Mediterranean coastal areas in Spain are graced with such a climate, allowing them to form part of an exclusive group that exports eternal spring.*





***The greater profitability of flowers in comparison to other farming produce, as well as improved technology, have made this crop an attractive proposition...***

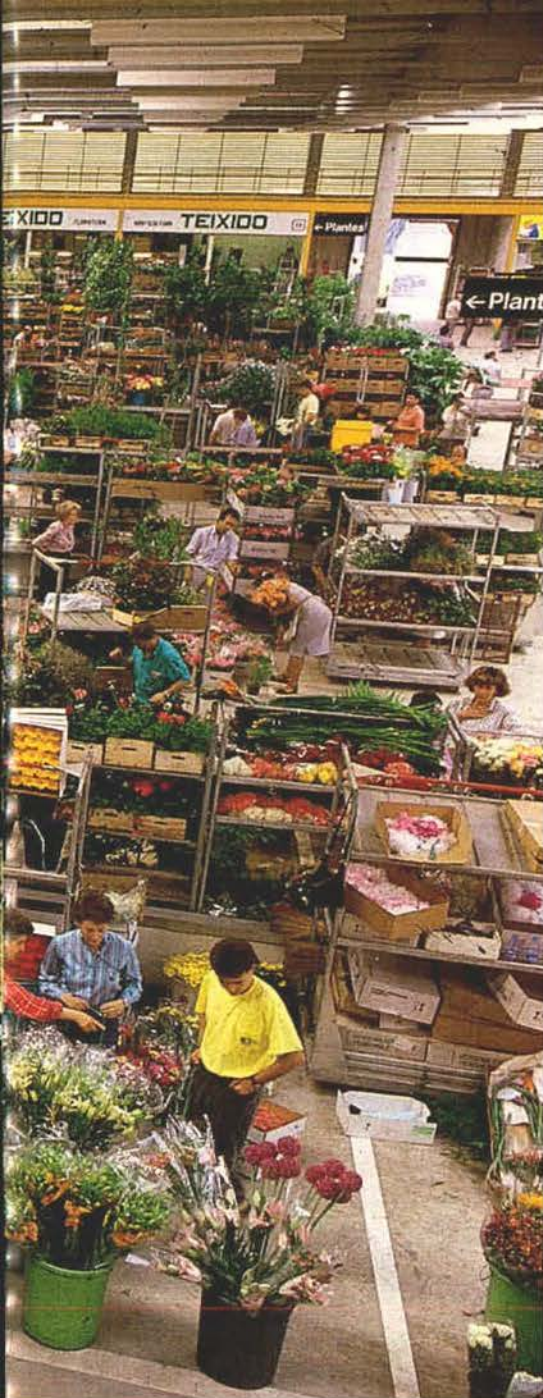
**I**t all started at the beginning of this century. In 1914, when the First World War began to spread its ominous shadow over the rest of Europe, an Italian family moved to the Barcelona coast, setting itself up in the Maresme municipality. Biomio Faminia planted the first carnations and laid the foundations for what would later blossom into a thriving business. Another family, this time native Catalans, the Lloveras, can also claim the honour of being pioneers in this enterprise. Thus, with the Faminia and the Lloveras families, El Maresme became a pivotal point in Spanish floriculture, although it took some years before these first tentative steps actually bore fruit. Ironically, it was another war—the Second World War—

that gave the decisive boost to the Maresme flowers. When peace returned, the fields of the war-weary countries were in no condition to cover the demand for flowers so Spanish flowers began to be exported to the rest of Europe... especially the carnations from El Maresme.

Several markets became extremely attached to these flowers, as evidenced by the story that the members of the *Florimar Cooperative* of Vilassar de Mar (Barcelona) still love to recount: In 1956, there was a strong frost in El Maresme—something that went down in the annals of local history, being most unusual there—which had ruinous effects, even destroying ancient trees that had stood more than two hundred years. The flower-growers found themselves

without any flowers to export and consequently without any money to buy the seeds for the following year. It was the German importers who came to their rescue, lending the cooperative the money it needed, interest free, to start anew.

Today, things have changed from the days of the Faminia family, and although El Maresme still exports its flowers, it is no longer the only Spanish producer. The greater profitability of flowers in comparison to other farming produce, as well as improved technology, have made the crop an attractive proposition for other regions of Spain, especially Andalusia, the Spanish Levante and the Canary Islands, all of which enjoy an enormous asset in the high number of sunlight hours they have per year.



*... for some regions of Spain which enjoy an enormous asset in the high number of sunlight hours they have per year.*

### BLOSSOMING EXPORTS

Spanish exports of cut flowers have been progressively rising (see Table 1). They are dealt with as high-quality products, appearing on the European market out of season, when the cold has already set in and flowers have become exotic objects, or -just when Northern Europe has a layer of snow on its greenhouses-, as the Technical Director of a large Canary-Island cooperative put it. The harvest season begins at the start of October and continues until June, with April and May being the months with highest turnover.

Until a few years ago, there was a large number of small horticulturalists whose products were not easy to export. But gra-

dually, things have changed and larger areas have been put to cultivation, with cooperatives being set up to bring together several small producers or large horticultural farms, created along Kenyatan lines. The *QUASH* association is an example of this latter type, with 180 Ha. of crops under its protection, twelve to chrysanthemums, 15 to irises and the rest to roses, which are grown in glasshouses. The *Naturaflor* Association in Chipiona (Cádiz) is an example of the new-style cooperatives, grouping roughly 100 farmers, and growing carnations, roses and chrysanthemums. The cooperative not only exports to Northern Europe, but also to the United States, using export connections made through the thriving sherry business in Jerez.

Although new countries are getting in on the game, Spain is still one of the leading world exporters, and in some cases, as with the mini-spray of carnations, is the leading European supplier. Europe is the biggest receiver of Spanish flowers, especially the EEC, with the Netherlands being the most eager to buy, followed by West Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France and Sweden (see Table 2).

### THE CARNATION, SPAIN'S LEADING LADY

Of the almost 2,500 Ha. devoted to the production of cut flowers in Spain (mainland and Canary Islands), nearly half (1,100



*It has been said that a country's level of culture is not only measurable by its literacy level, but also by its flower consumption.*

TABLE 1

**TRENDS IN SPANISH CUT-FLOWER EXPORTS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS**  
(Figures in kilograms)

1985	1986	Growth	1987	Growth
8.333.028	11.069.993	33 %	17.972.771	62 %

Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

TABLE 2

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPANISH CUT-FLOWER EXPORTS**

Consumer country	Harvest 84/85	%	Harvest 85/86	%	Harvest 86/87	%
Netherlands .....	3,065,197	36.8	3,851,204	34.8	6,368,663	35.4
W. Germany .....	1,815,041	21.8	2,783,412	25.1	5,160,973	28.7
U. Kingdom .....	1,303,228	15.6	1,803,729	16.3	3,324,308	18.5
Switzerland .....	825,110	9.9	821,834	7.4	931,505	5.2
France .....	171,607	2.1	459,305	4.2	628,023	3.5
Sweden .....	423,239	5.1	469,866	4.3	345,444	1.9
Others .....	729,606	8.7	880,643	7.9	1,213,855	6.8
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>8,333,028</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>11,069,993</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17,972,771</b>	<b>100</b>
			Growth 33 %		Growth 62 %	

Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

Ha.) is used for cultivating carnations, which takes the biggest share of covered farms, all with modern drip-irrigation systems.

Apart from being the most widely grown flower, the carnation is also the most exported, which is not surprising, given its decorative beauty, its value for money and the infinity of colours it comes in, not to mention its hardiness in transport.

At present, the two most intensively grown species are the *standard* or single-head carnation and the *spray* — a stem with four to six blossoms, depending on the variety.

The carnations are planted between May and June and are ready to be picked in September or October. Although the plant may continue to give forth flowers until the following September or October, the later blooms are not such good quality and are not for export. Nonetheless, Nature has her contrary ways, and some varieties have bloomed better the second year than the first, but that is not usually the case.

With *standard* carnations, the flower is cut when it is half open; it should not be round nor totally closed. The norm with the *spray* type carnations, which have an average of five flowers, is to cut the spray when two of the flowers are half open and the rest are still buds, where one can just make out the colour of the petals.

The flowers are cut manually, and for the moment there are no expectations of being able to mechanise the process for many years to come. This is not surprising if one bears in mind that twenty-two plants are grown on each square metre, giving forth seven hundred buds, which do not all flower at the same time.

There is a long process, involving both manual skills and the most up-to-date technology, from the moment when the farmer cuts the stalk of the carnation, with the aid of a special knife, until the carnation reaches the country where it is to be sold. Each cooperative or association may have its special way of doing things, but there are also some official quality standards that must be respected, such as the length of the stems. Thus, a first class *spray* carnation should have a stem length of 55 cms. (21.6 inches) and a minimum of four buds; if there are three, it is considered a second class carnation.

The farmer cuts the carnations and takes them to his cooperative in packages of twenty, wrapped in paper. There, the workers (usually women, who seem to be more skilled at the job) go over the flowers to ensure that they look impeccable; they rewrap them in a paper with a perforated code showing where they have come from. This way, if there is any problem in a batch, the supplier can be

# Off the rocks.

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**TIO PEPE**

It's the mood.





*The purchase of flowers and plants has become an everyday affair in the developed countries.*

**TABLE 3**

**EXPORT BY PROVINCES OF 1986-87 HARVEST**  
(Figures in kilograms)

Provinces	Carnations	Roses	Other flowers	Total
Alicante .....	276,159	3,001	70,147	349,307
Almería .....	5,267,537	102,646	539,577	5,909,760
Baleares .....	—	27,356	2,360	29,716
Barcelona .....	130,025	3,175	2,072	135,272
Cádiz .....	14,730	—	3,735	18,455
Coruña .....	4,367	—	26	4,393
Gerona .....	2,007,470	125,308	1,511,909	3,644,687
Guipúzcoa .....	1,668,333	222	533,342	1,721,897
Madrid .....	32,874	2,470	13,932	49,276
Málaga .....	248,886	17,940	37,257	304,083
Murcia .....	145,290	157	27,893	173,340
Navarra .....	63,510	—	6,168	69,678
Pontevedra .....	1,877	—	—	1,877
Salamanca .....	—	550	—	550
Sevilla .....	1,791,869	—	12,397	1,804,266
Valencia .....	2,977	—	43,991	46,968
Total Spanish Mainland ..	11,655,904	282,665	2,324,956	14,263,525
Las Palmas .....	92,910	115,103	1,137,775	1,345,788
Tenerife .....	83,961	1,631,319	648,178	2,363,458
Total Canary I. ....	176,817	1,746,422	1,785,953	3,709,246
<b>TOTAL SPAIN .....</b>	<b>11,832,775</b>	<b>2,029,087</b>	<b>4,110,909</b>	<b>17,972,771</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

identified immediately. Prior to this, as soon as the newly cut flower arrives at the warehouse, it is placed in tanks filled with water, to which a special liquid is added to freshen them up. The liquid is called *crisal*, a water disinfectant, which also nourishes the plant.

Once the flowers have been checked, they are taken to the pre-cooling chamber, where the heat that the flower has absorbed in the fields is eliminated. Then the flowers can be packed in boxes or in small tanks, with more *crisal*, which are loaded on refrigerated trucks with conditions that enable them to transport the flowers over enormous distances without allowing them to spoil.

The entire process is very fast, and usually no more than two days are allowed to pass between the cutting of the flower to loading it on the truck.

**THE CANARY ISLANDS:  
COMING UP ROSES**

But this industry is in no way limited to carnations. It also has its beds of roses. At

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from the quiet refinement of a first-class restaurant to the hustle and bustle of a local tavern. And they're always a success. Of course. They're a natural. Fragrant reds, glistening rosés, remarkable whites. Valencian wines are young and never let you down.



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BODEGAS C. AUGUSTO EGLI, BODEGAS VINIVAL, BODEGAS CHERUBINO VALSANGIACOMO, CAVAS MURVIEDRO, BODEGAS VICENTE GANDIA PLA

present, modern research methods have led to an overwhelming number of different varieties of cultivated flowers, and the range of colours in each variety is infinitesimal. Roses, chrysanthemums, geraniums, lilies, irises, gladiolae are but a few of the many varieties grown in Spain.

After the carnation, the rose is the second most popular export flower in Spain, with the Canary Islands being the leading producer, especially Tenerife.

The first commercial cut-flowers in the Canaries were grown some twenty-five years ago. The initial strategy was oriented towards intensive growing in the winter time in order to optimize the excellent weather conditions on the islands. The first crops were mainly carnations, but about fifteen years ago, following disease and blight problems, these gave way to the production of roses.

The current production and marketing policy followed in the island of Tenerife gradually took shape, with farmers habitually engaged in extensive low-tech farming, growing bananas and other fruits and vegetables, gradually converting to the high-tech intensive methods necessary for flowers.

The fields used for cut-flower production are small, covering roughly 0.1 to 0.5 hectares, and are run as family concerns. At present, there are roughly 600 flower farms on the islands, of which 90 % are located on Tenerife.

Chrysanthemums from the Canary Islands are also rapidly catching on in the export market, and the Islands are at present almost the leading producer of this flower, which has been vastly improved with modern flower-breeding methods,



**In the open air or in greenhouses, flowers grow the whole year round, with no other heating than light and sun.**

becoming increasingly elegant and decorative.

The main problem facing the flower export business on the Canary Islands is transport. Unlike mainland producers, which almost exclusively use refrigerated trucks, the Canary Islanders have to rely on air freight in order to ensure that their flowers arrive in perfect condition, with all the additional costs that this entails.

#### FLOWER POWER

It has been said that a country's level of culture is not only measurable by its literacy level, but also by its flower consumption. Are flowers really a luxury item?

Obviously, countries that have not yet managed to satisfy basic necessities are not going to have much demand for flowers except on very special occasions. However, the purchase of flowers and plants has become an everyday affair in the developed countries.

If one thinks about it, this is only to be expected since in Northern Europe, for example, where a high level of economic development is accompanied by rather depressing weather conditions, people have come to consider flowers and plants a daily psychological necessity, letting their sweet perfume and bright colours brighten up the long winter days as a reminder of the warmth and joys of summer.

If we add to this the marvellous selection of different varieties that have been developed and the infinity of shapes and colours, even the most demanding consumers can find the flower they want. Mutations

and cross-breeding have given rise to the most original colours. Thus, people who have a predilection for red carnations can opt for the *cantalupe* or the *fausto*, amongst many others. Each colour has its key name, by which it is identified worldwide. Variegated carnations, which are often called *fantasy*, combine two or more colours in one single flower; white carnations with pink, red or yellow edges, etc. are becoming increasingly popular. They are obtained through special pollenization methods and between ten and twelve thousand plants are usually needed to obtain a good breeding stock.

Each country has its own preferences which have to be tended to if one is going to keep ahead of the market. In the past, things were simpler. There was a reasonably steady demand for carnations, which could be estimated in constant shares of 60 % for red carnations, 30 % for white carnations and the remaining 10 % for yellow carnations. Now, however, these proportions vary all the time and the colour range is getting bigger every day.

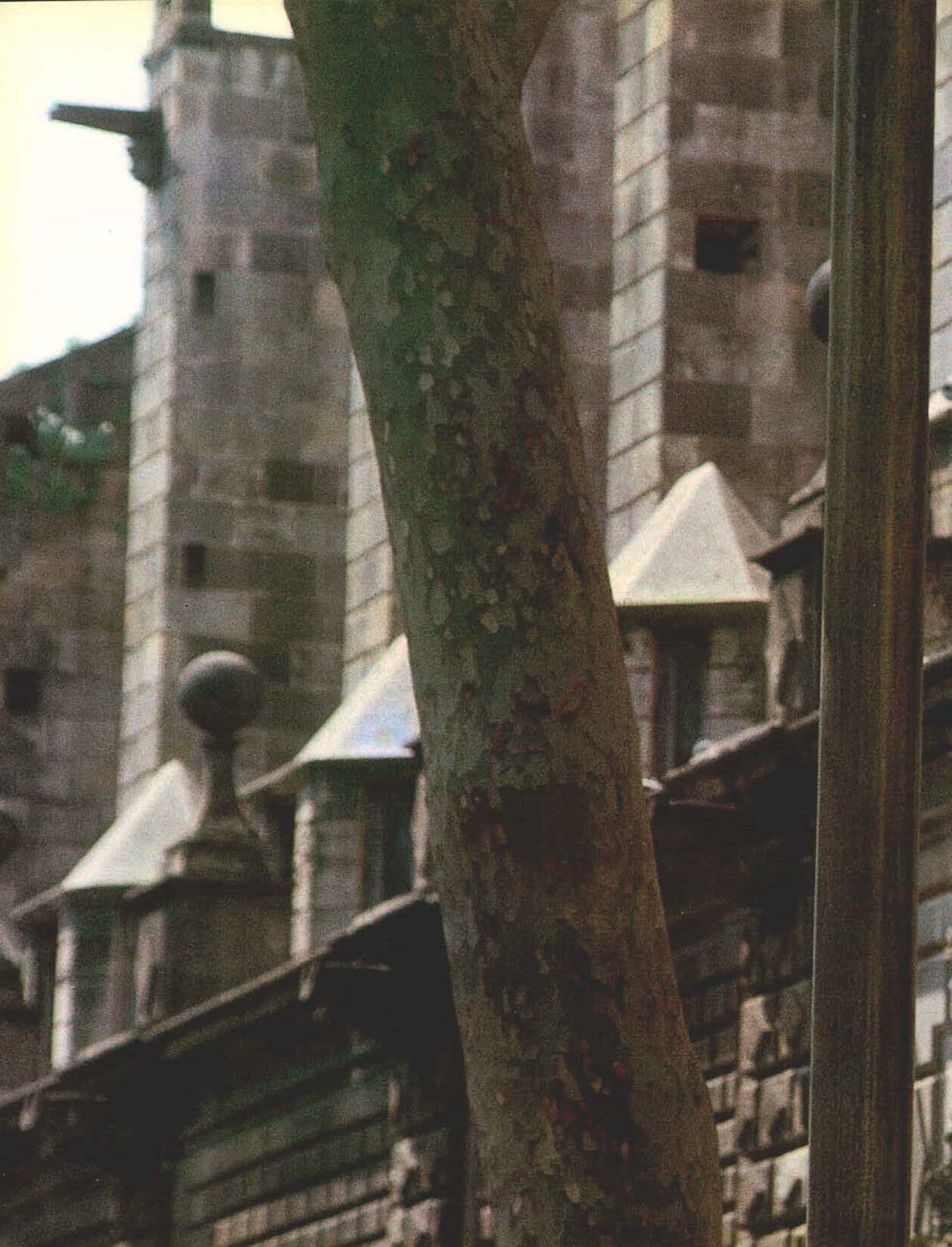
Just to add to the complications of this beautiful flower market, each country has its special celebrations, which require a specific flower of a specific colour on a specific date. For example, when Christmas comes round, Sweden, which prefers pink carnations during the rest of the year, will suddenly want nothing but red carnations, and in March, only yellow ones.

TABLE 4

#### TREND IN HECTARES UNDER CUT-FLOWER CULTIVATION

	SPANISH MAINLAND AND BALEARIC I.				CANARY ISLANDS			
	1971	1975	1980	1986	1971	1975	1980	1986
Carnations ...	619	718	916	990	936	154	61	95
Roses .....	227	284	530	343	31	89	144	180
Other flowers..	—	741	1.095	706	—	132	229	138
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	—	1.743	2.541	2.039	—	375	434	413

Source: Ministry of Agriculture.



# BARCELONA

## A CITY ON THE MOVE

Text: Tom Burns  
Photos: Félix Lorrio

*Barcelona, mes que mai. (-Barcelona, more than ever-) says the Catalan slogan for this beautiful Mediterranean city that is now busy with the preparations for the '92 Olympics. And although one could never have called Barcelona a sleepy place, it cannot be denied that it is now brimming over with more life and energy than ever. Visitors will be infected by the sense of excitement that pervades the entire atmosphere, inviting them to explore the city from the port to the Tibidabo.*



"BARCELONA, MÉS  
QUE MAI"

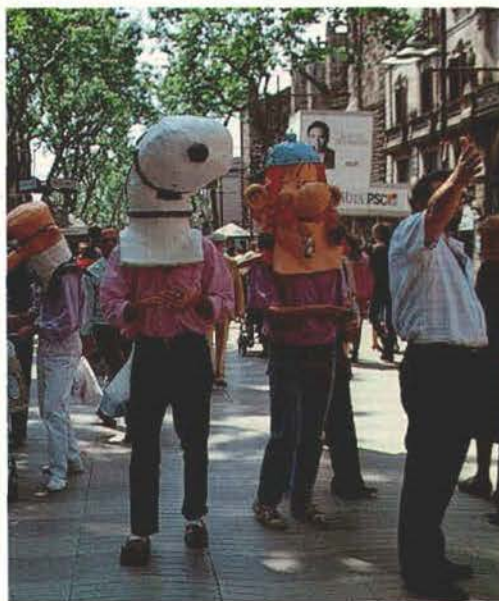
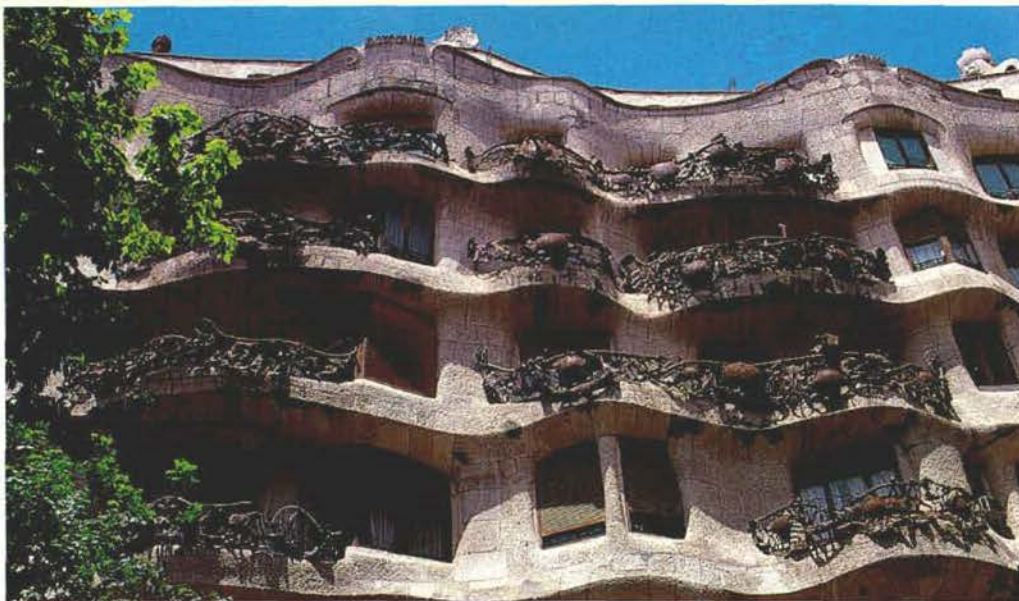
**Y**ou can tick off the city's qualifications: bustling mediterranean sea port, busy commercial centre, thriving arts capital. Barcelona is all of that and a lot more. It is a bit like London. With apologies to Dr. Johnson, if you tire of Barcelona, you are also tired of life. It is big and vibrant, confident and assertive, it offers a kaleidoscope of sensations and, like every major city, ensures something special for everyone. Now it wears 1992, the slogan Barcelona '92, like a badge of honour and it is obsessed with the Olympic Games that it will host that year. Barcelona is in the big league and it knows it.

