

S P A I N

GOURMETOUR

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



TURRON AND MARZIPAN:
WORLDWIDE RESURGENCE OF A
SPANISH CHRISTMAS TRADITION

ASTURIAS:
NATURE IN ITS PUREST STATE
BRANDY DE JEREZ. SPIRIT OF THE SOUTH

No. 34 September-December 1994

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

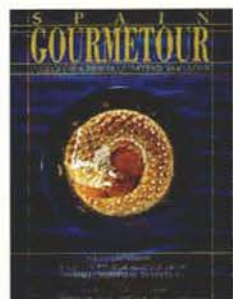
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Paternina



Greatness from Rioja.





Director

Manuel García-Aranda

Editor

Cathy Boirac

Publication Coordinator

Sonia Ortega

Editorial Secretary

Angela Castilla

Publisher

ICEX

Pº de la Castellana, 14

28046 Madrid

Tel.: (1) 349 62 43

Fax: (1) 435 88 76

Art Direction and Design

Luis Artime Diseño

Desk-top Publisher

Pilar Nadales

Circulation

ICEX, Madrid

Advertising

CEDISA, Almirante, 21

28004 Madrid

Tel.: (1) 308 06 44

Fax: (1) 310 51 41

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San Miguel

The Spanish beer.

D

ear readers,

It is now eight years since SPAIN GOURMETOUR made its appearance with the first issue in the English language. In 1988, due to the importance of the French market for Spanish products, the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade decided to publish a French edition. And three years later, in 1991, the German language version first appeared, being distributed mostly within Germany, the second largest customer for Spanish food products.

So for eight years now the whole team on both the editorial and the production side has been striving to introduce you to Spain - its regions, history, art, culture - but also and most especially to Spanish products. We hope you have discovered that there's more to Spain than just oranges and *paella*. Spain is a country of age-old traditions with its part to play on the international scene and today has much more to offer than sun and sand.

But somehow we feel that the time has come for us to stop and think. Are we really meeting the needs of the main foreign markets? Are we leaving out subjects of interest? Is the information we give too specialised or too general? Are our articles too long or too short? We plan to ask all these questions and more in a readers' survey in 1995.

In the meantime, we would like to know the opinion of any of our readers who would like to write to us. We would be pleased to receive your comments, suggestions and criticism.

Meanwhile, on behalf of the whole team of SPAIN GOURMETOUR, I would like to wish you all the best for 1995.

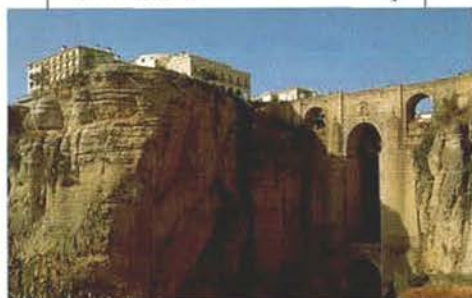
Cathy Boirac
Editor



Compiled by NICK LYNE

SPAIN'S PARADORES OPEN NEW HOTEL

Spain's prestigious Parador Nacional chain of hotels has announced the opening of its latest addition, situated in the historic Andalusian city of Ronda. In keeping with the state run body's tradition of converting buildings of historic or architectural interest or using sites of outstanding natural beauty, the Ronda hotel sits aside the more than 160 meter (400 feet) deep gorge, spanned by the 18th century "New Bridge" which has become the city's landmark. Built around the former market and town hall, great care has been taken to keep



the design traditional. The parador also maintains the tradition of offering the best in local cuisine.

An ideal way to get to know the Ronda parador, and the other 69 hotels in the chain, would be to take advantage of the winter special offer, minimum two night stays (Christmas excluded). An average cost, per person with half board would be around 60 dollars a night. Special offers are also available over the winter period for those over sixty with a 35% discount on bed and breakfast.

Visitors to the Castilian city of Avila should note that the parador there will be closed for the best part of two years as a complete restoration is undertaken of the 15th century Palacio de Piedras Altas. However, consolation can be found in the recently restored

CULINARY HOLIDAYS IN THE SIERRA DE MALAGA

What better way to get to know a country than through its cuisine? And what better way to appreciate said cuisine than through learning how to prepare it as part of a week's holiday in a converted farmhouse tucked away in the mountains north of Malaga? Courses in Mediterranean cooking, under the expert tutelage of some of Europe's top chefs are organized throughout the year in Gaucín, near Ronda. Organized by Ana Wright and Andrés Collt, the next one is planned for June '95 when Spanish cookery expert María José Sevilla, head of gastronomic promotion at the Spanish Commercial Office in London will lead a course, following the success of her stay at Gaucín last summer. Groups never exceed more than ten people. Apartado 20, 29480, Gaucín, Malaga. Tel (5) 215 1222. Fax (5) 151179.

CODORNIU WINS RIGHT TO CONTINUE USING "CREMANT" METHOD

After a four year legal battle Spain's cava and sparkling wines producer Codorniu has finally managed to overturn European Union legislation which limited the use of the term "cremant" to wines produced only in France or Luxembourg. Codorniu, the largest producer of sparkling wines in Europe, has been using the term "Gran Cremant" for the best part of a century, with sales of around 11 million bottles a year, and insisted that the cremant is a method of manufacturing and not a denomination of origin, as is Champagne for example.

RIOJA SPONSORS SPANISH ENTRY IN AMERICAS CUP '95

La Rioja - one of Spain's best known wine producing region - is to sponsor the Spanish entry in the prestigious Americas Cup. With a total sponsorship figure of 415 million pesetas (\$3 million) a pool has been formed made up of the Denomination of Origin Regulating Council of La Rioja, the Spanish Foreign Trade Institute (ICEX), the regional government, and three of the northeastern region's best known bodegas, Age, Campo Viejo and Berberana. The boat, appropriately enough, will be called "Rioja de España".

The Rioja Denomination of Origin Regulating Council has just produced an invaluable map for those interested in a wine tasting trip to the Rioja region. The map, which is freely distributed, indicates bodegas by their type, as well as including other topographical and road information. On the back is a complete list of the 344 bodegas in Rioja, with full addresses.

Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Rioja, Jorge Vigón, 51. Logroño, 26003. Tel (41) 254877. Fax 26 29 00

NEW GUIDE OPENS UP RURAL TOURISM IN GALICIA

The Galician Rural Tourism Office has just published a free guide to more than seventy hotels, guest houses and even "Pazos" - traditional Galician country manors - throughout the northwestern province. The guide, published in English, German, French, Spanish, and of course, Galician (one of the 4 official languages of Spain, apart from Spanish, Basque and Catalan), offers vital where to stay information both along the coastline and in Galicia's often unexplored interior.

Secretaría Xeral de Turismo Rural, Praza de Mazarelos, 15, Santiago de Compostela 15073. Tel (81) 54 25 27. Fax (81) 57 15 50.

As 1994 comes to a close, Spain's Institute for the Denomination of Origin (INDO) which oversees the qualification of the country's denomination of origin wines, has announced its wine ratings for the 1993 vintage.

parador Hotel Atlántico in the historic heart of the Andalusian port of Cadiz.

As part of Paradores' cultural and promotional activities, the Cuenca parador, a former convent, held a week long gastronomic course earlier this autumn devoted to "Convent Cuisine". Spain's convents have long been appreciated as depositories for centuries of regional traditional cooking, and the course, while offering excellent food, was also an exercise in history.

Paradores de Turismo de España, Requena, 3, Madrid 28013. Tel.: (1) 559 0069. Fax: (1) 5592042

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US OPENS DOOR TO DRY-CURED SPANISH HAMS

From now on, Americans will be able to enjoy three of Spain's top dry-cured pork delicacies. A ban imposed more than 30 years ago preventing the importation of Spanish pork products - following outbreaks of African swine fever in the early 1960s - has been partially lifted, allowing Serrano and Iberian hams and shoulders, as well as loin to enter the United States. The Spanish agriculture ministry will be supervising quality control of the hams, which will also be checked upon entry to the US. Serrano and Iberian hams, loins and shoulders (the latter takes its name from the Iberian pig, bred only in Spain and allowed to forage, feeding principally on acorns and roots, giving its meat forage, feeding principally on acorns and roots, giving its meat a distinctive, natural flavor) are a top quality delicatessen item.

MORE PRIZES FOR SPANISH WINES ABROAD

Bodegas Amézola de la Mora, based in La Rioja, was awarded a bronze medal for its 1989 "Señorio Amézola Reserva" at the International Eastern Wine Competition, held in New York this past June.

Madrid-based Bodegas Orusco was awarded the European Golden Laurels 1994, a prize organized by the Council for European Promotion, for its "Maín Crianza 89" and "Maín Crianza 90".

Meanwhile, at the eighth annual World Wine and Liqueur Fair in Brussels this past April, Berberana was the only Spanish wine to be awarded a gold, for its Tempranillo 1991. Berberana has also been awarded a Certificate of Excellence by the London-based Institute of Masters of Wine. The Institute, the world's most prestigious, gave Berberana's Tempranillo 1992 an 86.8 point rating out of 100 at its August annual meeting.

QUALIFICATION OF THE VINTAGE OF SPANISH WINES WITH DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN FOR THE YEAR 1993

ALELLA	E	MENTRIDA	G
ALICANTE	G	MONTILLA MORILES	G
ALMANSA	VG	NAVARRA	VG
AMPURDAN-COSTA BRAVA	-	PENEDES	VG
BIERZO	D	PRIORATO	-
BINISALEM	G	RIAS BAIXAS	-
CALATAYUD	-	RIBEIRO	-
CAMPO DE BORJA	-	RIBERA DEL DUERO	R
CARIÑENA	-	RIOJA	G
CAVA	-	RUEDA	G
CHACOLI DE GUETARIA	G	SOMONTANO	-
CIGALES	-	TARRAGONA	-
CONCA DE BARBERA	-	TERRA ALTA	-
CONDADO DE HUELVA	VG	TORO	-
COSTERS DEL SEGRE	VG	UTIEL-REQUENA	E
JEREZ	-	VALDEORRAS	-
JUMILLA	VG	VALDEPEÑAS	E
LA MANCHA	E	VALENCIA	VG
MALAGA	-	VIÑOS DE MADRID	G
		YECLA	G

D: DEFICIENT

R: REGULAR

G: GOOD

VG: VERY GOOD

E: EXCELLENT

indicates bodegas by their type, as well as including other topographical and road information. On the back is a complete list of the 344 bodegas in Rioja, with full addresses.

Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Rioja, Jorge Vigón, 51, Logroño, 26003.
Tel.: (41) 254877
Fax: (41) 26 29 00



**BODEGAS Y BEBIDAS
 BECOME EUROPE'S SECOND
 LARGEST WINE PRODUCER**

Spain's Bodegas y Bebidas group is set to become Europe's second largest wine producer following the acquisition of Bodegas Age from the Banesto bank.

