SPAIN GOURMETOUR

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SEVILLE
SOUTHERN ENCHANTRESS

THE CLASSIC RED WINES OF THE RIOJA ALTA

SPAIN, LAND OF THE MASTER ROASTERS

The world's most civilized aperitif.

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SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Seville is the source of what for many foreigners are the quintessential images of Spain —flamenco, thoroughbred horses, dusky beauties in flounced dresses— thanks largely to the Romantic travellers of the 19C who were so seduced by the exoticism of the south. But it had already been exerting its magnetism for centuries, not least upon the Romans and the Arabs, in whose colonial empires Seville was a prized possession.

Among its many claims to fame, Seville can take credit for having given the world Don Juan, Carmen and *tapas*, which regular readers of SPAIN GOURMETOUR will know all about. Here, *tapas* are traditionally accompanied by a *fino* from nearby Jerez, but a good Rioja —see the article on the Rioja Alta— would also do very nicely.

With Christmas already upon us, we take a look at Catalan brandy, Canary Island cigars and other traditional Christmas fare: in Castile, whose prosperity rested for centuries on sheeprearing, lamb is the classic Christmas dish, whereas in the sea-faring north, sea-bream takes pride of place on the festive board. Another lovely old tradition, still kept very much alive in Spanish households, is arranging the Nativity Scene of elaborately painted terracotta figures.
Our where-to-stay section has suggestions for those who like to get away from it all. The Parador of Alarcón, in Cuenca, is a fine example of how this hugely successful chain of hotels manages to combine the ancient with modern-day comforts. Or you could consider one of Spain's many health spas - most have left the rug-over-the-knees image far behind and are perfect places to forget the stresses of everyday life and start the new year in top form. Now read on...

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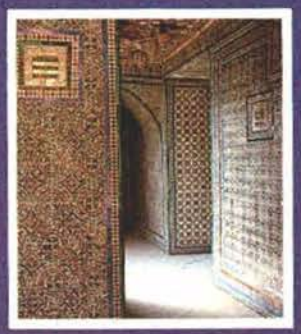
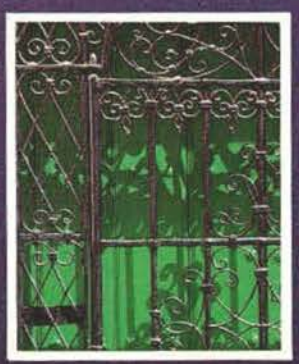


S E V

SOUTHERN ENCHANTRESS

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

Seville is one of those eternal cities whose charms never fade. Throughout its long history it has known periods of prosperity and decline but has never lost the power to seduce. Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Cervantes have all eulogised the quality of light, the colour, the* alegría *of Seville. And it's all true. Few can resist the heady combination of the sights, sounds and smells of this southern enchantress with a rich and thrilling past, now preparing yet again to occupy centre stage as the setting for Expo '92.



I L L E

Seville, then known as Hispalis, was one of the principal towns of the flourishing province of Baetica during the Roman period. It stands in the fertile plain of Andalusia, on the left bank of the river still known by the name given it by the conquering Moors in the 8C — Guadalquivir, or Great River. Beautifully situated in the heart of Andalusia, beneath skies of a rarely disturbed crystalline blue, the historic part of the city of some 700,000 inhabitants that we know today dates back in the main to the Middle Ages. It is a maze of passageways, alleys and little squares designed to protect its inhabitants from the heat of the summer sun and with the incidental advantage of creating delightful visual surprises at every turn.

Seville's origins are shrouded in myth — it is said to have been founded by Hercules himself. Archaeological evidence shows that it was conquered by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans in succession. Opinion varies as to whether its ancient name of Hispalis is Iberian or Phoenician in origin, but it is known that the Roman conquest occurred around the 2C B.C. and that the city was considered a jewel in the crown of the Roman Empire, and even provided it with two emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, both born in nearby Itálica, whose fascinating ruins can be visited today.

Then the capital of a Visigothic kingdom. Seville was taken by the Moors in 712, and came to rival in its prosperity the glittering caliphate city of Córdoba not far away. Seville's Almohad rulers in the 12C endowed it with many architectural gems, among them the Giralda tower which still stands. A century later, in 1248, the city was taken by Ferdinand III, the Saint, during the long campaign for the Christian Reconquest of Muslim Spain. He set up court in the city and was later to die there. It was also the seat of Pedro I, known as -the Cruel- by some and -the Just- by others, a sinister figure about whom legends abound. Here, Don Juan, son of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand

The Casa de Pilato *is a classic Andalusian mansion. Built in the 15-16C, its patio, with its fountain and statues, is a lovely example of Sevillian Renaissance architecture.*

SEVILLE

Seville's history has been a vivid one and its shows. Its urban landscape is a mosaic whose pieces reveal its mixed Muslim and Christian heritage.

and Isabella, was born and Emperor Charles V was married. But Seville's most glorious period came after the discovery of America. By the 16C, Seville was a vital link in interchange at all levels with the New World. Its *Casa de Contratación* functioned as a clearing house for all transatlantic trade and its river port thrived accordingly. this gateway to the New World and the wealth and opportunities that it signified drew people form all walks of life lke a magnet. Rich businessmen, the cream of society, major figures in the Arts (Tirso de Molina, Lope de Vega, Velázquez, Murillo...) rubbed shoulders with opportunists and pickpockets. Seville offered something for everyone.

As the nation as a whole went into decline, so Seville's prosperity waned, a gradual process compounded by a severe outbreak of plague in 1649 and a damaging earthquake a century later. In 1929, Seville grasped the opportunity of hosting the Latin American Exposition, and the money and effort invested in modernising and equipping the city for it provided an economic and psychological shot in the arm. Now, sixty years later, Seville is in the throes of preparing for an even more prestigious event, Expo'92, officially described as a Universal Exposition or what you and I would call a World Fair.

MOORS AND CHRISTIANS

Seville's history has been a vivid one, and it shows. Its urban landscape, like so many in Spain and particularly here in Andalusia, is a mosaic whose pieces reveal its mixed Muslim and Christian heritage. The vivid tiles and elaborate plasterwork so typical of Moorish architecture blend with the purest Baroque.

The city's historic quarter is one of the largest in Europe, but modern growth has been inevitable and, unfortunately, badly managed. The new developments that have sprung up around it are sadly out of tune, but since the old core is self-contained, strolling around its picturesque streets or, for wholehearted tourists, seeing the sights from a horsedrawn carriage, one's enduring impression is of the ancient rather than the modern.

Seville is divided in two by the Guadalquivir, or rather by a canal channelled off it. On one side of this canal-river lies the city's famous Triana quarter. It dates back to the Moorish period when it was a slum area outside the city. By Seville's period of glory, from the 15-17C, it had become a lively and integral part of town, linked initially by ferry boats and then by the Isabel II bridge, or Puente de Triana. Triana, once the scene of the amorous adventures of Don Juan Tenorio, legendary Spanish lover, vibrates with life and character to this day, still with a certain sea-faring flavour, its little patioed cottages reflected in the Guadalquivir almost too picturesque.

Right next to Triana is the quarter of town known as Los Remedios, which grew up in the 1950's and is linked to the Old Quarter by San Telmo Bridge. Flanking it is El Real, the fairground which, empty for most of the year, springs to life with a vengeance for Seville's annual April Fair.

But Seville proper starts as you cross San Telmo Bridge. Almost facing you as you do so, like a river sentinel, is the

SIXTY YEARS ON

1992 is to be a big year for Spain, and not least among the events it is preparing for is the Universal Exposition to be known as Expo '92. Nearly sixty years ago, Seville hosted another major Exposition which, as will Expo '92, made major changes to its urban landscape.

Seville will again occupy centre stage as the setting for Expo '92.

REMINDERS OF 1929

The Latin-American Exposition held in Seville in 1929 was shrouded in controversy from the start. Those in favour saw it as an opportunity for the city to snap out of the lethargy into which it had slipped gradually, resting on what were by that time very dusty laurels, and start looking to the future instead of the past. Those against saw it as nothing more than a flash in the pan and claimed that it would be like -waking up from a *siesta* before settling down for a real sleep-. Despite the controversy, the Exposition went ahead, leaving Seville with an enduring contribution to its already incomparably rich architectural heritage and modernising those functional aspects of the city which had fallen far behind current trends.

As well as the pavilions and other building directly concerned with the Exposition, preparations for the event also included major urban improvements: roads were widened in some parts of the Old Quarter, public lighting was improved, new hotels were built (the splendid Alfonso XIII was one of them), and the old town walls were demolished to make way for wide new boulevards. By the time the Latin-American Exposition was declared open by King Alfonso XIII on 9 May, 1929, Seville was a different city.

The area chosen as the site for the 117 pavilions involved in the Exposition was a stretch of land measuring some million and a half square metres parallel to the River Guadalquivir, to the south of Seville's concentration of historic buildings. There, in the lovely María Luisa Park, it was somehow managed to create a series of buildings and pavilions which miraculously made a positive aesthetic contribution to their setting. The most spectacular of these was the vast Plaza de España. Under the guidance of architect Aníbal González, its style seems to synthesise the various influences which have played such a vital role in Spain's aesthetic heritage: Arab, Mudéjar, Renaissance, Plateresque and Baroque. -Colour-, claimed González, -is unquestionably the fundament of Spanish architecture-, and he put this conviction into practice in this monumental *plaza*. Around it runs a semi-circular building, with a radius of over 200 metres, which contained the Exposition's administrative offices and various exhibitions of national artistic treasures. The lower section of the façade is decorated with the shields and maps of all the provinces of Spain, and the architect makes full and effective use of *azulejos*, traditional glazed tiles, and ceramics. Indeed, *azulejos* and ceramics were to be a decorative leitmotiv in nearly all the Exposition buildings — hardly surprising when one

The Expo site occupies 215 hectares on the Island of La Cartuja.

considers that at the time there were over forty tile and ceramic wokshops in Seville's Triana quarter. A bare half dozen survive today.

Aníbal González also designed the Exposition's Gran Casino and the Royal, Mudéjar and Renaissance pavilions in the lovely Plaza de América. Many of the pavilions were built for the duration of the Exposition only and were then dismantled, but others were intended to be long-term, some to serve as the consulates of the countries they represented once the event was over. Some of the original pavilions still in use today have been adapted for other uses and include museums (like the Folk and Archaeological museums) and even a university gymnasium, but most of them are currently occupied by central or local government offices. The best preserved are the pavil-

Façade of the old ceramic factory located on the Island of La Cartuja.

ions of Peru, the United States, Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Cuba, most built in characteristic national style and often with a distinct touch of fantasy and flamboyance. When the Latin-American Exposition closed its doors in 1930 and the participants headed for home, Seville was left with an extraordinary and exciting collection of buildings and broader horizons than before.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 1992

With just four years to go before Expo '92, preparations in Seville are in full swing. Expo '92 is to be the main event, and the one which will focus world attention most keenly, in the celebrations to commemorate the quincentenary of the Discovery of America.

Since they were launched in 1851, universal expositions have been envisaged as showcases for the latest discoveries in the field of science for all the nations of the world to see. The concept on which Expo '92 is based is an even broader one, and it aims to portray and celebrate mankind's urge to progress. Under the banner of -The Discoveries-, the Expo Site on the Island of La Cartuja in the Guadalquivir will open its gates from 20 April to 12 October, 1992, and will portray and explore the past and the future.

The Pavilion of Discoveries and other theme pavilions and museums will provide a trip through time, exploring the huge impact of the discovery of the New World and the progress and achievements made by mankind in the subsequent five centuries.

The Area of the Future will be given over to exhibitions of state-of-the-art science and technology and previews of what we can expect in this area in the future. By 1992, robotics and artificial intelligence will be well advanced, and attention will be paid to their application in making the world a safer and more peaceful place to live in.

There will also be lots of sporting actvities and cultural evente like opera, theatre, ballet and concerts of all sorts.

The Expo Site — 215 hectares on the Island of La Cartuja — lies opposite the Old Quarter of the city and is very near the shopping centre. Buildings will take up some 350,000 square metres of it, while the remaining 1,800,000 square metres will be a huge area of landscaped parkland. *La Cartuja,* which gives the island its name, is a 15C Carthusian monastery to which Columbus retired to prepare for one of his voyages and where he was subsequently buried.

The organisers estimate that Expo '92 will be visited by some 20 million people, just under half of them from abroad, and they expect about 60 countries to take part, particularly from the American continent. The demands that an event of this calibre make are enormous, and Seville is making the most of the opportunity to make major changes in the city itself, and improvements in its port, its regional road and rail networks and airports.

This juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern promises to be exciting, and seems particularly appropriate in today's Spain. We have always known that we could rely on Spain for historical treasures — Expo '92 aims to show the world that the tide has turned for the nation as a whole and that it faces the future with confidence.

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Seville's most glorious period came after the discovery of America. By the 16C, Seville was a vital link in interchange at all levels with the New World.

Torre del Oro, the Tower of Gold, said to take its name from the fact that it was once clad in gilded tiles. It dates back to 1220 when it was the end tower of one of the town walls, built to defend the port. Various towers punctuate the Seville skyline, but the landmark of them all is the Giralda. This minaret, built on earlier Roman foundations by the Almohads in 1184, forms a sort of matching set with the Marrakesh Kutubiya and the incomplete Tower of Hassan in Rabat. When Seville returned to Christian hands after the Reconquest, most of its Muslim buildings underwent modification at the very least, and the Giralda was no exception. Between 1565 and 1568, Cordoban architect Hernán Ruiz worked on the pinnacle of the tower with its 25-bell belfry and the enormous statue of Faith which serves as a weathervane, or *giraldillo,* from which the whole tower takes its popular nickname. The tower, almost 100 metres high, is decorated on the outside with elegant balconied mullioned windows, a fine example of the lightness of touch which the Arabs brought to Spanish architecture. In this particular case, the -artistic direction- of the building project was entrusted by emir Abu Yusuf al Mansur to a poet, Abubeguer Renzoar. The interior, however, is simple and functional and the ascent of the tower is made by means of a solid ramp up which Ferdinand III rode on horseback in a splendidly flamboyant gesture after recapturing Seville. The view from the top is marvellous, but you'll have to get there on foot.

The Giralda was originally the minaret of the main mosque, which dated back to 1171. Subsequently, in a burst of Christian zealotry, the reconquerors demolished or altered many fine Arab buildings, and the mosque itself was replaced by a cathedral which the church authorities intended to be so splendid that -all those who see it will think that we are mad-. And splendid it is — Seville's cathedral is the third largest in the Christian world, outdone only by St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London. This huge undertaking, 130 metres long by 76 metres wide, took over a century to build, from 1402 to 1519,

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and further additions have been made during subsequent periods so that while the overall style is Gothic, others are represented, particularly the Renaissance. It is made up of five wide naves in the Gothic style and a huge transept containing the chancel, screened off by an impressive wrought-iron grille. Its spectacular altarpiece, the biggest in Christendom at 20 metres high and 13 metres wide, was designed in 1482 by Pierre Dancart and, composed of 45 panels depicting scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, kept various artists busy for the best part of a century. The impressive Royal Chapel houses an elaborate silver urn, a gift of Philip V, believed to contain the uncorrupted remains of Ferdinand III, conqueror of Seville. The cathedral's many chapels display a fine collection of works of religious art, among the best the paintings by Murillo, Zurbarán and Goya in the *Sacristía de los Cálices* and Juan de Arfe's mighty silver monstrance in the *Sacristía Mayor.*

In one of the side sections of the cathedral is the tomb of Christopher Columbus, the key figure in bringing such celebrity to Seville. Later, his remains were taken to Santo Domingo. Curiously, his remains seem somehow to have been divided and some were left in America, so that both Seville and Santo Domingo can lay claim to being Columbus' burial place. The *Patio de los Naranjos,* or Courtyard of Orange Trees, also originally part of the mosque, at the foot of the Giralda, counterbalances so much Christian pomp and, in that it contains a Visigothic baptismal font, serves as a further reminder of Seville's multicultural heritage.

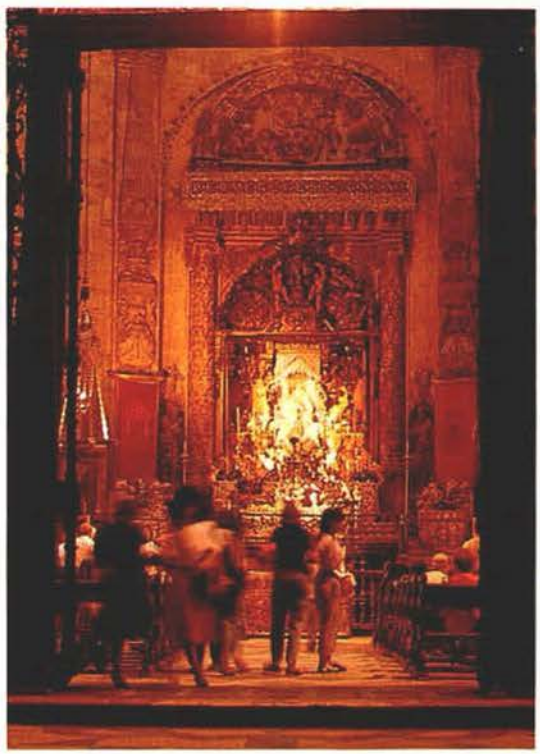
THE REALES ALCAZARES

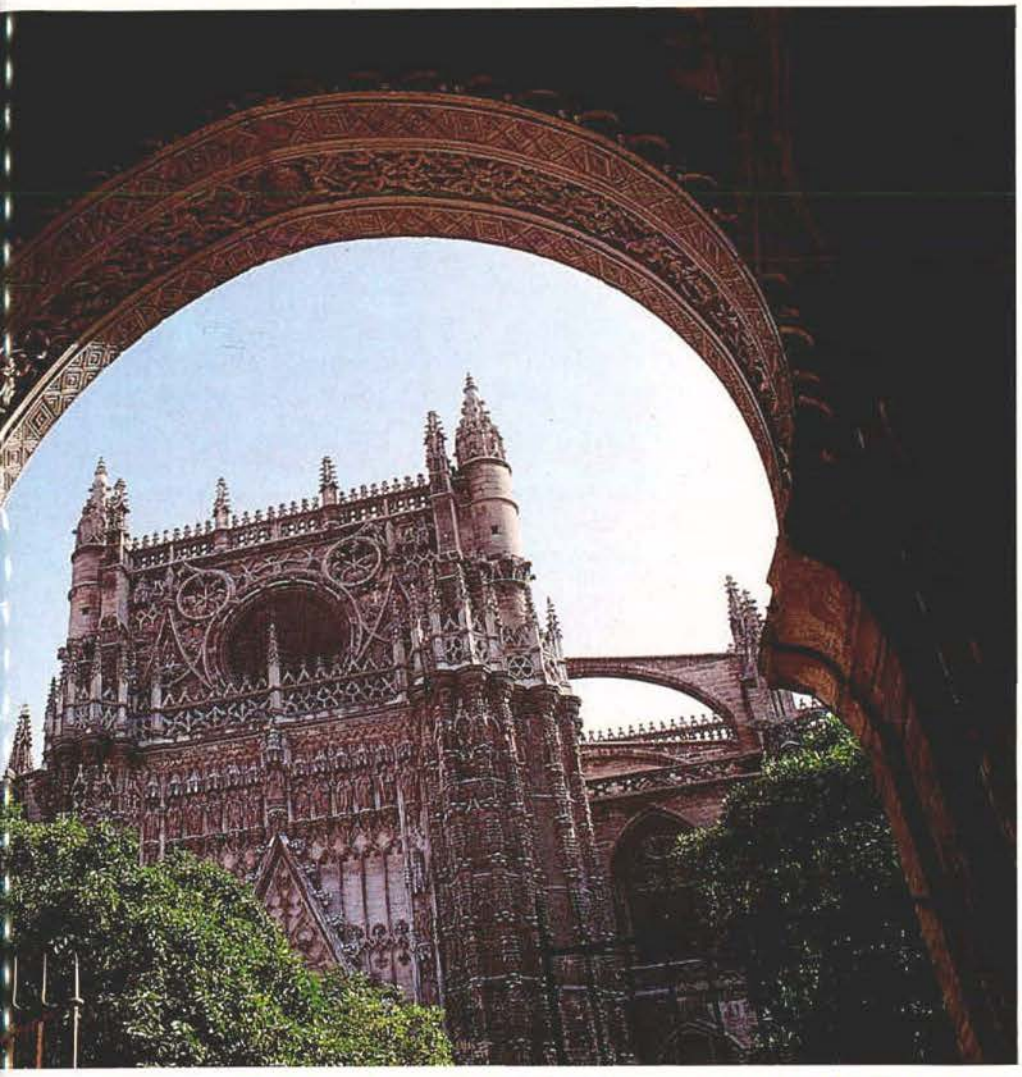
Just as the Christian and Muslim jostle for predominance in religious architecture, so do they in the secular, and the Old Quarter is full of fine examples of juxtaposition of the two cultures. The outstanding work of secular architecture is the *Reales Alcázares,* or Royal Palaces, an amalgam of splendid buildings which has evolved over the centuries to provide Spain with one of its finest architectural treasures. Originally a fortress built to accommodate the Arab military leaders who conquered the city, it gradually became more luxurious and courtly as new palaces and courtyards were added. The reconquering Christians chose to establish their most stable court here, making their own additions in the current, Gothic, style. The Gothic combined well with the Arab approach to architecture, and the marriage of the two was to produce many churches in the Gothic-Mudéjar style (a *mudéjar* was a Muslim who lived under Christian rule) all over Seville. The Alcázar we see today was built by Pedro I and later altered by the Catholic Monarchs and by Charles V. The portal is considered a gem of Spanish mudéjar art, while two outstanding features of the interior are the *Patio de las Doncellas,* once the focus of official life, and the *Patio de las Muñecas,* part of the palace's private wing. Behind lie the splendid gardens, always an integral feature of Moorish architecture, designed to charm the senses with walkways shaded by palms and pomegranate trees, murmuring water and the scent of jasmine on the air.

Close to the Reales Alcázares stands the *Casa de la Lonja,* the former trade exchange which is now a records office containing a vast and fascinating collection of documents of all sorts — maps, letters, autographs — relating to the conquest and colonisation of Spanish America. The building was designed by Juan de Herrera, architect of El Escorial, the monastery built for Philip II not far from Madrid, and is in his characteristically severe style.

The *Casa de Pilato,* is a classic Andalusian mansion. Built in the 15-16C, its patio, with its fountain and statues, is a lovely example of Sevillian Renaissance architecture. Popular belief has it that it is a replica of the palace of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, built by the Marquis of Tarifa after a visit to the Holy Land.

Other gems of civil architecture to look out for in Seville are the *Palacio de las Dueñas,* the *Ayuntamiento* or Town Hall (an outstanding example of the Spanish Plateresque), the *Palacio de San Telmo* and the old Tobacco Factory, now turned University. The fact that the *Fábrica de Tabacos,* built in the 18C, is the biggest major building in Spain after El Escorial, says something





In the Barrio de Santa Cruz there are some marvellous examples of patios with fountains and fragrant plants, an art form in themselves.

of Seville's importance as tobacco capital of the world at that time. It was in this vivid and evocative building that Seville's famous *cigarreras*, Carmen among them, worked.

As one might expect, Seville has several museums. The Fine Arts Museum, the *Museo de Bellas Artes*, in a former Mercedarian monastery where Tirso de Molina, literary progenitor of the original Don Juan, once lived, is Spain's second most important art gallery, with works by Murillo, Zurbarán, Valdés Leal, Pacheco and many more. There is also an archaeological museum, a museum of modern art and a good folk museum.In the wake of the Reconquest, convents and monasteries sprang up all over Seville and many of them still serve their original function today. Apart from the obvious interest of their architecture, some have the added charming feature of selling cakes and sweets still made to ancient recipes, many of them of clearly Moorish provenance, by the nuns who live in them (see article page 73).

STROLLING

Culture galore, then, yet what charms most is the general atmosphere of Seville. As you stroll about its parks and winding streets, peeping into flower-filled patios, the combination of quality of light, warmth, waves of scent from the flowers which seem to overflow from every balcony, produce that feeling of well-being which comes from aesthetic satisfaction. And nowhere more so than in the Barrio de Santa Cruz, once Seville's *juderia*, or Jewish ghetto. Labyrinthine, evocatively named streets — Life, Water, Pepper, Slaughterhouse, Glory — link flower-filled squares. The Plaza de Doña Elvira used to be an open-air playhouse, and in the Plaza de Santa Cruz, the ashes of Murillo are buried. He was a native of Seville and his house, in a nearby street, is open to the public. The whole *barrio* was restored in the 1920's and is now perhaps a little too perfect, with its whitewashed houses with their typically Andalusian grilles at the windows and vivid pots of flowers on every balcony. The occasional façade is painted in the same golden-ochre to be seen in the soil of the city's parks and in the Maestranza, mecca of bull-rings. White, ochre and the brilliant blue of southern skies are the dominant colurs of the Andalusian palette.

The patios which are so typical a feature of the houses of southern Spain are an inheritance from the Romans and the Arabs. Home life revolves around the patio, which the benign climate makes it possible to use as a room in itself. Here in the Barrio de Santa Cruz,

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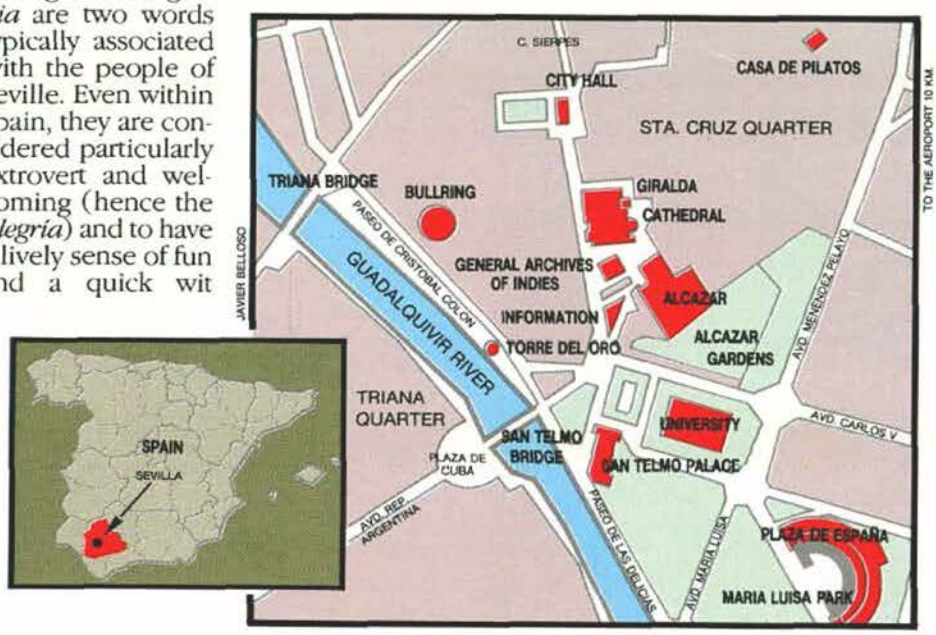
The general atmosphere of Seville produces that feeling of well-being which comes from aesthetic satisfaction.

especially in the Callejón del Agua, there are some marvellous examples with fountains and fragrant plants — jasmine, orange-blossom, magnolia — an art form in themselves. Remember that *tapas* were invented in this part of the world, and pop in to any bar or *tasca* for a glass of wine and a snack to sustain you as you explore (see next article).

RITES OF SPRING

Alegría and *gracia* are two words typically associated with the people of Seville. Even within Spain, they are considered particularly extrovert and welcoming (hence the *alegría*) and to have a lively sense of fun and a quick wit (hence the *gracia*). Like most generalisations, this is only part of the truth. It is an undeniable fact that they are welcoming, vivacious and chatty, yet behind it all there is a certain formality, a certain keeping of personal distance which led novelist and essayist Miguel de Unamuno to describe them as *finos y fríos* — refined and cool. It is almost as if they were both actors and audience at the same time, observing their own performance in their traditional role.