It is typical of Barcelona's self esteem that the high peak rising behind the city should be called Tibidabo, from the Latin *-I will give to you*. According to the locals, this is because the Tempter took the Lord up to that same mountain when He was in the wilderness and it was from that high peak that the Tempter said I will give to you (Tibidabo) everything in sight should you prostrate yourself and adore me. The point of the legend is that Barcelona is everything that one could desire and that mortals cannot resist it.

From the Tibidabo, now an amusement park, you look down on the city and the Mediterranean. Barcelona has all the romance of a big sea port town and like all such cities it is welcoming and inventive, outward looking and receptive to new ideas. As a prosperous commercial capital it hums with activity. Finance, trade, industriousness are in Barcelona's blood stream. One has the impression that the people of Barcelona walk faster than elsewhere in Spain. In that sense there is nothing static about the place and this underlying perception colours one's view of the city.

This does not mean that Barcelona is all hustle. Far from it. For a start it has that special serenity that comes with a finely tuned and long standing appreciation for the arts. The people of Barcelona have always distinguished themselves by their patronage of culture and have traditionally channelled their wealth towards beautifying their city. Barcelona is a thriving arts centre that is rightly proud of its concert halls, exhibitions and galleries. But even this serenity is imbued with movement.

Fundamentally Barcelona is mobile because it is constantly embracing what was and what will be. It is at once historic, and makes a very good job of lovingly preserving past cultures, and it is futuristic and unfettered. The genius of Antonio Gaudi, Barcelona's artist *par excellence*, is emblematic of this all too difficult synthesis. In Gaudi you have the prime mover of Modernism who broke every rule in the book as he soared in his architecture to greater and greater flights of inspiration. And yet Gaudi's shapes and forms are root-



***Barcelona has all the romance of a big sea port town and like all such cities it is welcoming and inventive, outward looking and receptive to new ideas.***



ed in a naturalism that has been with us since the world began.

The past in Barcelona is the Romanesque world you find in the Museo de Arte de Cataluña and the future is in the Fundación Joan Miró. Both collections are conveniently in the Montjuich park, Barcelona's other peak and like the Tibidabo also accessible by cable car. The past is in the Gothic Quarter, the Barrio Gótico, an area that offers the highest cultural returns per square foot for it was the ancient Roman and medieval heart of the city. And the future, particularly now, is the surge of developments, planning and building that the Olympics have prompted.

### THE RAMBLAS

For movement, pure and simple, you should prepare yourself to join the crowds shuffling up and down Las Ramblas which

*Las Ramblas, with its flower stalls, pet shops and newspaper kiosks along the centre of the boulevard, must surely be one of the great avenues of the world.*

must surely be one of the great avenues of the world. With its flower stalls, pet shops and newspaper kiosks along the centre of the boulevard you have a good deal of what you need to stimulate the senses. As you walk down it, you have the medievalism of the Gothic Quarter on your left and the fleshpot Chinatown, *Barrio Chino*, district on your right. That All the World is a Stage is perfectly obvious.

Las Ramblas starts in the massive Plaza de Cataluña which is commercial, business Barcelona and it ends up on the quayside of the port city. It is reassuring to find that Christopher Columbus, atop his high column where the boulevard meets the harbour, is pointing not towards the New World he discovered but eastward, roughly in the direction of his home town of Genoa. Barcelona, as Columbus seems to say with his gesture, is emphatically Mediterranean.

Just by the Columbus monument stands a suitably nautical and fairly unique building complex that is called the Atranzas. Under the vast naves of this edifice, which dates back to the late 14th century, whole fleets were constructed and kitted out at a time when Catalan seamen were a dominant Mediterranean power. Now the building houses the Maritime museum and its collection of maps includes one drawn by Américo Vespucci.



**On Sundays mornings, in front of the Cathedral, people join hands and form circles to dance the sardana, one of Catalonia's most fascinating rituals.**

Halfway down the Ramblas, and on the Gothic Quarter side, you pass the Liceo opera house which is the temple of art-loving Barcelona. People here are serious and knowledgeable about their music and the passion for opera is deeply felt and sincere. The soprano Montserrat Caballé is Barcelona through and through as well as being an international star and the same can be said for the tenor José Carreras who is every bit as much a local.

For music and theatre of another kind you could cross to the other side of the Ramblas and, venturing into Chinatown, make your way to another very venerable institution, *El Molino* in Calle Vila 99. This is the sort of place that helps you believe that Vaudeville never died and that the Music Hall will live forever. It is *picante* as the Spaniards say meaning saucy but it is definitely not risqué. Barcelona does of course boast plenty of places in the latter category and, if interested, your best bet is to check in the *Guía del Ocio*.

*El Molino* is one side of Barcelona's humanity and the old Boquería covered market, laid out beneath a huge metal structure and with a canopy giving out on to the Ramblas, is in the same class. Mediterranean markets are wonderful places and the Boquería, so full of zest and variety and graced by an essential tastefulness, must be one of the best around.

Another, not dissimilar, spot where you



*Christopher Columbus, atop his high column where Las Ramblas meets the harbour, is pointing not towards the New World but in the direction of Genoa, his home town.*

can savour the Barcelona that always was is the *Bodega Bobemia* in the tiny Calle Lancaster alleyway. Here you can drink and sing tangos and play the piano to your hearts content surrounded by a lot of other nostalgics. Barcelona has an unrivalled ability to keep such places going.

#### THE GOTHIC QUARTER

Conventional old Barcelona involves crossing to the other side of the Ramblas and wandering about the Gothic Quarter. The most important -sight- here is the big 14th century cathedral. One of its pleasantest corners is its cloister, abundant with vegetation and birdlife. The cathedral, or rather its well proportioned square, is at its best on Sunday mornings when people join hands and form circles to dance the *sardana* which is one of Catalonia's most fascinating rituals.

The dance is unusual as folklore expressions go because it is not the private preserve of enthusiasts; it is genuinely, and therefore unassumingly, popular. People spontaneously link up and move to the stately rhythms of the band's woodwind instruments in a sort of simple minuet. The unity that the *sardana* represents, the orderliness and respect that it evokes is all very much a reflection, or an expression, of the Catalan psyche.

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Another one  
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Mont-Marc

The area behind the Cathedral leads to the Plaza San Jaime, which is the proper central square of the old medieval city. It is graced, as one would expect, by fine public buildings, in this case the Palace of the Generalitat, Catalonia's regional government, and the town hall. The square is the centre of political power in the city and the heart of the Gothic Quarter.

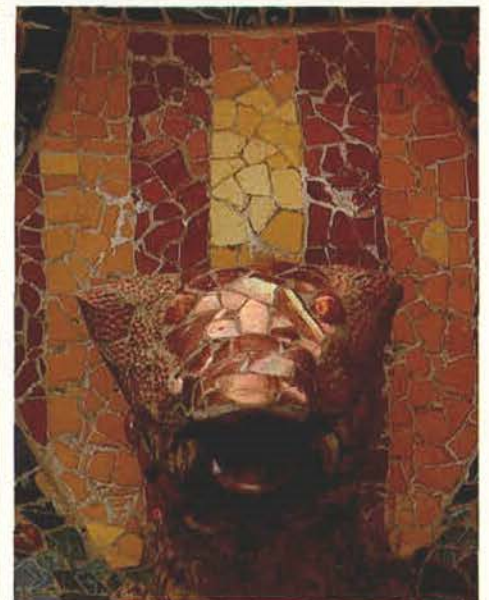
Between the Plaza and the Cathedral there are a number of good Gothic buildings with picturesque courtyards such as the Royal Palace of the Counts of Barcelona, which is also the home of the Federico Marés museum. The latter is a fascinating collection of religious carvings that were mostly accumulated during the Spanish Civil War period. They help to create a picture of how the now mostly austere Catalan churches once looked.

The Gothic Quarter, with its narrow streets and its intimate little squares, its public buildings and palaces and its souk-like, unhurried and yet busy atmosphere, is certainly one of Barcelona's most agreeable areas. For a meal in this district, just about every tourist itinerary points you in the direction of *Los Caracoles* (Calle Escudellers, 14) which is a place that does, in fact, deserve a visit if only to establish the fact that food can be fast and good. The restaurant is always busy and the sight of *paellas* and of plates of steaming mussels and of spit-roasted chickens (*pollastre a l'ast*) being dished out nineteen to the dozen makes for a fascinating study of time and motion.

The more discriminating gourmet in the Gothic Quarter usually ends up in the *Agut d'Avignon* (Calle Trinidad, 3) which combines Provençal cooking with a strong native Catalan input and touches of Basque cuisine. In restaurants like this you discover that the secret of great cooking is, in addition to simplicity, providing surprises in the mix of tastes and textures. The result is dishes such as duck with figs, goose with pears, sole with oranges, entrecôte accompanied by roquefort and brains with romesco sauce—a Catalan speciality which mixes garlic, tomatoes and green peppers.

The Ramblas borders the Gothic Quarter on its south side and the Vía Layetana performs the same function on the north side. On the other side of the Vía Layetana there are number of narrow lanes and old buildings, some of which are now being turned into Greenwich Village and Soho-type lofts by the Barcelona trendies and artists who form another slab of the city's humanity and human spectacle.

One of the haunts of this crowd is the *Senyor Parellada* (Calle Argentería, 37) which looks like an antiseptic, postmodern eatery but is in fact dedicated to resurrecting old Catalan recipes and is housed in what used to be a shelter for shipless seamen. Among the surprises here is, for example, the manner in which the



**Barcelona is fundamentally mobile because it is constantly embracing what was and what will be. It is at once historic and futuristic.**

# JEAN LEON



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*Jean Leon*

wily fishermen of Catalonia sold their catch but kept the offal and then elaborated amazing ways of serving up the innards that they were left with. It is a soul food of sorts.

Another haunt, which is on the same street at number 65, is the *Zeleste* nightclub where the city's newest rock and pop groups perform nightly. When the noise and the atmosphere become too much to bear, walk out and round the block to that most beautiful of Gothic churches, Santa María del Mar. Its three spacious naves are breathtaking for they are high and are supported by prism-like, slender columns and are well lit by a good rose window.

Besides Santa María the other -musts- in this area are the Museo Picasso, in Calle Montcada, and the former market of El Borne. The museum is in a very well appointed 14th century gothic palace in a street which has several more buildings of the same vein. Its chief interest is its collection of Picasso's very early, mostly student, work when he was in Spain. El Borne is Barcelona's answer to Les Halles and to Covent Garden; you can take your pick of terrazas and bars.

If you press down from El Borne to the quayside, you will be close to the *Siete Puertas* (Calle Isabel II, 14), a dependable and remarkably unfussy harbour restaurant that has been serving staple Catalan cuisine for 150 years. This is the place for the region's traditional seafood stews such as the *Suquet de peix* and the *Zarzuela* and for the concoctions that put rice and fish together such as the *Arròs Xat* and the *Arròs de peix*.

## THE ENSANCHE

When you have your fill of gothic and romanesque, of harbour civilisation, of loft-living trendies and of Ramblas humanity, it is time to go uptown to what is called the Ensanche, literally the Broadening. This is essentially prosperous 19th century Barcelona that could no longer fit within the old city and therefore had the engineer and urbanist Ildefonso Cerdà draw up a grid-like pattern to accommodate the blossoming bourgeoisie.

Prosperity last century in Barcelona coincided with the nationalist movement called the *Renaixença* that emphasised Catalan identity with a flowering of the arts and particularly of language and poetry, of architecture and design. You had wealth, rational urban plans, intense cultural awareness and, to add a special fizz to the cocktail, the fashion of Modernism that took Barcelona by storm before art nouveau

was really known anywhere else in Europe. The Ensanche has a very clear personality of its own.

The hero of the hour here is Gaudí. Architect, blacksmith and cabinetmaker, potter, sculptor and painter, he was an unclassifiable genius who clearly stamped his unique creativity on Barcelona in general and on the Ensanche in particular. His controversial masterpiece, the unfinished Sagrada Família cathedral, is the city's most identifiable landmark.

There is an extraordinary view from Sagrada Família's towers and if you go down into its crypt, you can examine all the plans and models that Gaudí left behind him

responsible for the Ametller house on Paseo de Gracia, 41.

The Ensanche is sophisticated Barcelona. For window shopping the best bet is either side of the Paseo de Gracia, between Calle Aragón and Calle Valencia, and the Rambla de Catalunya, not to be confused with the Ramblas, which runs parallel to Paseo de Gracia a few blocks away. An alternative is to opt for the shopping malls, *Bulevard Rosa*, Paseo de Gracia 55, and *Avenida*, Rambla de Catalunya 121, where boutiques sell everything from costume jewelry to bikinis.

The area is also home of the really serious restaurants with years of experience behind them such as *Reno* (Calle Tuset 27), and *Via Veneto* (Calle Ganduxer 10-12). A newer, excellent restaurant is *El Dorado Petit* (Calle Dolores Monserdá 51) which is a city version of a highly successful restaurant of the same name that made its reputation in the Costa Brava resort of San Feliú de Guixols. The Barcelona version is housed in a 19th century mansion with exquisite dining rooms and a very attractive garden for summer eating. Its combination of Catalan and nouvelle cuisines has proved enormously popular.

This is, in addition, the area of sophisticated nightlife such as at *Up and Down* (Calle Numancia 179) which has food and drinks -up- and rock -down-, at *Otto Zultz* (Calle Lincoln 13) which is selective about whom it lets in, and at *Regine's* disco which is at the *Princesa Sofia* hotel, Plaza Pio XII.

If you tire of jet-set posing and want something completely different and a bit in the *Bodega Bohemia* mould, you could try *La Paloma* (Calle Tigre 27) which has red drapes, gold plasterangels hanging from the ceiling and a period orchestra playing fox trots and cha-cha-chas until dawn. On Tuesday night boxing bouts are usually staged on the dance floor.

When you can take no more city nightlife, eating, itinerary tramping and shopping, head for the fresh air, the gardens and views of the Montjuich mountain. Culture bugs have their museums here, too; children have their amusement park; and both will enjoy the fountains which are both fun and a work of art. The Pueblo Español, up on the hill, is a reconstruction of houses, streets and plazas of Spain's diverse regions that was built for the 1929 International Exhibition.

The Olympic Stadium was built for the games that Barcelona had hoped to host in 1924 and is now being refurbished for the ones that it will stage in 1992. From here, you can look down on the Barcelona that is and forecast that it will be even better, more vital, always a premier division place.



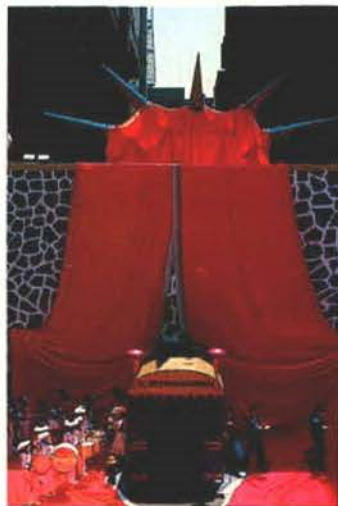
*Gaudí — architect, potter, sculptor, painter and blacksmith— was an unclassifiable genius who clearly stamped his unique creativity on Barcelona.*

when a tramcar killed him in 1926 after more than 30 years work on the project. These plans form the basis for the continuing work on the Sagrada Família. The ambitious idea is to have the cathedral pretty much completed for the 1992 Olympics.

There is infinite scope for Gaudí spotting. Try the fantastic Güell Park at the foot of the Tibidabo mountain which was his garden city project, the Palacio Güell on the Ramblas by the Opera House and the great houses of Batlló and Milá, numbers 43 and 92 respectively on Paseo de Gracia. For other modernist pacemakers you should examine the works of Domènech i Muntaner such as his Palacio de la Música concert hall, near the Cathedral, and those of Puig i Cadafalch, who was



**Montse Guillén** —our guide for a tour of Barcelona's tapa bars— was a key figure in making *-tapas-* more than just a foreign word in the USA. Her *-tapas-*restaurant, *El Internacional*, in New York City is a great success.



B A R C E L O N A

# Tapa-Tasting around Barcelona

Text: **Sonia Ortega**  
Photos: **Félix Llorio**

*In this issue we continue our tour of Spain's tapa bars. This time the setting is the beautiful coastal city of Barcelona, where the best of traditional Catalan cuisine has added its special accent to the world of tapas. Perhaps tapa bars are not quite as popular here as they are in Madrid, but we still find many to choose from. In Barcelona, just like in any other big city, there are people for everyting.*

# W

hat better guide for our tour of the city's *tapa* bars than Montse Guillén, that enterprising restaurateur who was a key figure in making *-tapas-* more than just a foreign word in the United States. A little background on her American adventure is in order. It all started out in 1981 when Montse left her Barcelona restaurant behind and took off for New York City. The fact that she did not speak a word of English did not stop her. In no time, she started working as a home caterer, preparing and serving meals at private affairs. And why not, she thought, serve a few *tapas* before dinner. One evening, one of the dinner guests happened to be the New York Times food critic, who, impressed by Montse's culinary talents, decided to write her up in his column. This was the first time her name appeared in the press, but it certainly was not the last as proven by a whole album full of clippings she has collected since then. Montse went on to bigger things; this innovative restaurateur wanted to do something different, something original that would set her restaurant apart from others serving Spanish cuisine. *Tapas* turned out to be the answer and thus her restaurant *El Internacional* was born. Success was quick in coming as was full house after full house. On more than one evening, 6,000 servings of *tapas* came out of the kitchen.

Montse has a new adventure in the works: she's planning to open up a similar restaurant in Tokyo. But for the moment, she is back in Barcelona, where we called on her to take us on a tour of the city's *tapa* bars.

Our tour begins in the upper part of the city in one of the more elegant neighborhoods. Our first stop is at *Casa Tejada* at #3 Tenor Viñas Street, right next to the Eduard Marquina Gardens. The owner, Ramón Alonso, has been in the business for twenty-four years. Here we find all kinds of *tapas* from popular Catalan specialties like *cap i pot* (veal salad) and *exqueixada de bacalao* (cod salad) to traditional ones served throughout Spain. *Casa Tejada* has always stood out for using only top quality ingredients, and there was a time when it also stood out for its relatively high prices. Today, however, their prices



*The Calle de la Mercé has probably the longest tapa tradition in the city. Here tapa bars, each with its own speciality, come one after another.*

are really no different from other *tapa* bars as proven by the crowds of -poor- university students who fill the place come evening time. And for those of you who like to follow the path of the stars, world-famous opera singer Plácido Domingo has been known to stop by *Casa Tejada* to do a little irresistible *tapa*-tasting. We stop in next door at the *Bar Turó* for some delicious *tapas* before moving on to #4 Maestro Nicolau Street where we find the bar *Jamón, Jamón* (-Ham, Ham- in English). The speciality of the house is — you guessed it — cured ham although other types of deli meats can also be enjoyed. *Tapa* bars specializing in cured ham have recently become very popular in Spain.

#### FROM RUSTIC TO MODERN

Our tour now brings us to the wide avenues of the section of Barcelona known as the *Ensanche*. The *Gran Bodega* at #193 Valencia Street has been around for almost fifty years and was originally a shop which sold only wine. The wine casks and bottles stacked up along the walls are a clue to the history of this place. A curious chandelier made out of *porrones* hangs from the ceiling. A *porrón* is a glass wine jar with a long spout traditionally used to serve wine. Wine is also drunk directly from the *porrón*; however, it takes a little practice and a lot of spilled wine down your chin before you finally get the technique down. Even more inviting than the decor is the seemingly endless selection of *tapas* lined up along the bar: seafood salad, potato salad, octopus in a garlic mayonnaise sauce, croquettes, cod fritters. The list goes on and on. Two *tapas* to be sure to try here are the famous anchovies from the seaport town of La Escala and omelettes made with spinach, mushrooms, zucchini (courgette), or eggplant (aubergine).

Another former wine tavern, located at #100 Rambla de Catalunya, invites us to savour its *tapas*. The speciality at the *Bode-*

*gueta*, founded in 1940, is Catalan sausage meats which are for the most part still made using traditional methods. The skill and care that go into the making can be tasted in every morsel. Our next stop is a total switch in atmosphere, from the rustic bodega-look to the absolute latest in modern. The recently opened *Gran Colmado* — *colmado* is the old word for grocery store — is a combination *tapa*-bar, restaurant, and grocery store. How's that for convenience... a little wine and some *tapas* to liven up your shopping or to warm you up to a sit-down dinner at the restaurant. The selection of *tapas* includes croquettes, omelettes, stuffed peppers, *escalibada* (a Catalan speciality similar to ratatouille), and so on. And of course, a side dish of *pa amb tomaquet* is a must. This is a thick slice of crunchy bread which has been rubbed with a juicy tomato and sprinkled with olive oil and a bit of salt. Top it with a slice of ham, anchovies, or sausage and your have got something that is -finger-lickin'- good. Our last stop in this part of the city is at the popular bar *Alt Heidelberg* at #5 Ronda Universitaria. As the name suggests, this is not the place to look for traditional Spanish *tapas*, but that certainly does not mean it is not worth a visit. On the contrary. Here you will find a wonderful selection of delicious German salads which are just the right thing to carry you over till mealtime.

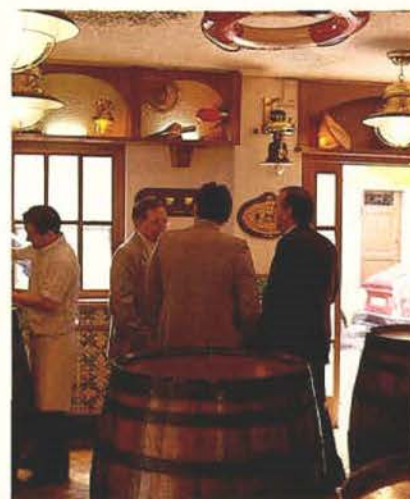
#### TAPAS GO TO MARKET

We now find ourselves in the heart of Barcelona on the Ramblas promenade. Two *tapa* bars in this part of the city are worth special mention. The first is *Pimochó*, which is located right in the midst of the city's bustling *La Boqueria* market, whose carefully tended stands offer a spectacle of color, shapes, smells, and sounds. Juanito, the bar's owner, buys all the food he needs from the stands nearby; you cannot ask for much fresher than that. This tiny bar opens up at six in the morning in



time to serve its hearty breakfast plates to market workers. Come aperitif time at mid-day, the *tapa* selection, though, is none the less: *cap i pot*, small fried fish, anchovy-avocado salad with pine kernels and raisins, creamed cod, *escalibada*, batter-fried artichokes, and a marvelous selection of other little dishes which Juanito dreams up depending on what is available that day.

The second *tapa* bar worth special men-





tion is *Amaya*, located at the end of the Ramblas near the statue of Columbus. This restaurant-bar combination specializes in Basque cuisine. On the *tapa* menu you will find appetizing dishes like small squid, tuna, stuffed peppers, small fillets of cod, and broad beans with onions. These last two *tapas* are especially delicious so be sure to ask for them. A glass of Basque white wine, *xtacoli*, makes the perfect accompaniment.