The entry of Bodegas Age into the Bodegas y Bebidas group - owned by banking giant BBV - will strengthen the company's hold on the Rioja market, in which it already has a firm hold through Campo Viejo.

**TORRES ANNOUNCES THREE
 NEW VINTAGES**

Torres, one of Spain's best known winemakers, has announced three new vintages. The white *Viña Esmeralda* 1993, a blend of Muscat and Gewürztraminer grapes, and ideal for fish, seafood and light aperitives. The second white is the *Grand Viña Sol*, a blend of Chardonnay and Parellada grapes, and perfect with oysters, caviar, smoked salmon, and seafood. Finally comes the red *Coronas* 1990, a blend of Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon.

PIREVINO CELEBRATES III ANNUAL "SALON DEL VINO"

Pirevino, the body which brings together wine producers from the French and Spanish Pyrenees region, celebrated its third yearly wine meeting in Barbastro in the northern Spanish province of Huesca, November 3-6. The gathering brings together more than 30 denomination of origin wines from the Pyrenees, and attracted journalist, experts, tasters and representatives and buyers from all over Europe and Spain to sample wines and discuss production techniques.

THE MARQUIS DE GRIÑÓN CELEBRATES AN ANNIVERSARY IN STYLE

The invitation issued under the coat of arms of the marquis de Griñón to attend a dinner last September to mark the 200th anniversary of the Valdepusa estate chapel at Malpica in the province of Toledo, promised a ceremony which even in our agnostic century would bring together the Church, the nobility and wine. The chapel on the estate, belonging to the marquis' family since 1292, was actually consecrated in 1794 and the vines themselves were planted at the beginning of the seventies.

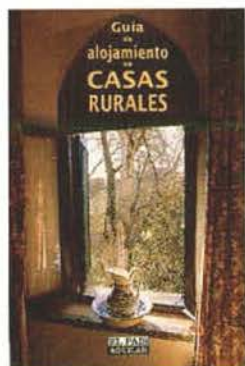
Some three hundred people held the invitations, including Prince Alfonso of Hohenlohe, Spain's Nobel prizewinner for literature Camilo José Cela, representatives of the media, many foreign distributors, both from Marqués de Griñón and the Berberana Rioja winery with whom the marquis has just signed a deal to produce a top class range of Riojas (see Spain Gourmetour no. 34). Such a deal was in itself well worthy of the dinner prepared by local chef, Adolfo, an expert in preparing game, who delighted our taste buds with a tasty rice dish skilfully cooked with rabbit and turtle doves from the lands around Malpica. To top it off, the meal was washed down with a superb Rioja, the fruit of the Marqués de Griñón-Berberana partnership: *Reserva Privada* 1988.

Before dinner was served, a concert of Baroque music came as a timely reminder that in Europe wine is, as it has always been, a truly cultural phenomenon.

KLM TREATS ITS PASSENGERS TO RIBERA DEL DUERO

Dutch airline KLM has chosen Ribera del Duero for its first class passengers. Ibernoble is a 1989 vintage from a exceptional year with a full bouquet and fruity, rich flavor. It will also be on sale at Madrid's Barajas airport for other travelers.

SONIA ORTEGA



Guía de alojamiento en casas rurales

Ediciones El País y Aguilar, 1994

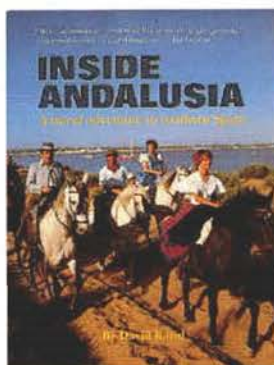
Juan Bravo, 38 - 28006 Madrid - Tel: (1) 322 47 00 - Fax: (1) 322 47 71

City-living and the need to get away from it all have created a new type of tourist - the sort who prefers to stay in a country home or on a farm rather than in a hotel by the beach. This is called rural tourism: an alternative and as yet fairly unusual way of spending a holiday in Spain but one that is becoming increasingly popular here, as in other European countries.

To meet the demand for information on the accommodation and countryside activities that are available, El País-Aguilar has published its Guía de alojamientos en casas rurales which includes a total of 1,074 country homes and 29 farm schools in all the autonomous communities of Spain.

The guide gives descriptions of available accommodation with addresses, telephone numbers and prices and other information of interest, as well as a list of activities that are possible in the area such as local companies specialising in nature walks, mountain biking, trekking, etc.

The information for each community includes a map showing the main roads and indicating the best way to get to the country homes listed.



Inside Andalusia: A Travel Adventure in Southern Spain

David Baird

Mirador Publications, S.L.

Puebla Lucía - 29640 Fuengirola (Málaga) - Tel: (52) 46 09 50 - Fax: (52) 46 10 22

Mirador Publications recently published this paperback version of the Vega Inclán prizewinner, awarded to the most outstanding travel book of 1989.

With Inside Andalusia David Baird, a British journalist resident in Andalusia for the last twenty years, introduces the reader to the surprising variety of this colourful and fascinating region and goes beyond the famous clichés of finger-clicking flamenco dancers and bullfights.

The author relates in a personal and literary style an interesting mixture of history, anecdote and day-to-day life, illustrating the real character of both the people and the country and showing a sound knowledge of the historical and cultural development of Andalusia through the centuries.

There are seventeen chapters giving a close look at the cities and provinces, three chapters about local fiestas, crafts and facts, a historical chronology of Andalusia and a glossary of the Spanish words used in the text.



Guía Peñín de los Vinos de España, 1994-95

Pi & Erre Comunicación Integral, S.A.

Núñez de Balboa 49 - 28001 Madrid - Tel: (1) 576 72 51 - Fax: (1) 577 29 20

José Peñín is a well-known Spanish writer and broadcaster on the subject of wine. After producing several books and hundreds of articles, Peñín has now published a comprehensive guide to the wines of Spain.

After a very extensive introduction, the guide attempts to classify the multiplicity of Spanish wines and wineries. The writer is not only knowledgeable but independent which gives credibility to his opinions.

The Spanish Denominations of Origin are arranged in alphabetical order, starting with Alella and ending with Yecla. There is also a section covering certain wines of interest that have no official D.O.

Each wine is given a mark out of 95 and those rated over 70 include a brief tasting comment. Except for wines with a marked character, the aim is simply to point out the most significant features that are easy for any non-expert drinker to detect.

What sets this book apart from others of its type is the fact that it is the writer himself who assesses the wines rather than a committee of expert tasters.



Nuevo Arte de Cocina

Juan Altimiras

La Val de Onsera, 1994

Artes Gráficas, s/n - 22006 Huesca - Tel: (74) 22 98 00 - Fax: (74) 24 05 36

Juan Altimiras is the pseudonym of a Franciscan monk called Fray Raimundo Gómez who was born at the end of the seventeenth century and died in 1769.

The sub-title, "Taken from the school of economic experience", shows that Altimiras worked as a monastery cook and in the prologue to his book, which was published in 1745, he states that he is publishing his "notebook" so that "newly professed monks who did not gain enough experience during their noviciate can find out, without having to ask, everything they need to know in their new positions".

This book, the Nuevo Arte de Cocina, was so widely used that it became one of the most published cookery books of its time and its popularity continued well into the nineteenth century. It can be said to have exerted a great influence over cooking during these two centuries. The book includes references to earlier cooking styles and, while based on these, it adds plenty of innovations. The author was clearly a knowledgeable and skilled cook but also wrote well, in a personal and good-humoured style.

There is a total of over 150 recipes that go beyond the monastery and show what cooking was like at the time, with special emphasis on meat cookery.

La Val de Onsera is a new publishing house that aims to reprint the classic Spanish cookery books. In this case, in addition to the modern edition, it has published a facsimile copy that will delight those interested in the history of Spanish cooking.

Text: Hawys Pritchard

A Taste of Spain for Sydney

"A taste of Spain", the symposium staged by the International Olive Oil Council and ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade) in Sydney, Australia, from 2 - 4 November, 1994, described itself as "A celebration of the Gastronomy and Culture of Spain". Held at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Sydney's Double Bay, the three-day event was attended by a predominantly Australian audience of food and wine writers, restaurateurs, photographers, stylists, importers, nutrition experts, legislators and hispanophiles in general.



The panel of speakers represented a nice balance of the cerebral and the hands-on, cultural appreciation

and commercial common sense. The contributors were: María José Sevilla (presenter of the award-winning TV series *Spain on a Plate*); world wine expert (and now Australian wine grower) Tony Lord; respected *grande dame* of Spanish gastronomy and keen food historian, Clara María de Amezúa; Sydney food writer and specialist in Asian and Spanish food history, Jacki Passmore; Juan Vicente Gómez Moya of the Spanish Olive Oil Exporters' Association, ASOLIVA; and Iñigo Cañedo, Head of the Agroalimentary Department of Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade. One of the primary objectives of the symposium was to penetrate beyond gener-

ic concepts of Spanish food, wine and customs. Clara María de Amezúa provided essential background material with her skillful synopsis of the influences exerted by invading cultures, domestic and international politics, and trade patterns throughout Spanish history. María José Sevilla, after many years in London, has acquired almost a foreigner's objectivity about her native Spain and knows that just the sights, sounds and smells of the bustling markets, dockside fish auctions, Basque gastronomic fraternities and patient almond peeling ladies of her native Spain will appeal most to her audiences of a more restrained cultural cast. As one of her fellow speakers observed, if she gets tired of food writing there'll always be a place for her at the Spanish Tourist Board. The food and wine served in the course of the three days (selected by Ms. Sevilla and Tony Lord) reflected the regional differences so notable in Spanish cuisine, and the whole Spanish approach to food by which both self-confessed hispanophiles Jacki Passmore and John Newton declared themselves totally seduced. John Newton's observations in his entertaining paper *The Flavours and Philosophy of Tapas* exemplified the selective and adaptive nature of cultural borrowing:

- "... we're learning. We're changing. More and more, like the Spanish. We're designing ways and means of combining food and drink and conversation."

- "... a feast of snacks. That's the most revolutionary way to use *tapas*. To subvert the

structure of the conventional three course meal."

TASTINGS

The sherry and *tapas* tasting which launched the symposium set the tone for the whole event. The sherry producer's efforts to convince the European and US markets that sherry is more than an aperitif has clearly taken little effect down under. Tony Lord's selection of *manzanilla, fino, amontillado* and *oloroso* individually taste matched with tiny *tapas* of sea urchin, crab and *alioli*, garlic sausage and pistachio, dried peach and goat's cheese was more convincing than any advertising campaign.