Monastic reformer and mystic Saint Teresa of Avila saw only their seductive charm, and observed that in Seville the demons were -more skilful tempters- than elsewhere, so that for her nuns to avoid succumbing to temptation there was an achievement in itself, without setting themselves higher aims.

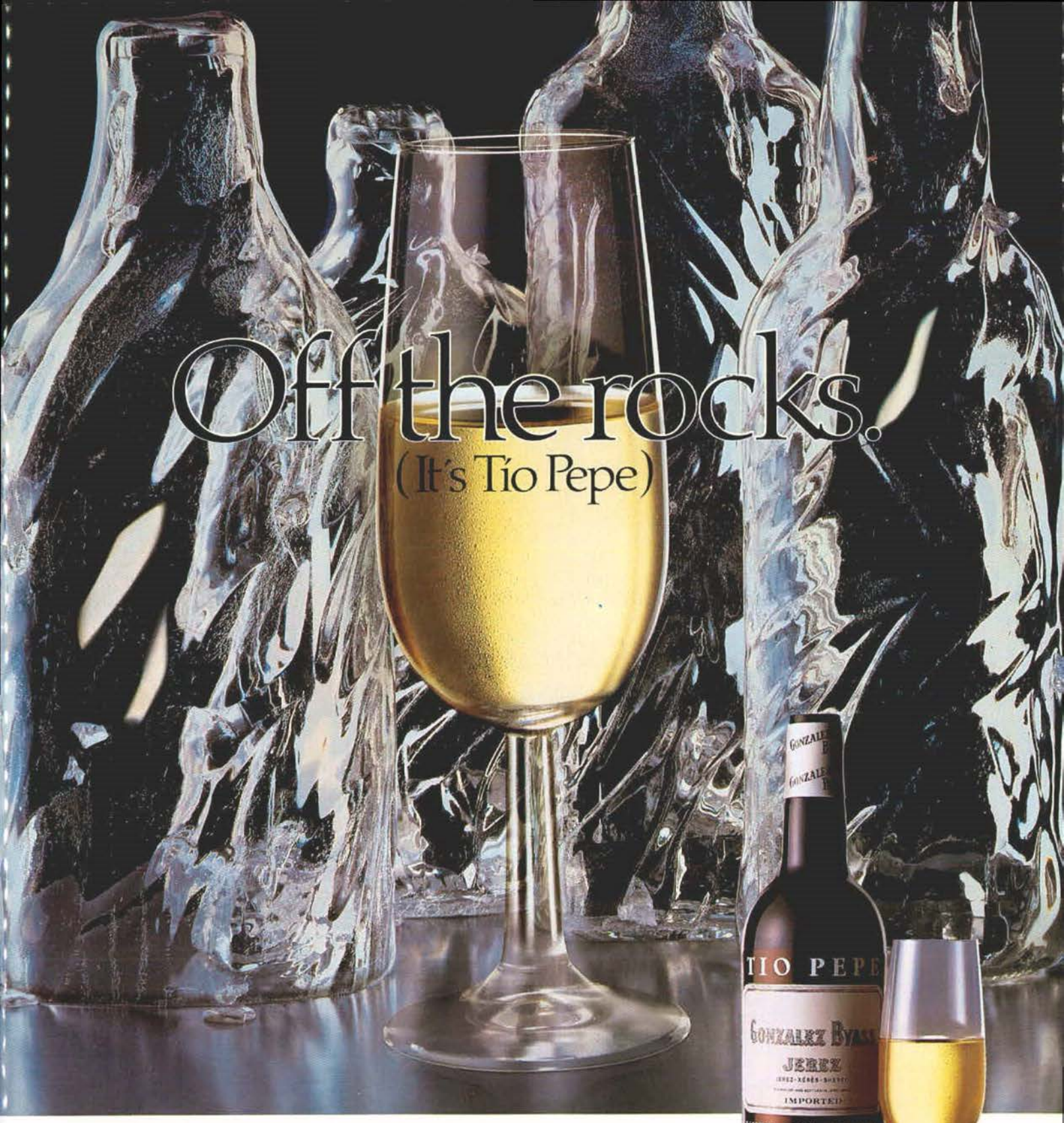
Seville in spring sees a veritable eruption of *alegría,* and this is the best time to visit the city. Not only is the weather marvellous, but it is also the time when two major annual events take place — the famous *Semana Santa,* or Holy Week, celebrations and the equally famous *Feria de Abril,* or April Fair.

The *Semana Santa* celebrations date back to the 16C and the whole city is transformed for the event. Processions of religious brotherhoods, descended from ancient trade guilds, make their way through the streets every evening of Holy Week and on Good Friday there is also a spectacular dawn procession. Over fifty brotherhoods take part, bearing a hundred *pasos,* or floats. These *pasos,* carried on the shoulders of teams of bearers, depict scenes from the Passion of Christ with tableaux of wooden figures, most of them dating back to the 17C, the golden age of Andalusian religious sculptors like Martínez Montañés, Juan de Mesa, La Roldana (daughter of sculptor Pedro Roldán and a highly successful artist in her own right) and many others. Members of the brotherhoods process before the *pasos* dressed in penitential garb of tunics and pointed hoods which cover their faces, lighted candles in their hands. Vast crowds throng the streets along which the procession is to pass, and gather particularly around the churches where the floats are kept, since getting them in and out of the church doors on the shoulders of the bearers, with only millimetres to spare, is a feat of tremendous skill and endurance. Along the processional route, the onlookers often break into spontaneous laments, known as *saetas,* for the Passion of Christ and the suffering of the Virgin Mary. These ancient songs have their roots in flamenco and beyond and their sound, particularly in this context, is profoundly moving.

Semana Santa in Seville is a fascinating phenomenon and, for the foreign observer, a particularly Spanish one in the way that it combines the sacred and the secular, each celebrated with equal fervour. It is a festival which embraces all social strata, and despite its overtly Roman Catholic significance undoubtedly incorporates elements of the religion and culture which dominated this part of Spain for centuries before the Reconquest.

No sooner has it recovered from *Semana Santa* than the whole of Seville is caught up in the *Feria de Abril,* where again *alegría* and *gracia* are given free rein. The April Fair is a relatively recent tradition, dating back only to the 1850's when it started off as a cattle fair. The original function was soon pushed into the background so that by today it has become a sort of joie-de-vivre festival with plenty of wine, song and dance. El Real is transformed from an empty site into a temporary city of canvas tents and booths, ablaze with the light of thousands of lightbulbs, where people eat, drink, sing and dance the night away. For a whole week, the city devotes itself to having a good time. Morning, which starts late, is the time for parading about in traditional finery, often on horseback, stopping for the occasional glass of *fino* and a *tapa.* In the afternoons, *aficionados* go to the bullfight — April Fair week attracts the top stars — then in the evening, back to the fairground for more food and drink to the sound of *sevillanas.*

Perhaps the secret of Seville's success is that of every seductress — unpredictability. Subtle, yet blatant, flirtatious yet aloof — the combination works like a charm every time.



To really enjoy what's going on, it's a good idea to get off the beaten track now and again.

There's a special sensation to be found in discovering something a little out of the ordinary.

That's Tio Pepe, the best fino sherry produced in Jerez de la Frontera. Just sip it, chilled and dry.

Produced by **GONZALEZ BYASS**
SHERRY & BRANDY

TIO PEPE
It's the mood.

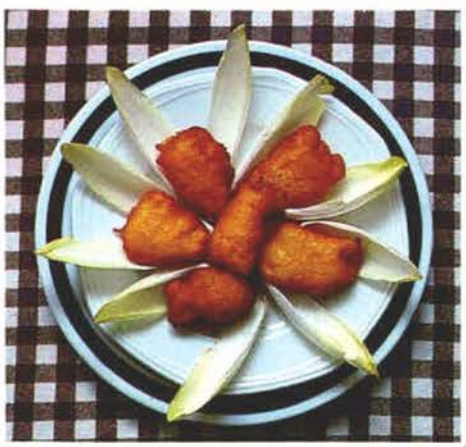
TAPA-TASTING IN SEVILLE

Text:
Sonia Ortega
Photos:
Félix Lorrio

Our tour of Spain's *tapa* bars brings us to the heart of Andalusia to the romantic city of Seville on the banks of the Guadalquivir river. Each of your senses is in for a treat when you go *tapa*-tasting in this city. The colorful sight of glazed tiles accenting tavern walls, the melodic sound of waiters calling off the *tapa* menu, the cool touch of a glass of sherry, and the inviting smells and delightful taste of Seville's special *tapas* all come together to make this city a *tapa*-lover's paradise.

Seville has got what it takes to be an ideal city for *tapa*-tasting. Mother Nature does her part by bringing pleasant weather most days of the year — weather which invites you out for an afternoon or evening stroll where you might run into a friend, greet each other, and go for a drink and a *tapa*. What could be more natural. In Seville's *tapa* bars and taverns, a relaxed atmosphere invites you to savor *tapas* and wine sip by sip and bit by bit, leisurely. As a matter of fact, if you are in a hurry, it is best to leave *tapa*-tasting for another time. They don't mix well. Unlike in other Spanish cities, bars here almost always have a section set off for tables for those customers who want to stay just a little longer. Topping off this pleasant setting are the Moorish-style ceramic tiles decorating the walls with geometrical designs of blues, greens, and ocres.

Each section of the city has its own characteristic *tapa* bars and taverns with their particular speciality just a little different from the next. This, of course, makes for a lot of diversity. Nevertheless, some general features run through the Sevillian *tapa* scene. Some say that Seville lacks any local cuisine worth mentioning, but when it comes to *tapa* bars and taverns, nothing could be further from the truth. In the past, each tavern distinguished itself by the particular wine it offered; some specialized in *manzanilla fina,* others in *amontillado,* and others in *oloroso.* As modern life brought on a certain standardization to the world of wines, taverns sought to set themselves apart in the way of cuisine. *Tapas,* which originally had started out as non-perishable foods like cured ham, cheese, and olives, multiplied into a whole array of interesting little dishes. What uniqueness was lost in wines was gained in *tapas.* A large number of these



tapas are referred to as -kitchen *tapas*-, so called because they require the cook to spend a lot of time in the kitchen preparing them. Bars compete with each other to offer the most delicious version of what are now considered typical Sevillian tapas: *la pringá, el menudo, las espinacas con garbanzos, el cazón en adobo, la punta de solomillo, la carne mechada, la melva, las pavías, los caracoles* and *las cabrillas*. (See section Seville's Hit Parade of Tapas for definitions.)

THE PREGON

The list of *tapas* is usually written up on a blackboard or posted on a sign, but the normal thing for Spaniards to do is simply to ask the waiter what is on the *tapa* menu. The waiter, displaying that special charm and wit so characteristic of the people of Seville, then chants off a litany of tempting little dishes, giving special emphasis to this or that *tapa*. This is called the *pregón* (vendor's cry). If your ear isn't tuned to the Sevillian accent, the *pregón* can be a little difficult to understand. In addition, the names of *tapas* are often shortened or derived from colloquial expressions. An example of the former is *la punta*. The original full name *la punta de solomillo de vaca* (tip of beef tenderloin) was first shortened to *la punta de solomillo* and then ended up as simply *la*

punta, which does not mean much to an outsider. An example of a colloquial name is *la pringá.* It derives from the verb *pringar* which in this sense means -to dip one's bread in-, something which families used to do seated around a large communal platter of mashed stewed meats. If all of this sounds too foreign, don't worry: after a few rounds of tapas, the once undecipherable *pregón* begins to ring like a familiar melody.

When ordering *tapas* in Seville, keep in mind the size of the serving. Rather than the communal plate which everyone picks from, *tapas* here almost always come in individual portions, served in little earthenware casseroles or on small, white platters. Once you have ordered, the first thing to be put in front of you is a small basket with forks and bread or breadsticks called *picos. Picos,* which come in different sizes and shapes, go hand in hand with *tapas* in Andalusia, in general, and in Seville, in particular. They make the perfect mate for all types of *tapas,* especially fried fish.

One word of advice before starting our *tapa* tour of Seville. If you are visiting in the summertime, it is probably best to wait until evening to go *tapa*-tasting. Otherwise, the mid-afternoon heat, even on the narrow, shady streets of the Santa Cruz quarter, might prove to be so intense that it takes your appetite away.

ON THE BANKS OF THE GUADALQUIVIR

What better place to start our tour than in a section of town that is pure Sevillian through and through: the legendary Triana neighborhood, full of history and folklore, immortalized in song after song. We head

for Betis street, which runs along the banks of the Guadalquivir river and stretches between the San Telmo and Isabel II bridges. Come nighttime and into the wee hours of the morning, this street is teeming with young people milling from bar to bar. A more peaceful atmosphere reigns at other times of the day. The bar *Primera del Puente,* located at number 66, has especially good seafood *tapas* like fried cod, batter-dipped shrimp, seafood cocktail, and *pepitos de gambas* (shrimp in a garlic sauce on toasted bread rounds). If you are visiting in the summertime, you have the added attraction of enjoying your *tapas* while sitting out on the terrace overlooking the river. Also open for business in the summertime is the *tapa* stand *Los Chorritos,* located across from number 28. The only *tapa* they serve is grilled sardines, but they are so tasty that you don't miss anything else. *Bar Diego* at number 28 is the place to go for a *tapa* of refried chick peas and spinach while *La Albariza* at number 6 calls for a stop to enjoy a good wine, olives, and a small shrimp omelette. Our last stop on this street

Some say that Seville lacks any local cuisine worth mentioning, but when it comes to tapa *bars and taverns, nothing could be further from the truth.*

is the *Kiosco de las Flores,* a *tapa* stand set up next to the Triana bridge alongside the monument to Triana's famous son, the bullfighter Juan Belmonte. This is one of the few places where communal rather than individual portions are served. The thing to order here is fish like *cazón en adobo* (fried marinaded dogfish) or *puntillitas* (small cuttlefish). And don't be surprised when a plate of delicious seasoned olives is set in front of you — it's on the house.

Pelay Correa street runs parallel to Betis street. At number 79, a curious-looking place called *El Morapio* invites you to walk through its vine-covered porch into a *tapa* arena plastered with bullfight posters. The magic word here is *la pringá* (bread roll stuffed with stewed meats). Moving on to Castilla street, we come across the *tapa* bar *Sol y Sombra,* which stands out for its delicious meats and garlic-flavored shrimp. Other *tapa* bars in the neighborhood are *La Bodega Triana* at #5 Pages del Corro Street, *Taberna Churruca* at #21 Constancia Street, and *Freiduría Sevillana* at #100 San Jacinto Street. All of these serve excellent fried marinaded fish.

Locals and tourists alike find* El Giralda *to be a perfect place to meet.

UNDER THE GAZE OF THE GIRALDA

Our tour now takes us across the river to the Santa Cruz quarter and surrounding area. *Tapa*-tasting in this part of town is doubly rewarding: not only do you get a chance to savour good food but also to take in a little history in a neighborhood boasting tradition and character at every turn. Just a few stops away, the twelfth-century Giralda minaret silently looks over the activity below. A classic *tapa* bar which goes by the same name, *El Giralda,* is located practically at the foot of the tower in the first block of Mateos Gagos street. No matter when you stop in here, there is always a full house since locals and tourists alike find it to be a perfect place to meet. The list of *tapas* seems endless and ranges from traditional favorites to house specialities like *chipirones a la duquesa* (grilled small squid with steamed potatoes),

Never has taste reached such heights.

Cruzcampo
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Breweries in Seville, Madrid, Jaen
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LORENTE MUSSOW

SEVILLE'S HIT PARADE OF TAPAS

La pringá: A stew of vegetables, salt pork, pork, blood sausage, red sausage, and stock is first made. When done, the meats are removed and crumbled up. Partially cooked bread rolls are then stuffed with the crumbled meat. The salt pork is spread over the top of each roll, and the rolls are then baked until done.

Espianacas con garbanzos: This is refried chick peas and spinach garnished with a paste made fro crushed garlic, fried bread, vinegar, and salt. A dash of paprika or other spice lends a finishing touch.

Cazón en adobo: Fish is first marinaded in vinegar, crushed garlic, oregano, paprika, bay leaf, and salt. It should steep for at least 3 hours after which even the humblest fish takes on an exquisite flavor. The king of marinaded fish in Seville is dogfish, a cetacean whose flesh blends just right with the seasonings. Swordfish can also be used. Once the fish is thoroughly steeped, it is floured and fried.

La punta: This is beef tenderloin either cooked in a sauce or sliced into thin filets and grilled.

Carne mechada: This is veal stuffed with a mixture of olives, pimentos, cured ham, and hard-boiled egg. It can be served cold or heated with a sauce.

Melva: This is a mackerel and pimento kebab. Sometimes a tomato is added.

Pavías: These are strips of salt cod (previously soaked) which are dipped into a batter of flour, saffron, baking soda, salt, and hot water, and then fried in abundant olive oil until crisp.

Caracoles y cabrillas: These are two types of snails which can be found all year round in Seville. *Caracoles* are quite small while *cabrillas* are larger with a somewhat different taste. They are both cooked in a sauce with lots of spices.

El menudo: This is tripe cooked in a seasoned stew.

la cazuela tío Pepe (broiled ham and mushrooms), *patatas a la importancia* (stuffed potato slices, batter dipped and fried), stuffed peppers, and a tuna roll. The delicious food is matched by a pleasant decor. A handsome mahogany bar set out the *tapas* for all to see, marble pedestal tables make room for you to sit down, and colorful ceramic tiles liven up the walls.

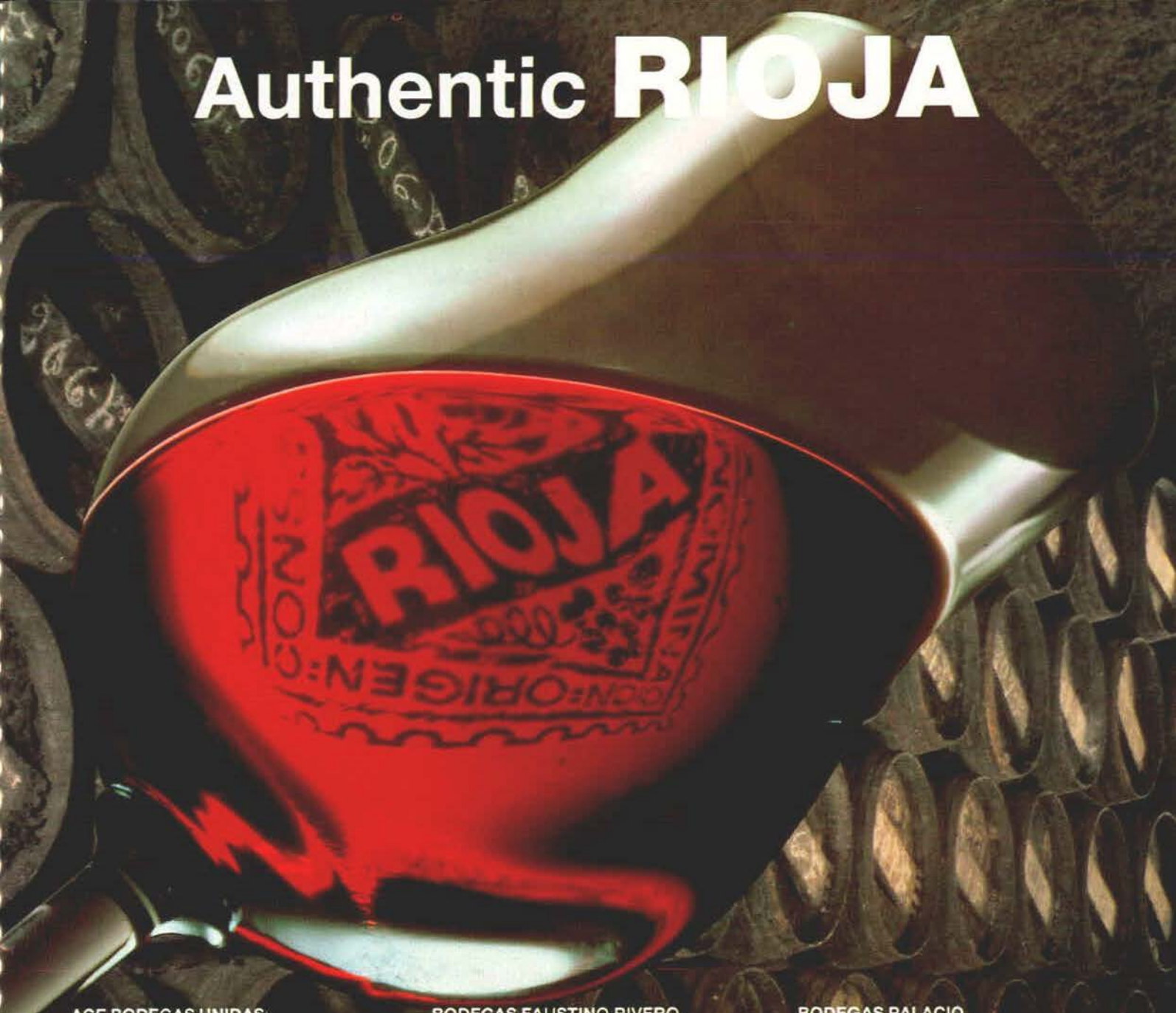
Two other places to stop on this same street are *Tasca Juan,* which has wonderful *melva* (mackerel kebabs) and *El Tenorio,* whose stews, meats, and spinach scrambled eggs are worth special mention. Moving into the heart of the Santa Cruz quarter, we come across other *tapa* bars, each worth a visit. *Casa Román* in the Plaza de los Venerables is famous for its ham and other cured meats, *Casa Sergio* on Murillo street for its *melva* (mackerel kebabs), *Alfaro* in Plaza de Alfaro for its Spanish *tortilla* (potato omelette), and *Modesto* in Plaza de Refinadores for its *coquinas* (wedge shell clams).

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

Many other *tapa* bars and taverns are scattered here and there throughout Seville. Armed with a good map of the city, you can take to the streets in search of the following *tapa* bars. If marinaded fish or fish roe is your thing, then head for *La Alicantina* in the Plaza del Salvador. A visit to the Plaza de la Alfafa and its adjoining streets is well worth the trip since there are lots of *tapa* bars to choose from and lots of atmosphere in the streets. Snails prepared according to a secret family recipe are the speciality at #15 Pérez Galdós Street. The bar is appropriately named *Los Caracoles,* which means -the snails- in English. One speciality, however, does not negate another; this *tapa* bar also serves up delicious tenderloin (grilled or -al whisky-) and *calamares del campo,* which are fried, batter-dipped onion and green pepper rings. A stop at the *Bodeguita Romero* at #10 Harinas Street promises a glass of excellent sherry or local wine and a fine specimen of *la pringá.* Wine lovers will be pleased to discover *Casa Morales,* an old-time wine tavern at #11 García Vinuesa Street. This century-old wine shop offers neither fancy decor nor *tapas.* Its business is purely good wines. Many customers pick up some fried fish at *La Isla* across the street and bring it back to munch on while they drink.

Cod is the center of attention at the *tapa* bar *El Bacalao* at #15 Plaza de Ponce de León. It comes prepared in all shapes and ways with special mention going to the small omelettes. If you are one to question how something so good can also be so nutritious, take a look around and read the tiles covering the walls. Each has a popular saying praising the excellent properties of cod. Last, but certainly not least, we recommend a leisurely visit to *El Rinconcillo,* founded in none other than 1670. It is the oldest tavern in Seville and is proud of it. You will find it at #42 Gerona Street in the same spot where it has been for over three hundred years. Inside, antique glazed tiles lend character to the walls and time-worn wooden shelves display all kinds of interesting bottles of all sizes and shapes. When you stop in to enjoy their ham tortilla, garnished refried chick peas and spinach, garlic-flavored tuna, or cured meats, you will be in good company for this is a favorite haunt of writers and poets.

Authentic RIOJA



AGE BODEGAS UNIDAS.
BODEGAS ALAVESAS.
BODEGAS BERBERANA.
BODEGAS BILBAINAS.
BODEGAS CAMPO BURGO.
BODEGAS CAMPO VIEJO.
BODEGAS CARLOS SERRES.
BODEGAS COOPERATIVAS DE RIOJA.
BODEGAS DE LA REAL DIVISA.
BODEGAS DOMECQ.
BODEGAS EL COTO.
BODEGAS FAUSTINO MARTINEZ.
BODEGAS FAUSTINO RIVERO.
BODEGAS FRANCO-ESPAÑOLAS.
BODEGAS GURPEGUI.
BODEGAS LAGUNILLA.
BODEGAS LAN.
BODEGAS MARQUES DEL PUERTO.
BODEGAS MARTINEZ BUJANDA.
BODEGAS MARTINEZ LACUESTA.
BODEGAS MUERZA.
BODEGAS MURUA.
BODEGAS SAENZ DE CABEZON.
BODEGAS OLARRA.
BODEGAS PALACIO.
BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO.
BODEGAS RAMON BILBAO.
BODEGAS RIOJANAS.
BODEGAS RIOJA SANTIAGO.
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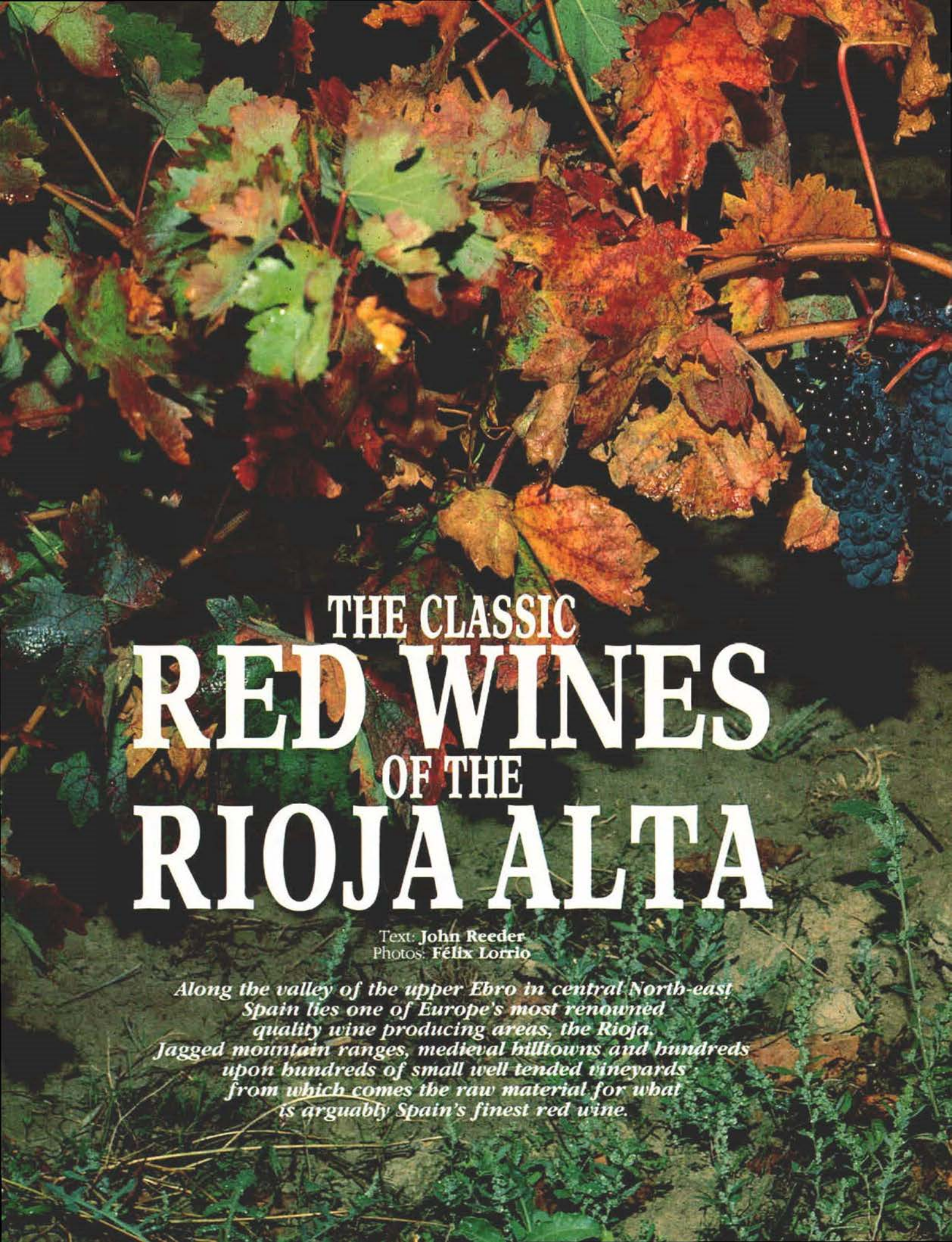


THE CLASSIC RED WINES OF THE RIOJA ALTA

Text: **John Reeder**
Photos: **Félix Lorrio**

Along the valley of the upper Ebro in central North-east Spain lies one of Europe's most renowned quality wine producing areas, the Rioja. Jagged mountain ranges, medieval hilltowns and hundreds upon hundreds of small well tended vineyards from which comes the raw material for what is arguably Spain's finest red wine.