### THE OLD TAPA TERRITORY

Leaving the Ramblas behind, we come to Mercé Street off to the right. It runs parallel to Paseo de Colón between Duque de Medinacelli Plaza and the Post Office building. A quick glance around and you know you are in *tapa* territory. Here *tapa* bars, each with its own speciality, come one after another. As a matter of fact, this street probably has the longest *tapa* tradition. The locales are for the most part quite old, and some even look a bit worn around the edges. Nobody seems to notice, though, on Friday and Saturday nights when the streets come alive with people making the rounds of the *tapa* bars. At *La Jarra* (#9) we stop in for a *tapa* of Canary Island ham, which is thin slices of roasted leg of pork and potatoes dressed with herb-flavored olive oil. This *tapa*, quite popular in this part of town, was first introduced at *La Jarra* over thirty years ago. Peppers and artichokes prepared Rioja style are also an attractive item on the menu.

The *Bodega Las Campanas* (#21) has

been in business for about forty years. Once you see the sausage meats hanging from the ceiling and walls, it is not hard to guess their speciality. Two deli meats are tops at this bar: *chistorra* and *ceniza*. *Chistorra*, grilled and served on bread, is a thin red sausage from the Navarre region of Spain. *Ceniza*, which in this case comes from the provinces of Leon and Palencia, is a dried or smoked beef jerky whose strong flavor is relished by people in the know. A couple doors down at number 28 we come across the *Bodega La Plata* whose speciality is fried fish, and next door, the *El Corras* whose red sausage flambé is the highlight of the house.

### TAPAS BY THE SEA

We now come to the Barceloneta neighborhood located behind the wharf of the same name. There is no doubt about it: this is the place to get excellent seafood. As we enter the neighborhood, we find the bar *Can Ramonet* at #17 Maquinista Street. Amidst a rustic decor in which wine





## The Masachs family secret

When José Masachs decided to start making a methode champenoise wine of his own he could have had no idea what he was starting.

True, his family had been growing and supplying grapes to some of the largest producers of such wines for generations. Also true that his vineyard was right at the centre of the region in which it is generally agreed that the finest of these wines are grown.

Nevertheless, for nearly 40 years Señor Masachs was content to produce small quantities of a top quality cava wine which more than satisfied the discerning palates of his family, a few friends and a gradually widening circle of admirers as the fame of his wine spread throughout the region of Penedès.

Then, in 1977, José's grandsons, Josep and Juan took over the business and the decision

was taken to develop sales of a range of cava wines, first throughout Spain and then to other countries in Europe and overseas.

The Masachs family secret was out. And the following year, when Josep decided to produce a slightly lighter wine made from grapes grown, as he puts it, 'on the other side of the hill, where the summer sunshine is less fierce' Cava Louis de Vernier was born.



José Masachs

*Cava  
Louis de Vernier*

casks double as tables, you can enjoy fish, shellfish, or a typical Catalan dish like broad beans and *butifarra* (Catalan sausage). The *Rey de la Gamba*, which means -king of shrimp- in English, is located a short distance away at #46 Paseo Nacional. Despite its name, a lot more than shrimp can be found here; in fact, this bar is also called -the House of Mussels-. The truth of the matter is they offer all kinds of seafood. On weekends the place is packed with hungry people ready to put away loads of shrimp and cured ham alike (a combination which is practically a tradition here).

If you are looking for a pleasant setting to enjoy some *tapas*, stop in at the *El Salmonete* restaurant at #34 San Miguel Beach. Although this is not specifically a *tapa* bar, you can order as *tapas* dishes like grilled or garlic-flavored shrimp, small fried fish, and so on. The dining room is light and airy, and on sunny days the tables are put out until they almost touch the sands of San Miguel beach. The seafood is excellent, the service is good, and the owner Carme—who dons a freshly starched, pretty apron everyday—is very friendly. It is the kind of place you want to go back to. And, of course, the same can be said for Barcelona.

## Recipes

### *Aguacates a la Catalana (Pinocho)*

Catalan-Style Avocados  
Serves Four  
2 large avocados, sliced  
2 tablespoons pine kernels  
2 tablespoons raisins  
1 can anchovies  
walnut oil  
tarragon vinegar  
salt

Cut anchovies into small pieces and then combine with avocados, pine kernels, and raisins. Dress according to taste with vinegar, oil, and salt. Toss.

### *Exqueixada de Bacalao*

Raw Salt Cod and Tomato Salad  
Serves Two  
100 grams (4 ozs.) salt cod  
2 ripe tomatoes, grated  
2 tablespoons chopped shallots  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
freshly ground white pepper  
salt

Soak cod in water for 2 hours. Rinse and pat dry. Using your fingers, crumble cod up. Combine all ingredients together and salt to taste. Let stand for about 10 minutes before serving.

### *Langostinos Flambeados (El Salmonete)*

Prawns Flambe  
Serves Four  
8 large prawns, peeled  
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
2 whole chili peppers  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
rum  
salt and pepper

In a small frying pan, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sauté chili peppers and garlic until golden. Set aside. In a clay casserole, heat the remaining tablespoon of olive oil. Season prawns with salt and pepper and then sauté in oil. When they turn deep golden, douse with rum and ignite. Allow the alcohol to completely evaporate. Pour in the sautéed garlic and chili peppers with their oil. Serve hot.

### *Tosta de Escalibada (Pinocho)*

Roasted Pepper & Eggplant on Toast  
Serves Four  
1 eggplant (aubergine), sliced  
2 sweet red peppers  
2 cans anchovies  
black olives  
bread  
olive oil

Place eggplant and peppers in a baking dish. Sprinkle with olive oil and roast in oven until tender. Remove. Peel and cut peppers into strips. Toast 4 large, thick slices of bread. Top each slice with pepper, eggplant, a few anchovies, and sliced olives. Drizzle oil from anchovies over top. Serve.

### *Cap i pota (Casa Tejada)*

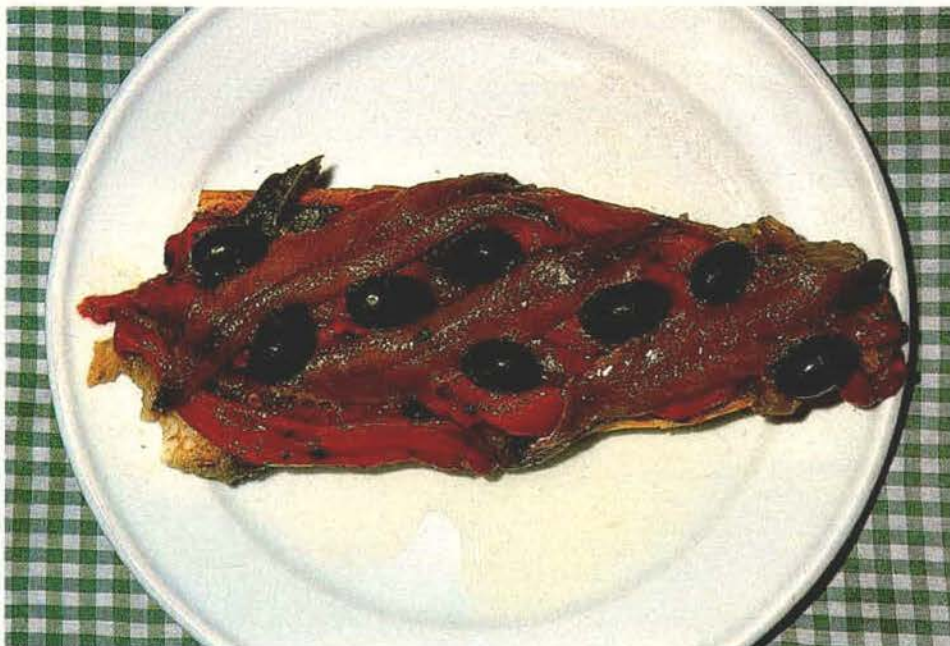
Veal Salad  
Serves Four  
1/2 kilogram calf's head or feet  
2 carrots  
4 green peppers  
1 onion  
3 pickles  
olive oil  
vinegar  
salt

In a pot, boil carrots and calf's head or feet until tender. (In U.S.A. the feet are sold already boiled). Bone and slice meat as thin as possible. Cut carrots into thin slices. Chop peppers, onions, and pickles. Mix all ingredients together with vinegar and oil. Salt to taste. Let stand several hours before serving.

### *Buñuelos de Bacalao (La Gran Bodega)*

Cod Fritters  
Serves Four  
4 heaping tablespoons flour  
2 tablespoons water  
1 tablespoon beer  
50 grams (2 ozs.) salt cod  
1 tablespoon chopped garlic and parsley  
olive oil  
salt

Put the salt cod to soak in water the previous night. Wash, drain, and break apart. Combine all ingredients (except oil) to make a dough. Using two teaspoons, drop small balls of dough into very hot oil and deep-fry. They will puff up as they cook. Serve while still warm.







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# PEPPERS

# YEAR-ROUND GOODNESS

Text: **María Jesús Gil  
de Antuñano**

Photos: **Rosi Ugarte,  
Carola Beamonte and ICEX**

More and more people are discovering that peppers are just as tasty as they are colorful. Whether served as a main dish or on the side, this versatile vegetable is the latest in fashionable eating. Stuffed peppers are tops on the menus at the finest restaurants and pepper-based sauces are the last word in superb tastes. This year-round vegetable isn't just delicious, though; it's also good for you since it's full of vitamins. No wonder peppers are so popular these days.

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*All peppers are at first green and then turn red or yellow as they mature. Their flavor ranges from sweet to pungent.*

**T**he cultivation of peppers in the New World can be traced back to even before the time of the Incan civilization. Columbus brought the plant to Spain, where its culinary use quickly caught on. In some regions it became a basic food for poor, rural families during certain seasons of the year. Although American natives called this vegetable -chili-, Spaniards named it -pimiento-, which in English is -pepper-. The cultivation and consumption of peppers quickly spread from Spain to other hot regions of the world.

There are so many varieties of peppers cultivated world-wide that it is impossible to come up with a single description that applies to all of them. The pepper is an herbaceous plant belonging to the nightshade family *Solanaceae*. It generally grows to a height of 40 to 60 cm (15-23 inches) and has single, white flowers. All peppers are at first green and then turn red or yellow (as in the case of the Mediterranean varieties) as they mature. Their flavor ranges from sweet to pungent; the hottest peppers grow in the hottest climates. Peppers are rich in vitamins A, B2, C, E, and P and are low in calories (18

calories per 100 grams) since the solid residue is only 8%. They contain about 4% carbohydrates, less than 1% protein, and no fats.

#### Storing

Since peppers are quite fleshy, they will keep for quite a few days in the vegetable compartment of the refrigerator with no special care. Wrapping them in paper, however, will preserve them even longer. Due to the loss of water, wrinkles form on the skin as peppers get old. It is still possible to eat them at this stage, but, of course, their nutritional value is limited since the older a vegetable is, the less vitamins it contains.

Peppers are good candidates for home canning. After they have been roasted and peeled, simply pack them (either whole or cut up) into a jar along with the juice they gave off when roasted. Top the jar with oil, seal, and sterilize. It is also easy to freeze peppers. In this case, remove stems and seeds after washing peppers. Then blanch them for 2 or 3 minutes depending on size. They can then be cut into strips, into halves, or simply left whole. Arrange them on a tray, seal, label,

and freeze. Frozen peppers will keep for about 12 months.

#### Common Varieties

There are many varieties of peppers, each with its characteristic color, shape, and flavor. Whether green, red, or yellow, large or small, fat or skinny, sweet or hot, each adds its own special zest and personality to the menu. Some of the most common varieties found in Spain are discussed below.

Green peppers usually range in size from 5-8 cm (2-4 inches) in diameter and 8-15 cm (3-6 inches) in length. There are two basic types: one is long and thin-walled and the other (bell pepper) is rectangular and thick-walled with four perfectly delimited sections or ribs. The first type is more appropriate for frying while the second is better suited to baking. Another green pepper common in Spain is the Padron pepper, named after the Galician town where they were originally grown. Their diminutive size calls to mind the land of the Lilliputians; only 4-5 cm (1.5-2 inches) long, they look like miniature green peppers. Fried Padron peppers,

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PICKLES & CONDIMENTS

which are cooked whole with stem and seeds, make a delicious appetizer or side dish for meat or fish. Eating Padron peppers can be a real adventure; although they are generally sweet, every so often — thanks to the whims of Mother Nature — you might bite into one which is as fiery as a chili pepper. This sense of -taking a gamble- adds to the enjoyment of eating Padron peppers and surely contributes to their popularity.

### Sweet Red Peppers

Sweet red peppers are green peppers which have reached full maturation. They can be long or rectangular and range from deep dark to bright red. Mediterranean varieties can be yellow. Their degree of mildness is largely determined by the weather; however, the larger ones are usually sweeter. Large, fleshy red peppers are used in baked dishes or for canning, in which case they are called *morrón* peppers or as we say in English -pimientos-. Pimientos, which come roasted, peeled, and preserved in oil or their own juice, are used as a condiment or garnish in a wide variety of dishes. A smaller-sized red pepper is the *piquillo* pepper, chiefly grown in the Spanish regions of Navarre and Rioja. *Piquillo* peppers are generally bought already roasted and peeled in jars. They are perfect for stuffing as proven by the fact that stuffed *piquillo* peppers are a favorite item on menus throughout Spain. These peppers are mildly spicy and taste their best when roasted over a wood fire.

### Dried Red Peppers

*Choricero* peppers are elongated, sweet red peppers which have been dried. It is a common sight to see them strung together and hanging on house fronts in towns throughout northern Spain. When it comes time to use them, they are soaked in water and the flesh is scraped off. They serve as a base for many sauces in Basque cuisine. *Nora* peppers are also dried sweet red peppers, but they are much rounder than *choricero* peppers. Commonly used in the province of Alicante in making *paellas* and other rice dishes, they are often fried with garlic and then mashed up with parsley. Paprika is a ripe red pepper which has been dried and ground up. A common ingredient in many traditional Spanish recipes, it might be sweet or hot depending on the type of red pepper it is made from. Hot chili peppers come in many varieties from the Spanish *guindilla* to the Mexican *chili* pepper. They are preserved dry by stringing them together and hanging them up or putting them out to dry in the sun. Both the flesh and seeds are hot so remember that one small piece of chili pepper goes a long way in spicing up a dish.

**Note:** This illustrated article was kindly provided by *Telva* magazine.

## PEPPERS: HOW TO... ?



### How to Roast Peppers on a Grill

Choose the largest and thickest peppers. Wash and dry them. Rub with oil and then sprinkle with salt. Place them on the grill over coals and turn every so often to cook on all sides. Cooking time is about 20 minutes.

### How to Roast Peppers in an Oven

Wash and dry the peppers. Rub with oil and sprinkle with salt. Arrange in a shallow pan and bake for about an hour at 180° C (350-375° F). Turn every so often using a tongs. Although roasting peppers in an oven takes longer than on a grill, they are less likely to burn.

### How to Roast Peppers in a Pressure Cooker

Wash and dry the peppers. Rub with oil and sprinkle with salt. Place in a pressure cooker and brown (do not add any extra oil). Cover and wait until steam begins to escape before positioning the pressure valve. As soon as the pressure cooker begins to whistle, turn off heat and let stand for 10 minutes.

### How to Roast Peppers in a Microwave Oven

Wash peppers, but do not dry them. Rub with oil. Since a microwave -cooks- rather than -roasts-, the peppers will have to be browned prior to cooking. Cooking time will be about 10 to 12 minutes depending on the thickness of the peppers. Turn at least 2 or 3 times to cook on all sides.

### How to Remove Skins Easily

Once peppers are roasted, arrange in a casserole or other dish and cover with heavy paper (newspaper will do) so that they -sweat- and their skin comes loose. When they are cool enough to handle, peel off skin.

### How to Fry Peppers

Thin-skinned green peppers are best for frying. First wash peppers. Smaller-sized peppers can be left whole while larger ones should be cut lengthwise into halves or quarters with seeds removed. Fry in about a centimeter of moderately hot olive oil. Cover and turn every so often to cook evenly. Salt when done. Always fry Padron peppers whole with stems and seeds.

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# Recipes

## Stuffed Sweet Red Peppers

Serves Six

- 6 medium, thick-skinned sweet red peppers
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1/2 small green pepper, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 50 grams cooked peas
- 50 grams ham, diced
- 250 grams uncooked rice
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 tablespoons stock
- salt and pepper

Roast peppers until they are almost done but still hard enough to not break when stuffed. Peel. In a frying pan, sauté onion and green pepper in olive oil till tender. Stir in paprika, making sure it doesn't burn. Add peas (cut green beans can be substituted) and ham. Then stir rice into sautéed mixture and coat well. Cover with water (double the volume of the rice) and cook for 15 minutes. Remove from heat. Stuff peppers with rice mixture and arrange close together in a baking dish. Drizzle stock, a bit of olive oil, and the juice which the peppers gave off when baked over the top. Cover with aluminium foil and bake for about 15 minutes. Serve with their juice.

## Sweet Red Pepper Soup

Serves Six

- 4 large sweet red peppers
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 decilitre olive oil
- 1 1/4 litre meat broth
- 1 decilitre light cream
- salt and pepper

Roast and peel peppers, saving the liquid they give off. Sauté onion in olive oil. Add peppers and stir for a minute. Pour in broth and let boil for 1 minute. Remove and puree in a blender. Then blend in cream and season to taste. Garnish each serving with puff-pastry fritters.

## La Mancha-Style Pepper Salad

Serves Six

- 1 kilogram large, fleshy sweet red peppers
- 1 large ripe tomato
- 1 large clove of garlic
- 1 decilitre virgen olive oil
- wine vinegar
- salt
- parsley

Roast peppers, garlic and tomato at same time. Set aside juice which they have given off. Peel peppers and cut into strips. Peel tomato. To make dressing, crush garlic, parsley, tomato, and a bit of kitchen salt using a mortar and pestle. Then add oil, juice from peppers, and a squirt of vinegar. Arrange pepper strips in a



*Sweet Red Pepper Soup*

serving dish and pour dressing over top. Sprinkle with chopped parsley. This salad will keep several days in the refrigerator. Another option is to not add vinegar and instead preserve the peppers in a jar by topping with oil and sterilizing. In this case, the vinegar is added just before serving.

## Fried Stuffed Piquillo Peppers

Serves Six

- 18 canned piquillo peppers
- 200 grams salt cod
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 50 grams butter
- 1/2 litre milk
- salt and pepper

Soak cod in water for 24 hours, changing water every 8 hours. Drain and then remove skin and bones. Break up into small chunks. Make a bechamel sauce using butter, flour, and boiling milk. Stir in cod and cook for a few more minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Pour out onto a plate to cool. Next, spoon bechamel into peppers. Roll each one in flour and then dip in egg. Fry in hot olive oil.



*La Mancha-Style Pepper Salad*

Serve as an appetizer or as a main dish with shoestring potatoes.

### Seafood-Stuffed Piquillo Peppers

Serves Six

18 canned piquillo peppers  
300 grams prawns, shrimp or lobster  
3 tablespoons flour  
50 grams butter  
1/2 litre milk

For sauce:

2 canned piquillo peppers  
1/4 litre light cream  
salt and pepper

Make a bechamel sauce with flour, butter, and boiling milk. Season to taste. Peel shellfish (reserve the heads to make a stock) and cut up into small pieces. Stir into the bechamel sauce and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and pour out onto a plate to cool. Fill peppers with bechamel and arrange in a baking dish. Make a



Pepper & Cheese Rings.

stock by boiling the heads for 20 minutes in a small amount of salted water with an onion, carrot, leek, and parsley. Puree in a blender and strain well. Then puree 2 piquillo peppers

along with the juice from the cans. Combine with stock and cream, blending well. Season to taste. Pour this sauce over stuffed peppers and bake for 20 minutes.

### Stuffed Green Peppers

Serves Six

6 medium-sized bell peppers  
1 cup white wine  
6 tablespoons stock

For stuffing:

300 grams minced veal and pork  
50 grams dry-cured ham, chopped  
1 onion, chopped  
1 clove of garlic, chopped  
1/2 decilitre oil  
2 slices bread, crusts removed  
1 egg, beaten

Wash peppers, rub with oil, and roast in oven for 10 minutes to facilitate peeling (they will still be hard). After peeling, cut off tops and remove seeds. Set tops aside for later use. To make stuffing, sauté onion and garlic in oil till tender. Add minced meat and ham, and brown. Remove from heat. Combine bread (which has been previously soaked in milk), egg, and sautéed meat



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mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon stuffing into peppers. Arrange close together in a baking dish and cover each pepper with one of the tops that were previously cut off. Pour white wine, stock, and a bit of oil over peppers. Also add any liquid they gave off when previously roasted. Cover with aluminum foil and bake in a medium oven for about 45 minutes. Serve with their juice.

### **Squid-Stuffed Green Peppers**

Serves Six

- 1 kilogram small green peppers
- 1 kilogram small squid
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- 1 tablespoon tomato sauce
- 1 cup red wine
- 1 shaving of nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- salt and pepper
- parsley

Dress squid and set aside ink sacks. Wash and pat dry. Cut into small rings. In a frying pan, heat a very small amount of oil and lightly fry squid. Remove and put into a casserole dish. In the same frying pan (add a little more oil if necessary), sauté garlic, onion, and one of the green peppers (cut up into small pieces) till tender. Meanwhile, using a mortar and pestle, crush together parsley and squid's ink. Dilute with red wine and pour into sautéed mixture. Stir in tomato sauce and season with salt, pepper, paprika, and nutmeg. Cook over low heat. Next, pour this sauce over squid and simmer until squid are tender. At this point, it is best to let the squid stand over night since their flavor will improve as they steep in the sauce. Next, fry or roast peppers to remove skins. Stuff with drained squid. Roll each one in flour, dip in egg, and fry in hot olive oil. Arrange in a casserole dish. Pour sauce over top and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and serve.



**Seafood-Stuffed Piquillo Peppers.**

### **Pepper & Cheese Rings**

- long, thin green and red peppers
- salted crackers

For red filling:

- 1 package cream cheese
- 100 grams butter
- 4 tablespoons catsup
- salt and pepper

For green filling:

- 150 grams Roquefort cheese
- 100 grams butter

Prepare each filling by blending together the ingredients listed above. Wash peppers and remove stems and seeds. Using a pastry tube, fill the green peppers with the green filling and the red peppers with the red filling. Refrigerate for a cou-

ple hours. Slice to form rings with cheese in the center. Place each one on a cracker and serve as an appetizer.

Note: Yellow peppers can be filled with the first filling omitting the catsup.

### **La Mancha-Style Stewed Vegetables**

Serves Six

- 1 kilogram green peppers
- 1 large sweet red pepper
- 1/4 kilogram onions, chopped
- 1 kilogram tomatoes
- 1 kilogram zucchini (courgettes) squash
- 1 decilitre olive oil

Remove stems and seeds, and cut peppers into small pie-

ces. Sauté onion in olive oil until golden. Add peppers, cover, and continue to cook. Meanwhile, blanch tomatoes to loosen skins. Peel and remove seeds. Add to sautéed mixture crushing down vegetables with a skimmer. Cook uncovered over low heat. Peel zucchini and cut into small pieces. Soak in salted water for 15 minutes to eliminate any bitterness. Drain well and add to other vegetables before the liquid from the tomatoes has completely evaporated. When the zucchini begins to change color, add salt and a teaspoon of sugar if tomatoes seem too acid. Cook over low heat until done. If desired, 3 or 4 beaten eggs can be added at this point and cooked until set. Serve with croutons or white rice.

