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SPAIN

GOURMETOUR

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

THE IBERIAN PIG:
LORD OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WOODLANDS

SHADES OF BLUE:
UNDERWATER DIVING IN SPAIN

MAKE MINE A MAGDALENA

CONSORCIO DE LOS QUESOS TRADICIONALES DE ESPAÑA

SHEEP'S MILK CHEESES: MANCHEGO, RONCAL, IDIAZABAL, ZAMORANO, LA SERENA.

GOAT'S MILK CHEESES: IBORES, MAJORERO, GARROTXA, RONDEÑO.
BLUE CHEESES: CABRALES, PICON, VALDEÓN
MIXED: TROCHON, IBERICO

COW'S MILK CHEESES: MAHON, TETILLA, NATA CANTABRIA, QUESUCO, AHUMADO DE ALIVA, CEBREIRO, SAN SIMON

The traditional Cheesemakers of Spain have come together as a Consortium to create a greater public awareness of Spain, with its many different landscapes, ecosystems and microclimates, as a producer of a variety of outstanding traditional cheeses.

The uniqueness of these cheeses comes from a legacy of ancient cultures and traditions, from production processes refined over generations, and in particular from the milk that is used. Members of the Consortium use only milk from Spain's indigenous breeds of sheep, cows and goats — the flavor of which reflects the special environment of each region.

The cheeses offered are thus highly individual in flavor, taste and texture. However, they are all recognizable by their presentation as being produced by the Traditional Cheesemakers of Spain.

We feel confident that, worldwide, connoisseurs and enthusiasts alike will appreciate the qualities of the cheeses produced by the members of this Consortium.

CONSORCIO DE LOS QUESOS TRADICIONALES DE ESPAÑA, S.A. C/. Gran Vía, 8 - 2.°
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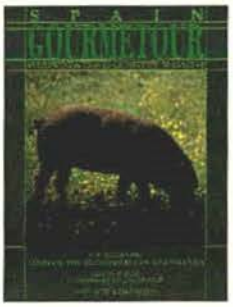
SPAIN GOURMETOUR



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La Quinta Esencia Del Fino

A Very Special Animal

Acorns, yes acorns, can be said to be the key to one of Spain's gourmet delicacies - Iberian ham. But there's more to it than just acorns. The Iberian pigs, with their exceptional genetic characteristics, are allowed to range freely beneath the holm and cork oaks that grow in large areas of southern and western Spain. Their meat is then cured in the traditional manner and the result is the much-prized hams and sausages that Spaniards wax poetic about. The benefits of an environmentally-sound production system are evident in the taste and aroma of the end products. Not so long ago, they were known only within Spain but over recent years gourmets in other countries have been able to savor these quite outstanding Iberian pork products.

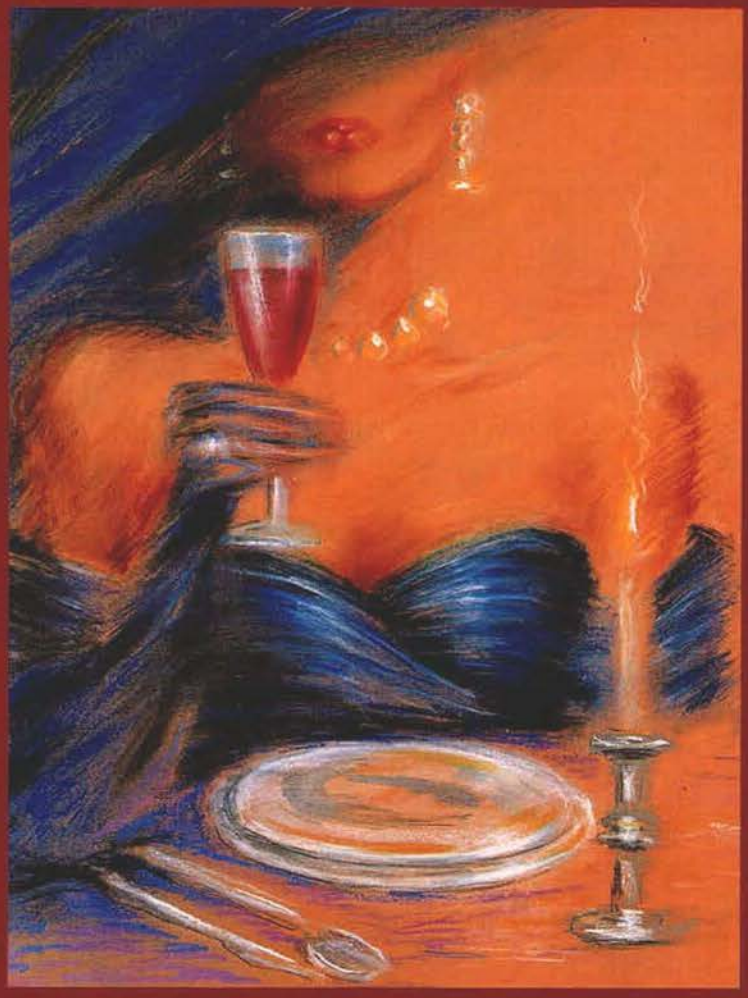
Spain is not especially famous for its cakes and pastries but recently the small cupcakes known as 'magdalenas' have surged onto the export market. A number of different varieties and flavors have been introduced and it seems that their lightness and smoothness are the secret to their new-found success.

Bodegas y Bebidas, on the other hand, is no newcomer to the export market. This veteran export company has one very unusual feature - it produces wines under nine different Denominations of Origin.

Variety is not only a feature of Spanish wines. The article on scuba diving illustrates the wealth of underwater landscapes waiting to be explored along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Spain. Another experience not to be missed by those in search of the unusual is a visit to Osuna, a delightful town still unknown even to most Spaniards and described in this issue's article in our series "Off the Beaten Track".

THE NINETH INTERNATIONAL GOURMET CLUB SHOW

Madrid, 17, 18, 19 and 20 March 1995



Access to the Show is only through invitation or as professional. Under no circunstances are those under 16 years of age admitted.

Activities and conferences

During the periods of the Show, a number of talks will be given related to quality products and good food, among which the FOURTH FORUM OF WINE stands out.

The result of the Eighth Show

The Eighth Show occupied a total area of 11,070 sq. m. with 320 stands shared among the 390 companies which ere exhibiting -of which 40% were from the food sub-sector and 51% from the drinks sub-sector. Throughout the four exhibition days almost 27,000 professionals visited the show.

Forecast for the nineth Show

Exhibitors: 450
Professional visitors: 30,000

Products to be shown

Wines, spirits and liqueurs.
Sweets, chocolates and biscuits.
Codiments, spices, oils and vinegars.
Apéritifs and beers.
Cheeses.
Meat, fish and vegetable conserves.
Charcuterie.
Patés, foie-gras and duck and goose by-products.
Accesories for the table (china, glass, linen, etc.).
Various (kitchen utensils, books, specialized magazines, etc.).

What is the gourmet Club Show?

It is the event where product manufacturers, elite gastronomes, artisans and industrialists can meet the owners and chefs of the best restaurants, head buyers from hotel chains and large select food chains, special shops and experts which are lovers of a good table (members of wine clubs, readers of magazines for gastronomes and users of tourist and good food guides).

For further information about the Nineth International Gourmet Club Show, send this coupon to Progourmet, S. A. C/ Claudio Coello, 52 - 1ª. Planta. 28001 - Madrid (SPAIN). Tel.: (1) 577 04 18. Fax: (1) 431 13 59.

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STOP PRESS

Compiled by NICK LYNE

TAKE A BREAK; WITH A DIFFERENCE

Visitors to Spain looking for something different should take note of three pocket-sized guides just out. "Estancias de España", now into its third year, offers more than 40 hotels and restaurants throughout Spain sited in buildings of architectural and historic interest. Ideal for weekend jaunts, or for those touring by

car and who want a special stopover at the end of each day. "El Grato Rincón" is a similar idea, with a less comprehensive list, and focused more on the Madrid area, however, its recommendations are based on exacting criteria. "Los Hoteles del Golf" will be indispensible for enthusiasts of the sport of kings, with a list including full details of prices and facilities for 20 hotels throughout Spain, the Balearics and the Canary Islands.

Available from Grupo Doble Fila, SL, Velázquez, 111, Madrid. Tel.: (1) 561 0170.

RIOJA INAUGURATES "PRESTIGE AWARD"- GOES TO UNESCO'S FEDERICO MAYOR

Federico Mayor Zaragoza has been announced as the winner of the inaugural "Premio Prestigio Rioja" award. The prize, organized by the Regulating Council of the Rioja Denomination of Origin, celebrates the fundamental values of Spanish culture, based on what it calls "the religious and commercial significance of the vine and wine, the olive and oil, wheat and bread". Don Federico was selected by a panel which among other notables included Nobel Prize winning novelist Camilo José Cela and Rafael Ansón, former director of the EFE news agency, for his work as Director General of UNESCO and his efforts to promote "friendship between different peoples through education and science, as well as the personal example set by him in exalting the values fomented by the Premio Prestigio Rioja."

RIOJA SALES INCREASE BY FIVE PERCENT ON 1992

Sales of Rioja reached record levels in 1993, more than 156 million liters, up 5.3% on 1992's 148 million liters. The average price per liter also increased, from 362 pesetas in 1992 to 371 pesetas for last year.

However, sales have leveled off after the heady days of the early 1990s, when growth was 25% in 1991 and 15% in 1992. Angel Jaime Baró, president of the La Rioja Denomination of Origin Regulating Council said that bearing in mind the world recession, the sales were positive. He added however, that the devaluation of the peseta had played a key role in boosting export sales, which rose 39% on the previous year.

Germany is the key market for Rioja wines, with some seven million liters of the total 39 million exported going there. However, sales to Britain soared by 47%, with British tipplers preferring vintage and reserve Riojas.

CAVAS HILL STARTS EXPORTS TO JAPAN

Penedés-based wine producers Cavas Hill are to start exporting their brand of sparkling white wine to Japan this year. The decision follows a trial period two years ago, which suggests a good market in Japan. The devaluation of the peseta has further boosted sales abroad, and the company believes it can increase sales by 45% on 1992, when sales reached 400 million pesetas. Exports should make up the bulk of these sales, jumping from 15% at present, to 40%.

CAVA EXPORTS RISE BY 10% ON 1992, REACHING 50 MILLION BOTTLES

Sales of Cava for 1993 reached 50 million bottles, up 10% on the previous year, according to statistics published by the Cava Denomination of Origin Regulating Council. Germany once again headed the list of importers, with 16 million bottles sold there, up 21% on the previous year. Sales in Britain rose by 18%, with 3.6 million bottles shipped. The US is the second biggest market, with 11.1 million bottles, although sales there fell by 11.7% on 1992. However, the council pointed out that sales to Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay have increased.

The council added that although sales grew by 10% on 1992, the real value was that of a 30% increase, given the devaluation of the peseta.

SPANISH WINES REAP FOREIGN PRAISE, AND PRIZES

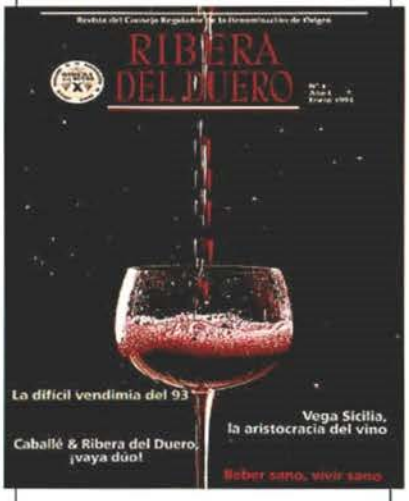
Spain's wines continue to make their mark felt internationally, reaping prizes and praise. Navarre came out tops in the March edition of Britain's Wine magazine, when a panel of 16 independent tasters was given a total of 59 unidentified Riojas and Navarres. Among the wines of Navarre specially praised were a 1989 Julián Chivite, which led the "Exceptional" category.

Meanwhile, the prestigious US publication "Wine Spectator", in its March edition listed more than 240 wines recently launched on the US market, of

STOP PRESS

RIBERA DEL DUERO LAUNCHES MAGAZINE

The Regulating Council of the Ribera del Duero Denomination of Origin has launched a new magazine. The quarterly publication, appropriately called Ribera del Duero is backed by the Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry and, while aimed principally at the wine trade, should also be of interest to wine enthusiasts. As part of the magazine's efforts to reach a wider public interested in quality wines, a Ribera del Duero "Circulo de Amigos" has also been formed to promote a range of cultural and tasting activities from the area's different bodegas.



The first issue looks at the "difficult" harvest of '93, and has an interview with the director of the region's best known exporter, Vega Sicilia. At present the publication is available only in Spanish, but overseas subscribers are welcome.
For further information contact:
Isabel Adrián, Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero, Hospital (no number), Roa de Duero, Burgos, 09300. Tel.: (47) 541221

which 21 were chosen for mention. Among the highlights were "Spectator Selections" - wines chosen for their reasonable price and high quality - with a Marqués de Murrieta 1989 Rioja tinto.
Among the "Best Buys" were a Bodegas Martínez Bujanda Conde de Valdemar Rioja Crianza 1990 and a Bodegas Campo Viejo Rioja Albor 1990.
In Canada, at the "Seléctions Mondiales" (Canada's Premier Wine Exhibition, and officially recognized by the International Office of Vine and Wine) in March, Spanish wines carried off 33 bronze medals, while the only silver was awarded to Bodegas Viña Ijalba's Múrice. Viña Ijalba was established in 1991 in Logroño, and boasts the latest technology.
Finally, at the "Vinalia" wine competition in Paris, which attracts the world's finest wines, Bodegas Faustino Martínez carried off two prizes. Their 1989 Faustino V tinto Reserva and the 1989 Faustino V rosado were given the *Prix d'Excellence*.

NEW PRODUCTS

LA CATEDRAL ADDS TO RANGE OF PRESERVES

La Rioja-based company Conservas La Catedral, owned by the Olarra group, has announced new additions to its range of luxury preserves. The latest members of the family are wild mushrooms in olive oil and wild mushrooms with "baby" kidney beans, also in olive oil.
Conservas La Catedral produces a variety of high quality and internationally renowned preserves, among them green vegetables, stuffed peppers and pulses.

BODEGAS OLARRA UNVEILS THREE NEW WINES AND TWO VINTAGES

La Rioja-based Bodegas Olarra have unveiled three new wines, as well as announcing two vintages, all reds. The oldest are the 1987 Gran Reserva 1987, and the Tinto Añares Gran Reserva 1987. Next there are the Cerro Añon Reserva 1988, and the Tinto Añares Reserva 1988. Finally, a 1990 Tinto Añares Crianza, a 1991 Tinto Otoñal Crianza, and a 1992 Otoñal Tinto.

COORSUR LAUNCHES EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Corporación Olivarera del Sur, Coorsur, the country's leading 100% Spanish-owned olive oil producer has just launched its Coorsur Virgen Extra, a full, fruity oil, prepared according to traditional pressing methods. Attractively packaged in a distinctive glass bottle and with its rich golden color, the oil's acidity is less than 0.4º, and is ideal for a range of culinary purposes.

BODEGAS CAMPILLO AND BODEGAS JULIAN CHIVITE, ANNOUNCE 1987 VINTAGES

Two 1987 vintages from La Rioja and Navarre have just arrived on the market: Bodegas Campillo, and Julián Chivite respectively. Bodegas Campillo have released only 18,000 bottles of its "Campillo Reserva Especial 1987". Julián Chivite have not only released a traditional red, the Chivite 125 Aniversario, but a new white, the Chivite Collection 125. The red follows very much in the footsteps of its '81 and '85 predecessors, while the white has superceded expectations, and few bottles remain of this Chardonnay produced in Cintruenigo, Navarre.

Carbonell didn't become such a fine olive oil overnight. It took 128 years of practice

Ever since 1866, Carbonell has chosen plump, juicy olives from the fertile land of Andalucia, in the South of Spain, to produce an exquisite olive oil.

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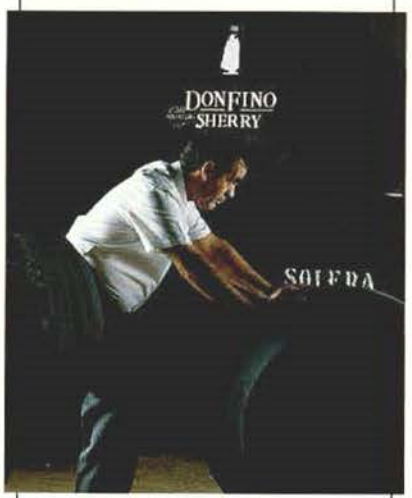
STOP PRESS

SANDEMAN ANNOUNCES A GOOD 1993

Sherry and port producers the House of Sandeman announced that despite difficulties brought about by the world recession, 1993 was a good year, increasing its market share. The company said that its sherry made up 10% of all shipments for 1993, with total production of 11 million bottles. Sandeman's main market is Germany, where it holds more than 40% of the market. The company now has its sights set on the emerging market of the former Eastern Bloc nations of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.



JOINT VENTURE WITH BERBERANA GETS MARQUES DE GRIÑON INTO RIOJA

Marqués de Griñon, one of the best known Denomination of Origin wines from the Rueda region, has joined forces with La Rioja's Bodegas Berberana to produce a top quality range of Rioja wines. Marqués de Griñón sees the move as a way to extend its specialized "author" wines to Rioja. Berberana announced a turnover of 4 billion pesetas for 1993, similar to that of 1992, based primarily on sales of Carta de Plata, which covers 30% of the Rioja market.

MIGUEL TORRES BUYS INTO BRITISH MARKET

Spain's leading wine exporter, Miguel Torres, has bought a 10% stake in British wine and spirits distributers John E. Fells. Miguel Torres, which reported a turnover of aproximately 71 million dollars for 1993, has seen its business in England and Wales steadily increase over recent years, and currently exports 65,000 cases there - some 8% of its total exports, third after Denmark.

NAVARRE 1993 "VERY GOOD"

The Navarre Denomination of Origin Regulating Council has classified 1993 as a "Very Good" year, the first since 1989. Production for 1993 in Navarre reached 49 million liters, of which 44 million liters were presented for classification. The Navarre D.O. Regulating Council has recently toughened its criteria for classification (see Spain Gourmetour nº 32), and new regulations will mean consistently higher quality in years to come.

SEVILLE HOSTS FIFTH MEDITERRANEAN FOOD SHOW

The Andalusian city of Seville will be host in October, for the fifth year running, of "MEDAL 94", the international exposition dedicated to the Mediterranean diet. This year's show comes amid increasing interest throughout the world in the so called Mediterranean diet, which has established itself as one of the healthiest - and tastiest - ways of eating.

A recent article in the prestigious US publication "Wine Spectator", looked at the secret of one of the world's most successful chefs, Alain Ducasse of Monte Carlo's Hôtel de Paris. Ducasse took the job as head chef at the hotel under the condition that he earn it three coveted Michelin stars in four years. He won the stars largely on the basis of a deceptively simple Mediterranean cuisine, emphasizing fresh ingredients, and particularly olive oil.

Meanwhile, top French food and wine publication Gault & Millau dedicated most of its March edition this year to the theme of the Mediterranean diet. A series of articles looked into both the culinary attraction and the health benefits from a diet distinguished by its low cholesterol intake.

Health experts note that Spain has one of the lowest rates of heart desease in Europe, and point to a balanced diet based on olive oil, fish and fresh green vegetables, as well as pasta and quality charcuterie.

MEDAL 94, which is backed by the European Union, as well as the Spanish agriculture ministry and the regional government of Andalusia, not only offers producers a showcase, but includes conferences on all aspects of the Mediterranean diet, from new trends in agriculture to distribution of products, as well as ways of increasing public awareness of the benefits of eating Mediterranean style.

For further information contact: Tel (5) 467 5140. Fax 467 5350.

GALLO GROUP'S EXORTS RISE 27%

Gallo, Spain's leading producer of pasta and flour products, announced a 27.6% increase in exports for 1993 over the previous year. Turnover was 19 billion pesetas (14 million dollars) for the year, up 9.3% on 1992. The company controls some 45% of the domestic market, while exports make up 12% of total production. Gallo has begun an ambitious investment program at its production plants, and the company aims to increase exports to 20% of turnover.

Scarce resource.

Traditionally, choice and selectivity have always been key ingredients in the wines of Bodegas Montecillo. And traditionally, demand has always exceeded supply. Particulary so this year. We're presenting our 1985 vintage. A year the experts classify as «Very Good». Viña Monty 1985. SCARCE RESOURCE.

BODEGAS MONTECILLO.
THE PRIDE OF RIOJA.

ESPARRAGO DE NAVARRA

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31006 PAMPLONA (NAVARRA)
TEL. (948) 23 85 12 - FAX: (948) 23 20 70

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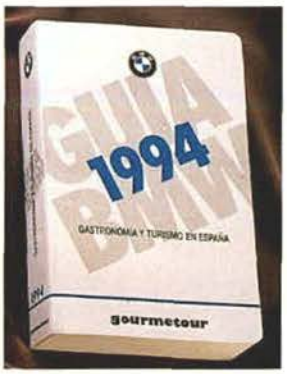
LASTING IMPRESSIONS

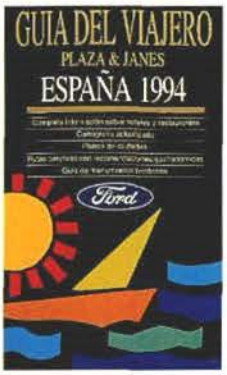
SONIA ORTEGA



Guía BMW. Gastronomía y Turismo en España

Club de Gourmets
Claudio Coello, 52, 1º - 28001 Madrid - Tel.: (1) 577 04 18 - Fax: (1) 431 13 59

During the eighties in Spain, *eating out* became a highly fashionable pastime. Conversations invariably ended up on the subject of gastronomy or the latest restaurant. Numerous tourist guides were first published at this time with the focus on the best food to be had all over Spain. The three main guides of this type are covered in this section. They have several characteristics in common. Being sponsored by automobile companies or other related organizations, all are driver-oriented and give maps and diagrams. All are published annually and, unfortunately, all are only in Spanish.
The BMW guide is the oldest (it was formerly called Gourmetour) and is possibly the most complete because, in addition to exhaustive coverage of Spanish hotels and restaurants - almost 2,000 restaurants and 1,500 hotels, with interesting and useful comments, this guide gives extensive tourist information as well as sections on things to buy (handcrafts, local food products, wines, *etc.*) and good places for just having a drink.
The BMW guide is structured differently than the others. Whereas the other two list towns alphabetically, this guide is arranged according to the 51 Spanish provinces and covers only the most interesting towns in each of them.



Guía del Viajero. España 1994

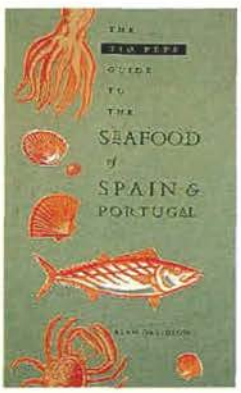
Plaza & Janés, 1994
Enric Granados, 86-88 - 08008 Barcelona - Tel.: (3) 415 11 00 - Fax: (3) 415 69 76

The Guia del viajero de España, now in its ninth edition with 700 pages, lists Spanish towns in alphabetical order giving basic information on each of them (inhabitants, distances, etc.), with details of the main sights in and around each town and the dates of the local fiestas. The bulk of the book covers hotels and especially restaurants with full comments. Grading goes from just a mention to three stars.
The Guia del Viajero de España also includes up-to-date maps of Spain as well as sketch maps of the main cities. But the most original feature of this book in comparison with others on the market is the section on tourist routes devised for those motoring for pleasure and in which brief details are given of distances and of the main reasons for visiting the towns along the way.
Lists of towns, restaurants and Ford dealers (the book is sponsored by Ford) are given at the end.
This collection also includes guides to the different Spanish regions. Published so far are guides on Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid, the Basque Country and, most recently, Castile and León.

Guía Campsa 1994. España

Repsol, Comercial de Productos Petrolíferos, S.A. 1994
Paseo de la Castellna, 278 - 28046 Madrid - Tel.: (1) 348 80 01 - Fax: (1) 348 88 03

The 1994 Campsa Guide with 400 pages is really two books in one - a full road map of Spain and a guide to Spain's food and drink, tourism and handcrafts.
Brief comments are given on local fiestas, monuments and places of interest in about 800 towns arranged in alphabetical order. As in other similar guides, most of the book is devoted to food and drink with detailed information on approximately 1,000 restaurants, which are classified by the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy and the Cofradía de la Buena Mesa on a scale from one to five (instead of stars, petrol pumps are awarded, CAMPSA being a Spanish petrol company). Information is also given on 2,000 hotels giving the official classification but without comments.
A special mention should be given to the selection of Spanish artisans. This was formerly given in a separate list but this year the names are included within the alphabetical section on towns so that they are now easier to locate.
Unlike other guides, this one also gives information on Portugal, Andorra and the South of France.
This year's novelty is a section entitled "An Introduction to Wine" with definitions of the different labels.



The Tio Pepe Guide to the Seafood of Spain & Portugal

Alan Davidson
González Byass, S.A., 1992
Manuel María González, 12 - 11403 Jérez de la Frontera (Cádiz) - Tel.: (56) 34 00 00 - Fax: (56) 33 20 89

The Iberian Peninsula offers a tremendous variety of seafood. Identification of the different species in the marketplace, on a menu or on the table is often difficult owing to geographical variations and to the different names commonly used in the various coastal regions.
Alan Davidson, an expert on the subject and the author of many works on seafood, has now come to our aid. This small, practical handbook covering 270 species facilitates the task of identification and inspires readers to be adventurous and try every one of them. The explanations are clear and concise and the drawings (mostly from the FAO archives) simple and elucidative. The names of each of the species are given in 8 languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Basque, Catalan and Galician) alongside the scientific name in Latin.
Although not a cookery book, Davidson gives advice on the best ways of serving these products and his recommendations generally tend to coincide with traditional recipes.
The original idea of this guide came from Mauricio González-Gordon - from the González Byass bodegas in Jérez, the producers of the famous Tio Pepe sherry. Aware that their sherry combined perfectly with most Spanish seafoods, it was he who suggested to Alan Davidson that he write this book. The end result would doubtless have delighted the original Tío Pepe himself.

Text: Cathy Boirac
Photos: Juan Ramón Yuste/ ICEX

Sherry and British cuisine

Tribute where tribute is due

She has one of those faces that would not have been at all out of place leaning over our cradle. Her frank, innocent smile reveals two neat rows of sparkling white teeth. Her lightly freckled, rounded cheeks simply add to the aura of harmony and tranquillity she exudes. Her sweet gaze, her light blue eyes, with just a touch of make-up. They alone should be enough to make that child in our mind's eye sink into a deep and peaceful sleep as she croons a lullaby or a Celtic ballad. But here we are face to face a long, long way from Ireland. Practically on the other side of the world. We are in Andalusia, in Jerez de la Frontera to be exact.

Frances Bissell, with her hair piled high on her head à la Katherine Hepburn, is wearing a white apron and no chef's hat - a woman's privilege maybe? She is busy in the kitchens of the Hotel Jerez where, despite barely having touched down, we are already enjoying a perfectly chilled glass of *fino* sherry, just the ticket as the weather is already hot here in spring.

All the literature on Jerez highlights the very special web of links the town has woven with the United Kingdom the centuries. The local archives tell the story of wine expeditions going back to 1340; Chaucer and Shakespeare both wrote enthusiastically about it; in the 19th century 40% of British wine imports came from Jerez. As for the people who live in Jerez, I have never met anyone else in Europe outside Britain who can speak the Queen's English better than they do.

So what could be more natural than to put together British cuisine with sherry wines. That is exactly what *Fedejerez* (an association of winemakers from the famous Jerez triangle) and the Denomination of Origin Regulatory Council decided to do, under the guiding hand of Frances Bissell, for the inaugural dinner of a new gastronomic society called *Las Buenas Compañías* (Good Company).

A Propitious initiative

Some five or six years ago, at a dinner in Anton Mosimann's famous London restaurant alongside the assembled specialized British press, I was fortunate enough to sample a succulently tasty duck served with a sauce thickened with Oloroso Solera 1842 from the Bodega Valdespino, followed by a mint sorbet washed down with a glass of Domecq's Palo Cortado Sibarita. But in that case the chef, José Antonio Valdespino - who is a member of one of the oldest families in Jerez - was an Andalusian. Last year, as Spain Gourmetour recounted - it was the turn of seafood and smoked fish, served against the magnificent backdrop of Scotland, which set off to perfection these very same wines. The Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade, the Sherry Institute of Spain and the Trade Office attached to the Spanish Embassy in London are all behind this kind of initiative.

We played our small part in these pages last year too, when we sang the praises of Cream Sherry and dared to suggest that our French readers serve a Pale Cream with *foie gras*. I say "dared" for it seems to me that those countries and regions with a deep-rooted culinary tradition are the least willing to admit new flavors or to try out new and seemingly unorthodox combinations.

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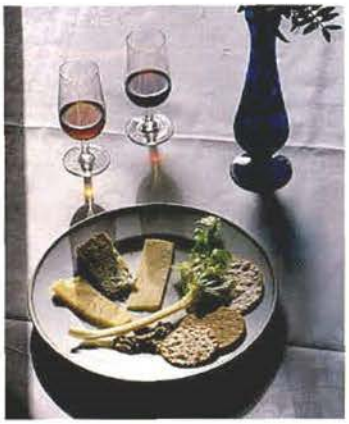

And so it fell to England, in the shape of Frances Bissell to be precise, to make a success of that extraordinary feat of skill, that of transforming words into food. She is a journalist by profession, and has written the regular Saturday food and drink column in the Times since 1987. But what she loves most is to be in the kitchen. Since being asked by Mosimann to prepare the Culinary Academy's Annual Dinner in London some years ago she has cooked for many guests in London, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Catalonia, gathering together on the way the many and varied ingredients which she shrewdly and, I might venture, even lovingly incorporates into the cuisine she is so committed to defending and to making more widely known.

A really special menu

Often reviled and certainly ignored, British cuisine is, nevertheless, steeped in noble traditions, from the Plantagenets to Benedictine monks. But Frances also explains with enthusiasm why she uses mint with her Scottish salmon, marinated in pure virgin olive oil, sherry vinegar and heather honey. It must be a nod in the direction of Andalusia, I hear you say, with a distinct Moorish influence. Frances goes even further and does not hesitate to evoke the Roman domination of the British Isles... The bitter crispness of *fino* and *manzanilla* accentuate the mellow taste of the salmon. As for the traditional lamb - served here as crispy chops - a surprising sauce from Wales made with capers, algae and bitter oranges and an equally surprising Oloroso Sec and Palo Cortado added further spice and originality to the menu. These courses were followed by an excellent Cheddar, matured over 9 months, and a Stilton, matured even longer, which - surprise, surprise - are subtly set off by the Oloroso Dulce and the Cream, sweet wines which seem to have been specially created to go with strong cheeses. And naturally enough, since Britain was being honored, the meal was rounded off with that traditional 18th century dessert made with confectioner's custard, sponge cake, fresh cream, and flaked, grilled almonds, all bathed in Cream Sherry. The famous sherry trifle.

At the end of this meal, which took place in the vaulted room of the headquarters of the Regulatory Council where the different winemakers forming it are represented - one per barrel - the new society seemed to have fulfilled its mission. It had set out not only to bring together Spanish and foreign professionals from the worlds of wine and gastronomy in happy company, but also to remind everyone that these legendary wines should not be relegated to the level of simple aperitifs.

A world of opportunity awaits sherry in this field. Served with a meal, it is capable of bringing out exciting new flavors in so many dishes from far and wide. We bet that Jerez hospitality will know how to make the most of them when we meet again.