The Rioja Alta is blessed with a milder climate than most of Spain's central plateau. Here fresh winds from the Atlantic produce cooler, more moist summers.

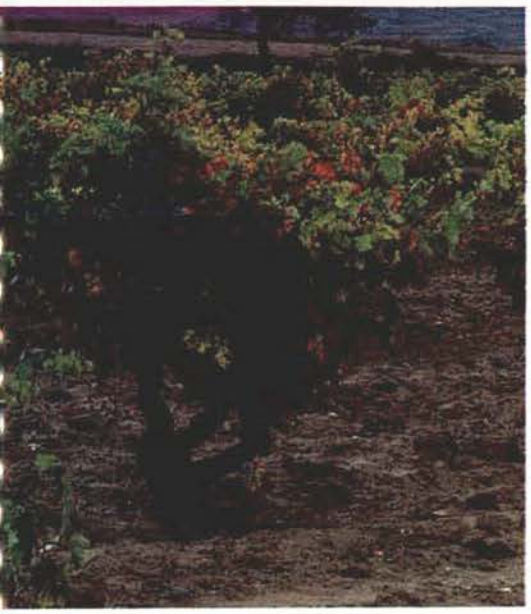
Rioja red wines are made from a blend of several complementary indigenous grape varieties, acclimatised over many long centuries: tempranillo, garnacha and mazuelo.

We had come to the small wine-town of Haro in the heart of the Rioja Alta —the upper Rioja— to talk with the wine-men about their wines, the fine oaky red wines for which the area is justly famous, the very good 81's, the spectacular '82's and the promising '87's. It was early autumn and the town was all abustle as preparations were made in the *bodegas* for the imminent grape harvest —the *vendimia*. The early morning river mist soon lifted giving way to long bright sunlit afternoons perfectly suited to finish off the last phase of the ripening of the grape. The Rioja Alta is blessed with a milder climate than most of Spain's central plateau. Here fresh winds from the Atlantic produce cooler, more moist summers which give that edge of acidity to Riojas, the mark of a pedigree red wine, at the same time helping to keep down the alcoholic content of the wine, creating an ideal microclimate for viticulture.

It will be remembered that Rioja red wines, much in the same way as their Bordeaux counterparts, are made from a blend of several complementary indigenous grape varieties, acclimatised over many long centuries: tempranillo basically lending character, color and longevity, garnacha body and mazuelo acidity and tannin. Unfortunately these thoroughbred varieties are also occasionally subject to overly wet or frosty springs which in the Rioja Alta can seriously affect the vintage.

Haro perches precariously on top of a hill from where you can see mile after mile of small vineyards — known locally as handkerchiefs — which seem to be scattered haphazardly across a countryside dotted in a similarly random fashion with small wine towns and villages. Closer examination reveals that this pattern of distribution is not quite so haphazard as first appears. In fact, most of the more important vineyards of the Rioja Alta are planted on the lighter calcareous clayey soils rather than on the more abundant but less suitable alluvial soils. Thus the principal wine towns and villages of the area are all located on outcrops of that calcareous clay reputed by viticultors and winemakers alike to be the soil which produces the best grapes for red wine making.

Although the origins of these vineyards are long lost in a hazy medieval past, they were most probably first planted by Benedictine monks, whose monasteries sprung up along the nearby pilgrims' route to the shrine of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is however only in the last century or so that



Most of the more important vineyards of the Rioja Alta are planted on the lighter calcareous clayey soils.

the Rioja has acquired a reputation for high quality vintage red wines. The origins of this transformation from the production of undistinguished young wines for immediate local consumption, principally in the nearby Basque region, to the careful making and cask-maturing of vintages of European reputation must be sought in the havoc wrought in the vineyards of Bordeaux by those twin scourges of the vine, *oidium* and *phylloxera,* in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

PHYLLOXERA AND THE RAILWAYS

Repeated outbreaks of *oidium* in the Bordeaux area between 1852 and 1862, followed by the arrival in the area of the American vine louse, *Phylloxera Vastatrix,* in 1867 devastated the vineyards, forcing the great Bordeaux *negociants* to look for alternative sources of supply of above all the red wines they needed for their domestic and export markets. They settled on the Rioja whose cheaper and more robust wines they were already acquainted with, importing them amongst other Spanish wines to body out the thinner and poorer *Bordelais* vintages in bad years. A technology transfer took place which was to transform the Rioja. More careful grape-growing and selection methods, more sophisticated wine-making techniques, French oak barrels and influx of French capital and access to wider French and European markets all followed on the arrival of the Bordeaux winemen. By the time they withdrew at the beginning of this century, new Spanish wineries had been set up, often by former employees or business partners of the French. One of the most important groups of new Spanish wine producers was centered on the major distribution point for the wines of the region, and the key to the conquest of the domestic and overseas market, the new railway station in Haro.

What had of course made it possible for the wines of the Rioja to be easily carried to Bordeaux was the coming of the railways to the area in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The building of the station at Haro in 1880 and line linking the area with the Basque country made it so much easier to transport the heavy wine barrels over the mountainous terrain between the Rioja and the nearest port in Bilbao. What more logical then that around the district of the railway station in Haro, the *Barrio de la Estación,* should grow up a concentration of the most important exporters of the Rioja? This nucleus of *bodegas* was to become synonymous with a style of wine, the classic red wine of the *Rioja Alta,* oak-cask aged according to the approved canons of Bordeaux, a tradition which the Rioja was to maintain long after it had been abandoned by the *Bordelais.*

RIOJA ALTA TODAY

How far has that tradition changed today? What, in 1988, constitutes a classic Rioja Alta red? Obviously today the structure of the wine making industry in the Rioja is radically different, infinitely more complex and diverse. Success on both the home and export markets has attracted new investment, new wineries, new technologies. In the period between 1970 and 1975 alone thirteen *bodegas* were set up in the Rioja *Denominación de Origen* (D. O.). This has in turn logically led to a greater variety of winemaking styles, a greater diversity of wines on offer to the consumer. One is told that the old-style heavier woody Rioja red is no longer fashionable. Amongst whom, one might ask? Is this true or is it that long cask-ageing is expensive and ties up investment for too long? Much easier to bottle quickly and sell quickly. Be that as it may, the consumer now has a wide range of differing styles of Rioja red wines to choose from, which can only be a good thing. These styles are however, in the last instance, only variations on a theme, the theme being on the one hand the constant natural limitations of climate, soil and grape varieties and on the other the set of regulations drawn up by the region's watch committee, the *Consejo Regulador,* to guarantee the authenticity and character of Rioja wines.

CATEGORIES OF RED RIOJA WINES

***As guaranteed by the* Consejo Regulador *of the Rioja* Denominación de Origen**

This classification, which figures on the back label of the bottle subdivides the red wines into the following categories: *crianza, reserva* and *gran reserva.* It should be insisted upon that the periods of wine refered to are the *minimum* periods of ageing in cask and bottle required by the *Consejo Regulador.* Each individual Rioja winemaker will normally more than fulfill these norms, extendidng the ageing of his wine in both cask and bottle far beyond these minimum periods as he sees fit in his search for his own particular style of wine.

Crianza red wines are those wines in at least their third year which have spent at least one year in oak cask.

Reserva red wines are those specially selected wines which have been aged for at least three years between oak cask and bottle. A minimum of one of these years must have been spent in oak cask.

Gran Reserva red wines correspond to outstanding vintages which have been aged for a minimum of two years in oak casks and a further three years in the bottle.

Unmistakably Rioja

Ageing in the Montecillo Bodega.

Montecillo wines have been produced in the upper region of Rioja for over a century. Today, the **classic range** of Gran Reserva and Reserva reds, younger reds, rosé and white wines enjoys unrivalled prestige in Spain and abroad. The secret of Montecillo is in just how long you have to wait for them . . . in addition to long ageing in oak casks, they also enjoy extensive time in bottle. A practice that has won it many admirers, and a clutch of awards in major international competitions.

Bodegas MONTECILLO, S.A.

A classic range of Rioja wines.

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The regulations of the D. O. Consejo Regulador *set out parameters within which the individual wine maker must work, but they do not impose absolute constraints.*

These are some of the most rigidly enforced, stringent regulations of any wine growing area in Europe, stringent both in the letter and, thanks to highly efficient inspection machinery, in practice. The regulations cover among other things the provenance of the grapes, methods of planting and pruning grapes, the limitation of those grape varieties permitted in the wine making, the fixing of maximum yields per hectare, the delimiting of vinivication methods and the outlawing of certain practices — chaptalistion —the adding of sugar to the must— for example is totally prohibited, —the definition of approved ageing procedures, types of barrels to be used and the categorisation of the final product, the finished wine, according to age and the maturing process it has undergone.

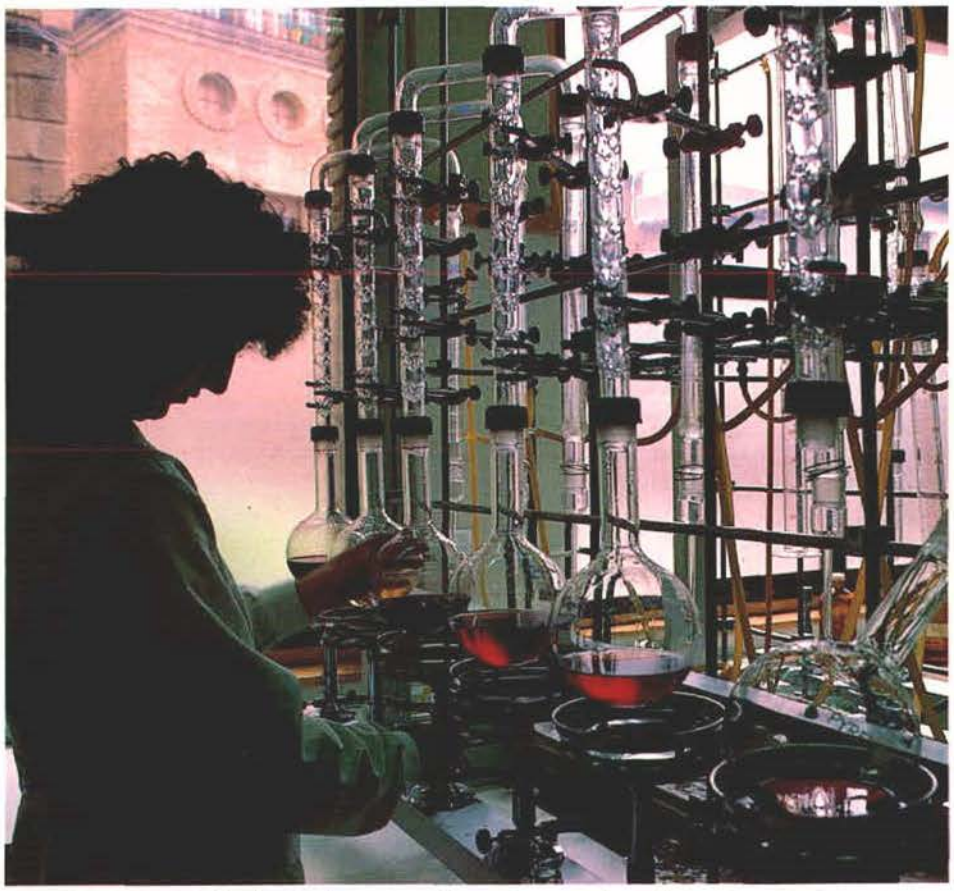
The *Consejo Regulador* of the Denominación de Origen (a D. O. is an officially delimited wine producing area, a Spanish variant on the French *Appellation d'Origine Controlée*) acts then as the guarantor of the authenticity of the wines made in each D. O. As strict as these regulations are, they must clearly allow for a certain amount of respect for the individual style and personality of the wine maker. So for example the categorisation system of the different types of Rioja red wines classified according to age and the maturation process employed does leave the choice of the mix between bottle ageing and cask ageing to the individual wine maker. A red *Reserva* is defined as a red wine which has matured for at least three years with a minimum of one year in oak cask. It does not, however, specify whether that oak cask should be old or new, a choice which would have an enormous influence on the style of the wine produced. The regulation stipulates a *minimum* of one year in oak cask: this could become two years or even two and a half years if the wine maker wished to produce a distinctly oaky wine or it could remain at the minimum twelve months in an old barrel combined with a prolonged two year period of bottle ageing if he wished to reduce that oakiness to a minimum. Notice also that the regulation says -*at least* three years-: if desired, and most *bodegas* do, it is permissible to age the red wine in cask and in bottle for *any* length of period longer than the minimum required, providing that the minimum proportion of cask to bottle ageing is respected.

The regulations then, set out parameters within which the individual wine maker must work, but they do not attempt to regiment him or impose absolute constraints, which would result in a tedious uniformity in the wines made, a totally undesirable kind of cloning.

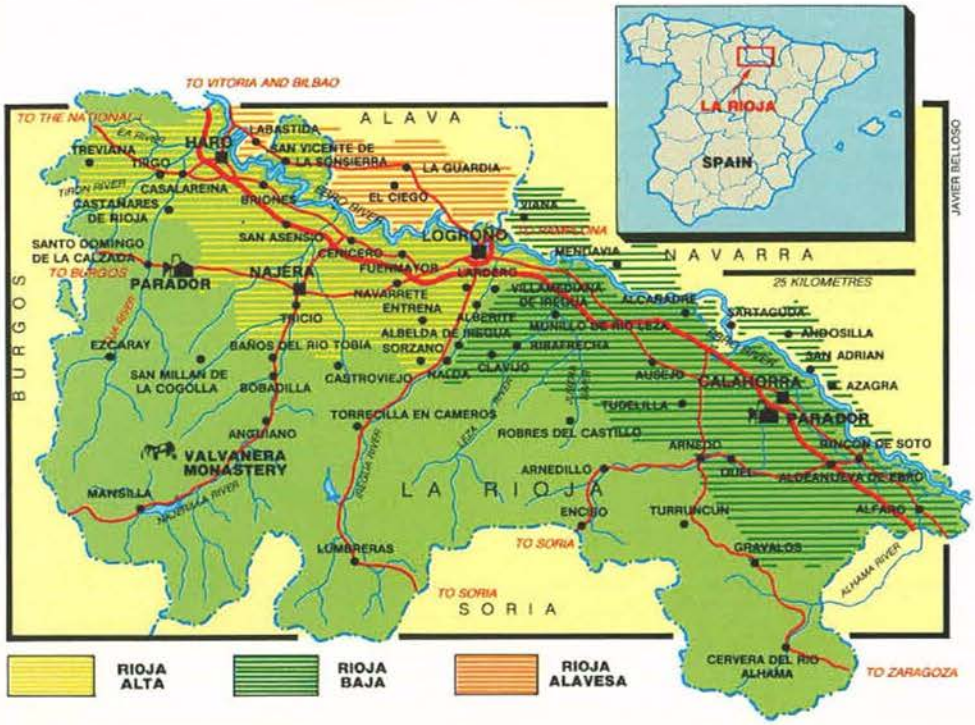
RIOJA VINTAGE CHART

Compiled by the Oenological Research Station in Haro

1968	Very good.
1969	Average.
1970	Very good.
1971	Poor.
1972	Poor.
1973	Good.
1974	Good.
1975	Very good.
1976	Good.
1977	Average.
1978	Very good.
1979	Average.
1980	Good.
1981	Very good.
1982	Excellent.
1983	Good.
1984	Average.
1985	Good.
1986	Good.
1987	Very good.



Success on both the home and export markets has attracted new investment, new wineries and new technologies.



CLASSIC RIOJA ALTA WINE

Having clarified what constitutes a Rioja red wine, perhaps we can now return to our original question: what in 1988 is a classic Rioja Alta red? From what we have set out above it will be clear that there is not one single answer to the question but several. It is true that it is the *Rioja Alta,* rather than the other two sub-regions of the D. O. the *Rioja Baja* and the *Rioja Alavesa,* which has been regarded traditionally as the *Locus Classicus* of the *Denominación de Origen.* And without disregarding the existence of such venerable houses as *Marqués de Riscal* in other sub-regions, it remains largely true that the more traditional — or if you prefer, conservative — wine making methods inherited from last century are more likely to be met within the older Rioja Alta *bodegas* than elsewhere in the D. O. It is to *López Heredia* or *Bodegas La Rioja Alta* that one goes if one wishes to see the huge wooden fermentation vats so typical of pre-*phylloxera* Bordeaux. Here, and in other Haro wineries such as *Muga,* the lees are still racked by hand, and the wine at the end of its period of maturation in the cask is fined with fresh egg-whites rather than industrially produced isinglass. It is to *Marqués de Murrieta* that one must go to taste wines which have been aged for prolonged periods in oak producing that unashamed woodiness so prized amongst connoisseurs of traditional red *Rioja Alta* reservas. A *Reserva 904* from *Bodegas La Rioja Alta,* a *Murrieta* red reserva, a *Viña Tondonia* from *López Heredia,* remain among the bench marks of classic oak-nosed infinitely complex red Rioja *reservas,* the rightful heirs to the winemaking traditions of the late nineteenth century Bordeaux winemen.

Although the origins of Rioja Alta's vineyards are long lost in a hazy medieval past, they were most probably first planted by Benedictine monks.

Here, in the Rioja Alta are some of the most important bodegas in Spain.

This is however not the whole story. Recently a new transfusion of Bordeaux-inspired winemaking ideas has taken place, and a new generation of Rioja Alta classics, *classix nouveaux* if one might be permitted to borrow an expression from the world of pop music, has emerged. Less cask and more bottle ageing —that might be the motto of the new Rioja oenology, ideas inspired in the current practice of Bordeaux wineries and in the scientific theories and experiments of the *doyen* of Bordeaux oenologists, Professor Emile Peynaud, ideas introduced into the Rioja by Enrique Forner, the son of an exiled Spanish Republican deputy, brought up in the French wine business before returning to Spain in 1970. The result —*Marqués de Cáceres.* Forner has gone on record as saying that -in a good Rioja the wood should not dominate, but should be in balance with the fruit-. So his *crianza* (see box for definitions of the terms *crianza* and *reserva*) reds are aged from only 16 to 18 months in cask and his *reservas* for about two years as opposed to the thre years spent in cask by *Bodegas La Rioja Alta's reserva* (see box) *Viña Arana* for instance, or for the five years in oak spent by *López Heredia's reserva Viña Tondonia.* The new lighter claret-styled red has gained widespread acceptance in the Rioja Alta, particularly among the newer wineries seeking to improve their younger *crianza* wines, naturally less oaky in any case, and to offer the consumer the best price-quality ratio possible at a time when storage costs are spiralling. Those who prefer fruitier younger red wines or like perhaps a less woody texture to their Rioja *reserva* should try these new classic Riojas, impeccably made representantives of the new technology, wines made by Rioja Alta bodegas such as *LAN, Olarra, Beronia, Marqués de Cáceres, Franco-Españolas* or *Montecillo.*

That evening in the bars and cafés that cluster around Haro's main square everyone was talking about the coming harvest and harking back to the fine vintages of recent years, '70 and '75, '78, '81 and '87 or the exceptionally outstanding vintages of '68 and '82. This is the period of expectation just before the *vendimia,* when the winemakers and grape-growers of the Rioja have time to reflect, to haggle, to hazard predictions. Was the spring too wet? Will the harvest be short or abundant? How high will the price of grapes go? Time to savor and enjoy a glass or two of one of the great classic vintages of the past before setting to the job of bringing in the 1988 harvest.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C.V.N.E.
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RESERVA
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75 cl.
HARO-RIOJA
Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España
HARO LA RIOJA

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For further information please write to: **Marqués de Cáceres, Ctra. de Logroño, s/n., Cenicero (LA RIOJA) SPAIN.**

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF TOURISM

Text:
John Heath
Photos:
John Heath and Spas

In the plaza Font del Lleo in the Catalan town of Caldes de Montbui emerges one of the oldest springs known in Spain. It is not a normal spring. Its flow remains constant through the seasons, and the water is extremely hot and tastes slightly salty. For thousands of years, people have taken advantage of its special properties. Townspeople used to wash their clothes in it, but now they are more affluent and wash their clothes in machines at home! Some still like to drink it in the morning *en ayunas* (without having breakfast) as a laxative, or to carry it home at midday to boil their vegetables. But the great value of these waters has been their ability to relieve and even cure the human body of a variety of ills. This property has attracted people from Barcelona and remoter places like Japan, and led to the establishment in the town of several spas, to administer the waters in baths and showers and vapors.

The oldest form of therapy is experiencing a revival. Medical evidence of the therapeutic effects of thermal and mineral waters is earning new respect for Spain's *balnearios,* or spas. As these ancient paradises are remodeling with modern installations and ideas, increasing numbers of people are coming to alleviate their ills. Meanwhile, a new group of young people has appeared seeking a retreat from the stresses of the city.

Main entrance to the spa of Vichy Catalán.

HISTORY

Thermal springs, varying greatly in temperature and mineral content, are scattered across Spain. The medicinal effects of these were generally discovered by chance, often by animals bathing in them. The waters of La Toja, now a luxurious resort with a 5-star hotel, were discovered by the owner of a sick donkey who was abandoned on the deserted island and soon returned totally healthy. Legends attribute the discovery of other springs in Spain to a peasant's dog acquiring a brilliant luster, a shepherd's sick goats curing themselves, and a scrawny bull becoming vigorous.

The Romans were great believers in the curative effects of thermal water and constructed sumptuous baths over these springs throughout Spain and the rest of their empire. Many vestiges remain. In Caldes de Montbui, fairly intact baths stand in the plaza Font del Lleo across from the fountain. In the Balneario Broquetas off the plaza lies a Roman sauna among the modern baths, and a commemorative tablet on which the wife of Julius Caesar thanks the goddess Minerva for a cure.

The spa of La Toja.

These decayed during the Middle Ages. The Moors however were fond of bathing in Spain, while apparently Christians were more concerned about their souls than about the health and cleanliness of their bodies.

Later on, Europe gradually recovered a thermal tradition, and established spas as exclusive pleasure retreats as well as curative institutions. The Golden Age of thermalism came in the 19th century, when aristocrats and famous artists lived la *dolce vita* in sumptuous resorts in bucolic settings such as Baden-Baden in Germany. Gradually, the bourgeoisie appeared to obtain social status with their new wealth. Meanwhile, *balnearios* in Spain were relatively quiet, boring places visited by truly sick people.

During the 20th century, the tremendous advance of pharmacology

SPA	USEFUL INFORMATION
ARCHENA	Archena (Murcia) Tel.: (68) 67 01 00
ARNEDILLO	Arnedillo (La Rioja) Tel. (41) 39 40 00
BROQUETAS	Caldas de Montbui (Barcelona) Tel.: (3)865 01 00
CALDAS DE BOHI	Caldas de Bohí (Lérida) Tel.: (73) 69 01 91 or 69 40 49 Open June 24 to Sept. 30
CESTONA	Gestona (Guipúzcoa) Tel.: (43) 86 71 40 Open May 1 to Oct. 31
LANJARON	Lanjarón (Granada) Tel.: (58) 77 01 37 Open May 1 to Nov. 30
LA TOJA	Isla de La Toja (Pontevedra) Tel.: (86) 73 00 25
PANTICOSA	Panticosa (Huesca) Tel.: (74) 48 71 61 or 48 71 62
TERMAS PALLARES	Alhama de Aragón (Zaragoza) Tel.: (76) 84 00 11
VICHY CATALAN	Caldas de Malavella (Gerona) Tel.: (72) 47 00 00

AILMENTS TREATED	INSTALLATIONS AND TECHNIQUES	HISTORY	LOCAL TOURISM
ainly rheumatisms,also ehabilitation, skin and espiratory ailments.	Baths, showers, pulverizations, aerosols, vapor baths, muds and massages, all in individual rooms.	Used extensively by Romans and medieval knights, reconstructed late 1800s and renovated and modernized 1980s.	Very atractive routes to see vineyards, reservoirs, monuments, mountains, and the sea. Art in Murcia.
heumatisms, neuralgias nd traumatic sequelas.	Thermal pool, individual baths, vapor baths, showers, jets, drinking fountain, acclaimed mud treatments.	Used by Romans, and in recent centuries by Spanish kings and famous writers. Totally reconstructed in 1970.	Located in a mountain valley, a host of interesting churches in nearby villages.
heumatisms, traumatic equelas, obesity.	Baths, jets, showers, thermal pool, hand massage, vapor bath, sauna, paraffin bath, parafin-muds, electrotherapy, inhalations, gym, cervical traction, aerosols.	Vestiges include Roman sauna and baths and commemorative tablets. Complete renovation 1986.	Nearby is important baroque church Santa María. A wealth of excursions through the Vallés, Barcelona, and the Costa Brava.
heumatisms, neuralgias, lments of the skin and f respiratory passages, c.	Varying mineral content of the springs and excellent installations offer complete gamut of thermal treatments.	Roman vestiges. Most buildings and baths constructed 19th. century. Complete renovation 1973.	Located in the heart of the Pyrenees surrounded by beautiful lakes and peaks. Particularly interesting Romanesque churches in area.
ver ailments and bile ucts.	Individual baths, thermal pool, hydromassage, showers and jets, saunas, thermal massages, muds, drinking fountains.	Created in 1760, water once bottled and sold. Beautiful old hotel completed 1895. Many recent reforms.	Pleasant mountain hikes, drives to neighboring towns, of which Azpeitia is of particular artistic interest.
igestive ailments and ver and bile processes.	Individual baths, showers, aerosols, cervical traction, inhalation, 4 distinct drinking fountains.	Used by Arabs. Important springs were discovered in 1700s and 1800s. Latest reform 1970.	Located in a long valley, with an Arab castle. Magnificent drive through the beautiful woods and rustic towns of the Alpujarras mountains to Trevelez, highest town in Spain. Costa del Sol beaches.
heumatisms, ehabilitacion, skin and mphoid ailments.	Gym, saunas, baths and pool showers, inhalations, pulverizations, aerosols and muds.	Discovered by the owner of a sick donkey, developed in the 1800s. The building constructed 1907, renovated 1972. Instalations modernized 1984.	Surrounded by vast woods, beaches, and gardens on an island. Sports and casino. Trips by boat or bus to beaches and rustic fishing villages of the Galician cost.
igestive system, skin lments, rheumatism.	Drinking fountain, pool, baths, showers, inhalations, pulverizations.	Roman vestiges, constructed 1826 and later destroyed by landslides. Complete renovation 1982, installations modernized 1985.	Located at 1636m. (5366 feet) altitude by a lake in one of the most beautiful valleys of the Pyrenees, not far from Ordesa National Park. excellent hiking.
hronic rheumatisms, lments of respiratory asssages and mouth, roat, ear.	Baths, pool, showers, drinking fountain, inhalations, pulverizations, aerosols, massages, vaporizations, gym rehabilitation.	Built in 1863, renovated and modernized 1972 and 1981.	Very near is the Monasterio de Piedra.
heumatism, respiratory nd circulatory aparatus.	Baths, showers, jets, pool, sauna, paraffin baths, paraffin-muds, inhalations, aerosols, gym rehabilitation, diet, drinking fountain.	Remains of Roman baths in the town. Vichy constructed 1870 restored 1982 and completely renovated 1984.	Region contains several Romanesque churches. Gerona has a very interesting old core and numerous churches.

and surgery led to a decline in thermalism. Powerful new drugs provided more effective treatment for many diseases, while water continued to be important in treating patients suffering from respiratory afflictions, traumas, and especially rheumatism. Evasio Campos, owner and proprietor of the Balneario Broquetas, explains: *-As soon as medicines appeared, it became easier to take a pill than to go to a* balneario *for ten days. In those days, it took six hours to get here from Barcelona, because you had to come by carriage. So people preferred to take pills and the* balnearios *began to decline.-* The elegant *balnearios* of the Belle Epoque decayed and became nostalgic retreats for wealthy old romantics and the incurably ill. About half of the 186 *balnearios* in Spain at the beginning

Gardens in Caldas de Bohí.

of the century closed in debt during the austere years of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship.