The tasting of olive oils selected by ASOLIVA's Juan Vicente Gómez Moya achieved a comparable impact: seven extra virgin varietal oils were tasted alongside two olive oils (perfectly respectable but characterless blends of virgin and refined oils). The gamut of flavors between the rich fruitiness of Nevadillo and the sophisticated dry bitterness of Arbequino (the diminutive Catalan olive) that laid to rest any misgivings alive that oil illiterates might have had about the possible pretentiousness of the exercise or the validity of the D.O. status granted to four of Spain's olive oils.

DOWN TO BUSINESS

The mutual interest that exists between Australia and Spain was one conclusion that emerged strongly from this symposium. The potential for translating this into a commercial relationship was examined during a seminar entitled The Market

for Spanish Food and Wines in Australia by speakers Iñigo Cañedo, Juan Vicente Gómez Moya, Jacki Passmore and Tony Lord.

In his resume of current trade relations between Spain and Australia, ICEX



spokesman Iñigo Cañedo explained that Australia is 48th on Spain's list of customers. Olive oil is Spain's primary export to Australia, with alcoholic beverages (*cava*, sherry, brandy and other wines) way down

in sixth place. Spain perceives the Australian market as eager and open minded and, importantly, interested in healthy food. Its disadvantages, however, are that it is a distant market with a complex distribution system and

significant import barriers. (The call for Spanish Ibérico ham, *chorizo* and cheese to be allowed into Australia was voiced many times in the course of the symposium, notably by John Newton and Jack Passmore).

Tony Lord is convinced that there is considerable potential for Spanish wine in Australia, seeing Spain's unique varieties as an attractive selling point to a nation of informed and confident wine drinkers. The drought currently affecting Australia is likely to produce a 1995 vintage which falls short by 25 - 30% of the booming domestic and export markets demands. He sees Spain as the ideal source to cover this shortfall, but warns that unless Spanish exporters move fast to make their wines known and available

to Australian importers, the niche will be quickly filled by other suppliers.

Tony Lord was evangelical about the importance of information and availability. In tracking down the wines served during the symposium he had found very few importers of Spanish wine in Australia, and even then some of the wines in their catalogues were not held in stock. It was up to the Spanish, he declared, to devote resources to making Australian wine journalists and importers aware of what he described as the "world class wines of Spain" and, just as important, to ensuring that they were available in Australia. Spain's olive oil sector can clearly be looked to as something of a role model in both these regards. The last ten years have seen a

Mediterranean Lifestyle on the Pacific Shores



Sydney has to be one of the most beautiful and civilized cities in the world. Marvelous location, enviable climate, clean air, huge cultural diversity, efficient public services, minimal urban stress, people who haven't yet forgotten how to be polite to each other, food and wine... It doesn't take a social scientist to realize how many of these attributes interdepend.

It comes as a surprise to visiting Europeans to discover that the city's evident love of eating out and eating adventurously, is a new phenomenon. And "new"

means in the last ten years. Remember that Sydney is the capital of New South Wales, and that the earliest colonial settlers in this part of the world were Anglo-Celts. There's a lot to be said for the Anglo-Celts — indeed saying a lot is one of our characteristics — but we are the first to admit that our traditional lifestyle is hardly the envy of the rest of the world. Even so, it evidently takes many generations in a new environment for the hereditary mists to clear. It is thanks largely to "new Australians", notably from the Mediterranean countries, that a lifestyle and diet that reflect Australia's natural conditions and resources are finally emerging.

Today, the Mediterranean influence in Australia's pref-

erences is obvious: fresh fish, fruit and vegetables, olive oil, wine, cheese, pavement cafés with good coffee, are all in huge demand. The thriving Italian and Greek communities here are largely responsible for having wrought this cultural miracle. The fact that there is no equivalent Spanish community partially explains why Australia's perceptions of Spain have gotten left way behind. Europe and the US have taken a new look at Spanish wine and food over the last 15 years, in the course of which Spain's profile has moved significantly up market. Australia is only now starting to do so, both at lifestyle and business levels. High time for a taste of Spain in Sydney.

steady rise in its sales figures, attributable in part to Australia's wholehearted shift towards a health conscious lifestyle. The generic promotional activity launched by Spanish exporters some five years ago has gradually become more and more specific as the buying public has become increasingly aware of the finer points of olive oil. What was once perceived as a standard product is now understood, like wine, to be susceptible to differences of fruit variety, climate, soil, weather and processing procedures. Ex-

tra virgin olive oils are accounting for more and more of Spain's sales to Australia despite the presence in the market place of much cheaper seed oils, for example. As ASOLIVA's Juan Vicente Gómez Moya pointed out, Spanish suppliers have opted for quality as their primary selling point, and consumers are prepared to pay for it. In addition to making her own plea for greater availability of Spanish products in Australia, Jacki Passmore also called for more Spanish food festivals and gastronomic promotion where

these products could be experienced hands-on. She pointed out that Australia has not simply adopted the "Mediterranean diet" but adapted it. There is a wider market there for Spanish products than as "authentic Spanish" food; they can become an integral part of Australian cuisine. In brief, Australia wants more. *Adelanta España!*

Hawys Pritchard is a writer and translator who lives and works in Australia. She is a regular contributor to Spain Gourmetour and other periodicals.

A. CAMACHO INC.

4410 East Adamo Drive,
Suite 106
Tampa, FL 33605

P.O. Box 1564
Melrose Park, IL 60161

2035 N. 15th Ave.
Melrose Park, IL 60160

Phone (813) 247-4534
Fax (813) 248-3260

Phone (708) 344-0066
Fax (708) 344-4207



OIL AND OLIVES

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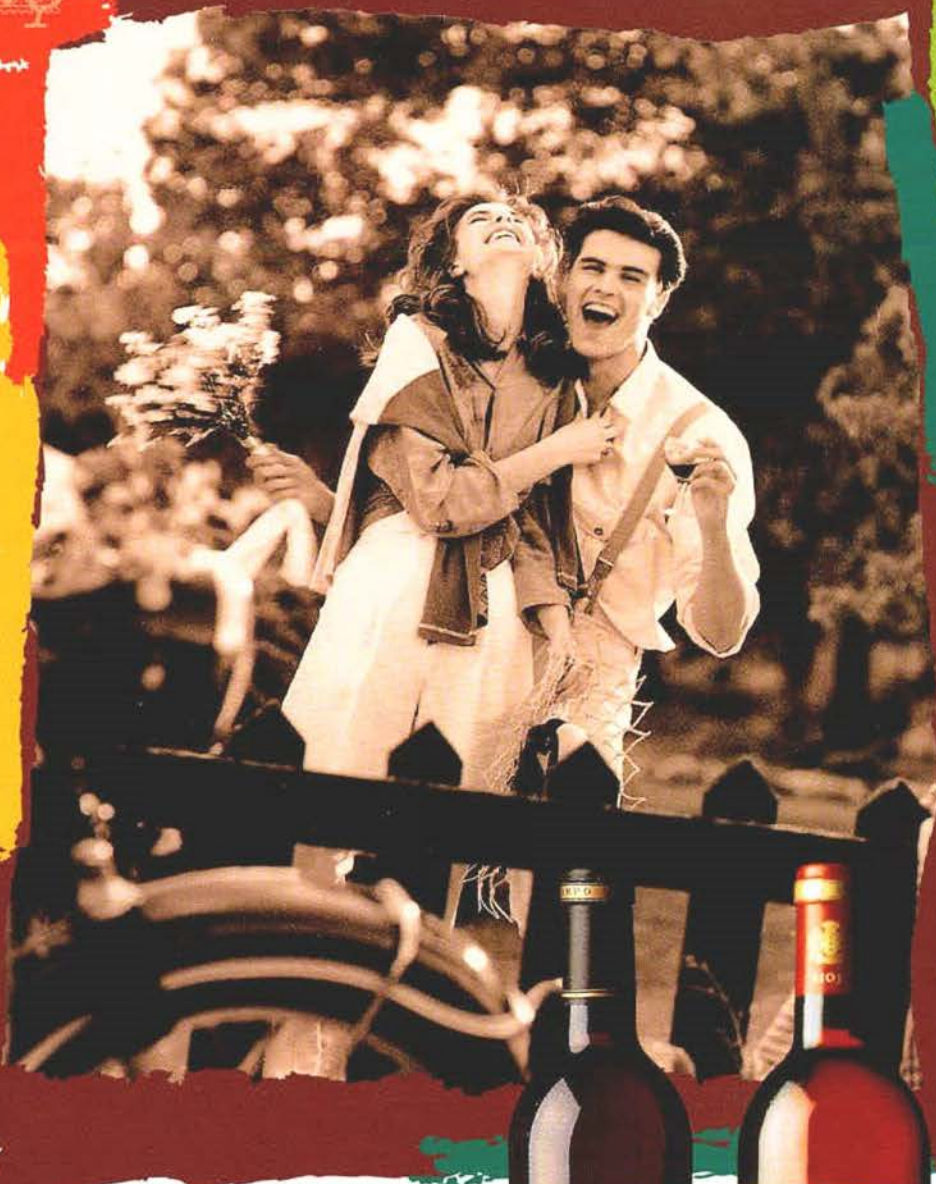
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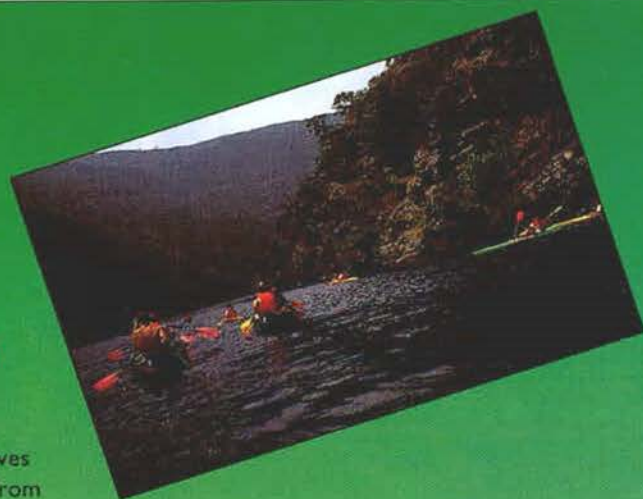
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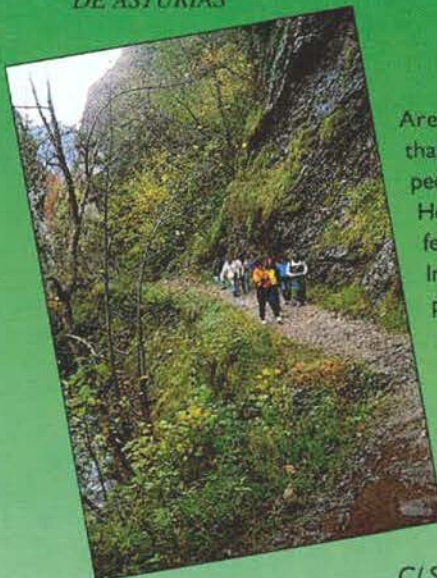
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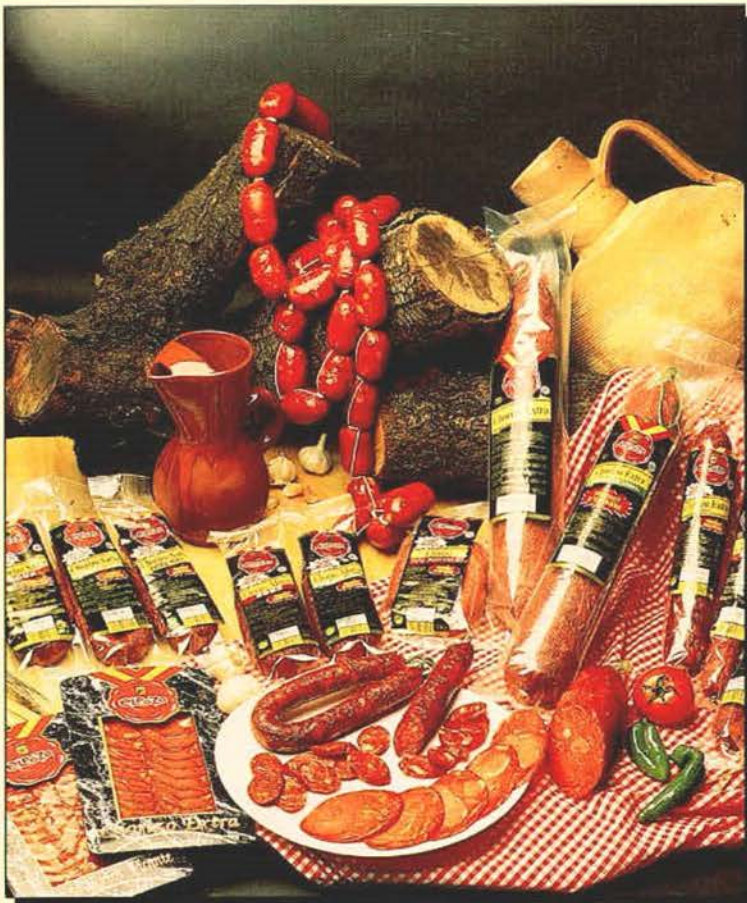
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San Ildefonso,3 - 11404 JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (Cádiz)
Tel.: (56) 34 18 00 - Fax : (56) 34 26 01
Pages: 125 - 111