## FROZEN SEAFOOD FROM SPAIN

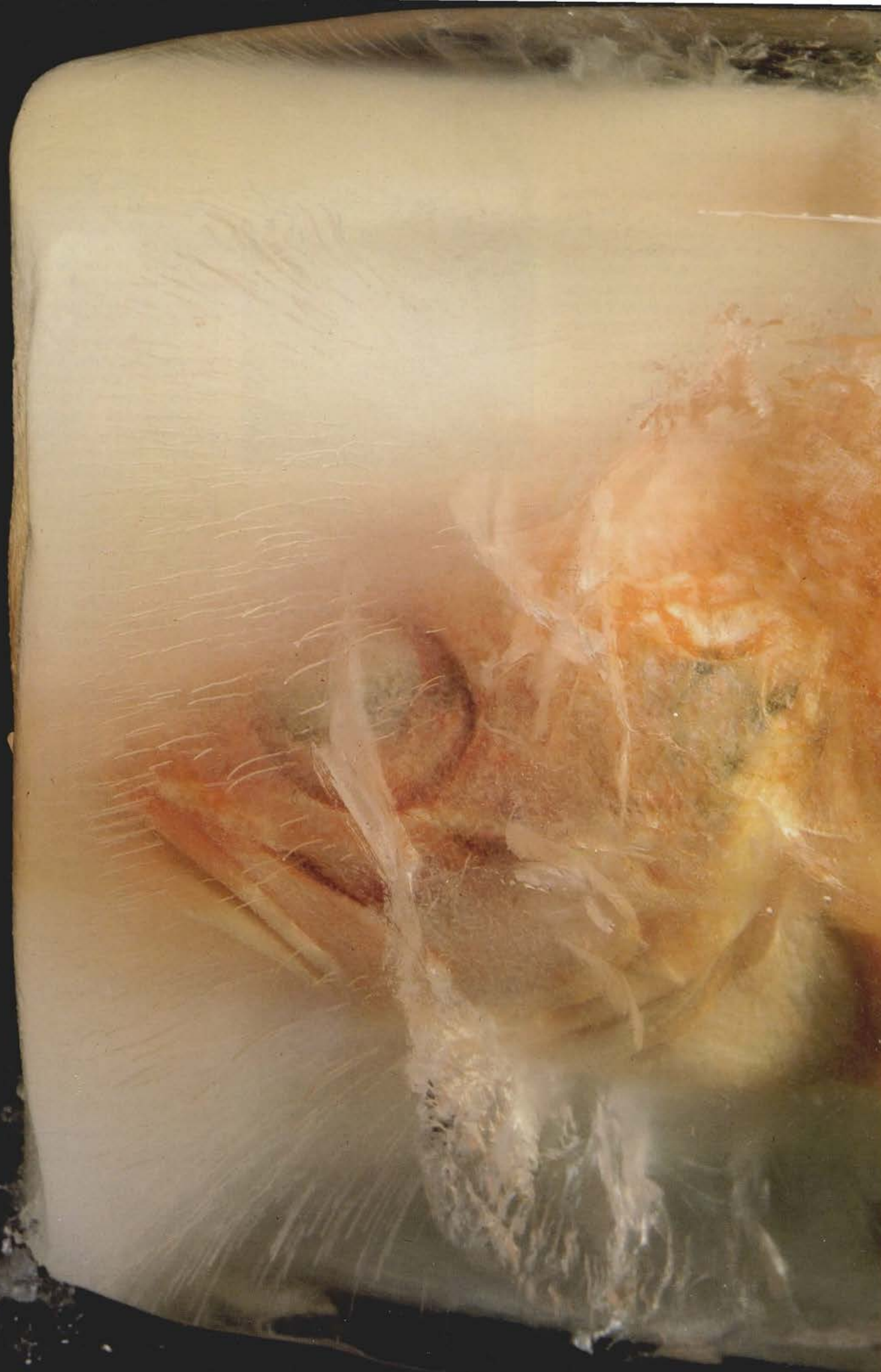
# FRESHNESS BELOW FREEZING POINT

Text: **José Carlos Capel**  
Photos: **Paz Ivison & FROM**  
Anna Löscher

*In 1870 scientist Charles Tellier carried out an experiment which would change the face of future commerce: several tons of frozen meat shipped from France to Argentina reached their destination in perfect condition. Since then tremendous advances in freezing techniques have been made and the commercialization of seafood in frozen form has been widely accepted. Today, one-third of the fish consumed in Europe is bought frozen, and great chefs no longer hesitate to use frozen fish as long as the raw material is top quality. Spain, with its privileged geographic location and its long fishing tradition, has become one of the world's major suppliers of frozen seafood.*

**N**orth, south, east and west, salty waters bathe the shores of Spain; it is not surprising then that Spaniards are traditionally a fish-eating people. The average annual seafood consumption in Spain is three times greater than the world average and twice as great as the European average. Seafood sold in frozen form is winning over new consumers everyday and is becoming especially attractive to seafood lovers. Its convenience and unquestionable quality proven by its succulent flesh are two factors which have contributed to the growing demand. The controversy of whether frozen fish can meet up to the standards of haute cuisine is now a thing of the past. No generalization will do: it is the particulars which make the difference

and in this case what counts is the quality of the raw material, the proper commercial processing, and the correct domestic handling prior to cooking. Frozen seafood which has been frozen fresh from the sea and has been stored at the right temperature all along the commercial chain proves to be highly versatile in the kitchen and quite delicious on the table. A wide selection capable of pleasing even the most extravagant tastes can be found on the Spanish market. Some of the tempting choices available are squid, octopus, trout, tuna, sardines, hake, cod, flounder, and different varieties of prawns (shrimp). Spain's large fishing fleet operates in fishing grounds around the world; its size guarantees a steady supply of frozen seafood free from the price and supply fluctuations characteristic of fresh seafood.



## THE FREEZING PROCESS

In the case of deep-sea fishing, freezing takes place out at sea on large ship-factories equipped with ultramodern facilities for freezing the catch brought in by a fleet of smaller vessels. In the case of shallow-water fishing, freezing takes place at coastal food-freezing plants. As the catch comes in, it is sorted according to size. Next, the fish are eviscerated, decapitated, and often scaled, boned, and cut into fillets depending on the type. Time is an essential factor in correct freezing: seafood must be frozen to below  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) as quickly possible before the cells begin to break-down. The ice crystals which form as a result of freezing will thus be very small, and the seafood will consequently better conserve its nutrients, texture, and flavor. Pieces which are especially large or thick are cut smaller to facilitate freezing, and only similar-sized pieces are frozen at the same time.

Different types of seafood are frozen using different methods. Fish, especially fillets and whole thin varieties, are generally frozen by contact freezing inside large



*One-third of the fish consumed in Europe is bought frozen, and great chefs no longer hesitate to use frozen fish as long as the raw material is top quality.*

freezers with refrigerated plates. Another method is air-blast freezing, which circulates cold air (as low as  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}/-58^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) at high speed through an insulated tunnel. The conveyor belt-version of air-blast freezing is used for small-sized products like shrimp, for example. Another method usually reserved for small pieces is nitrogen freezing; in this case, liquid nitrogen ( $-196^{\circ}\text{C}/-319^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) is sprayed over the food to be frozen. Freezing will preserve the appearance, taste, and nutritional value of fresh seafood as long as the product has been properly frozen and stored.

Strict legislation regulates sanitary conditions in coastal freezing plants and on freezing ships operating thousands of miles off the Spanish coast. Every stage of processing is carried out under strict hygienic controls. Sanitary measures for crustaceans and mollusks are so rigorous that the catch is kept alive in special tanks until it is ready to be frozen.

Frozen seafood can be divided into two main categories: that which does not undergo any processing except for freezing and that which comes prepared in some way such as breaded, shaped, mixed, sea-

# TRADITIONAL FOOD FROM C



soned, and so on. In this second group, we have items like cod fish sticks, batter-dipped squid, cooked octopus, and hake croquettes, pies, or morsels. Each comes ready to fry or to simply pop in the oven for a moment. These tasty prepared foods which meet product standards and guarantee a uniform quality are the wave of the future. The variety of prepared seafood is continually expanding given the increasing demand and the vast resources of the great storehouse of the sea.

#### THE COLD CHAIN

Once spoilage agents have been rendered inactive and enzyme activity reduced by freezing, it is extremely important that products remain completely frozen throughout the commercial chain. From the time an item is frozen to the moment it reaches the consumer, its temperature should never rise above  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). The last link in this chain is the consumer, who must store frozen foods at the correct temperature until they are ready to be used.



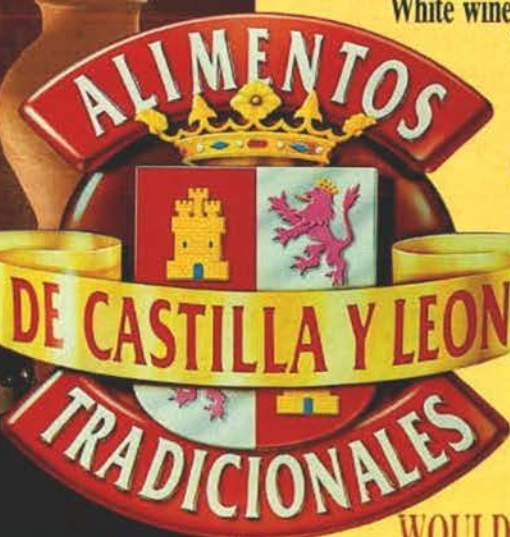
*Frozen seafood which has been frozen fresh from the sea and has been stored at the right temperature all along the commercial chain proves to be delicious on the table.*

Frozen seafood generally comes packaged in polyethylene plastic, which protects the product from drying out or losing its aromas. If both packaging and temperature control have been correct, then frozen seafood can be stored for as long as 18 to 24 months. The texture, however, will be more natural if the period of storage is shorter. Also, it is best to use a product as soon as possible whenever it has been subjected to an accidental rise in temperature, which, of course, reinitiates the activity of internal microorganisms. A good rule of thumb for successfully using frozen seafood is to take the same precautions that one would normally take with fresh seafood. And lastly, it goes without saying that the end result can only be as good as the original product and, therefore, quality is the name of the game. Freezing preserves the natural flavors of food, but it will not improve them.

#### THAWING

The procedure for thawing, an important step in the final outcome, varies according

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## TRADITIONAL TASTE THE USUAL TASTE

Sausages,  
Ham from Guijuelo,  
White wines from Rueda,  
Rosé wines from Cigales  
or Cebreros,  
Red wines from Ribera  
del Duero, or Toro,  
or Bierzo.

Sheep cheese  
Haricot beans from  
Barco de Avila or from  
León-La Bañeza  
and our biscuit...

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*Spain's large fishing fleet operates in fishing grounds around the world; its size guarantees a steady supply of frozen seafood.*

to the type of seafood, its size, and the method of cooking. In contrast to the quickness of the freezing process, thawing should take place slowly with no abrupt changes in temperature. The best place to defrost seafood is in the bottom section of the refrigerator. Depending on the size of the item, it may take anywhere from 3 to 6 hours to complete the process.

Shellfish like prawns or shrimp can often be cooked frozen if the recipe calls for boiled shellfish to be served alone or with salads, rice, or pasta. In this case, a small batch is dropped into a pot of boiling salted water, which ceases to boil upon contact with the frozen shellfish. Once the water begins to boil again, the shellfish are done and should be removed. The next batch is then dropped in. The cooked shellfish should be poured into a deep dish filled with ice and kitchen salt and then mixed well. The drop in temperature will reduce any residual heat which might overcook the shellfish. In addition, this sudden contact with cold helps to loosen the shells, which might otherwise stick to the flesh (a potential problem with frozen shellfish if not cooked correctly).



Squid and octopus require no special thawing measures. Freezing, by the way, tends to soften their compact, elastic flesh, thereby improving texture and juiciness. Whitefish like hake, cod, flounder, and so on — those species which have minimal fat content per milligram of flesh — require slow defrosting. A way to improve the juiciness of frozen fillets is to soak them in milk for about 15 minutes after they are defrosted. Once drained, breaded, and fried, they will prove to be a delicious meal. An important point to remember, though, is that frozen fish, no matter how it is cooked, requires even less cooking time than fresh fish.

Frozen seafood first appeared on the Spanish market in 1965. Since then the range of products has greatly increased in response to consumer demand. Product uniformity and high-grade quality explain their progressive penetration into highly demanding markets like the United States, France, and Italy. Exports of fish like trout, tunas, hake, cod, flounder, and sardines are on the rise while prawns and shrimp top the list of exported shellfish.

# Recipes

## FRESH IDEAS FOR FROZEN FISH

Text: Janet Mendel

The quality of frozen fish in Spain has improved enormously in just a few years and the variety available is quite incredible.

In selecting packaged frozen fish, make sure the wrapping isn't split or the package bent or damaged. Choose only those pieces which are solidly frozen. Avoid the top layer of packets in the deep freezers — any that are stacked above the -frost line- may have suffered some defrosting, which draws moisture out of the fish. Don't buy if there is any evidence that the fish has been refrozen — look for ice build-up or evidence of dripping on the outside of packages. Check for discoloration which indicates freezer-burn — a leaching out of precious juices either by improper wrapping, thawing and re-freezing, or over-long storage.

Make frozen fish the very last

thing you buy on your shopping rounds and get it straight home to the freezer. If you've far to go and the weather is warm, use insulated bags. If there is any thawing, plan to cook it immediately. Never re-freeze thawed seafood.

If you must defrost frozen fish before cooking, let it thaw very slowly in the refrigerator, still wrapped, allowing about eight hours or overnight. Never soak it in water and, once thawed, don't salt it, as this will only draw out moisture.

*Don't overcook frozen fish!* Use flavourful sauces and marinades to replace what the fish might have lost in taste. Sauces rich in butter, oil or cream and those with the tang of wine, lemon or vinegar seem to complement frozen fish very well.

Frozen fish can be cooked in all of the same ways which fresh, unfrozen fish can be cooked: poaching, steaming, baking, grilling and frying. And, with only a few minutes to the cooking time.

**In casserole.** This is essentially a braising operation and it is one of the most popular ways of cooking fish in Spain. The fish is first floured and browned, then liquid is added

to finish the cooking. It works equally well with frozen fish.

Here is one example, a classic Spanish recipe.

### *Merluza a la vasca* *Hake, Basque Style*

Serves four

- 4 hake steaks
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic
- flour
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup cooked peas
- 12 asparagus tips, cooked or tinned
- 2 hard-cooked eggs
- salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Rinse the unthawed fish slices in cold water to remove the ice glaze. Pat them dry, dredge them in flour. Heat the oil in an earthenware casserole (or four individual casseroles) and brown the fish steaks on both sides. Add the chopped garlic and sprinkle with one tablespoon of flour. Pour over the white wine. Don't stir, but shake the casserole, adding water, stock or liquid from peas and as-

paragus, drop by drop, until the sauce is the consistency of thick cream. Add the cooked peas and garnish with the asparagus tips and quartered eggs. Season with salt and pepper and lots of chopped parsley. The cooking time will be about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the steaks. Test the dish for doneness by probing with a fork: it's done when the outer edges flake easily and the centre is still a little translucent. Remember, the fish will continue to cook from the heat of the casserole.

**Poached.** This procedure adds flavour and moisture — if you're careful not to overcook the fish. The cooked fish can be sauced, using the poaching liquid as the basis of the sauce, or can be served cold with mayonnaise or incorporated into salads, moulds or casseroles.

With frozen fish, you might not have the head and trimmings for making a fumet or fish stock. The poaching liquid can be a court-bouillon, made by cooking 4 cups of water with 1/2 cup white wine, onion carrot and herbs for about 30 minutes. Milk or chicken broth are other good poaching liquids.



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### Poached Fillets in Butter Sauce

Serves four

- 750 grams fish fillets (hake, sole, -rosefish-), either individually frozen or in a package
- 2 tablespoons minced onion, scallions or shallots
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons dry vermouth or white wine
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 5 tablespoons butter, chilled

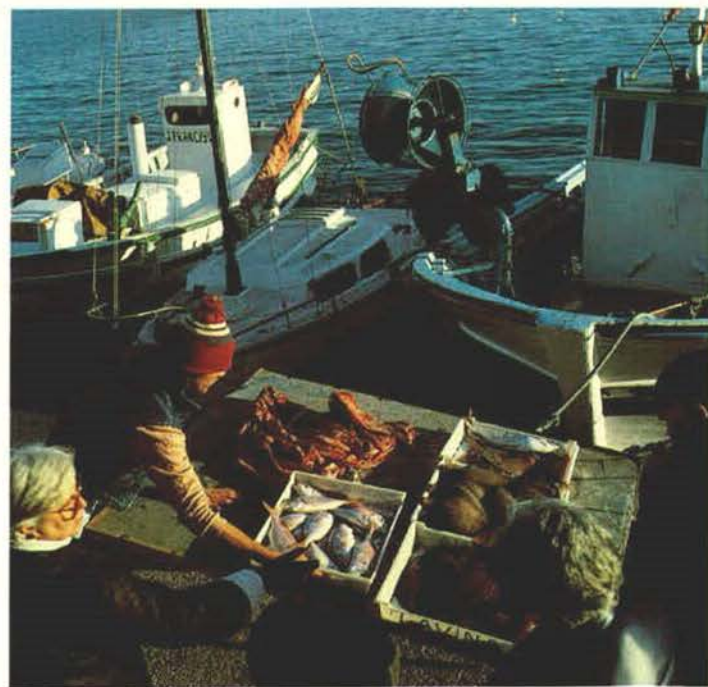
Rinse the unfrozen fish in cold water to remove the ice glaze and pat dry. In a pan just large enough to contain the fish in one layer (a frying pan works well) melt 1 tablespoon butter and in it sauté the minced onion, scallions or shallots. Add the chicken broth, vermouth or wine, and vinegar. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat so the liquid just simmers. Place the fish in the pan, cover tightly, and simmer until it is done. Test by probing with a fork: the fish should just barely flake. This will take only about four minutes for thin sole fillets; about eight minutes for small hake fillets, and 10 to 12 minutes for thicker fillets. If poaching a whole package of fish, separate the fillets in the pan when they have thawed sufficiently. They should poach in less than 15 minutes.

Remove the fish with a slotted spoon and keep it warm, covered. Pour the remaining liquid into a saucepan (only because it makes whisking easier). Cut the rest of the chilled butter into small pieces. Reduce the poaching liquid to about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup by boiling it. Then reduce heat and whisk in a piece of butter, swirling and lifting the pan off the heat so the butter just barely melts without completely liquefying. Immediately whisk in the next piece of butter, continuing to swirl the sauce until all the butter is incorporated and the sauce is the consistency of thick cream. Taste for salt (if you have reduced chicken stock, it probably will not need salt). Spoon the sauce onto serving plates, place the fillets on top and garnish with a spray of chives or parsley. Serve immediately.

**In foil papillote.** Wrapping fish in a foil packet keeps all the juices in. This is one of my favourite instant meals when done with individually frozen fillets and it makes a good diet entrée if the butter is omitted. Packaged fish can be prepared in the same manner, increasing the cooking time to about 25 minutes for a 450 gram package.

- 4 fillets of frozen fish, each weighing about 200 grams
- thyme salt and pepper
- 2 teaspoons mustard
- 4 tablespoons plain yoghurt
- 4 teaspoons butter
- 1 tablespoon capers

Cut four squares of foil. Fold each in half diagonally, forming a triangle. Unfold and place a fillet, which has been rinsed of ice and patted dry, alongside the fold line. Sprinkle each with a little thyme and salt and pepper. Spread each fillet with a little mustard, then top with a spoonful of yoghurt and a teaspoon of butter. Sprinkle with a few capers. Fold the packets and seal tightly by crimping the edges of the foil together. Either cook them in a medium-hot oven or steam packets on a rack in a covered pot over boiling water. They will take about 15 minutes, but remove one and test it in 10 minutes.



**Pan-fried.** Yes, you can fry frozen fish without defrosting. Rinse individually frozen fillets or slices in cold water and pat dry. Dust them with flour, dip in beaten egg, then in flour or breadcrumbs. Pan-fry in a frying pan in enough oil to cover the bottom of the pan, using a medium-low heat for fairly thick fillets and steaks and allowing about 20 minutes; medium-thick fillets need a medium heat and about 10 minutes; and very thin ones, a medium-high heat and only about five minutes on both sides. For deep-fat frying, defrost the fish first, as ice crystals can cause spattering and bubbling over.

**Grilling, broiling.** Thin steaks and fillets can be grilled or broiled without thawing. Rinse them and dry. Thick steaks should be partially defrosted so heat penetrates to the centre in the short time it takes surface to brown. Remove fish from the freezer about an hour before preparing.

### Broiled Swordfish

Swordfish is not a fatty fish and can be very dry if not basted while

cooking, or if allowed to overcook. This preparation provides automatic basting, flavouring and topping. Use it, too, with salmon and tuna steaks.

swordfish steaks, partially defrosted  
mayonnaise  
breadcrumbs

Preheat a broiler pan, without the rack, to very hot. Brush the surface with oil. Spread one side of the swordfish steaks with a thick layer of mayonnaise and cover the surface with breadcrumbs. Lay the steaks on the broiler pan and broil about four inches from the fire un-

salt and pepper  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup white wine

Oil an oven dish just big enough to hold the fish. Rinse the fish under cold water to remove ice, dry it and place in the dish. Drizzle a little oil over the top, add the wine and put in a medium hot oven. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a frying pan and sauté the chopped onions, garlic, chili pepper cut in pieces, and chopped red peppers. Season with salt and pepper. Spread this mixture on top of the fish and return to the oven until fish is done.

**Soups.** Frozen fish can be used in any of your favourite fish soup recipes, from bisque to bouillabaisse. If you need a good fish stock, use one package of frozen fish to simmer with wine and herbs and another package to add, after straining, to just cook until done. Scoop out the cooked fish to a platter and, using kitchen scissors, cut into chunks and return to the soup.

### Fish Chowder

Serves six

- 500 grams frozen fish
- 2 cups chicken broth or fish stock, if available
- 100 grams bacon or salt pork
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 potatoes, peeled and diced
- salt and pepper
- pinch of thyme
- 4 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon butter
- paprika

If you are using fish which still has skin and bones, such as the inexpensive hake slices, first poach them in the chicken broth just until the fish is barely cooked. Strain saving the broth. Remove all skin and bones from the fish and reserve the fish. If using fillets, they can be cooked right in the soup, then removed and cut up. Cut the bacon or salt pork into small dice. Put in a soup pot and fry until crisped, adding a little butter if necessary. Skim out the bacon and in the remaining fat, sauté the chopped onion until it is softened. Stir in the flour, then add the diced potatoes, two cups of chicken broth, salt and pepper and thyme. Stir until the soup comes to a boil, then reduce heat and cook until potatoes are tender. If frozen fillets are to be cooked in the broth, add them now and cook only until they are done, and remove. Cut them into chunks. In another pan heat the milk until hot, but not boiling. Add to the potatoes and broth and return the cooked pieces of fish to the soup with the bacon bits. Pour into a tureen and add the spoonful of butter to melt in it, and sprinkle with paprika.

This article by Janet Mendel is reproduced with the kind permission of *Lookout Magazine*.