Despite centuries of empirical evidence of curing illnesses, thermalism lacked scientific explanations and thus has been riddled with superstitions and abuses.

MODERN THERMALISM

Today, modern technology and practices as well as medical and scientific evidence have given thermalism a new respect among the medical profession and society as a whole. In 1987 the World Organization of Health considered *balnearios* as health centers.

Objective evidence has demonstrated beyond doubt the therapeutic effects of thermal water, effects produced by the temperature, pressure, and chemical composition of the water. Water treatments are more effective

in treating certain ailments, such as rheumatism, than conventional medicine. Modern methods with water are routinely used to treat rheumatic, respiratory, dermatological and digestive ailments.

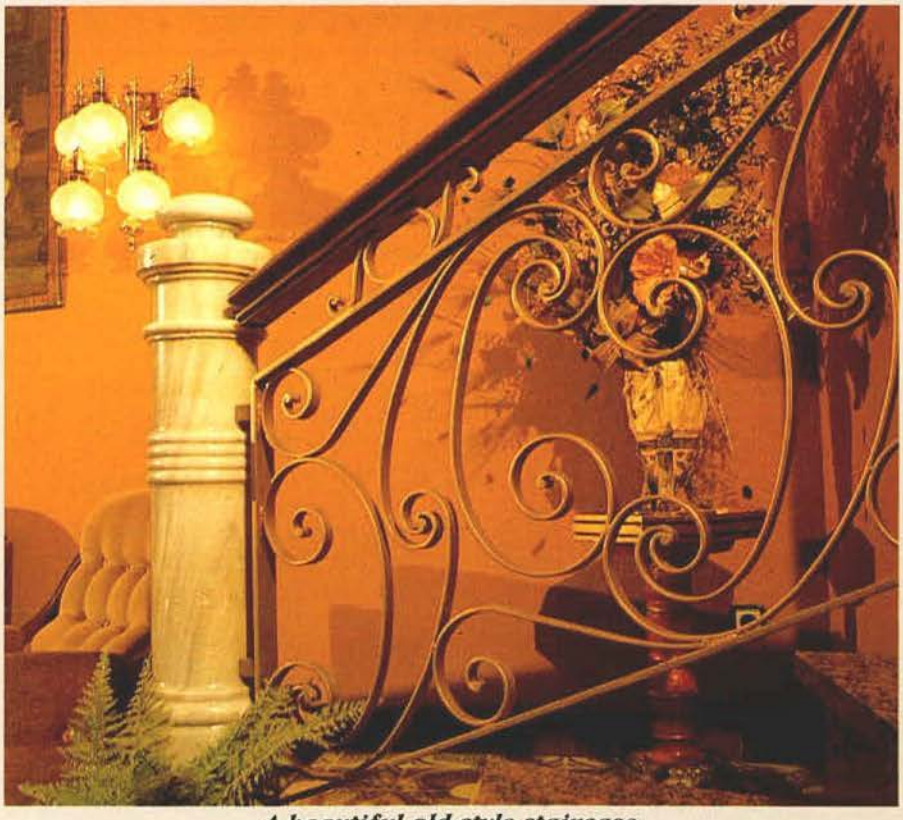
Moreover, properly applied water treatments have virtually no side effects. Dr. Miguel Angel Torán, specialist in hydrology and hydrotherapy at Broquetas, claims that the only side effects that patients encounter there are gaining weight on the fine cuisine and becoming addicted to the *balneario.*

ELEGANCE AND PEACE

An incredible 94 % of clients return to *balnearios* the following year. Besides the treatments that relieve their pains, they are lured by a special environment of tranquility and warmth that allows them to disconnect from the anxieties of their normal lives. Many doctors believe, like Dr. Rodríguez Minon who practiced at the Balneario Arnedillo (La Rioja) for 30 years, that *«three weeks of rest away from our neurotic society, without the constant stress of each day, in an atmosphere of peace and human communication, is not found in just any place. The effect of this atmosphere on the psyche is just as important as the benevolent properties of the waters.»*

Spanish bathers usually stay for long treatments of 15 to 21 days, many for two stays each year during the same months (September and March, for example). Thus they have a great deal of contact with the same clients as well as personnel, and develop friendships and a sense of belonging.

When you walk through shady trees — used since ancient times to separate these establishments from the outside world — to the monumental entrance of Balneario Vichy Catalán, you are entering another world. The elegance and spaciousness of the modernized Mozarabic architecture, softened by pastel colors and delicate details, delight and soothe the visitor. The daily routine of treatments leaves much time to enjoy the many activities available (billiards, lectures, etc.) or leisurely stroll through the gardens, chat with friends on the terrace, or stop in the grand hallway to listen to a pianist play Chopin. Dining is elegant, with original dishes using fresh local produce complemented by a bottle of *Vichy Catalán* mineral water, which is bottled here and sold throughout Spain.



A beautiful old-style staircase.

Swimming pool in Broquetas.

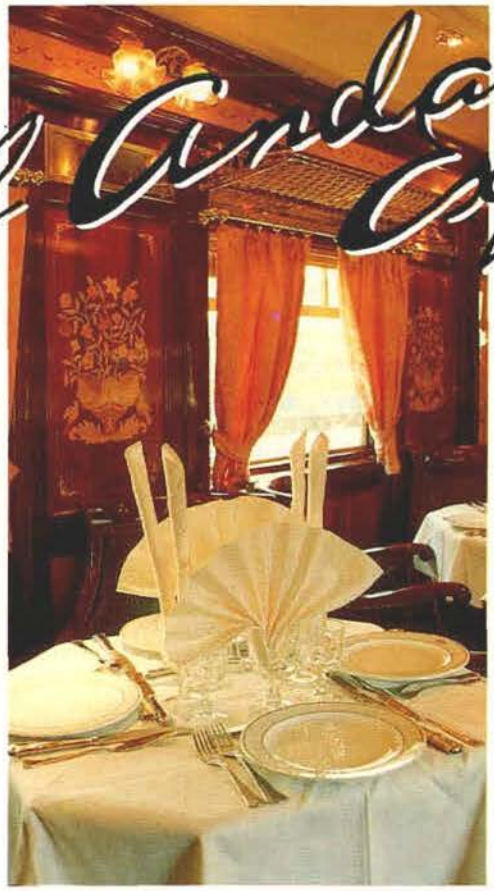
FUTURE

Spain has about 100 widely varying *balnearios* and is just starting to reawaken to their benefits. The 200,000 Spaniards who visit a *balneario* each year are dwarfed by the figures of their neighbors: 4 million in France and Italy, 8 million in Germany, and 15 million in the Soviet Union. The Spanish government has recently made the first tentative steps towards subsidizing treatments for retired people and providing credits for the modernization of installations.

Marcial Campos, a Spaniard who is President of the World Organization of Thermalism, notes that *«Spain enjoys a rich and varied supply of minero-medicinal waters».*

With demand increasing, Spain's *balnearios* installing among the old porcelain baths modern equipment such as circular showers. The main clientèle may continue to be older people with rheumatism and respiratory ailments. But *balnearios* are looking to attract a growing number of young people who are looking for new things. They are constructing swimming pools and squash courts to respond to the cult of the beautiful body, and incorporating treatments for the new ailments of the 20th century: obesity, stress and anxiety. More and more young professionals, instead of a crowded beach, are opting to spend their weekends and vacations resting and recuperating in these ancient paradises.

Al Andalus Expreso



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SPAIN

LAND OF THE MASTER ROASTERS

Text: **José Carlos Capel**
Photos: **P. Sancho-Mata**

Lamb is not what leaps to most minds at the thought of Spanish food. Yet it has been a national favourite for centuries. Eaten young and tender, there are countless traditional lamb recipes in Spain, though the best of the lot is apparently the simplest.

If you were asked to name the parts of the world where most lamb is eaten, the chances are that visions of British Sunday lunch, Greek moussaka, Middle Eastern kebabs and Indian curries would nudge your replies. But I'll bet you'd never think of Spain.

Yet lamb has been a Spanish favourite for centuries. Eaten young, so that the meat is exquisitely tender and delicate, it features in dishes from all over the Peninsula, the recipes varying according to local climate, prosperity and produce. In the vast central plateau of Castile, where nobility and unpretentiousness are the traditional virtues, they go in for simple, unbeatably delicious roasts. Extremadura, Andalusia and La Mancha all have their own variations on the *caldereta,* a lamb stew plumped out with vegetables and flavoured with herbs, whilst along the fertile banks of the River Ebro, which runs through Aragon, Rioja and Navarre, lamb is cooked *chilindrón* style with local onions, red peppers and tomatoes.

We know that back in the Middle Ages, lamb was the meat that graced the noblest tables in the land, but it was the turn of commercial events in the late 13C that produced the huge increase in its production and consumption that established it forever as a national favourite.

The repercussions of the boom in the European wool trade at that time were felt far and wide, and the 14C, and particularly the 15C, saw a spectacular increase in Castile's trade with Flanders. From her northern ports, Spain sent ships bound for Bruges and Antwerp laden with iron, foodstuffs — wine, olive oil, almonds, citrus fruits, rice — and, above all, wool from the flocks of merino sheep which were herded from pasture to pasture all over Spain.

Castile traded these products for wheat, salt fish and the luxury items which were then all the rage among the Spanish aristocracy, like fine fabrics from Abbeville and Ghent and lace from Bruges.

TRANSHUMANCE

The practice of transhumance, the grazing of livestock on upland pastures in

warm seasons and lower pastures the rest of the year, dates back centuries in Spain. Back in 1273, King Alfonso X, The Wise, created the -*Honrado Concejo de la Mesta de los Pastores de Castilla*-, a sort of guild of the shepherds of Castile, commonly known as *la Mesta,* to safeguard the burgeoning wool trade and to facilitate the collection of taxes to replenish the ever-voracious royal coffers.

For five centuries, until the Mesta was dissolved by the Cadiz Parliament in 1812, sheep-breeding was to remain one of the lynch-pins of the Spanish economy. Herding the flocks from pasture to pasture was so frequent and so widespread that the whole of Spain came to be crisscrossed by tracks which amounted essentially to a vast, if rudimentary, network of rural roads focused on three main routes originating in the northern provinces of León, Soria and Cuenca and gradually working their way southwards.

In the early Middle Ages, the strategic location of Medina del Campo in Valladolid, where routes to the Atlantic coast converged, transformed this little Castilian town into a vital hub of the wool trade where major transactions, heavily taxed by the crown, were carried out. Its fairs were a huge attraction and drew buyers and sellers from as far afield as Ireland, Flanders, Genoa and Florence.

As trade boomed, so did the town's importance, and the words -Payable in Medina del Campo- featured on bills of exchange all over Europe. For over a century, until Philip II declared the nation bankrupt in 1575 and 1579 thus severing the Medina-Bilbao-Antwerp trade chain, it used to be said that -when Medina's bank falters, the world's finances totter-.

SIDE-EFFECTS

A side effect of the thriving wool trade was the growing availability of, and taste for, lamb. There are innumerable historical references to the vast rate of lamb consumption in Spain, and it is a recorded fact that by 1650 some half million lambs a year were slaughtered in Madrid alone.

The influence of two important ethnic groups also had its effect in popularising lamb cuisine. For several centuries, Muslims and Jews coexisted peacefully with the Christians in Spain, with resultant cultural interchange at all levels. The expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, and subsequently of the *moriscos,* Muslim converts to Christianity, in 1609, dimmed their influence though it was by then deeply rooted.

There are innumerable historical references to the vast rate of lamb consumption in Spain. By 1650 some half million lambs a year were slaughtered in Madrid alone.

Lamb was charged with religious symbolism for the Jews and, cooked with bitter herbs, it became the dish with which, in Spain, they ritually commemorated their legendary Exodus from Egypt. At a more everyday level, *cholent,* or lamb stewed on a bed of broad beans was a classic Jewish dish, while the Arabs went in more for roasting whole lambs skewered on Y-shaped spits.

Information about indigenous dishes comes to us from varios sources, among them the well-known Spanish historian Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, who relates that during the late Middle Ages the subjects of one area of the Kingdom of León were obliged to prepare an annual banquet for their feudal lord, composed of foods which were considered delicacies: breads, bacon, fowls and lamb. Another indigenous classic in which lamb loomed large was the *olla podrida,* a sort of gigantic hot-pot of assorted meats and vegetables aimed at satisfying the apparently huge appetites of the rich and noble in 16C Spain.

In those days, lamb was eaten older than it is today. In *Don Quijote,* Cervantes tells us, with a view to conveying the information that our hero is not terribly well off, that his daily stew contains rather more beef than mutton, as opposed to lamb. Foreign travellers through Spain also recorded their observations on the quality and popularity of lamb or mutton. Portuguese traveller Tomé Pinheiro de Veiga noted, on visiting Valladolid, that -Spanish mutton is the best in the world-.

Some time later, and casting a slightly different light on the matter, Alexandre Dumas expressed his amazement at the number and variety of lamb-based dishes eaten in Castile: -...They eat it roast, as chops, in ragouts, with beans, but always with a lot of garlic. Lamb is so plentiful and so reasonably priced that a friend of mine who stayed in Carrión de los Condes, having eaten nothing but lamb for a month, was obliged to leave the place for a change of diet-.

Modern analysis reveals that lamb, nutritionally speaking, is good for you. Not only is rich in vitamins and mineral salts but it is also low in the saturated fats which cause raised cholesterol levels.

20C DIETETICS

Modern analysis reveals that lamb, nutritionally speaking, is good for you. Not only is it rich in vitamins (A, B_1 and B_2) and mineral salts (iron and phosphorus) but it is also, compared with pork and beef, low in the saturated fats which cause raised cholesterol levels. Like vegetables

and oily fish, it is high in unsaturated fats which help combat the accumulation of cholesterol and the attendant risk of heart disease.

On the gastronomic front, the Castilian roast is considered the pinnacle of lamb cuisine in Spain. Although these roasts seem simplicity itself, an elaborate ritual has to be performed to get them just right, starting off with prime quality ingredients.

For a classic Castilian roast, you need a brick baker's oven heated by a gentle fire of ilex, oak and *jara,* the fragrant resinous shrub which scents the air of the Spanish countryside. The cooking process is a slow, solemn ceremony and the roasting dish, traditionally a large earthenware oval, is rotated at intervals to a fixed and mysterious pattern.

The quartered lamb is placed, cavity side up, in the dish without either salt or water, and is allowed to cook gently, at a temperature of 80°C (144°F) for an hour and a half. The meat is turned over, spread with pork dripping, and put back in the oven for another hour and a half. It is salted just before serving.

Serving, or indeed eating, roast lamb in Spain requires careful planning and you should beware of any restaurant that serves it up at the drop of a hat. Habitués order in advance — once it's reheated, the magic is gone.

Nowadays, the Spanish eat their lamb young — very young. These *corderos de leche,* or *lechazos* (suckling lambs) are no more than a fortnight old and have never eaten grass or gambolled on it for they are kept under baskets from which the shepherds release them only to suck from the ewe. Some lambs are fed by two ewes, and the extra nourishment produces superior quality meat described as *-lechazo de dos madres-.*

Cándido López, owner of the famous *Mesón Casa Cándido* restaurant in the shadow of Segovia's Roman aqueduct, is something of a high priest of the Castilian roast ritual. Perhaps best known for his flamboyant performances of carving his roast suckling pig with the edge of a plate to show how tender it is, Cándido maintains that the lamb's forequartes are better than the hind because the way the lamb lies down tends to make the latter tough. He could probably be described as a *maestro asador,* or master roaster, traditionally highly prestigious figures, especially in Segovia. In days gone by they would be hired to cater for village fiestas, weddings and other big occasions where the food had to be of the best.

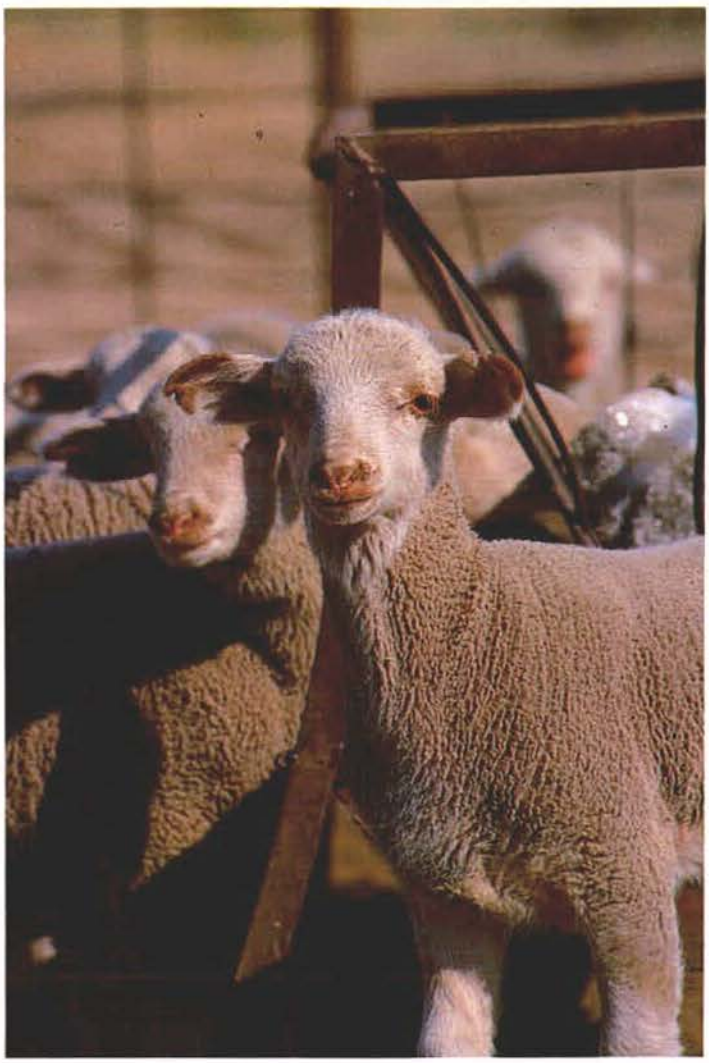
Although the same breed of sheep is raised throughout Castile, gastronomes insist that some areas produce better meat than others. Broadly speaking, the towns of Sepúlveda, Aranda de Duero and Peñafiel in the provinces of Segovia, Burgos and Valladolid, are generally accepted as the points of a triangle which contains the best lamb in Spain, though other areas have their fans. Cooking techniques vary subtly from *maestro* to *maestro,* area to area. In Villalón (Valladolid), when the roast is just done, it is sprinkled with a dressing of herbs and vinegar; in Burgos, the lamb is either roasted in a baker's oven or grilled over an open fire, and in Fermoselle (Zamora) it is cooked over oak embers.

As well as young *lechal* lamb, there is also demand within Spain and from abroad for older, larger and stronger-flavoured lamb. *Cordero pascual,* or Easter lamb, some four to five months old, is eaten roast, whilst lamb killed at ten months to a year tends to be cooked in other ways, many of the classic recipes coming from Aragon, Extremadura, Rioja, Navarre and Andalusia.

The *caldereta,* an invention of the wandering shepherds of the Mesta, is a basic stew of chunks of lamb cooked with vegetables, herbs and usually, wine. It appears in many guises according to region, sometimes with rice, potatoes or beans; *chilindrón* style with a sauce of red peppers and tomatoes; with liver and other offal — an impressive testimony to the culinary standards and ingenuity of the Spanish *pastor.* Lamb chops, much smaller than those eaten in Britain or the United States, are usually grilled over an open fire and either served alone — simple and delicious — or with a good garlicky mayonnaise, or *ali-oli.*

While the old recipes still flourish, the new wave which has swept over Spanish cuisine in the last few years has brought with it some interesting lamb dishes, as lovely to look at as they are to eat: loin of lamb stuffed with vegetables, ribs roasted with aromatic herbs, tiny chops made into fragrant *papillotes* with herbs and spices... Clearly, Spain's lamb-eating tradition is in no danger of dying out, particularly now that it bears the official seal of nutritional approval!

In the Middle Ages, lamb was the meat that graced Spain's noblest tables, but it was the turn of commercial events in the late 13C that produced the huge increase in its production and consumption that established it forever as a national favourite.



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Recipes

Marinaded lamb chops

Serves 2-3

8 small rib lamb chops
5 tablespoons olive oil
salt and freshly ground black peper
2 cloves garlic
2 teaspoons capers
1/2 teaspoon oregano
1 lemon

Peel the garlic cloves and crush them, then place in a deep dish with the olive oil, salt and pepper. Put the chops in the dish, moving them about so that they are well coated with the mixture and leave for 2 hours to absorb the flavours. Drain them, dry them with paper towel and then fry them for a couple of minutes over a high heat so that they brown lightly on both sides. Lower the heat to a minimum, add the original marinade to the pan along with the oregano and the capers, then cover the pan and allow the chops to cook for a further 15 minutes. Serve them very hot, seasoned with a squeeze of lemon juice and accompanied by fried potatoes.

Guard of honour

Serves 5-6

2 best ends of lamb
salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
thyme
a bunch of watercress
parsley
1 kg potatoes

Tell the butcher what you want the meat for so that he trims the meat from between the bones to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the ends. Place the two best ends facing each other and interlock the exposed bones like the fingers of two hands, tying them together at either end. Rub the meaty surfaces with olive oil, salt, pepper and a little thyme. Wrap each bone individually in silver foil to stop them burning and place the guard of honour in a very hot (preheated) oven for 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to half and cook for 30 minutes more. Remove from the oven and serve garnished with the watercress and sprinkled with chopped parsleys. This is excellent served with fried potatoes and its own cooking juices.

Huelva lamb stew

Serves 5-6

3 kg lamb
2 medium onions
2 kg tomatoes
1/4 kg green peppers
1 bay leaf garlic
cloves (to taste)
1/2 dessertspoon black peppercorns sea salt

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1 clove
2 litres very young dry white wine

Cut the meat into very large, thick slices, and wash and dry well. Quarter the tomatoes, slice the onions finely and cut up the green peppers into large dice. Choose a wide casserole dish and in it place a layer of meat, then one of onion and pepper, then one of tomatoes. Repeat the layers until you use up all the main ingredients, then sprinkle with sea salt and add the peppercorns, the clove, the bay leaf and the whole garlic cloves. Pour on the wine and cook gently until the meat is tender and the wine has reduced considerably. Skim the fat off the sauce before serving.

Loin of lamb a la panadera

Serves 6
11/2 kg loin of lamb
1/4 kg onions
1 kg potatoes
1/2 litre chicken stock (cubes will do)
2 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons olive oil
sea salt, pepper and parsley

Tell the butcher to prepare the joint for roasting. Make incisions in the skin with a sharp knife and slide in slivers of garlic, then season the joint well by rubbing it all over with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Slice the onions into fine rings and fry them gently in a frying pan with the oil. Peel the potatoes and slice, not too finely. Place the onions and potatoes in layers in an ovenproof dish, seasoning each layer with salt, then add enough stock to cover. Place the joint of lamb on top and cook in the oven for an hour and a half. Serve sprinkled with plenty of chopped parsley.

Lamb hot-pot

Serves 6
11/2 kg lamb (any good, lean cut)
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion
1/2 kg carrots
1/2 kg turnips
1/2 kg potatoes
2 cups chicken stock (cubes will do)
1 glass white wine
2 tomatoes
1 clove garlic
black peppercorns
thyme

Slice the onion into half rings and soften them gently in a fireproof casserole. Add the lamb, cut into fairly large chunks, and allow to brown. Add the carrots, cut into thick rings, the wine, the garlic, the quartered tomatoes, a pinch of thyme, a few peppercorns and the stock. Cover the casserole and simmer gently for an hour before adding the cubed potatoes and turnips. Season with salt at this point, then allow to cook for another hour or so until the meat is tender, by which time the liquid will have reduced to a rich sauce.