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Tel.: (71) 486 01 01 - Fax : (71) 487 55 86 - 224 64 09
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(Very Spanish)



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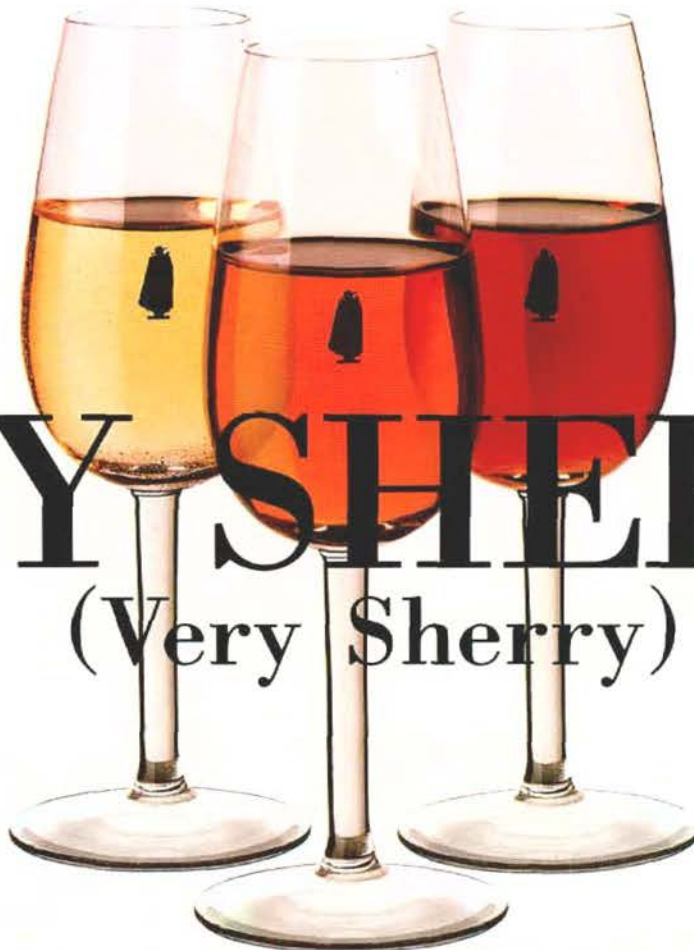
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ON THE RISE
DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOUR

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RIQIJA

HERE'S TO BOLD FOOD!

*Just mention turrón and marzipan to any Spaniard
tradition these delicious gourmet sweets are the crown-
cially on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and the
offering from the children (see*

WORLDWIDE



RESURGENCE OF A

sweet enchant-

ment of Christmas" is

on elegant trays with the cava at the end of a feast.

with charming marzipan figures and other delights

and the nougat blocks symbolizes family unity in-

and you can only be talking about Christmas. By
ing glory of any Christmas fiesta in Spain, espe-
night of The Three Kings, who receive their own
Spain Gourmetour n.º 21). " The

SPANISH CHRISTMAS



TRADITION

presented in nine out of ten homes

Pieces from the blocks of assorted turron are mixed
for all to pick and nibble. The sharing of the tray
fused by the happiness of the Christmas festivities.









During the last two years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic families rediscovering the historic tradition with exports from Spanish manufacturers soaring to the Americas and other parts of the globe. And prices have been frozen at last year's rates.

The most popular *turrón* is still the classic hard, *duro*, and soft, *blando*, that have been made for over five centuries in Spain. But other new varieties, especially those including chocolate, are also becoming favorites. *Turrón* is produced in nougat type slabs of 300 (10.5 oz) and 100 grams (3.5 oz) and is made from a mixture of wild honey, sugar and glucose to which is added the most important ingredient, almonds that have been peeled and toasted. The quality of each type of *turrón* depends on the amount of almonds used, varying from almost two thirds for the Supreme to under a third for the Popular.

The origins of *turrón* are lost in the mists of time but without doubt it was brought to Spain by the Arab invaders who occupied much of the country for seven centuries until the Catholic monarchs entered Granada on January 2, 1492, to capture the Moors last stronghold. In his definitive work on the history of *turrón* published in 1986, the late Fernando Galiana, once Mayor of Jijona, the original cradle of Spanish *turrón* production near Alicante, says the word comes from

torrar, meaning to grill from the Latin *torrere*.

Señor Galiana, whose family company made *turrón*, said that it was produced in Jijona before the 14th century, especially in Arab and Sephardic Jewish communities. Then it was called *halvo*, and in Turkey and the Middle East a similar sweet, also called *halva*, can be found today. In 1590 a document in Valencia, north of Alicante on the Mediterranean coast, recorded that a hard mixture of almonds and honey sold for two Valencian *sous* per pound.

By the 15th century, *turrón* from Jijona, was already being exported to Japan after Antonio Martínez Montiño, a writer and chef for Felipe II (1527-1598), visited Jijona with three Japanese princes in 1585. "All the houses in Jijona smelt of the steam of warm honey," he wrote in his book *Conduchos de Navidad*.

Now the ancient craft involved in the production of *turrón* in Jijona is strictly controlled by a regulatory council formed by representatives from the 30 factories and the regional authorities to ensure the content and quality of production. By law, no other manufacturer outside the region can label its product as Alicante (hard) or Jijona (soft) *turrón*. These *turrónes* are characterized by their high content of locally grown sweet almonds and honey from bees that collect nectar both from orange blossom in the area's extensive orchards and from

rosemary growing wild in the mountains.

THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

In recent years other *turrón* manufacturers in Spain, especially in Toledo, Zaragoza and Barcelona, have built major factories with sophisticated production lines for many different varieties of *turrón*. Most also produce other sweets, especially chocolate and marzipan, to balance the financial stress caused by the seasonal nature of *turrón* sales.

The Spanish Association of Turrón and Marzipan Manufacturers, based in Barcelona, represents 38 companies, employing 4,000, that produce over 75 per cent of output. In 1993 its members produced 22,500 metric tons with sales reaching 25,100m pta, representing 80% of Spain's *turrón* business. Sales had increased by 5% in the previous year with traditional hard and soft *turrón* accounting for 38%, *turrón* with chocolate 46% and other varieties 15%. Overall, *turrón* accounted for 81% of sales, marzipan 13% and other products 6%.

During the economic boom that followed Spain's membership to the European Community in 1986, sales at home soared but with a shortsightedness that was to prove fatal for several brand names, exports were neglected. The boom ended, the recession started in 1991 and the cost of raw materials rocketed. Nuts have dou-

bled in price, partly due to the drought causing a one third drop in this year's August crop, which amounted to 22,000 tons. Cheaper California almonds, that arrive in November, are considered of inferior quality because their thin skin makes them susceptible to worms and blemishes. The Spanish sugar prices are the highest in the European Union and the cost of packaging has increased by 35%.

But the rewards for those who finally met US food, packing and labelling regulations, set up distributors and financed publicity campaigns have been substantial.

Exports in 1993 increased to 3,600 tons, 114% more than the previous year. But the degree to which the export market had declined can be appreciated when one realizes that in 1963, the last year before Fidel Castro prohibited imports, Spain exported 3,500 tons of *turrón* just to Cuba's 6.5m population. But the Cuban exodus to the United States, particularly Miami, coupled with the economic recovery and greater stability in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and Puerto Rico have entirely changed export prospects. In Europe, the main buyers are France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany.

"In the export market we have to be very optimistic after the results of the last two years. At the moment exports represent about 12% of production," says Alfonso Bonmatí, secretary general of the manufacturers' associ-

MARZIPAN

ation. "Given the degree to which South American countries are reanimating their economies, we are very confident that exports will keep growing."

Señor Bonmatí blames the recent difficulties within the industry not only on the recession but bad structuring. "Many have had problems, especially in Jijona," he says, "It is not just a question of increasing the market but making it more profitable. We have a lot of competition between companies for the home market and a grave problem is that some companies, desperately seeking sales, send too much product to their distributors and then have many returns.