### Mertuza a la bilbaina Hake, Bilbao Style

Serves four

- 1 package frozen hake
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 chili pepper (optional)
- 2 red peppers, roasted and skinned, or tinned



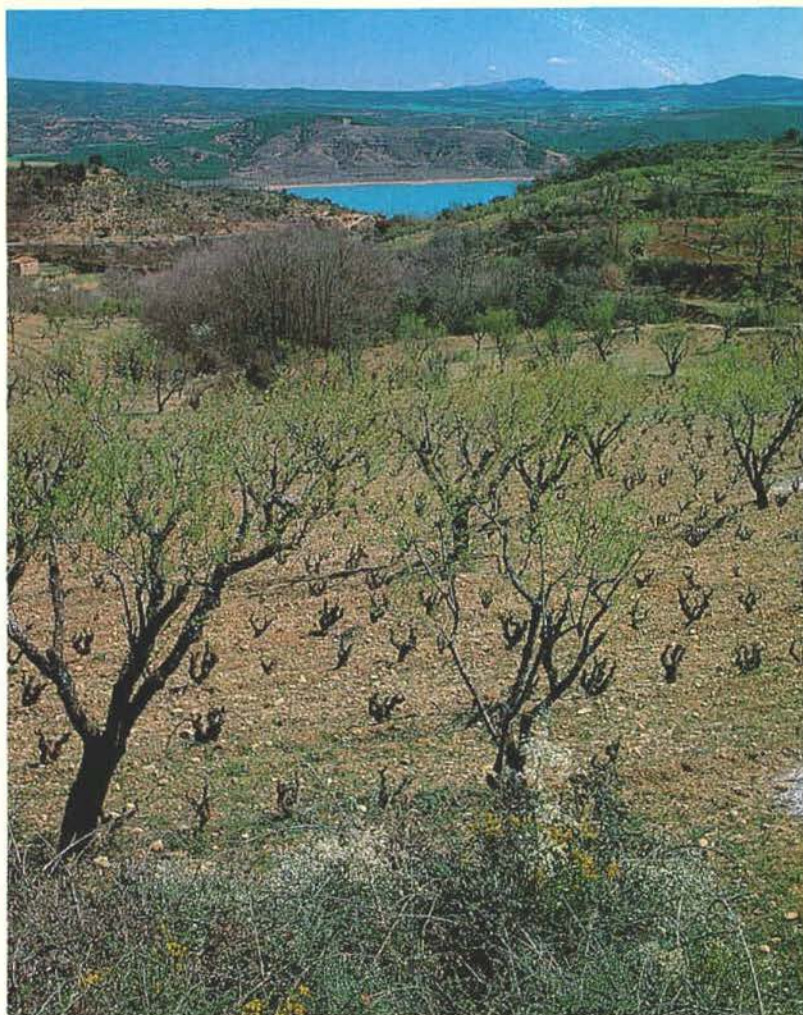
THE WINES OF SOMONTANO

# SMOOTH WINES FROM ROUGH COUNTRY

Text: Víctor Rodríguez  
Photos: Nelson Souto

*In the foothills of the towering Pyrenees lies the winegrowing area of Somontano, one of Spain's newest Denominations of Origin. Set in rugged Aragon, its young wines with a promising future are lower in alcohol than the traditional output of this region's uncompromisingly tough terrain.*





*There is documentary evidence that Somontano was a wine-producing area as far back as the twelfth century.*

**T**he mountains from which Somontano takes its name are the Central Pyrenees which extend southwards from France into the Aragonese province of Huesca where this winegrowing area lies. Somontano del Sobrarbe, to give it its full title, extends on either side of Barbastro on the road linking the towns of Huesca and Lérida. Forty or so villages hereabouts live by viticulture, the most productive of which are Salas Altas, Salas Bajas, Pozán de Vero, Castellazuelo, Barbastro, Alquézar, Berbegal and Santa María de Dulcis.

This upland D.O., which stretches from Graus in the north, near the snow-line, down to Angües in the south west, is set in a province whose varied geography ranges from the 3,000 m high Montes Malditos to the steppe-like areas of Los Monegros and Los Llanos de la Violada: it is all downhill from the dizzy heights of the snow-topped peaks down as far as the Ebro basin.

As in Valais in Switzerland, the vineyards of Somontano can count on an annual influx of water when the mountain snows thaw in spring. Despite the fact that the influence of the nearby areas of Rioja and Penedés has had its effect on the wines of this area over

*This area's speciality is the little-known Moristel grape. It provides the aromatic base for Somontano's wines.*

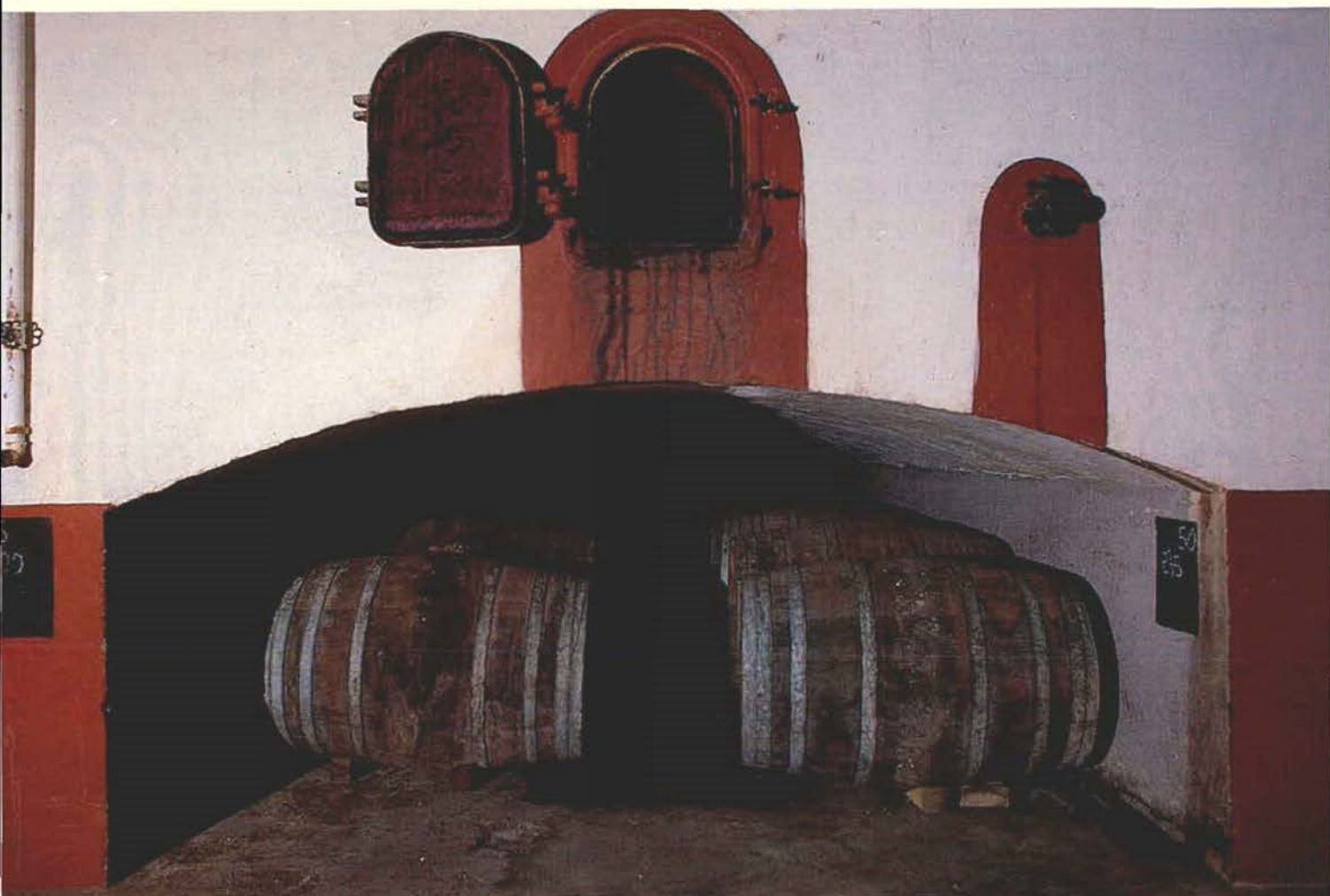
the last few decades, Huesca, and Aragon as a whole, still has a reputation as a fount of rough, sturdy wine. The wines of Somontano — there is documentary evidence that it was a wine-producing area as far back as the twelfth century — bear little resemblance to the produce of neighbouring Campo de Borja, Calatayud and Cariñena which can reach an alcoholic strength of up to 18°. The post-war depression in Spain forced many Somontano growers to give their vineyards over to cereals, and the fact that olives and almonds are traditionally grown here has also taken its encroaching toll. However, it seems that the urge to grow grapes is genetic in these

parts, for locals have shown the stubbornness for which the Aragonese are famous throughout Spain in sticking to their traditional *métier* despite all odds.

#### MOORS AND CHRISTIANS

For three hundred years Barbitania, subsequently to become known as the county of Sobrarbe, was border territory between the Christians and the invading Moors. During the back-and-force struggle between the troops of Charlemagne and the forces of Islam, Sobrarbe changed hands several times. In 820 a local count, García the Bad, entered into an alliance with the Emir of Huesca to expell the French troops. Two centuries later, a crusade was launched against the Moors then occupying Aragon, and Count Armengol III took the *plaza* of Barbastro in an historic battle. Nevertheless, the Moors had recaptured Barbastro within the year and it was not to be definitively taken by the Christians until the year 1100.

But even during their periods of military dominance, the Muslims' influence did not extend beyond the lowlands, though there



*The wines of Somontano bear little resemblance to the produce of neighbouring Campo de Borja and Cariñena.*

was undeniably a considerable incidence of Christians converting to Islam. Even today, visible evidence remains of the curious coexistence of these two cultures, as in Buil, once the -capital- of the county of Sobrarbe and today virtually inaccessible because of the lack of roads. Many mountain *pueblos* whose ruins can be seen today were abandoned when peace was finally achieved and their inhabitants resettled in the valley.

Far from being in constant conflict, Christians and Muslims were to learn a great deal from each other and the period of Moorish occupation was characterised by mutually beneficial interchange between the two cultures. The Town Hall in Barbastro is a case in point: it was designed by the Arab architect Farag de Gali, employed by King Ferdinand the Catholic.

Centuries after the Muslim invasion came another — the scourge of phylloxera, which decimated the vineyards of France before spreading south. Initially, this meant big business for Spain to which the French turned for supplies. Navarre, Aragón and Tarragona met demand with dark, sturdy wines, full of extract and alcohol, and the period saw the loss of many of Spain's traditional types of

*Although some growers have adopted the espalier technique in recent years, most vines are still low-grown in the traditional way.*

wine, among them Somontano's, in the rush to cash in on the boom.

Just a few kilometres from Barbastro, the French Lalanne family set up their *château*. Originally from Barsac, near Bordeaux, the Lalanne also bought other vineyards in Grao, near Valencia. They managed to survive the bulk wine boom and the family still runs its picturesque bodega in Barbastro today. It is a true family business, run by Mr. and Mrs. Lalanne and their three daughters. Family lore records that the current incumbents' great-grandparents arrived in the area in search of dark, extract-packed wine, but on discovering that vast quantities of white

grapes were grown locally, they opted for making champagne, a line that the Lalanne's still produce to this day, though only to the tune of some six to eight thousand bottles.

Barbastro, standing as it does on a Roman crossroads, is the commercial hub of this essentially agricultural area, and used to be the site of the big local cattle fairs. Mule-dealers from the Pyrenees sold their beasts here to farmers from all over Aragón in the days before mechanisation.

Somontano's D.O. dates back only as far as 1985 and, unusually, its motivating force has been a cooperative winery. This seems less extraordinary if one takes into account that the coop., the only one in the area, controls some 95 % of the D.O.'s entire production. There are four other private bodegas which come under the Regulatory Council, of which *Lalanne* is the only one of any weight.

#### VARIETIES AND WINES

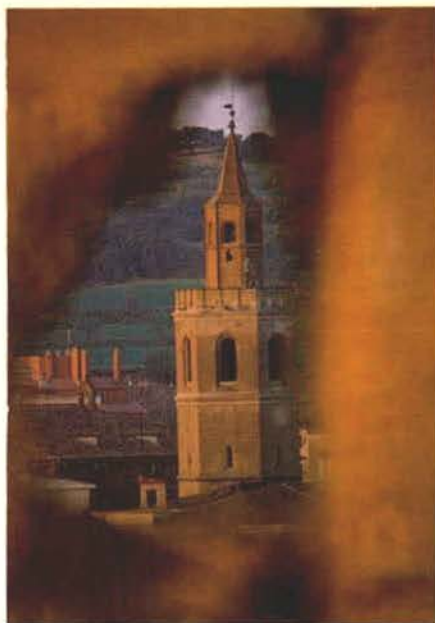
This area's speciality is the little-known Moristel grape. It provides the aromatic base for Somontano's wines and is not to be con-

fused with that other, very oxidative, Mediterranean grape, Monastrell. Moristel stands up well to medium-term ageing and in combination with other, better-known varieties, makes for very original wines. Ruby red with bronze, almost brick-red hues, they look a touch oxidised and could be taken at a glance for Merlot wines, with no hint of the purple so typical of Garnacha. They are at their best, in alcoholic terms, at 12%.

Interestingly enough, some of Rioja's classic varieties originated in Aragón and were transplanted from here. The outstanding example is red Garnacha and another is Mazuelo or Cariñena which, though it gave its name to part of Aragón, subsequently disappeared as a variety from its vineyards.

Another of Aragón's bequests to Rioja is Macabeo, or Viura, a white grape grown today along the banks of the Ebro from the Rioja Alta as far as the Mediterranean. Macabeo, harvested around September 15th, is the earliest grape in Somontano.

Along with other red varieties, in the minority now in Somontano, like Garnacha Parraleta, and whites like Alcañón and white Garnacha, Bordeaux's Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are also grown. French influence, like *Lalanne's* for example, can be thanked for having drawn the attention of Barbastro's growers to the excellent results possible with foreign varieties, and Cabernet, although grown on a very small scale, could be counted among Somontano's traditional grapes.



*Barbastro, standing as it does on a Roman crossroads, is the commercial hub of this essentially agricultural area.*

Although some growers have adopted the espalier technique in recent years, most vines are still low-grown in the traditional way. Replanting of areas already under vine has been given a boost by support from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund who are subsidising 190 hectares. Growers are being encouraged to replant with Tempranillo, Moristel and Macabeo.

#### TRADITIONAL WINES

Somontano's brand-new D.O. covers villages with centuries of winemaking behind them, many with their own traditional specialities. Barbastro and Monzón, for example, are known for their wood-aged reds and slightly maderised whites. Secastilla, a little village in northern Somontano, near Graus, used to be famous for its *Garnacha fina*, a wine which seemed to enjoy guaranteed quality regardless of vinification methods, now sadly on the point of extinction. The scarcity of cultivable land led to vines being planted alongside almonds, and in the course of a seven year drought, almond triumphed over grape in the quest for the little water available.

There are no commercial wineries in Secastilla, and it might seem at first that winemaking here is a feminine domain since the big local names in the field are Maruja, Pru-

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dencia and Florentina. Closer acquaintance reveals this to be the result of the quaint local custom of calling villagers by the names of their houses, generally women's names emblazoned over the front door. Maruja, actually called Joaquín and of unquestionable masculinity, has an underground bodega so full of fermenting vats that it is quite a struggle to move about down there. I was offered a taste of this *Tinto Garnacha* which turned out to be a young red of 14° or more. He makes another, sweet, version of Garnacha which the locals call *clarete*. My first impression of this interesting wine was that, at around 12°, it still had more fermenting to do. Maruja assured me that with time the sweetness subsides and the wine gains alcoholic strength. He also had a -special-, ageing in small casks. Two huge and ancient-looking fermenting vats dominate the bodega, dismissed by Joaquín as being relatively modern — no more fifty years old — because they are reinforced with iron, rather than wooden, hoops.

#### TODAY'S APPROACH

The winegrowers of Somontano, despite their ancient pedigree, have an eye to the future. The Cooperative, which produces two million litres a year, is gradually phasing out antiquated methods and varieties. Its top quality matured reds tend to use 60 % Tempranillo and 40 % Moristel. Its members are now planting Cabernet and within a few years hope for a harvest of 30-40 thousand kilos.

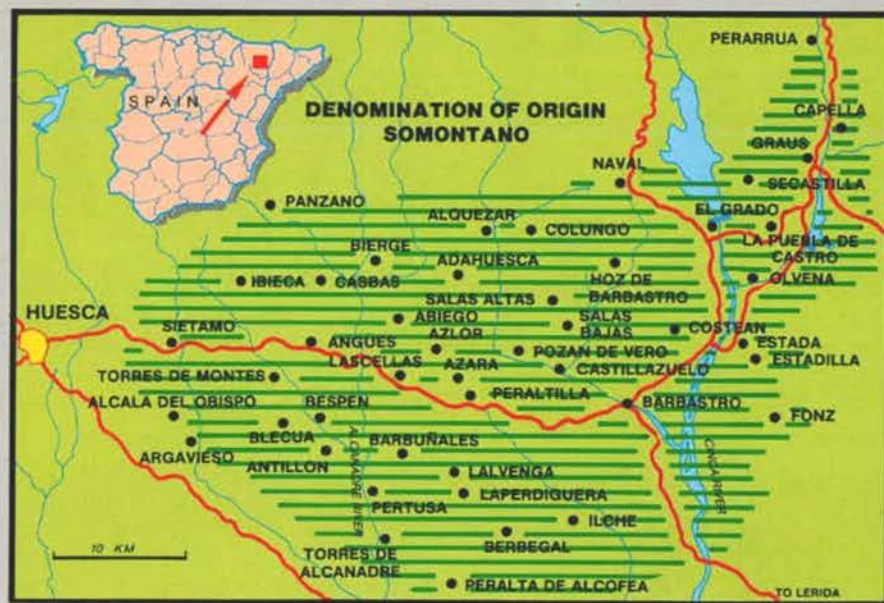
I tasted an '83 *reserva* in the bodega: it had spent eight months in the wood yet the aromas were of reduction rather than of the classic vanilla one would have expected. I was pleasantly surprised by the aromatic contribution of Moristel, less definite than Tempranillo's but distinctly elegant. I was reminded of good northern Italian wines, like certain Brunellos. In the mouth it was perhaps a little soft though well structured. I suspect that Moristel is a grape which tends to give way rather in the face of wood, not to mention other varieties like Tempranillo and, still more so, Cabernet.

The Cooperative's present policy is to produce a full range of wines — reds, whites and rosés in equal proportion — until the market demands otherwise. It has high hopes of its young, fruity wines, though I would put my money on their medium-matured reds.

The whites and rosés from the 1987 vintage were not of representative quality thanks to an inopportune hailstorm just at harvest-time. In general, though, Macabeo is a variety that ages well and the Cooperative is experimenting with ageing a white for a few months in wood, like a Californian Chardonnay.

At *Lalanne*, I tasted a 1980 red which turned out to be a lively wine with complex, pungent aromas, faintly suggestive of tar and salt, pleasant in the mouth and with a good, long finish.

## Background Notes



#### Winegrowing Area

Situated in the mid-east of the province of Huesca, the area has some 1,300 hectares under vine, spread among 40 local villages around Barbastro. Somontano is, on average, 500 metres above sea level and is traversed from north to south by the rivers Alcanadre, Vero and Cinca, all of which flow down from the Pyrenees and into the Ebro.

#### Climate

The climate is continental but moderate, with Atlantic temperatures which can vary in the course of the year between -5° C and 30° C, though without dramatic shifts. In the uplands of Somontano the prevailing winds are from the north-west. It is protected to the north by the natural barrier of the Pyrenees, and to the west by the mountains of the Sierra de Guara. Winter and spring tend to be damp and the summer dry. Average annual rainfall over the last few years has been around 544 mm.

#### Soil

The soil is mainly dark and limy and is deep and easily permeable though poor in organic material, its lime content accounting for some 10%. To the south and east, near the lowland steppes, the lime content is lower; the soil is more solid here and gives wine higher in alcohol. Along the rivers, the soil is alluvial.

#### Varieties

The predominant red varieties are Moristel, Garnacha and Tempranillo, with Cabernet Sauvignon being promoted as

a variety for replanting. Macabeo and Alcañón are the area's white varieties.

#### Wine Characteristics

The reds, from 11.5° to 13.5° of alcohol, are moderately full-bodied and equally moderate in tannin and, when young, in colour. They are suitable for short-term ageing in wood followed by a longer period in the bottle. The whites, between 10° and 12°, are yellow in colour with golden hues and are fresh and aromatic. The rosés, between 11° and 13.5°, are, like the reds, generally limpid and are higher in acidity than wines from the rest of Aragón. The statutory ageing time for reds is a minimum of two years.

#### When to Drink

The whites and rosés should be drunk young, preferably within the year of being put on the market. The matured reds which contain over 50 % of Tempranillo are the ones which age best, though none of these wines should be kept for too long. The beauty of an original variety like Moristel is at its best while the wine is still young.

#### How to Get There

Travelling from Madrid, head for Zaragoza and from there to Huesca. The road from Huesca to Lérida passes through Barbastro, the -capital- of Somontano. Travelling from Barcelona, make for Lérida and take the same road, though in the opposite direction, namely Lérida to Huesca, which will take you through Monzón and Barbastro.

# CLIMBING IN SPAIN

Text: **John Heath**  
Photos: **Ramón Muñoz**  
& **Roberto Llop**

**B**y dividing the country into compartments and isolating the parched meseta from the rich maritime periphery, these mountains helped forge in the Spanish people their independent spirit and the regionalism that offers such delightful variety to the gourmet and tourist. The mountains themselves offer, to the mountaineer, an endless variety of spectacular hikes. Many popular scenic areas are easily accessible for short family hikes. More serious hikers can spend days exploring more remote areas, or trek for weeks along the GR (Gran Recorrido) trails which follow the long *cordilleras* (chain of mountain ranges). Rock climbers have a greater selection of rock walls here than in any other country in Europe. Other activities that are popular in these sierras are skiing, pony-trekking, bicycling, parachute-jumping, descending into canyons, exploring caves, fishing, and hunting.