Cathy Boirac *has a B.A. in English philology. Of French origin, she settled in Spain somo twenty years ago, after living in France, Germany, England and the USA. Editor of Spain Gourmetour, she is also head of the Periodical Publications Dept. at the Spanish Foreign Trade Institute (ICEX).*

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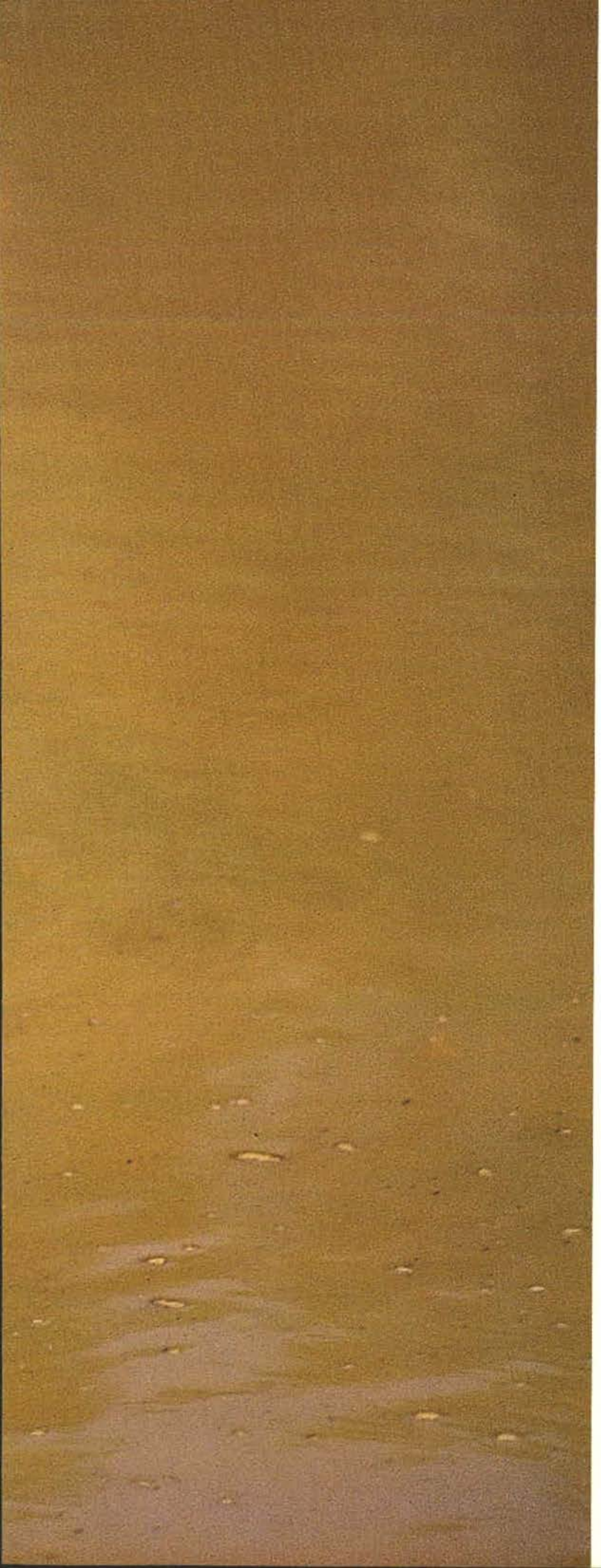

Lord of the Mediterranean woodlands

The hams and sausages made from the meat of the Iberian pig are much prized today in Spain. Their success in the market ensures not only the survival of an outstanding animal and the continuity of a production system closely tied to its natural environment but also the conservation of the oak and cork woods of the Iberian Peninsula.

Text: **Luis Silió** Photos: **Carlos Navajas/ICEX**

The *dehesa* constitutes an ecological model of the interaction between woodland, grassland and livestock and an important reserve for wild fauna and flora.

The characteristics of the Iberian pig are the result of their having adapted to their environment, an area of semi-arid continental climate with drought conditions in summer and a short cold period in winter.

A Spanish geneticist, Miguel Odriozola, who devoted much of his career to the study of the Iberian pig, classified pig populations in two categories according to their degree of artificiality. First degree populations are those on lands controlled by a large number of farmers who only occasionally exchange breeding stock. They therefore develop genetically by adapting to their environment and the available diet. Second degree populations undergo genetic changes in which the environment has little influence because they are determined by a small group of farmers that select breeds according to production and handling needs. Iberian pigs are an example of the first type of population and, obviously, modern breeds of pig fall under the second category.

For centuries, numbers of Iberian pigs remained high in large areas of the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula without being modified by selection processes. The special characteristics of the Iberian pig are therefore the result of their having adapted to their environment, an area of semi-arid continental climate with drought conditions in summer and a short cold period in winter.

There is much literary and artistic evidence that pig breeding was traditionally related to the exploitation of woodlands at least up until the 17th century in Northern Europe and until today in Mediterranean Europe. The characteristic habitat of the Iberian pig is the *dehesa*. These are sparse Mediterranean woodlands in which holm and cork oaks predominate and in which shrub growth has been reduced by man. There is a herbaceous layer of the type of annual plants that grow well on shallow soils that are not suitable for continued agricultural cultivation.

THE DEHESA

Holm and cork oaks and other species of the *Quercus* genus are very resistant to summer drought and winter frost because of the thick cuticle of their evergreen leaves, and they make good use of the high levels of insolation and the long frost-free season. The typical products of the *dehesa* are firewood, cork and, most importantly: livestock (cattle and sheep for meat, as well as Iberian pigs). The *dehesa* thus constitutes an interesting ecological model of the interaction between woodland, grassland

Today, Iberian pigs are bred almost exclusively for quality cured products, reaching a value of over 80 billion pesetas.

and livestock and an important reserve for wild fauna and flora.
The *dehesa* trees flower from April to May and bear fruit from November until the end of February, or mid-March in areas with large numbers of cork oaks, which mature slightly later. The herbaceous flora of gramineous and leguminous plants, with a liking for acid soils and a semi-arid climate, give abundant pasture in spring, slightly less in autumn and winter and none in summer.
The production of Iberian pigs centers on the utilization of these resources. The *dehesa* is not self-sufficient and the marked seasons mean that animals must be able to subsist during the summer with a poor or non-existent diet obtained from grazing on nearby stubble fields with quick fattening in the autumn for slaughtering at the end of the acorn season.
The morphology of the Iberian pig makes it resistant to sunstroke and the high summer temperatures and enables it to travel far in search of food: dark skin and hair color, a pointed snout and legs that are both long and strong. It can endure long periods of hunger because of its low basal metabolism and the early formation of fatty tissues. The thick layer of subcutaneous fat and the high level of intramuscular fat make its meat easy to cure and conserve for long periods under adverse climatological conditions.
Although in the traditional populations there were different local varieties with slightly different appearances (black hairless strains and red, golden or pied varieties), the aforementioned features are shared by all Iberian pigs and have remained unchanged over the centuries. It is not unusual to find an exact reproduction of what today's zootechnicians would call the breed standard of the Iberian pig as seen in the animals used as models between 1660 and 1670 by the Andalusian painter, Murillo, in his two paintings of the Prodigal Son tending pigs which are today in the collections of the Prado Museum and of Sir Alfred Beit in Ireland.

THE CRISIS YEARS

The population of Iberian pigs is the largest of the surviving populations of the Mediterranean type, which is one of the three ancient types of domestic pig, together with the European/Celtic and Asian types. Until 1960, Iberian pigs were mostly bred for meat and pork fat and were by far the most important breed of pigs in Spain. But the sixties marked the start of a long period of decline for Iberian pigs and *Quercus* woodlands.
The arrival of African swine fever caused large numbers of pigs to be slaughtered. The crisis of the Iberian pig was made worse by the depreciation of animal fats and by the loss of the city meat markets because of the entry into Spain of more efficient, select European breeds for intensive meat production. In rural areas, family pig slaughtering and other types of local consumption decreased and the implantation of irrigation systems and increasing mechanization meant the end of many *dehesas* and stubble fields.
In reaction to this crisis and in order to improve lean meat yield, many breeders tried crossing practically all the known dark-skinned breeds of pig - *Tamworth, Wessex, Large Black, Duroc* and *Berkshire*. The census dropped drastically from 567,424 sows in 1955 to 67,143, most of them cross-breeds, in 1982. Although some public and private pig farms survived with breeding stock of guaranteed origin, certain local varieties, such as the Andalusian golden, disappeared.
But the hard times passed and the downward trend of Iberian pigs and of the *dehesa* turned upward once Spanish consumers and visitors from many other countries began to recognize the high quality of the Iberian hams, loin sausages and other cured products. The 1990 census registered 107,000 sows, one third of which were pure Iberian and the rest hybrids. Today Iberian-type pigs are bred almost exclusively for quality cured products. In the early eighties, about 550,000 pigs were being slaughtered annually but this figure has practically doubled since then, with the end products reaching a value of over 80 billion pesetas.
This revival of the Iberian pig bodes well for livestock breeding on the *dehesa* and for the survival of this exceptionally valuable ecosystem because the extensive production of Iberian pigs still maintains the basic features of the traditional method.

EXTENSIVE BREEDING OF IBERIAN PIG

The farmers arrange the mating by placing one boar with about ten sows being grouped for one month. Both sexes are used for breeding from the age of eight months. Farrowing takes place in closed stalls with small outside pens or in movable arks in outdoor enclosures. Lactation lasts almost two months although the piglets are fed small quantities of concentrates. Their weight on weaning is about 15 Kg (33 lbs.).
The long interval between weaning and slaughtering with traditional production methods, when pigs were often fattened for over two years before slaughtering, has been considerably reduced and, with current extensive methods, the optimum weight for slaughtering of around 160 Kg (352 lbs.) is reached between the ages of 14 and 18 months. There are two distinct periods in the growth of Iberian pigs: rearing and fattening.
The preliminary rearing period starts at weaning and continues until a weight of 90-100 Kg (198-220 lbs.) is reached: duration depends on the time of birth. The main objective is maximum grazing on the spring pastures, stubble fields and any available additional crops. A cereal supplement is provided, especially during the summer, in order for the necessary weight to be reached by the end of October when the acorns begin to fall.
The fattening process known as the *montanera* begins on All Saints Day (November 1) or thereabouts and continues as long as there are acorns. Ba-

The Regulating Councils for the Denomination of Origin in the areas with the main processing industries are very much concerned with quality, which should be the salvation of the age-old Iberian pigs and the *debesas* where they live.

sically it consists of the consumption of fallen acorns or acorns that are knocked from the tree by the farmer who rationalizes the feeding process by using the areas with the steepest slopes during the first few weeks and the flatter lands for the end of the fattening period when the pigs find it more difficult to move about.

The pigs cannot eat the whole of the acorn. The base and husk of the seed are very lignified and if eaten they reduce the digestibility of the other nutrients. Not only are Iberian pigs unusual in their capacity for pasturing, they have one most unusual characteristic which disappears when crossed with other breeds: namely, their skill in selecting the fruit and peeling off the husk.

Daily consumption varies between 6 and 10 Kg (13 and 22 lbs.) of acorns with an additional intake of grass in good years as well as roots and bulbs. This extra intake enriches the protein content of the diet because the shelled acorn is basically an energy-giving food with only 8% of protein on dry-matter, much lower than the 12% recommended for pigs undergoing fattening. Under favorable conditions, daily weight increase can reach 1 Kg (2.2 lbs.) and fattening is considered finished when the pig weighs between 160 and 180 Kg (35.7 and 39.6 lbs.).

Tree density on the *debesa* varies between 30 and 40 trees per hectare (2.4 acres), giving an average yield of 15 Kg (33 lbs.) of acorns per tree although this varies greatly depending on the year and the area. This is the equivalent of 500 Mcal of digestible energy per Ha (2.4 acres). Since a pig needs 950 Mcal during acorn pasture, the theoretical livestock load is 0.52 pigs/Ha (2.4 acres). The surface occupied at present by *debesas* in the Iberian pig-breeding areas of Spain (Extremadura, western Andalusia and areas of Castile) is about 2.3 million Ha (5.6 million acres), of which 1.9 (4.7) are holm oak woods and 400,000 Ha (almost 1 million acres) are cork oak woods. Farming Iberian pigs following the *montanera* method is therefore limited by the availability of suitable woodlands because the area of *debesa* cannot be increased in the short term. Nor can it be used where tree density is too low, where there is scrubland or where access is difficult.

Unfavorable weather conditions or excessive livestock load make it necessary to resort to the mixed system, called the *recebo*, in which low levels of acorns are supplemented with concentrates during the fattening period, or the fattening period is prolonged with commercial feed stuff when and if the acorn period has finished and the animals have not yet reached the required weight for slaughtering.

IBERIAN PORK PRODUCTS

The hams, shoulders and loins are only one fourth of the carcass weight of 115-145 Kg (253-319 lbs.) but their value exceed 80% of its price. The rest of the carcass is used for different types of sausage (*chorizo, morcon, salchichón*) in which not only must the raw material be of top quality but the condiments and processing are also of importance.

Purebred Iberian pigs that have pastured on acorns with the right age and weight on slaughter give the best quality carcasses. Their meat is streaked with a high proportion of intramuscular fat, and the fat has a high unsaturated fatty acid (oleic and linoleic) content resulting from the high acorn intake. Curing of these Iberian hams lasts for two years, during which volatile substances accumulate from the hydrolysis of proteins and lipids (free aminoacids, aldehydes and ketones) which give the hams their taste and aroma. The organoleptic variations between the hams from *montanera, recebo* or fodder-fed pigs seem to result not from qualitative differences in these volatile compounds but from quantitative differences in their concentration.

The Regulating Councils for the Denomination of Origin in the areas with the main processing industries (Guijuelo, Dehesa de Extremadura, Sierra de Aracena and Valle de los Pedroches) are aware that the best products are obtained from animals reared following traditional methods and their regulations covering Iberian acorn-fed hams require that carcasses have a minimum of 75% Iberian blood and that acorn fattening be equivalent to one third of the weight at slaughtering. This concern for quality should be the salvation in this century of the age-old Iberian pigs and of the *debesas* where they live.

JAVIER BELLOSO

***Luis Silió**, an agronomist, is a full-time researcher in Animal Genetic Improvement in the Spanish National Institute for Agricultural Research and is in charge of the programs for the conservation and selection of stocks of Iberian pigs on the 50-year-old experimental pig herd, El Dehesón del Encinar (Oropesa, Toledo).*

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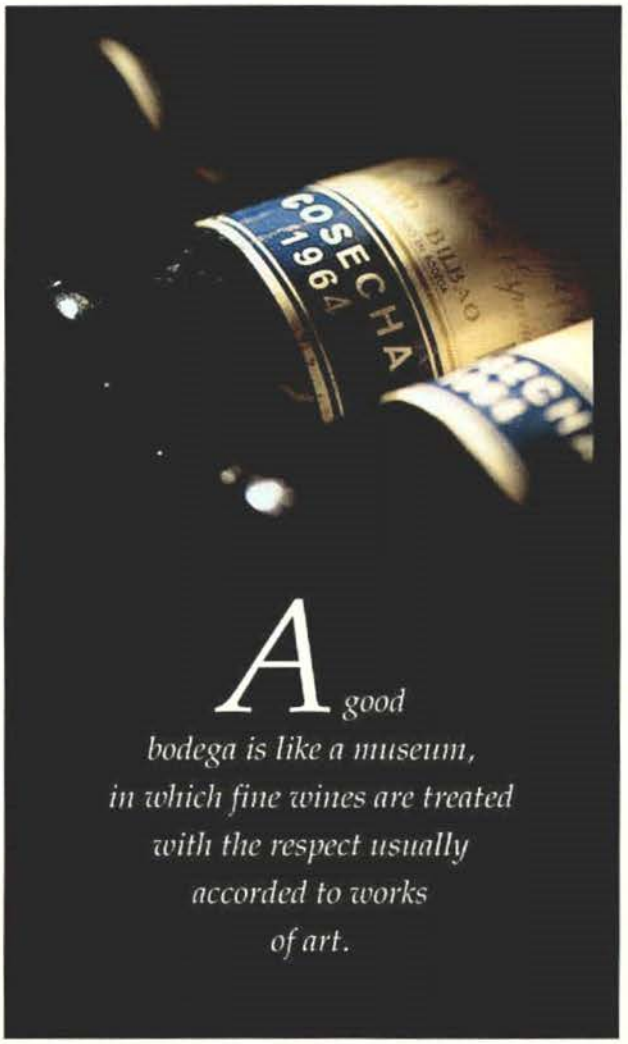
BODEGA: A SHRINE TO WINE

This second article in our series about the role of wine in Spain's restaurants looks at their bodegas, or wine-cellars. In many cases, these are designed to be more than just well-equipped storage areas: they are shrines to wine and attract many devotees.

Text: **Andrés Proensa** Translator: **Hawys Pritchard** Photos: **Pablo Neustadt /ICEX**

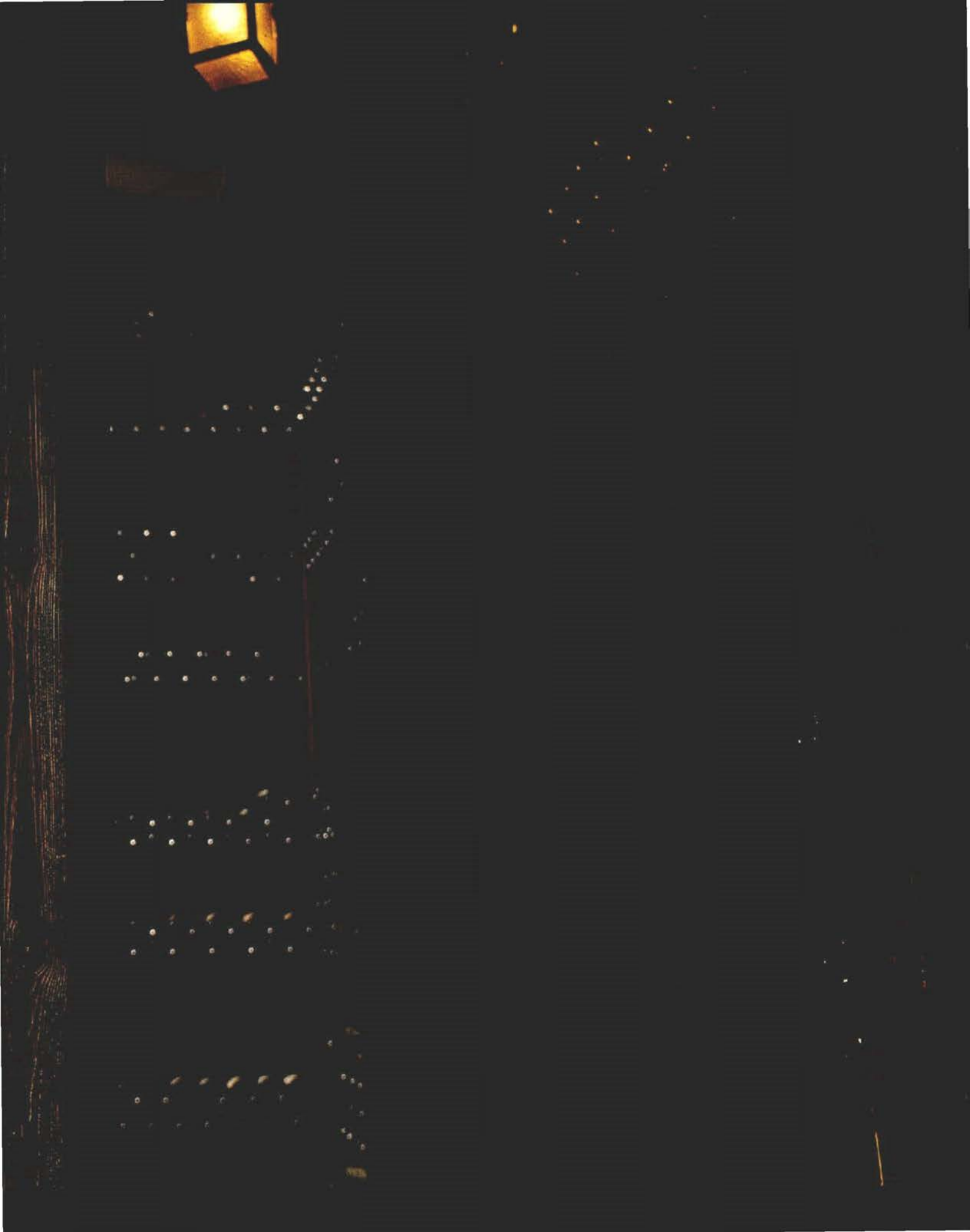


A good bodega is like a museum, in which fine wines are treated with the respect usually accorded to works of art.

Restaurant Rekondo
(Bilbao)

Restaurant El Churrasco
(Cordoba)

Restaurant La Merced
(Logroño)



Spanish proprietors have always taken a pride in their wine-cellars, which are considered a key element in a restaurant's overall prestige.

Whereas the sommelier has emerged relatively recently as a significant figure in the restaurants of Spain (see Spain Gourmetour No. 32), the wine-cellar has always been recognized as a vital element in restaurants of any standing.

Not even the most pedestrian restaurateur can fail to appreciate the mystique associated with wine, not to mention its profit-making potential, and capitalize on them to the full. It makes sound business sense to invest heavily not only in stocking one's wine-cellar, but also in creating an environment that provides optimum storage conditions and maximum consumer appeal. In Spain, restaurants with good wine-cellars are not hard to come by. Owners have always taken great pride in their bodegas, which are considered a key element in a restaurant's overall prestige. To show one's clients around the wine-cellar is, after all, to offer proof of expertise. It could be argued that a restaurant's cellar is every bit as important as its kitchens, and it will certainly attract far more outside scrutiny.

Bodega-cum-restaurant

In some cases, the restaurant pales into something of an also-ran in comparison to its wine-cellar. Rekondo, in San Sebastian (Basque Country), is a case in point: many consider it to have the finest restaurant wine-cellar in the whole of Spain.

Proprietor Txomin Rekondo has been amassing oenological booty since he established the business in 1964. Today, his bodega contains tens of thousands of bottles and has acquired such a reputation that no self-respecting wine-lover would pass through northern Spain without making a detour to call there.

Sr. Rekondo has not paid all that much attention to decor but the environmental conditions in his underground cellar are as near perfect as possible. Ideally, these call for stable temperatures between 12 and 16 degrees C (53 and 61 degrees F), humidity levels between 75 and 80% relative humidity (high enough to ensure that the corks do not dry out and allow air to get at the wine, but not so high that the labels spoil), freedom from noise and vibration, good ventilation, absence of light, and so on. The bodega at Rekondo almost qualifies as a museum, displaying as it does the most prestigious Spanish and foreign labels, and an impressive section devoted to extra-large bottles such as imperials (double magnums) and jeroboams. It receives its daily quota of visitors, clients of the restaurant attracted as often as not more by the reputation of its wine-cellar than of its excellent Basque cuisine.

La Matilde, a restaurant in the historic part of Zaragoza, is another comparable case. The labyrinthine cellars beneath the 300-year-old building could be said to be more of an attraction than the restaurant above, though architecturally speaking neither building nor cellar is particularly interesting. But José Antonio, one of the brothers who run the business, has built up a wine-list whose fame has outstripped the gastronomic reputation of La Matilde. Braving the inconveniences of the busy side-street on which it stands and the difficulty of parking, many a loyal client turns off the Madrid-Barcelona road just to browse around the bodega. Its only charm lies in the quantity and quality of its contents, but these are considerable.

The art of wine

A good bodega is rather like a museum insofar as fine wines are treated with the respect usually accorded to works of art. A wine-cellar is more dynamic, though: not only is there a constant turnover of exhibits, but each exhibit is itself in a constant state of development. Suitably enough, some of Spain's best restaurant wine-cellars occupy buildings of considerable historical and architectural interest.

Take the Restaurante La Merced in Logroño, "capital" of the renowned wine-producing region of La Rioja. It occupies what was once a splendid 18th century palace, and its underground bodega is one of its main attractions. Originally the palace of the Marqués de Covarrubias, *aide-de-camp* to General Espartero, a noted military figure of late 19th century Spain, La Merced stands in the town center. Not far away is the palatial home of the general himself, where another member of his general staff, Colonel Luciano Murrieta, produced the first bottle of a wine whose name was to become one of the legends of La Rioja: Marqués de Murrieta.

The history of the palace now occupied by La Merced is nothing if not checkered. It became Logroño's first offices of the Banco de España (Spain's central bank), then served as a school and then as housing, and was eventually abandoned. By the time Lorenzo Cañas, owner and *chef de cuisine* of La Merced, bought it in 1981, it had fallen into ruin and only the facade and part of the staircase could be saved.

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A restaurant's bodega is considered to be as essential as its kitchens - in some cases even more so.

Restoration work was expensive and lengthy (the restaurant opened in 1983) and, as one would expect in this part of Spain, the bodega received particular attention. What must originally have been a little domestic storage cellar has now been extended to over 150 square meters (1,600 square feet). Its stone alcoves lined in old wood are just the right size to accommodate three cases (36 bottles) of wine, and the underground conditions need no artificial assistance in providing an environment similar to those in a maturation cellar.

The same is true of the tunnel-type bodega of the Mesón de la Villa in Aranda del Duero (Burgos). This restaurant in the heart of the Ribero del Duero Denomination of Origin area stores its wines in galleries in traditional local fashion. It used to be the custom in this region of Castile to construct bodegas on the outskirts of towns and villages, which tend to stand on raised ground in this undulating countryside. They were traditionally burrowed horizontally into the hillsides and ended in a vertical chimney leading up to the open air often as much as 30 meters (98 feet) above. In the larger towns (particularly if they stood on flat land, as Aranda del Duero does), the bodegas would have to be excavated below ground level. These, too, were built in the mining gallery pattern typical of the region and were reached by a downward sloping ramp.

The Mesón de la Villa's bodega is one of this urban type, and must once have been the cellar of an important building to judge by the size of its gallery and the quality of the dressed stone with which its walls are clad. That original building has been replaced by a much more recent one.

Relics of a Jewish past

Adolfo is an attractive and influential restaurant in Toledo, 80 km (50 miles) from Madrid. Its bodega is separate from the restaurant itself, albeit only a few meters away, in the 11th century cellar of what was once a Jewish building, long since replaced. Conditions in the cellar are just right for storing wine without the help of air conditioning. It was put to use as a bodega in the early 1980s, but was rehabilitated four years ago into what has turned out to be one of the restaurant's star features. Built in the *mudéjar* style (the style characteristic of Moslem craftsmen working under Christian rule), it has brickwork arcades and wrought iron decorative features, and the broad alcoves for bottle storage are also brick-built.

El Churrasco, in Cordoba, has a lot in common with Adolfo. It also has a separate bodega (claimed by many to be the best restaurant wine-cellar in Andalusia) which is also housed in a fine, originally Jewish building just a stone's throw a way from the restaurant. Standing right in the heart of Cordoba's old Jewish Quarter, the 16th century building is in the classic local style, its rooms organized around a rectangular central patio. The wines are stored on purpose-built wooden shelves in the ground floor rooms, where temperature and humidity conditions are most favorable. On the floor above, well away from the bodega, there is a private dining room.

Designer bodegas

Avant-garde architects have always been in their element in Catalonia, and the emergence there of "designer restaurants" has provided them with a lot of scope in the last few years. The new wave has had beneficial effects on their wine-cellars, too, which are purpose-designed to incorporate all the essential features for proper wine storage.

One recent star example of this phenomenon is the Torre del Remei, a hotel and restaurant in the Cerdanya, in the Pyrenees. This Modernist building dating from the turn of the century used to be the summer home of a wealthy family from Barcelona. The proprietor, José María Boix, opened it as a restaurant in 1991 after its conversion by architect Miguel Espinet, who specializes in this sort of project (see Spain Gourmetour Nº 32). The bodega incorporates what were once several underground rooms — the original cellar, kitchen and larder, whose original position can still be detected from the arches in the ceiling. It is now a stone-lined cellar which, though not enormous, provides perfect atmospheric conditions for wine storage.

José María Boix is an experienced restaurateur, having spent many years at his family's hotel and restaurant, known as Boix, just a few kilometers away in Martinet de Cerdanya. During his time there he built up an impressive wine-cellar, some of whose finest vintages can now be found on the shelves of his new bodega.

Ergonomics were given priority in the design of the bodega, and the alcoves in which the bottles are stored hold just 18 bottles each. This tends to accelerate

Juan Gris, *The Breakfast*, 1910-1915. Oil on canvas. Giraudon/Art Resource, NY. ©1993 Foods From Spain.

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Some of Spain's finest restaurant bodegas are in buildings of considerable historical and architectural interest.

turnover in that it makes a wide range of labels and years all equally accessible.
The same attention to detail is apparent in El Castell, a hotel and restaurant in La Seu d'Urgell (Lerida). Founded in 1973, this *Relais et Châteaux* group restaurant is in a stone Swiss-style chalet just at the approach to this historic town, near the originally Roman castle which later became the seat of the Condes de Urgell. The hotel, run by Jaume Tápies and family, is genuinely charming, and its restaurant is considered among the best in Spain. The bodega is among its leading attractions both for its contents and for its look and feel. Its broad vaulted gallery is slate-built and floored in earthenware tiles laid with compacted earth to retain humidity. Natural conditions here are good but at certain times of year humidifying and air-conditioning equipment are brought into play to maintain the relative humidity at 75% and the temperature at 16 degrees C (61 degrees F).
Generously sized at 120 square meters (1,200 square feet), this bodega stores only six bottles at a time of each of the more than 500 types of wine that appear in the restaurant's wine-list. Stock is topped up daily from the storage bodega in the basement of the owner's house nearby. This is a more functional affair altogether, concrete built, well insulated and also equipped with automatic atmospheric controls. Here, over 20,000 bottles of *reserva* and *gran reserva* wines are stored in large wooden bins.

Big city bodegas

Finding space for a wine-cellar generally poses little or no problem in small towns and country villages. In the big cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, however, space is so expensive as to make the cost of installing your average sized bodega prohibitively high. Some restaurants are lucky enough to have good basements in which to install their wine-cellars — Las Cuatro Estaciones in Madrid is one example. Others, like Zalacaín, also in Madrid, have adapted buildings close at hand. Zalacaín's storage cellar containing some 40,000 bottles is barely 50 meters (160 feet) away, while some 8,000 are kept in the restaurant itself.
The usual pattern, though, is for city restaurants to have a small scale bodega within the restaurant itself in which wines for early drinking are kept. The great ones, however, refuse to do without a large cellar. Not many can resist laying down a few bottles of great vintages or stocking up on a good year which is expected to mature well. Many have to maintain another bodega out of town where most of the *reservas* are kept.
Madrid's Cava Real is an extreme case. It has very little cellar space but a very comprehensive wine-list. In the restaurant itself there is barely room to keep 24 bottles of each wine, which are replaced as they are drunk. It manages this by having a storehouse outside Madrid where it keeps wines which need to mature in the bottle.
Luis Miguel Martín of Madrid's El Amparo, has a cellar 15 km (10 miles) outside the city where he keeps back-up stocks and wines bought young which need time to mature. Even so, the bodega he has just 15 meters (50 feet) from this Madrid restaurant would be ample for most restaurants. It is at street level and has been insulated and fitted with the technology to keep the relative humidity around 80% and the temperature around 15 degrees C (59 degrees F). One eye-catching feature of this bodega is the fact that the alcoves in which the wine is stored (8,000 bottles for immediate use) are built of reddish volcanic rock. This retains humidity and serves as insulation against changes of temperature and vibrations which might affect the wine adversely.
Las Cuatro Estaciones is a notable exception in that it has a large bodega beneath the restaurant. With its concrete walls and good insulation this is essentially a functional bodega, though it receives its share of visitors. Wines for daily service in the restaurant are kept in five attractive glass-doored "mini-bodegas" at the restaurant entrance, forming an integral element of the decor and separating the front bar from the dining room. They are insulated storage chambers fitted with individual bottle racks, and each is equipped with it own independent air-conditioner which regulates the temperature at a suitable level for the wine it holds.