"They have to adjust production to demand. For various years we have tried to create closer links with the distributors and make sure there are not surpluses that have to be absorbed by the industry." He said that the association had supported a generic campaign with ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade) with television and radio commercials for *turrón* in Miami in Puerto Rico. "It was very successful," he says. "This year we will repeat it and include New York. We are also doing very well in Argentina, Chile, and Colombia and hope to increase exports at the same rate as the last two years. Our members have agreed to freeze their sales prices at 1993 levels."

THE JIJONA TRADITION

According to Fernando Galiani, the first record of a *turroneiro*, dedicated exclusively to making and selling *turrón* was in 1590 in Jijona, but a century earlier the trade was already well established. The raw materials were all local. Almonds are indigenous to the area with archaeologists dating nuts found in nearby Alcudia de Elche from the fifth or sixth centuries BC. The Arabs had brought sugarcane from Sicily and granite mills were built on the edge of town. Felipe II, whose banquets always included *turrón* and marzipan, constructed Spain's first dam nearby to irrigate Jijona sugarcane crops. And bees thrived so well on wild rosemary and thyme. The name of a neighbouring town, Biar, is derived from the Latin *apiarum* meaning beekeeping.

Another reason for Jijona's main industry is its location. Just a few kilometers inland from the port of Alicante, it nestles between moonscape mountains and deep canyons carved by the very occasional rains. The dry microclimate is ideal for *turrón* production and also ensures that the almonds are top quality. The main variety used nationally is Marcona, a perfect, sweet tasting, healthy almond that peels easily and has just the right oil and fat content to be ground and mixed to make soft *turrón* or marzipan. The almonds used in Jijona are from Alicante and

adjoining Murcia.

Jijona's population of 11,000 depends entirely on two seasonal industries for employment. Last year they produced nearly 5,000 tons of hard and soft *turrón*, nearly a 1,000 tons down from 1992. But apart from producing *turrón* from June till December, they have ingeniously dove tailed ice-cream making, from Easter until August, as another of their arts. Jijona ice-cream makers specialize in exotic flavors, one of which is of course *turrón*. Not only do they take their trade to the Spanish holiday *costas* but have also traveled as far as Argentina to practice it.

"The fact that we make two product lines means that our workers pamper their product and nurture them with pride," says Alejandro Jiménez Navarro, managing director of El Castillo de Jijona SA, one of the town's major manufacturers. "The secret of Alicante (hard) *turrón* is that you can see the almonds. There is real competition between the workers, often with incentive schemes, and many families are split up working at different factories. There is no fraud here. Couples even talk about almonds in bed!" Señor Jiménez Navarro points out that one reason why *turrón* is sold in large slabs is that the flavor is better preserved than in small portions. He says that Jijona produces 75-80% of Spain's traditional classic *turrón*.

El Castillo de Jijona constructed a new 2,500 square meter factory in 1980 and by

1991 was exporting to the United States, Mexico and Argentina. Last year 44% of its Alicante and Jijona *turrón* production was exported. The company plans to build a factory in Tunis for the north African market. Among two dozen items, El Castillo's prestige product, packaged in a wooden box, is *Turrón a la Piedra*, crammed with crunchy almonds flavored with grated lemon rind and cinnamon.

THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS

El Castillo is less mechanized than the bigger factories elsewhere in Spain giving the various *turrón* a more crafted feel and flavor. For making hard Alicante nougat, the almonds are first sorted, scaled, peeled, dried and then toasted. The local honey is filtered and glucose is added to the beet sugar to increase product life.

The honey and sugar are heated to 85C (185_F) for 30 minutes and then mechanically mixed with the toasted almonds. The mixture, that includes egg white, is cooled, put into lined rectangular moulds and pressed. When it has further cooled, the blocks are cut into 200 gram (7 oz) slabs with a circular saw. Finally the cold *turrón* is vacuum-packed and cartoned.

The manufacture of soft Jijona uses the same ingredients with 4% more almonds, but after mixing, the mass is squeezed between powerful granite rollers, with the al-



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The great, smooth Spanish Brandy. Wonderfully mild, with a mellow taste. Aged for years in oak-wooden casks after the well-known method of blending fine old and young brandies. OSBORNE VETERANO.



mond oil binding the paste which is then refined. Subsequently the *maestro turronero* supervises the noisy process of homogenizing the paste for up to three hours in giant, mechanical pestles and mortars, the latter called a *boixet*, heated by gas.

The mix is then poured into moulds to cool. Each block is then chopped into 300 gram slabs (10.5 oz) and excess almond oil filtered out before being vacuum packed.

Another variety of *turrón*, becoming popular in the United Kingdom, is *torta* made in the same way as hard Alicante but poured into circular, cake size moulds without being cut, thereby leaving all the almonds whole. Other permitted types of *turrón* contain crude or toasted nuts such as walnuts and hazel nuts mixed with egg yolk and perhaps coconut or fruit. This category, which includes marzipan (see separate section), is known as *Turron de Obrador* (workshop) because of its special confection.

CHOCOLATE, FRUIT & NUTS

The largest manufacturer of *turrón* or nougat varieties, excluding the specific soft or hard types, is the 154 year old Lacasa company in Zaragoza in north central Spain, headed by the legendary pioneer, Carmen Echeverría, still working hard at 80. Last year Lacasa took 62.22% of the Spanish chocolate sweets market

with sales of 7,000m pta, 36% from sales of 850 tons of 28 varieties of mainly chocolate *turrón* which Lacasa was the first to launch in the 1950's.

In 1979 Lacasa inaugurated its new factory just outside Zaragoza with a highly mechanized production line that includes its sophisticated weapon, a 1,200m pta Hutt machine from Germany that can extrude virtually any shape or form as well as create layers or stuffings of individual flavors. For example, Irish coffee pralines are layered and taste like the real thing. Lacasa has also acquired the Mauri factory in Barcelona which produces 17 types of mainly dark chocolate Marcona *turrón* that are very popular in Catalonia. Lacasa also owns Bonbonera Vallisoletana in Valladolid that produces the Uña brand of boxed chocolates.

Pedro Arregui, export director, says that Lacasa exports have risen from 200m pta in 1991 to 390m pta last year to a projected 500m pta this year. The United States, Argentina, and Mexico are the major markets. In the Miami area, Lacasa will be advertised on Olé TV, a new cable tv channel, with 50 twenty second spots during the four weeks before this Christmas.

David Burns, the Texan marketing director of Lacasa, says: "Our success is variety with popular flavors. Also our distinctive black and gold packaging was most liked in market surveys." Lacasa launched its triangular Chocala, a delectable blend

of chocolate nougat with honey, with success in North America in 1991. Also selling well is Chocolate Chip, a bar in which Lacasa's best selling Lacasitos, multicolored sugarcoated chocolate drops, are cleverly inserted.

TOLEDO TRADITION

Delaviuda SA, founded in 1927 in Sonseca, near Toledo, central Spain, is the second largest Spanish owned producer of *turrón* varieties after Lacasa but takes the first position if both hard and soft *turrón* are included. Total variety sales were 700 tons last year including marzipan products (see separate section).

Jesús Alaba, marketing director of Delaviuda, says that exports were worth 370m pta last year, an increase of 120% on 1992. The major market was the US with 27%, followed by Argentina (17%), Mexico (15%) and Aldeasa Spanish duty free shops (11%).

"This year we hope to pass 500m in exports. Apart from joining the ICEX promotion, we supply point of sale displays, posters, organize tastings, and in Argentina we help our distributor with television commercials and magazine advertising," says Señor Alaba. "We have high hopes for the growing export market."

For the second successive year, ICEX will be financing 75% of a 70m pta campaign on Spanish television and radio in Miami, New York and Puerto Rico. Four leading *turrón* manufacturers

are supporting the generic campaign: Jacobs Suchard, Castillo de Jijona, Delaviuda and Sanchís Mira.

The major companies are forecasting export sales increases of up to a third this year after doubling exports in 1993. This proves there has been a spectacular revival of the great Spanish Christmas treat among Spanish emigrants, their descendants and Hispanics.

But the real success of any campaign is getting the Spanish *turrón* and marzipan on the shelves. Its production is strictly controlled by law in Spain and it is both the original and the best. In Spain most of the delicacies are sold in Christmas boxes, at hypermarkets and supermarkets. Impulse buying of the newer chocolate varieties is high. Such market penetration abroad will also widen the market to non-Spanish customers and they'll have a delicious Xmas surprise!

Edward Owen has worked as a journalist in Spain for the past 14 years and is the correspondent in Spain for The Times and the Daily Express in London as well as the South African Argus Group in Johannesburg. He has also contributed to Time magazine, Lookout and various travel books.



Photo: Pablo Neustadt/ ICEX

The ancient city of Toledo, 70 Km (44 miles) southwest of Madrid, was where centuries ago Arabs, Jews and Christians once lived happily together. And the everlasting fruit of this harmony can be seen in Toledo pastry shops where today delicious local marzipan (see Spain Gourmetour n°28) is offered in all shapes, sizes and combinations.

It had originally been brought to Spain by the Arabs, eaten to celebrate special ceremonies by the Sephardic Jews and is now munched on by Christians during the Easter and Christmas fiestas. Significantly the almond is one of the only two nuts mentioned in the Bible - the other is pistachio - and in the 4th century BC the mixing of almonds with honey to form a paste was chronicled in Greece. The Arabs in Toledo called their paste of sweet almonds and sugar *maulbaban*, meaning sitting king, because before roasting, it was imprinted with a coin showing a king seated on his throne.

Marzipan has also long been produced in Venice and France where it was made popular by an order of nuns producing *massépain*. German marzipan, as consumed in Britain, is mainly made from bitter almonds. Spain is now the world's largest producer of

marzipan with about a third from Toledo factories, and at nearby Sonseca, Delaviuda SA, the biggest manufacturer, boasts a museum.

MARZIPAN MUSEUM

The museum shows how Toledo marzipan was first made with the same formula used today, guaranteed by a *Denominación de calidad* law enforced by a regional regulatory council to ensure top quality. The exhibition shows small wooden mallets for cracking the sweet almond shells, how nuts were scalded by dipping an iron colander into boiling water and finally peeled on a wooden tray by rubbing them with cork. One pound (460 grams) of almonds was then mashed in a granite mortar with one pound of sugar. Oil from the almonds, so fine it is used to lubricate watches, helped bind the ingredients. The mixture was then refined by being rolled by a granite roller on a curved granite slab and then squashed between the granite rollers of a contraption resembling a clothes wringer. Finally the paste was molded or shaped into pretty figures and baked in a semispherical Moorish oven until slightly toasted on top.