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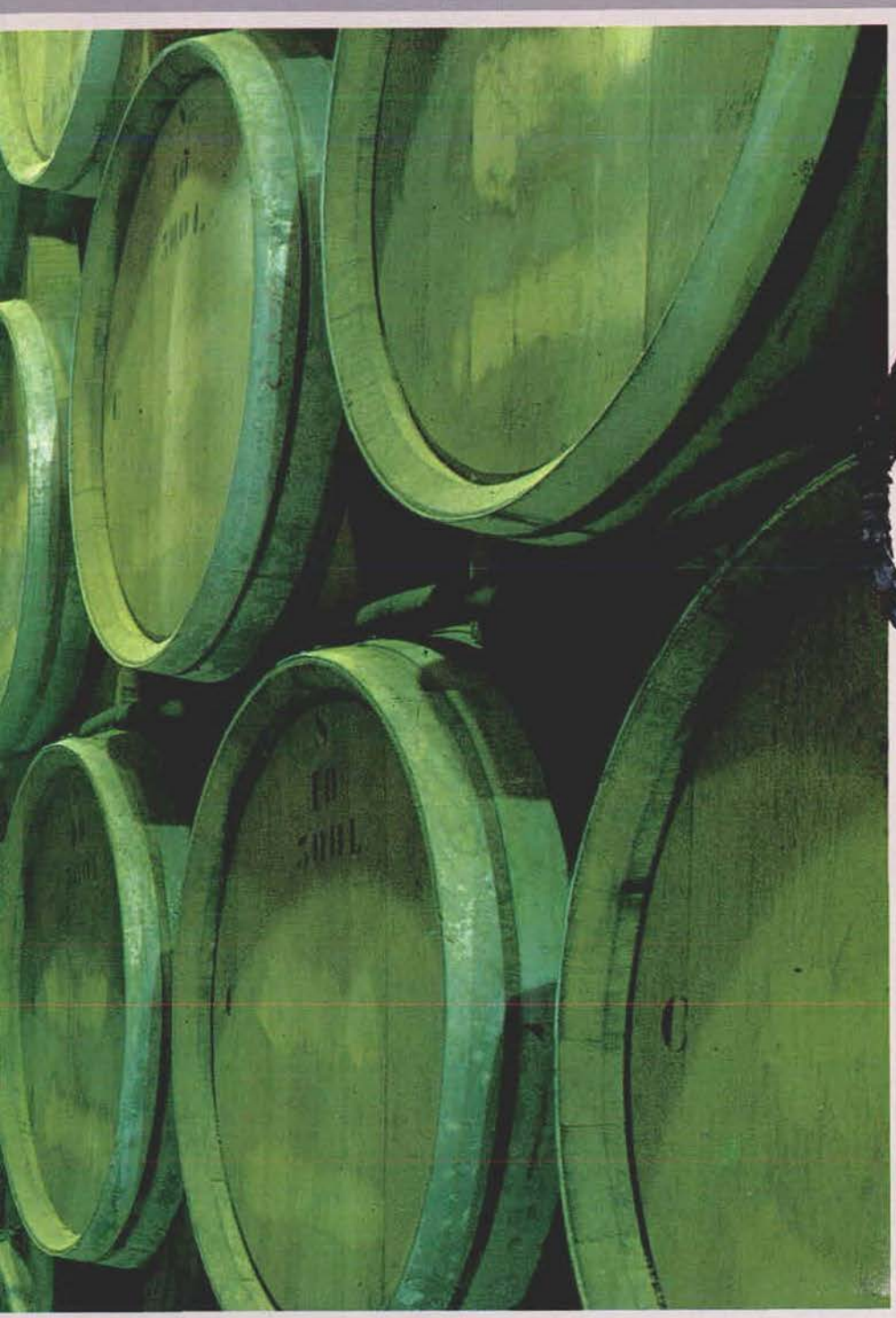
CATALAN BRANDY

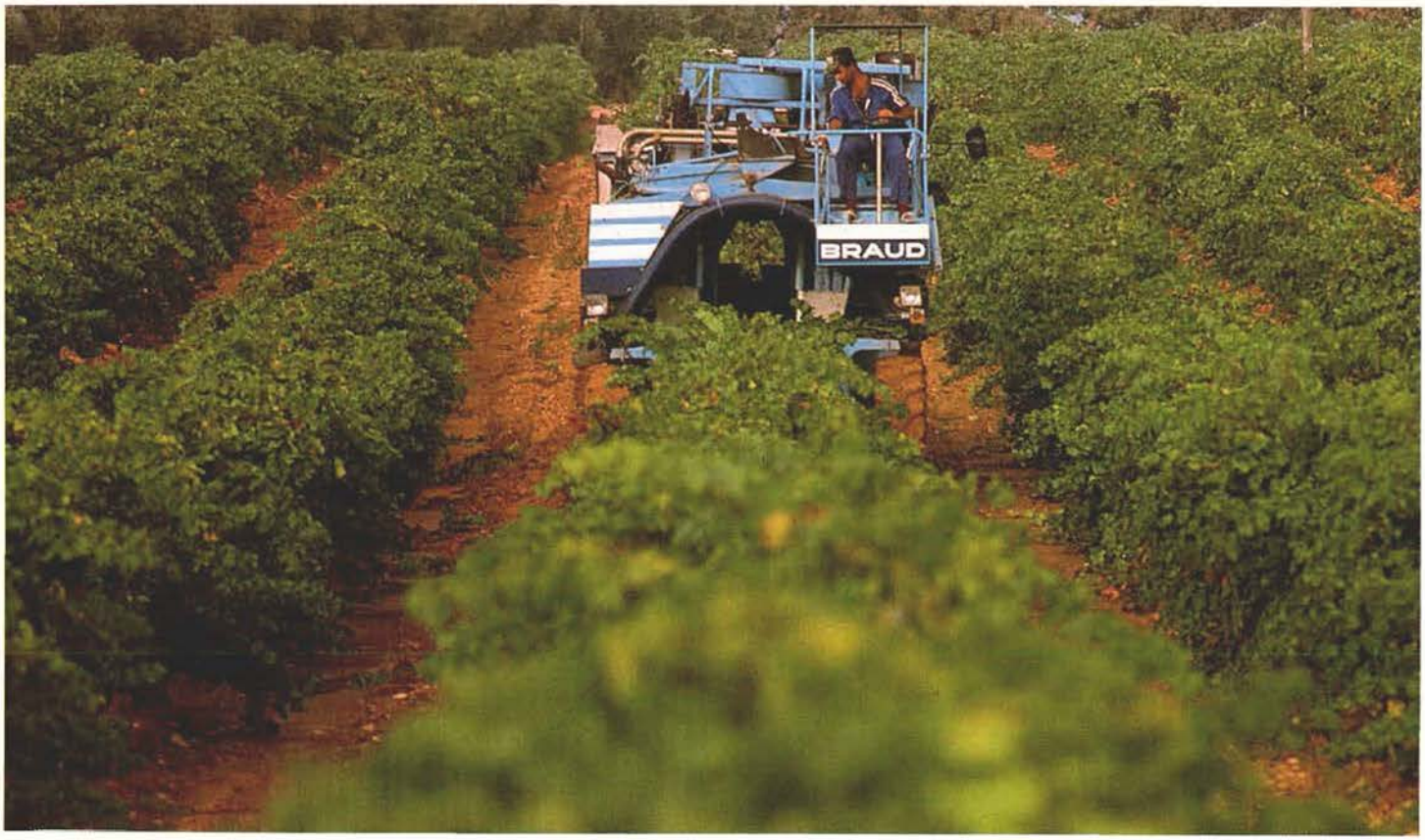
IN THE BEST OF SI

Text: **Alain Kelepikis**
Photos: **Nelson Souto**



Catalan brandy is made with the grapes grown in the Penedés area of north-east Spain. Whilst more similar to French Cognac than to its fellow Spanish brandy from Jerez (the sherry-producing region), both Spanish brandies have in common the fact that they are one-hundred per cent distilled from grapes, without the addition of any other type of alcohol.

PIRITS

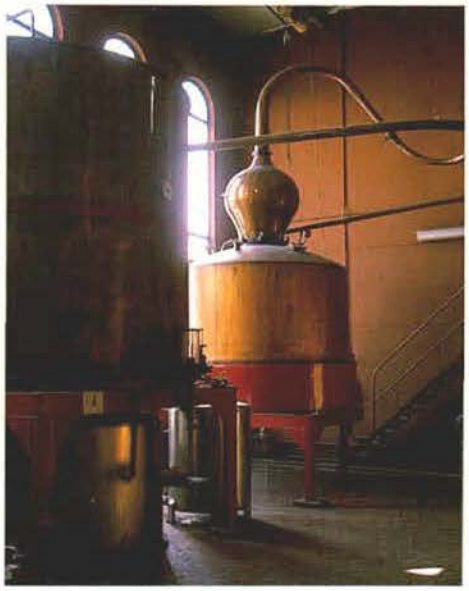


Although production in Catalonia began only last century, over the last few years, Catalan brandy has doggedly persevered in its endeavours to ensure maximum quality.

Its history is short but sweet. Although production in Catalonia began only last century, over the last few years, Catalan brandy has doggedly persevered in its endeavours to ensure maximum quality, aspiring to a *Denominación de Origen,* a certificate of origin that would recognise the region's specific quality characteristics.

For foreigners, the idea of Spanish brandy abroad usually conjures up pictures of noble knights drinking the spirit on the eve of battle or as they celebrate on their victorious return. Romantic as it may seem, there is a seed of truth in this link between the drink and the age of knights of chivalry. According to the Spanish writer and gourmet Nestor Luján's book, *Libro del Brandy y de los Destilados, aguardientes* (fire-water or spirit) was first referred to in the mid-17th century, in *La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor, compuesta por él mismo* (-The life and deeds of Estebanillo González, a good-humoured man, composed by himself-), published in Antwerp in 1646. And alongside it, the word *brandevino* also appears on the same pages, obviously a literal Castilian translation of the Dutch word *brandewijn* (brandywine) which later became anglicised as -brandy-, a name which was soon adopted internationally.

However, although we may date the word, the history of the drink itself is harder to track down. The exact date when Spain began distilling brandy is still unspecified. Some would put it back to the more than five hundred years of Arab occupation in Andalusia, arguing that the Arabs would have distilled wine as the best method for obtaining alcohol. However, other historians claim that the *aguardiente jerezano* (Sherry Spirit) came into being somewhat later, in the 16th century, at the height of the Spanish empire.



Since we are concerned with Catalan brandy here, our task is somewhat easier, since it has a shorter history. We can be reasonably sure that it began to be distilled in the 18th century, when a famous Catalan merchant, Bacardí, established himself in Cuba to promote trading relations between the island and the Spanish peninsula, importing his local *aguardiente,* which he used to prepare what was perhaps the best rum of his time.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: TIME FOR A BRANDY

This century has witnessed a boom in the Catalan wine industry. This has been especally true of the last few years, although the *Torres* wine producers, the biggest in Penedés (the region with the best vineyards in all of Catalonia) began to distill *aguardientes* as early as 1928. These 60 years have also seen the producers, *Mascaró* and *Manuel Giró,* making slow but sure headway, so that Penedés production and marketing has gradually been stepped up as the quality of its wines has been upgraded and they have gained a higher profile abroad.

To begin with, the region's brandies were not given as much importance as its still and sparkling wines. However, with time, both the quantity and the quality of the brandy production has grown. The main characteristic has always been the Penedés brandy's immediately recognisable similarity to Cognac and Armagnac brandies, lacking the Jerez brandy's distinctive *bouquet* that has become known abroad as the mark of a *typical Spanish brandy.*

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SPANISH BRANDIES - TYPES AND ELABORATION METHODS

Two regions of Spain are known for their brandies —Andalusia and Catalonia, and though basically similar, produced by distilling wine and ageing the spirit in oak casks, there are certain significant differences in the brandies they produce.

Before analysing these differences in detail, it is worth mentioning that there are two basic methods of distillation: continuous distillation, which produces rectified wine spirit, high in alcohol (80-96°), clean, neutral and without impurities; and discontinuous, or two-phase, distillation, as in the Charentais, or Cognac, method which uses a simple pot still with a coiled condenser.

The first method produces a spirit which is chemically pure and has little to offer in the way of taste or smell, while the second produces the wine spirit known in Spain as *holandas*, originating from unfiltered wine, some of whose aroma and flavour survive in the distillate.

Brandy-makers turn for their supplies of rectified alcohol to the big distilleries of La Mancha and Extremadura, both large-scale wine producing areas in their own right.

Spanish brandies are, almost without exception, the offspring of a felicitous union between rectified alcohol and *holandas*, the vital gestation period taking place in oak casks.

Jerez brandies are obtained from wine spirit — recitified and *holandas* in varying proportions — distilled from wines made from Airen and Cayetana grapes grown on the plains of La Mancha and Extremadura. These wines range from 10-12° in alcoholic strength and are low on aroma and overall acidity.

Catalan brandies, mostly produced in the Penedés area, are based on *holandas* which bear the stamp of Parellada, Xarello and Macabeo grapes, particularly the first of these varieties, though a certain amount of spirit produced by continuous distillation may well also be involved. That being said, however, this region's few and well-known brandy-makers take great pride in their Charentais-type stills.

In Jerez, on the other hand, the local speciality is the application of the *solera* system to brandy. Oak buts, stacked in rows according to age of contents, are skilfully and patiently topped up one from the other, from scale to scale, to give a perfectly uniform end product. The Catalans do not go in for this systematised ageing method, and simply age their brandies in oak casks.

The addition of caramel to intensify colour — though it does affect taste, too — is a legal practice in Spain, as indeed it is in Cognac, and is used more in Jerez than in Catalonia. This contributes to the similarity between Catalan and French brandies, while Jerez's have more style of their own.

According to Alberto Fornos, Torres Public Relations Manager, -The Jerez brandies leave a lingering aftertaste of their fortified wines in the mouth. There are two reasons for this: either because a touch of sherry is added to them, with the intention of achieving this particular taste and aroma, or else because they are aged in barrels that have previously been used for these fortified wines and their wood is impregnated with those characteristic aromas... A Catalan brandy is a -French-style brandy-.

Experts explain that there are other differences, apart from these external characteristics. They cite the influence of the different conditions in the production of the two Spanish brandies, such as the *solera de envejecimiento* (-vintage aging-) system widely used in Jerez, whereby young brandies can be blended with others that have been maturing for three, four, five or ten years, for example. Moreover, most Catalan brandies, even from the smaller *bodegas*, are double distilled in stills, unlike the Jerez brandies, according to the Catalan producers.

Of course, the most immediately obvious differences are the natural ones: The weather and the varieties of vines in La Mancha, the region that produces the grapes for the production of sherry in Jerez, are very different from the weather and the vines in Catalonia, and especially from those in Penedés. There is a mainly Mediterranean climate throughout Catalonia, but Penedés also enjoys a very mild microclimate which means that it can easily grow Xarello, Macabeo and Parellada grapes. These varieties, either alone or in combination, are used as the basis for the area's wines, cavas and brandies.

D.O. -ESPRIT-

Of the approximately 100 million litres of brandy produced in Spain each year, roughly 93 percent come from Jerez, while Catalonia only produces some 6 million litres. However, it was the Catalan firms that first began campaigning to get a *denominación de origen* for brandies, just as there are for wines. A *denominación de origen* is recognition of the special qualities of a locality and a bottle bearing it is guaranteed to have come from that locality and therefore to have those qualities.

For the last three years-, says the Chairman of the *Asociación del Brandy Catalán*, the lawyer, José Ventosa Palancas, -*the Catalan wine trade has been fighting to get a* denominación de origen *for its brandies, so that their own special character is given recognition, and also because the current trend towards identifying product quality with the geographical area where the product was produced is a definite plus when it comes to marketing*-.

-The two leaders in this battle are the two biggest producers in the region, Miguel Torres and Antonio Mascaró. The idea is to christen the zone chosen with the name (denomination) D.O. -Esprit-, the Catalan term for spirit.

-*If we manage to overcome the internal differences that always separate the farmers and the wine trade when they have to discuss the limits to the D.O. zone*-, José Ventosa explains, -*we are sure to have no problems with the European authorities. We were in Brussels recently, when we went to apply for authorisation for 800 hectares more of vineyards for grapes to be used for brandy production and we met no opposition*-.

The path towards this much-longed-for geographical distinction is not exactly without its ups and downs. However, whatever the technical arguments about the exact terms of its *denominación de origen*, one thing is beyond dispute: the recognised quality of Catalan brandy.

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L A F O N D A

Haute Cuisine with Alegría

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

Horcher fell in love with* La Fonda*'s poignant elegance and bought it.

Until it was -discovered- in 1977 by Gustavo Horcher, one of Madrid's top restaurateurs, *La Fonda* was just what its Spanish name suggests — an inn or tavern. Now to anyone brought up on Dickens or Du Maurier, these word conjure up pictures of ruddy-faced landlords, copper warming pans, oaken beams... Suffice it to say that this particular *fonda* is in Andalusia and is a gem of late 18C local architecture. Built around a central patio, its whitewashed walls, Moorish arches, the play of light and shade and the murmur of water are redolent of the Arab heritage of this part of Spain.

Horcher, a devotee of Marbella like so many *bons viveurs*, fell in love with *La Fonda*'s poignant elegance and bought it. The same simple white façade now fronts what is essentially the Marbella branch of Madrid's exclusive *Hocher* restaurant.

Of course there have been changes, but they have been kept to a minimum to preserve La Fonda's original charm. The decor is still simple. The large windows have been given surrounds of vivid *azulejos*, the brightly coloured glazed tiles so typical of Andalusia. The walls, still whitewashed, are now hung with collections of traditional pottery, military paintings and decorated mirrors reminiscent of the Belle Epoque. Furniture has been kept as lightweight as possible to allow the intrinsic beauty

The large windows have been given surrounds of vivid azulejos, *the brightly coloured glazed tiles so typical of Andalusia.*

of the interiors and the patio to show through.

In Ramón Ballesteros, Sr. Horcher had the ideal person to manage *La Fonda*. He had been with the Horcher familiy since the Madrid restaurant opened in 1943 and his years of experience had equipped him not only with a mastery of the arcane skills of the *maître*, but also with the contacts and know-how necessary to put together a first class team. The same team of thirty people is still intact today, and Sr. Ballesteros is hugely proud of it.

He cannily recognised that *Horcher*'s Madrid formula for success would need to be adapted to the local market and, particulary, to the more informal tone of this glamorous playground coast, without relaxing standards. The fact that Sr. Ballesteros has been known to travel the 100 kms. to the port of Algeciras to snap up the best of the catch of seabream, monkfish, grouper and seabass conveys something of his perfectionism.

Guinea fowl mousse with brandy.

Marbella's marvellous weather and the fact that its well-heeled habitués tend not to be the sort of people who have to get back to the office mean that there is no -off- season as such. Here, suntans never fade and the holiday time-table applies all year round: up late in the morning, beach in the afternoon, then long, late dinner and, for those who like that sort of thing, the sort of glittering night-life that makes the pages of Spain's inimitable gossip magazines. Sensibly, then, *La Fonda* opens for dinner only, and in summer stages two -sittings-. The first attracts foreign tourists who keep relatively early hours, and the second mainly Spanish customers who demonstrate that enviable abililty to stay up all night with unflagging vivacity, often popping into a café for an early breakfast on the way home to bed.

This poses its organisational problems for the kitchen team, headed by José Ramos Torres, who copes beautifully. He changes his menu every four months or so, but these highlights convey something of the general tone: aubergine mould, fish terrine with herb sauce, marinaded seabass with dill, avocado pancakes with prawns, partridge, guinea fowl... Horcher enthusiasts from the big city are delighted to find all their favourite desserts on the menu at *La Fonda*, with a few

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particular house specialities, like the unlikely sounding but delicious fried ice-cream (see »Recipes«).

The bar area where you can have pre-dinner drinks or linger for hours over your coffee and liqueurs actually achieves that rare feat of making you feel at ease, and summer dinners in the patio are a sybarite's delight. The air is balmy, the fountain murmurs, the food is exquisite. Sr. Ballesteros says that he really *enjoys* his customers, and it shows. This is haute cuisine with a touch of Andalusian *alegría*. It seems effortless, but it takes subtle skills to get these things just right.

Until it was »discovered« in 1977 by Gustavo Horcher, one of Madrid's top restaurateurs, La Fonda *was just what its Spanish name suggests —an inn or tavern.*

Recipes

Guinea fowl mousse with brandy

Serves 6
- 1 guinea fowl
- 1 teaspoon chopped shallot
- 1/2 glass brandy
- 1/4 l whipping cream
- 200 g butter
- 1 carrot
- 1 sprig thyme
- 5 g juniper berries
- salt and pepper

Roast the guinea fowl. When cool, skin and trim thoroughly then press through a fine sieve. Boil the carcass and the vegetables together and use the stock to make 1/4 litre glaze with gelatine. When lukewarm, add the meat, the remaining ingredients and, last of all, the whipped cream. Form into a roll and serve, cut into slices, with Cumberland sauce.

King prawns with braised endives

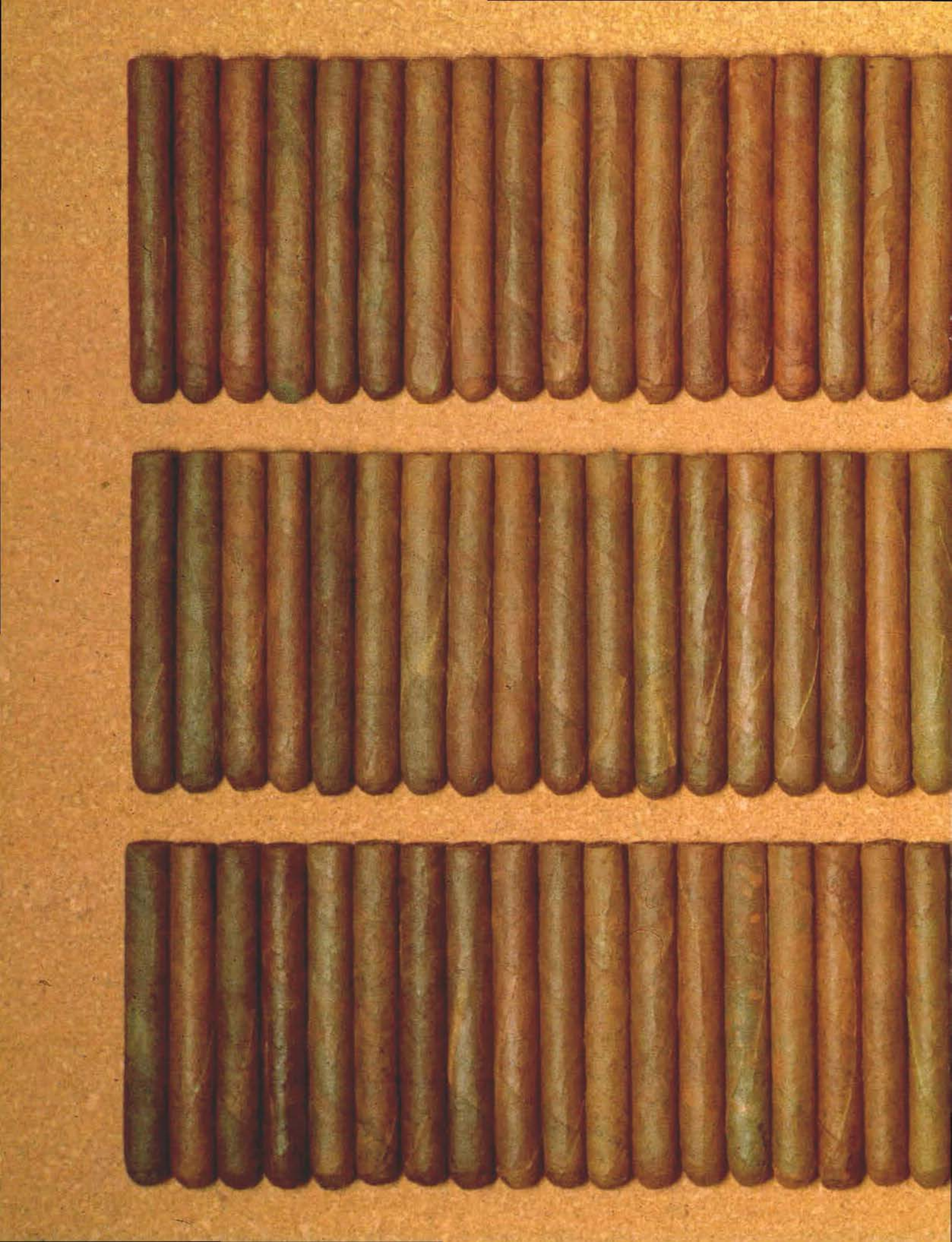
Serves 6
- 24 king prawns
- 6 endives
- 6 small turnips
- 6 carrots
- 1 courgette
- 1 glass brandy
- 1/2 l cream
- 50 g butter
- 1 shallot
- 1/4 l bisque
- salt and pepper

Shell the prawns and place in a fire-proof dish with the butter and chopped shallot. Pour over the brandy and set alight, and then add the cream, allowing to cook gently for 7 minutes. Remove the prawns and set aside, then reduce the sauce until thick and add the bisque. Meanwhile, boil the vegetables until just tender, then toss in the butter. Braise the endives. Serve the prawns with the sauce and garnish with the various vegetables.

Fried ice cream

Serves 6
- 12 scoops buttery ice cream
- 150 g grated almonds
- 200 g sponge-cake crumbs
- 2 l olive oil
- 1/2 l Spanish *ponche* or another sweet liqueur
- lemon rind

Mix together the grated almonds and the cake crumbs and roll each scoop of ice cream in the mixture, then chill them in the freezer for 4 hours. Place the lemon rind in a frying pan with the olive oil and heat to frying temperature. Dip each ice cream ball in liqueur and fry. Serve with raspberry *coulis* or a chocolate sauce.



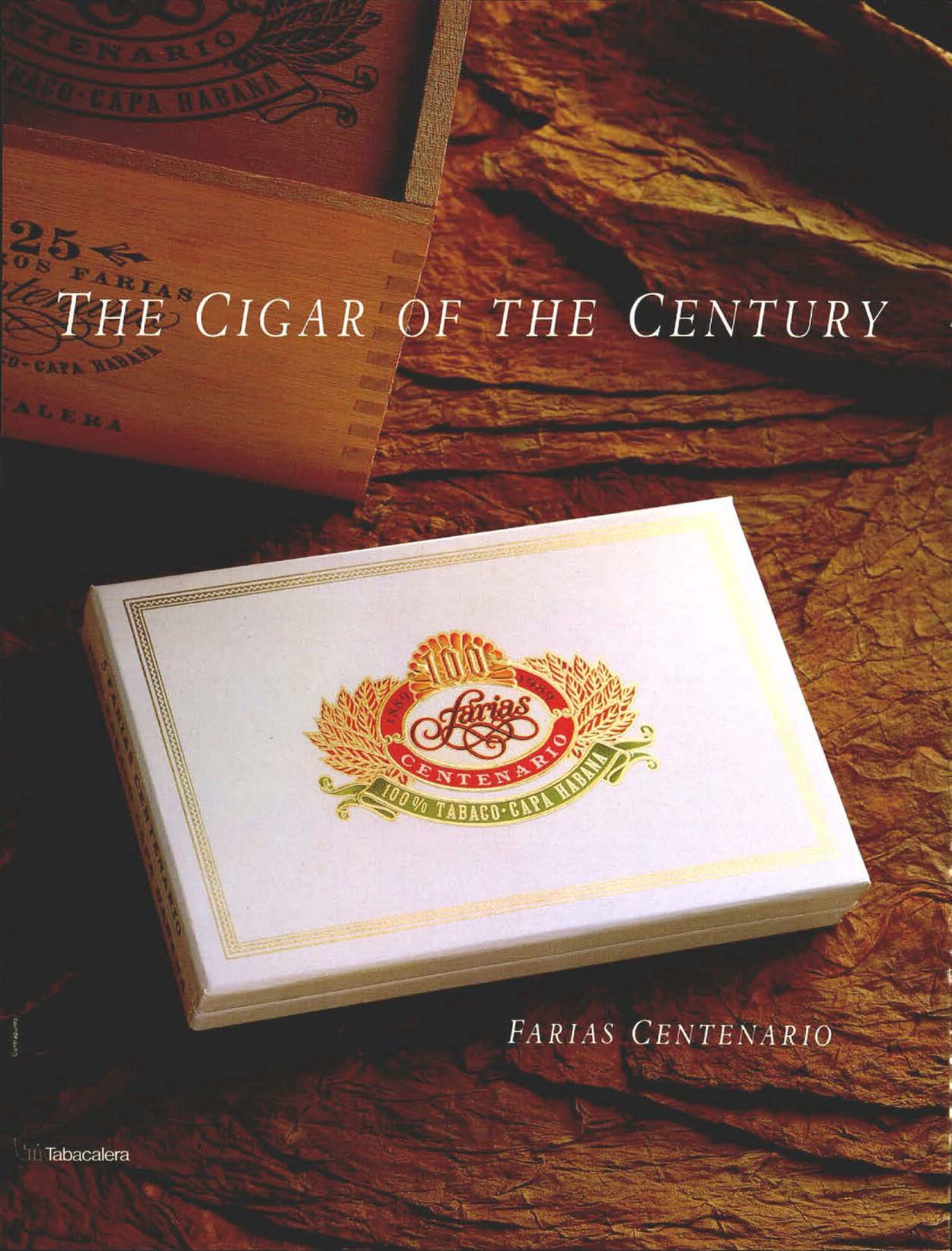
CANARY ISLAND CIGARS

A SMOKER'S SMOKE

Text: **Daniel Hortas**
Photos: **Sobremesa and Club de Gourmets**

The Spanish are great smokers. And hardly surprising when you consider that they were the first Europeans to discover tobacco. Luis de Torres and Rodrigo de Jerez, members of Columbus' crew on his first great voyage of discovery, are credited with being the Old World's pioneer smokers. It is difficult to imagine now how astonishing it must have seemed to them to see the natives of The Americas inhaling the smoke from burning tobacco leaves through cane pipes and puffing on crude precursors of cigars. Or indeed to realise how daring they were to try it themselves, taking, in the process, the first tentative steps in what was to develop into an enormously profitable world-wide trade route.