Andrés Proensa *is a Spanish journalist who writes about food and wine. He makes regular contributions to publications specializing in this subject.*

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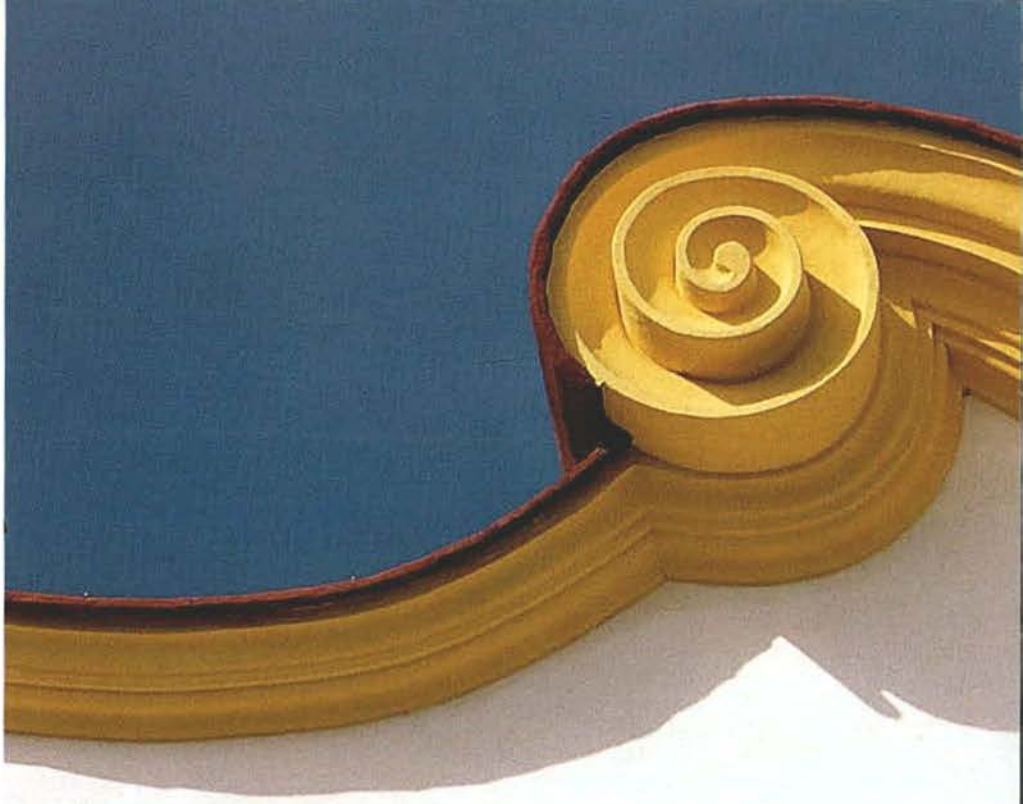
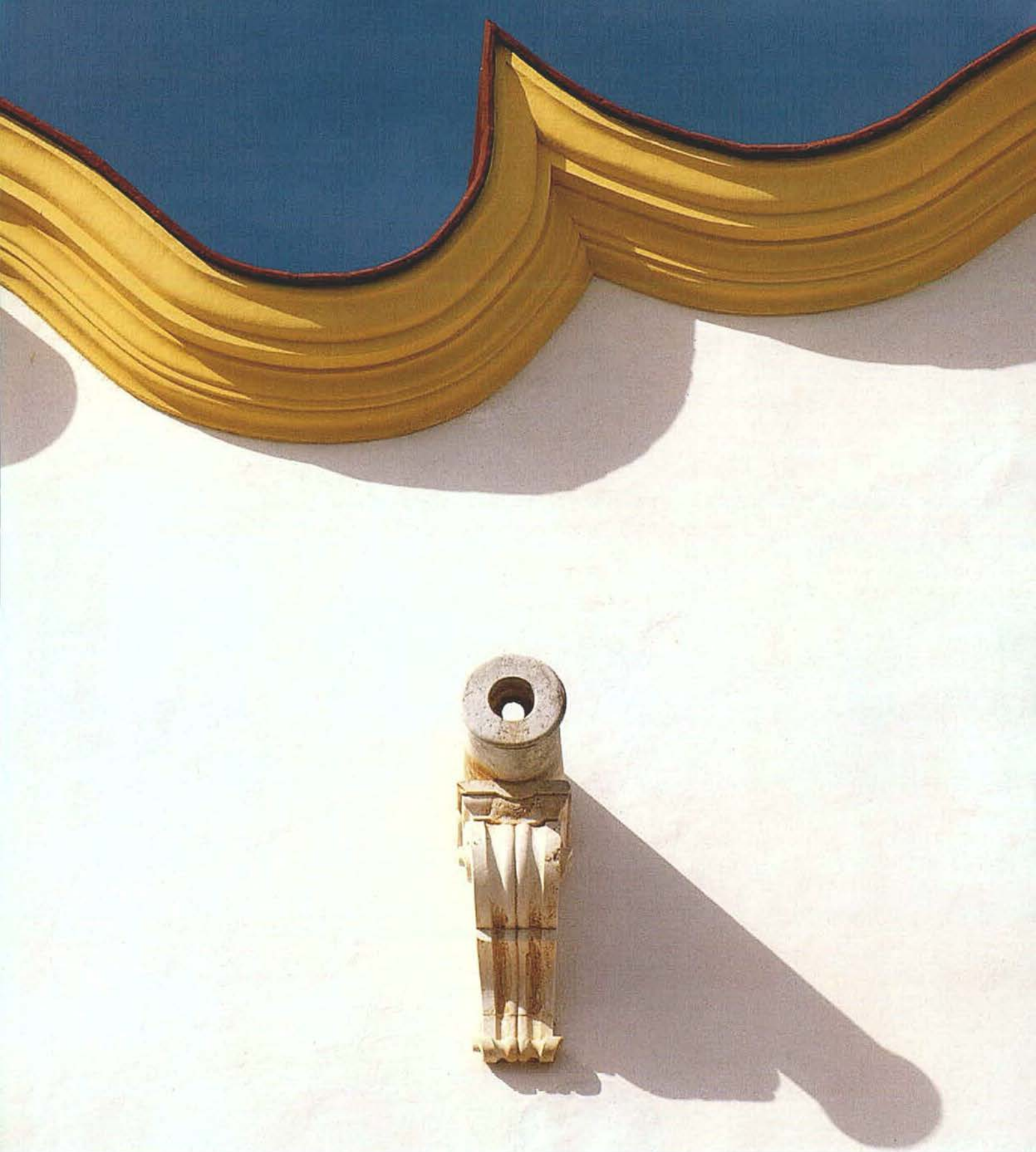


Why should we deny it? No matter how much we may insist - and with good reason - on the fact that there is another Spain - a rainy one, for example; or one which does not know how to shout *olé*; - we cannot help but admit that the most exotic part of our country is precisely, Andalusia, the South. And the grand capital of Andalusia is Seville, a compulsory as well as delightful visit, which is included in almost every itinerary, especially after the celebration of the World's Fair in 1992, from which several excellent samples of contemporary architecture still exist.

Text: **Diego Díaz**
Translation: **Muriel Feiner**
Photos: **Carlos Navajas/ICEX**

Off the Beaten Track (VIII)



OSUNA: BLACK GRILLES ON WHITE

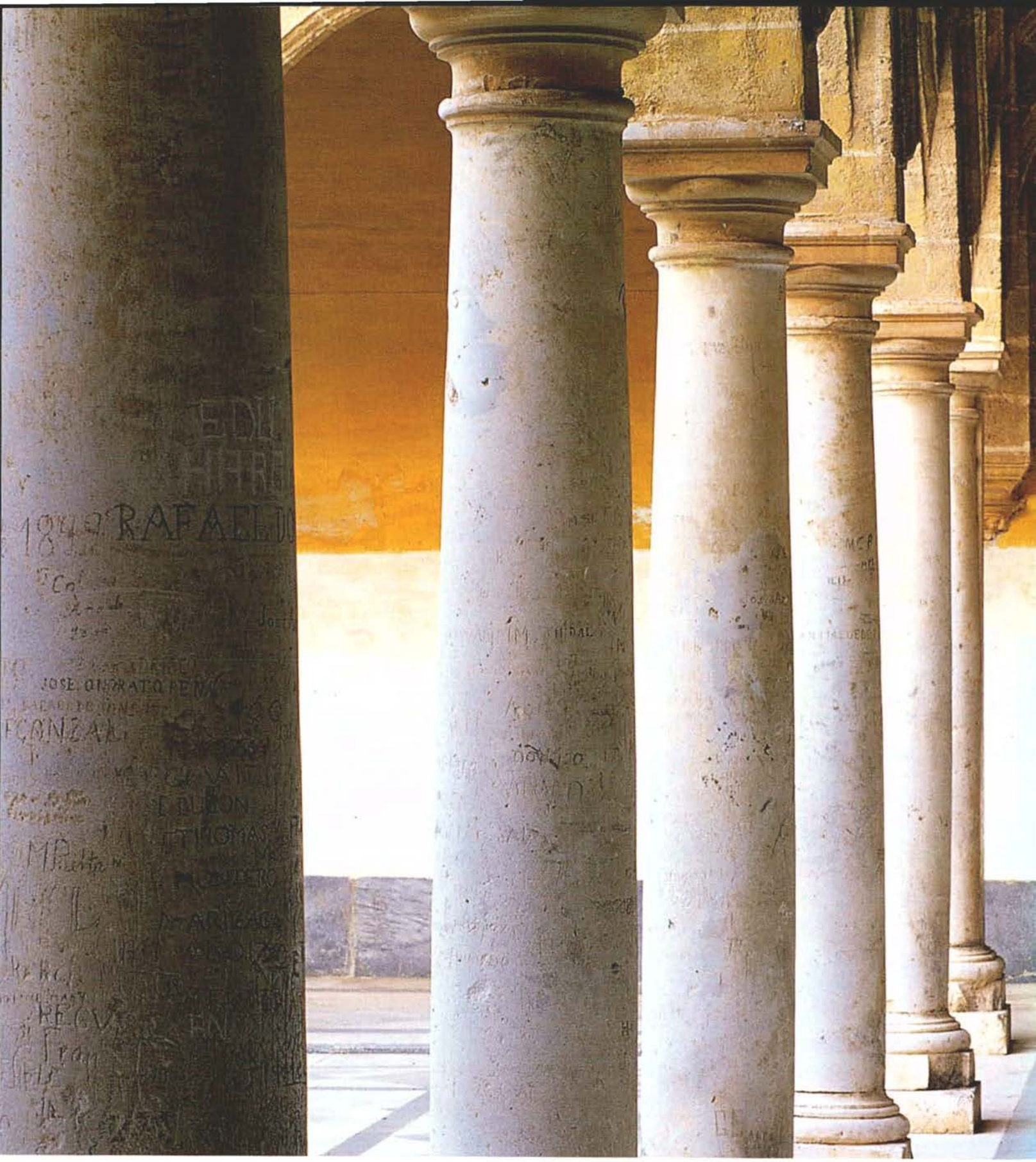
San Pedro Street is the most stately in Osuna. Broad and imposing, it is lined with palaces and ancestral homes which compete openly in opulence.

The windows in Osuna are all covered with grilles, standing out against the façade.

Well, let us now imagine ourselves in a typical Sevillian tavern, with a glass of sherry in one hand and a plate of thinly sliced cured ham before us, while we discuss the places we have visited and those that we plan to visit. However, there is always one person in the group who is already quite familiar with the area, or another who prefers to avoid those spots overrun with tourists, and is interested in something more than Seville's Giralda, Granada's Alhambra, or Córdoba's Mezquita. And so, the author of this article will arch his eyebrows and, with the knowing, expert smile which all of us writers are presumed to have, will then proceed to recommend Osuna. Eighty kilometers (50 miles) of excellent motorway will take us in a heartbeat from Seville to Osuna, a beautiful, white town.

Osuna is almost unbearably white, as immaculately white as a painter's canvas. We have just arrived from the big city, with its imposing walls: that is, huge billboards, informative panels, traffic signs, last minute bulletins, graffiti, political protests, posters, advertising messages, slogans and scrawled notes. We have also left behind the overwhelming noise: hundreds of voices mixing together and confusing us, creating an irritating racket, together with the inescapable dirt and pollution, all of which produces a visual and sonorous indigestion. And then we come to Osuna, which is white, white, white... like a huge painter's canvas. Osuna offers the visitor time to think and space for the eye to repose. The thought of so much purity might frighten us at first, while the echoes of all that chaos grow faint. One becomes lost in the labyrinth of its streets and as you slowly walk along its narrow pavements, you find yourself relaxing with its silence, which is only occasionally interrupted by the warbling of a canary in its cage. You wander along, unconcerned about direction, for sooner or later, you will end up in a familiar square. You stop

Osuna is almost unbearably white, as immaculately white as a painter's canvas.



The Spanish Imperial Epoch granted new splendor to Osuna. It became the harmonious, monumental city in the 16th century, which we can admire today.

One of the most important 16th century foundations was the university, which operated until the 19th century.

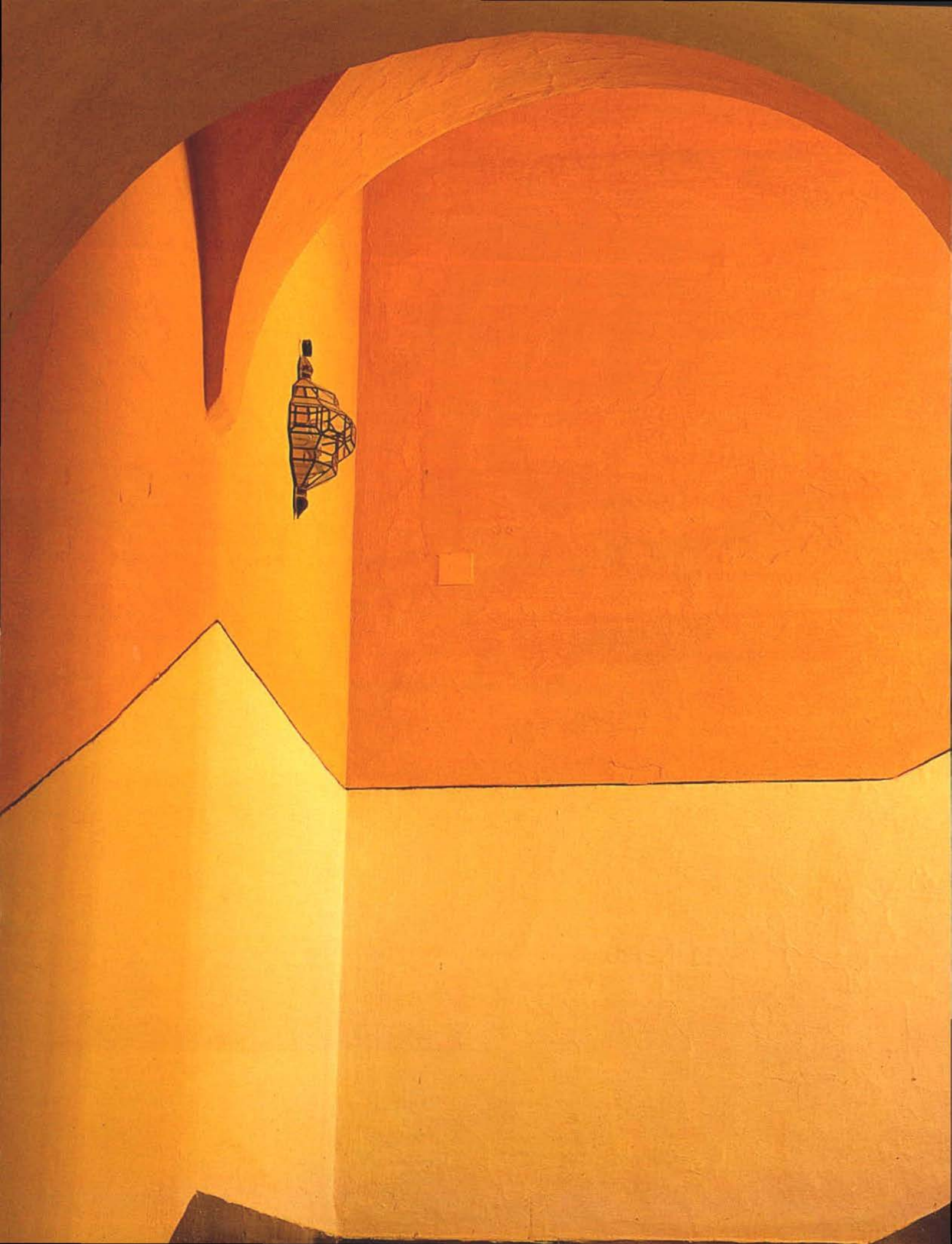
for a moment, take a deep breath and perhaps light a cigarette, under the soothing light of a street lamp. A local resident passes by and says "Good evening" to you, or the more traditional "Go with God". As the sound of his steps fade into the night, you notice the windows: they are large and covered with grilles, standing out against the façade and rising barely two palms above the sidewalk. Inside were it not for the curtains, its inhabitants would practically be living in an open showcase. A young couple are talking through the bars, conjuring up old, romantic images. Here, like in all Mediterranean countries, one spends a good part of the time in the street; the women sit by the window to watch, greet or inquire about the health and family of all those who appear before their observatory.

Here lies Osuna's true delight: wandering along its modest, harmonious, charming streets, with the scent of orange blossoms in the air and a soothing half-light, and façades which always look as if they have been freshly white-washed. The streets are so clean and swept up that the slightest waste would be offensive. White walls, black grilles and flowers. No home, I repeat, absolutely none, clashes with its surroundings; no building rises up arrogantly above two floors, nor disrupts the established harmony.

However, aside from the homes of its residents, Osuna also offers many monuments, most of which are of a religious nature. Just like in most other towns of Andalusia, if not all, the Church's presence is indeed overwhelming and considerably disproportionate in relation to its population. Only the bars exceed the Catholic establishments in terms of number and scores of faithful. Osuna has a collegiate church, a monastery, five convents, seven churches and three hermitages.

As regards their architecture, these sacred landmarks cannot be considered as splendid. In fact, we might say that the many civil palaces are far more interesting, but the religious art is not limit-

The Baroque Tower of La Merced (18th century) is one of the most interesting landmarks in the town's architecture.



ed to the buildings, and the paintings, altar-pieces, carvings, gold and silver work, vestments and ceramics that the Church conserves in Osuna make up a priceless treasure. Any art connoisseur, antique dealer, historian or aesthete who visits Spain must pay a visit to this city and I will tell you why: So accompany me on the following itinerary.

THE VISIT

The Plaza Mayor is, like in every Spanish city, the nerve center of the community. From it, we can begin our ascent along the Calle San Antón to the "Historic-Monumental Complex" and even though the climb may be somewhat tiring (for no matter how little you have traveled, you will surely know that horrible hills are the price one has to pay in order to reach almost every "historic-monumental complex"), San Antón requires an effort, but it is not without its final rewards. As you make your way up its slippery cobblestones, crossing below its arches and enveloped in the scent of its orange trees (if they are in bloom), you suddenly turn around and Osuna offers you a splendid view. It looks something like a puzzle of white dominoes, with a wisp of smoke emerging from the chimney of one piece, while the distant melody of a nostalgic *flamenco* tune drifts out of the window of another. And then we reach the Plaza de La Encarnación, which is the artistic center of the town. The Collegiate Church, founded in 1535 by Juan Téllez Girón, the fourth Duke of Ureña, must be visited first.

THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH

Its imposing structure towers over the town and is its most characteristic monument. It has both a severe and heavy presence. Its unfinished tower and the many buttresses called for in the unfortunate plans of its architects, only serve to intensify the lack of charm found in its original design. However, the interior is something else quite again! Don't let yourself be distracted by the main chapel, for the most interesting aspect of the Church lies below. Underneath is the Ducal Pantheon and its chapel. Imagine a tiny Renaissance chapel, measuring 8.30 m. x 4.30 m. x 2 m. (27 ft. x 14 ft. x 6.5 ft.)! A small, underground jewel, divided into three naves, with nazarite columns and lovely arches. Everything is so magnificently proportioned in scale, that it is indeed lavish, without being overdone. The polychromy, in blue and gold, which embellished it in times gone by, has been darkened by the smoke from the candles and its patina is no less beautiful and impressive. The decoration is exquisite throughout, although we would draw special attention to the choir: stalls of eleven walnut seats, set between four marble columns. In summary: a delicate, obscure and luxuriant miniature, very different to the customary Catholic ostentation (perhaps the Viceroyalty of Naples mitigated the tastes of the Duke and Duchess of Osuna).
However, beneath the altar of this chapel, which is situated under the main altar of the Collegiate Church, there is still another altar: that of the Calvary, in the Pantheon of the Dukes. How unusual to have three altars, one on top of the other! The pantheons, divided into several chapels, each one more beautiful than the next, are truly startling, especially the anonymous one of St. Jerome. I am impressed by all of the crypts, but this one, occupied by a family that devoted great efforts and fortune to patronizing the arts, more so still.
Nevertheless, the lavishness of the Collegiate Church does not end with what we have mentioned — nor with what we have not mentioned, for that matter: I have forgotten the patio and the façade of the pantheon, both of which are in Plateresque style. The museum is indeed the most dazzling part of the visit: No more and no less than five extraordinary works by José de Ribera (1591 - 1652), one of the greatest artists in the history of painting. It is a truly amazing discovery to find in a small Sevillian town, five great paintings by Ribera, not minor works at all, but five of his best masterpieces: "St. Jerome and the Angel of Judgement", "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian", "St. Peter's Tears", "The Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew" and "The Expiration of Christ".
I am particularly impressed by Tenebrism, the pale light which is not from the sun, nor from the moon, but from death, which softens Jesus' face in the "Expiration" (1626). And also the heart-rending dynamism, the tremendous movement found in the "Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew" (1618), with the executioner ripping off his skin (the work, which led Pedro Téllez Girón, the Duke of Osuna, to designate Ribera as the painter of the Court of Naples). Nor can I forget Verism, the eloquent old age and holiness (the saint's entire life condensed into one image) of St. Jerome's face and knees — oh, those knees! (1616).
We cannot leave the Collegiate Church without mentioning the magnificent coffered ceiling of the Chapter House (16th century), an "Immaculate Conception" by Alonso Cano (1601-1667), a carving of "Christ on the Cross" by Juan de Mesa (1623) and a Colonial Tenebrae (18th century), whose Indianism breaks a little with the painful atmosphere generally created by the imagery of this temple.

THE MUSEUM - MONASTERY OF LA ENCARNACION

Opposite the Collegiate Church is the Monastery of La Encarnación or Convent of the Barefoot Nuns (1549). It is an imposing experience to cross the threshold and enter this atmosphere of peaceful retreat, with the feeling of having abandoned the 20th century, in order to enter an insulated bubble, in which we can hear our own breathing and our own thoughts. A nun acts as the guide for our visit (Warning: the sisters do not accept any unaccompanied males), and one feels like a blatant intruder, hardly daring to ask a question. It is amazing to see what they possess. Just as in the Collegiate Church, I am sure that here, too, I will forget to mention many important works, for it is totally impossible to recall so much and such valuable material. On the average, the contents can be classified as outstanding. I would swear that I have seen a painting by Valdés Leal

(1622-1690), half hidden on a staircase landing, that I recognized from an anthology in the Prado. I suspect that this painter's striking style does not please these nuns very much, for despite their enclosure, the *aggiornamento* must have reached them. I remember as well an impressive "Christ of Mercy" (a 16th century carving). All of the ceramic work is indeed unusual and pleasing and the tiles serve as an excellent decoration for the cloisters. Although there are some biblical scenes, most of the themes represented are of secular origin: the five senses, street motifs, big and small game hunting. The anonymous potter left us a beautiful collection of traditional images from the 18th century.

Let us go up to the second floor of the museum, where we will find a very special, fascinating room. I am sure that the surrealists would have made a mass pilgrimage just to see it. It is the "Little Room of the Children", in which we see small figures of children exhibited in urns - most of them made of wax and almost all dating back to the 18th century. Each nun has to take care of one of them, for which she sews or mends lavish clothing which is also on exhibit. No further comments are necessary, right? It is easy to imagine one of these women, enclosed in the convent because of her vocation, married to God, stroking and cuddling her doll's cerulean face.

TOWERS, QUARRIES AND PALACES

The Baroque tower of La Merced (18th century) is, without a doubt, the most interesting landmark in the town's architecture. It is so beautifully carved that its profuse ornamentation illuminates but does not saturate its over-all appearance, an otherwise frequent defect of Baroque art. It has a spritely line and rises up stylishly towards the blue sky, boasting an elegant balcony. The use of sandstone to build the tower is unfortunate, for, even though its yellowish color bestows a great deal of warmth upon the whole, it falls easy prey to erosion and some deterioration can already be noted. We suggest that you do not delay your visit for too long!

Let us forget the monuments for a moment, in order to take a stroll along the outskirts of town and visit a very unusual place: the quarries where the aforementioned stone, present in almost all of Osuna's buildings, has been extracted since Roman times. It is difficult to find adequate words to describe such exotic scenery: it is like a labyrinth of narrow passes of cleanly cut rock walls. Some of the quarries have been abandoned and gypsies and stonemasons have constructed their homes here, embedded in the rock and made of its very same material. You get the feeling of having entered a Troglodyte kingdom. Fig trees, geraniums and agaves decorate this mysterious landscape. The largest of the quarries is called The Cathedral: it is a kind of cake made of rock, with naves carved out of its interior. We are enveloped in the atmosphere of a primitive settlement: caverns, dolmens and rock faceted in a whimsical manner. The warm light at dusk emphasizes the ocher shades of such an original place. Do not forget to take your camera: beautiful churches abound, cubist countryside *au naturel* like this do not.

San Pedro Street is the most stately in Osuna. Broad and imposing, it is lined with palaces and ancestral homes which compete openly in opulence. Their respective owners must have been very envious folk, for the lavish decorative displays are far too evident. The most emblematic palace is that of the Marqués de la Gomera (18th century). Its style is colonial to the point that one in-

GASTRONOMY

We can say that there are two Andalusian cuisines: the one on the coast and the inland one. The main raw material on the coast is, naturally, fish and the way it is fried: some modest *boquerones* (anchovies), which are fried correctly (that is not steeped in oil), are a delicious mouthful, especially if they are washed down with the excellent white wine of the region — forget the red, here.

The scene changes inland: game, preserves and marinades predominate. But let us concentrate now on Osuna. *Gazpacho* is the most well-known dish of the Spanish South, a cold soup, whose basic ingredients are crushed tomatoes and garlic, seasoned with oil and vinegar. Sounds simple, right? Of course, the secret lies in the quality: the tomato must taste like a tomato, pure olive oil and only a few choice drops of wine vinegar.

The real recipe for *gazpacho* has inspired a great deal of controversy in Andalusia. Everyone claims the authenticity and superiority of his own variation. *Casus belli* being the modest, refreshing and nutritive *gazpacho*.

One of its variations is called *salmorejo*. Its change of name proves rather excessive as its only difference with *gazpacho* lies in its thickness: it is less liquid, more of a cream than a soup. However, Osuna boasts of a very unique specialty: the *ardoria*. I have not been able to determine the difference between it and the *salmorejo*. It is true that they also use it as a cream to enrich the potato omelette, that is as a sauce, rather than a dish itself. It is also true that the *picadillo* or minced food is enhanced sometimes with other ingredients, such as cucumbers, but... let us not get involved in these controversies. I will give you the basic recipe for the *salmorejo*, which is really just the formula by common consensus. It is fast and easy to prepare, keeps well, is ideal for summer and is an excellent, highly healthy dish, even between meals.

Another one of Osuna's gastronomic delights is the pastry skillfully prepared by the nuns of the Las Descalzas Convent. When you have finished your tour of the museum and are about to leave, do not forget to ask the sister who has accompanied you, about their sweets — donuts and tarts. They will be happy to sell them to you at a modest price, proud that their work is recognized and pleased for the small financial support. You will enjoy tempting, homemade aromas and rich flavors.

RESTAURANTS

Certainly, the best selection you can make in Osuna is the Restaurante Doña Guadalupe. You will find it inside a patio, with an elegantly decorated dining room, lovely crockery and excellent service. The wine list is its weak point and although they do offer some interesting wines, they lack variety and concern for temperatures. We can enjoy such succulent dishes as pork loin with almonds and swordfish with brandy. Prices are very reasonable.

Another choice is El Molino, which is rather poorly situated, near the motorway, on the outskirts of the city. It is a noisy, popular restaurant, but recommendable. They serve very large portions.

OSUNA

evitably imagines it as the presidential palace of some banana republic. It borders on the tawdry and kitsch, although the undulated set of volutes which crowns its façade is not without its charm and grace. Less famous, but of better taste, is the Palace of the Collegiate Chapter House (18th century), but you do have a vast selection from which to choose in this contest among palaces.

The Water Tower (14th century) is the oldest construction still standing in Osuna. Strong, solid and protective, it houses the Archaeological Museum in its interior, which has Iberian and Roman objects on display, all of which have been found in Osuna. The medieval atmosphere of its rooms and the intelligent, clear and didactic design of the well-lit museum certainly justify the visit.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Osuna belonged to the Tartessian Kingdom under the name of Urso and it must have been an important Iberian settlement, judging by the richness of the artistic remains which have been unearthed, belonging to the period between the 3rd and 1st century B.C.

Osuna was an important setting for some of the conflicts of the epoch. Rome and Carthage disputed its possession. It was first Carthaginian, but after the Battle of Ilipa (207 B.C.), it was seized by the Romans. There are many Roman remains: a necropolis, the vestiges of a circus, an abundance of coins and, above, all, the so-called "Osuna Bronzes". During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Urso was a city loyal to the latter general. When Pompey was defeated, Caesar changed the city's name to *Colonia Genitiva Julia* and he published its laws on ten bronze slabs: "*Lex Coloniae Genitivae Iuliae*". These slabs were exhibited in a public place, surely in the Forum, and were probably buried there when the Vandals arrived in the 5th century. Five of them were recovered at the end of the 19th century.

During the Moslem domination (as of the 8th century), Osuna fell into decline until the year 1239, when Fernando III the Saint conquered the town and turned it into a Christian outpost in the very heart of Arab Spain. In 1264, Alfonso X the Wise granted the city the Order of Calatrava, which was one of the four military orders, made up of knights, founded in Spain in order to "wage war on the infidels".

The Spanish Imperial Epoch granted new splendor to Osuna. It became the harmonious, monumental city in the 16th century, which we can admire today. Its appearance up until this point as a fortified town was modified substantially thanks to the patronage of the 4th Count of Ureña: Juan Téllez Girón. Felipe II converted Osuna into a Duchy (1562) and granted it to Juan Téllez, thus initiating the saga of the Dukes of Osuna, the leading protagonists of the history of this city. The most important 16th century foundations were the Collegiate Church and the university, which was operating until the 19th century; and so culture and religion became the main pillars of Osuna's prestige and activity (although we should not overlook Cervantes' sarcastic comments in *Don Quixote*, when he wrote about the "broad-mindedness" of its university authorities when it came time to pass their students).

The Duke and Duchess of Osuna were the Viceroys of Naples, one of the most aristocratic families, then, of the Empire, a circumstance which undoubtedly favored the city. Juan Téllez managed to bring over the image of Our Lady of Consolation from London, thus saving it from the persecution decreed by Henry VIII. This image, of British origin, has been the patron saint of Osuna ever since.

As long as the Empire endured, the town maintained its prosperity, but the 19th century signaled its decline. Just like many other towns, it suffered reprisals from the Napoleonic army. Famed English traveler Richard Ford gives testimony of this: "The French soldiers enjoyed mutilating the sacred figures of the Collegiate Church."

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) also brought a great deal of religious conflict, although the anecdote frequently told in Osuna is more amusing than bloody: Left-wing political gatherings were held in the Plaza Mayor, in which anti-clerical harangues were plentiful. The Convent of La Concepción, with its powerful bells, is also situated in the very same square. The determined nuns disrupted the political meetings with the tolling of their bells. As a reprisal, the Republican Town Council created a tax on church bells. Even today, the La Concepción nuns appear to conserve all of their character: they have opened up a dry cleaning store in order to balance their budget.

Before leaving the white town of Osuna, we wish to devote one last look at the patios. Oh, those Andalusian patios, furnishing refreshing shade beneath an open sky, with the music of its running fountain in the center and pampered plants in large pots, splashing touches of green everywhere. Visit as many as you can, especially those found on Sevilla Street.

Diego Díaz *is a free-lance journalist and photographer. He collaborates with different publications.*

Salmorejo

SERVES 4

- *a clove of garlic*
- *a kilo of ripe tomatoes*
- *crumbs from half a loaf of white bread (approx. 125 grams).*
- *four soup spoons of extra pure olive oil*
- *two teaspoons of wine vinegar*
- *salt*
- *two hard-boiled eggs*
- *a hundred grams of cured ham*

Soak the bread crumbs in water. While the bread is soaking, peel the tomatoes. Keep only the pulp and discard the skin, juice and seeds. Put the tomatoes in the mixer, together with the drained bread crumbs, garlic, oil and vinegar. Cut the hard-boiled eggs and ham into very small pieces, and add them to the cream. Salt to taste.

Suggestions: Garlic has a very strong taste. If you do not like spicy flavors, try half a clove. It is also advisable to cut off the green bud inside the garlic so that it does not "repeat" on you during digestion. Proportions of oil and vinegar are relative, depending upon one's taste and the specific characteristics of the oil and vinegar used. It is a good idea to start with moderate amounts and then adjust the flavor afterwards accordingly. If you do not intend to eat all the *salmorejo* prepared, add the vinegar right before serving, so that the leftover portion does not take on an acidic flavor. Just about anything and everything can be added into the mincing: cucumber, mint, cheese, etc. Use your imagination, although sweet flavors are not advisable.

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Make Mine a Magdalena

Ever since Proust immortalized the French madeleine after its taste brought back a flood of childhood memories, that small shell-shaped sponge cake has been known around the world. By contrast, the magdalena has found fame much later, making its way from the Spanish breakfast table to such far-flung markets as Russia, Japan and even Antarctica only in the last five years.

Text: **Vicky Hayward**

Photos: **Antonio de Benito/ICEX**

Still Lives: **Menchu Artime**

The quality of a magdalena is judged by its high egg content and the use of native hard flour.

Whether or not Spanish *magdalenas* and French *madeleines* are first-cousins is a mystery since the origins of both are lost in the past. One French tale runs that Sainte Madeleine invented them miraculously to help an errant young man who'd been playing around with a pastrycook's wife. More prosaically, French historians say they came out of the kitchen of Madeleine Paumier, a cook in Commercy.

Needless to say, the Spanish have their own stories. One is that Napoleon took the recipe back to France after his invasion of Spain; another is that it traveled with nuns to a French convent of their order. According to both these versions, the Spanish original was adapted to local ingredients by replacing olive oil with butter for the fat.

The truth is that, as with so many recipes, the two almost certainly came about independently in the hands of many a good cook who arrived at the classic proportions of the French *cuatre-cuarts* and the English pound cake: that is, a cake batter made with a quarter each of flour, eggs, sugar and fat.

In Spain, at least, such small sponge cakes seem to have been made since the Middle Ages to celebrate saints' days, at first in the convents and then later in village homes. Even today, one batch is baked to eat with coffee, a glass of sweet wine or *eau-de-vie* at the end of a big festive lunch, and another is kept in the sideboard to offer guests who drop round for a chat. As times improved, so the *magdalena* made more frequent appearances, usually sold loose by the bakers by weight on Sunday mornings.

Old-fashioned recipes

Why *magdalenas* were such a success in simply equipped village kitchens can be seen from this recipe for *Magdalenas de Mamá*, taken from a recently published collection in Seville.

It tells you to take eight eggs, measure their weight out in sugar and flour, then crack open the eggs without damaging the shells and use them to measure the same volume in olive oil. This is heated with a little anise seed for flavoring, strained and left to cool. Into the oil beat all the other ingredients - eggs, sugar, flour, a little ground cinnamon and grated lemon rind. Spoon into paper cases to bake in a moderate oven for 20 minutes.