Some of the most charming, and at the same



Photo: Pablo Neustadt/ ICEX

time highly suggestive, marzipan creations in Spain are *anguilas*, exquisitely presented serpents of marzipan usually given by a man to his lover at Christmas. At Casa Mira near the Puerta del Sol in Calle San Jerónimo, Madrid, one of the world's finest confectionery shops, *anguilas* have been made since 1855. The marzipan is rolled with a stuffing of egg yolk a snake-like shape up to one meter (3 feet) long which is then coiled and baked. Afterwards it is dipped in egg white to give it a shine before being finely decorated with glass eyes and painted with edible colors. Nestling in round gift boxes, the serpent cradles glacé fruits.

MARZIPAN PRODUCTION

Delaviuda was founded in 1927 and from its modern factory is now the Spanish market leader producing last year 20 million kilos (19,643 tons) of 50 varieties of *turrón* and marzipan products, billing 20,000m pta. Marcona almonds arrive already peeled from Alicante and are ground and kneaded raw with sugar, glucose (for preservation) and water in huge 600 kg mixers, heated to 100C (212F) for sterilizing and poured out at 50C (122F). "The secret is to ensure

the mix has the right moisture," says master chef Hipólito Martín, 51, who has worked for Delaviuda for 26 years, ten of them mixing.

The paste is put in 25 kg (55 lbs) barrels and then fed between rollers and pressed into molds that drop the little figures on to a conveyor belt. This passes through an oven for precisely 3.8 minutes with temperatures reaching 304C (573F). Lightly toasted on top, the marzipan is then brushed with syrup and passed through a cooling tunnel. Finally they are automatically wrapped and packed in boxes of 200 (7 oz) and 400 grams (14 oz). Delaviuda also makes marzipan cakes and various marzipan sweets that can be with pine kernels or mixed or stuffed with egg yolk, like hand rolled *Huesos de Santo*, Saint's Bones, first crafted by nuns in Spanish convents. Often marzipan was made by religious orders when there was no flour to make bread, *pan* in Spanish.

"*Turrón* and marzipan are two symbols totally inseparable from Christmas," says Jesús Alaba, Delaviuda marketing director, "If we say *turrón* and marzipan, we are saying at the same time, Christmas."

The Wine List:

The showcase of wines

This is the last in the series of articles on the wine served in restaurants. After the salesman (the sommelier) and the warehouse (the wine cellar), the showcase (the wine list) comes next and it must be considered as something more than just a mere physical support. The wine offer is a very important factor to take into account when judging the category of a restaurant.

Text: **Andrés Proensa**
Still Life: **Menchu Arttime**

Translator: **Muriel Feiner**
Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**



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VALBUENA DE DUERO (Valladolid) España

Most of the better wine lists seek a sense of balance between the customers' demands and the promotion of new and good labels.

One of the most noteworthy shortcomings of a good number of classic Spanish restaurants of late has been their tendency to overlook the need to create the perfect match between wine and cuisine. Their traditional offer of wines responded to a long but not highly varied list, which relied heavily on the Rioja wines and professed a certain loyalty to very specific brand names.

The classic wine list supposedly responded to the customers' demands. A clear case of this is that of the Mesón de la Villa, in Aranda de Duero, about 150 kilometers (100 miles) north of Madrid. Aranda is considered as the capital of the Denomination of Origin of Ribera del Duero, one of the most prestigious areas of Spanish red wines, and the Mesón de la Villa offers absolutely all of the wines of this Denomination. However, theirs is in no way a monographic list. It maintains a classic offer with about 20,000 bottles of wine from all over Spain, among which the Riojas take priority. One of the reasons is that the Mesón de la Villa is a strategic point on the Madrid - Basque Country route. Eugenio Herrero, the owner of the Mesón, tells us: "Many Basques pass by here, clients for many years, who for the most part remain faithful to the Rioja wines and refuse to change."

SCARCE REGIONALISM

Generally speaking, the traditional wine lists included several wines from Penedes, Galicia and Navarre, some *cavas* (most of the time semi-dry) and the occasional sherry or

Montilla-Moriles, which were frequently the only exceptions. The presence of foreign wines was a rarity which bordered on an extravagance.

In addition, in wine producing regions, it so happened that the local wines were often included, but without much conviction. The offering of local wines is not as frequent a custom as it might be in the winegrowing regions of other countries. Nowadays, greater attention is being paid to regional wines, although they are still forced to share the scene with those of other areas. Customers remain faithful to certain regions, sometimes regardless of their own local wines.

NEW WINE LISTS

The initiation of an evolution towards greater diversity was noted at the beginning of the eighties. There were many factors involved in this evolution, such as the improvement of the average level of quality of the restaurants and a greater appreciation of regional products. However, the most important cause was certainly the arrival of a growing number of labels of quality wine. The attainment of popularity and recognition by the new wine producing regions and the revolutionary modernization experienced by other areas furnished a good number of new alternatives as regards quality wines.

If, up until the eighties, only the Rioja wines and few others, with very specific names, monopolized the image of quality wines in Spain, as of that time, new areas and many new labels began to appear on the scene.

We must remember that sev-

eral of the most prestigious Denomination of Origin arose less than fifteen years ago. As clear examples, we can mention that the Denomination of Origin of Rueda was launched in 1980, that of Ribera del Duero in 1982, Somonstano in 1985 and Rías Baixas in 1988, to cite just four of the new, prestigious wine producing areas in Spain.

We must also consider the new activity going on in the majority of the classic regions, which today bear very little resemblance to the way they were ten years ago.

The advent of restaurants with specialized staff and a spectacular improvement, both in the wine list as well as in the preparation of the dining room staff, became necessary. Such improvements are being adopted to a greater or lesser extent nowadays. The profession of sommelier is doing very well and the wine lists have ceased to be a single sheet of paper or cardboard.

The new wine lists are well structured, beyond just the mere classification of whites - rosés - reds, and they offer a lot more information. The new trend calls for more details on each one of the wines and it is not infrequent to include a brief description and even a gastronomical recommendation. In this way, the wine list serves as a complement and, at times, even a substitute for the sommelier.

A HAPPY MARRIAGE BETWEEN WINE AND FOOD

Of course, the creation of a wine list is taking more and more into account the characteristics of the cuisine. In Spain, there are many wine lists which show a special

interest in encouraging the right marriage between the wines and the dishes served. We might single out the perfection of the wine offer of the restaurant El Bulli, of Rosas (Gerona). It does not have one of the largest wine cellars, nor is its selection extremely extensive, but the list does include a very balanced selection, featuring representatives from many Spanish areas, along with foreign wines. Its list is stimulating and attractive, with little known names, but its wine selections are intended to combine perfectly with what is offered on the plate. El Bulli has the added merit of serving a very modern cuisine, at times with a somewhat daring conception. It displays a great deal of imagination and requires a similar amount of talent in order to seek just the right wines for such a personal cuisine.

FOUR BASIC TYPES

We can discern among the wine lists of the most prestigious restaurants in Spain, four more or less well-defined types: a classic, updated line, a regional list, an erudite list and a balanced list.

The king of the classic wine lists is, without a doubt, Rekondo (San Sebastián). It includes no less than 700 different names and vintage wines. It relies heavily on the Riojas, as corresponds to its location in the Basque Country, an area totally surrendered to the charms of the Rioja wines, but it does not refuse to include representatives from the vast majority of Spanish regions and the best international names.

This spectacular wine of-

There are many wine lists which indicate a special interest in creating the perfect marriage between food and wine.

fering goes hand in hand with a magnificent, traditional Basque cooking: elaborated with top quality products which naturally find their ideal companions in many of the wines on the list.

Along this line is Zaragoza's La Matilde, with more than 900 references from all the Spanish regions and from the main countries of the world. "Many people", José Antonio Puyuelo tells us, "come to La Matilde more for the wine than for the cooking. In fact a lot of customers order the wine first and then, the food."

There are many other splendid wine lists following the classic line, influenced to a greater or lesser extent by a passion for Rioja wines. We can single out several, such as that of Carles Camós, whose Hotel - Restaurant Big Roc, in Playa de Aro, is one of the best and loveliest of all Catalonia.

Another classic example, with a certain regional inclination, is the Mesón de Cándido, in Segovia, to the north of Madrid. Three great wine lists, noteworthy in quantity and quality and situated entirely in the traditional line, are those of the Bermeo of Bilbao (the Basque Country), Bodega Cigaleña, of Santander (Cantabria), and the Marisquería Santiago, of Marbella (Malaga). The three are found among the best wine lists of Spain, although they maintain older criteria and the Riojas predominant in their offering.

REGIONAL CHARACTER

The La Merced restaurant is an excellent example of the wine list specializing in the region. It is located in Logroño, the capital of La

Rioja, and its wine cellar contains products from all the large and average size (and even many small) wineries of the Rioja Denomination of Origin.

However, its list also makes room for several representatives from almost all the Spanish Denominations of Origin and several examples of the best international enology.

Something similar also occurs with the Adolfo restaurant, in Toledo (40,000 bottles in the wine cellar and more than 200 references on the list). The traditional offer has been combined with the regional wines. Toledo, to the south of Madrid, is the capital of Castile - La Mancha, an important wine-growing region, the producer of half of Spain's wine.

Adolfo's wine list has been tending towards a certain regionalism as the wines of the region's Denomination of Origin are improving: Almansa, La Mancha, Mentrída and Valdepeñas.

However, it maintains a varied wine list because as Adolfo Muñoz, the owner, explains: "We cannot ignore the great wines of other areas and we have to respect the fact that thousands of visitors come to Toledo every day, from other regions and other countries." Even though this type of list is not very frequent, other examples can be mentioned, such as the La Fragua and Panero restaurants, of Valladolid, which devote special attention to the wines of Castile and, especially, El Mirador de les Caves, in the heart of Penedes (Catalonia), with a monographic offer of Penedés wines, in which the *cavas* take on special importance.

The erudite list, in turn, includes certain novelties in regard to quality, coupled with the intention of promoting new discoveries. A fine example of an erudite list is what is offered by La Cava Real, of Madrid. "We like," says Jesús Flores, the manager - sommelier of the restaurant, "to discover and promote new quality wines." However, he does not forget about the need for the perfect combination of wine - food: Jesús Flores is a noted researcher in this area and a defender of new wine - gastronomy marriages.

This category would also include what we would call wine lists by authors. On many occasions, the author is not a specialist in the strictest sense of the word, but he is, let us say, an enthusiast with extensive knowledge and a great deal of curiosity, who often presents very interesting subtleties and variations.

A fine example would be the wine offered at Viridiana, in Madrid, which responds to the very personal fancies of the restaurant's owner, Abraham García. "I only sell those wines which not only go well with my cooking, but also tell me something. They can be wines which have accompanied me on a gallant adventure or some other pleasant experience which I wish to remember over and over again and share with my customers."