The Andalusian city of Seville, in southern Spain, was the hub of Spain's trade with her colonies for centuries, and it was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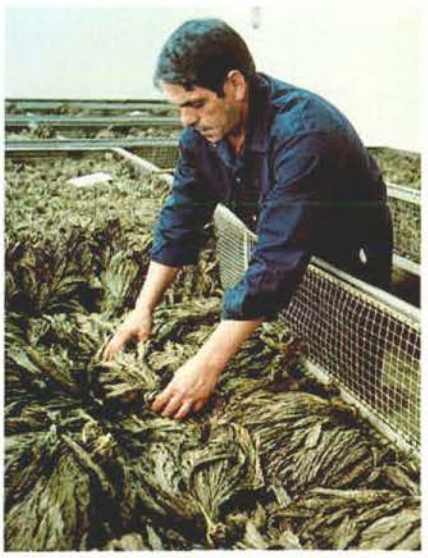
here, in the San Pedro quarter, that the first tobacco factory was set up — records date back to 1620 — later to be replaced by the marvellously evocative building which so captivated Mérimée's Romantic imagination and inspired his creation of that quintessentenial Spanish seductress Carmen, the *cigarrera* made famous the world over by Bizet's opera. The building still stands, now occupied by Seville's Hispalense university.

Spain's overseas discoveries opened up new horizons in more than just the geographical sense. Scientific enquiry and experiment flourished, and in the Botanic Gardens at the foot of the Giralda, the minaret of the mosque which originally stood on the site of Seville's cathedral, Dr. Nicolás Monades carried out early experiments with seeds from the Americas and the first written study of tobacco, then considered to have medicinal properties, was produced in consequence. Francisco Hernández Boncalo, medical adviser to Philip II, was another early investigator of new plant species imported from the New World.

In the Canaries, plans are afoot to turn the islands into Europe's main source of quality cigars. The venture has the backing of several companies.

Tobacco soon caught on with the general public, who chewed it, inhaled it as snuff, drank it in infusions and, most of all, smoked it. Soldiers of the Spanish imperial armies carried in with them in their knapsacks on campaigns all over Europe while missionary monks planted it for its decorative qualities in the gardens of the Far East. Dutch and British sailors, rivals in trade with the Americas, popularised pipe-smoking. But the Spanish have always preferred the cigar, or *puro* as they call it — -pure- as opposed to adulterated versions made of tobacco wrapped in leaves of other, inferior, plants such as maize.

Spain acquired a taste for the best in that her old colonies happened to enjoy ideal conditions for the cultivation of superior tobacco varieties — light, humus-rich soil and plenty of warmth without too much sun. According to Zino Davidoff, undisputed authority in the field, the Spanish



have always been privileged cigar smokers, both in terms of quality and quantity.

A ROUND TRIP

Cuba's legendary cigar industry had its heyday in the latter half of the 19th century, when over four hundred manufacturers supplied markets all over the world.

Curiously, unlike sugar-cane and cotton, tobacco has never been associated with slave labour. Indeed, the instigators of Cuban emancipation were tobacco-growers exiled in Florida, and legend has it that the order to launch the revolution was delivered from Key West in 1895 hidden inside a cigar.

The movement for independence from Spain was to be backed by both tobacco growers and manufacturers who, originating from all parts of Spain and dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of the Spanish authorities, had set themselves up in plantations and factories in the Caribbean. The great tobacco dynasties — Gener, Partagás, Cifuentes and many more — date from this time, and their names live on in the brands and cigar-bands of today's industry.

Among the tobacco tycoons were many Canary Islanders who had crossed the Atlantic to seek their fortunes, taking with them their tobacco-growing and manufacturing skills. They were soon to make their mark, and the quality of crops and end products soared under their experienced care. For many of them, the Cuban period was to be a stage in a round trip, subsequent events making it necessary for them to return to their native islands where they set up in business yet again.

In the wake of Castro's takeover of Cuba, many tobacco business-men returned to the Canaries, some of them legendary names to connoisseurs of the havana cigar. Among them were the descendants of José María García and Hermenegildo Menéndez, creators of the *Montecristo,* and a branch of the Cifuentes family (others opted for the United States), successors to Jaume Partagás, the enterprising Catalan who had founded the prestigious *Flor de Tabacos Partagás* factory in 1848.

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Among today's smokers

there is demand

for the top quality

craftsman-made *puro* as well

as for the more

everyday big sellers.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

This influx of tobacco know-how in combination with the Canary Islands' privileged fiscal status and geographical location, was to provide a powerful boost for the archipelago's tobacco industry.

Small family businesses, generally barely industrialised, flourished in the islands. These little workshops are known in the trade as *chinchales,* and even today there are some five hundred of them turning out hand-made cigars and popular brands.

There are still those purists who maintain that a truly good cigar has to be hand-rolled by the nimble fingers of a *cigarrera,* inheritor of the skills of generations of tobacco-rolling forebears. And indeed, up until the late 1880's hand-rolling was the only known way of making cigars. Then along came Heraclio Farias, clearly more of a functionalist than a romantic, who revolutionised the whole business of cigar manufacture.

A Mexican of Spanish stock, he arrived in Madrid shortly after the State Tobacco Company was founded in 1887 and sold it his patented mechanised system which made it possible to use chopped leaves for the filling, keeping the costlier whole leaves for the outer wrapping only. So successful was his system and so economical in raw material, that it was taken up throughout the tobacco manufacturing industry. Hand-rolled cigars became an expensive luxury item to such an extent that the traditional skills involved were in danger of dying out. Today, the industry is taking a renewed interest in the cigar as an art form and has recognised that there is still demand among today's smokers for the top quality craftsman-made *puro* as well as for the more everyday big sellers.

In the Canaries, plans are afoot to turn the islands into Europe's main source of quality cigars. The venture has the backing of several companies, many of them international, and its aims are ambitious. They will be producing not only classic Canary Island cigars (less aromatic than Cuban ones, they are paler in colour and better-burning), but also, for the first time outside Cuba, -havana- cigars in association with the national Cuban company, *Cubatabaco.*

Top names, like England's *Alfred Dunhill* and Holland's *Henry Wintermann,* already use Canary Island manufacturers for some of their cigars for overseas markets, while a cigar recently launched in France under the name of the historic château of *Chambord* actually hails from Tenerife. Meanwhile, names like *Peñamil, Condal, Alvaro* and the legend -Made in the Canary Islands- are becoming familiar to North American cigar smokers.

There's clearly more to these plans than just pipe dreams.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

IN SPAIN

Text: **Janet Mendel**
Photos: **Sobremesa**

Christmas in Spain is like nowhere else in the world. It bursts forth in the joyousness of song, dance and feasting to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, yet with many Oriental overtones which remind us of Spain's Moorish heritage.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

IN SPAIN

Where I live in southern Spain, a -white Christmas- means the blinding white of walls in an Andalusian village on a December morning, when the air is so diamond clear that you can see the snow on the Rif Mountains across the sea in Africa. On Christmas Day we have drinks on the terrace next to a poinsettia tree in brilliant bloom.

And the music! None of the somber, solemn Christmas carols of northern Europe. The Spanish ones are merry and fun: *arre borriquito,* giddy-up, little donkey, we're going to Bethlehem. In some parts of Spain the carolers are accompanied by drums, tambourines, brass mortar and pestle and the *zambomba,* a strange rhythm instrument resembling a drum pierced by a stick. The player rubs the stick up and down through the drumhead, producing a weird, grunting sound to accompany the singing. The group goes singing through the streets and doors open. At the finish, plates of typical Christmas sweets are passed around —and perhaps a bottle of brandy to warm chilly hands, then off they go, streamers flying down the street.

Fiesta means feast and, in Spain, Christmas is the biggest feast of the year. And the longest, for it lasts a full 12 days. Otherwise frugal housewives suddenly start splurging on luxury foods. The quantity of oysters, giant prawns and lobsters which get carried away from the markets during these days is astonishing. The butcher dispenses turkeys, capons and pheasant, whole loins of pork and tiny, baby lambs by the dozens. Cava and *aguardiente,* anise brandy, are bought by the crate, and traditional Christmas sweets are purchased in five-kilo boxes. 'Tis the season to be joyous and generous.

Though most Spanish homes today are decked out with Christmas trees, more traditional is the *belén,* or nativity scene, with small figures of the Christ Child in the manger, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the three Kings, who are daily moved closer to the manger (see article page 66).

During the days preceding and following Christmas, neighbors, relatives and friends come calling. Always there is the tray put on the table with bottles of Spanish brandy, sweet anise liqueur and Malaga wine, accompanied by typical holiday sweets such as *roscos,* wine doughnuts; *mantecados,* sesame-studded biscuits; and *empanadillas,* tiny fried pastries with a sweet filling.

Today, the traditional Christmas cakes and sweets are purchased, readymade and handsomely packaged, at supermarkets. But many housewives still make huge quantities of holiday sweets in the home — -*una arroba de harina*-, 25 pounds of flour to make a basket of sweets which will last the family through a month of festivities.

I used to help my neighbor, who possessed a prolific fig tree, to make vast quantities of *pan de higos,* a spicy fig roll, for holiday giving. Chopped figs were mixed and kneaded until arms ached. Nobody ever seemed to mind the labour — an excuse for a happy get-together — with much gossiping and merrymaking to confect the Christmas goodies.

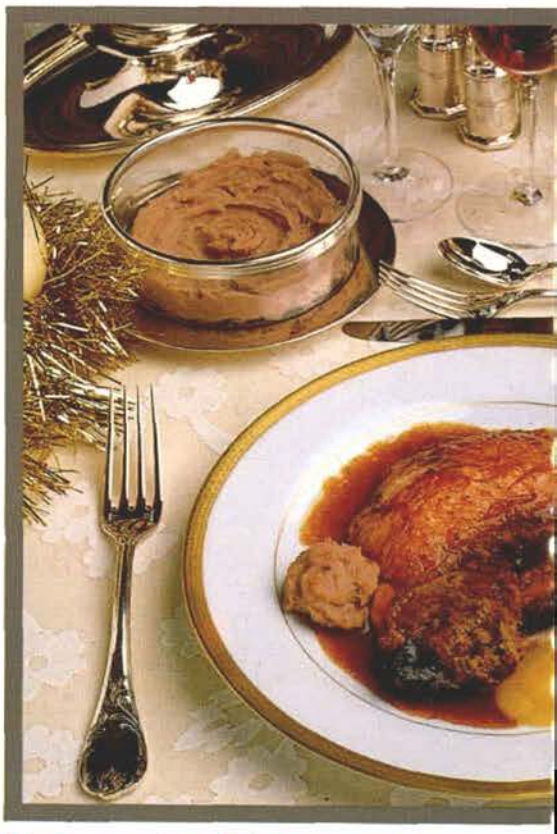
FEAST AND FOOD

In most Spanish homes Christmas dinner is the *cena de nochebuena,* Christmas Eve supper served before midnight mass, when the whole family gathers to feast together. Each region of Spain has its variations on traditional foods. The Galicians, for instance, typically start with *lacón con grelos,* cured pork shoulder boiled with turnip greens; in Catalonia, *ecudella,* a rich broth served with a huge meat dumpling would likely precede the stuffed turkey.

Turkey, native of the New World, has been naturalized in Spain since the 16th century, when a recipe for its preparation is mentioned in one of the earliest cookbooks. It is favorite holiday fare everywhere, usually stuffed with a forcemeat of pork, veal, nuts and spices and oven-roasted. It might also be boned, truffled, pressed and served cold. In Andalusia and Extremadura, where few village families had ovens, the holiday bird would either be sent to the village bread oven to roast or, more usually, be braised *en pepitoria,* an egg-enriched almond sauce.

Baby lamb or kid, roasted or stewed, is also typical, specially in the central regions

One of the most unusual starters or dessert for the Christmas meal is almond soup.



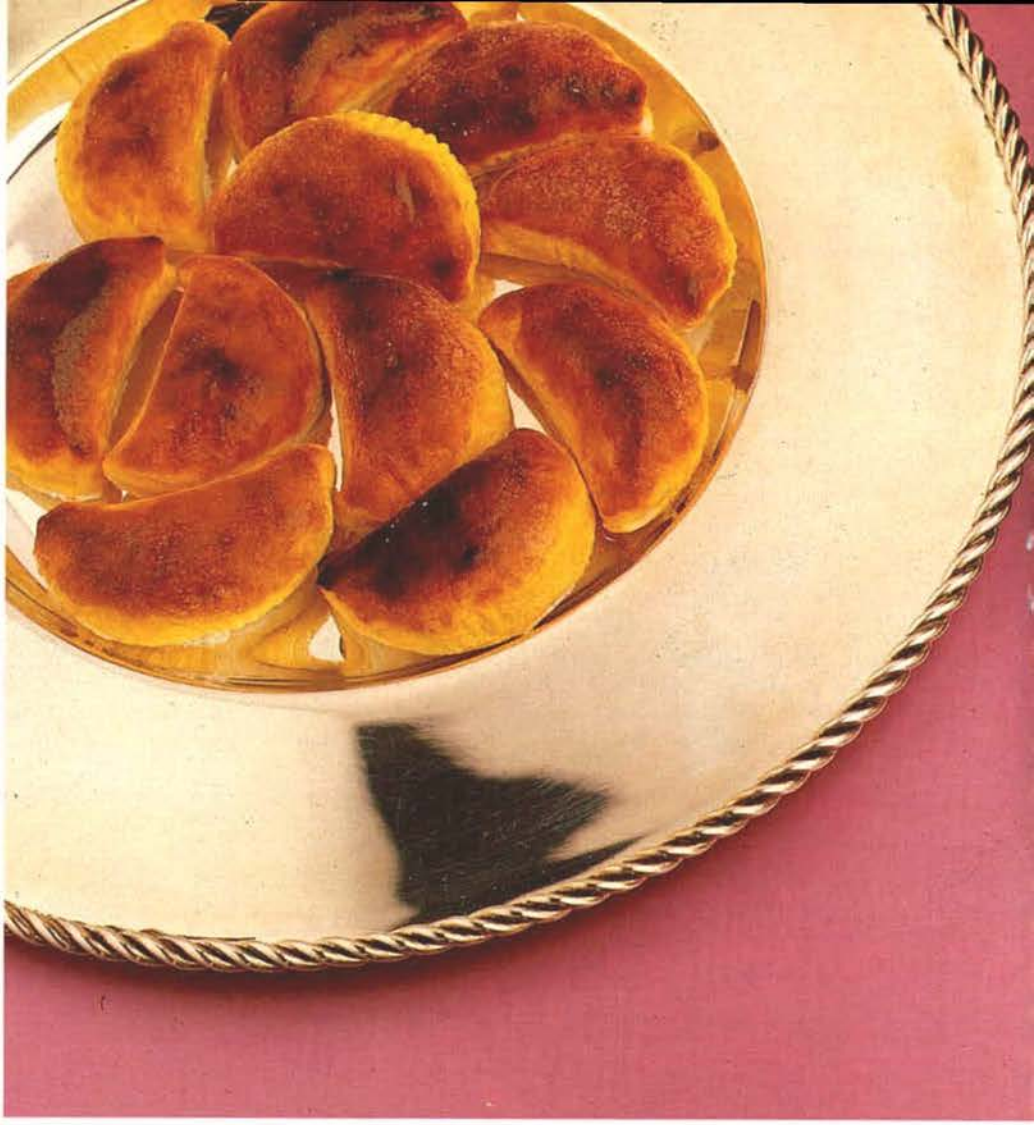
Turkey, native of the New World, has been naturalized in Spain since the 16th century.

At Christmas, in Spain, otherwise frugal housewives suddenly start splurging on luxury foods.

In most Spanish homes, Christmas dinner is the cena de nochebuena, *Christmas Eve supper.*

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

IN SPAIN



of Castille and Extremadura. In Mallorca roast fresh ham makes a festive Christmas dish.

Besugo, a beautiful pink bream, is the traditional fish for the Christmas Eve repast, though with prosperity, many families are serving instead the much pricier *mariscos,* or shellfish. The Basques celebrate all occasions with their beloved *angulas,* tiny baby eels sizzled in oil and garlic, and Christmas is no exception.

One of the most unusual starters or dessert for the Christmas meal — reflecting Spain's Moorish heritage — is almond soup, slightly sweet and cinnamon scented. In the Basque country, a similar soup is confected of walnuts.

Seasonal vegetables — cauliflower, red cabbage, brussels sprouts— also make an appearance at the Christmas feast. An unusual one is cardoon, a winter vegetable which looks like celery, but tastes like artichoke, to which it is related.

THE DESSERTS

After all that feasting, how can there be room for sweets? But no Christmas dinner is complete without *turrón,* the fabulous almond nougat candy, and marzipan, sweet almond paste molded into many shapes and tinted to imitate the flowers, fruits and figures which they represent. In the south and east of Spain, fresh fruits in season would accompany the tray of turrón — Spain's fabulous oranges and tangerines are in season at Christmas. Elsewhere, dried fruits and nuts, sometimes stewed in compotes, would finish the meal.

Then it's off to midnight Mass to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. The bells peal and the church reverberates with the joyous carols. The revelry may go on until dawn as the *pastores,* or shepherds, sing through village streets.

In Spain, it isn't St. Nicholas who brings toys and sweeties to good girls and boys, but the Three Kings, *los Reyes Magos,* who arrive by camel from Bethlehem. And they don't come on Christmas Eve like Father Christmas, but on the twelfth day of Christmas, January 6. As children happily try out the new toys, grown-ups enjoy one of the last of the holiday treats, the *roscón de reyes,* Kings' Day cake, which always contains a tiny trinket or coin. The one who finds it is assured a year's good fortune.

No Spanish Christmas dinner is complete without* turrón, *the fabulous almond nougat candy, and marzipan, sweet almond paste molded into many shapes and tinted to imitate the flowers, fruits and figures which they represent.

Recipes

Sopa de Almendras
Almond Soup

Serves six

1 1/2 l water
1/4 k sweetened almond paste
1/4 lemon
1 cinnamon stick
4 slices bread, crusts removed
sugar to taste

Put the water in a saucepan. Break the almond paste into chunks and dissolve it in a little of the water. Add to the saucepan with the lemon and cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil and simmer for five minutes. Cut the bread into thin strips and add to the soup. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the bread is completely dissolved and the soup slightly thickened. More sugar can be adder to taste.

Besugo asado
Baked Sea Bream

Serves six
1 whole fish, weighing 1 kilo or more
lemon slices
1/4 cup olive oil (60 ml)
cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
lemon juice

Clean and scale the fish, but leave it whole. Salt inside and outside and let it set about 20 minutes. Rinse and pat dry. Slash the skin in about three places and insert lemon slices. Place the fish in an oven dish. In a small frying pan, heat the oil and very gently sauté the chopped garlic. Drizzle this over the fish and put it in a very hot oven or under the broiler. Baste the fish frequently with the oil until the fish flakes easily, about 20 minutes. The skin should be slightly crisped. Remove and squeeze over a little lemon juice. Serve immediately.

Pavo Relleno Asado
Roast Stuffed Turkey

Serves ten or twelve

- 1 turkey, 4 to 5 kilo
- 50 g lard or butter
- 1/4 k mince pork or veal
- 6 pork link sausages
- 50 g prunes, soaked ,pitted and chopped
- 50 g dried apricots, soaked, pitted and chopped
- 25 g Malaga raisins, seeded
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 apples, peeled, cored and diced
- 25 g pine nuts
- 10 chestnuts, roasted, peeled and chopped (or walnuts)
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- salt and pepper
- 50 g fine breadcrumbs
- 1/3 cup (10 ml) *vino rancio* or Amontillado Sherry
- thinly sliced pork fat
- thyme, oregano, bay, rosemary

Clean the turkey and rub it inside and out with salt and a little sherry or lemon juice. Let it set for an hour. Heat the lard in a large pan and in it sauté the turkey liver until it is browned on all sides. Remove it and chop it. To the fat, add the minced pork or veal and the sausages, chopped. When they are browned, add the chopped liver, the chopped prunes, apricots, raisins, celery, onions, apples, pine nuts, chestnuts, cinnamon, salt and pepper and bread crumbs. Stir in the wine or sherry and cook for a few minutes until the liquid is absorbed. Stuff the turkey with mixture. Sew up the openings and truss the bird with string, tying the legs and wings close to the body and covering the breast with thin slices of pork fat. Put the turkey in a preheated very hot oven for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat to moderate and roast the bird, basting frequently. After an hour's roasting, add a glassful of wine and continue adding wine as it is cooked away. Remove fat from breast towards end of cooking time to allow skin to brown. Allow about 25 minutes per 500 grams of turkey (weighed unstuffed, without head and feet). Remove turkey to a serving platter. Remove excess fat from the pan drippings and sieve the sauce.

Lombarda a la Castellana
Red Cabbage, Castillian Style

Shred a large red cabbage and put it to cook in salted water with a few spoonfuls of olive oil, an onion stuck with two cloves and a bayleaf. Cook for 20 minutes and drain. In a casserole heat 3 tablespoons of oil, add 1 chopped clove of garlic, 1 apple, peeled and diced, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley and the cooked cabbage. Sauté for several minutes, seasoning with salt and white pepper. Add 1/4 cup (50 ml) white wine and cook until liquid is absorbed. Serve hot.

Roscos
Christmas Doughnuts

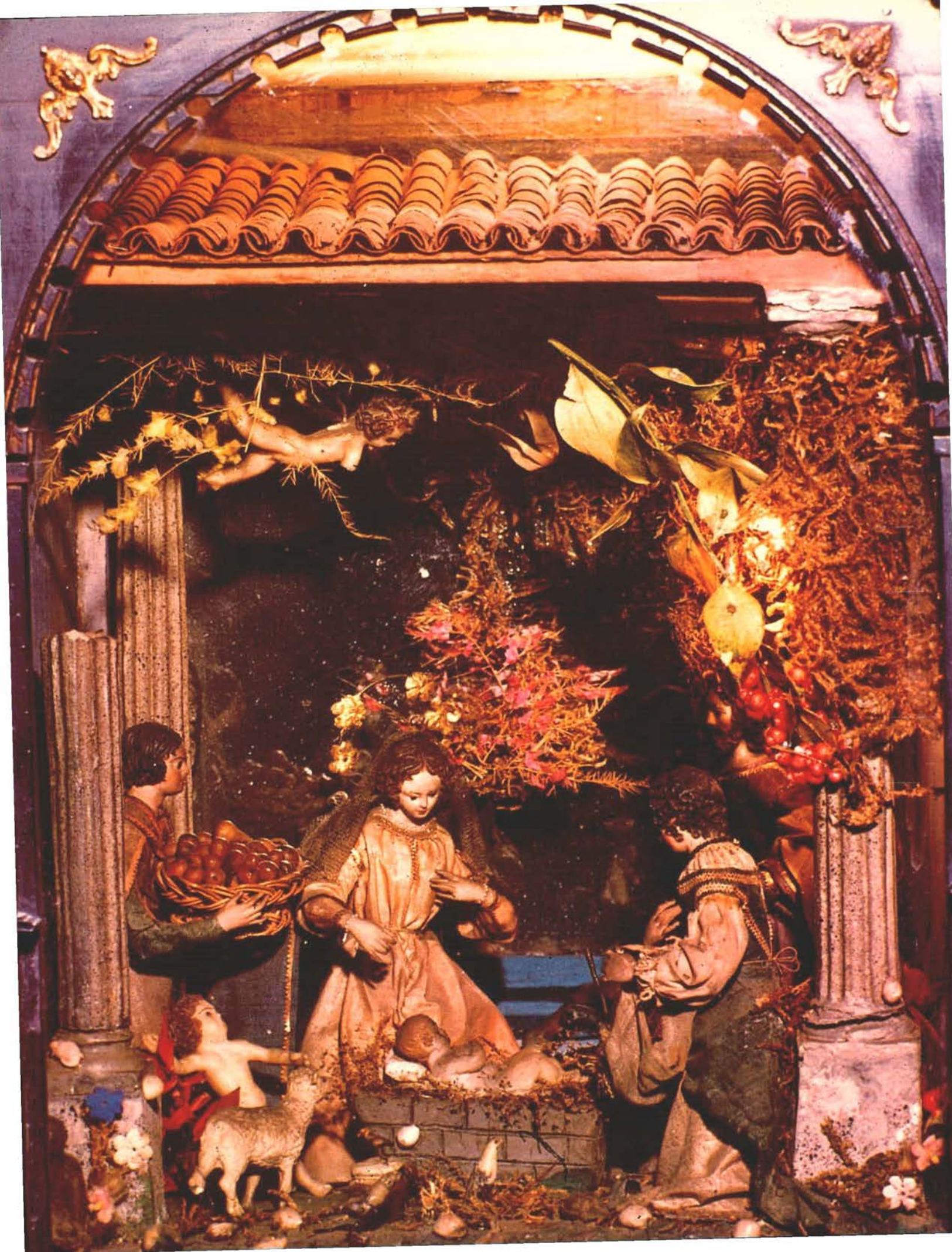
- 1 1/3 cups (300 ml) olive oil.
- 3 tablespoons (30 g) aniseed
- 675 g sugar
- 1 1/3 cups (300 ml) milk (or half milk, half orange juice)
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon
- 3 eggs, separated
- 3 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 k flour
- oil for frying

Put the oil in a saucepan and heat until hot, but not smoking. Add the aniseed and cook for a few minutes, just until the spice is fragrant. Remove and cool the oil. In a very large bowl mix the lemon peel, 275 grams of the sugar, milk and juice, cinnamon, oil and aniseed. Add 2 cups of the flour, then beat in the egg yolks and baking soda. In another bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff and fold them into the batter. Add flour, using the hands to work it in. At first the dough will be very sticky. Continue adding flour until the dough is just stiff enough to roll without sticking to the hands — it's customary to put the bowl on the floor in order to get better leverage in kneading. Take a small ball of the dough and roll it into a thick cord about 12 cm. long. Pinch the ends together to form a circle. Continue forming the *roscos*. Heat deep oil until hot but not smoking and add the *roscos*, a few at a time. Fry until they are golden brown. Remove with a skimmer, drain briefly and, while still hot, dredge them in sugar on both sides. Makes about 10 dozen small doughnuts. The *roscos*, using Malaga wine for the liquid, can also be baked in a medium oven until lightly coloured, about 20 minutes. Then dredge them in fine icing sugar.

Roscón de Reyes
Kings' Day Cake

- 20 g pressed yeast
- 4 tablespoons warm milk
- 1/2 k flour
- 3 whole eggs
- 1 egg, separated
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon dark rum
- 1 tablespoon orange flower water *(agua de azahar)*
- 1 teaspoon grated orange rind
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
- 100 g butter, softened
- 50 g almonds, blanched, skinned and slivered
- candied fruit, orange peel, etc., for decorating, about 100 g

Dissolve the yeast in the warm milk with 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Add 1/2 cup of flour and mix it to make a soft dough. Cover with a damp cloth and set in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 40 minutes. Put the remaining flour in a large bowl. Make a well in the centre. Beat the eggs together with the egg yolk and pour into the flour with the salt, rum, orange flower water and the rest of the sugar. Add the grated orange and lemon rind. Work the flour into the liquids in the centre with the hands or a wooden spoon. Add the yeast dough and mix very well until the dough is no longer sticky. Divide the butter into 4 parts and sprinkle it with flour. Divide the dough into 4 parts. On a lightly floured board work a piece of butter into each of the pieces of dough, then knead them together again. Knead the dough until very smooth and elastic. Lightly butter a bowl, put the ball of dough into it, turn it, cover with a damp cloth and set it a warm place for 1 hour. Punch the dough down, turn out onto the board and knead again. Insert a trinket or coin (nothing plastic which will melt) into the dough. Shape it into one or two rings by making a flattened ball, then inserting a finger into the centre and gently easing the dough outward to create a hole in the centre. Either stuff the hole with crumpled foil and place on a buttered oven tin, or set the ring in a lightly buttered ring mould. Cover and set in a warm place to rise again. The dough will not double in bulk, but will rise substantially during baking. Lightly beat the remaining egg white (or use a whole egg). Brush the cake with the egg. Sprinkle on the slivered almonds and decorate with candied fruit. Sprinkle lightly with sugar and bake in a medium hot oven until nicely browned, about 40 minutes.