A great attraction of these mountains is the people who live in them. Many isolated mountain communities are like little living pockets of history which have preserved customs and a way of life that seem as old as the mountains themselves. Like all mountain people, these inhabitants know adversity and you can depend on them in a pinch. But be warned that a shepherd's directions may be unintelligible, and villagers are wary of strangers. So if you are entering a tiny village on a rainy evening and need

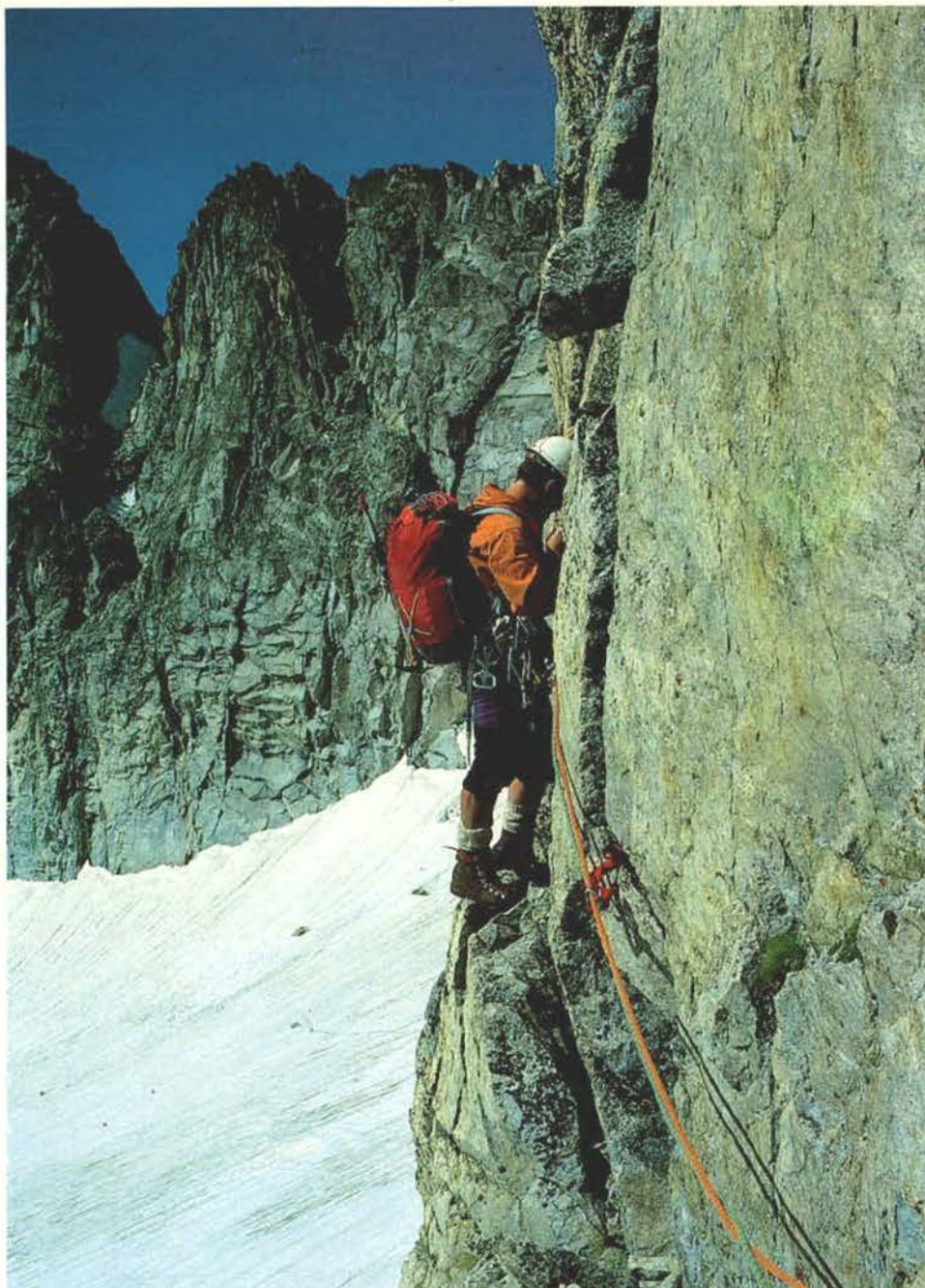
shelter, it is best to go to the bar and have a glass of wine before asking for a place to stay. You may end up in a shack filled with stacks of rank mountain cheese, but after an exhausting day and a few more glasses of wine it will seem luxurious.

In the south, the Sierra Nevada boasts the Iberian peninsula's highest peak (Mulhacén at 3,482 m - 11,423 feet) while the Sierra Morena claims the loveliest forests. Meanwhile, volcanoes shoot up from the Canary Islands for attention. But most judges, the people who hike and climb, agree that the

*A multitude of sierras, along with its large central meseta, make Spain the second highest country in Europe after Switzerland. These mountains are overlooked by foreigners, who have been attracted to the higher and more famous Alps and the giants of other continents. But within Spain, they are a popular escape from the summer heat for the general public and a serious pastime for the 55,000 licensed mountaineers.*







*In Spain, rock climbers have a greater selection of rock walls than in any other country in Europe.*

## THE NARANJO DE BULNES

In Asturias in northern Spain, there is an enormous limestone monolith called the Naranjo de Bulnes which rises straight up to 2,519 meters (8,262 feet) above sea level. The greatest alpinists at the turn of the century studied the walls, which are nearly vertical on all sides, and pronounced it impossible to climb. When a Bavarian geologist intended to try, a local aristocrat was horrified

by the idea of a foreign flag being the first to deflower the summit of this sacred symbol of Asturian fierceness which, moreover, was in his favorite hunting grounds. The marquis studied the walls, bought climbing rope in London, and contacted a local goatherder who had never seen climbing rope before, and in 1904 the two of them climbed the Naranjo de Bulnes.

most outstanding areas for mountaineering are the Central Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa in the north and the Guadarrama and Gredos ranges on the central meseta.

## THE PYRENEES

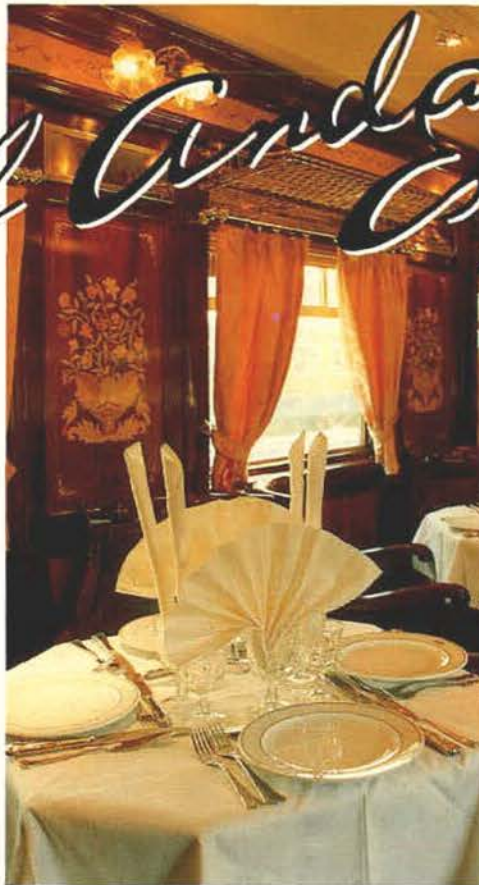
The Pyrenees, both for extent and height, are second only to the Alps among the mountains of Europe. They are a series of violently folded ridges that stretch 400 km (248 miles) from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, dividing Spain from the rest of Europe. Deep cirques and U-shaped valleys have been carved in these ridges by glaciers, of which remnants survive.

Ordesa National Park is one of the first national parks in Spain and one of its most beautiful natural areas. A deep glacial valley covered by a beech and poplar forest is the thundering conduit of streams which crash down the sheer sidewalls. Across the highlands to the north of the valley are sharp 3,000 m (9,842 feet) ridges which include the towering Monte Perdido (3,355 m - 11,000 feet). Under the northern crests of these ridges are small glaciers and permanent snowfields and extraordinary scaling surfaces. Two sharp little cirques cut into the north sidewall of the valley also have extensive limestone walls that are well-known rock-climbing areas. There is excellent hiking, from short walks within the valley to multiday hikes into the remote heights and other impressive valleys to the east.

The Maladeta massif is a gigantic soaring mass which rises 2,000 m (6,550 feet) from a forested valley and is crowned by the highest peak in the Pyrenees, Aneto (3,404 m - 11,165 feet). The massif also has the largest glacier, and its topography is covered with small lakes and other glacial features. The glacier and a breathtaking final ascent make Aneto a superb climb for experienced and equipped hikers. A curious geologic feature is that a stream which collects the meltwater from the glaciers disappears into a chasm. Instead of continuing down the valley to the Esera river and on through Spain to the Mediterranean, the water flows through subterranean conduits dissolved in limestone under a steep ridge and reappears 4 km later in a neighboring French valley as a tributary to the Garonne.

The National Park of Aigües Tortes and the San Mauricio Valley is a vast wet wonderland of extraordinary natural beauty. On a high plateau, serene lakes, fir trees, and soft grassy fields give a sense of tranquility, which contrasts with the violence of jagged snow-spotted peaks with waterfalls crashing down from them. The park is an endless paradise for hikers, with good granite rock-climbing areas to the south.

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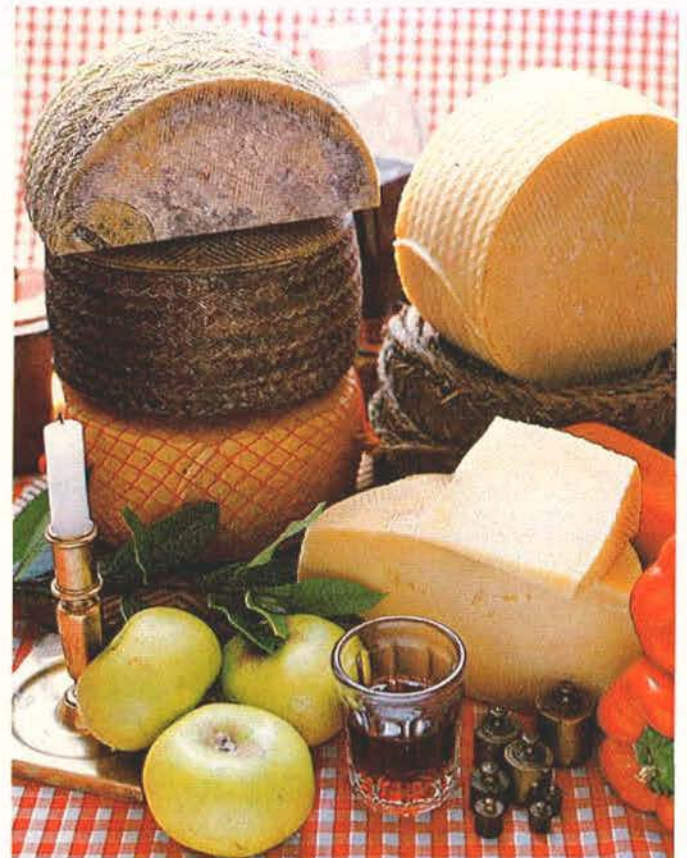
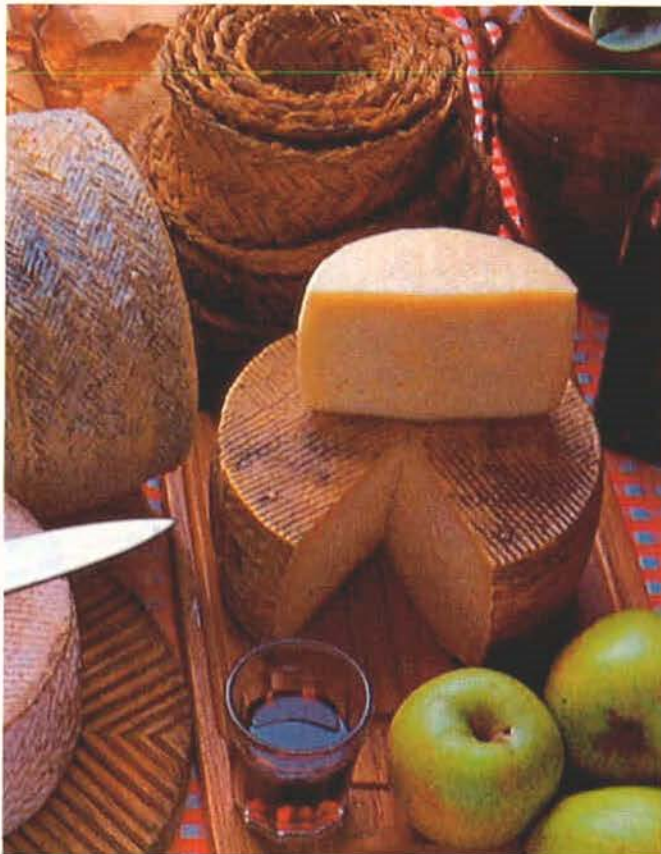
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# Vocabulary

**Alpinismo:** rock-climbing and using rock-climbing techniques to climb ice and snow.  
**Arista:** arete, a sharp-crested ridge.

**Arroyo:** stream, brook.

**Balzo:** pond, pool.

**Brecha:** gap.

**Brújula:** compass.

**Campamento:** camp, camping.

**Canal:** channel, ditch.

**Cañón:** canyon.

**Carst:** an area with exterior and interior features caused by the dissolution of limestone.

**Cascada:** waterfall.

**Cima:** summit.

**Circo:** cirque, glacially carved bowl with steep sides.

**Clavija:** piton, peg driven into

rock for climbing support.

**Collado:** pass.

**Cordillera:** mountain range.

**Crampones:** climbing irons.

**Cresta:** arete, a sharp-crested ridge.

**Cuello:** neck.

**Cueva:** cave.

**Desnivel:** slope.

**Dolina:** circular depression in limestone caused by dissolution or sinking (karstic feature).

**Embalse:** reservoir.

**Escaral/escalada (escalador):** scale or climb rock.

**Escuela de escalada:** rock-climbing areas where rock-climbing is taught, usually easier.

**Excursionismo (excursionista):** hiking.

**Faja:** strip, belt.

**Fuente:** spring.

**Garganta:** gorge.

**Hoyo:** sink-hole.

**Ladera:** slope.

**Macizo:** massif, mountain mass.

**Montañismo (montañero):** mountaineering, mountain climbing.

**Peña:** rock.

**Pico:** peak.

**Piolet:** piolet, ice axe.

**Pista:** trail.

**Puerto:** pass.

**Punta:** point.

**Refugio:** shelter.

**Sendero:** path.

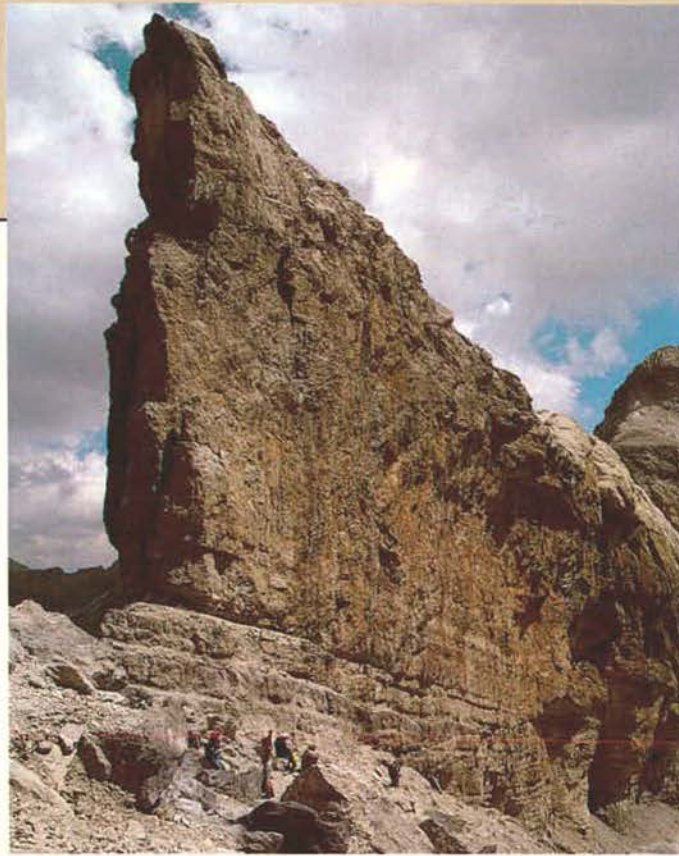
**Sierra:** mountain range.

**Sima:** chasm

**Tienda:** tent.

**Torre:** tower.

**Vega:** fertile plain or valley.



## THE PICOS DE EUROPA

The Picos de Europa (-Peaks of Europe-) are not the highest mountains in Spain. But their immense jagged show-capped towers rise through mists so abruptly (to heights over 2,400 m - 7,872 feet from valleys not far above sea level) that for many mountaineers they surpass the Pyrenees and the Alps in spectacular beauty. They are an enormous mass of limestone that has been erratically dissolved by water to form a wild landscape of twisted peaks, sheer cliffs, and crumbling sink-holes. Runoff streams have cut sharp gullies in the limestone, while rivers rushing northward have cut deep gorges which circle and divide the Picos into three massifs.

The Picos are massed at the junction of the provinces of Santander, Asturias and León, and form part of the Cordillera Cantábrica, which runs along the north coast of Spain. Tourism has only recently discovered them, and the area is particularly rich in charming mountain communities which celebrate colorful festivals with horse races and traditional dancing and music. In the summer, shepherds bring their flocks to graze in the high pastures as they have for thousands of years, and villagers produce the famous Cabrales cheese from ewes' milk.

*The Spanish mountains offer mountaineers an endless variety of spectacular hikes: from easily-accessible areas to more serious hikes.*

These mountains were once a stronghold for guerrillas holding off the Roman legions. And after the Moors from Africa defeated the Christian Visigothic kingdom and overran the peninsula, a band of Christians led by the Visigothic prince Pelayo gathered here. In 718, at Mount Covadonga in the Western Massif, they routed a force of Moors sent to subdue the rebels. Pelayo was elected King of Asturias and initiated the long Christian -Reconquest- of the peninsula from the Moors, which was

not completed until 1492. Thus, Asturias is considered the cradle of the Spanish monarchy (the heir to the throne is titled Prince of Asturias), and Covadonga a highly venerated shrine.

The -Divine Gorge- of the Cares river is the classic hike of the Picos. It is quite popular and truly spectacular. The gorge is cut by the Cares river directly through the Picos alongside some of its highest peaks and has sheer walls of rock thousands of meters high. The wide and well-groomed footpath is cut and occasionally tunneled into the side of these cliffs over precipitous drops.

The Central Massif is the most impressive of the three, and it can be explored from the lovely Liébana valley. Jeep taxis or the cable car at Fuente Dé will quickly get you into the central region, unless you want to hike in from

rustic Espinama. The karstic landscape of the barren interior is fascinating, and the incredible crags offer great views and endless rock-climbing possibilities. Torre Ceredo (2,648 m. - 8,685 feet) is the highest peak in the range, but the heart and soul and main attraction is the colossal Naranjo de Bulnes (2,519 m. - 8,262 feet). Its sheer 530 m. (1,739 feet) west face is the great rock-climber's challenge in Spain. Even if you are not a rock-climber, it is such an impressive sight that no excursion to the



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Picos would be complete without seeing it, if only from the distant Bar de Picos, where they bring beer up by mule and keep it cool in a sink.

The Western Massif makes up the beautiful and historical National Park of Covadonga, where Pelayo's band defeated the Moors. There are a pair of mountain lakes, and the impressive towers around Peña Santa (2,596 m. - 8,514 feet) offer still more scenic and scaling possibilities.

## SIERRA DE GREDOS

The Cordillera Central runs some 500 km (317 miles) across the central meseta, dividing the Duero basin to the north from the Tajo basin to the south. It reaches its greatest width and height in the Sierra de Gredos. The main part of this range is a fairly uniform ridge with a steep granite wall on the south side, sliced steeper in parts by raging streams. The north face is marked by glacial features such as cirques and lakes. Villages are few, and their inhabitants are very hospitable. Arenas de San Pedro, with a 14C castle and surrounded by pine forests, is the center for climbers of the south side of the ridge. To the north are several towns and Spain's first Parador, described in another article of this issue.

The most attractive and interesting area is the Gredos Cirque on the north face. It has a cold lake Laguna Grande and popular shelter, and is ringed by a steep concave wall capped by a continuous series of knife-edges, needles, and points where rock-climbers are continually exploring new routes. Included in this crest is Almanzor (2,592 m - 8,501 feet), the highest peak in the Cordillera Central, along with La Galana (2,568 m. - 8,423 feet) and three sharp little needles called the Tres Hermanos. From the lake you can hike over to a neighboring cirque with five ponds or up to the Almanzor crest, or slant up onto the main spine of the Sierra and continue along it through scrub where mountain goats roam.

Another interesting area, particularly for rock-climbers, is the Galayos, a series of sharp points of the main ridge that overlook the beginning of a steep ravine cut into the south face. Gredos is an excellent area for rock-climbing because of the quality of its granite, and the Galayos in particular because of their high faces. The most famous site here is the Torreón de los Galayos, a vertical needle 180 m (597 feet) high with a dozen challenging routes. Meanwhile, La Mira (2,343 m. - 7,685 feet) is an easy climb with a tremendous view overlooking the Galayos and the range.



*The Ordesa National Park (Pyrenees), the gorge of the Cares river (Picos de Europa) and the Añisclo Valley (Pyrenees), three classic hikes.*

# Background Notes

Freelance camping is permitted in some areas and loosely forbidden in others. The *refugios* (shelters) scattered among the mountains themselves vary from modern hostels with food to unmanned huts and are sometimes owned by private clubs.

Unless you are looking for winter conditions, the seasons for hiking in the mountains are:

Picos de Europa: June to December.

Pyrenees: July to November.

Sierra Nevada: June to November.

Sierra de Gredos: May to December.

Others: April to December.

The best months weather-wise are July and August in most ranges, September in the Picos de Europa. In August, the most popular areas tend to be overrun and huts and hostels packed.

An easy way to get involved is through an adventure travel agency. Then again, making your own arrangements can be an adventure in itself. Maps and information can be obtained through the official *Federación Española de Montañismo*

in Madrid or in the affiliated regional *Federaciones*. Through these offices you can contact one of the 900 mountaineering clubs in Spain which organize trips, libraries, courses, etc... Club members receive a *Federación* license, which provides insurance coverage, priority and reduced rates at shelters, and other benefits. Non-members can at least meet enthusiasts who are eager

to share information. Maps and guidebooks are sold in towns near hiking areas and in specialized bookstores in large cities. *Editorial Alpina* prints handy pocket guides that come with fold-out mountaineering maps. Detailed information in English is hard to find in Spain, but you do not have to know Spanish to be able to read a topographical map, or for that

matter to enjoy the thrill of mountaineering in Spain.

- *Federación Española de Montañismo*. Alberto Aguilera, 3 - 4.º. 28015 Madrid. Tel.: (91) 445 13 82 - 445 14 38.

## Some mountaineering clubs

- Club Alpino Español. Mayor, 6. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 233 07 01.
- Real Sociedad Española de Alpinismo Peñalara. Gran Vía, 27. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 222 87 43.
- Club Alpino Guadarrama, Gran Vía, 11. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 232 22 75.

## Adventure Travel Agencies

- *Trekking y Aventura*. Don Ramón de la Cruz, 93. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 401 22 08.
- *Años Luz*. Rodríguez San Pedro, 2, Of. 1,202. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 445 11 45.
- *Nouvelles Frontières*. Luisa Fernanda, 2. Madrid. Tel.: (91) 242 39 90.



## SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA

The Sierra de Guadarrama is similar to its neighbor, the Gredos, but it is more pine-covered and, because of its proximity to Madrid, more developed and accessible. Its rock, largely granite, is among the oldest in Europe. The mountains are quite high (many are over 2,000 m - 6,550 feet, and Peñalara is the highest at 2,430 m - 7,977 feet), yet they have round and heavy summits that are typical of lower mountains. The large amount of precipitation contrasts with the dryness of the surrounding meseta and makes the range an oasis for Madrileños. A maze of streams pour down from the upper heights to fill the province's many reservoirs. Madrileños love to visit them when they can and to gaze at their snow-capped peaks from high-rise office windows in Madrid when they cannot.

The range has a host of important historical sites. From the 15th century is the picturesque castle at Manzanares el Real and the magnificent alabaster altarpiece in the monastery of El Paular. Added since Madrid became capital are the Escorial, the Granja de San Ildefonso, and the Valle de los Caídos. More recently, the southeastern slopes have seen development of chalets which Madrileños use as weekend and summer retreats.