In her book *La España Dulce* - Sweet Spain - Flor Díaz gives half a dozen or so other *magdalena* recipes, each with its own touch: perhaps a glass of anis, *eau-de-vie* or milk to replace some of the egg, or the egg whites separated and whisked to a froth. The oil may be fried with a sliver of lemon zest to flavor it, or replaced by beaten pure white lard. Besides these, nowadays you always find some form of raising powder.

It is no coincidence that most of these recipes come from Castile and Andalusia, where the plains and hills are covered by wide expanses of wheat fields and olive groves. Within these, Aragon, to the north-east, has perhaps the strongest *magdalena* links. This may be because its golden olive oil, bland and light, is perfect for biscuit and cake-making. Certainly, several of today's manufacturers have grown out of family bakeries there.

Traditionally, these Spanish oil-based *magdalenas*, also found under local names such as *polcas* (polkas) in Aragon and *mariquitas* (ladybirds -or ladybugs) in Valladolid, come in three different shapes. The classic is the small round Aragonese one, domed in the middle. Then there are the newer oblong Valencian ones and, finally, the larger flat-topped round ones you most often find in Andalusian bakers. Each type has its allure. The Aragonese ones tend to have a finer sponge, while the other two give you something more substantial to bite into.

Breakfast ritual

In the last 25 years *magdalenas* have become an everyday food and a breakfast ritual. Whether you're in a Spanish home, bar or hotel, you can usually find someone dunking *magdalenas* into his coffee. In fact, the two are so closely associated in Spaniards' minds that dictionaries suggest the cake's name could have come from the proverb 'crying like a Magdalena', the idea being that the average eater drips as much coffee as Mary Magdalen once shed in tears of repentance.

Of course, not everyone is so messy. I have friends who dunk politely with the aid of a spoon and others who lose hardly a crumb in the cup. But most of them swear that half the pleasure is in using your fingers, whatever the cost to the tablecloth. And among these, there are a good few who after a lifetime of practice, have to fish out half a submerged *magdalena* or leave trails of coffee-drips twixt cup and lip.

These days, some are still made at home or found sold loose in bakers, and occasionally, in the country you'll find wonderful ones baked in a wood-oven. But with women increasingly going out to work and more money available for shopping, the majority are now bought in packets. Today, the Spaniards eat an impressive 65,000 tons of shop-bought *magdalenas* every year, nearly 40% of the market for manufactured cakes and pastries.

Traditional quality...

One of the keys to manufacturers' success has been their insistence on cherishing homemade quality within up-to-date industrial processes. When you visit a factory, you will see the batter and oven temperatures being adjusted according to weather or variations in the flour and eggs.

In part this is because many big brand-names have grown out of small family bakeries within the last thirty years. And while the workforce may be tenfold that of the bakery, older members stay on with their old-fashioned standards.

But it is also because, as with many traditional foods close to Spaniards' hearts, manufacturers have to keep product quality as close to the original homemade article as possible to find their share of the national market. A *magdalena*'s quality is judged differently from that of a *madeleine*. While the emphasis in France is on butteriness, in Spain it's on richness in fresh eggs and the quality of its flour. The key differences in ingredients from old-fashioned recipes is that today the olive oil is replaced by sunflower to ensure rancidity

With the export market growing all the time, all the companies are developing new products.

doesn't develop in the flavor and that raising agents are always used.
In the past two to three years, manufactured *magdalenas* have become even closer to the original, with the artificial colors and flavorings being removed. The hard part was to keep the moist sponginess and the long shelf-life - now around 75 days - without preservatives. This, too, has been achieved now, with the help of fructose to keep the crumb moist and to extend the aging, and natural preservatives to immobilize the tiny water particles so they cannot gather and allow mold to form.

... Modern methods

Alongside this stress on homemade quality, you will find the most modern of production lines, with machinery brought in from as far afield as Japan. Flour and sugar are kept in silos, ingredients are measured out automatically before mixing, baking and cooling temperatures are computer-controlled, and wrapping is done without the *magdalenas* being touched by hand. Above all, there is strict hygiene to keep a sterile environment.
Looking around the factories today, this combination of new and old is striking. Cooled and sealed metal vats of fresh shelled eggs wait near the mixing area. A complex piping system feeds measured quantities into old-fashioned paper cases spread over a conveyer belt.
Perhaps the most impressive bits of machinery are the ovens from 30 to 80 meters (100 to 262 ft) long, through which the cakes move continuously. This length allows for precise temperature control in every minute of baking time, which is especially important for the round *magdalenas*. Their dome is produced by a double temperature curve, during the second of which the batter pops up in the center.
At the other end of the ovens emerge the baked *magdalenas*: browner than a muffin, spongy and moist, with an invitingly shiny top - sometimes finished off with a sprinkling of sugar - and a soft golden cake inside. Most important for discerning dunkers, the hard flour and high egg content produce a resilient crumb that won't disintegrate in your coffee.

The export boom

Once cooled and wrapped, the packets are boxed and ready to send off to their destination. And hereby hangs the most recent chapter in the *magdalena*'s history.
For while until the 1980s, they were rarely found outside Spain, they're now being exported all over the world. Lorry-loads and containers go right through Europe, around the Arab world, and as far afield as South America, Japan and Australia. One company even includes labeling for Antarctica on its packets!
But perhaps the most interesting thing is the *magdalena*'s success in France, where it's found its own niche away from the *madeleine*.
This success began in the 1980s, after entry to the EC, at trade fairs. But in the last four years, that first upswing has turned into a boom, with the scale and extent of markets abroad growing all the time and producers racing to keep up with demand. Now, some 15,000 tons are exported every year.
Behind this success story lie many factors. One, suggests Francisco Lafita, managing director of La Bella Easo, the market leader in Spain, is that the 50 million tourists or so who come to Spain every year get a taste for them at hotel breakfast tables.
Another is that they're a surprisingly low-cholesterol (16%) product because they're made with vegetable oil.
On a purely practical basis, too, the manufacturers have shown how quickly they can react to increased demand. Nearly all have doubled their output in the last five years, as well as adapting their product to the growing snack market. For this, *magdalenas* now come packed individually and in pairs, as well as in dozens or in boxes of several kilos.
New varieties are also grafted onto each country's tastes. The French and Germans like them with a touch of lemon.
Then there are fillings, squirted into the baked *magdalenas* from metal jets: the English go for strawberry jam and the Italians for chocolate-hazelnut cream, but the Americans prefer exotic mango or peach.
Meanwhile, Latin Americans follow along Spanish lines, preferring their *magdalenas* plain for breakfast-time dunking.
In the end, though, all the manufacturers stress that the single most important factor in their success abroad has been the uniformly high product quality.

New products

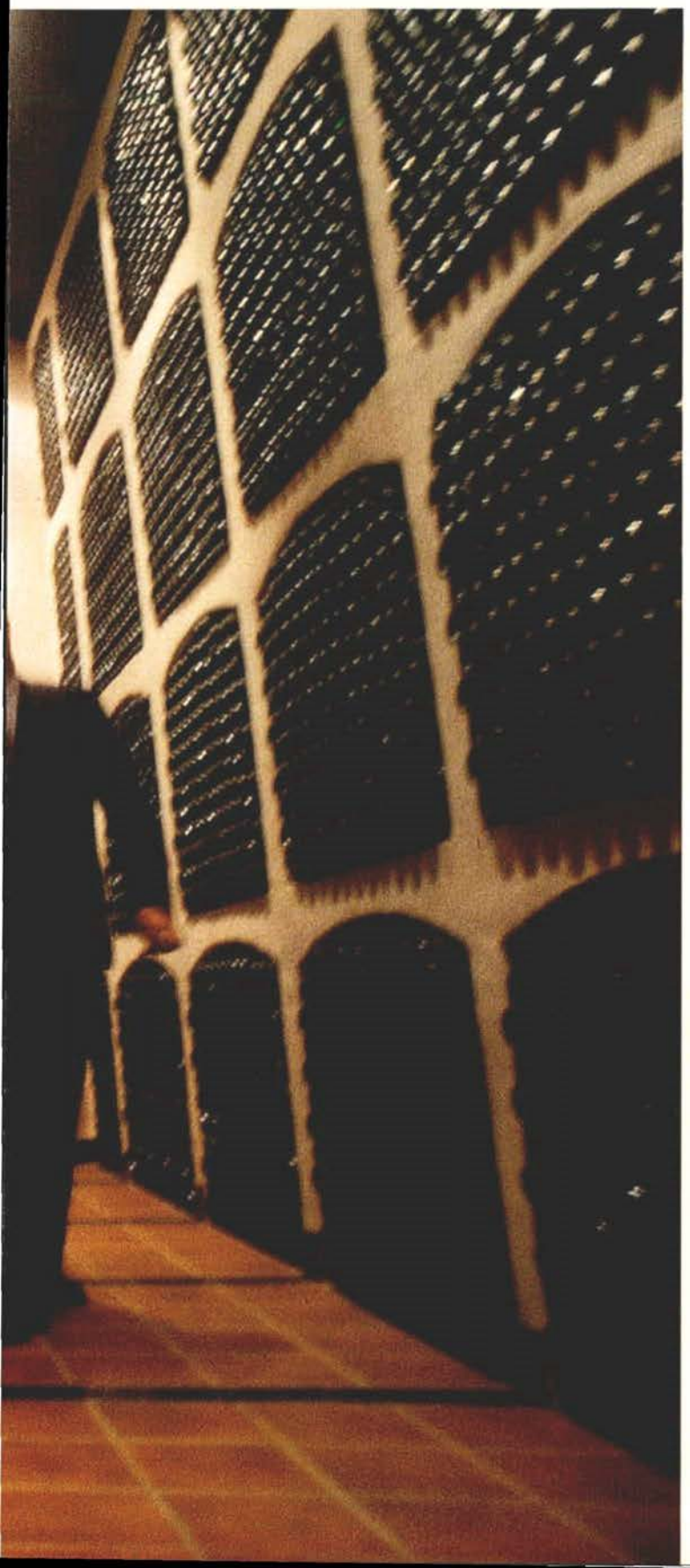
With the export market continuing to grow all the time, each company is continuously developing its specialities and jealously guarded new recipes. Heras Bareche, the biggest exporters - more than 50% of their production - now make *magdalenas* with yogurt and sultanas as well as fillings. They say many more varieties are to come. Panrico, for example, also make a lemon cream filling.
Another new speciality, for companies such as La Bella Easo and Unipasa - originally a distributor but now also a manufacturer -is a Spanish version of the croissant. Drier and less buttery than the French original since the fat is oil again, it's made either curved like the Viennese originals or straight. Again, these companies are investing in high quality: for example, they use fresh yeast and a double fermentation.
But other Spanish classics, too, are beginning to find an export market. Martínez brothers are the national leaders in Cantabrian *sobaos*, a light buttery sponge in flat paper cases, and make a 'mini-cake', or miniature butter fruit cake. Meanwhile, La Bella Easo are beginning to produce individual Majorcan *ensaimadas*, delicious coiled spirals of flaky yeast-dough similar to that of a croissant; and crumbly *mantecados*, almond-topped biscuits.
Perhaps it's only a question of time before these follow in the *magdalena*'s footsteps.

Vicky Hayward *lives in Madrid and is writing a book about Spanish food. She works as a freelance feature journalist, travel writer and book editor.*

BODEGAS Y BEBIDAS

A PLEASING

Diversity of Fine Wines



One single Spanish company, Bodegas y Bebidas - which could be translated as Wineries and Drinks - vinified over fifty million kilograms of grapes during 1992: Spain's export market leader with around twenty-five percent of the country's total wine exports.

Bodegas y Bebidas consists of over twenty wineries, distilleries and distribution and export companies - there's even a mineral water company for the abstemious - dotted across Spain, from small prestige wineries in the Rioja such as Bodegas Marqués del Puerto, specialized in making fine cask-aged *reservas* and *gran reservas* to Vinival in the sprawling Mediterranean port of Valencia, Spain's leading exporter of bulk wine; from Bodegas Alanis situated in the lush, verdant countryside of Galicia, Spain's extreme north-western Atlantic corner, to the Casa de La Viña, a sunbleached white bodega in the Valdepeñas *Denominación de Origen (D.O.)*, deep in the arid heartland of Spain's high central plateau. Bodegas y Bebidas offers what is perhaps the most complete portfolio of Spanish wines currently on offer by a single wine-producing company.

Sometimes, perhaps, the concentration of articles and features in specialized wine publications on smaller wine-making companies and boutique wineries tends to make us gloss over the fact that most of the world's wine is made by much larger firms. And their wine is none the worse for that, often quite the opposite in fact.

These larger concerns enjoy certain advantages over their smaller brethren: a large scale operation with ample financial resources at its disposal can underwrite ambitious research and development programs, which ensure that more and more better-made wines reach the consumer. The larger companies can, and do, finance the massive investments required in the new wine-making technology and the extensive use of cold fermentation plants, for instance, which have had such an impact in improving the quality of so many of Europe's medium-priced country wines. Thanks to economies of scale these firms can offer well-organized and smoothly-run distribution and commercialization networks. All of these factors are essential if fine quality wines are to reach you, the wine drinker, in optimum condition at a reasonable price.

Text: **John Reeder** Photos: **Pablo Neustadt /ICEX**

A large holding company comprising many different styles, types and sizes of winery can, of course, enjoy the best of both worlds. Large scale operations to satisfy a price ratio conscious medium-price market together with smaller artesan-style wineries dedicated to the production of relatively small quantities of premium quality wines. And, of course, there is nothing to prevent a large company from dedicating part of its resources to planting or buying vineyards and making special single vineyard vintages if it so wishes, as Bodegas y Bebidas has in fact done with its new range of Viña Alcorta wines.

Rioja Reds And Galician Whites

One such, then, of these larger umbrella concerns is the Spanish group Bodegas y Bebidas, which brings together some twenty wineries located in nine of the most prestigious officially delimited wine-producing areas - *Denominaciones de Origen* - across Spain from the Rioja to the Penedés to offer one of the most varied portfolios of Spain's finest table wines available on the market today.

Bodegas y Bebidas is by far the single largest producer of wine in the Rioja D.O. as a few figures will demonstrate. The company has twenty percent of the market share of Rioja wine sales on the Spanish domestic market, and in 1992 some twelve-and-a-half million kilograms of grapes were vinified in its various Rioja wineries.

The flagship of the company and its original mother winery is the prestigious Rioja bodega of Campo Viejo in Logroño, the cellars of which hold over forty-five thousand oak casks of wine. Campo Viejo is the number one selling Rioja brand on the Spanish domestic market.

Bodegas Campo Viejo, apart from the traditional ranges of cask-aged *crianza*, *reserva* and *gran reserva* reds plus younger whites and rosés marketed directly under the Campo Viejo label, has recently launched two interesting ventures, two new types of wine from the prestigious Rioja Alta subregion: Albor and Viña Alcorta. Albor is a range of single varietals, a 100% Tempranillo red, a 100% Viura white and a 100% Garnacha rosé, smooth, fruity and, in the case of the red, a little lighter on the palate and a shade less oaky than the more traditional Rioja reds. Viña Alcorta white and red are two new speciality single vineyard, cask-aged 100% varietal wines, the Tempranillo red using whole grape fermentation to heighten fruit, and the Viura white partially fermented in oak cask. Both the red and white Viña Alcorta wines are made from grapes grown only in two vineyards owned by Bodegas Campo Viejo in the Rioja Alta, Navarrete and Torremontalbo.

Bodegas y Bebidas also own another separate limited production winery in the Rioja Alta in Fuenmayor: Bodegas Marqués del Puerto, which makes relatively small quantities of single estate cask-aged wines. A small, elegant, traditional winery with just two thousand oak casks in its cellars and some 450,000 bottles in stock, both its

Over forty five thousand oak casks of wine. Campo Viejo is the number one selling Rioja

Bodegas y Bebidas Offers What Is Perhaps The Most Complete Portfolio Of Spanish Wines.

1985 red *reserva* and the 1980 red *gran reserva* are fine examples of Rioja Alta wines, silky and oaky in the classic mold.

Bodegas y Bebidas is not just Rioja, however. It owns both the oldest and largest winery in the Navarra D.O. for example: Vinícola de Navarra, founded in 1868 and famed for its Las Campanas brand of oak cask-aged red wines and exquisitely delicate Garnacha varietal rosés, together with the beautiful Casa de la Viña estate with its century-old cellars in the Valdepeñas D.O. in central Spain, which make fine estate-bottled Cencibel varietal red wines. Although not averse on principle to experimenting with imported noble grape varieties, Bodegas y Bebidas' avowed policy is to attempt to exploit the richness and diversity of Spain's indigenous noble grape varieties. By encouraging stricter standards in viticulture, by introducing the latest wine-making techniques and technology - controlling fermentation processes more closely, for instance - and by taking care in the aging of the wine, Bodegas y Bebidas are making better and more carefully finished versions of wines made from Spain's indigenous grape varieties. Thus the use of the black grape Cencibel in the Casa de la Viña cask-aged red: a local variety of Tempranillo, the noble black grape which lends breeding and elegance to the red wines of the Rioja. Similarly, in the Ribeiro D.O. in the north of Spain, using the local white grape varieties Treixadura and Torrontés, another of the group's wineries, Bodegas Alanis, has produced one of Spain's most distinctive white wines: Gran Alanis.

An increasingly export orientated company such as Bodegas y Bebidas cannot be oblivious to new trends both in international wine-making and in consumer preferences. In the making of both their Casa de la Viña wines in Valdepeñas and at Bodegas Alanis in Galicia they have enlisted the expertise and the co-operation of one of Australia's most successful wineries, Mitchelton Wines.

The interchange of ideas and techniques between the old world and the new cannot but be fruitful.

Lest this should begin to appear like a catalogue we will spare the patient reader a more detailed analysis of the remaining wines in Bodegas y Bebidas ample portfolio, a wealth of well-made different and individual wines from Catalonia, Valencia, Jumilla and La Mancha. At the end of this article the interested wine buff will find brief tasting notes on some half dozen or so wines selected almost at random from amongst the company's more interesting products.

The export market

1992 marked the end of the transitional period of adaptation that followed Spain's entry into the European Economic Community, which took place in 1986. Complete integration within the Community coincided with the dismantling of the last remaining internal tariffs and was followed from January 1, 1994 by freedom of movement of capital within the Community. All these changes enabled Spanish companies to compete on equal terms for the first time with their other European rivals. If we add to this a more realistic rate of exchange for the peseta on the international currency market we have a combination of factors which have strongly favored Spanish exports. The resultant export boom has had a profound effect on the wine industry.

Not surprisingly, Bodegas y Bebidas as Spain's leading exporter of still and table wine, played an important part and had a major share in this export revival. Figures which speak for themselves testify to this success, figures such as an increase for the year 1992 over that for 1991 of around 60% in the total amounts of exports of the company's bottled wines, or figures such as the 18.8% increase registered in 1992 over 1991 in its sales of Rioja wines, or the fact that the company has moved up from third to first place as the leading company exporting wine to Sweden in just three years.

Leader of the Spanish Domestic Wine Market

	SHARE
Total Market	20%
D.O.C. Rioja Wines	20%
D.O. Navarra Wines	20%
D.O. Jumilla Wines	18%
Table Wines	12%

Source: Bodegas & Bebidas, 1992

Export Leader of Spanish Wines

	SHARE
Total Market	25%
Bulk Wines	30%
Bottled Wines	10%

Source: Bodegas & Bebidas, 1992

BUEN SABER;
BUEN SABOR

ALIMENTOS DE CASTILLA Y LEON TRADICIONALES

A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE
A GOOD TASTE
Knowledge distilled from centuries of experince, of tradition, always in the good company of art, science and pleasure.
TASTE *in which both sight and sense of smell participate, only offered by a cuisine as authentic and original as that found in the region of* Castille and Leon.

Junta de Castilla y León
CONSEJERIA DE AGRICULTURA Y GANADERIA

Rueda · Ribera del Duero · Cigales · Bierzo · Arribes · Guijuelo · Avila · Carne de Morucha · Cecina de León · Lenteja de La Armuña · Queso Zamorano · Alimentos Artesanales de Castilla y León

AROUND 80% OF ALL THE COMPANY'S EXPORTS GO TO SPECIALIZED RETAIL OUTLETS.

The overall trend in the company's exports, in line with increasing world consumer demand for better quality wines is towards more bottled and less bulk wine. Around 80% of all the company's exports go to specialized retail outlets - chains of wineshops such as Oddbins or Threshers in Britain, Gall & Gall in Holland, Metro and Tengelman in Germany or Dansk and Colruyt in Denmark and Belgium, respectively, or quality catering and hospitality outlets.

The major export growth markets for the company over recent years have been Holland, Scandinavia, Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Francophone Africa and Latin America. Of late there has been increasing demand from Eastern Europe and Russia. The fact that Bodegas y Bebidas exports as much wine to Puerto Rico as it does to the rest of the U.S.A. would seem to point to as yet untapped possibilities for the company's fine portfolio of wines on the U.S. mainland. Their export director told us that in the short term, however, that is for the year 1995, he had targeted Germany as his number one priority.

With such a well-balanced portfolio of quality Spanish wines and a fine record of commercial dependability and efficiency, the future augurs well for Bodegas y Bebidas, a large company that has not sacrificed individuality, distinctiveness and diversity in its product range for the anonymous grayness of corporate identity.

***John Reeder** is a wine writer who has published in the most important English and Spanish wine journals. He is associate professor at the University of Madrid. He lives in Madrid.*

WINE TASTING

Most winedrinkers will probably never have heard of Bodegas y Bebidas, but few people who enjoy Spanish wine will not at some time have drunk with pleasure a bottle or two of the group's wines: a Campo Viejo Rioja, a Marqués del Puerto Gran Reserva, a Las Campanas rosé from Navarre, a Gran Alanis white Ribeiro, a Casa de la Viña Cencibel varietal red from Valdepeñas.

To finish therefore, and to whet the reader's appetite, we have chosen to jot down tasting notes for six of Bodegas y Bebidas' most popular wines which hopefully you will be able to find in your local specialist wineshop.

Gran Trocadero Vendimia '93: Ribeiro D.O.
A distinctive fresh young wine, with a floral nose, clean on the palate, refreshingly dry with an agreeable touch of acidity.

Campo Viejo erral fermented Viura 1992: Rioja D.O.
Oak cask fermentation has added complexity to and has rounded out this fresh, dry Rioja varietal white. An interesting experiment in returning to traditional Rioja aging techniques.

Las Campanas Rosado Cosecha 1993: Navarre D.O.
A superb rosé. A beautifully made, elegant, onion-skin pink wine, delicately fragrant and aromatic, fresh and fruity from Navarre where Spain's finest rosés come from.

Casa de la Viña '93: Valdepeñas D.O.
An overwhelmingly fruity young red wine redolent of the black Cencibel grape. A fine example of Spain's increasingly popular first year young red varietal wines.

Campo Viejo Reserva 1988: Rioja D.O.
A well-structured, well-balanced red cask-aged reserva, cherry red in color, with underlying tones of brick, silky and smooth in the mouth with agreeable hints of tannin but not excessively woody. A fine Rioja red reserva.

Marqués del Puerto 1985 Gran Reserva: Rioja D.O.
A classic Rioja Gran Reserva red, two years in bordelais oak cask, a subtle, balsamic slightly tannic wine with a prolonged, satisfyingly complex aftertaste.

Signed Originals

Our four masterpieces,
each wine individually conceived and created.
An original worthy of our family signature.

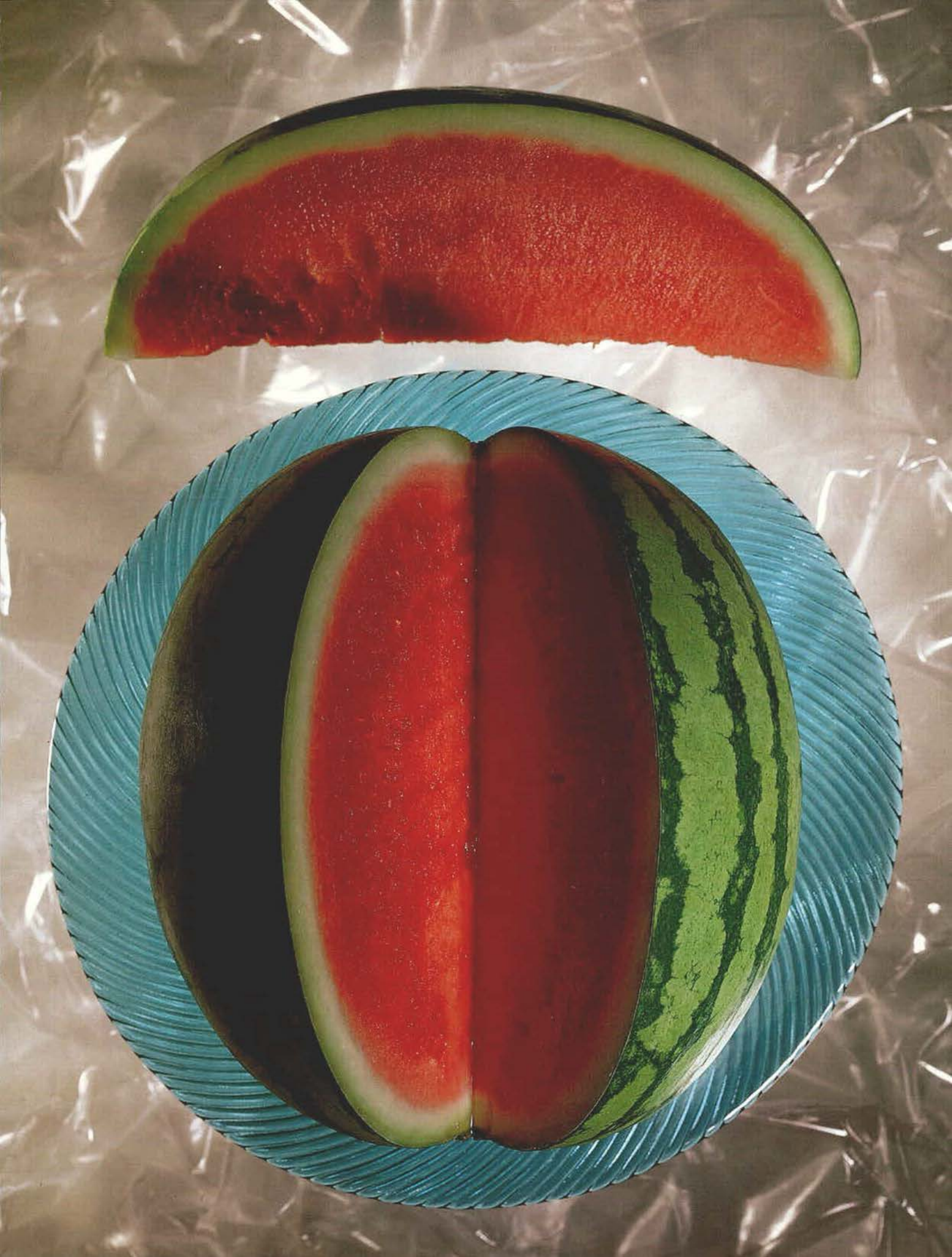
F. Chivite
F. CHIVITE Cenologist

Julián Chivite
Bodegueros-viticultores since 1647

A SLICE OF *Seedless* CONVENIENCE FOR *Watermelon* EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

Seedless watermelon is a natural mutation discovered in the Orient at the turn of the century. It was grown experimentally on farms in California and Japan in the 1930s, but it was not until last summer that this convenient and delicious fruit became widely available to Europeans, thanks to the efforts of an innovative group of Spanish farmers.

Text: **Deborah Luhrman** Still Lives: **Menchu Artime** Photos: **Antonio de Benito/ICEX**



Between 1987 and 1989 Valencian farmers tried growing 84 different varieties of seedless watermelon; the results ranged from very good to plain awful.

WATERMELON

As a kid, summer meant long, hot, lazy afternoons. We quenched our thirst with juicy slices of cold watermelon and relieved our boredom with contests to see who could spit the seeds the farthest.

As an adult I still enjoy a summery plate of watermelon, but the seeds have become a bore. It is a messy job separating them from the fruit and I've never been able to devise a graceful way of getting the missed seeds out of my mouth and back on the plate in polite company.

Seedless watermelon provides an easy solution. It is just as red, just as juicy and just as sweet as watermelon with seeds, but without the mess and with more edible fruit in the heart, which is almost everyone's favorite part.

The only thing really wrong with seedless watermelon is its name. Maybe it should be called almost seedless watermelon, because it does, in fact, have seeds. There are tiny white ones, almost transparent and harmless to eat and then in each fruit there are five or six normal black seeds. Spanish regulations say seedless watermelons can contain up to seven black seeds, but no more.

Spanish seedless watermelons are round and weigh between 4 and 5 kg (9 and 11 pounds) at their peak of ripeness. From the outside they are easy to distinguish from other watermelon, because the skin is light green with dark green stripes, rather than the solid dark green of watermelon with seeds.

Their launch into the European marketplace last summer was a huge success and managed to transform a rather ordinary fruit into a luxury product, but one that costs only slightly more than traditional watermelon.

Encouraged by the tremendous demand, Spanish farmers are planning to more than double production of seedless watermelon this summer and have devised a unique system of staggered plantings that makes the seedless fruit available for five months - from mid-April to mid-September - so that while Northern Europeans are still digging out from their final spring snowfalls, they can enjoy an early taste of summer by eating a Spanish seedless watermelon.

SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Spain has the right geography and climate to make it the garden of Europe and great improvements have been made in recent years in availability and distribution of produce. But as in other sectors, there comes a time when diversity is needed to strengthen the business.

Bearing this in mind, the Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Valencia began searching for new products in 1987. With the help of the agricultural commission of the Valencian regional government and the Polytechnical University of Valencia, the farmers examined a variety of new products, including baby lettuce, purple cauliflower, and yellow-fleshed watermelon, finally deciding that red, seedless watermelon was the best bet for their diversification project.

Seedless watermelon is a natural mutation first discovered in Southeast Asia at the turn of the century. Experiments with commercial production began in the 1930s in California and Japan and while it is currently grown successfully in the United States, South America and South Africa, it was at this time completely unknown in Europe.

Between 1987 and 1989 the Valencian farmers tried growing 84 different varieties of seedless watermelon on an experimental farm loaned to the project by the bank Caja Rural in the town of Paiporta, near the Valencia airport.

The results ranged from very good to plain awful and in 1989 the field had been narrowed to five varieties of seedless watermelon, which were planted on larger farms to test yield. The following year, 1990, commercial production began for the first time, but on a very small scale. Only 500 tonnes were produced and only for domestic consumption.

Farmers were a bit skeptical at first, but were enticed into trying the new seedless watermelon by offers of free plants, insurance against possible losses and technical assistance from the researchers.

The first farmers to take advantage of the offer were already growing traditional watermelon. They began by planting about one-fourth of their land with the seedless variety and then at the end of the season comparing their profits per hectare for regular watermelon with the innovative variety.

But there was more to consider than just the market price, which is 10 to 20 pesetas per kg higher for seedless watermelon. First of all, seeds for the new variety are rare — only 5-7 per melon. They are produced in Chile and cost the farmers seven times more than what they pay for regular watermelon seeds. Also while regular watermelon practically grows itself, the seedless variety is much more delicate from germination to harvest. It is more sensitive to temperatures, humidity and fertilizers. Finally, the seedless variety cannot self-pollenate, so patches of normal watermelon must be grown alongside the new variety and the flowering stage must be perfectly timed to coincide so that the normal plants pollenate the seedless ones.

"QUEEN OF HEARTS"

By 1991 researchers and growers in Valencia had settled on one variety of seedless watermelon with the poetic name "Queen of Hearts". In addition to meeting all their requirements for sweetness, appearance, and color, the "Queen of Hearts" variety has an especially uniform and solid center. It is highly prized by gourmet chefs who like to take slices of the seedless watermelon and cut shapes out of the

Nowadays we have seedless grapes, seedless oranges and seedless tangerines and nobody questions them, why not seedless watermelon?

solid flesh with cookie cutters for creative dessert presentations.

In the subsequent two years, research has centered on extending the harvest season through staggered plantings and broadening the growing region, so that nowadays Spain's "Queen of Hearts" is available five months a year. The first harvests are grown in greenhouses in Almería, while open-air fields in Murcia and along the coast of Valencia are planted for mid-summer harvest, with the late maturing crop coming from inland farms in the Valencia region.

Exports to the rest of Europe began in 1992, with 86% of the exports being handled through the company Anecoop, a Valencia-based consortium that represents 117 cooperative farms throughout Spain and was integrally involved in developing the seedless watermelon project.

In the first year of exports, nearly 75% of Anecoop's 5,300 tonne crop was shipped abroad, mainly to France, Germany, Britain, Norway, Belgium and Switzerland.

But export sales really took off in 1993 when total production of seedless watermelon in Spain reached 7,500 tonnes and about 80% of the crop was exported. Sales to France, Germany and Norway boomed, while exports to Britain, Belgium and Switzerland remained about the same and Spain added two strong new markets for its seedless watermelon: Finland, which imported 480 tonnes or 7% of the crop; and Denmark, which bought 3.6% of the production.

BIG IN SIZE, BIG IN FLAVOR

There's an old Spanish saying used to describe a problematic situation: *"Es peor que andar con un melón bajo el brazo"* ("It's worse than walking with a melon under the arm") and that is the way many of the folks involved in the launch of Spain's seedless watermelon describe the task they faced in gaining public acceptance for the new product.