A CHERISHED TRADITION OF

NATIVITY SCENES

Text: **John Heath**
Photos: **Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas and John Heath**

Every December, belenes *(Nativity scenes) appear throughout Spain, just as Christmas trees appear in other countries. The elegant* belenes *in public settings and the simple ones in private homes form part of a long and very Spanish tradition.*

In a humble high-rise apartment outside Madrid, a great tradition is being preserved. Using techniques and materials that have changed little in centuries, José Luis Mayo delicately carves with precise instruments a figure out of a block of red clay, then bakes and paints it. His figures — whose extraordinary detail and life have earned prizes and national respect, alongside Martín Castells of Catalonia — will appear at Christmas in *belenes* (-Bethlehems-), Nativity scenes with landscapes constructed out of cork and glue, plastered and then painted.

AN ARTISTIC TRADITION

The most marvelous event of Christianity, the birth of Jesus Christ, has been portrayed in paintings and low-relief carvings since the early Christians painted frescos of the Nativity on the walls of their catacombs in Rome. Saint Francis of Asisi, as part of his effort to bring the Church closer to the common people, erected the first plastic representation of the Nativity on Christmas Eve of 1223 in a cave in Creccio, Italy. He used life-size figures and a real ox and donkey and, according to legend, as he preached mass to a torch-bearing multitude, the infant Jesus came to life. His Franciscan followers created similar scenes, and a popular tradition of representing the Nativity usually with small clay figures arose throughout Italy, with its greatest flowering in Naples.

Spain, which already had a rich tradition of creating painted baked-clay figures, began to embrace the new subject with an original Spanish stamp. Already in the 1600s, the famous dramatist Lope de Vega owned -a birth that is displayed at Christmas- with wax figures, and in Seville sculptress Luisa Roldán (1656-1704) -La Roldana- was creating exquisite clay Marys and Josephs, several of which are displayed in the Hispanic Society in New York and the Victoria & Albert Museum of London. When Charles III, King of Naples, came to Madrid in 1759 to assume the Spanish crown, he brought with him the sumptuous baroque style of the Neapolitan *belenes.* His love and patronization of Nativity scenes firmly established the tradition of the *belén* in Spain. He commissioned for his son (later Charles IV) the -*Belén del Príncipe*-, a massive work which is exhibited each winter in the Royal Palace in Madrid. The great sculptors Francisco Salzillo (1707-1783) in Murcia and Ramón Amadeu (1754-1821) in Catalonia created magnificent figures for various *belenes,* many of

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which are now in museums in their respective regions.

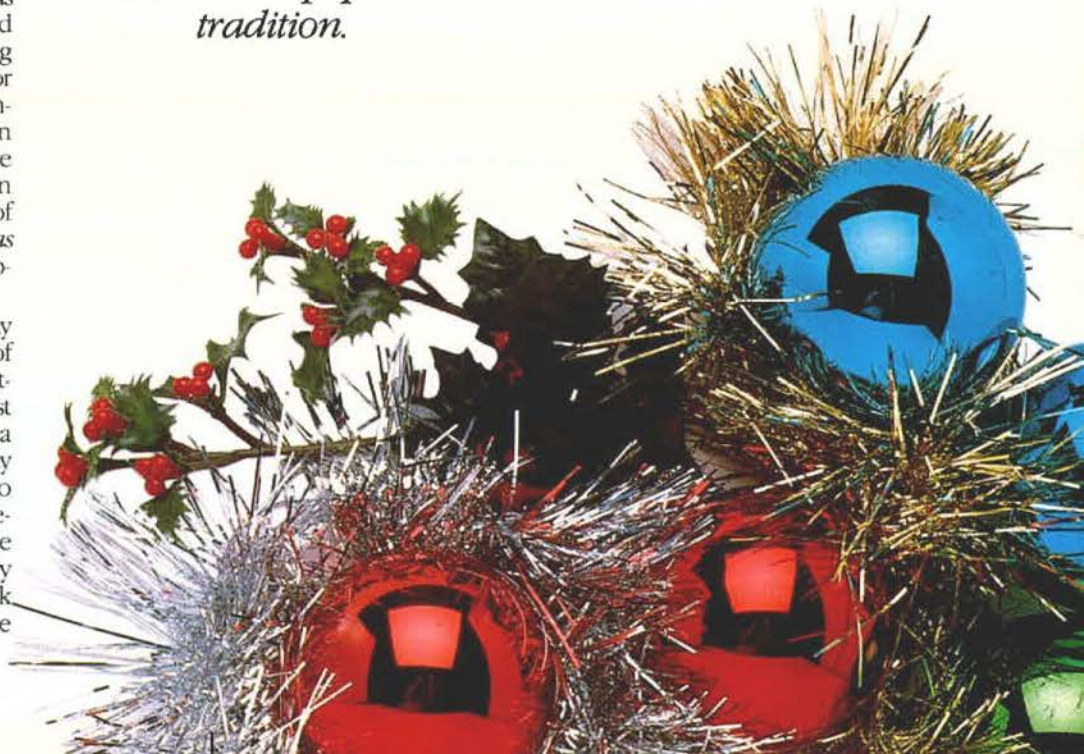
Since the impetus of Charles III, the Levante (eastern Spain) has formed part of the great *belén*-producing center of the world, an arc which swings along the Mediterranean coast from Murcia up through the French Midi and down to Naples. *Belenistas* in Catalonia, Mallorca, and Murcia created popular *belenes* with details and clothing that were typical of their own regions (for example, Catalan shepherds adoring the Infant wore the regional *barretina* cap). In the 19th century, -Orientalists- sought more realism by putting mideastern clothing on their figures, though the clothing was of their own day. Only recently have *belenistas* begun to recreate historical details from Biblical times.

This artistic tradition remains strong today and one proof is the recent -Great Belén of Madrid-, which will be displayed this Christmas in Bordeaux after being in Paris last year. This 16-meter-long panorama was a two-year project, and its realism and beauty qualify it as a true work of art. Fernando Cruz, President of the Association of Belenistas of Madrid, created the landscape while Mayo modelled the 242 figures, which vary in size from 7 cm (2,75 inch.) in the back to 35 cm (13,77 inch.) in the front to give the impression of depth.

The deep and lasting tradition of belenes *has produced great works of art, but it has always been above all a popular tradition.*

A POPULAR TRADITION

The deep and lasting tradition of *belenes* has produced great works of art, but it has always been above all a popular tradition, as Saint Francis had intended it to be. *Belenes* are normally open panoramas, which can



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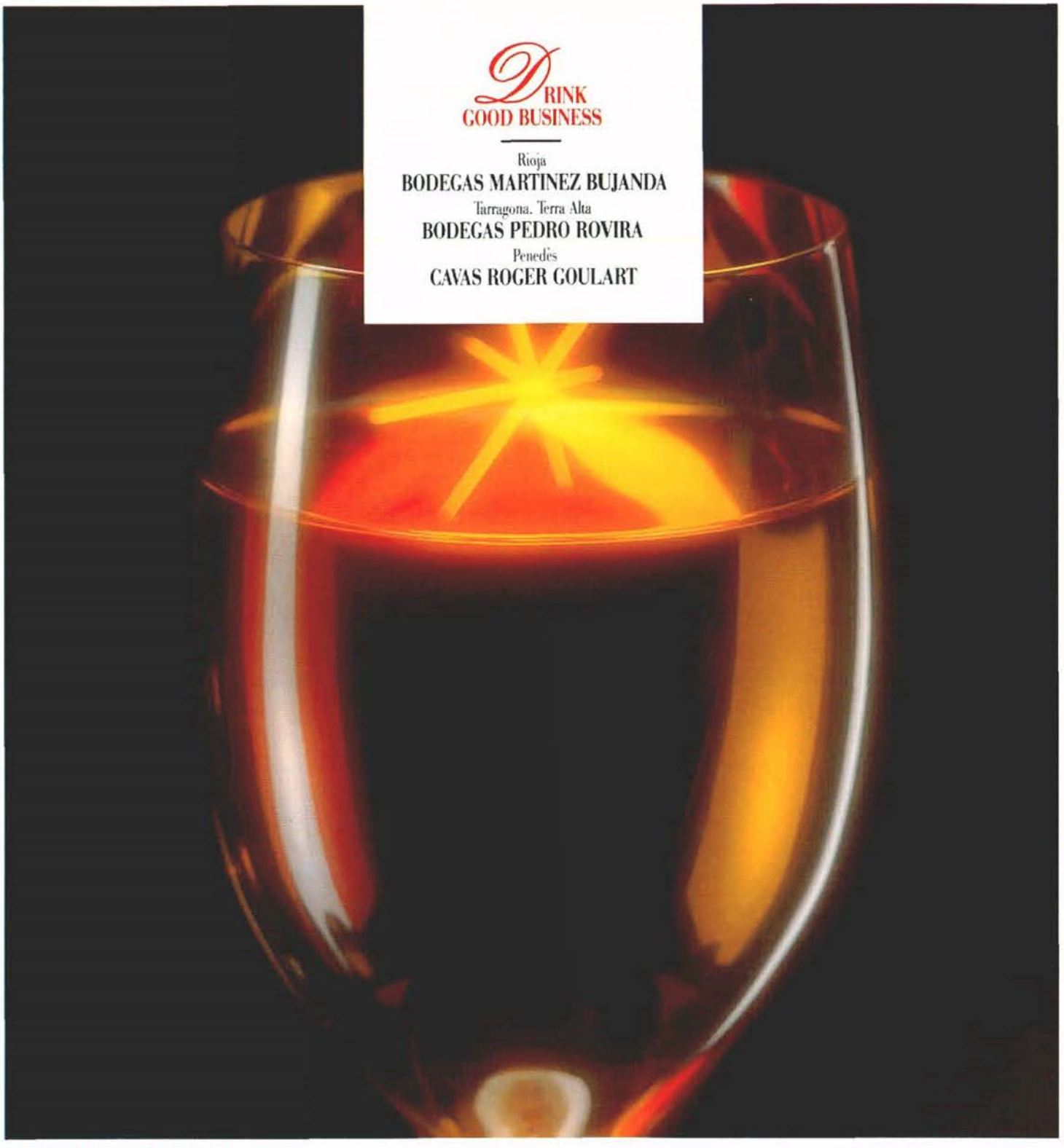
be artistic or popular. The other form, exclusively artistic, is the -diorama-, a miniature scene enclosed in a box and often electrically animated with running water or glowing fires. While artistic *belenes* contain original, expertly sculpted figures, popular *belenes* generally contain premolded figures that continue to wear local clothing. These figures are molded and hand-painted en masse in shops, and sold in the multitude of stands that appear each December in Madrid's Plaza Mayor and around Barcelona's cathedral and in plazas across Spain.

Spanish families typically have a haphazard collection of such figures bought a few at a time. They set up the *belén* with fanfare at Christmas, the father perhaps constructing a part of the landscape while the children move and rearrange the figures and animals. The *belén* evokes nostalgia and warm feelings of family, and has withstood the invasion of the Christmas tree some 20 years ago, to come back into fashion.

Artistic *belenes* are exhibited across Spain in banks, hospitals, etc. in December, and year-round in museums and in the many associations, where *belenistas* and interested people unite for demonstrations, discussions, and to share a surprising variety of construction tecniques.

The belén *evokes nostalgia and warm feelings of family, and has withstood the invasion of the Christmas tree some 20 years ago.*

Why do people devote so much time to the creation of *belenes?* For Mayo it is a way of making a living while doing something he has enjoyed since he was a child. For most amateur *belenistas* who construct landsccapes from cork in their free time, it is to preserve an old and very Spanish tradition.



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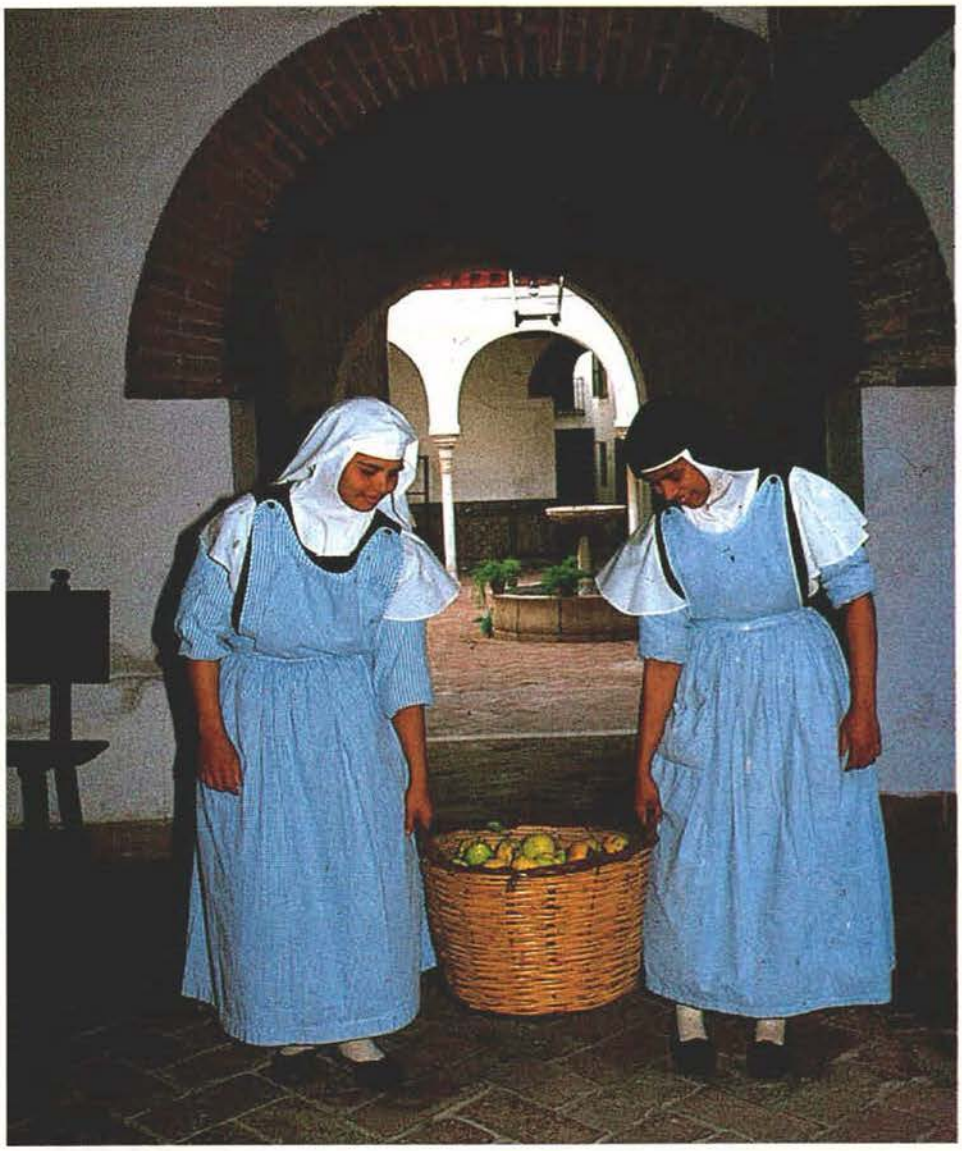
CHRISTMAS FARE
FROM THE CONVENTS

Text: **Mary Peirson Kennedy**
Photos: **Sobremesa and M.ª de los Angeles Ruiz**

Now's the time to enjoy the traditional sweets and cakes made by nuns in the convents of Andalusia.



Each convent has its own specialities, some baking only at Christmas and Easter, others the year round.

Those marvellous, legendary sweets and Christmas cakes called *dulces* that are made by nuns in the convents of Andalusia are one Spanish tradition that has not been lost to 20th century progress. They are available to anyone who wants to take the time to seek out the convents that sell them.

One light ring at the grilled window will bring you face to face with a gentle, smiling sister —or, in the case of cloistered orders, an ethereal voice floating out from behind an enclosed wooden turnstile.

In either case, they will carefully explain their wares. *Polvorones, mantecados, roscos de vino, cubiletes, tirabuzones, borrachuelos, brazo de gitano, madalenas, hojaldrinas, bolitas de coco, yemas, mermeladas, membrillo, tartas de bizcocho, mazapán* (crumble biscuits, lard cakes, wine doughnuts, marzipan...) —the list goes on and on, each convent with its own specialities, some baking only at Christmas and Easter and others the year round.

The recipes have changed little over the years and go back to the time of the Catholic Kings and their conquest of southern Spain, when the convents were established and often filled with wealthy aristocracy, who usually lived better than those on the outside. There was no scrimping at the convent tables in those days, and the recipes were rich.

The making of sweets for religious festivals has always been part of the Catholic tradition, so it was natural that the convents made these delicacies and passed them out among the faithful on church holidays.

Actually, these recipes go back even further than the convents, for they are based on ancient Arab formulas; the Arabs introduced sugar to Spain during their rule here (from the 8th to 15th century).

They are the same mouth-watering confections that are described in *A Thousand and One Nights,* using sugar, eggs, honey, dried fruits, nuts and cinnamon. Simple recipes with no additives, they have a very special flavour. *Dulces caseros* as the nuns call them (or home-made baked goods) are somehow different from those made commercially. Perhaps the serenity and devotion of the women who make them pass into these delicious little confections.

José Carlos Capel, author of *Comer en Andalucía,* a marvellous book on Andalusian cooking, offers a whole chapter on these convents and their *dulces.* He writes, *-Inside the workshops of the religious convents are hidden the best pastry shops of Andalusia-,* and lists over 50 convents and their specialities.

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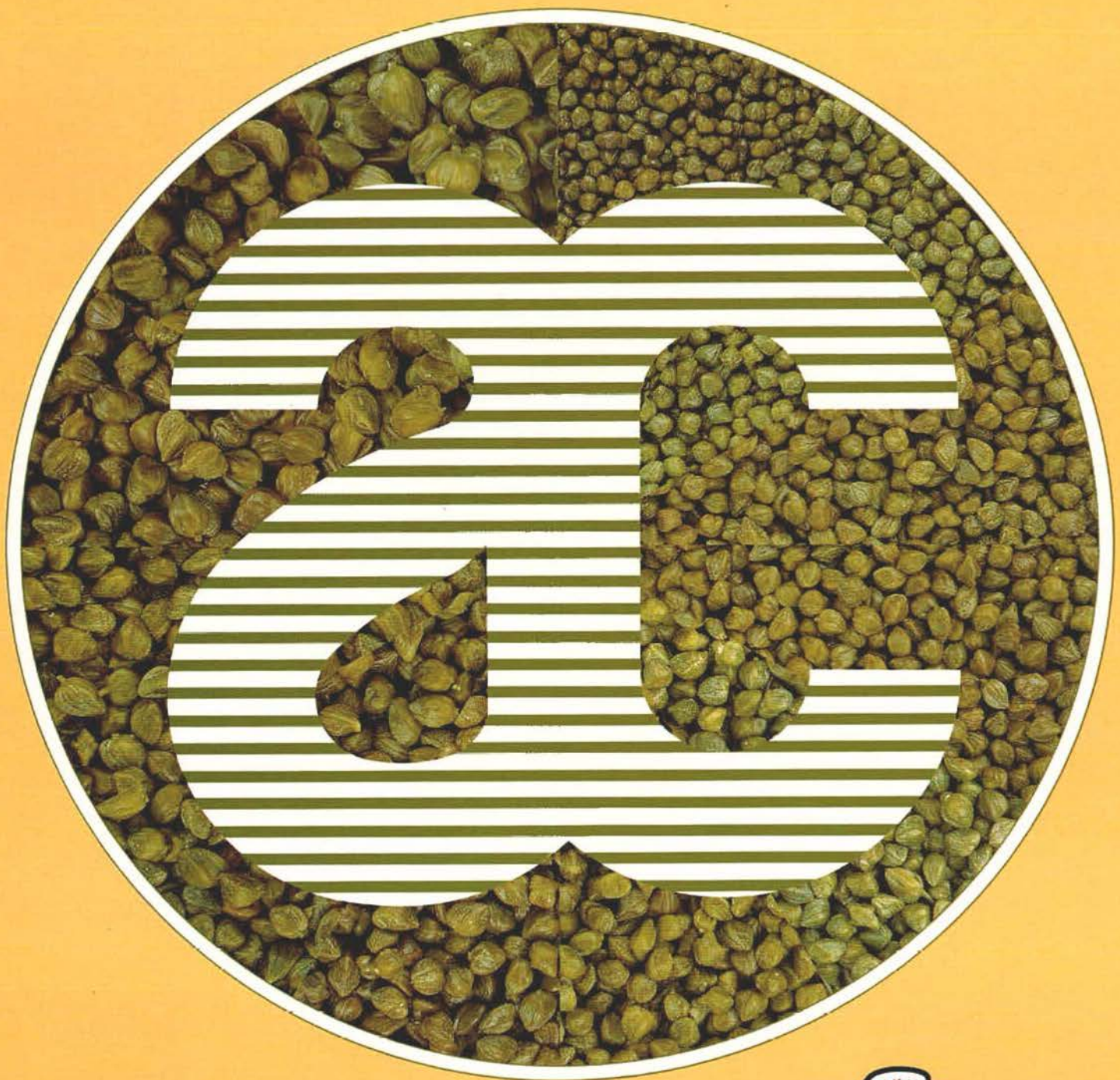

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DELICIAS

PICKLES & CONDIMENTS

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SWEET SEVILLE

It would be impossible to list them all, but here are a few (not necesarily the best because they are all good), beginning with the capital Seville. It is here that perhaps the most famous *dulce* in the whole country, the pyramid shaped *Yemas de San Leandro,* is made by the Augustine nuns in the Monasterio de San Leandro. Sister Virtudes, whose unworldly voice floats out from behind the ancient brass-studded turnstile, will tell you that the recipe for these fantastic handmade little sweets (really more like a candy than a cake) has been handed down in their order for over 400 years.

Made only of egg yolks, sugar and a dash of lemon, these celebrated *yemas* come carefully wrapped and packaged in one kilo and half-kilo wooden boxes. Available only at the convent (Monasterio de San Leandro, Plaza de Ildefonso, 1. Telephon (54) 22 41 95), people come from all over Spain to buy them.

Not far from the Agustines is the Monasterio de Santa Inés (Doña María Coronel, 5. Tel. (54) 22 31 45), where the Franciscanas Clarisas, hijas de Doña María Coronel offer their famous *bollitos de Santa Inés,* an almond and sugar treat; *Cortadillos de Cidra,* rich little cinnamon and *cabello de ángel* (angels' hair) pastries that melt in your mouth; *Hojaldres,* pastry shells you can fill at home; *roscos de vino,* a very traditional big, round cookie with a hole in the middle, made of honey, oil, cinnamon, sugar, lemon, eggs and flour. And many more. The best thing to do if it is your first visit is to ask for a *surtido* or mixed assortment.

This order has only nine members and it is with the sweets that they support themselves, as do all these convents. Sister Teresa García, who has lived 35 years behind the convent walls, will ask if you know the legendary story of their founder Doña María Coronel who, in the 13th century, took refuge in the convent in order to avoid the amorous advances of the king, Pedro El Cruel. In the end, since nothing would stop his lustful pursuit of her, she poured boiling oil over her body, disfiguring her beautiful face and ending the king's unwanted advances.

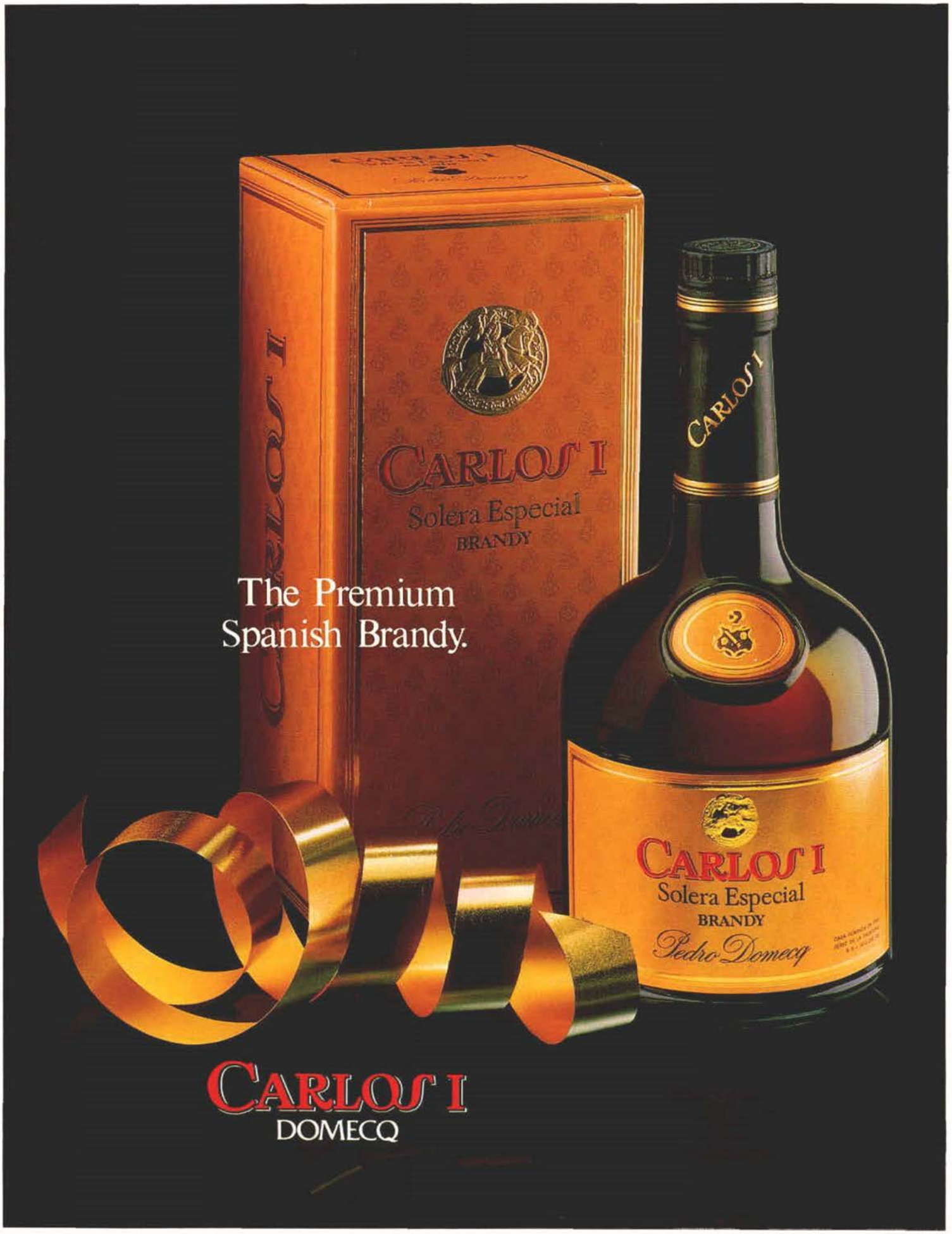
ORANGE MARMALADE

Perhaps the finest orange marmalade outside of Scotland is made at the Monasterio de Santa Paula by the order of San Jerónimas. This beautiful convent (at Santa Paula, 11. Tel. (54) 42 13 07) with its peaceful interior gardens has a small museum that is as delightful as is their large selection of tea cookies, marmalades and pastries. Sisters María del Belén and María del Carmen are in charge of the baking kitchens and the museum respectively.