The main ridges of the Guadarrama can be explored quickly and painlessly. You can hike up the slopes that

*Many popular scenic areas are easily accessible for short family hikes and can be explored quickly and painlessly.*



overlook the Escorial to the rock where Felipe II sat supervising the construction of the monastery. The many passes are easily accessible by car, ski-lift, or even train and from them you can explore pine slopes and bald ridges. Serious rock-climbers will find excellent opportunities in two granite spurs further to the NE: La Cabrera and La Pedriza. La Pedriza is a chaotic eroded mass of granite with ravined cliff-faces and huge rocks with capricious rounded forms. Once the mysterious haunt of legends and bandits, it is now popular with weekenders who stroll on the trails gazing at the odd forms and picking mushrooms, and with rock-climbers who scale the hundreds of short routes on compact smooth granite requiring careful technique. El Yelmo is a mass of granite so large that the entire El Escorial monastery supposedly would fit inside of it.

Further east, only an hour's drive from Madrid, is the town of Patones. This town was so isolated through the centuries that, as the Romans and the Moors and Napoleon came and went, nobody learned of its existence. Meanwhile, Patones was ruled by its own king, and this King of Patones ruled until the town was discovered during the construction of a reservoir in the last century. More recently, rock-climbers discovered in Patones a spectacular wall of compact limestone and have dubbed the multitude of routes with such contemporary names as -Cosmic Haze-, -Ecstasy-, -Flash Gordon-, and -Highway to Hell-.



## Don Zoilo Sherry



Díez Merito, S. A.  
Jerez de la Frontera - Cádiz - SPAIN



# A Mountain Hideaway

Text: Meg Campbell  
Photos: A.T.E.

*Spain's first Parador is a cozy mountain retreat hidden in the slopes of Gredos. Several kilometers from the nearest town, this refuge offers peace and quiet to the harried Madrileños, and an opportunity to explore the region's beautiful wilderness.*

# W

e arrived at the Gredos Parador numb and sodden at 10:00 o'clock at night after a cold, wet day in the mountains. Although I honestly tried to take in such details as the decor and the view, I was far more interested in the creature comforts; namely, hot water and hot food. I was not disappointed. The water was steaming, the pressure powerful, and the bath towels enormous. Perfect. Later, a hearty meal for us hearty hikers,

and I was once again functioning. A quick look around before slipping into deep sleep provided me with my first details: a cozy, rustic hotel with shiny hardwood floors and an abundance of the local ceramic, and what looked to be a stunning view.

Morning came with cow bells, and a look out the window offered a spectacular view indeed: a dense pine grove followed by a river valley, with the majestic mountains in the background. Originally designed as a hunter's refuge, the Parador's greatest charm is its proximity to the forests, streams and wildlife of the Gredos Mountains, and it's the perfect starting and ending point for the numerous excursions available to visit the region's countless unspoiled crannies and examples of natural beauty.

## STILL A WILDERNESS

The mountains of Gredos form part of the Central Mountain System, which lies to the northwest of Madrid and separates the country's two principal mesetas, the Tajo and Duero river basins. From one of the





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Clarín



*The Parador is nestled in a pine grove on the sunny south side of a mountain slope. Built in 1926, this rustic mountain retreat enjoys the distinction of being the first Parador.*

areas's highest peaks, the Alto de Risquillo, you can see the entire Tormes Valley, all the way to Salamanca. The higher peaks are well beyond the tree line and are made up of granite and in some areas are covered by snow year-round. Down these peaks run countless mountain streams, forming lakes, waterfalls, and feeding the region's larger rivers.

Efforts to build on these areas have fortunately never been realized, so the region remains largely untouched, offering expansive stretches of real wilderness. Very near the Parador is the *Circo*, a natural formation of mountains arranged in the shape of an amphitheatre. The highest of these peaks is the Almanzor, which measures 2,650 meters (8,600 feet) and is the highest mountain in central Spain. The mountain is named for the warrior Almanzor of the 10th century. According to legends, he led invasions throughout northern Spain, reaching as far as Galicia, where he is said to have captured the bells of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. His name provoked terror and admiration in the Christian kings of Castilla, and the region's highest pinnacle was

later named as a tribute to the man who once dominated the land.

At the bottom of the *Circo* lies the *laguna*, a small lake fed by the melting snow and streams of the peaks, teeming with fat trout brought up over fifty years ago. On shore is a refuge, a sturdy three-story building providing shelter for hikers, campers, hunters, and fishermen in all seasons. It is surprisingly well equipped considering its remote location, with a kitchen and the ever-present Spanish bar. Supplies are brought up on horseback or by mule.

A hike up to the *Circo* is a pleasant jaunt well worth the trip. Two and a half hours will have you sipping a well-deserved drink up at the refuge bar and looking out on the massive natural construction with its many scattered cascades. The hike down is even easier, giving you time to keep an eye out for the resident fauna, primarily the *capra hispánica*, a long-horned mountain goat. These animals were once a coveted prize of the hunt, but the sport has fallen off in recent years due to the expense and the tight control of the game reserves by rangers.



### THE FIRST PARADOR

A little lower in the mountains is the Parador itself, nestled in a pine grove on the sunny south side of a mountain slope. Built in 1926, this rustic mountain retreat enjoys the distinction of being the first of the country's network of paradores. The site was chosen by King Alfonso XIII, who was a great fan of the hunt, and it was initially to be simply a refuge for hunters and fishermen. Under the guidance of the Tourism Commissioner the Marquis de

la Vega-Inclán, the refuge was built and inaugurated in 1928, with King Alfonso XIII himself presiding over the ceremony. Later, as similar hotels and retreats began to spring up, the Marquis developed the idea of a national network of state-run hotels, and thus decided that Gredos was to be considered the first of these establishments.

The original structure was modest, with few rooms and even fewer luxuries. Renovations in 1941 and 1975 produced the present hotel of 75 rooms, several salons, a lounge, library, and big, open dining room. Around the outside is a large stone porch looking out onto the mountains, and across the road is a tiny country chapel built with the original parador and often used for weddings.

The Parador operates at capacity on weekends, when the weary city flock to a mountain escape, and people from neighboring provinces make a day trip for lunch. The local cuisine is sumptuously prepared, and great favorites include the white beans of the region; *Sopa Cana*, the traditional bread and garlic soup made with milk rather than broth; *Zancarón*, a deep dish of veal and vegetables prepared with white wine; and *natillas*, a light egg custard. The hunters and fishermen still come as well to try their luck with the local targets: mountain goats, wild boar, jackrabbits, partridges, and river trout. In addition, companies have begun to take advantage of the quieter mid-week days and the parador's convention facilities, holding conferences where they know they have their employees' undivided attention.

A day at the Parador begins on a very positive note: breakfast. As one indoctrinated at a very young age as to the merits of a big, hot breakfast, I was delighted by the bountiful repast offered in the morning hours. All the staples of the continental breakfast are present so the European need not worry, but the Anglo-Saxon in Spain will surely appreciate the hot dishes of eggs, bacon, and *migas*, a regional dish of fried bread crumbs and bits of spicy sausage, as well as heaping bowls of cereals, fresh fruit, nuts, and raisins, and icy pitchers of juice. It's a buffet and I suggest several trips up, as the mountain air makes for a hearty appetite. Also you'll need your strength if you're to take advantage of the outdoor activities around the Parador. There's an event for every season, age, and physical form, all in a tranquil alpine setting.

#### EXCURSIONS

The winters of Gredos are cold, but not impossible. Although there are no real al-

pine ski facilities, many people go cross-country skiing, or hike up the slopes with their equipment and ski back down. Those very addicted to the outdoors will even go winter camping, but it might be more comfortable to just enjoy the winter scenery from the window by the Parador fire-side. Spring is lush, with hundreds of tiny streams and waterfalls pouring off from the thaw. The countryside is green and cool, and the wildlife has many new

members. It is the perfect time to go hiking in the mountains, walking along the rivers, or exploring the region on horseback. Several farms offer guided excursions on horseback that last anywhere from an hour to a week, and not just in spring, but year round. The horses are gentle, lunch and rain ponchos are included, and it is simply a fantastic way to see the terrain.

Summers are cool and comfortable, although an invigorating swim in the mountain streams is always a good idea. Several natural pools found in the rivers near the Parador are perfect spots for bathing and picnicking, and sleeping at night is never a problem.

Long walks in the crisp Fall are made complete by the vivid autumn colors of the leaves. Fall is also the best time to catch a glimpse of the mountain goats, as the herds are out in full force for mating. Nights are chilly, and the best defense is a hot drink and a good book.

If the call of the wild gets to be a bit too much, try the favorite Spanish pastime of visiting villages. Several mountain villages about ten minutes from the Parador are delightful examples of small town mountain life, with their thick-walled, slate-roofed houses. Visit the old church and even older hermitage of Barajas and the little central plaza of Hoyos del Espino. Hoyos del Espino seems to also be the local hotspot, with two discos and a pub.

About 40 km away from the Parador is Arenas de San Pedro, which boasts a 14th century castle, an 18th century palace and the Monastery of San Pedro de Alcántara. On the way to the village are the ruins of a Roman highway, a fine example of the ancient civilization and still largely intact. Very near the village is the even tinier village of Ramacastañas, with its fascinating grotto of Romperropas. The grotto, one of the best in Europe, is a collection of galleries, columns and cupolas, all carved by nature.

Longer trips include a visit to the province capital, Avila, a 12th century city surrounded by massive walls. The city has several examples of Romanesque and Gothic architecture and is the birthplace of Santa Teresa, the patron saint of the city. Or visit Barco de Avila, home of the 15th-century Castle of Valdecorneja and the famous white beans.

Regardless of where you go or what you do, the trip will not be a disappointment. The entire region of Gredos is full of spectacular sights and the Parador is the ideal place to return to after a long day of sightseeing, hiking, riding, or simply strolling.



*The site was chosen by King Alfonso XIII, who was a great fan of the hunt, and it was initially to be simply a refuge for hunters and fishermen.*



# Recipes

## *Judías del Barco de Avila* (White Bean Soup)

Serves 6

250 g. white beans from El Barco de Avila  
50 g. chopped pigs ears  
100 g. chopped pigs' chin  
100 g. spiced sausage, in chunks  
4 cloves of garlic, diced  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 tablespoon paprika  
4 tablespoons olive oil

Put the beans in a pot, cover with  $\frac{3}{4}$  liter of water and soak overnight. Add pork, sausage and garlic and begin cooking. Bring the soup to a boil, then simmer over low heat for 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, until the beans are soft. Sauté the onion in the oil until translucent, and add the papri-

ka. Add to the soup about ten minutes before serving.

## *Trucha con vino de Cebreros* (Trout in Cebreros Wine Sauce)

Serves 6

6 trout (about 200 g. each)  
1 cup flour  
200 g. butter

Sauce:

1 medium onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
2 bay leaves  
1 1 tablespoon flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  liter of Cebreros red wine  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  liter fish broth

Sauté the onion, garlic and bay leaves in the oil until the onion is translucent. Add the

flour, wine, and broth. Let the sauce simmer while preparing the fish. Clean the trout, then salt them lightly and dip them in the flour. Butter a shallow pan, place the fish on top, and put in a slow oven for about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and pour the sauce over fish. Return to the oven for another 6 minutes. Optional: Put a generous handful of cleaned closed clams on top of the sauce. They will open in the oven.

## *Yemas de Santa Teresa* (Candied Egg Yolks)

Serves 6 (3 yolks per person)

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of sugar  
18 egg yolks, separated and beaten

1 cup confectioner's sugar

Put water and sugar into a copper candy pot and cook over medium heat until peaks appear. Don't let the mixture get too stiff. Add the beaten yolks and cook for about 10 minutes, until the mixture is fairly stiff. Pour mixture onto a tray and spread evenly. Leave the tray to cool for about twelve hours. Add the confectioner's sugar and mix well. Dust hands with some powdered sugar, pinch off some of the mixture and roll it into a small ball (a little bigger than a large cherry). Dust the ball lightly with the powdered sugar and place in a small paper candy holder. Repeat until there are 18 balls. Arrange on a tray and serve.



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# CAVA

## CUISINE

Text: **Luis Bettonica**  
Photos: **Sobremesa & ICEX**

**Just the sight of a bottle of cava is enough to conjure up images of romantic evenings by candlelight, the clink of festive glasses... It is one of those wines with an indisputable touch of class so that even when used in cooking it invariably raises the tone.**

**A**s well as its other delights, I find cava particularly good for cooking, a fact that I put down to its high acidity and its peculiarity of not -caramelising- when heated so that its delicate bouquet is still discernible in the end product. This is true even when the bottle has been opened well beforehand, so that left-over cava can be used very successfully without any loss of finesse.

Not everyone agrees. Some feel that a cava's charm lies essentially in its sparkle, and that since that is inevitably lost in the cooking process, you might as well use any old white wine. Famous French gastronomes Gault and Millau maintain that the only function of a champagne sauce is to make a restaurant sound chic and push up prices. I maintain that there's more to it, and plenty of others seem to have felt the same for quite some time...

Champagne has been a feature of elegant cuisine from very early in its history. The chefs who cooked for the royal and aristocratic households of eighteenth century France made use of a lot of wine in their dishes, often specifying that it should be champagne. In *Les Soupers de la Cour*, the collection of recipes from the French royal kitchens published in 1755, champagne features as an ingredient in 67 of the 352 meat dishes, 75 of the 266 fish dishes and 25

of the 84 sauce recipes. And there was no question of using inferior champagne: the high priests of haute cuisine were tremendous perfectionists and insisted on nothing but the best. Their successors in the following century seem to have followed in their footsteps. The great Carême, author of several classics of cuisine and chef to the great, including Talleyrand and Tsar Alexander I of Russia, is described by a contemporary historian as using -champagne by the bottleful- as he cooked. As haute cuisine emerged as a formal genre within France and beyond, champagne became one of its classic ingredients and so it remains to this day.

Cava does not have that sort of history behind it, and would have been used in cooking in Spain only as a substitute for the champagne called for by some courtly recipes adopted from our French neighbours. But there is a new wave of master chefs in Spain today whose approach recognises the best of what is Spanish, and some of their most imaginative dishes are

cava based. In my book *Los Cavas de Cataluña* (The Cavas of Catalonia), I give examples of cava cuisine recipes created by ten of the top chefs in Spain which illustrate beautifully the versatility of cava in the kitchen. Juan Mari Arzak of *Arzak* in San Sebastián (see SPAIN GOURMETOUR





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# HOW TO TREAT A CAVA

Far too many people make the mistake of over-chilling cava and other white wines. To enjoy it at its best, it should be served at between 6° C (43° F) and 8-9° C (46.5°-48° F). If it gets any colder, cava loses the finer qualities of its flavour and bouquet and you also run the risk of losing a fair amount of the wine itself since the cork and contents of the bottle can shoot out violently if subjected to lower temperatures. You can chill it in various ways (though *not* in the freezer). The traditional way is to place the bottle in an ice-bucket with ice-cubes and

water for twenty minutes to half an hour before opening, though an hour or so in the refrigerator, set at about 5° C (41° F), will do just as well.

Purists claim that the cork should be removed as slowly as possible so that the carbon dioxide escapes slowly rather than explosively and finds its way into the glass

along with the liquid. This seems to me to be putting rather too fine a point on it, and I for one would be loath to sacrifice the festive popping of the cork for the sake of a little extra carbon dioxide.

What glasses to use? All wine glasses should be of clear, smooth glass and, in the case of cava, tulip-shaped

so as to allow the dispersion of gas while concentrating the aroma. The tall cylindrical glasses known as flutes (believed to have been invented, incidentally, by the legendary Dom Pérignon who perfected the *méthode champenoise* in the late 17th century) have the disadvantage of restraining the bouquet since they are so narrow and also of generating too much foam. However, they are better than ordinary wine glasses which expose too much surface area of wine to the air so that the bouquet is dispersed and the aroma is lost almost immediately.



number 8) came up with a ragout of fresh truffles and wild mushrooms in cava. His friend and colleague Pedro Subijana suggested a cava sauce to accompany lightly roasted duck. The contribution from Madrid's *Zalacain*, unchallenged as the best restaurant in Spain (see SPAIN GOURMETOUR n.° 9) was a typically exquisite recipe for quail with courgettes and cava. Luis Cruañas of the *Eldorado Petit* in Barcelona, another top-notch, suggested a delicate cream of carrot soup with cava, and from Paul Schiff of Marbella's famous *La Hacienda* came a recipe for red mullet in cava with rosemary. These recipes seem to me to be examples of genuinely imaginative and stylish cooking. I often choose dishes featuring cava when I eat out, particularly in Catalonia, and I notice that the range is getting bigger and better all the time.

Cava is just as versatile in the glass and is one of the few wines which can take you right through a meal from aperitif to dessert and even beyond—I confess that one of my personal weaknesses is a glass of cava with the post-coffee cigar.

I make my favourite cava aperitif—a long drink called a *Bellini*—to a recipe from Harry's Bar in Venice, haunt of Ernest Hemingway. The original calls for Italian *spumante*, but I use a good brut cava. In a flute glass, I pour a little fresh peach or mandarin juice (orange will do as a second

*There is a new wave of master chefs in Spain today whose approach recognises the best of what is Spanish, and some of their most imaginative dishes are cava based.*



best) and top it up with the chilled, but not freezing, cava, adding a touch of sugar if the fruit juice is too sharp.

Cava goes beautifully with both the delicate flavours of oysters, caviar and the equally delicious sea-urchins that you may be offered as aperitif *bonnes bouches* in some parts of Spain, and more everyday savouries—salt seems to highlight its flavour on the palate. As a table wine, it really goes with almost anything—smoked salmon, *foie*

*gras*, truffles, cured ham, even game, though one has to recognise that only a top quality wine can bear the strain of taking you through a whole meal from start to finish. A good brut will take you as far as the dessert, when most people would choose to change to a sweet or semi-sweet.

The all-cava meal is far from being a fashionable fad. In Catalonia, where they have been making cava since the 1870's, it has been a common phenomenon for years at all social levels. Yet however blasé we become about cava, sloshing it into our cooking or turning it into a table wine, it will never lose its extra zing. The very ritual of peeling off the foil, untwisting the wire, and popping the cork never fails to work its magic, turning even the simplest snack into a special occasion.

**Note: This article has been reproduced with the kind permission of *La Revista del Buen Comer y Beber* magazine.**

DISCOVER...

# Dubosc

PREMIUM CAVAS



# RECIPES



## Cream of Carrot Soup

(Eldorado Petit, San Feiú de Guixols, Gerona)

Serves Six

- 1 kilogram carrots, peeled and cut
- 1 litre soda water or sparkling water
- 250 grams light cream
- 1/4 litre dry cava
- salt and pepper

Boil carrots in the soda water for about 25 minutes. Stir in cream and boil for about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and remove from heat. Next, puree mixture in a blender. Strain. Serve very hot in consommé bowls. At this point, the cava is added to each serving according to taste.

## Cava-Steamed Vegetables

(El Molino, Santander)

Serves Four

- 1 1/2 kilograms mixed fresh vegetables
- 100 grams butter
- 1/2 litre brut cava
- chopped fresh basil

Cook vegetables until crisp tender. Place on a large piece of aluminum foil. Dot with butter and sprinkle with basil. Fold up sides of foil to form pouch. Pour cava over vegetables and seal up top of pouch. Bake in a very hot oven for about 5 minutes. Serve hot.

## Truffles and Mushroom Ragout

(Arzak, San Sebastián)

Serves Four

- 60 grams fresh truffles
- 1 kilogram mushrooms

- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped shallots
- 1/2 decilitre oil
- 1 decilitre cava
- 1 decilitre truffle juice
- 1 decilitre vegetable broth
- 1 decilitre light cream
- 1 tablespoon tarragon.

Clean and slice mushrooms. Place in a baking dish with oil and garlic. Bake for about 20 minutes. Drain and set aside. In a saucepan, combine shallots and cava and boil until soft. Pour in truffle juice, vegetable broth, and cream. Cook over moderate heat for about 15 minutes. Next, add mushrooms and continue to cook over low heat for about 5 minutes. Stir in truffles and tarragon. Salt to taste and cook for 2 or 3 more minutes. Serve.

## Hake Mousse

(Akelarre, San Sebastián)

Serves Four

- 300 grams hake, boned and cleaned
  - 1 small truffle
  - 100 grams whipping cream (double cream)
  - 2 eggs whites, beaten stiff
  - salt and white pepper
- For sauce:
- 1 teaspoon butter
  - 2 shallots, finely chopped
  - 2 decilitres brut cava
  - 2 tablespoons hake stock
  - 2 tablespoons hollandaise sauce
  - 1 decilitre whipping cream (double cream).

Using a blender, chop hake. Blend in truffle and whipping cream. Season with salt and pepper. Fold in beaten egg whites. Grease individual

moulds with butter. Fill two-thirds full with mousse mixture. Place in a pan with water and bake for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, to make sauce, melt butter in a small saucepan. Add shallots and sauté. Next, pour in cava and reduce. Add cream and bring to a boil. Stir in hake stock and season to taste. Add hollandaise sauce at the last minute and do not let boil. Remove mousse from moulds and cover with sauce. Sprinkle a little chopped dill over top. Serve hot.

## Salmon in a Spinach Sauce

(Zalacaín, Madrid)

Serves Six

- 800 grams fresh salmon, boned and scaled
- 200 grams butter
- 3 shallots, finely chopped
- 2 ripe tomatoes, cut up
- 200 grams spinach leaves
- 2 decilitres fish stock
- 3 decilitres dry cava
- 2 decilitres whipping cream (double cream)
- 2 egg yolks
- lemon juice
- salt and white pepper

In a flat pan, melt butter. Add shallots and stir for a few minutes. Add tomatoes and cook over low heat till soft. Add spinach, fish stock, and cava. Boil to reduce by half. Stir in cream and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and blend in a blender. Season with a little lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Using a double boiler, beat egg yolks together with a few drops of water until fluffy. Fold into sauce just before serving. In a frying pan, cook salmon steaks in butter until done (they should be juicy). Pour hot sauce over each one and serve.

## Capon with Cava

(El Bodegón, Madrid)

Serves Six

- 2 capons or chickens (1 1/2 kilo each)
- 200 grams butter
- 100 grams diced bacon
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 shallots, sliced
- 3/4 bottle brut cava
- 2 decilitres poultry stock
- 1/4 litre whipping cream (double cream)

In a copper or stainless steel pot, brown capons in butter and diced bacon. Cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Add onions and shallots and sauté till golden. Pour in cava. Cover and slowly boil over low heat for 1 hour. Remove capons. Add poultry stock to pan to loosen drippings. Mix well. Stir in cream until blended. Slice capons and serve with sauce on the side.

## Cava Fruit Compote

(El Molino, Santander)

Serves Four

- A variety of fresh fruit (about 1 1/4 kilograms)
- 100 grams butter
- 1/4 litre brut cava

Slice fruit. Place on a large piece of aluminum foil and dot with butter. Fold up edges to make a pouch. Pour cava over fruit. Seal up pouch. Bake in a hot oven (250° C/475° F) for 8 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

**Note: These recipes have been reproduced from the book *Los Cavas de Cataluña* by Luis Bettonica (Editorial Trébol, S. A.)**

# Creative Catalan Cuisine

Text: **Leopoldo González Espejo**  
Photos: **Manuel Santos Alguacil**



*Jaume with his mother, sister, and his experienced team of workers, all of them working in perfect coordination.*

**P**rovença Street in Barcelona has seen lovers of good food come and go ever since a certain bar opened up there in the 1940's. This was the place where you could get some of the best *tapas* (hors d'oeuvres) in town. The bar was originally called *Alcázar* but when the Bargaúes family took it over, they renamed it *Casa Jaume*. Mrs. Bargaúes, or simply *-doña Pilar-*, went to work in the kitchen while her husband manned the bar and their small son Jaume ran about and played amidst the bustle. Although he grew up

in this setting, Jaume did not show much interest in following in his father's footsteps. As a matter of fact, when he was old enough to work, he took his first job in an office. But apparently office work suited him even less because he was soon back at the bar working full time.