"Initially there was a rejection in the marketplace. Housewives didn't know what it was, it cost more, and many of them questioned the need for a new kind of watermelon," explained José María Torres, director of research and development at Anecoop.

"Some consumers thought it was artificial, manipulated and not natural, but what a stupid reaction! Nowadays we have seedless grapes, seedless oranges and seedless tangerines and nobody questions them, why not seedless watermelon?" he said.

To gain consumer confidence, a massive information campaign was undertaken last year using television and print advertising in the major markets, as well as heavy point-of-sale promotional efforts that included tastings, posters, mobiles, life-size cardboard cut-outs of a waiter serving seedless watermelon, and recipe booklets printed in English, French, German and Italian.

A distributor in Norway even held contests for retailers selling seedless watermelon, with a prize of tickets to the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer.

The promotional strategy was tailored to each market. In Northern Europe they used the slogan "Big in size, big in flavor" in an attempt to overcome consumer prejudice against such a large-sized watermelon. Some shops in Norway and Germany found that cutting the melon in half and covering it with plastic wrap solved the size problem and also gave curious customers a chance to see inside the watermelon before buying. In southern France, the successful campaign was directed at mothers of young children with the slogan "The big fruit, for little gourmets".

At a recent meeting to launch the 1994 seedless watermelon season, importers from throughout Europe were enthusiastic.

"I was happy and surprised by last year's sales, we reached our target thanks to the strong sales support from Anecoop and I think we can double our sales this season, perhaps someday making the seedless variety 99% of our watermelon sales," said Harri Lehto, whose Finland-based company Kesco hopes to begin shipping Spanish seedless watermelon into Russia.

Norwegian importer Erling Lundby of Bama predicted that 99% of his watermelon sales this summer would be the seedless variety, while German and French importers said they needed larger quantities of the seedless melons this summer to meet the demands of their growing market, which is based heavily on sales to Turkish and North African immigrants.

Buoyed by the success of last year, Spain plans to more than double production of seedless watermelon in 1994 to reach 18,000 tonnes. Promotional efforts are aimed at boosting sales in northern France, Belgium and Switzerland, while seedless watermelons will be introduced for the first time in Holland, Portugal and Italy.

Farmers and economists throughout Spain are taking a keen interest in the seedless watermelon experiment. They are worried about increasing competition from outside of Europe and know it is no longer enough to search for new agricultural markets by merely extending the season of traditional produce or by increasing distribution to more distant countries. Just as in other industries, there is a demand for new products and innovation is seen as the key to meeting the challenge of the future.

See recipes page 140

American journalist ***Deborah Lubrman*** *is based in Madrid and writes on Spanish food, wine and travel for several publications, including* Spain Gourmetour, Lookout, Fodor's Travel Guides and Travel Trade Gazette.

NUTREXPA'S COLA CAO: Success

From infant food formulas to sophisticated pâtés, Barcelona's family owned Nutrexpa is one of Spain's leading and most successful food conglomerates to compete in the international world market. Generations of Spaniards have been raised on Cola Cao, an instant chocolate drink that is the company's mainstay. Its logo is as recognizable as the national flag in Spain. Now generations of children in over 60 countries around the world are also growing up with Cola Cao. Other Nutrexpa products produced or sold abroad include La Piara meat and fish pâtés and Ordesa baby foods.

Text: **Ana Westley** Photos: **Nutrexpa**

Anyone in Spain over 35 can sing or hum along with the original Cola Cao jingle and conjure up nostalgic memories of the carefree days of childhood when happiness meant a glass of chocolate milk before going off to school or out to play. The Cola Cao brand so dominates Spain with a 65% market share that it has become generic for all instant chocolate drinks. In Latin America, China, and Eastern Europe, a similar process is taking place in which households of all socio-economic levels consider Cola Cao a staple to grow up with.

"It is always satisfying to find your product displayed around the world," commented Manuel Blasco, International Marketing Manager of Nutrexpa International. But even he, a senior staff member from the founding days in 1946, was surprised to see Cola Cao displayed alongside basics and staples by street market vendors high in the mountains in Peru.

"Sacrificing mothers in the developing world know that Cola Cao is a high energy addition to milk that kids like," Mr.Blasco justified to explain the product's success. "Our

Cola Cao product is aimed at everyone, not just an upper class elite," he added.

With four foreign production centers in Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, and China, and distribution companies in Portugal, France, Poland, Czech Republic, and Peru, foreign operations now constitute close to 15% of Nutrexpa's sales, which amounted to 40 billion pesetas or approximately $300 million last year. Only five years ago, this percentage was a mere 5%.

Nutrexpa's foreign market is divided almost evenly between Europe (35%), South America (30%) and Asia (30%).

First in Eastern Europe

"The potential for growth is still enormous," adds Mr. Blasco, "especially for formerly communist countries that have recently opened up their markets to international trade," he said.

Although Cola Cao is exported to Western Europe, the Spanish instant chocolate drink has been able to quickly gain a large stake in new markets such as Poland. "As a family run company, Nutrexpa is more agile and makes decisions quickly," adds Manuel Velayos, Commercial Director of Nutrexpa Trading, the subsidiary that channels foreign exports.

"While other large corporate multinationals debate a new market, we can move in first," he affirmed. This tactic has paid off recently in Eastern Europe. After a heavy advertising blitz in Poland, for example, Nutrexpa found it was so overwhelmed with demand a few years ago that stores were forced to limit two jars of Cola Cao per customer until new shipments arrived.

"Of course at first many took advantage of this scarcity buying up supplies and reselling them at double the price outside the store," Mr. Blasco recalled.

"In Eastern Europe we enter the market in the same conditions as the other multinationals, but we have more flexibility and are able to take advantage of this," Mr.

Abroad (V)

AN INSTANT WORLDWIDE

PATES FRESCOS

NUTREXPA

Velayos affirmed, justifying that it is much harder for Nutrexpa to gain a large market quota in Western Europe where other national brands have been installed for as long as Cola Cao in Spain. Nevertheless, sales continue to increase in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Growing up with milk and Cola Cao

Nutrexpa firmly believes that market success is based on growing up with Cola Cao along with milk consumption, which is exactly what has happened in Spain. In fact, Nutrexpa likes to attribute Spain's higher than European average milk consumption to the widespread consumption of Cola Cao since its founding in 1946.

Consumers in the EU drink an average of 90 liters per person of milk a year and Spaniards an average of 110 liters per capita per year.

Undaunted by China's per capita milk consumption of a meager 14 liters, Nutrexpa foresaw a golden opportunity to grow along with milk consumption which the Chinese government was trying to promote. "We were delighted to join the government milk campaign," Mr. Velayos recalled and pointed out that there is a much greater market potential in China than Poland, where milk consumption is 200 liters per capita. Nutrexpa plans to open a production plant in Poland in September and set up another production center in China in the near future. The new Warsaw center will supply Eastern Europe with Cola Cao while the Barcelona based parent company will continue to export other products such as cocoa cream and honey (Granja San Francisco). Spain will continue to export to Russia rather than open up a production center there.

Portable factories

With the largest -according to Nutrexpa- capacity cocoa production plant in the world in Barcelona, which currently produces from 45 to 50 million kilos a year, Nutrexpa has developed a technology that allows it to concentrate a full scale production center into four containers that can be set up anywhere in the world.

Before Spain joined the Common Market in 1986, Nutrexpa had a portable factory in Portugal which was later dismantled in favor of direct exporting from Barcelona after EC membership in 1986. Another was set up in Nigeria for several years but was eventually disassembled. The Chinese production center, however, will soon be enlarged with more portable units for assembly in another area.

"The system has worked very well and is capable of producing some three to four million kilos a year," Mr. Velayos explained.

Although Nutrexpa began exports in the early 1970s its first foreign venture was to set up a production center in Chile 12 years ago that supplied the South American continent with Cola Cao with a yearly production of some 400 tons of the chocolate powder.

An Ordesa infant food production center followed eight years later in Ecuador and by this summer Nutrexpa hopes to finish a second infant formula and baby food factory, which is being constructed in Chile near its Cola Cao center with an initial $140 million investment. The new installations will supply South America.

Soon after acquiring La Piara processed meat products and spreads in 1988, Nutrexpa established a production subsidiary in Mexico. The recently introduced fish and seafood spreads have been especially successful in both Spain and Mexico and in Eastern Europe. "Although our products compare favorably with other European brands, it is obviously harder to get a market corner in Western Europe than in the East or Latin American," Mr. Velayos explained.

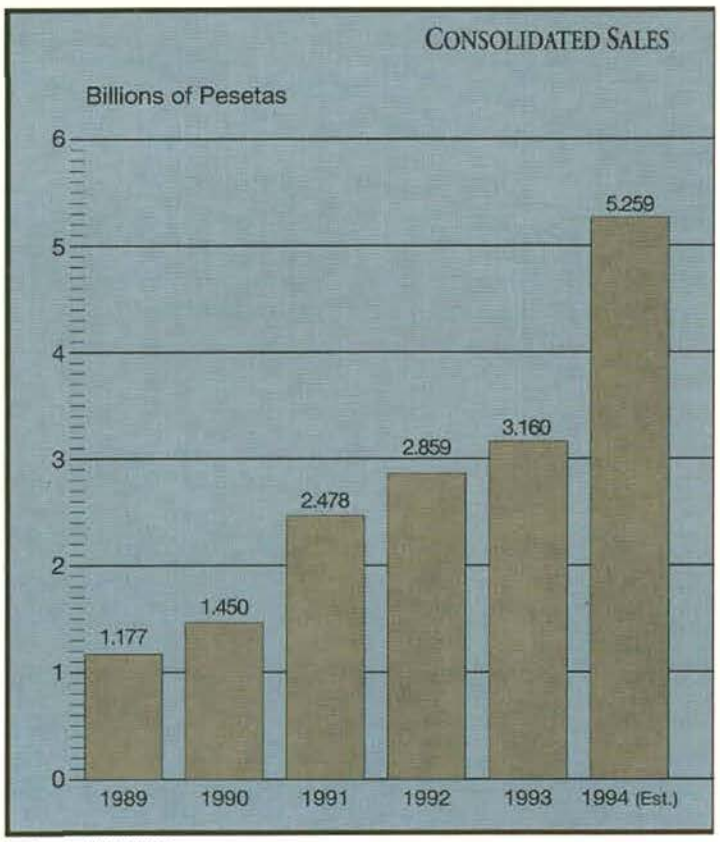
An advertising classic

Now a food giant in Spain with 7 production centers and 28 groups of different products, the beginnings of Nutrexpa, like any family business, were modest. Two brothers-in-law, José Ignacio Ferrero Cabanach and José María Ventura Mallofre, founded the company in 1946, a post war period in Spain of international isolation accompanied by scarcity of raw materials and food. For those Spaniards who can remember, these were times of hardship.

Despite an initial vow to never borrow money from banks, the two brothers-in-law agreed to gamble "only once" with borrowed money for a radio advertising campaign, something practically unheard of at the time. A family relative composed the music for the first jingle, now an advertising classic. For three weeks no effect was noticed until finally, a first large order came in for Cola Cao.

A second and last loan was borrowed to finance one more month of sponsoring a radio soap opera. Before the month ended orders were pouring in and Nutrexpa was in business. The loans were paid off and were never resorted to again.

NUTREXPA INTERNATIONAL



Source: NUTREXPA

PATES FRESCOS

Perhaps no other multinational, not even Coca Cola, can boast that its original jingle has become a classic that is passed on from generation to generation along with other childhood songs. A nostalgic remake of the jingle with computerized music even made number 6 on last summer's top 40 songs.

Nutrexpa was one of the first Spanish companies to firmly believe in advertising and sponsorship. When television began in Spain, Cola Cao was one of the first sponsors, not only for soap operas, but any popular early shows of the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially sports activities.

With a staff of only 17 employees in the early 1950s, by the end of the decade the ranks had swollen to over 120 with two factories. Today there are some 1,600 employees and seven factories in Spain.

From a milk complement to a household name

"In those early days in some backward parts of the country, there were small stores that sold Cola Cao by the teaspoon," Mr. Blasco recalled as even a small can of the product was too expensive a luxury for a poor family's budget but could be afforded on a day by day basis. Returning full cycle, Cola Cao is today sold in individual envelopes for travel convenience or for consumption in cafeterias.

From the beginning, Cola Cao was sold as a tasty complement to one of Nature's most nourishing products of all: milk. As in China today, Nutrexpa in developing Spain in the 1950s based its advertising on educating families about children's requirements for daily glasses of wholesome milk.

Mothers knew that children who drank milk would be healthier and stronger. "Cola Cao, made from kola malted cereals, fat reduced cocoa powder and sugar, gave an extra high energy boost for active children, and encouraged milk consumption," Mr. Blasco remembered. "Kids love it."

The 1960s were the boom years for Spain as international isolation had ended and the country raced to catch up in development with the rest of Europe. By then, Cola Cao was a household word throughout the country and a product that no family could be without. Nutrexpa still gets requests for private shipments from Spaniards living in countries overseas where Cola Cao is not yet widely distributed.

Advertising in television continued along with sponsorship of sports related activities. As an energy product for youths and children, Cola Cao has sponsored or supplied both summer and winter olympic games since Munich, 1972, and most major national and international sports events.

Product diversification and expansion

The 1970s marked the beginning of expansion through the acquisition of other companies in the food sector and further product diversification. Nutrexpa purchased the cookie manufacturer Riudarenes and began marketing Phoskitos. The purchase of Ordesa followed adding infant and dietetic foods to Nutrexpa's diversifying product line. Production also began of a Cola Cao spread.

When obtaining a dependable supply of cocoa became a problem, Nutrexpa opted to maintain Cola Cao's quality even if that meant raising prices to absorb part of the dramatic 300% increase in the price of cocoa rather than diluting the product.

In 1977 Nutrexpa introduced Cola Cao Vit, a vitamin enriched instant cocoa mix that was more dissolvable than Cola Cao. Market studies had shown that Cola Cao consumers, especially junior consumers, did not want any change whatsoever in the original formula, including the characteristic lumpiness when first mixed with milk.

"Kids like it that way and love smashing up little clumps of undissolved Cola Cao with their spoon," Mr. Blasco explained. "So we made a very soluble product for those who preferred a really instant mix which is our Cola Cao Vit," he said.

The booming 1980s in Spain marked another phase of expansion into new products such as processed selected vegetables, nuts, and spices under the brand name La Granja San Francisco, the trademark of Nutrexpa's best-selling honey, and the acquisition of the Pamplona candy maker Dulces Unzue. A bottled ready-to-drink chocolate milk drink Okey was launched in 1984 followed by the purchase of a milk plant in 1986.

"Better than bread"

In 1988, Nutrexpa acquired La Piara, a quality processed meat producer. Nutrexpa

NUTREXPA INTERNATIONAL

Company structure of the Nutrexpa Group

FOREIGN SUBSIDIARIES WITH PRODUCTION INSTALLATIONS

NUTREXPA CHILE (1982)
LA PIARA DE C.V. (MEXICO) (1989)
TIAJIN NUTREXPA FOOD (CHINA) (1990)
N. ECUADOR (1990)
N. POLAND (TO BE OPENED FALL, 1994)

FOREIGN DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

N PORTUGAL
N. FRANCE SARL
N. POLONIA
N. CZECH REPUBLIC
N. PERU

NUTREXPA COMPANIES IN SPAIN

LA PIARA
JAMON ANETO
CELPA (PALENCIA)
DULCES UNZUE (PAMPLONA)
ORDESA
IDAPSA
COLA CAO
GRANJA SAN FRANCISCO

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NUTREXPA

expanded the well known pâté line to include an assortment of fish and seafood pâtés that have gained widespread market acceptance. Clever advertising with a catchy jingle again helped launch a quality product. "Better than bread" - a Spanish expression for something really delicious - is a slogan that almost any Spanish household now associates with La Piara. Innovations in the Spanish market also included a black plastic lid to aid refrigerator storage once the can was opened. A year later, a La Piara factory was set up in Mexico.

Nutrexpa recently launched a new selection of bakery and pastry products under the brand name Horno de la Granja San Francisco (Oven of the San Francisco Farm). In keeping with the weight conscious 1990s, Nutrexpa also introduced "Cola Cao Light" with half the calorie count.

Yet despite steady diversification, Nutrexpa's star product, Cola Cao, still represents roughly 50% of the food conglomerate's business and constitutes its main product sold or produced abroad.

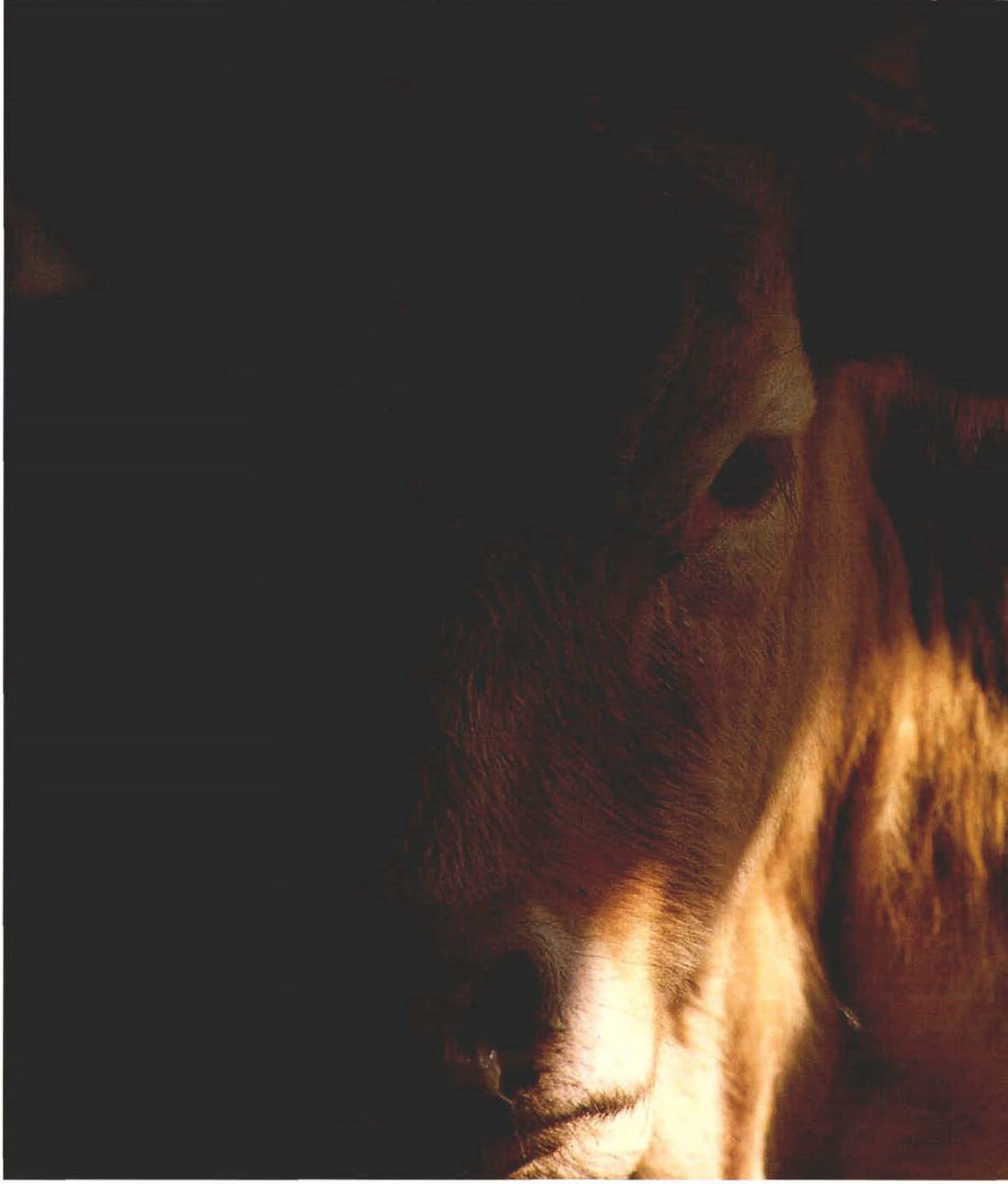
Although the Spanish version continues with its brand label that depicts cocoa harvesting in Africa -a trademark that has become famous in Spain for generations- the new international label depicts a hot and cold version of the chocolate drink that is unmistakable.

"Our trademark has become so successful that others try to imitate our label, format, and container," Mr. Velayos noted.

Court rulings have required competitors to withdraw labeling and packaging in similar yellow and red containers but in foreign markets this is harder to enforce.

With an ever expanding line of food products, Nutrexpa can surely take claim to being a major Spanish food sector multinational capable of satisfying palates around the world from babyhood, through childhood and youth, to mature adulthood. In many parts of the world, the Spanish brand name Cola Cao is as familiar or more so than that of any other multinational food or soft drink giant.

Ana Westley *is the Spain correspondent for* The New York Times. *She has been the correspondent in Spain for the U.S. weekly news magazine* Businessweek *since 1988. Previously, from 1982 to 1988, she was the correspondent for* The Wall Street Journal. *She has also contributed regularly to various other publicaciones, including* The Boston Globe, The San Francisco Examiner, The Denver Post, The Christian Science Monitor, *and* Lookout, *an English-language publication in Spain.*



RAFAEL CHIRBES/SOBREMESA

Land of a Hundred Cheeses (II)

Cows' milk cheeses:

Text: **Enric Canut** Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

mountain culture

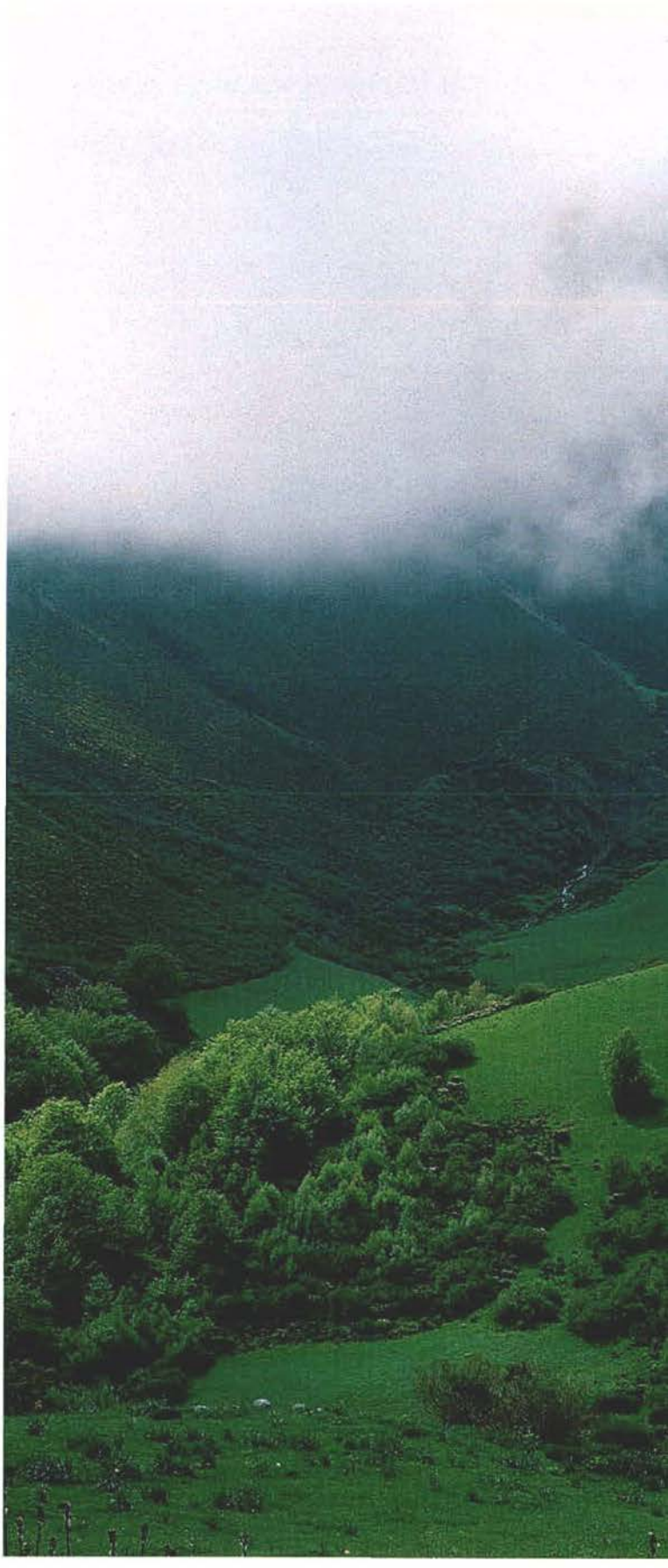
The first in this series looked at Spain's great plateau, the meseta, traditional sheep-breeding territory. This chapter turns its attention to the mountainous north. There, in a landscape very different from the average foreigner's image of Spain, the livestock is predominantly cattle. It is the most prolific cheese-producing area in the whole country, outstanding in both quality and range.

ANTONIO DE BENITO/SOBREMESA

Galicia is known for its tetilla gallega, *named for its flattened breast-like shape.*

The cheeses of Galicia, in the northwest, owe their texture to the fatty milk of the native breed, glamorously named the the Galician blonde.

The climate in northern Spain is Atlantic and continental, with Alpine conditions at the highest points, abundant rainfall and cool to extreme temperatures.



***M**ahon cheese is made all over the island of Menorca. Its characteristic shape is a sort of rounded parallelepiped.*

ANTONIO DE BENITO/SOBREMESA

ANGEL ARAUJO/SOBREMESA

The geographical and climatic conditions in northern Spain gave rise to what ethnologists describe as a pastoral culture..

The whole of northern Spain is spanned by a vast chain of mountains which stretches over 1000 km (621 miles) from the Atlantic in the west to the Mediterranean in the east. Its towering peaks and intricate valleys occupy a total area of some 125,000 Km2 (48,000 square miles). The western half, which extends through Galicia and the Basque Country, is made up of the Cordillera Cantábrica mountain range, while the Pyrenees, the natural border with France, make up the eastern segment.

The climate throughout the area is Atlantic and continental; with Alpine conditions at the highest points, abundant rainfall and cool to extreme temperatures. This part of the country is predominantly green all year round, its rich meadows and pastureland providing a rich source of food for the herds of cows and, to a lesser extent, flocks of sheep kept there.

The environment constituted by these geographical and climatic conditions gave rise to what anthropologists and ethnologists describe as a "highland", or "pastoral" culture. In this case it dates back to the Neolithic Period, originating with the indigenous inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula and early immigrations of Indo-European peoples from Eastern Europe. They infiltrated as far as *Finis Terrae* (Galicia), the northwestern tip of Spain, later to become the final destination on the pilgrimage route known as the *Camino de Santiago.*

This broad mountainous strip was the only part of Spain to prove impervious to the subsequent dominion of the Romans and the Arabs. The fact that its ancient culture and customs (among them the making of mostly cows' milk cheeses) have survived is generally attributed to this. The extraordinary differences which occur from one valley to the next are explained by historically minimal communications between their isolated, self-ruling and self-sufficient communities.

Spain as a whole produces a hundred or so different cheeses, more than half of which come from this cheese-lover's paradise in the northwest.

Galicia

Galicia's relatively gentle mountain landscape and tranquil valleys produce four types of cows' milk cheese. Central Galicia is known for its *tetilla gallega*, named for its flattened breast-like shape, and for Ulloa and Arzúa, popularly known as *queixo do pais* ("local cheese" in the Galician language: *gallego*).

Both are soft, short-matured cheeses, smooth and soft inside and elastic-to-sticky in texture. They are light in flavor, somewhere between sweet and lactic, and very slightly salted. Always very popular cheeses in their home patch, their reputation has spread and they are

ANGEL ARAUJO/SOBREMESA

***M**any cheeses are naturally smoked, with birch-wood, juniper, etc.*

Northern Spain is the most prolific cheese-producing area in the whole country, outstanding in both quality and range.

now in demand all over Spain. They owe all this to the sweetish dense, fatty milk yielded by the native breed of dairy cow glamorously named the *rubia gallega* (Galician Blonde) fed on rich pasture.

Ulloa, now has *denominación de calidad* status (a recognition of quality awarded by regional, not national, bodies which regulate production and ensure that certain standards are met), as does its variant, Arzúa, which takes its name from the little Galician town famous for its cheese-market and fair.

The western foothills of the Cordillera Cantábrica, still in Galicia, produce two other cows' milk cheeses. These are San Simón, made around Villalba, and Cebreiro made near the high mountain passes of Piedrafita and Becerreá, both in Lugo Province. San Simón is a soft to semi-hard cheese with a firmer interior than *Queso de tetilla* and a more intense flavor. It is readily recognizable by its characteristic cannon-ball shape topped by a "nipple", its gently birch-wood smoked brownish exterior, waxy rind and unmistakable smell. San Simón is also a *denominación de calidad* cheese. Cebreiro is an unusual country cheese, farmhouse-made in very small quantities in an isolated mountain area. Shaped like a chef's hat it is fresh and acidic in flavor and very buttery on the palate, reminiscent of a quark though drier in texture, compact and granular, though it can sometimes be spreadable.

Time-honored cheeses

Beyond the northern slopes of the Cordillera Cantábrica, leaving Galicia behind us, lies the Principality of Asturias. This little region was something of an historical exception in that it never fell under the Arab dominion which, at its height, extended almost throughout present-day Spain. Barely a decade after the Arabs first invaded Spain by way of Andalusia in 711, Asturias had become a Christian refuge, developing into a crucible of rebellion which generated the Reconquest —eight centuries of struggle by the Christians to regain control of Spain from the invaders. They eventually achieved it in 1492 when the remaining Arabs were ousted and Spain became one united kingdom. Asturias is traditionally regarded as an enduring bastion of basic Hispanic values. The inaccessibility of this mountainous territory, wedged as it is between the ocean and the high mountains which separate it from the central meseta, has kept it unspoiled and its traditions intact. This is also why it is Spain's richest cheese-producing area today.

An area of just 10,000 km2 (3,861 square miles) boasts almost 30 varieties of cheese, each an individual in its own right. They include pressed, semi-cooked and medium to long matured ones such as Taramundi; fresh, lactic, buttery cheeses such as Porrúa and Vidiago; soft, washed-rind ones such as Peñamellera; cheese with external mold, from the dramatic landscape of the Los Beyos gorge; several blue cheeses, such as La Peral, Gamonedo (lightly smoked), and Cabrales (see Spain Gourmetour Nº 20). There are two very ancient cheeses in this region. One is *Afuega'l pitu* (bafflingly this means "stifle the cockerel"in *Bable*, the local Asturian vernacular), a fresh, soft cheese made by lactic coagulation and molded or pressed by hand. It occurs in two forms, either with a mold-encrusted rind or an interior reddened by the addition of paprika. The other is Casin, a farmhouse cheese made in the Campo de Caso area with very fatty dense milk. It is pressed several times with a special roller over the course of a few days to remove the whey, ending up as a fine-grained sandy-textured cheese, piquant in flavor and cylindrical in shape. For Picañón, another piquant and spreadable cheese, the curds are fermented in an earthenware crock; queso de *vejiga* (literally "bladder cheese"— a lamb wineskin is used as its mold). Then there are Urbies, and Xenestosu, molded in an esparto band... and so on and so on. A mere catalogue just doesn't do justice to the wealth of local cheeses here: you just have to experience them for yourself.

Picos de Europa: a natural park of cheeses

On the eastern edge of Asturias, straddling the provinces of Cantabria and Leon, the Cordillera Cantábrica develops into the huge limestone mass known as the Picos de Europa. Over 100 km (62 miles) around, they are traversed by the deep channel of the River Cares. The Picos de Europa, designated a Natural Park for their extraordinary and unspoiled natural beauty, are still a safe haven not only for Spain's small surviving bear population but also, the foothills to the highest pastureland, for over twenty different varieties of cheeses.