Unlike the rest of the order, these two sisters are not cloistered. Sister María del Belén who is 80 years old, has a very sharp mind and, after a bit of prodding from Sister María del Carmen, admitted she has designed part of several convents around the country, including a beautiful staircase that was just completed inside their convent (you can get a glimpse of it from the museum). *Men,* she said shyly, *-do not really know how to design living quarters for people like us-,* and they both laughed.

Sister María del Carmen delights in showing people around the rooms of the museum that include a highly unusual creche made of clay, beautiful examples of 18th century English furniture, elaborate work done by nuns down through the centuries, and many fine paintings.

Downstairs in the patio they sell their sweets, which include large baskets of gift-wrapped jars of jams and marmalades and sweets, and in a small Victorian sitting-room they offer you little plates of tea cookies and jams of all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Dulces caseros *as the nuns call them (or home-made baked goods) are somehow different from those made commercially; they have a very special flavour.*

kinds, including lemon, pineapple, tomato and even purée of chestnuts. They also have sweet potato, *cabello de ángel* and chestnut pastries.

In Córdoba, perhaps the largest selection of sweets is found by walking through the tiny garden just off the Plaza Santa Isabel into the sparkling white reception room of the convent of the Clarisas de Santa Isabel. Here Sisters Corazón de María Jurado and Manuela Sagrario García offer you *Tirabuzones* (tiny fried sugar and flour sweets that look like sausage curls), truffles made from chocolate and brandy, almond paste in delicious little squares, fluffy pastry shells *(hojaldres)* and perhaps their most popular item, *Yemas de Coco,* light little balls of egg yolks, sugar and coconut.

The order of the Clarisas are famous for their dedication to this kitchen art and at Christmas they offer the traditional *mantecados, polvorones* and *mazapán.* Both Sisters admitted they like going out into the streets to buy their ingredients.

-Life has changed- said Sister María del Corazón. *-Everything is much more expensive and we can buy more economically if we shop ourselves.-*

The convent is at Santa Isabel, 13. Tel. (57) 47 05 76. The best advice here is to order an assorted box.

GOOD INGREDIENTS AND DEVOTION

Nestled down into a bit of suburbia on a high hill overlooking Málaga is the Monasterio de la Asunción in Puerto de la Torre (El Atabal. Tel. (52) 43 11 42), where the Madres Cistercienses de San Bernardo bake four days a week. If you arrive on baking day, the whole neighbourhood is permeated with the smells of *cubiletes* (sweet potato cakes), *carne de membrillo* (preserved quince pulp), *bizcocho* (light sponge cakes), and *pestiños* (a sweet fritter).

This order also makes the traditional Christmas cookies that are on sale in some of the local supermarkets as well as the convent.

The same order of Madres Cistercienses are hidden (Cister, 11. Tel. (52) 21 69 71), behind the Málaga cathedral at the Abadía de Santa Ana where they have been making mouthwatering confections since the 17th century.

From behind her grilled turnstile, Sister Maria assured us that *our recipes have not changed at all; we use simple ingredients and make them with love and devotion to Our Lord.*

One of their most delicious items are jars of *Jalea,* a very special jelly made from the heart of quince after the pulp has been taken away to make *carne de membrillo* (which they also sell). This dark red jelly served with fresh white cheese makes an extraordinay dessert. Their list of goodies is long and includes packages of tea cakes, tortes, almond cakes, chocolate sponge cakes, raisin pastries plus the traditional Christmas fare.

In Antequera, the Monasterio Madre de Dios at Ramón y Cajal, 2 (Tel. (52) 84 19 98) and the Clarisas at Belén, 4. (Tel. (52) 84 21 64) both have large selections, and in Ronda the Carmelitas Descalzas, Plaza de la Merced, 2. (Tel. (52) 87 29 65), make *bizcochos, sultanes, cortadillos, pastitas, roscos de canela* and English marmalade.

In Jerez de la Frontera, the Agustinas Ermitañas at Santa María de Gracia, 2 (Tel. (56) 34 36 32) make the famous *Bienmesabe,* a candy-like confection of sugar, egg yolks, cinnamon, almonds and lemon. Also here the Clarisas (Barja, 2. Tel. (56) 34 09 86) offer you *Tocino de Cielo,* a sweet so rich (recipes for small amounts call for 16 egg yolks) that you can only eat a tiny amount at a time.

There are many more convents that sell sweets. Wherever you happen to be in Andalusia, just ask for the nearest one. They are usually open in the morning from 9 to 1 and in the afternoon from 4 to 7. A phone call before you go can save you an unnecessary trip.

A L A R C O N

The Castle of Alarcón is a regal dream come true. Site of the National Parador Marqués de Villena, it cheers the most distressed of damsels and embraces the most errant of knights with its enchanting medieval scenery and royal treatment.

FIT FOR A KING

Text: **Meg Campbell**
Photos: **A. T. E. and Sobremesa**

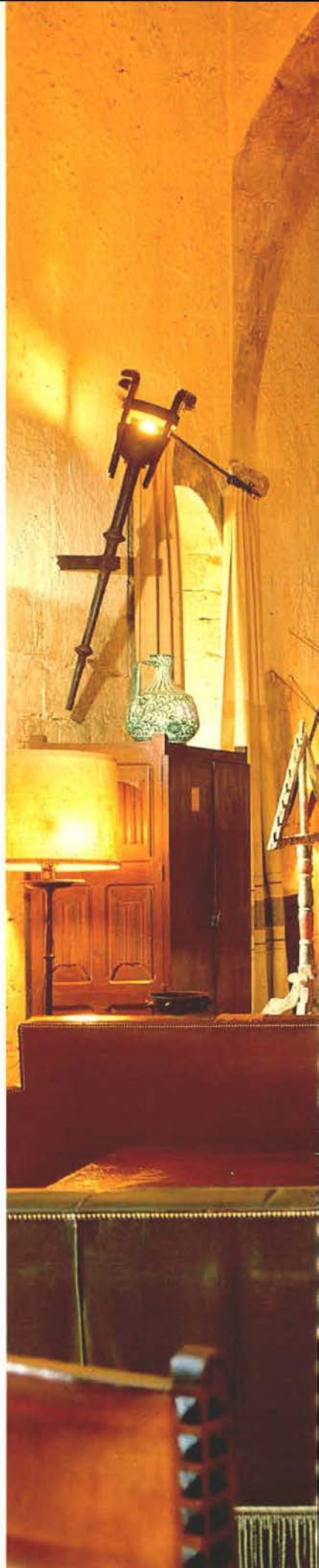
A vassal tended to my steed as I roamed the grounds for my first look at the lands. The castle was in an ideal location, nearly surrounded by a curve in the winding river below and well protected by the three lines of defense. I surveyed the edifice itself. A sturdy structure; the blunt tower was solid, the doors massive, and the windows tiny as they should be, to shoot out, not in. Excellent. The lands stretched beyond the horizon, parched and rocky. I had journeyed many hard miles to these eastern lands of La Mancha, and was in great need of rest and amusement. Tonight there would be great merriment in the castle, food drink and festivity in the central chamber. -Your majesty!- My companion called. -The car's parked. Get your suitcase and let's go check in at reception.-

-Off with your head-, I murmured, as my crown vanished. So much for my regal daydream.

But even if I was robbed of my illusory robes, the castle's magnificence persisted. The best conserved in the Manchego province of Cuenca, it is the Castle of Alarcón, now the National Parador Marqués de Villena. Despite renovations, the castle has retained its medieval style and spirit, and a weekend within its walls provides a delightful anachronistic escape into feudal Spain.

BACK IN TIME

Step through the stone arch into the vine covered courtyard and you've stepped back into the 16th century. Drop your things in one of the five tower rooms —you must have a tower room for the full effect and for the canopied beds— and head on in to the salon. A large colorful tapestry hangs over a sprawling hearth, brass bowls and rustic ceramics decorate the scattered tables, and a very old wooden candelabra stands in the corner. There are portraits of marquis, old wooden chests and chairs, and a dark wooden loft in one corner whose stairs lead to a quiet sitting area above.



The castle remained the property of Spanish nobility until 1964 when it was purchased by the government to convert it into a parador.

The castle's tiny windows look out onto the river Júcar and to the plains of La Mancha beyond. (The terrain of La Mancha is one of three found in the province of Cuenca: to the north lie the dense pine forests of the mountains, and to the northeast the arid rocky plateaux of the Alcarria.) The fertile countryside of La Mancha was the scene of many medieval skirmishes, where armoured knights clashed with robed Moors, all fighting for the lands of central Spain. The castle, with its thick walls and look-out posts, still seems inhabited by the warriors; their ghosts might still clank faintly through the courtyard at night.

But though time may have stopped in the middle ages at the castle, its history is considerably older. Over 1000 years old, it was built by Romans, who later lost it to a tribe of Visogoths led by a son of the Gothic king Alarico. The son named the area Alaricon after his father, and over time the town's name was shortened to Alarcón. The Visogoths were then conquered by the Moors, who reorganized and revitalized the town, converting it into a powerful fortress and a stronghold in their kingdom of Toledo. The castle changed hands yet again in the 15th century when it was captured by the Christians during the reconquest. It remained the property of Spanish nobility until 1984 when it was purchased by the government to convert it into a parador. It was inaugurated in 1966.

Although massive as a castle, the structure is tiny as a hotel, and in fact is one of the country's smallest paradors. It has only 13 rooms, two of which were added recently in renovations, the salon, and a charming dining room that seats 80. Here traditional dishes are served in rustic surroundings, with the exception of a striking contemporary tile mural set in one of the whitewashed walls. The dining room's small size and the Parador's reputation for excellent cuisine mean there is always a small waiting list going, especially on weekends.

Weekends bring many regulars to the Parador, people who slip out of the city for a few evenings of royal treatment. Other guests wander in off the Madrid-Valencia route, as the Parador is only a few kilometers from the national highway connecting the country's capital with the Levantine coast. Not to worry though, the sounds of the highway are left well behind. You can't even see the road from the castle. The small number of rooms means the hotel is almost always operating at capacity. It's particularly busy between -Las Fallas- —the famous Valencian holiday in mid-March— and mid-October. It's not the place for big events; large conventions or weddings are simply not possible due to the small size. Its reputation is instead that of a luxurious little hideaway. People come with a handful of books for a good rest, some good food,

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and a chance to visit the rich historic and artistic sites nearby.

HISTORIC SURROUNDINGS

The city of Alarcón is itself a National Artistic Monument, and it cooperates well with the castle in retaining the medieval atmosphere. Perched atop the gorge cut by the Júcar, it is a pretty walled village with a mix of old stone buildings and the more typical whitewashed houses of La Mancha. It lists a number of historic sites, including the 16th century Church of Santa María with its Gothic architecture and Renaissance porch, and the 13th century Gothic Church of Santa Trinidad. The town celebrates its local «fiestas» in mid-September, when the Plaza Mayor rings with music and dancing.

Not far from the Parador, and en route from Madrid, is the Uclés Monastery. This solitary edifice dates back to the 16th century and is nicknamed «Little Escorial», because it was designed by the same architect who did the Escorial Monastery found in the mountains to the north of Madrid.

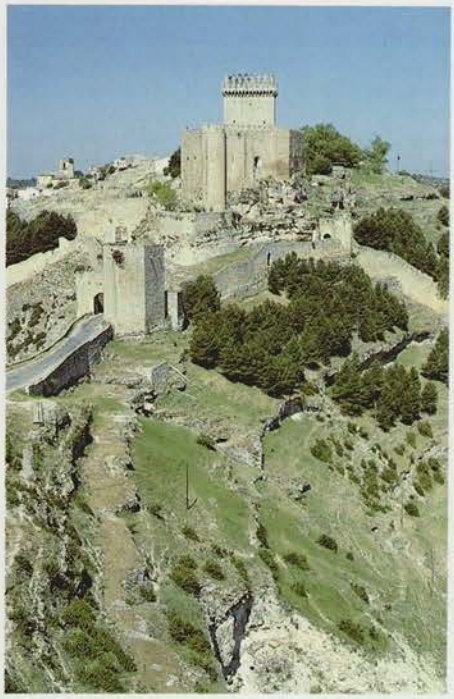
Close by the Monastery are the Roman ruins of Segobria. Excavations there have uncovered a Roman theatre, amphitheatre and circus, as well as a large number of ceramics and jewelry, which are displayed at the museum near the site.

Other Roman ruins are presently being excavated 45 Km. north of the parador, in the town of Valeria, where a long row of Roman baths has so far been the most interesting discovery.

A drive through the arid plains west of the Parador provides a taste of Cervantes' La Mancha. The first sight after miles of wheat fields is the imposing castle of Belmonte, a well-preserved 15th century fortress. Next, in the tiny town of Villaescusa de Haro, is the Gothic Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción. Finally, Don Quijote's fierce adversaries loom on the horizon, the whitewashed windmills of Mota del Cuervo.

North of the Parador lies the capital of the province, the city of Cuenca. (Geographical aside: in Spain, most provinces share their names with their capital cities.) This unusual city offers a full day of sightseeing. Walking along the banks of the river Huecar offers the best view of the famous hanging houses of Cuenca, three houses built against a sheer cliff. One of the houses is home to the museum of Abstract Spanish Art, a large collection of modern abstract pieces done by prominent Spanish artists. The architecture and layout of the museum is as interesting as the collection itself. Nearby is the archeological museum in another intriguing house, the Casa Curato, and a walk from here up to the Plaza Mayor leads to the city's well-known Anglo-Norman Gothic Cathedral.

A short distance from Cuenca is the Enchanted City, a fascinating geological zoo, where assorted petrified formations strike animal poses. A little to the south is another natural puzzle, «Las Torcas». These are enormous potholes, perfectly round,



whose origin is still disputed. Some are dry and filled with pines, others contain stagnant water, while others are filled by underground springs. They are probably caused by the freezing and collapsing of the earth's crust, but they may have come from meteors, and the local legends don't rule out the possibility of extra terrestrials...

Sightseeing of this nature is best done in spring or fall, due to the harsh weather extremes Cuenca experiences. If you visit in winter, be prepared to bundle up; if in summer, bring along a fan. Spring and fall usually require only a sweater, and also give some of nature's best shows, with the budding or the turning of the leaves.

Keep an eye out for the local wares while traveling around the province. Ceramics are a regional favorite, and one native of Cuenca, Pedro Mercedes, is a well-known name in the clay business. His rustic pottery is popular throughout the country, and easy to find in the province. Another provincial specialty is wicker, brought down from the mountains in the northeast of Cuenca. The baskets and furniture fashioned from the reeds are popular throughout the province.

EATING LIKE KINGS

When not sightseeing or spying for bargains, your objective should be eating and drinking. The cuisine of Cuenca is rich and varied, using the plentiful game of the region and the vegetables of neighboring Valencia. Years ago the people of the region dried their tomatoes and peppers and strung their garlic and onions to use all winter, but these days fresh vegetables are always available for the many sauces and stews that require them.

The cuisine is laborious and time-consuming: stews simmer for hours or even age for days, as in «Morteruelo», a puree of game meats such as partridge and rabbit with pork and chicken. Ingredients are chosen for their availability, and also for their ability to keep for long periods of time and to withstand the harsh climes of the region, such as salted codfish, which is used in «ajo arriero», a paté that combines the fish with garlic, tomato and bread crumbs.

The Parador features these dishes on a menu that offers a wide selection of national and regional dishes. There is «gazpacho Manchego», very different from the popular tomato gazpacho of Seville; it uses game and fowl and is served hot. There is the very typical Spanish potato and onion omelette, dressed up with a vegetable sauce. And for a real king's banquet, there is the roast leg of lamb, medieval style. (Forks are allowed but frowned upon.) There's never room for dessert, but have some anyway. Perhaps a bit of the region's «queso Manchego», a tangy sheep's cheese that runs from mild to sharp and is served with quince jelly, or maybe the «alajú» a sweet almond candy of Arab origin.

The food is well acompanied by the wine of La Mancha, from the region of Valdepeñas. Valdepeñas is a popular and reliable table wine, a typical wine of the region's many taverns.

The key word at the castle is indulge. Indulge in the peace and quiet, in the food and spirits, and indulge in a little royal fantasy. Don an imaginary crown or coat of arms, stride through the grounds, relax in the castle, and really spend a little time living like a king. You may not want to wake up.

Recipes

Pisto Manchego

Serves 6

150 c.c. (1/3 cup) olive oil
1 medium-sized zucchini
2 onions
3 cloves garlic
750 g. (1½ lbs.) green peppers
750 g. ripe tomatoes
1 hambone
salt

Dice all the vegetables, keeping them separated. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil, then sautee the zucchini lightly, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, drain oil, and set aside. Add remaining oil to a casserole dish or deep frying pan and heat. When hot, add the onion, garlic, green peppers and hambone. Sautée the mixture until the onion is translucent, then add the tomato. Heat for another ten minutes then add the zucchini. Cover and simmer on a low flame for about 30 minutes. Season with salt and serve.

Bacalao a la Manchega

Serves 6

750 g. (1½ lbs.) salted cod (Cod should be soaked for 24 hours beforehand, changing the water once every 8 hours)
300 g. (2/3 lb.) ripe tomatoes
4 red peppers
1 large onion
2 cloves garlic
1 branch parsley
200 g. (1/2 lb.) potatoes
1 teaspoon paprika
several strands of toasted saffron
50 g. (1½ oz.) bread crumbs
1/4 l. (1 cup) olive oil
4 eggs
salt

Drain, dry and bone the cod. Set aside. Chop and combine onion, garlic and parsley. Peel, drain and chop tomatoes. Remove pepper cores and cut into strips. Set vegetables aside. Boil two cups of water with 1 teaspoon salt, add potatoes and cook until they are about half-done. Place potatoes to cool then peel and cut into chunks. Now heat the olive oil in a casserole dish on the stove. When hot, add the onion mixture and saffron. When the mixture takes on a golden color, add the cod, tomato and peppers. Mix well for five minutes, then add the potato, 1 cup of hot water, the paprika, and season with salt. Simmer, stirring occasionally. When the stew is almost done, add the breadcrumbs and stir to thicken the sauce. Then tip the casserole from side to side so the stew is level on top. Just before serving, poach the eggs and arrange on top of the stew. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley.

Cordero a la Caldereta

Serves 6

Ingredients:

2 Kg. (4 lbs.) lamb, taken from the leg
1 cup fresh pureed tomato
1 onion
1 clove garlic
3 bay leaves
3 tablespoons olive oil
½ l. (2 cups) water or light meat broth
100 g. (3 oz.) lamb liver
1 cup Valdepeñas white wine
1 dried cayenne pepper
salt

Clean and bone the lamb then cut into chunks. Chop onion and garlic, then sautée with bay leaves and cayenne pepper in 2 tablespoons of olive oil. When onion is translucent, add tomato, wine, liver and water. Cook for about 10 minutes, then remove from heat. Fry the lamb lightly in the remaining oil, then place in a casserole dish. Pour in the sauce, and let the stew simmer until the lamb is tender, about 1 hour.

Note: If you prefer a finer sauce, puree it before adding it to the lamb. If the sauce is too thin, thicken with a handful of breadcrumbs. Season with salt.

Pestiños
Sugared pastries

½ cup olive oil
1 cup Valdepeñas white wine
300 g. (approx 1 cup) flour *
¼ cup anisette liqueur
1 teaspon anise seeds
1 tablespoon lemon rind
salt

Heat oil, then add lemon rind and anise seeds. Sautée 5-10 minutes, then remove from heat. Separate and discard seeds and rind, saving oil. Sift the flour, then working on a dry surface, shape flour into a volcano, making a mound and leaving a deep depression in the center. Pour wine, oil, anisette and a pinch of salt into the hole. Working with your hands, form a ball of dough, adding flour until the dough is no longer sticky. Place dough in a bowl, cover with plastic and let sit in a cool place for an hour. Flour a flat, dry surface and roll the dough out as thinly as possible. Cut into rectangular strips (about 2 fingers wide, 1 long) and fry in hot oil. Pastries should puff up. When golden brown, remove from oil and place on paper to absorb the oil. Then sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon, or serve topped with honey.

* Flours differ, so the amount will vary. Work with the dough adding more or less flour according to the consistency.

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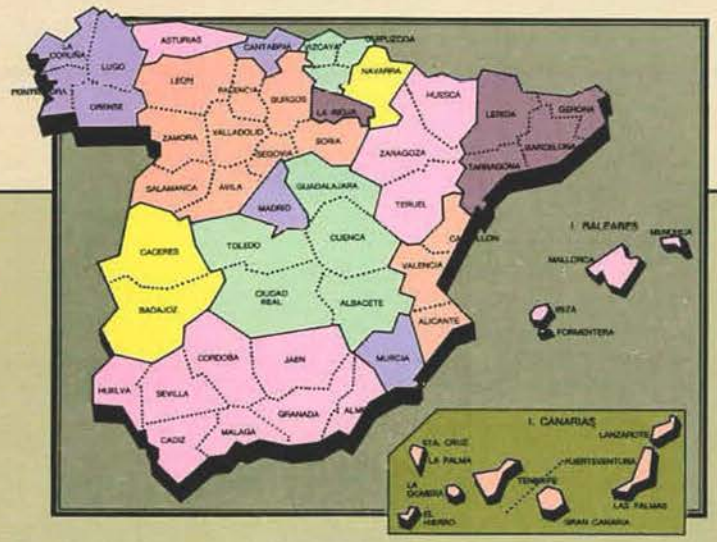

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Agnus Dei

Text: **Joaquín Pacheco**
Photo: © **Prado Museum. Madrid**

The painting -*Agnus Dei*- (Lamb of God), which hangs in Madrid's Prado Museum, is by the seventeenth-century Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán. Zurbarán painted several versions of this same theme, but this one is considered to be among his best. It stands out for its realism and attention to detail which lead one to think that it was a live study. So real does it seem that one of the painting's former owners used to proudly affirm that he would take the lamb in the painting over a hundred lambs in the flesh. Although this painting is basically a still life, we should not overlook its symbolism. In all Mediterranean religions and in Christian tradition, in particular, the sacrificial lamb is a symbol of gentleness, innocence, and purity. In one of his versions of *Agnus Dei,* Zurbarán paints a halo around the head of the lamb, thereby exalting the lamb's divine-like nature.

In this painting, we find the same sobriety and economy of means which characterize Zurbarán's other still lifes. This surface austerity, though, actually heightens the spiritual depth of the subject matter. Notice, for example, how the empty, dark background and the cold, bare table make the white figure of the lamb hauntingly stand out as if it were an apparition. Zurbarán gave great importance to tangible form, and here he masterfully -sculpts- the body of the lamb with as few as three colors. He also carefully attends to details which help create the overall effect of the painting: the lamb's half-closed eye; the skillful intertwining of its feet; the intricately worked, sculptured look of the fleece; and the golden tones which seem to outline the lamb's body. All of these details contribute to the intensity of the central figure. The result is a painting which exudes a sense of solidity and an air of mystery.

Short Biography

Francisco de Zurbarán was born in Fuente de Cantos (Extremadura) in 1598 into a family of well-to-do merchants. At the age of sixteen, he was sent off to study painting in Seville, which was then the most cosmopolitan city in Spain. Here he became friends with many of the well-known painters of his day, Velázquez among them.

After completing his formal studies, Zurbarán decided to set up a studio in Seville. His plans met with resistance on the part of local painters who, protective of their trade, felt that Zurbarán should be made to take a guild exam. Nevertheless, the many commissions for paintings which Zurbarán was quick to receive from city officials and other key figures in Seville won him the right to establish himself in the city.

Zurbarán was influenced by the great Italian painter Caravaggio to the point that some even called him -the Spanish Caravagio-. But perhaps his work had even more in common with the Sevillan painter Juan de Roelas, who introduced into Spanish art the more sensual, golden light characteristic of Venetian painters. Within a short time, however, Zurbarán developed a style of his own which was in tune with the artistic tastes of his day.

Although Zurbarán also painted secular subjects for the Royal Court in Madrid, the majority of his paintings dealt with religious subjects, which he portrayed with a sharp realism. Commissions for these paintings came from as far off as the New World; working from his studio in Seville, Zurbarán together with his son painted a great number of paintings for the newly established churches in the Americas. This joint studio production later created problems for art historians when determining which paintings were done solely by Zurbarán.

Zurbarán was a master at turning a common everyday object or face into something magical and otherwordly. This can be seen again and again in both his still lifes and in his paintings of monastic life where his simple and sometimes awkward composition lends a grave, statuesque presence to monks draped in flowing robes. Other distinctive features characterizing Zurbarán's paintings are his use of a double source of light, his emphasizing architectural elements alongside persons or landscapes, and his precision in depicting tangible forms.

Towards the end of Zurbarán's life, his son and close collaborator died victim of the plague which devastated Seville. Disheartened by the tragedy, Zurbarán moved away to Madrid where he would try to develop a style closer to the lighter, airier approach characteristic of his contemporaries Velázquez and Murillo. Although he received few commissions, he did paint some noteworthy paintings in this new style before dying in 1664.

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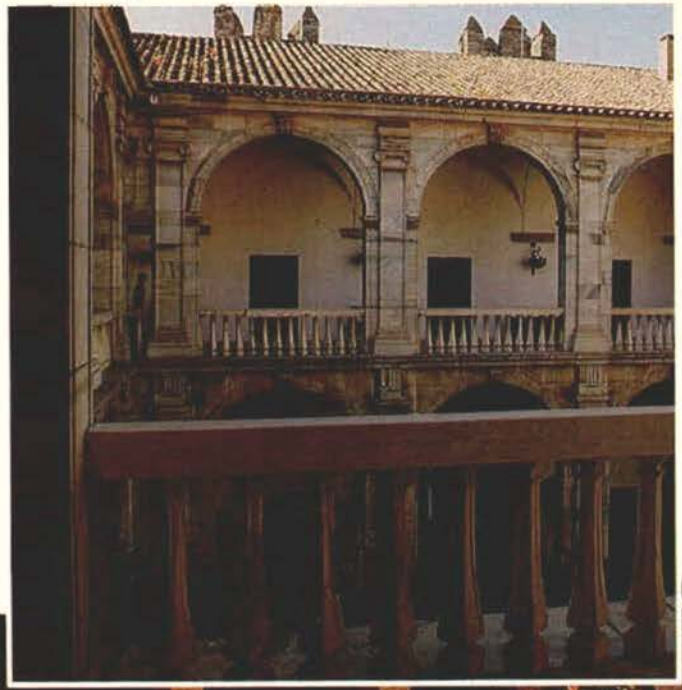

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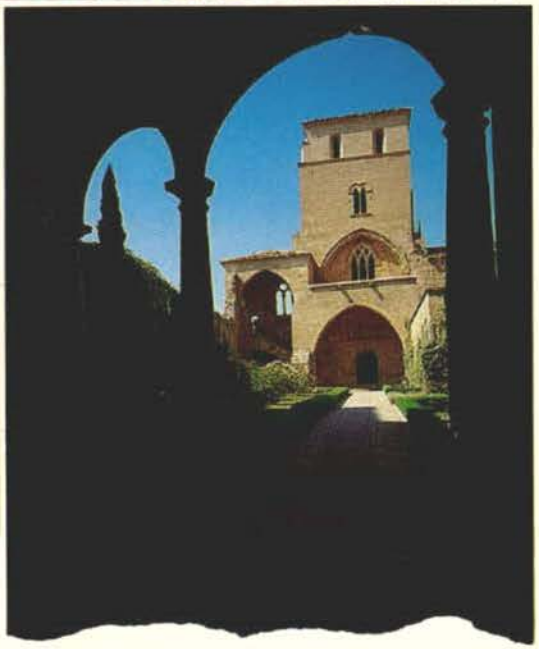

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