After his father died, Jaume took over the business and ran it with the help of his mother and sister, who worked in the kitchen. Small sandwiches and shellfish were added to the menu and then one day before they knew it, they found them-

selves serving meals —traditional Catalan dishes like fricandeau, meatballs, pigs feet, tripe, *sanfaina* (a type of ratatouille) and spinach cannelloni. *Casa Jaume's* popularity continued to grow, and in 1975 the decor was redone giving the place a new look. Something new was also brewing in the kitchen: alongside *doña Pilar's* unmistakable touch, Jaume had begun to add his own flavor to the menu by creating new, lighter dishes. Now fully involved in the culinary side of the business, he sought to broaden the menu selection by making variations upon







*The kitchen has the latest equipment, such as infrareds for keeping the dishes at the right temperature.*

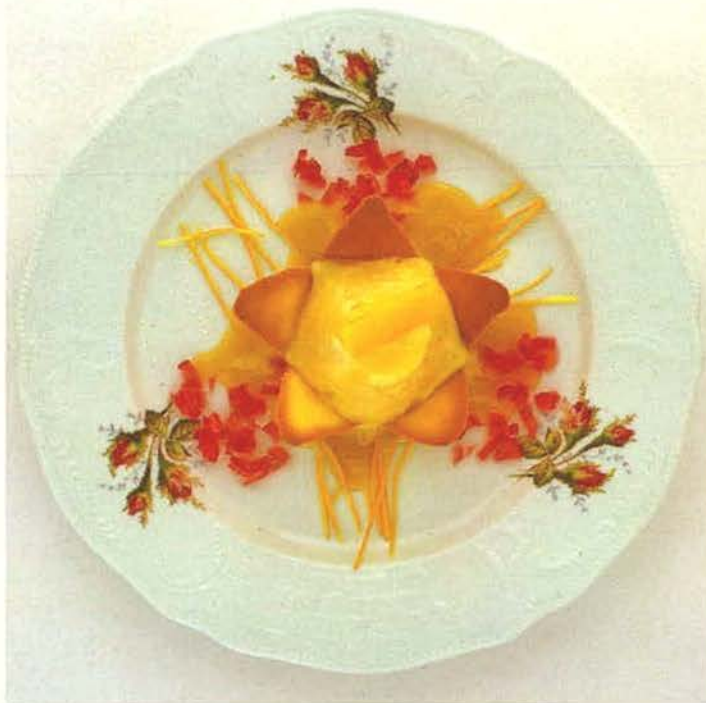
the basic theme of Catalan cuisine. New recipes gradually replaced old ones while all-time favorites like rabbit fricandeau, meatballs, tripe, and spinach cannelloni continued to be served.

Since Jaume's palate had been educated by the exquisite tastes of his mother's cooking, it is only natural that he came up with equally exquisite flavors. New, intriguing dishes like spider crab lasagne, pigs feet with plums and truffles, oysters wrapped in spinach leaves, red mullet mousseline with two sauces, and so on began to dominate the menu. But, of course, an educated palate was not the only thing at the root of Jaume's success; his creative style was also based upon many hours of reading everything there was to read about gastronomy. Before long, this self-taught man had acquired a complete library of books in the field, books which he not only collected but also read. In addition, Jaume possesses something else which is getting harder to find these days: a genuine humanity. You can see it in the way he runs his restaurant, now called *Jaume de Provença*. This large, robust man ex-

udes a friendliness and warmth to match.

The restaurant has plenty of space and is equipped with all the modern conveniences necessary to handle full house after full house. In the kitchen, aside from the latest equipment like infrareds for keeping the dishes

at the right temperature, an experienced team of workers moves about in perfect coordination. This is where all the desserts on the menu are made right from scratch. In search of new tastes, Jaume is always open to new combinations, and desserts are no exception. Just to see delights



*Orange Mousse*

like Catalan custard ice cream with hazelnut topping, or lemon cheesecake is enough to make your mouth water. If alcoholic spirits are your inclination, there's a well-stocked bar at the entrance to the restaurant where you can stop for a friendly drink. Jaume also offers a selection of quality white, red, and rosé dinner wines along with suggestions for making the appropriate choice.

The restaurant's clientele has gradually changed over the years and is certainly very different from that which long ago frequented the former *Casa Jaume*. Nowadays, there are a lot more people—many of them young—who are into fine dining and consequently they are always on the lookout for a place to enjoy a superb meal. *Jaume de Provença* is such a place. No matter who might be sitting at the table across from them—celebrities or otherwise—they come to participate in the ritual of fine dining.

Allowing room for making minor improvements, Jaume plans to carry on along the same lines and above all wants to maintain the present quality-price ratio. After putting in a day's work, Jaume likes to spend his free time reading cookbooks or catching up on matters related to his profession. Always in search of new tastes and new forms... that's Jaume of *Jaume de Provença*.

#### *Pastel de Esqueixada de Bacalao*

Codfish Pie  
Serves Six  
500 grams salt cod  
1 cooked carrot, thinly sliced  
2 hard-boiled eggs  
50 grams pitted black olives  
2 peppers, canned  
500 grams fresh tomato pulp  
parsley, basil, chervil  
olive oil  
salt and pepper

Soak codfish in water for 24 hours, changing water 3 or 4 times. Drain and flake. Place a round mould in the center of a serving dish. Line the sides with carrot slices and cover the bottom with sliced egg white, olives, and peppers cut in small strips.

Fill mould with codfish. Dress with olive oil, pepper, and a little bit of chopped onion. Next mix together tomatoes and herbs and spread over top. Garnish with egg slices and olives.

### **Conejo Relleno y Sanfaina Catalana**

Stuffed Rabbit with Catalan-Style Ratatouille

Serves Six

- 1 rabbit (approx. 1 1/4 kilograms)
- rabbit liver and kidneys
- spinach or chard leaves
- 100 grams white bread, crust removed
- 1/4 liter milk

For sauce:

- sliced onions, carrots, and celery
- cognac and white wine
- 1 liter poultry stock

For *sanfaina*:

- 2 aubergines (eggplants)
- 2 green peppers
- 2 sweet red peppers
- 2 zucchini (courgette)
- 2 onions, chopped or sliced
- 250 grams fresh tomato, diced and seeded
- 10 tablespoons olive oil



**Stuffed Rabbit with Catalan-Style Ratatouille.**

Bone rabbit and remove front legs. Spread out flat and cover with a layer of spinach or chard leaves. Next, cover with a layer of the following mixture: chopped meat from the front

meat, and the bread which has been soaked in milk and drained. Next, top with liver and kidneys. Roll rabbit up and secure with a string. Bake. To make sauce, place carcass, bones, and sliced vegetables in a pan and

heat in a hot oven for 10 minutes. Remove. Pour in cognac and white wine, scraping bottom of the pan to loosen fat drippings. Reduce until almost evaporated. Pour in poultry stock and cook over low heat for about 45 minutes. Strain and set sauce aside. To make *sanfaina*, dice first four vegetables and sauté each separately. Sauté onions and then add in tomatoes and sautéed vegetables. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes. To serve rabbit, cut into round slices and place in center of dish. Put a serving of *sanfaina* and sauce on each side.

### **Mousse de Naranja**

Orange Mousse

Serves Six

- 2 oranges, grated
- 6 egg yolks
- 150 grams sugar
- 4 tablespoons Cointreau
- 4 tablespoons Grand Marnier Rouge
- 1/4 liter whipping cream

Beat together egg yolks, sugar, grated oranges and their juice. Add liqueurs and then fold in whipped cream. Pour into individual moulds and freeze. Remove from moulds before serving.



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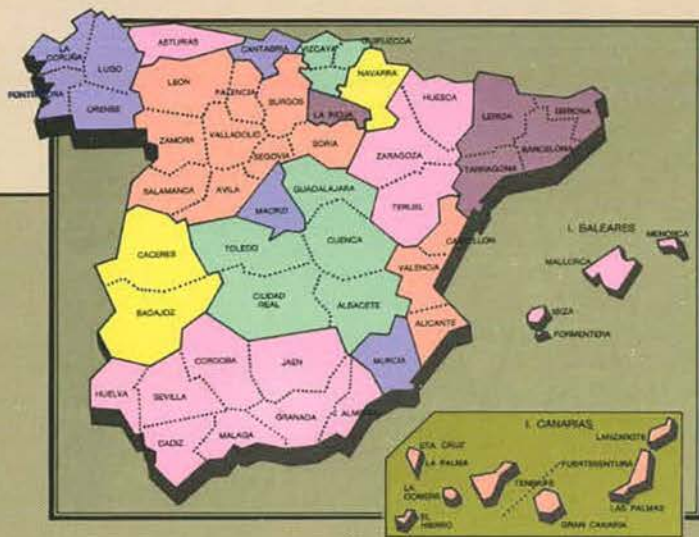
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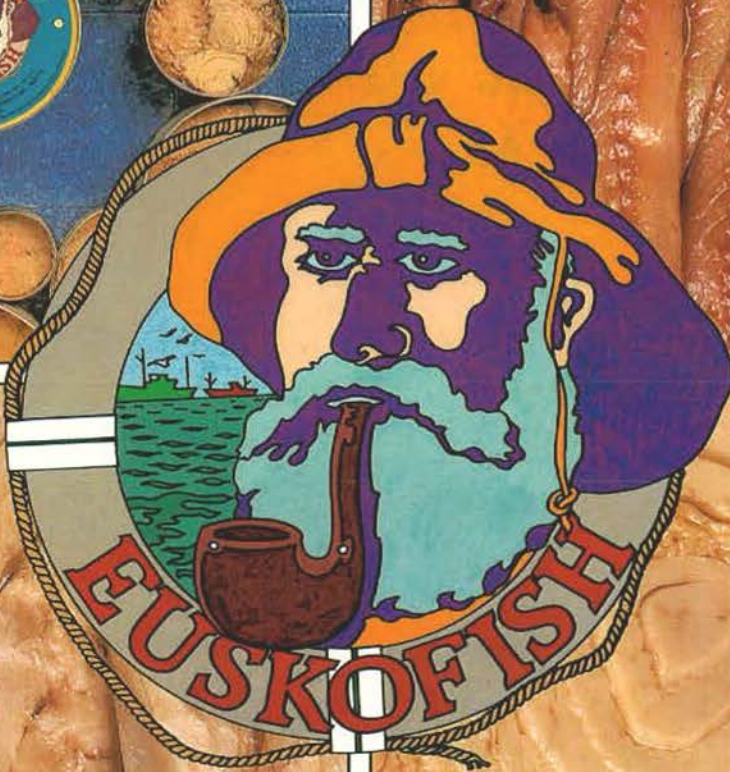
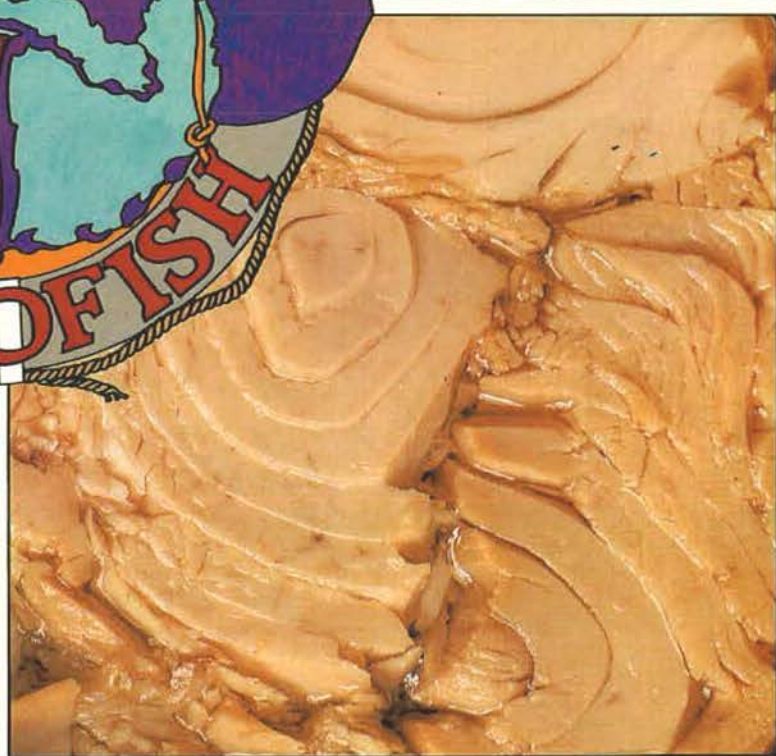
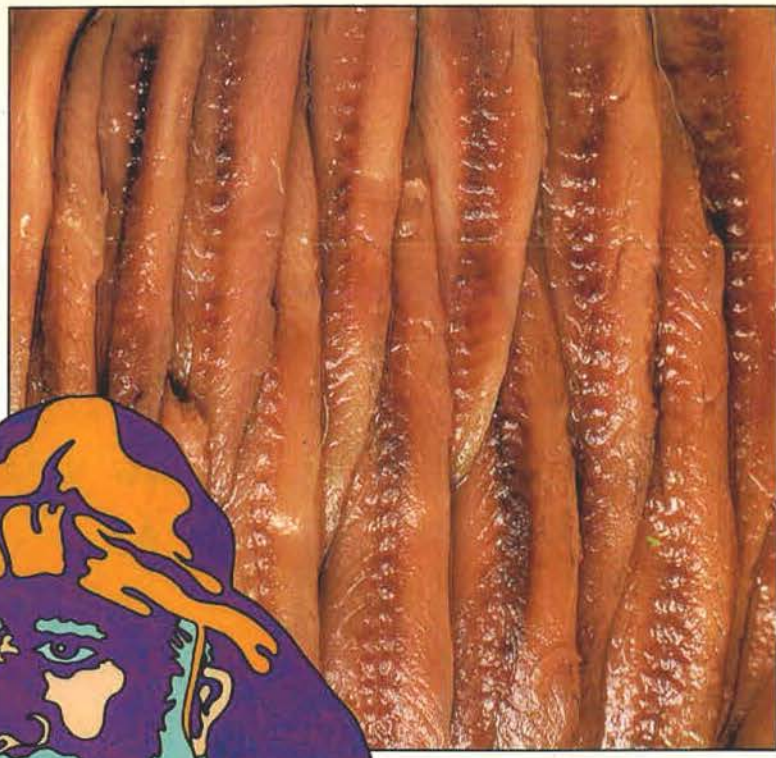
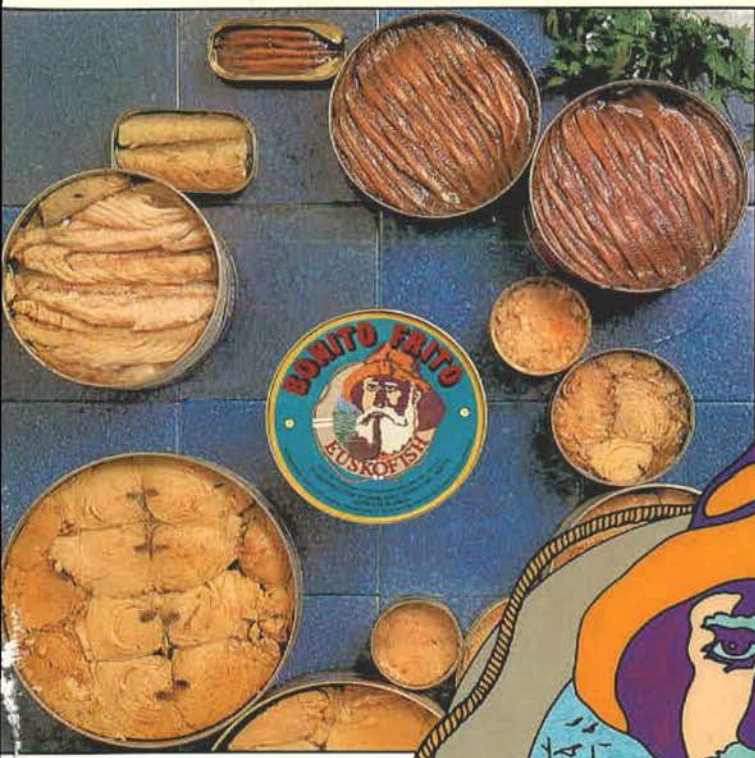


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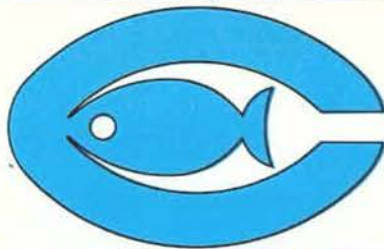
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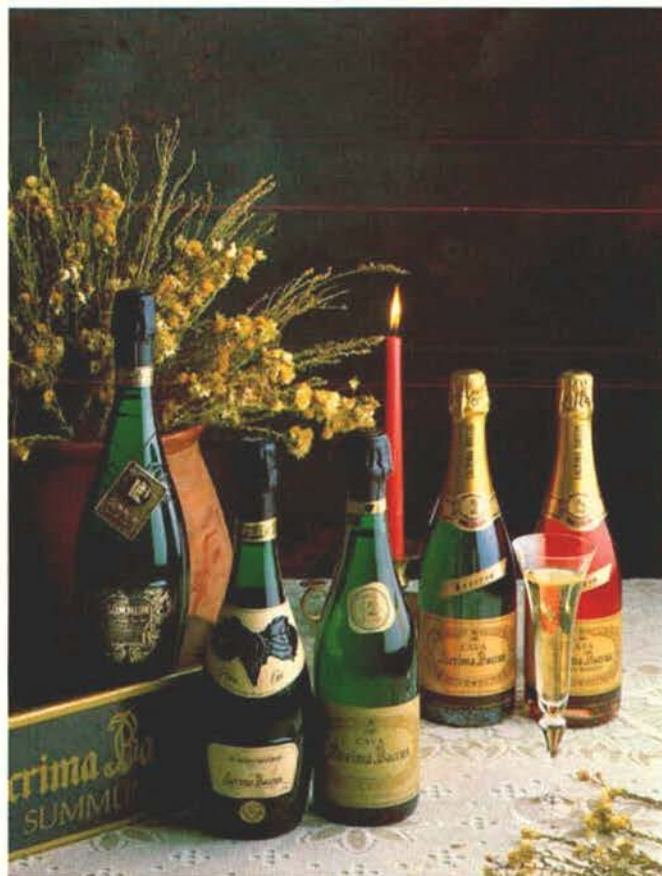
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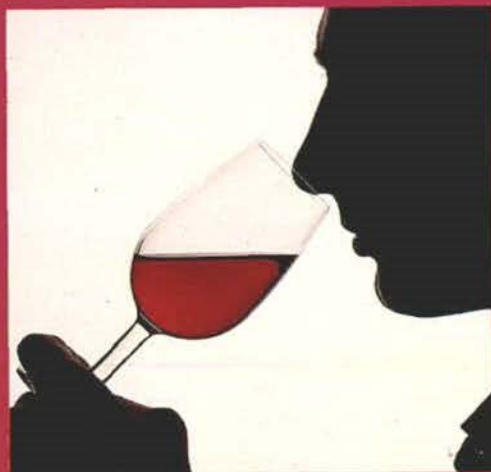
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# The Shipwreck

**S**hort Biography: José Gutiérrez Solana was born in Madrid in 1886 into a wealthy family which had a history of mental illness. Both his mother and uncle died insane. This tragic experience had a great effect on Solana's personality development. From an early age, he showed signs of introversion and eccentricity and seemed to be drawn to the somber side of life.

Solana studied at the San Fernando School of Fine Arts in Madrid. His profound admiration for the classical painters brought him time and time again to the Prado Museum. These visits influenced his painting to such a degree that he had no interest in participating in the vanguard movements of his day. His only goal was to paint like the 'true masters'.

Solana lived both in Madrid and in the coastal city of Santander. Here, in this latter city, he discovered the world of the sea, a subject he would depict in a number of his paintings. Solana was obsessed with two other themes in his paintings. The first was the world of work. His pessimistic outlook on life, however, led him to focus on lowly professions like, for example, prostitutes or bullfighters. In his treatment of the subject matter, he always avoided the typical folkloric aspects of these professions. The second theme which haunted him was the world of inanimate objects and, consequently, still lifes represent an important part of his work. But here again, the objects he chose



Text: **Joaquín Pacheco**  
Photo: **Oronoz**

reflected his solemn outlook: skulls, masks, spiral sea shells, and hundreds of other unusual objects which he collected in his customary wanderings through Madrid's flea markets and antique shops.

Solana was also a writer, a profession intricately related to his vision as a painter. He was a member of Madrid's literary circles and a friend of some of the most important writers of his day (referred to as the Generation of '98). Solana, who shared with his contemporaries a critical and tragic view of Spain, wrote and published several books. In them, he paints a realistic picture of the towns and customs of Castille and underscores the poverty of these parched lands. Solana's social writings parallel his paintings in their plasticity and dramatic description. In certain intellectual circles, the adjective 'solanesco' was coined to refer to the dark side of Spain.

Solana's paintings, drawings, and engravings

were exhibited in Madrid and other Spanish cities on many occasions. In addition, he participated in important international meetings like those held at the Carnegie Institute (USA) in 1934 and in Pittsburg in 1935. He had three individual exhibits in Paris, the last one in 1937 when the events of the Spanish Civil War forced him into exile. While alive, Solana won acclaim from independent art critics, but official recognition did not come until after his death when he was awarded the Grand Medal of Honor in Fine Arts from the Spanish academy.

The painting 'The Shipwreck' by José Gutiérrez Solana in many ways sums up the artist's work. The three most characteristic elements of his work are all present: his plastic technique, his social concern, and his tragic outlook on life. The painting is structured into a series of frontal planes defined by long horizontal lines. This simple, primitive

approach to composition links Solana to Spanish still life painters of the baroque period. The scene of the shipwreck in the background calls to mind similar scenes often portrayed by Romantic painters. In this case, though, Solana, who approaches the subject with a moralist and critical spirit, seeks to depict the dangers and suffering that seafaring men must encounter.

The painting communicates an intensely dramatic feeling: the ship adrift with its broken sails, the sailors futilely waving their scarves to signal to a far-off ship, and the barrel—symbolizing their destinies—floating in the water at the mercy of the waves. The anguish of the scene is reflected in the pitiful look in the eyes of the fish and in the agonizing expression on their mouths. We witness how Solana, in an effort to transcend the material, masterfully transforms a few simple fish into something human and emotional.

The artist's obsessive nature and fear of emptiness move him to fill every open space with thick paint strokes which create a strong emotional element. Lines do not just delimit the objects but rather form an integral part of them. This is especially evident in the areas of heightened color where the lines visibly stand out. We could say that Solana draws and sculpts with paint until the object takes on shape. Lastly, a dim, yellowish light characteristic of Solana's paintings envelops the whole scene and accentuates the depth of feeling and drama.

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