Beginning with the most important blues: Cabrales, which has enjoyed D.O. status since 1981, is a farm cheese made exclusively with raw milk (a mixture of cows' goats' and ewes'). Production is small, and is generated by the farmers of little villages around Arenas de Cabrales. Picón, a close relation of Cabrales is made in the Cantabrian villages of Bejes and Tresviso, and is also a D.O. cheese. Gamonedo, another farm cheese is a big format one (each weighs over 4 kilos) which is gently smoked for a month and then matured in natural caves (as are Cabrales de Picón), until interior molds develop. The last of this group is Picón de Valdeón, made in the Posada de Valdeón area (León Province) on the southern slopes of the Picos. Very little of it is made and few know about it, but it is well up with the others in quality. All these cheeses are ma-

Gran Selección 94

LOS VINOS DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

BLANCOS

MEDALLA DE ORO
Añil, 1993
Vinícola de Tomelloso S. C. L.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE PLATA
Zagarrón, 1993
Coop. Ntra. Sra. de Manjavacas
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE BRONCE
Lorenzete, 1993
Coop. Virgen de las Viñas
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

ROSADOS

MEDALLA DE ORO
Castillo de Almansa, 1993
Bodega Piqueras S. A.
Denominación de Origen: Almansa

MEDALLA DE PLATA
Zagarrón 1993
Coop. Ntra. Sra. de Manjavacas
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE BRONCE
Viña Alambrada, 1993
Bodegas Hermanos Rubio S. L.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

TINTOS

JÓVENES

MEDALLA DE ORO
Don Fadrique, 1993
Bodegas J. Santos S. L.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE PLATA
Lazarillo, 1993
Coop. Nuestro Padre Jesús del Perdón
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE BRONCE
Castillo de Manzanares, 1993
Vinícola de Castilla S. A.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

RESERVA

MEDALLA DE ORO
Vegaval Plata, 1985
Miguel Calatayud S. A.
Denominación de Origen: Valdepeñas

MEDALLA DE PLATA
Casa de la Viña, 1985
Casa de la Viña S. A.
Denominación de Origen: Valdepeñas

MEDALLA DE BRONCE
Viejo Videva, 1987
Bodegas Videva S. A.
Denominación de Origen: Valdepeñas

GRAN RESERVA

MEDALLA DE ORO
Viña Albali, 1984
Viña Albali Reservas S. A.
Denominación de Origen: Valdepeñas

MEDALLA DE PLATA
Don Fadrique, 1983
Bodegas J. Santos S. L.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

MEDALLA DE BRONCE
Señorío de Guadianeja, 1984
Vinícola de Castilla S. A.
Denominación de Origen: La Mancha

Junta de Comunidades de
Castilla-La Mancha

Vinos de Castilla-La Mancha
Naturalmente buenos

Over 50%
of the cheese produced and eaten
in Spain is made of cows',
goats' and ewes' milk mixed in
varying proportions.

tured in natural limestone caves or cellars where temperatures are consistently cool (-8 degrees C/39-46 degrees F) and humidity levels very high all year round. Natural vents, known locally as *soplidos*, carry in cold, moist, saline, oxygen-rich air from the Atlantic, via the bowels of the earth, and this is responsible for the blue mold *(Penicillium)* which develops right through the cheese from rind to center. The cheeses are soft inside, some spreadably and others crumbly, and when cut reveal an interior warrened with little galleries and caverns inhabited by the greenish-blue mold which gives them their highly individual strong penetrating flavor, slight piquancy, and rich volatile aromas.

In addition to a plethora of fresh and soft cheeses (10 or so varieties), the Liébana area, on the eastern slopes of the Picos, produces various traditional cheeses which have had D.O. status since 1987. As well as Picón, from Bejes and Tresviso, Liébana also yields Quesucos, in fresh form from Pido and smoked from Aliva (these are two villages at the source of the River Deva up on the snowline). The fresh Pido cheese is soft and spreadable, and although it looks granular it melts in the mouth much like a *petit-suisse*. It is lactic, very fatty, with a buttery aroma and a complex, developed taste despite being of short maturation. The Aliva smoked, originally a goats' cheese, though, now made with predominantly cows' milk is made with local dairies. It is a soft though dense, close-textured cheese with an acidic, buttery flavor and a delicate aftertaste left by juniper smoke. Quesucos are made not only in Liébana but throughout Cantabria, part of Asturias and in Las Encartaciones (Basque Country). They are simple little soft cheeses, pastoral in origin and with a straightforward honest flavor suggestive of cows' or mixed milks produced by fresh pasture grazing.

Soft creamy cheeses

Cantabria produces another cows' milk cheese which was awarded D.O. status in 1985. Known as Cantabria, or *queso de nata* (cream cheese) (see Spain Gourmetour Nº22), it is, as its name suggests, smooth and soft, melts on the palate and tastes strongly of fermented cream. It is made throughout the province by small-to-medium family dairies still working in a centuries-old tradition.

There is also a unique and incomparable cheese known as Garmillas, formerly called unpressed Pasiego'. It used to be made in the Pas Valley in the central eastern area of Santander, for the local market only, but its delicacy and short keeping capacity have caused it now to wane in popularity almost to the point of extinction. Nevertheless, anyone who can get to the area should be sure to try this flat, irregularly shaped disc with its fine rind patterned with the imprint of the *cerbellanes*, or twigs, on which the cheeses are aired. The flavor of this fatty, aromatic cheese is sweetish and complex, light but intense, fatty and aromatic,and it never fails to impress anyone remotely interested in cheese.

The cheeses produced in the Basque Country and Navarre (see last issue of Spain Gourmetour), are predominantly matured ewes' milk cheeses, sometimes smoked. Even so, in the areas around centers of population one can still get fresh cows' milk cheeses which are milky and gelatinous in appearance, vividly white and smooth and buttery in the mouth.

The Pyrenees: changing times

Throughout the central and eastern Pyrenees, both cows and sheep are kept as livestock. Until about a century ago, sheep constituted the majority, while cows were more multi-purpose beasts, kept for meat, milk and work. Urban growth during this century, increasing demand for dairy products (milk, cheese and butter), changes in eating habits and the super-abundance of grazing provided by this huge highland area have all contributed to the emergence of dairy cattle as a local specialization.

To deal with the volume of milk that needed processing, the first industrial dairies and the first dairy co-operatives were established in this area at the beginning of this century. Today, this area is a source of a huge range of cows' milk cheeses, from fresh to matured catering broadly for palate and price. Among the most noteworthy of them are cheeses from Benasque (Huesca Province), the Valle de Aran (Lerida), l' Alt Urgell-Cerdanya and Llivia (Gerona) and Selva. There are also new variants on the junket: like Mató and Recuit, traditional fresh cheeses of Catalan origin, nowadays made mainly with cows' milk.

Island cheeses

Off the Mediterranean coast of mainland Spain lie the Balearic Islands. Menorca, the northernmost and easternmost island of the whole archipelago, is the home of another traditional cows' milk cheese with a long pedigree: Mahón, which attained D.O. status in 1985 (see Spain Gourmetour No.19). Menorca is something of an exception in cheese-making terms. From autumn to late spring, the mild climate transforms this tiny island, just 700 km2 (270 square miles) and flat as a landing strip, into one huge verdant meadow of pasture and potential fodder. Dairy farming is one of the main occupations of the island, and its 600-plus farms (known locally as *llocs*) produce almost 5,000 tonnes a year of Mahón cheeses of many types and degrees of maturity. Some are artesan-made with intreated milk on the *llocs* themselves, and others with pasteurized milk in the several factories in the island's center, or used as the

EVERYTHING BUT THE ELEPHANT...

The twelfth-century castle of Peñafiel, in the heart of Ribera del Duero.

In 1501, the city of London enjoyed a week of festivities to celebrate the arrival of a Spanish Princess, who was to marry the King's brother.

Her name was Catherine, Infanta of Castile, and the locals turning out for the beer and fireworks in her honour were cheerfully convinced that they were going to the south-London district where she was staying to see the Elephant and Castle ...The rest is history.

Everyone knows the story, but how many know the Castile from which the Infanta took her title? There's not a lot in the way of elephants to be found here, but the historic countryside still has its share of castles, as well as the heritage of a thousand years of history provided by the Royal houses of León and Castile.

The river Duero flows through a lush green landscape of fertile soils and rolling hills under a crisp, alpine-blue sky. This is a land of wildflower meadows and sheep-farms as well as castles and kings, known as the breadbasket of Spain for its production of quality cereals...And soon to be known for another of its outstanding contributions to gastronomy: the wines of the Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero. The vine thrives in the chalk and sandstone soils here, at an altitude of 2,500 feet: the very limit at which grapes can be grown and ripened anywhere in Spain.

The high, cool spring, hot summer and autumn, and very cold winter ensure that only the healthiest vines survive to produce grapes, and the combination of freshness, acidity and ripeness of those grapes is unique in Spain, and the rest of the world. The vine is the Tinto Fino, or Tempranillo, which has evolved its own unique characteristics in this high Castilian plâteau – characteristics which have been much prized by those in power in the major cities of the region: Burgos, where El Cid launched his campaigns against the Moors; Segovia, where Isabella – mother of the Infanta Catherine – was proclaimed Queen; Valladolid, former capital of Spain and Soria, for many years the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain.

These proud Castilians demanded – and could afford – wines which matched their elevated tastes and the hearty foods which nature provided in such abundance.

In the countryside, too, people had a healthy thirst for good wine, and in almost every village you'll see *luceras* – strange towers like giant spears of petrified asparagus which stick up almost everywhere, between the houses and on the hillsides.

These provide light and fresh air for the labyrinthine cellars burrowed into the soft bedrock below, where every family, no matter how humble, would tread its ration of grapes and store their beloved product.

Add to this an explosion of new technology in the wineries, new ideas from young winemakers who are masters of their craft, and new investment in the land, and you'll understand why there's an atmosphere of excitement in Ribera del Duero.

The region's winemakers, the Consejo Regulador which polices the quality, and some pretty impressive international wine experts believe that one of the world's greatest wines is emerging here. You will, too.

It was, after all, good enough for the Infanta – and you can enjoy it with or without an elephant!

WINES FROM

SPAIN

66 CHILTERN STREET, LONDON W1N 1PR

Cow's milk Cheeses

basis for a high quality cheese spread popular throughout Spain.
Historical references to Mahón cheese can be found dating back to the Roman times but it was under the British, in the 18th century that Menorca's animal husbandry underwent the greatest changes. Dairy cows were introduced and farmers turned their attention to cheese producing on a scale that reached its peak this century.
Mahón cheese is made all over the island of Menorca. Its characteristic shape —a sort of rounded parallelpiped — derives from the knotted cotton cloth (or *fogasser*) in which the curds are molded and pressed. It is eaten both fresh and aged with the rind either left natural or oiled with paprika. The flavor is acidic, rich and individual, slightly salty and very readily palatable.
The neighboring island of Majorca produces its own cheese, very similar to Mahón, known as *Mallorquín*. In the old days, a pure ewes' milk cheese, also molded in a *fogasser*, a farmhouse cheese for local consumption, used to be made in Majorca. However, among the huge changes wrought in Majorca by the tourist boom was a hugely increased demand for cows' milk products, mainly liquid milk though cheese-making (now limited to the center of the island) was also affected..

Queso de Guia: the exception to the rule

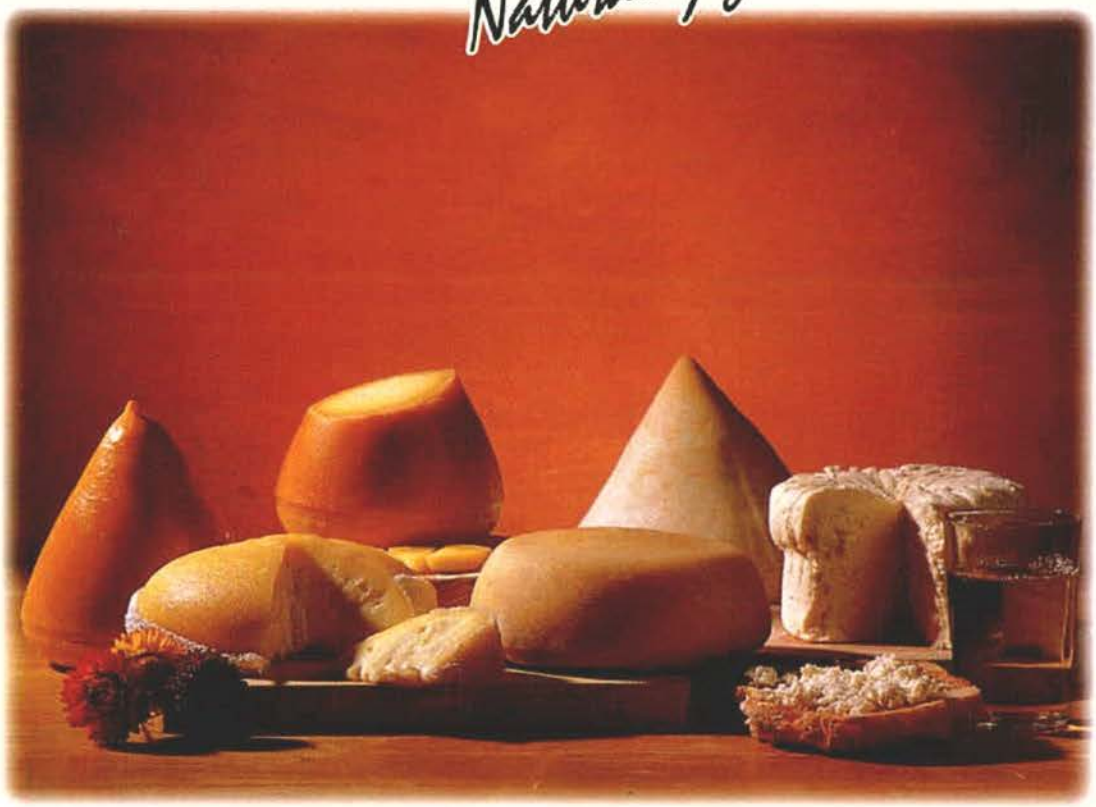
Another singular and atypical cheese, also an island product, comes from Guía in the northeast of Gran Canaria (Canary Island). The whole Canary archipelago is a big cheese producer and consumer, particularly of goats' cheese. Around Guía however, they use cows' milk mixed, from January to May with ewes'. The setting agent used can be animal or vegetable or a combination of the two. Farmhouse made on a very small scale, Guía cheese is hugely popular among Canary islanders for its fresh buttery flavor and acidic, buttery aroma.

Mixed-milk Cheeses

Over 50% of the cheese produced and eaten in Spain is made of cows', goats' and ewes' milk mixed in varying proportions and made into cylindrical shapes similar to a Manchego, short to medium-matured and defined as uncooked pressed cheeses. A glance at the window or display counter of any cheese shop will confirm that this type of cheese makes up about half the stock, alongside other more clearly identifiable cheeses, both Spanish and foreign. The price range spans the middle segment of the market.
This has been the case for the last 50 years and is reflected in the cheese-eating habits of most Spaniards today: nearly all of them will have eaten mixed-milk cheese at some time or another.
Every day, dairy products are delivered throughout the length and breadth of Spain. Often the product in question will be the type of milk needed to complete a mixed-milk cheese, according to the season of the year and the type of cheese to be made.
Cows' milk is the basic component of mixed-milk cheese, with goats' and ewes' milk being added in varying proportions according to the end product being aimed for. The more cow's milk it contains, the simpler and cheaper the cheese will be while the opposite is true of ewes' milk. What milk mixing achieves, in most cases, is an enhancement of character quality to approach what the average consumer likes and wants. This characteristic is peculiar to the domestic Spanish market and indeed of the export cheese market. Spain is the only EC country that produces continuous and plentiful supplies of the three types of milk required to make mixed-milk cheeses all the year round.
In general terms, cow's milk provides the necessary volume, the basic flavor, and the desired acid level in this type of cheese. Goats' milk contributes whiteness (cow's milk gives a yellow color) and a slightly piquant and acidic flavor. ewes' milk boosts flavor, body and butteriness, being rich in dry extract and fat content: the more ewes' milk it contains, the better the cheese.
With a view to imposing some order on this vast category, Spain's cheese-producers and the Ministry of Agriculture agreed on regulations and quality standards to govern three types of mixed-milk cheese: Hispánico, Ibérico and Mesta. They came into force in July 1987. Hispánico is made exclusively with ewes' milk (a minimum of 30% by volume) and cows' milk (a minimum of 50% by volume), with a minimum 55% of dry extract/45% fat content.
Ibérico is made with all three types of milk: cows' (a minimum of 50%), goats' (a minimum of 30%) and ewes' (a minimum of 10%). Dry extract and fat content/dry extract stipulations are similar to those of Hispánico.
Mesta is made with ewes' milk (a minimum of 75%), cows' (a minimun of 15%), and optionally, goats' (up to a maximum of 5%), with minimum dry extract at 55% and fat content/dry extract at a minimum 50%, given the high fat content of ewes' milk. Of these three types, Ibérico is the best-known and most widely produced and is the type closest to the general notion of a mixed-milk cheese. Flavorful and commercially successful, it is even exported abroad.

GALICIAN CHEESE

Naturally good



QUEIXO DE ARZUA

Lenticular or teat-shaped, made from whole cow's milk and animal rennet, with a ripening period of more than 15 days.
Smooth creamy paste without holes, thin yellow rind without mould.
Weight between 0,5 and 2,5 kilogrammes, with close to 45% fat content.

QUEIXO DE SAN SIMON

Shaped like something between a bullet and a spinning top, produced from cow' s milk, animal rennet and other coagulant enzymes. Minimum ripening period of 60 days. Semi- hard paste with a fine fatty texture and a hard yellow-ochre rind.
Fat content over 45% and weight variable between 0,8 and 1,5 kilogrammes for the normal kind, and between 150 and 300 grammes for the "Bufón" or Jester type.

QUEIXO TETILLA

Conical or convex-conical shape. Smooth paste cow' s milk cheese with a scrubbed rind and a minimum ripening period of 7 days.
The smooth, creamy and uniform paste has few holes regularly distributed and is white-ivory-yellowish in colour. The yellow rind is thin and elastic, without mould.
Mild, slightly acid aroma. Its weight varies between 0,5 and 1,5 kilogrammes.

QUEIXO DO CEBREIRO

Mushroom-shaped cheese made from cow' s milk, with a smooth paste and granulous texture.
It has a thin rind and is eaten fresh or slightly ripened.
The whitish paste is granulous, creamily smooth and melting on the palate. The rind is thin, firm and without mould, its colour varying from white to yellow.
Weight between 0,5 and 2 kilogrammes.

XUNTA DE GALICIA

CONSELLERIA DE AGRICULTURA, GANDERIA E MONTES

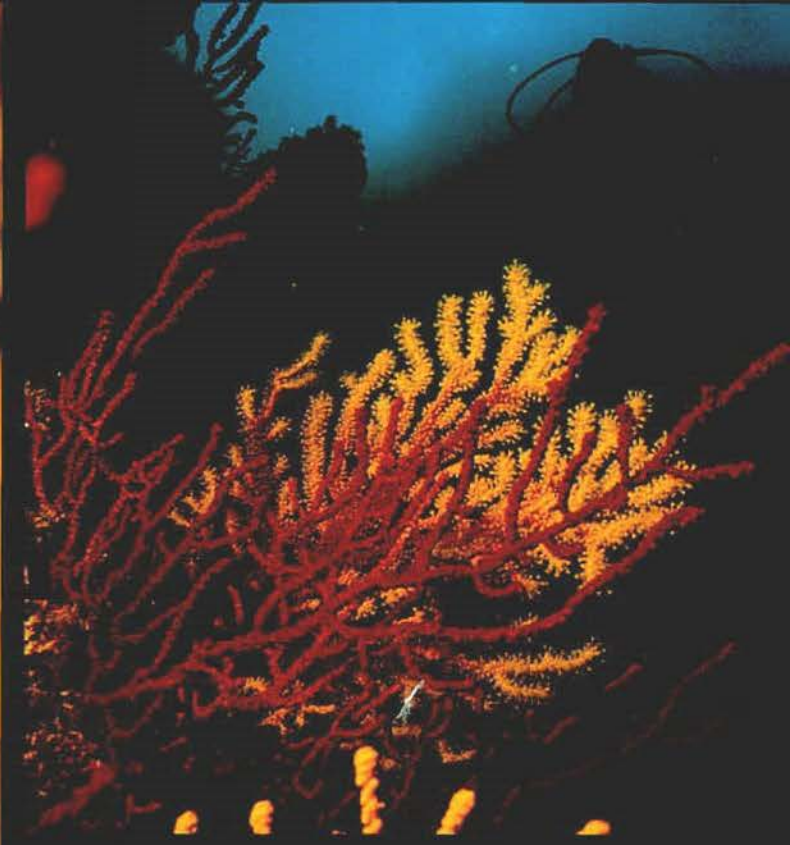
Sea anemone.
La Llosa, Benidorm

Text and photos: **Pilar Martínez and Rafael L. Bardají/ICEX**

in Spain

Astroides Calcycularis.
La Herradura, Granada.

Diving centers are dotted all along the Spanish coastline, especially on the Mediterranean shores and the islands.



Red coral and yellow gorgonians.
Meda Island.

Spain's 3,105 miles of coastline are one of her main assets. The Spanish fishing fleet last year brought in a catch weighing around 1,400,000 tons and tourists have been pouring in by the millions since the early sixties when the slogan "Spain is different" first began to rouse their curiosity. Although the majority spend every possible minute of their Spanish holiday on the beach, few of them ever swim more than a few yards out, and even fewer explore under the surface to discover the prolific underwater life and the innumerable shades of blue.

Sirius wreckage.
Bajo de Fuera, Cabo de Palos.

The practice of scuba diving is not new to Spain but only recently has there been any sort of infrastructure providing divers with equipment, air, boats and dive masters to help in their descents into the depths.
No longer do divers have to provide all their own equipment, with the heavy tanks and weights, the breathing apparatus and the inflatable boat. There is now a network of diving centers dotted along the coast guaranteeing that anyone interested can take the plunge under expert guidance with modern, well-kept equipment, all year round.
Perhaps no specific locations should be singled out because all the Spanish waters are rich in flora and fauna but there is no doubt that certain places have earned themselves a special reputation amongst divers. Here are just a few of them.

Barracudas.
Cabo de Palos, Murcia

The Spanish waters are rich in both fauna and flora, and it is hard to single out a specific location for divers.

Coral on the Meda islands

Probably the greatest dedication to diving in the whole of Spain is to be seen in L'Estartit in Gerona. Just a few hundred yards off its coast, the Meda islands are a paradise for divers. On the underwater slopes of the islands, yellow gorgonians and red coral await their visitors in a profusion of color that is difficult to match in Spain and throughout the Mediterranean.

A complex of underwater tunnels and caves, some of which cross the islands from one side to the other, also attract divers with a special interest in speleology. The Vaca or Delfin caves with their high roofs and columns filtering the blue light are a delight even for those not normally keen on closed spaces. A 60-meter boat was sunk intentionally in 1992 to provide extra excitement for those who enjoy exploring wrecks, and underwater photographers in the Meda islands find ample scope for their wide-angle lenses.

It is possible to dive here all year round although in winter the Tramontana winds may make some areas inaccessible and affect visibility. The experts say July is the month with the clearest waters.

L'Estartit has learned how to profit from its underwater riches by turning itself into a base for diving where at any time of day you may bump into divers in their wetsuits on their way down to the water's edge. A dozen centers guarantee enough air and boats for all, although at peak times (summer and long weekends) it is advisable to book. There are hotels to suit all pockets with mealtimes that adapt readily to diving hours.

Conger eels and morays in La Llosa (Benidorm)

Benidorm, with its long stretches of white sand, has always been a point of reference for summer tourists. Over recent years, thanks to the dedication of its diving center, it has become a popular year-round diving center including the island and an underwater island called La Llosa, the highest point of which is 36 feet below sea level.

La Llosa, with its gentle slope to the west and its vertical drop to the east is home to the most exuberant of sea life, both fauna and flora. There are few other places on the Spanish Mediterranean coast where you can be sure to find shoals of bream living in such crowded conditions. And nowhere else are the conger eels and morays so playful. Some divers find it thrilling to feed conger eels over 6 feet long. Others are happy just to watch the morays fighting over their ration of sardines. Close-up photography can catch fascinating scenes of tension.

The vertical east wall with a height of 82 feet leads down to small caves, the home of several groupers. Don Pepe, the best looking of the bunch came to be well known among divers until his untimely death at the hands of wretched underwater fishermen who took advantage of his sociability. But his place was soon taken by others and now the dive masters watch over the area as if it were a nature reserve.

Deeper down, at about 130 feet, a wall screens dozens of shy lobsters that show only their feelers in an area full of medium-sized yellow gorgonians known as La Llosa II. Diving is possible year round both on La Llosa and the island of Benidorm except for the period in early winter when those in charge at the diving center take their annual holidays but then the water is at its coldest and the weather is not so good.

Dives are either in the morning or the afternoon. We prefer late afternoon because the fish are livelier and are silhouetted against the light.

The lost ship cemetery: Cabo de Palos (Murcia)

Without a doubt, the most exciting place for a diver is the 'Bajo de fuera' or far-out shallows at the Cabo de Palos. This is a narrow underwater mountain rising up from a depth of 300 feet to 10 feet below the surface. It is now marked by a radio beacon warning ships of the danger but this wasn't always the case. Around this sharp needle of bare rock, the remains of at least five shipwrecks give testimony to its deadly existence.

The most famous of these was the Sirius, a steamship belonging to the Italian Shipping Lines and covering the route between Genoa and Buenos Aires. It sank on the afternoon of August 5, 1906 and only about half of its 700 passengers survived. The rock has been known since then as the "steamship rock". On the south face, a vertical wall over 160 feet high, lies a cargo ship named Cassenga with its keel facing upmost. Its bows crashed into the rock and it slid down the wall to the seabed. The sternpost with an enormous 4-bladed screw now lies at a depth of 145 feet amongst purple gorgonians and corallines. A few yards further north, the listing bows of another ship, the Plymouth, mark the site of rather too deep a descent. By following its hull we reached 230 feet but the shadow of the ship went yet deeper down into the darkest of the blue.

For nature-lovers, the Bajo de fuera, being far out and isolated from land, offers varied deep-sea fauna. In winter it is not unusual to meet spotted dolphins that sometimes like to play with the boats but it is in summer when the moonfish and barracudas make their presence felt. Turtles, breams, groupers and stockfish swim about, above innumerable octopuses and moray eels.

Diving here is not easy. If you want to visit the sunken ships, regular, long decompression periods are necessary and, because the area is usually crossed by strong currents, both the descent and the ascent are hard work. But it's worth it.

But there are other lovely parts of the Cabo de Palos that are suitable for divers of any level such as the Isla Hormiga, El Hormigon or the shallows closer to land. And along the coast there are many small, quiet bays with relatively shallow water that are sheltered from the open sea.

Three diving centers in Palos as well as an air compression station make diving possible all year round, although obviously the most popular season is the summer. Our experience, however, has been that the waters are at their clearest, albeit icy, in mid-winter.

The volcanoes of the Canary Islands

Although not part of the Iberian peninsula, these islands are undoubtedly Spanish. Each of the islands has its own distinct character and coloring, and the underwater scenery reflects these

Each of the Canary Islands has its own special characteristics and coloring and the underwater scenery reflects this variety.

The world's most civilized aperitif.

La Ina
DOMECQ

differences. There is enough to say about diving in the Canaries to fill a book because the clear waters of the Atlantic produce a thousand different sensations and each dive is memorable.
There are two main diving centers on the island of Gran Canaria: the Punta del Cabron, near the town of Arinaga, where a gully houses shoals of grunts that give way unwillingly to the passing divers. Gray and rather fierce-looking tiger moray eels fight over the food offered them. Sometimes, on the sandy white seabed 68 feet down rests an angel shark.
The Laja opposite Pasito Blanco is another must for visitors to the underwater world of Gran Canaria. This is a flat rock about 65 feet down that has become a coral reef inhabited by barracudas, tuna fish and thousands of grunts, in such quantities that they form whole walls of fish. In May we have even seen stingrays of considerable size.
However, if it's rays you're looking for, the place to go is the south of the island of Tenerife. At the entry to the port of Las Galletas, on the sandy seabed there are always about twenty medium-sized stingrays to be seen. When fed from the tourist submarine, it is quite spectacular to see how they glide and twist one after the other. Not at all camera shy, they are a feast for those with video cameras.
There is another center of attraction for divers in the south of Tenerife - a resident colony of pilot whales. Here a well-known diving center offers the possibility of snorkeling amongst them.
There are excellent diving centers on both the main islands as well as on some of the other islands of the archipelago (Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and El Hierro). Diving is possible all year round: the water is not very cold and the temperate tropical climate means that it is always possible to sunbathe after your dive.

The giant sea slugs of La Herradura (Granada)

About 50 miles from the snowy mountains of Sierra Nevada and south of the historic city of Granada is the bay of La Herradura. Sheltered by the Punta de la Mona and Cerro Gordo, it has several spots for very pleasurable dives. The seabed is half rock, half sand, so when there is a strong west wind, visibility is likely to be poor, but this is rare. Unusually large moonfish swim here amongst other more characteristic Mediterranean fauna and this alone would justify the dive for many people.
But what we like especially about La Herradura is the extraordinary number of sea slugs of all types, colors and sizes that are to be seen all around the rocky walls at the edges of the bay. Nowhere else in the Mediterranean have we seen such exotic specimens, worthy of any tropical reef.
At the furthest limits of Cerro Gordo the rock opens up 40 feet down to form a wide, arched cave.
The diving center at La Herradura is open all year round and offers two dives a day, plus one at night. There are plenty of hotels locally and some culinary surprises that are well worth trying.
Taken together, the places described cover just a few miles of the Spanish coastline. There are many more all along the coasts, especially on the Mediterranean shores and the islands. We have described just a small sample of what is to be found beneath the Spanish seas that so often are contemplated only from a deckchair.
But there is plenty more. There are few seaside villages, hotels or residential estates that cannot offer scuba diving or at least recommend somewhere to go. And there are the crystalline waters of the Balearic Islands, the clear blue of the Cabo de Rosas and the Costa Brava, the sunken galleons of Vigo, the strong currents at the Strait of Gibraltar, the rich, untamed waters of the Cantabrian sea ..., all waiting to be discovered. Have a good dive!

Rafael L. Bardají *and* ***Pilar Martínez*** *are* ***PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors)*** *instructors in recreational diving and technical diving instructors for the International Association of Nitrox Technical Diving (IANTD). They have each made over 1,000 dives and are specialists in underwater filming and photography. They are both members in Spain of DEEP SUB.*

DIVING CENTERS RECOMMENDED BY THE AUTHORS

Meda Islands (Gerona):
Estartit Sub/Hotel Les Illes
C/ Illes 55
Tel: (72) 75 82 39

Benidorm (Alicante):
Club Poseidon
C/ Santander s/n, edificio Silvya,
Playa de Poniente
Tel: (6) 585 32 27

Cabo de Palos (Murcia):
Centro Islas Hormigas
Paseo de la Barra 15
Tel: (68) 14 55 30

La Herradura (Granada):
Centro Granada SUB
Paseo Andrés Segovia 6
Tel: (58) 82 79 44

Gran Canaria:
Angel Duran's SUN SUB
Playa del Inglés
Tel: (28) 76 16 50

Tenerife:
Coral Sub
Ten Bel Hotel Park
Tel: (22) 73 00 60

Fuerteventura:
Diving Center Corralejo
Corralejo
Tel: (28) 86 62 43

Bodegas Bilbainas, S.A.

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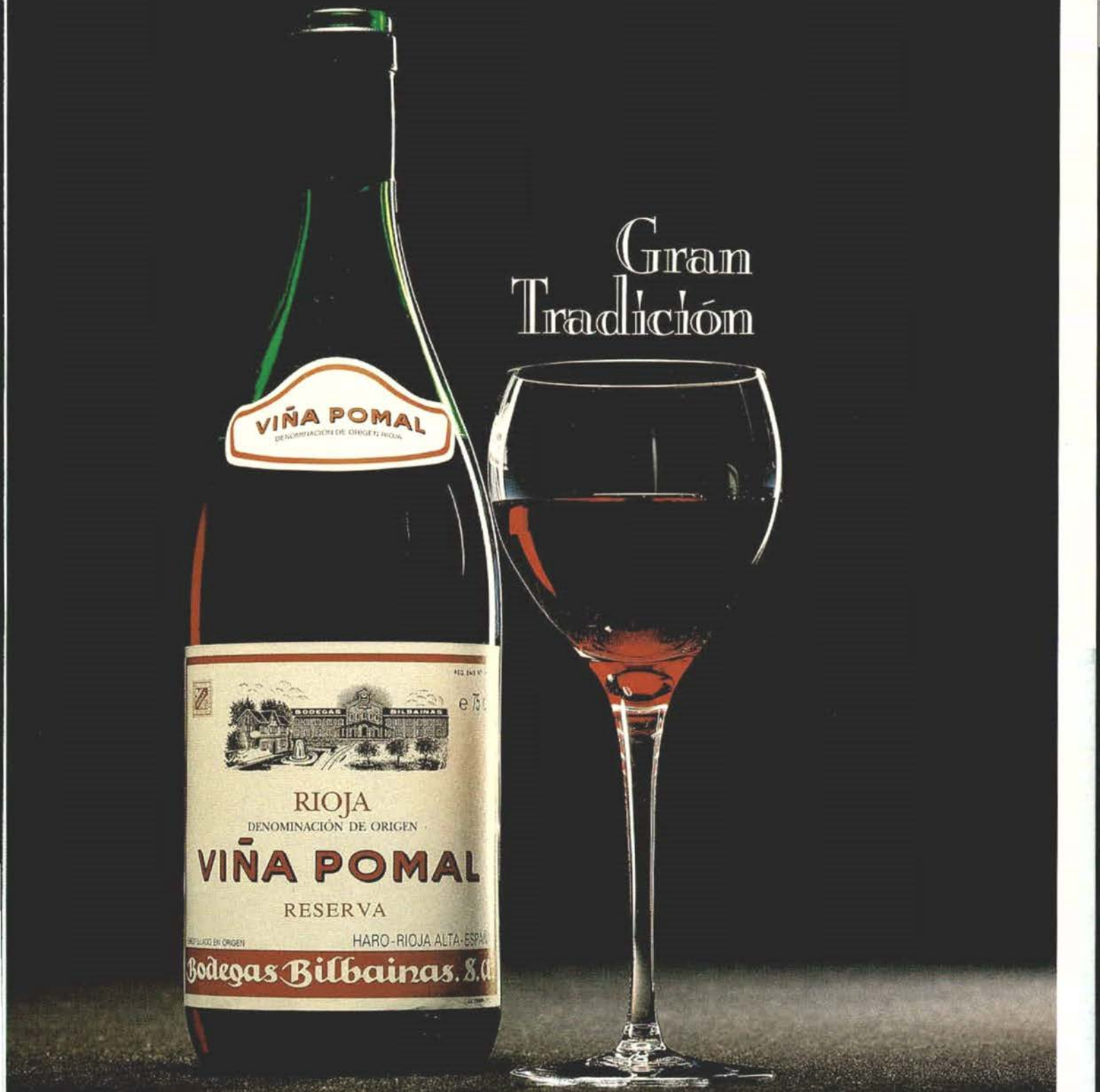


ESPAÑA
Dpt. Comercial - Fax: (94) 415 00 59

LONDON
Deinhard & Coltd. - Fax: 44-71-261 95 69

NEW YORK
Vintwood International Ltd. - Fax: 516-424-97 49

In the mid-1980's Swiss businessman Rudolf Staab bought a large estate in the rolling hills of inland Andalusia. First he built a big house and, as the house grew bigger, he turned it into a most unusual, luxurious and enchanting hotel. Even more stunning than the hotel complex itself is the vast natural setting that surrounds it.