SEEKING THE HAPPY BALANCE

The majority of the better wine lists seek a deliberate equilibrium between the customers' demands, which always tend towards the more established brand

names, and the promotion of new labels. The results would be the fourth type of list, that of balance.

Jerónimo Ingelmo, the sommelier/manager of Las Cuatro Estaciones in Madrid, discovers "increasingly fewer label-oriented customers and fewer exclusive consumers of one zone or type of wine. Most ask for a specific 'profile' of a wine and then, leave themselves open for recommendations. There are those who are extremely curious and others who are adventurous. The tendency of our list is to rely on representatives of at least the most noteworthy Denomination of Origin."

In El Amparo, also in Madrid, the wine list is a real book, with more than 500 references, bound in a volume of avant-garde design. Luis Miguel Martín, the sommelier, prefers "to have Spanish wines, but I do not want to put up any borders. El Amparo's wine list also has representatives from the most important wine producing countries."

Custodio López Zamorra, of Zalacaín, one of Madrid's classics, works with a wine list which includes more than 400 references, but he seems to use it very little. "People look at the list", says Custodio, "and then they put themselves in my hands. Many customers always want something new and they seek my advice."

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

Editor's Note: We would like to thank Antiguiedades Rodríguez for lending the silverware for the still life.

Winetasting alternatives

If we talk about wines in restaurants, it would be unfair to neglect to mention other establishments which cannot be included among the top restaurants, although they are places where wine definitely takes on special importance. They are more than just wine bars, because the wine offering is ac-

companied by solid food in the form of *tapas* or aperitives, with which one can create an informal meal around the wine. They are the latest fashion in the wine world and among the most outstanding, we must mention the initiative of a true pioneer, Paco Parejo, in the center of Madrid. His place is called Aloque and it is the site for frequent monographic sessions and courses on winetasting which are then culminated with an informal lunch or dinner. More recent is the opening,

also in Madrid, of La Taberna del Sumiller, inspired by Luis Miguel Martín, the sommelier of El Amparo. A very broad and select wine offering is accompanied by portions of the most typical Spanish dishes (magnificent, homemade *morcilla* or black blood sausage) and by Iberian pork products. In the monumental city of Cuenca, 165 kilometers (100 miles) east of Madrid, La Ponderosa is an excellent alternative to the traditional restaurants. Standing at the

bar (there are no tables here), one can enjoy succulent portions of sweetbreads, mushrooms, pork sausage, etc., together with a very ample wine cellar. And finally, we must mention the Bar Juli, of Rentería (Guipúzcoa), in the Basque Country. Here, the Aguirre family offers two dozen wines served by the glass and accompanied by a wide and sophisticated variety of classic *pinchos*, the Basque version of the famous Andalusian *tapas*.

A guide to the restaurants mentioned in this series

ADOLFO

Granada, 6
45001 TOLEDO
Tel.: (25) 22 73 21

ALOQUE

Torreçilla del Leal, 20
28012 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 528 36 62

ARZAK

Alto de Miracruz, 21
20001 SAN SEBASTIAN
(Guipúzcoa)
Tel.: (43) 28 55 93

* BAR JULI

Viteri, 27
20100 RENTERIA
(Guipúzcoa)
Tel.: (43) 51 28 87

BERMEO

Ercilla, 37
48011 BILBAO (Vizcaya)
Tel.: (4) 443 88 00

BODEGA CIGALEÑA

Daoiz y Velarde, 19
39003 SANTANDER
Tel.: (42) 21 30 62

CARLES CAMOS BIG ROC

Barri dels Fanals, 5
17250 Playa de Aro
(Gerona)
Tel.: (72) 81 80 12

CUENLLAS

Ferraz, 5
28008 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 542 56 21

EL AMPARO

Puigcerda, 8
28001 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 431 64 56

EL BULLI

Cala Montjoi
17480 ROSAS (Gerona)
Tel.: (72) 25 76 51

EL CASTELL

Ctra. Lleida, km. 129
25700 SEO DE URGELL
(Lérida)
Tel.: (73) 35 07 04

EL CHURRASCO

Romero, 16
14003 CORDOBA
Tel.: (57) 29 08 19

EL MIRADOR DE LES CAVES

Ctra. Ordal, km. 4,5
08739 SUBIRATS
(Barcelona)
Tel.: (3) 899 31 78

LA CAVA REAL

Espronceda, 34
28003 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 442 54 32

LA FRAGUA

Paseo Zorrilla, 10
47006 VALLADOLID
Tel.: (83) 33 87 85

LA MATILDE

Casta Alvarez, 10
50003 ZARAGOZA
Tel.: (76) 43 34 43

LA MERCED

Marques de San Nicolas,
111
26001 LOGROÑO
Tel.: (41) 22 11 66

* LA PONDEROSA

San Francisco, 20
16002 CUENCA
Tel.: (69) 21 32 14

LAS CUATRO ESTACIONES

General Ibañez Ibero, 5
28003 MADRID
Tel. (1) 553 63 05

* LA TABERNA DEL SUMILLER

Victor de la Serna, 37
28016 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 359 85 95

MARISQUERIA SANTIAGO

Paseo Marítimo, 5
29600 MARBELLA (Málaga)
Tel.: (5) 277 00 78

MESON DE CANDIDO

Azoguejo, 5
40001 SEGOVIA
Tel.: (21) 42 81 02

MESON DE LA VILLA

Rodriguez Valcarcel, 3
09400 ARANDA DE DUERO
(Burgos)
Tel.: (47) 50 10 25

MESON PANERO

Marina Escobar, 1
47001 VALLADOLID
Tel.: (83) 30 16 73

REKONDO

Paseo Igueldo, 57
20008 SAN SEBASTIAN
(Guipúzcoa)
Tel.: (43) 21 29 07

RENO

Tuset, 27
08006 BARCELONA
Tel.: (3) 200 91 19

TORRE DEL REMEI

Cami Reial
17463 BOLVIR DE CERDANYA
(Gerona)
Tel.: (72) 14 01 82

VIRIDIANA

Juan de Mena, 14
28014 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 523 44 78

ZALACAIN

Alvarez de Baena, 4
28006 MADRID
Tel.: (1) 561 48 40

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Alameda Mazarredo, 17
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"Castile continues to depend greatly upon its climate, to the degree that if the Castilian sky appears to be so lofty it is probably because the Castilians have raised it, from having contemplated it so much." Miguel Delibes.



The Torreón is the jewel and emblem of Covarrubias. Admiring it is enough to take us back in history and we can easily imagine the raw reality of the 10th century.

COVARRUBIAS

AN OASIS IN THE HEART OF CASTILE

I read these words written by Delibes, - born in 1920 in Valladolid, he is, perhaps, the contemporary author who has best been able to capture the soul of Castile and its people - before undertaking my journey and on the way, I looked up over and over again in order to see just how high the sky really was. But I was not successful. You almost always find what you are looking for and see what you have been taught to see, but not this time. As I crossed the plains, the horizon looked farther and farther away, even though I seemed to be heading towards it, but the sky, that obstinate sky, continued to hang just above my head and I felt that all I had to do was

Text: **Diego Díaz**
Photos: **Fernando Briones/ICEX**
Translator: **Muriel Feiner**



Covarrubias is the pure white of its limestone façades and the wooden beams supporting its buildings. They are modest, rural homes, but ones which are, nevertheless, well cared for.

Off the Beaten Track (and IX)















COVARRUBIAS

stand on tip toes in order to touch the cottony clouds with my hands. The firmament appeared bright, transparent and thick, but never far away. It resembled a gigantic mirror, reflecting the river, the farmlands, the roads and the poplars, and transformed everything before my eyes, like an abstract painter, into a canvas of light blue, white and gray, streaked with rays of sunlight.

Autumn is an excellent season of the year for traveling in Spain. Temperatures are mild and the sun, which makes us desert the outdoors in summer, brightens up our every step. Autumn is deceiving, but it is not without its charm. It announces the approaching cold weather and snow, but it does so with warm colors and lukewarm rain. Its dusks are unique: they are gradual, with slowly changing skies and migrating birds; they are tempered, but with a sudden, nasty gust of wind which forces us to pull out a sweater, smelling of mothballs, from the back of the closet. Here we have a bittersweet cocktail of nostalgia and expectation, a cocktail which mixes the silly yellow joy of the dry leaves in the contrasting afternoon light, with their sadness, a few hours later, when they break off and fall into the mud. It is the season of the grape harvest and the slaughtering of the pigs, when the grapes are crushed and the sausages are prepared. The approaching winter, marking the initiation of a period of

rest, and the recent harvest are celebrated. Besides, in September, there is no town without its festivities in honor of the Virgin: it is the last opportunity to dance in the streets before being shut up in the house in front of the fireplace for the long, lethargic winter.

And just in case you have not realized it, my intention is to encourage you to travel through inland Spain during the autumn months, when all the summer hustle and bustle have subsided, the "summer vacationers" have all returned home and the towns have recovered their serenity and the locals, their customs. I am writing this article with a touch of autumn melancholy as well, for it is the last of this series. It need not necessarily be the last because there is no dearth of interesting towns off the beaten track, but something new is called for. Therefore, I would like you to accompany me through the lands of Castile, in fact, to its very core. Here a small county was born, which grew and grew through the vicissitudes of history, until it reached the size of an empire. Come with me to Covarrubias.

The town

Covarrubias is an oasis, even though there are no palm trees. Let me explain: as it is surrounded by mountains, this village is protected from the strong, cold winds, thanks to its natural defenses. The harsh climate of these lands becomes much milder here. The twin peaks of the Mamblas pro-

tect the town, which snuggles beside the Arlanza River. The waters appreciate the shade and the rustling of the many poplars and, in return, they flow along tranquilly and generously irrigate the many nearby orchards. Covarrubias enjoys the nickname of "Town of the Hundred Springs." It is not strange, then, that cherry trees abound. In spring, when winter is on the wane, their white flowers burst forth with joy and the friends I made during my visit have made me promise to return in that season so as not to miss such a joyous festival.

Covarrubias has 800 inhabitants, called *racheles*, an unusual appellation with no apparent relation to the toponym, for there is, in fact, none. It seems that *rachel* comes from the biblical name of Jacob's wife, who was famous for her beauty. It apparently occurred to the womanizer Count Fernán González to call the local women "*rachelas*" or "*rachels*" because he thought that they were so beautiful. His compliment stuck and it became extensive to anyone belonging to this village. In fact, Covarrubias owes its name to its many reddish caves — *cuevas rubias*—, which were carved out of the river walls by its waters. However, we should leave the curiosities aside for the moment and go for a walk.

The visit

Making a good entrance into any place, even if it is a forest, is not a trivial matter.