The film *Out of Africa* starts with the camera panning the wonderous, wild grasslands of the veld and with Meryl Streep, playing the Danish writer Karen Blixen, saying "I had a farm in Africa." If this article were a movie it would start with scenic shots of the holm oaks that punctuate the Mediterranean uplands and with Swiss businessman Rudolph Staab saying "I have a hotel in Andalusia."

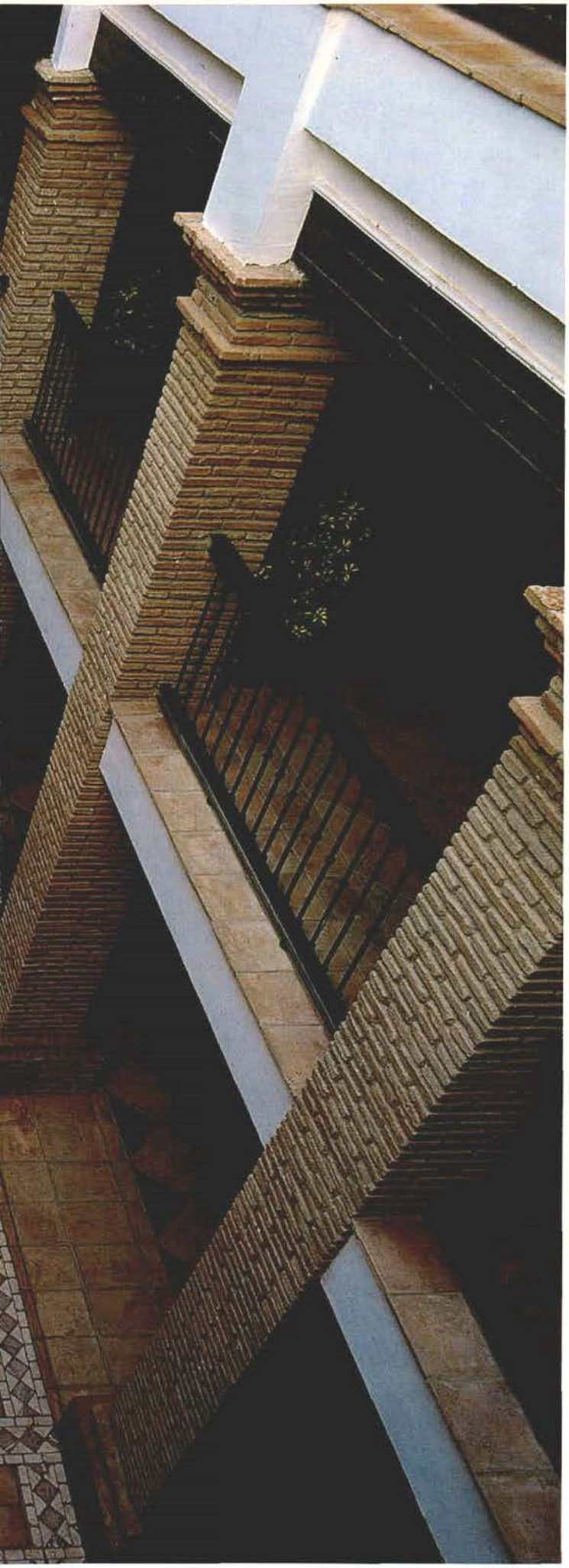
La Bobadilla is Staab's dream come true and fortunately nobody needs a cinema-goer's imagination to share it. It is, strictly speaking, a hotel because it has a reception desk where you are politely given the key to your room and it has all the other fittings of such establishments, extremely luxurious ones as it happens for it is a very luxurious hotel. But La Bobadilla is a lot more than that.

It is certainly the stuff of romance and fantasy, just as romantic and fantastic as the real life African stories that Blixen wrote up under the pen name of Isak Dinesen. If there is another hotel set in the middle of a beautiful nowhere that has a building styled as a 16th century Spanish colonial church with the finest pipe organ that money can buy inside it, I don't know about it. Grand Luxe hotels come two a penny and several hundred dollars a night.

LA BOBADILLA

A DREAM IN ANDALUSIA

Text : **Tom Burns**
Photos:: **Juan Ramón Yuste/ICEX**



The hotel rooms are quite brilliant and all share the elegant, simple taste of Andalusian decor at its best.

La Bobadilla is Grand Luxe all right, although it is "Spanish expensive" as opposed to "international expensive" and therefore it does not belong to the "if you ask how much, you can't afford it" bracket. It is exclusive not for the wrong super pricey-type reasons but for all the right sort of reasons, starting with the fact that it has cast itself in a special category of its own making.

A SPECIAL KIND OF LUXURY.

The hotel can genuinely be said to stand alone in its class because Staab and the Andalusian countryside have between them put together an utterly unique environment, a framework if you like, that will restore the body, mind and soul of the most jaded individual.

Luxury is an often abused, catch-all word that means different things to different people. Fine foods and wines, great rooms, exquisite service, lots of extras, attention to detail - yes, La Bobadilla has all of that by the shovelful and I will come to it in a moment. The point is that there is a lot more to it in Staab's hotel than all of those conventional prestige items put together.

I began to understand La Bobadilla's special brand of luxury when I walked across the whitewashed patio to my room and met the goldfinches head on. The sight of them was every bit as fantastic and romantic as the pipe organ.

There were two goldfinches and each was incubating its eggs in intricately woven nests that were very visible at eye level among the slender branches of a couple of cyprus tree saplings. These gorgeous little birds, that Spaniards call *jilgueros*, are invariably caged for they are prized for their song as much, or more, as are canaries.

Spotting the nests I remembered the poet William Blake's lines: "A canary singing in a cage/ Sets all heaven in a rage." Heaven must be smiling down on La Bobadilla where goldfinches nest and trill in freedom alongside hotel guests. What an extraordinarily benign peace must reign here, I

The framework offered by La Bobadilla will restore the body, mind and soul of the most jaded individual.

thought to myself, as I took possession of my room.
It was late evening and I took a walk before dinner. The magic of the place continued to hit all my senses. Early the next morning, I took another long walk and it happened all over again. You can keep your jacuzzis and your vintage wines, I told myself; give me the goldfinches and these walks, the sort of luxuries that mere money just can't buy.

A WALK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

La Bobadilla is set in its own very large estate, an undulating countryside of valleys and gentle hills that stretches as far as the eye can see to distant, lonely farmhouses. Straight east, out of view and 70 kilometers (43 miles) away, lies Granada, the most hauntingly beautiful of all Spain's strong collection of historic cities. What you do see from La Bobadilla is the towering Sierra Nevada, the snow-capped mountain range that rises up behind Granada.
I was not trekking, Boy Scout-style, around the estate. In my case the walks were leisurely ambles along marked bridlepaths using a well designed map of the estate that I had picked up at the reception desk. Had I wanted, I could have asked the concierge to fix me up with a horse or with a mountain bike and with a picnic hamper. I could also have jogged around the network of paths and no doubt there are athletic guests of La Bobadilla who pant their way through the poppy fields that dye the estate's valleys.
Ambling through this Andalusian *Bosque Mediterráneo* - a term which is somewhat of a misnomer for the Mediterranean "forest" consists of low-lying southern oaks, cork and ilex trees and open scrub country of cistus, wild rhododendrons and hollyhocks - amounts to an extraordinary communion with nature.
The earth moves in La Bobadilla's estate because it must have a million and one rabbits darting about its shrubs and boulders. Every so often there is a big, dark and darting shadow in the middle distance and you know you have sighted a wild boar. And then there

LA BOBADILLA

are the birds. The goldfinches in the patio were a preview to the giant aviary that lies beyond the hotel's immediate confines. The estate hosts a bird song symphony orchestra.

A NON-GHETTO SITUATION.

The breeze, for this is upland country, is light and translucent in the early mornings as the dew still clings to the canopy of wildflowers. In the late evening the breeze is heavier and thick with the scent of thyme, rosemary and marjoram. The breeze, the bird song and the cicadas serve to accentuate the stillness of the atmosphere. Well after dawn had broken, roosters continued to break that quiet every so often as they crowed their cockiness to each other across the still sleepy valleys.

Frank Pfaller, La Bobadilla's vice president and managing director, is a hotelier who has run millionaire bolt holes in the Caribbean and in most other choice locations around the globe. He made what I thought was a very good point when he said that La Bobadilla is not "a ghetto situation" as are so many luxurious watering holes elsewhere in the world.

"You have all the luxury you can ask for here in the hotel but when you walk out of it you are not hit by horrible reality," said Pfaller. He is absolutely right. La Bobadilla is a magnificent hotel that gives out onto even more magnificent nature.

When you are a guest of La Bobadilla, you end up interacting with unique natural surroundings even if you are the grayest of stressed-out urban dwellers who cannot tell a wild rose from a thistle. The hotel's style is one of deliberate understatement, an attitude which has always been the classiest act of the lot. "We lay on all the usual luxuries," Pfaller said, "but we use them in an unusual way." How are the luxuries used or rather not used? Pfaller used a zany, newspeaky turn of phrase: "we don't animate their use."

WINING AND DINING.

You don't have to use the superbly equipped fitness room with its menacing muscle-mincing machines and I didn't. You don't have to saddle up one of the handsome horses in the hotel's stables and I wished I had brought my boots with me and done so. I didn't have a massage, although that was also available, but I did sweat out the city smog I had brought with me in the sauna.

I ate and drank, of course, and very well too. The main restaurant, called La Finca, forms an outhouse of the main complex and it rivals in its inventiveness, presentation and wine cellar, any one of Spain's top two dozen restaurants.

La Finca has a possible edge in the haute cuisine stakes because it uses the herbs and the organic vegetables that are lovingly grown on the estate. I saw the vegetable garden on one of my walks and its products tasted as good as they looked.

The Cortijo restaurant that extends out onto the little Andalusian plaza by the main entrance to the complex is a less sophisticated sort of place and recreates the warmth of an attentive *tapa* bar. Past the little plaza, with its bouganvilla climbers, its roses and its jasmine creepers you can wind your way down to a third resturant, a barbecue overlooking the pool.

Here, in a Shangri-La, beachcomber atmosphere, by palm trees and among more roses and climbers, the art of making brimming jugs of white and red sangria reaches new and previously unexplored heights. Sangria, of either color, is the last word in fruit-laden wine cups; by La Bobadilla's pool it is served to accompany marinated grills and help-yourself, eat-me salads.

The swimming pool is more exactly a mini-lake, open from April to October, that comes complete with a fountain, set on a rocky island, that spurts a jet of water up into the sky. The immense lawn that surrounds the pool is suitably studded with couches for sun worshipers.

FELLOW GUESTS.

I saw nobody at all when I went on my walks and if there were celebrities in the Finca restaurant or soaking up a tan by the poolside I didn't spot them. But there were probably all sorts of famous and powerful people for La Bobadilla has become an open secret among glamour magazine favorites and it was certainly doing good business when I was there.

Curious about this who-am-I-staying-with celebrity angle I did obtain a list of some past guests from the unfailingly helpful reception desk. Stars of the *paparazzi*-pursued bunch, headed by the likes of Mr Tom Cruise, had, as expected, put in an appearance at La Bobadilla in order, presumably, to get a bit of peace and quiet. The Americans I came across during my stay seemed to me to be much closer to Wall Street than to Hollywood.

The top national contingent of La Bobadilla fans turned out to be Spaniards, headed by King Juan Carlos who apparently pops in when he is within range of the hotel. Germans on the guest of honor list, I learned, ranged from the late Willy Brandt to a grandson of the last Kaiser. Germans formed the biggest national contingent after the Spaniards and after them, came the Britons.

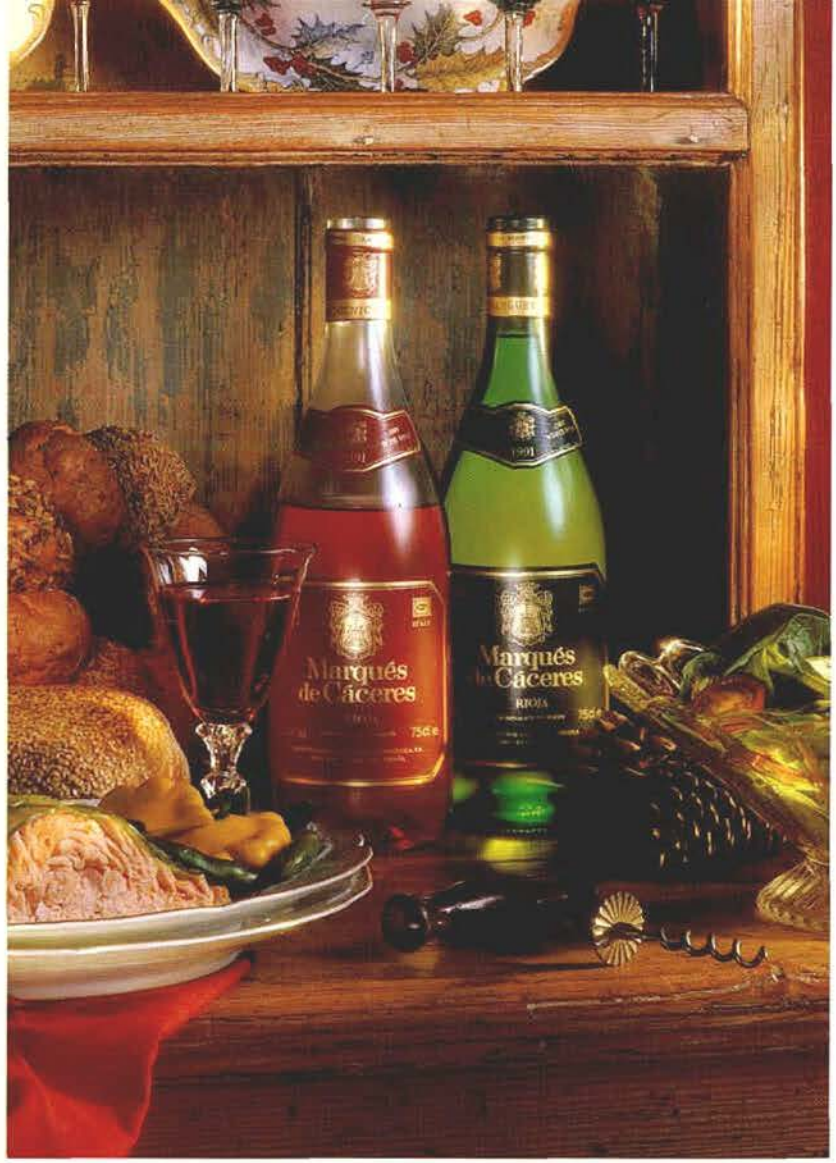
I was told later, by friends from London, that Prince Charles had become such a regular at La Bobadilla during his frequent private visits to the nearby estate owned by the Duke of Wellington that the hotel had acquired a special dinner set for his use engraved with the Prince of Wales' three-feathered crest.

It would not have been in the least bit surprising to come across the heir to the British throne somewhere along one of the bridlepaths, working away at the spring-flowered landscape with his watercolors.

Germans and Britons, in particular, can be counted upon to go mad over the joys that La Bobadilla's estate affords

SPANISH SECRETS

For a delicious Spanish wine with more than a hint of French flavour, try Marqués de Cáceres Rioja



SERVING TIPS

- Serve both white and rosé Riojas lightly chilled; an hour or so in the fridge should suffice (much longer and the wine will be numbed and flavourless).
- Red Rioja should be served cool. It does not need decanting, as there should be no sediment in the bottle.
- White or rosé Rioja make a great choice for a cold buffet. Both complement cold meat, fish and salads. Versatility is one of their characteristics – they are also excellent aperitifs.
- Red Rioja is at its best with hot buffet dishes or red meat.

In 1970 Henri Forner, the founder of Bodegas Marqués de Cáceres, began a revolution in Spain's celebrated wine region – Rioja. For generations, the Forner family have been dedicated to wine production, but at the start of the Spanish Civil War they moved to France, working in a variety of regions before settling in Bordeaux where they bought Chateau Larose-Trintaudon and Chateau Camensac, Grand Cru Classé.

A French accent

During their 35 years in France they established a reputation for producing some of the finest wines in the region, learning new techniques of vinification. Here they decided that the future lay in quality wines. So when in 1970 Henri Forner felt it was time to return to Spain he took with him one single objective – to produce the very finest Rioja wines, applying his Bordelais experience to his home country.

To achieve this he enlisted the support of a group of professionals including Professor Emile Peynaud, a leading consultant and guru of the Bordeaux wine trade.

Regional flavour

The vineyards of Rioja are broadly divided into three regions, Rioja Alavesa, Rioja Alta and Rioja Baja. It's believed that the Rioja Alta vineyards produce the finest wines and it is here, at Cenicero, that Henri Forner founded his bodega.

While most Riojas are a blend from all three regions, Marqués de Cáceres has adopted a Chateau system, selecting the best vineyards around the bodega which are planted with mainly older vines. As a result, the wines have a distinct and consistent character with a certain finesse.

Traditionally all Riojas, be they white, red or rosé, are aged for several months, if not years, in American oak barrels – with an additional period of ageing in the bottle. The result is a Crianza (oak-aged) wine with a heavy body and strong oaky flavour.

Dramatic changes

Henri Forner enriched Rioja's best traditions using his long professional experience acquired in France. All the wines are fermented under strict temperature control to preserve the grape's fruity character. All the red wines, as well as a limited production of an excellent Crianza white wine, are aged in French oak. The time spent ageing in the bottle has been increased to produce rounder, lighter wines which have lost the marked oaky character, in order to maintain a perfect balance between the fruit and delicate vanilla tones from the oak.

But it is with white wines that he has really achieved a dramatic transformation. The use of cold fermentation and the selection of only one grape variety, the Viura, produces a fresh and fruity wine with lively acidity. The rosé is made with equal care and similar technique, resulting in a fresh strawberry flavour with a rich bouquet. Many other bodegas have followed Henri's example, but Marqués de Cáceres remains one of Spain's leading wine producers.

Photographs/Gus Philgate Home Economist/Liz Trigg Stylist/Maria Jacques

to the nature lover, to the serious botanist and to the keen ornithologist. If you can sketch and watercolor such beauties, or just take good photographs, so much the better.

A place like La Bobadilla is geared to take in all types and of course it does. There is a group of very high-minded Germans, for example, that turns up at the hotel every so often to play the complex's extraordinary organ. The impressively big pipe organ is housed in a free-standing building, across the plaza, that was built to look like a chapel and to serve as a conference center if so required. A Bach appreciation society could not dream up a more exotic spot in which to pay homage to their master.

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN.

Those of us who cannot claim such exquisite enthusiasms simply go to La Bobadilla to switch off entirely. If a string quartet happens to be playing on an evening in one of the patios so much the better and if there is no such special event there are always the goldfinches.

The hotel rooms, where you finish off your day of differing sensations, are, as you might expect, quite brilliant. No two are the same and if one has a sunken bath, another has a curious split level and each and every one of them has several eye-catching antique details of its own. All are large and roomy and have huge and comfortable beds. And all share the elegant, simple taste of Andalusian decor at its best.

The interiors rely heavily on whitewash and terracotta, tiles, wrought iron-work and age-darkened wooden beams and doors. La Bobadilla's interior decorators obviously scoured Andalusia, searching out artisans from Seville to Granada and back again to come up with what they wanted.

There is superlative craftsmanship, some but by no means all of it very old, in the glazed pottery, the pewter mirrors and the brass lamps. Above all there is the harmony that is the mark of genius-level design.

La Bobadilla, built around its patios, shimmering with the water from its fountains and from the water ducts that score its flagstones, has all the cool, quiet intimacy of an Andalusian *pueblo*, all the mystery of Granada's ancient Albaycin quarter.

One has to hand it to Staab and his hotel. With the beautiful individuality of La Bobadilla's rooms he has given his guests something that will always belong to them for they can always return to a welcome.In the same "I had a farm in Africa" mode, you can say "I have a room in Andalusia."

Tom Burns *writes for London's* Financial Times *and is an associate editor of* Lookout.

Spanish Masterpieces

GONZALEZ BYASS

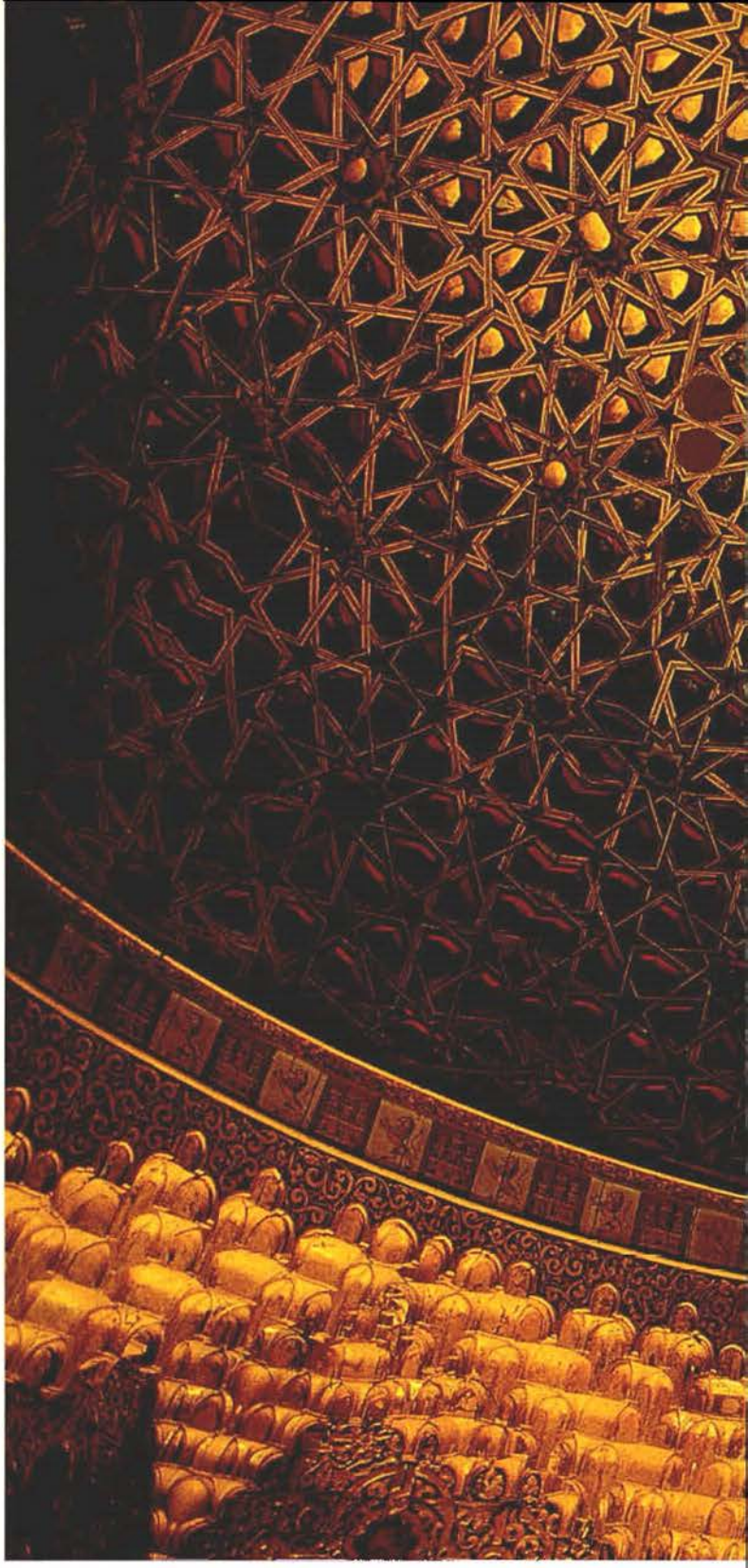
SHERRY & BRANDY

Producto de ESPAÑA Jerez - Xérès - Sherry

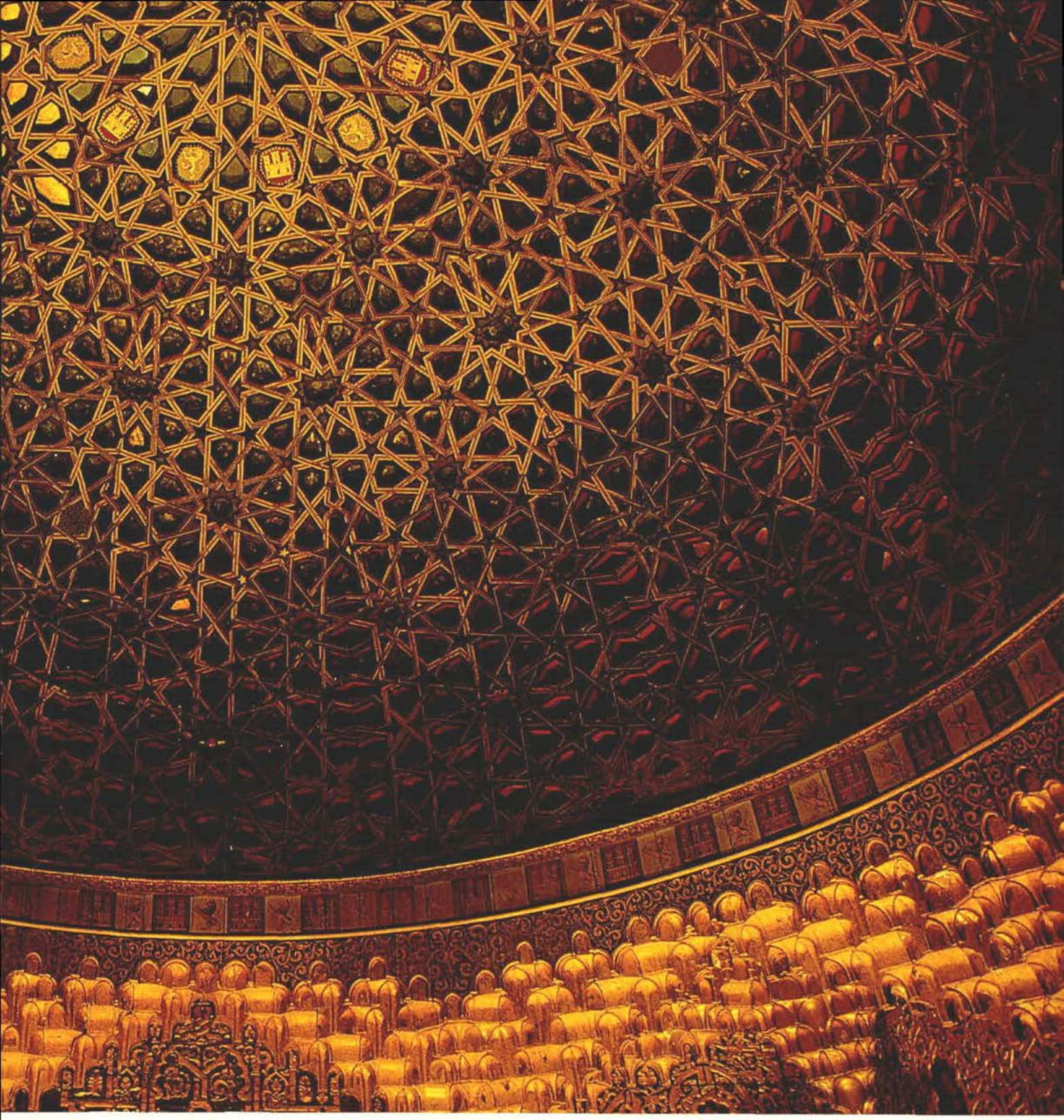
CITY CASTLES

Text: **Meg Campbell**
Photos: **Felix Lorrio/Patrimonio Nacional**

Moslem caliphs constructed the Royal Palace of the Almudaina in Majorca and the Royal Alcazar of Seville many centuries ago, and Spanish monarchs later took them over to use as royal quarters. Both are still in use today, serving as residences for Spain's royal family in their travels south or to the Balearic Islands. The palaces are noted for their outstanding architecture, and a visit through their rooms bring to life the royal dynasties that reigned in Spain and changed the course of many a country's history.



The original Royal Alcazar of Seville dates from 913 and is used today by the royal family during its visits to the city.



After the conquest of Seville in 1248, the christian kings established their residence at the Alcazar, contracting *mudejar* artisans to rebuild it.

In the 16th century Seville, port and doors of the New World, was one of the most prosperous commercial centers of the Old World.

The Royal Alcazar has been the site of some of the most important episodes in the history of the New World.

The members of Spain's royal family —King Juan Carlos, Queen Sofía, and their children, Prince Felipe and Princesses Elena and Cristina— take a break each summer from heavy schedules of studies, work and official activities to retreat to the Mediterranean island of Majorca for a peaceful vacation of sun, swimming and sailing. In the weeks before the royal family's arrival, the staff of the Royal Palace of the Almudaina work feverishly to prepare the thousand-year-old alcazar, for even though the family will live in the nearby Marivent palace, the Almudaina will host several days of photo sessions, receptions and dinners.

The Almudaina, overlooking the bay in the island's capital of Palma, is exceptionally well-suited for these events, making a handsome and historic backdrop for the summer galas attended by the island's VIPs and aristocracy.

The Alcazar's location is strategic, set in the center fo Seville and close to the Guadalquivir river, where traffic was heavy during the height of the discovery of the Americas.

The palace is the oldest of Spain's royal sites, and is in remarkable shape for its ten centuries. It has in fact benefitted from King Juan Carlos' choice of Majorca as a summer retreat, say officials from Spain's National Patrimony, the organization charged with managing and preserving the royal properties. Until recent years, the Almudaina was less used than some of the other royal sites, because until the advent of airplanes, travel to the islands was less attractive to monarchs and their families. It has thus suffered from neglect and, particularly in the 19th century, from renovation free-for-alls that destroyed many of the palace's most valuable elements.

Moslem to Medieval

The Almudaina of today is a sprawling complex of wings, walls and towers, the result of centuries of changes to the original structure. Many new rooms were tacked on over the years, others were divided, while still others were eliminated, making for a most original ar-

King Carlos V used the palace in his attack on Algeria.

The Almudaina, close to the cathedral of Palma de Mallorca, was built in the 10th century on high ground from where you could observe enemies at sea.

"There is nothing so irregular, so uncomfortable or so savagely medieval than this lordly abode" wrote the French writer Georges Sand, after staying on the island with Chopin.

The Almudaina, in disuse for over three centuries,hosts several days of photo sessions, receptions and dinners during Spains' royal family summer retreat.

chitectural hodgepodge. "There is nothing so irregular, so uncomfortable or so savagely medieval than this lordly abode", remarked the French writer George Sand in her book of travels, *A Winter in Majorca*, "but there is also nothing so arrogant, so characteristic, or so noble as this mansion of galleries, towers, terraces, and arches one upon the other, all crowned by a gothic angel, which, from the bosom of the clouds, contemplates Spain across the sea."

Built in the tenth century as a Moslem fortress and palace, the Almudaina began as a simple rectangular building with a tower at each corner and another in the center of the north wall, explains Juan Hernández, an architect of the National Patrimony, pointing to a drawing dated the 10th century. High walls enclosed the palace and its gardens, and to the south, held back the sea. A large archway built into this wall allowed the Caliphs' ships to sail directly into palace grounds.

"Apart from its age and its architecture, the most spectacular thing about the palace is its strategic positioning", says Hernández. From the palace, on high ground and on the edge of the bay, the Caliphs' soldiers could easily observe enemies approaching from many miles away.

The Arabs were not the first to take advantage of the site, Hernández notes. Renovations have revealed walls built by Romans, who inhabited the island until the middle of the 5th century.

The Christian king Jaime I conquered the island of Majorca in 1229, expelling the Moslems and taking over the Almudaina as his residence. The palace would serve several generations of kings looking to establish a Majorcan kingdom independent from Spain.

These kings made a number of changes to the palace, such as the addition of the Tinell, a great hall that originally served as the throne room.

In medieval times, the king and queen led separate lives, explains Bartolomé Mayol, one of the guides of the Almudaina. Thus, the original structure built by the Moslems was converted into the king's portion of the palace, while a new building was added to serve as the queen's palace. The two areas met at the baths, built in Arabic style, with domed ceilings and space under the floors for the fires that would fill the rooms with steamy heat.

Another important element added in medieval times was the Chapel of Santa Ana, which served to divide one large courtyard into two, one for the king and one for the queen. A relic in the chapel holds the bones of a Roman saint, Saint Práxedes.

A palace forgotten

The Majorcan dynasty was short-lived, however, when the island was conquered in 1349 by the rulers of the kingdom of Aragon and Catalonia. Some decades after the conquest, King Juan I of Aragón found himself hard-pressed for funds to finance his sumptuous court. He installed in the central tower of the king's palace an alchemist, who worked diligently for years trying to discover the formula for making gold. He failed, naturally, and escaped the king's wrath only through the intervention of the queen.

The tower where he labored is known as the Tower of the Angel, due to the weathervane in the shape of the angel Gabriel at the top. Fishermen today still look to the angel to check the direction of the wind, says Bartolomé Mayol.

After Majorca lost its bid for independence, the palace fell into disuse by the royal families, and in fact, not a single monarch visited the Almudaina from 1541, when King Carlos V used the palace in his attack on Algeria, to the late 1800s, with the visit of Queen Isabel II.

The palace was put to other uses, however. For example, King Felipe II installed several governmental organisms, and in doing so completely renovated the vast throne room, dividing it into two floors and a number of different rooms. The island's military forces were also lodged in the palace, and they continue there today, occupying what was originally the queen's palace.

The modern-day Almudaina

The palace is decorated with fine pieces that come from the National Patrimony's collection, in particular a number of outstanding tapestries from the 16th and 18th centuries. There are excellent examples of the French and Spanish empire styles of furniture and Isabelina furniture. There are also remnants of the palace's Moslem inhabitants, such as painted ceilings and a large bronze faucet that fit into a stone fountain.

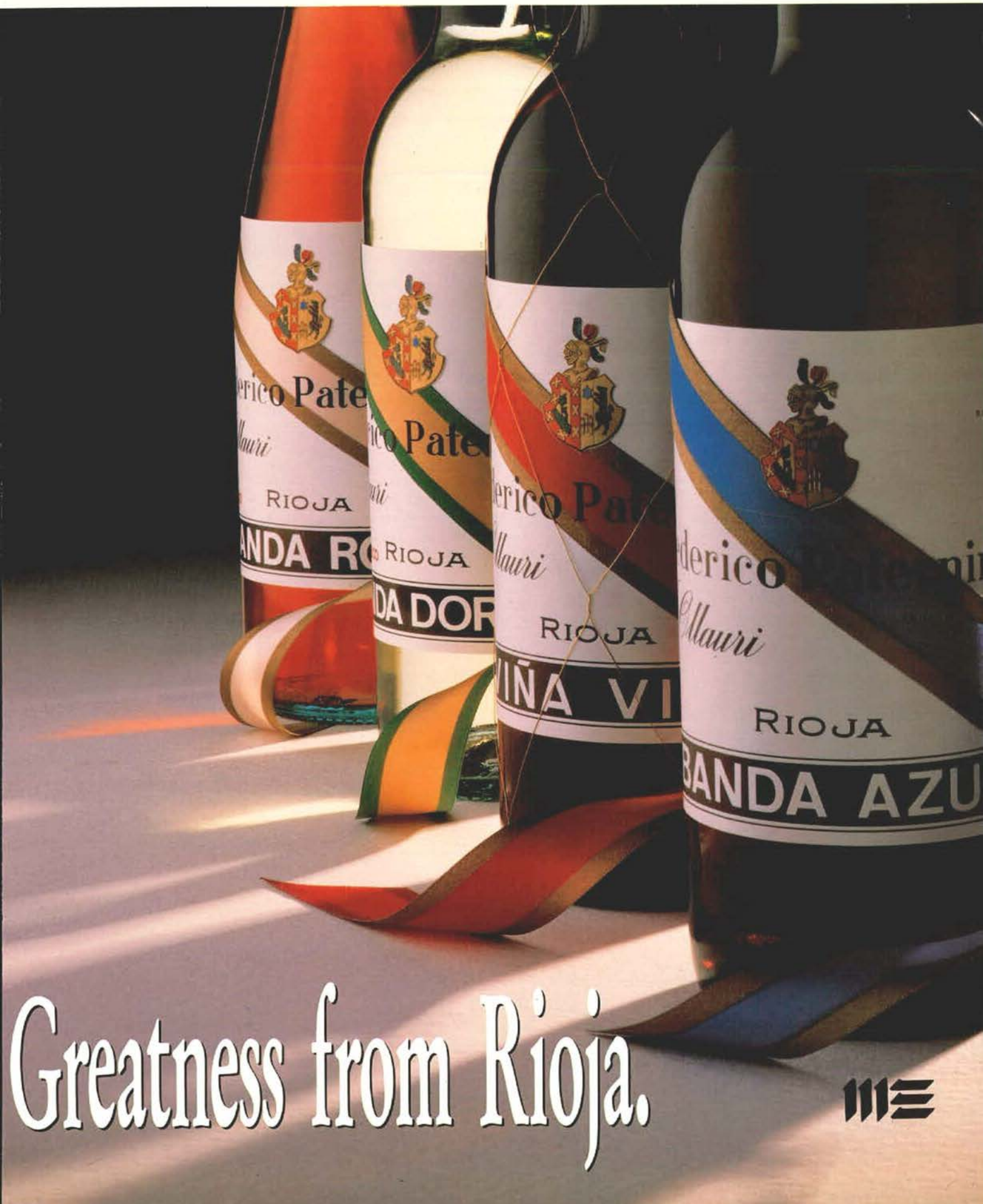
Nevertheless, the decoration doesn't have much to do with the palace itself, says Ana García, the curator of the Almudaina, due to the fact that after medieval times, the palace was seldom used until recent years. "Hundreds of years went by between the monarchs that really used the palace", explains García, so there is no decoration that belongs to it".

The palace was redecorated and new pieces added in the mid-eighties, when King Juan Carlos chose Majorca as the family's summer residence. Rooms upstairs in what was originally the palace of the king serve as the King's and Queen's offices, where they receive visitors.

Across the narrow cobbled street from the Almudaina is the city's cathedral, a great Gothic structure built from the 13th through the 16th century. The number and size of its windows make it the most luminous of Mediterranean cathedrals.

The area around the palace and cathedral, known in arabic times as Medina

Paternina



Greatness from Rioja.

All the coins minted in Seville during the 16th century bore the imperial emblem which soon became the symbol of money in Spanish America and eventually turned into today's dollar sign.

Mayurka and later as the *barri gotic* (Gothic neighborhood) is a tight tangle of narrow winding streets dotted with homes and churches dating back as far as the 14th century. Today, many house art galleries and other upscale boutiques which attest to Palma's reputation as a cosmopolitan haven for tourists, jet setters and shoe shoppers. The island itself is an immensely popular vacation spot for Europeans, and since the early 1800s, a favorite hideaway for artists and writers, from Frederic Chopin to Robert Graves.

Seville's royal Alcazar: a *mudejar* jewel

Far from the Balearic Islands is another exotic palace with its own rich history and architecture: The Royal Alcazar of Sevilla. High ceilings, intricately carved arches, multi-colored tile mosaics, fountains, courtyards and some of the finest gardens in Spain all combine to form truly palatial surroundings that today serve as a royal residence, but also as a retreat for all *sevillanos*, who are encouraged to stroll the grounds and learn about the role that this jewel of *mudejar* architecture has played in the history of the world.

"The port and door to the New World"

The Alcazar's location is strategic, set in the center of Seville and close to the edge of the Guadalquivir River, a navigable river with easy access to the Atlantic Ocean. During the height of the discovery of the Americas, traffic on the river was heavy with Spanish galleons leaving on adventures and returning laden with the exotic goods of the New World. Seville in these years became the focal point of Europe. Called the *puerto y puertas*, port and doors, of the New World, it was quickly converted into one of the Old World's most prosperous and influential commercial centers.

The Alcazar was a logical protagonist as the residence of the Spanish monarchs who were financing and benefitting from these enterprises. "The Royal Alcazar has been the site of some of the most important episodes in the history of the New World", says José María Cabeza, director of Seville's City Hall's administration of the Royal Alcazar, leading the way to the Casa de Contratación, the House of Contracts. This office, in a building adjoining the Alcazar, was established by Queen Isabel the Catholic in the early 1500s. Here, some of the most well-known enterprises to the Americas were planned, says Cabeza, including Columbus' second journey, and Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe.

On one of the walls hangs the painting *Virgen de los Mareantes* by Alejo Fernández, the first depiction in Europe of the discovery of America, says Cabeza. In the painting, the Virgen Mary covers native Americans with her shawl. In the forefront appear Christopher Columbus, the Pinzón brothers and other important figures of the Discovery, while at the bottom a number of different models of ships used by the Spanish explorers are depicted.

"The modern-day system of accounting of debits and credits was invented here", says Cabeza, emphasizing the influence the city held at that time. "Even the dollar sign used today is closely related to the Alcazar". Entering the palace, he heads toward an elegant courtyard called the Patio de las Doncellas, and points at a series of crests carved over the arches showing two columns and intertwined by a banner in the form of an S. These columns representing the two kingdoms of Spain - the Old World and the New, together with the banner bearing the motto "plus ultra", were the emblem of the Emperor Charles V. All the coins produced in the Seville Mint from the gold imported from America during the 16th century bore this emblem.

Over the years, in Spanish America first and then throughout the continent, the simplified imperial emblem was to become the symbol of money, eventually turning into today's dollar sign.

The emblem appears repeatedly in the decoration of the Alcázar.

Moslem Alcazar to *Mudejar* Palace

The Alcazar was an important site hundreds of years before the heady days of the discovery of America, however. Like the Almudaina, it began as a Moslem palace, ordered constructed in 913 by the Caliph Abd al-Ralsman III, although little remains of the original structure. A hundred years later, the palace was expanded, built where today the Casa de Contratación stands. The central room of the palace was the Caliph's throne room, which was later redone in mudejar style and renamed the Ambassador's room. The original palace also included a pretty courtyard, the Patio de Yeso, whose delicate Arabic arches would later serve as an inspiration to the *mudejar* artisans working on the palace. The patio is still intact, although in need of a facelift.

In 1248, King Fernando III, known as Fernando the Saint, conquered Seville and took charge of the Alcazar, converting it into the residence of the Castilian monarchs. The king and his successors would set the tone for the palace, contracting *mudejar* artisans to imitate the art and architecture of the Moslems to make a luxurious palace. "You have to remember that the Castilian monarchs had led an almost nomadic lifestyle, pushing ever further south to conquer the Moslems, and accustomed to austere castles and convents", explains Fernando A. Martín, curator of the Royal Alcazar for the National Patrimony. (National Patrimony owns the objects

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The wedding of Charles V with Isabel of Portugal in 1526 was celebrated at the Royal Alcazar of Seville.

that decorate the palace, while Seville's local government is owner of the palace itself). "They were fascinated by the sumptuous way of life of the Caliphs, the bright colors, the elaborate decorations and fountains."

For the next seven centuries, Spain's monarchs would use the palace during their visits to Seville, and nearly each one left his or her mark on the palace. Monarchs in the middle ages added Gothic elements, although always respecting the *mudejar* style, while the Habsburg monarchs converted the palace from a summer retreat to a year-round residence. Emperor Carlos V had a particularly important role in the development of the palace, celebrating there his wedding to Isabel of Portugal.

Today, visitors can tour the bottom floor of the palace, where the *mudejar* style is most prevalent. Each room has delightful elements, from the carved wooden octagonal ceiling of the Ambassador's room to the friezes, mosaics and sculptured Islamic patterns that cover every surface.

Upstairs is currently off limits, as it is the area used by King Juan Carlos and his family on their visits to the city. The architecture is also *mudejar*, although with a healthy mix of Gothic and renaissance. The rooms are furnished with pieces from the collection of the National Patrimony, and have little to do with the palace itself. A good number of pieces found their way to Seville in the late 1800s when the palace was used by Isabel II upon her brief return from exile in Paris, according to Fernando Martín of National Patrimony. This is why the rooms have a distinctly romantic feel, the style popular when Isabel was queen.

Gardens of paradise

Along the back of the palace runs a hallway that looks out to the palace gardens. The gardens, one of Spain's finest examples of renaissance landscaping, are a piece of heaven. Lush and dense, while at the same time manicured, they are dotted with ponds, statues and pavilions. It would take hours to see all the corners, with their sculpted bushes, fountains, shady walkways, and surprise jet streams. They are filled with specimens of tropical plants and trees, brought over hundreds of years ago by the Spanish explorers.

Open to the public, the gardens these days provide the city's inhabitants with a perfect escape for reading on a stone bench or a lunchtime stroll. "We are trying to get more *sevillanos* to visit the palace and grounds, and in fact, entrance is free for the city's residents", explains José María Cabeza. "They should understand that the palace is theirs now, they should use it, which is in fact the best way to protect and preserve it".

Like the Almudaina, the Alcazar is a stone's throw from Seville's immense cathedral, one of the most impressive works of Gothic archictecture in Europe. A few blocks in is the city's old quarter, again with narrow winding streets and replete with Andalusian *tabernas*, small whitewashed bars where the wine is good and cheap and the bill is tallied in chalk on the counter.

Elegance and love of a good time are well-known elements of Seville, and in fact are often applied as characteristics of Spain in general. A visit to the Royal Alcazar gives new meaning to the stereotype, and helps visitors to better know the city that for many years was indeed the capital of the world.

Meg Campbell *is an American journalist who is a regular contributor to* Spain Gourmetour. *She contributed also to* Insight Guides: Spain, *winner of the 1988 Vega-Inclán prize from the Secretary of Tourism of Spain.*

The Premium Leading Brandy From Spain

"An eraser is the most creative tool ever invented...

JOAQUIN BERAO

A PASSION FOR SIMPLICITY

All that glitters is not necessarily what the stylish Spanish woman of the 90s needs to call attention to herself. Flashy gems and gaudy baubles dangling conspicuously from ear and limb may succeed in evoking a momentary blink in the eye of the beholder and yet somehow diminish the individuality of whoever is wearing them. The certain knowledge that there are many more subtle and fascinating ways to highlight the human body is what for the past 25 years has enabled top-flight designer Joaquín Berao to create his unique, eye-catching collections of jewelry and accessories.

Though Berao has neither the need nor the inclination to resort to name-dropping, it is no secret in Madrid fashion circles that his creations have been snapped up by both of Spain's royal princesses, Elena and Cristina, not to mention the wife of prime minister Felipe Gonzalez, singer and actress Ana Belén and actress Carmen Maura, muse to movie-maker Pedro Almodóvar.

What Berao will tell you is that he works in hope of pleasing a certain type of contemporary woman, "one who is looking for something simple and elegant with which to adorn herself."

Could we get a bit more specific?

"Well, for this woman, regardless of her age or economic circumstances, a piece of jewelry is not a matter of value but of values. She's saying: look, this is what *I* value because it suits me so perfectly you'd think it was made expressly for me."

As the urge may move him, a given piece might highlight a semi-precious stone such as onyx or agate, but rarely anything more high-powered than that. The most expensive article ever to emerge from his workshop was an 18 kt gold necklace, a one-off that sold for 800,000 pesetas.

"Coming up with a setting for a huge diamond would not be a problem from a purely technical standpoint. It just doesn't happen to interest me all that much. Also, the message you're sending out when you go that route is hard to reconcile with my own".

"At its simplest, it comes down to making an imaginative statement of individual taste. Nowadays people are more aware than ever that they have a choice. If they find something that connects with their personality, they'll go for it."

Treated Metal

Berao obtains his characteristic effects not only with eye-catching shapes but also through his mastery of carefully meditated juxtapositions of texture and tonality that may seem startling at first.

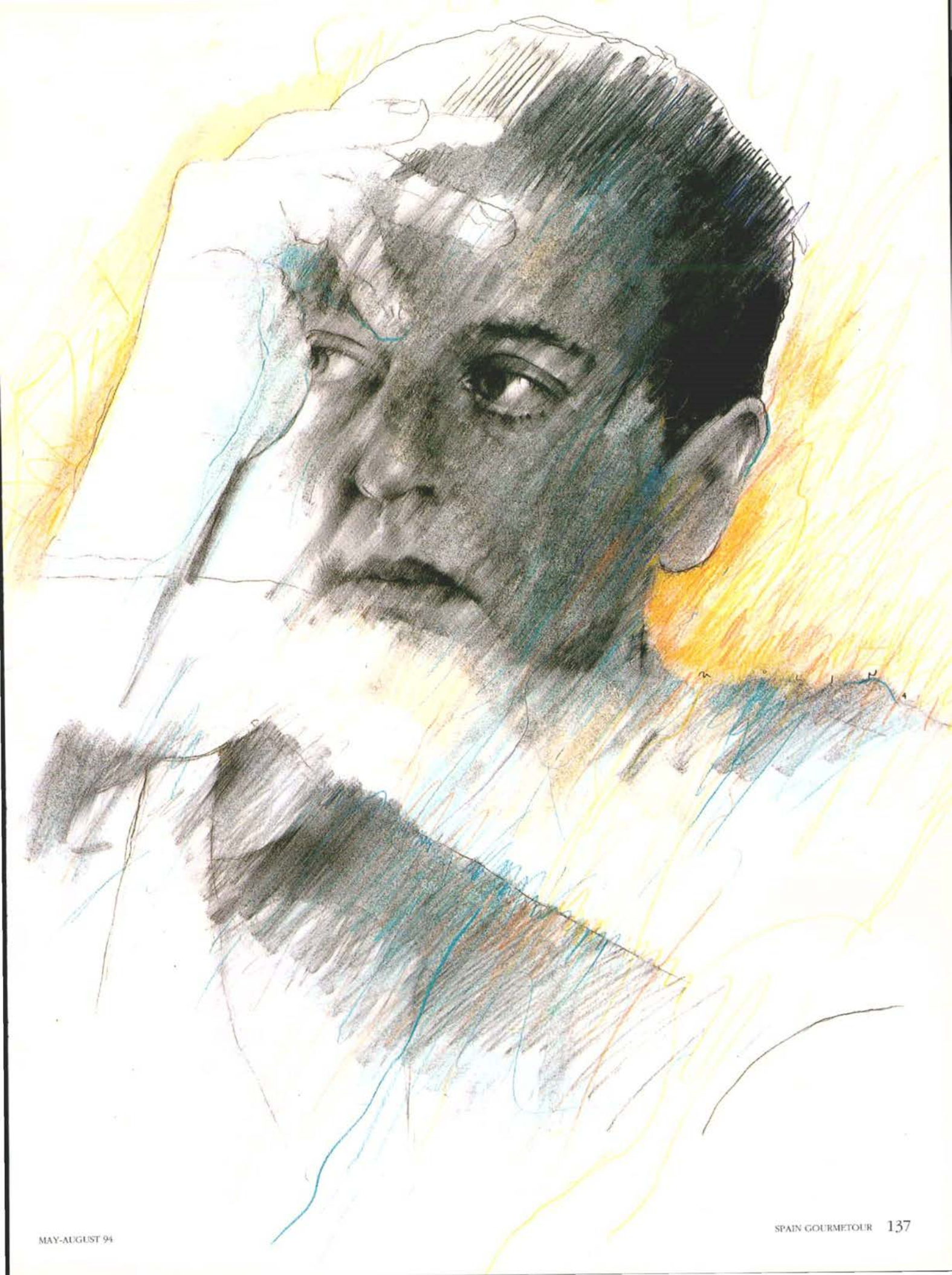
Bracelets, earrings, necklaces and brooches all have a revealing signature style that sets him apart from other Spanish designers in the field. Burnished bronze set off by titanium, a bronze patina contrasting with silver, are typical combinations. Or titanium and gold, highlighting a lone turquoise.

Although most of his pieces are first sketched into existence, Berao admits that often enough an idea that started off looking great on paper may fall short of expectations when translated into three dimensions - usually by the lost wax process of molding and casting - or when the right material simply cannot be found.

"More and more I find I'm achieving what I want using treated metal, substances that have been aged, oxidized, pitted, electroplated, physically or chemically transformed in some way. Titanium, for example; you can do marvellous things with it. When heated to extremely high temperatures, it turns all the colors of the rainbow."

At this point, his hand delves into a

Text:
Robert Latona
Illustration:
José María Sánchez Molina/ICEX



But there has got to be enough left behind to...

drawer and brings out a wristlet mottled in a warm color straddling the spectrum between peacock blue and refracted violet, with a copper chevron insert. "Hold it in your hand", he says. It does seem remarkably light for all its obvious solidity.
"I like to make sure it is comfortable. I make things for people to wear. Not to be photographed or displayed in showcases. It's not as if a woman were nothing more than a blank wall, and a pair of my earrings, say, the work of art hanging from it."

Household objects

In Joaquín Berao's case, the creative itch is not all that easy to confine to a single field of endeavor. Two decades ago, when he was just beginning to make a name for himself as a jewelry designer, some deliberately oversize and obviously "unwearable" regalia was exhibited in galleries in Madrid and the Canary Islands.
A few years after that, museum directors began to take an interest in his output, and Zurich's Museum of Modern Art acquired a number of pieces from that period for its permanent collection.
Straddling the line between the fine arts, you would have found him working in materials such as marble, bronze and stainless steel to create sculptures and assemblages that were exhibited alongside his jewels.
Now, his "moonlighting" is more likely to result in the creation of distinctive household objects such as the "Ketupa" lamp, designed in collaboration with Josep Lluscá, or an exclusive rug commissioned by the Barcelona-based decorators, AB2. The Artespaña retail chain, which offers the best of Spanish design and craftsmanship, asked him to come up with a series of innovative desk accessories for a collection in which prestigious international designers such as Philippe Starck and A. Mendini also lent a creative hand.
Fashion accessories are another fairly recent sideline but even in this speciality, where cutthroat competition and the fickle followers of media-hyped trends work against the designer, his successes could end up eclipsing the reputation he has earned with his jewelry.
Since 1991, Berao's collections of handbags, hand-decorated silk scarves and other accessories have been present in Spain's top-of-the-line boutiques. Seville's world fair EXPO 92 gave him another opportunity for adding new strings to his bow. Not only did he design a keepsake object in silver and bronze presented to VIPs who took part in the Universal Exhibition, he also got to try his hand at stage design, creating the sets for a contemporary dance piece that was performed in the Roman ruins of Italica.
Like the proverbial shoemaker whose children go barefoot, Joaquín Berao does not himself wear any jewelry at all — not even a ring. True, his watch is an asymmetrical designer piece, but that is about as far as it goes. The problem is that he is a man, and men, to his way of thinking, are a lost cause as far as jewelry is concerned.
"They don't have the instinctive feeling for how to adorn themselves. I mean in industrialized countries; precisely the opposite is true in so-called primitive societies, where it's often the man who knows how to do himself up — with a feather or the tooth of an animal — with more natural elegance than a woman."
The way he dresses — slightly worn jeans, a pin-striped dress shirt, comfortable loafers — is a strong hint that he is no slavish follower of the trend-of-the month club, but fails to convey the extent to which Joaquín Berao absolutely loathes everything that other people understand by the word *fashion.*
Beg your pardon? He says he doesn't like fashion? "I detest everything ephemeral," he insists, "and being in fashion means just that. Remember bell-bottom trousers? You can't argue that once upon a time they were valid, but not any more. They never were. They were only fashion, and now they are nothing."
Berao admits being influenced by the shapes and colors found in African objects, or relics from civilizations of the past, such as the Etruscan. But only to the extent that they prefigure or enhance the dominant 20th century aesthetic, which experienced its most intense spurt of development in the Bauhaus movement, which for Berao still remains perfectly valid insofar as its essential postulates are concerned.
Is that where he gets his passion for simplicity, taking to heart the Bauhaus dictum of "less is more"? Berao just smiles when the question is put to him. "Don't forget that somebody answered that with: yes, it's more boring. As often is the case."
"It all depends on knowing how far to take an idea. Generally, I start out with something complicated. Then I work at it, making it more simple, until I get it right. An eraser is the most creative tool ever invented. But there has got to be enough left behind to hold your eye and make you think a little."
It is an approach that has served Joaquín Berao well since 1968, when he set about learning his craft after returning from a youthful stint in London that brought him into contact with the music and lifestyles of the sixties. Within a few years, a buyer from Bloomingdale's had snapped up all the pieces the novice designer was hawking in the street markets of Ibiza, the then hippy-haven that put itself on the international style map thanks to the Adlib movement. Now, department stores such as Harrods in London and Japan's Hankyu have become Berao's regular stockists.
The flagship outlet highlighting Berao's creations is now located just off Madrid's exclusive Calle del Almirante, with satellite shops in Barcelona, San Sebastián, Tokyo, Ibiza, Milan, and Valencia. Apart from being the milestones of a highly successful career, they offered Berao the chance to participate in the creation of prize-winning environments working closely with well-known architects like Tonet Sunyer, Tomás Morato, Pedro Urzaiz, and furniture designer Quique Sirera.
All told, staying on the cutting edge of the contemporary during more than a quarter century of swerves in style and fatuous tastemaking is in itself a considerable achievement. Joaquín Berao's secret? "If you are plugged into the zeitgeist, you'll experience changes and growth all right, but whatever you carry deep in your inner self and reveal only to a handful of people is unchangeable and timeless. For me, a classic is anything that is unquestionably part of its time, but which also has this timeless component."

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... hold your eye and make you think a little".

PERSONAL PLEASURES

Where would you choose to go on holiday?
On the island of Majorca, in Llombarts, a little village on the southwest coast where I have a house.

Why there?
Because of the stillness, because you have the Mediterranean lapping at your feet. Because it's an island.

When would you go there?
In the spring.

How would you spend your time?
Feeling that I'm truly alive. Going for walks down country lanes at dusk, when the sheep are being driven home and all that incredible silence is broken by the jangling of their bells. Going to the Wednesday market in Santanyí. Letting myself feel time passing.

What would you eat and drink?
The local cuisine is marvelous. I like *tumbet* (potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and aubergines fried together with garlic). What is good is *pa amb oli* (a slice of country-style bread, rubbed with tomato and oil and sprinkled with salt, topped with a slice of air-cured ham). There's a local fish called *caproig* (a kind of scorpion fish) or just about any other fish baked in rock salt gathered from the salt pans of Ses Salinas.

What would you take home to remind you of your stay?
A piece of the bare, white driftwood with pointed branches that you often find washed ashore.

What is it about Spain that you miss when you travel outside the country?
The light.

SEEDLESS WATERMELON

Watermelon fruit salat

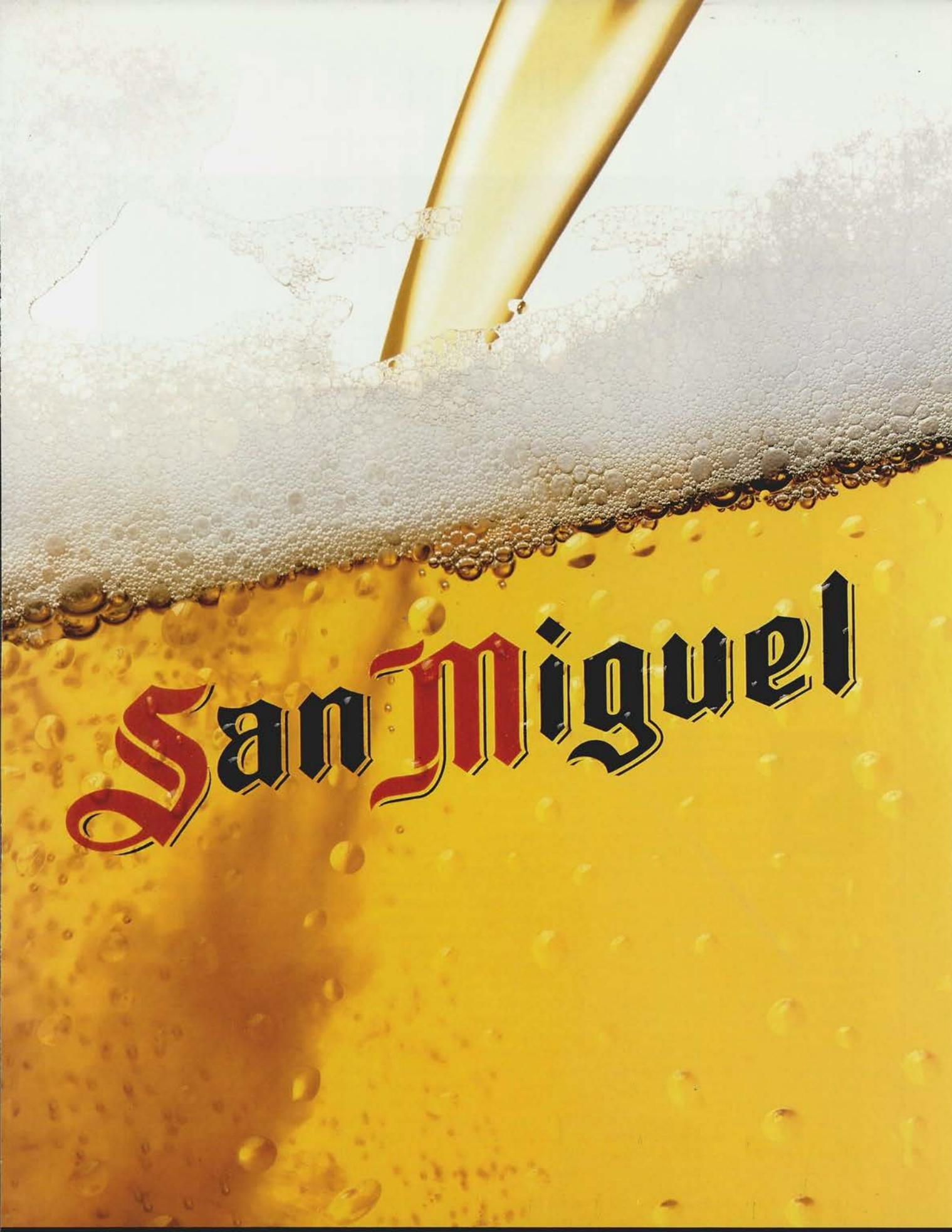
1 medium watermelon
1 small melon or 1 mango
lychees
4 spoons of sugar
1 small glass of white wine
1 small glass of Maraschino

Remove the skin from the mango. Cut the melon in half and remove the pulp with a potato shaper spoon. Cut off the top third of the watermelon and remove the pulp, using the same spoon. Place all the fruit in a bowl and sprinkle the sugar on top, adding the maraschino and the wine. Leave to cool in the refrigerator. Serve either in a large bowl or in individual servings.

Fruit and kirsch symphony

1 small glass of kirsch
1/2 watermelon
fruit according to individual taste:
red plums, strawberries, gooseberries
1 lemon
4 spoons of sugar

Cut the fruit into pieces, segments or slices, as you like best; pour the lemon juice and kirsch over the top and then sprinkle with sugar. It may also be decorated with cream (no lemon in that case). Place in the refrigerator and serve well chilled.



The Spanish beer.

EUGENIO DE LUCAS

© Museo del Prado - Madrid

Spanish painting of the early 19th century is characterized by the impact made upon it by Francisco de Goya. Among the many followers of this universally recognized genius was Eugenio Lucas; he stands out as particularly significant not only for the quality of his work but also for the particular cast which Goya's influence takes on therein. The similarity between the two is so close that some works actually by Lucas have been attributed to Goya.

Born in Alcalá de Henares in 1824, Lucas achieved early fame in Madrid where he painted the ceiling of the Teatro Real. His reputation spread to Paris where his work was praised by such literary figures as Théophile Gautier and Edmund About.

He was temperamental, imaginative and romantic, an ideologically liberal and open-minded man to whom artistic expression came naturally and readily. Even so, he attempted to impose some discipline on his natural verve by studying Velázquez and Goya. While Velázquez provided the inspiration for certain scenarios and characters, Goya's flamboyant and violent world of bullfighters, dusky beauties, picadors, and the like was to exert the most clearly identifiable influence. That said, however, Lucas' range of subject matter was as extensive and varied as his work was prolific.

He visited Morocco, whose exoticism was a source of inspiration to so many Romantic painters, and his *oeuvre* includes some works from this period. He is also known to have carried on a correspondence with the great French Impressionist Manet. Lucas died in 1870, leaving his two painter sons Eugenio and Julián, to carry on his style.

Looking at this picture, it comes as something of a surprise that such a temperamental painter whose range was so wide and varied should achieve brilliance in a genre more usually associated with a controlled, analytical approach. But he does: This lovely still-life, charged with color and sensuality, is the work of a master, calling to mind the finest Flemish still lifes of the 17th century. Its overall richness is a compound of use of color as well as the choice of elements that make up the composition.

It shows a juicy watermelon, into which a knife has been stuck, surrounded by various different fruits: pears, plums, black and green grapes, figs, quinces, oranges, peaches, cherries and others, interspersed with the occasional leaf and flower. All these are arranged on a barely visible table covered by a white cloth.

The painting seems to be lit by natural light, and although there are shadowy areas and even a hint of purple fabric in the background darkness, there is nothing here of the contrived obscurity typical of the Tenebrist genre. Though apparently disorganized, the composition is harmonic and balanced, the undeniable fluency of its execution, in no way detracting from its precision and realism.

The broad palette of pastel and strong colors suggests a desire to communicate through this arrangement of assorted fruits something of the hedonism and *joie de vivre* so beloved of the Romantics.

José María Ortega Sanz
Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

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