One of my superstitions is to size up and skirt around any spot, before selecting just the right entrance. In a forest, for example, I search for a very old tree, one which I look upon as a friendly doorman, and then, I choose the closest path to its branches in order to enter the woods, sure of having obtained its safe conduct or, at least, an initially good omen.

What we are looking for in Covarrubias is precisely beauty, the most beautiful entrance and the one which best sets the mood is the archway of the *Archivo del Adelantamiento de Castilla*. *Adelantado* is what the Governor of a border province —Castile was such a province at the time— was called, and *Adelantamiento* was the corresponding institution. The Archives were constructed in the middle of the 16th century by order of Felipe II, the project was drawn up by Juan de Herrera, the architect of the Monastery of El Escorial (see Spain Gourmetour, no. 31) and the work carried out by Juan de Vallejo. It is a solid, rectangular building, a bit of a monstrosity were it not for its eight buttresses which furnish it with a certain rhythm and character. The arch which spans it softens its severity, and invites us to cross beneath it. The King's coat of arms which proudly presides over the arch is obviously large, for it had to include in its quarters, the many states of the Spanish Empire. The Archives' valuable documentary, historic-



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graphic and even artistic treasures, in the case of its manuscripts — the oldest dating back to 950 —, are no longer kept here.

When we pass through the arch, a few steps farther on will bring us to the Plaza de Doña Urraca. It is the *Plaza Mayor* or Main Square, where one can find all the hustle bustle of the town and where the words of writer and political Dionisio Ridruejo (1912-1975) take on maximum veracity: "Covarrubias is more than a mere repertoire of illustrious monuments. It is an atmosphere, one of those atmospheres trapped in Time. And, besides, this square does not suffer, as do the vast majority of them, from the sadness of having been abandoned." No, there is no abandonment or melancholy here. It is a charming, active town. It was justly awarded the Silver Medal of "Europa Nostra" — from the UNESCO Foundation— due to the excellent state of conservation of its heritage. One merely has to observe the pure white of its limestone facades and the varnish which highlights the brownish color of the wooden beams supporting its buildings. They are modest, rural homes, but ones which are, nevertheless, well cared for. It is evident that their inhabitants are determined to assure that the beautiful geometry of their framework remains standing. The hotel, restaurant and town hall are found on the cobble stoned square, under the arcade, and it is the ideal place for conversing while enjoying an aperitive.

Almost adjacent is another square, that of Doña Sancha. Here we find a lovely popular dwelling of the 14th century which, like an old pirate, is supported in a most unusual manner on the four "wooden legs" — juniper pillars— of its portico. They say that there is a tunnel — blocked up today— in its basement which led to the *Torreón* or large fortified tower of Fernán González. This tower is, in fact, the jewel and emblem of Covarrubias. Admiring it is enough to take us back in history and we can easily imagine the raw reality of the 10th century, when this region was continually being subjected to military attacks. Count Fernán González had it reconstructed in that century on the site of an ancient fortress. This gigantic, Mozarabic structure, "almost blind", for it has no windows, had to face very hostile enemies, with its truncated pyramid of three meter thick walls, without decoration of any kind. Its brutal and dry beauty is overwhelming. It is indeed handsome but no one ever smiles before it, for it is handsome like granite or pure, hard steel, and it was the site of many sacrifices and bloody battles. When the roof was set in place, the tower lost its battlements, which made it look even more solemn and closed in. The legend surrounding it is not pleasant either: it is said that Doña Urraca was buried alive in narrow quarters opened up in the wall on the first floor. However, around the corner

from the irregular square of Doña Sancha, we come to the most harmonious area of all Covarrubias: the Plaza del Rey Chindasvinto, a romantic, landscaped corner. The statue dedicated to Princess Christine of Norway welcomes us, like a young hostess. A Norwegian princess in such a remote area? The inscription it bears leaves us even more perplexed: "She came to Spain in 1257." We will talk about her later on, because now it is the Collegiate Church of San Cosme and San Damián which attracts our attention. If the *Torreón* is the symbol of the city, the Collegiate Church is its treasure. Let us have a closer look.

In appearance, it is nothing more than a humble and inviting Gothic church (15th century), but its interior and its museum produce a wealth of emotions. The first of them is the light. We are accustomed to the tremendous back lighting which demands so much from photographers when they enter a church blinking their eyes; those sinister shadows and those almost burning stained glass windows. However, the light of the Collegiate Church is diffused and enveloping, thanks, above all, to the magnificent rose window, which has an enormous diameter compared with the size of the naves, and to the splendid reflection of its limestone, so white, and the diaphanous spaces of the chapels which face the nave without the conventional intention of being separated from it. The slender columns

glow with joy and we feel a giddy tingling as we look up their full height. This is Gothic! The Collegiate Church is an invitation to song rather than to whispering and surely, mass is "celebrated" in it.

A paradoxical joy, because the Collegiate Church is filled with the dead. There are more than thirty graves of illustrious persons and among the many sarcophagi, some stand out for their unique beauty. Those of Count Fernán González and his wife, Sancha, are located directly in the main altar. The latter demands our attention. It is a Roman tomb from the year 300, used "second hand" in order to hold the remains of the Countess. It is a real jewel of classic funerary art which must have received, in its day, the body of a magistrate. The medallion carved on the side, representing two patricians, is of great delicacy, as well as the bucolic scenes which accompany it. Another two tombs also stand out: that of the Abbot Garci Alonso (15th century), of florid Gothic, with a great wealth of detail and a certain smoothness which saves it from being overly elaborate, and that of Don Gonzalo Díaz (16th century), with a frontispiece in which the adoration of the Magi Kings is endearingly represented. Both tombs are the work of Aquino Egas, the engraver of the Catholic Monarchs.

Hopefully you will be lucky enough to hear during your visit the sound of the church's small organ. It is a

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17th century relic with wood decorated in bright, candid colors. It is considered a "stradivarius" of an organ. As proof of it, François Chapelet, the great organist, obtained the grand prize of the French record industry on two occasions, thanks to his talent and the sound of the trumpets of this jewel.

The Cloister

"A complete quadrilateral allows the shade to play with the sun in the four corners and come out the victor." Bonifacio Zamora.

There is no more peaceful place than the Cloister. The silence, the flowers, the murmuring of the fountain, the warbling of the birds. The Cloister of the Collegiate Church dates back to the 16th century and I especially like the wild aspect of its gardens. A very austere tomb in one of its corridors guards the remains of Princess Christine, the daughter of the King of Norway Haakon Haakonson. How did she get here?

King Alfonso X (1221-1284) aspired, upon the death of William of Holland, to the throne of the Holy Germanic Roman Empire. He needed the support of the Norwegian king and in order to obtain it, he arranged for the king's daughter to marry one of his brothers. At least he allowed the presumably unfortunate young girl to choose from among them. After the long trip, Prince Felipe was selected and the couple were married in Valladolid in 1258. Christine died in Seville four years later at the age of 28,

yearning perhaps for the greenness and the rain of her native Norway. Her remains, which had been moved to Covarrubias, were discovered in 1958. The coroner's report describes a corpulent young girl, 1.72 meters (5.6 feet) tall, which must have been quite outstanding for the epoch. I imagine that the Spanish nobles felt a bit of a complex beside this "Snow White". A bell which hangs beside her tomb promises a boyfriend to any young girl who rings it. "What an empty, vacant look in your eyes, without your frozen lakes, without your fjords, without the remote lushness of your forests! (...) Your hidden, petrified, lack of affection, your impossible return." Antonio Popetta, local writer.

The Museum

In addition to what we have described in the Collegiate Church, we still have to visit the rooms of the museum. There is gold and silver work, clothing, documents. I can recommend the Mudéjar coffered ceiling (15th century) of the Chapter House, a three-piece suit of green velvet embroidered in silk and brocade (15th century), part of the trousseau of the unfortunate Christine and a 17th century ivory Christ. However, it is in regard to paintings that we find true jewels. We must inevitably single out the panel "Christ Resurrected", by Diego de la Cruz (15th century). The pathetic expression of that Jesus is so realistic that it almost trembles and what is more sur-

prising; it looks at you and at the camera, as a result of an aesthetic recourse, highly unusual for the epoch! The brilliant colors—and it has not even been restored!—, the intelligent composition and the magnificent finish make this a truly classic work.

Afterwards—why not!—, the "Virgin of the Book", by Van Eyck (15th century), which is one of those very warm Flemish interiors in which the religious theme becomes domestic. The magnificent perspective and the open windows in no way disrupt the intimacy of that Baby Jesus who is looking at a book in his mother's arms and prevents the atmosphere from becoming too closed in, despite the abundant detail and its exquisite meticulousness.

Following these works, we should mention those coming from the Church of Santo Tomás: three Spanish-Flemish panels (15th century) by the excellent Diego de la Cruz: "The Visitation", "St. Lucy" and "Mary Magdalene". If you like Renaissance painting they should not be missed. And two by Alonso de Sedano: "The Decapitation of St. Thomas" and another in which an unusual legend is depicted: The King of India invites the Saint to dinner. He refuses to eat pork, as he is Jewish and a servant—who is not at all tolerant of superstitious people—slaps him because of it. In that moment, a dog enters the room and bites off the sacrilegious hand of the servant and this scene is what is represented

in the painting.

"Last but not least", as the saying goes, a panel by Berruguete (15th century) in which St. Cosme and St. Damien, doctors, transplant a black leg to a white man (!), a work of great delicacy. There is also a 15th century Flemish "Pietà", a twin, but far more interesting, than the adjacent Castilian one of the same century.

I will finally cite the work considered the masterpiece of the Collegiate Church: a spectacular triptych by Gil de Siloé, a Flemish sculpture in polychrome wood, which represents the Magi Kings (15th century). Its size and excellent state of conservation are surprising, but I feel that it has excessive technique, and limited inspiration. Rigid, almost like a caricature, I prefer, in any event, one of the paintings which decorates the doors of the triptych, in which St. Cosme and St. Damien are represented. They have been decapitated, but are, nevertheless, standing up and holding their respective heads in their hands. And, speaking of sculptures, we should not miss the carvings of the Virgin of La Redonda and the Virgin of Mamblas (13th century) and their sweet smiles.

Let us go outside again and take a walk along the shores of the Arlanza River, beside a section of the ramparts (10th century) which has resisted the passage of time and man, so that we can digest in our minds the recently contemplated beauties. Just as on other occasions, I do not cease to be amazed

at what I have seen today, and I can't help but think about what must have been the ancient wealth of this town, considering the many thefts, wars and spoliation it has suffered. When we reach the bridge, we should turn right in order to head towards the Plaza del Obispo Peña (the illustrious son of the town and Archbishop of Quito who lived during the 16th century). It is the most genuine corner of Covarrubias. Very close by is the Church of Santo Tomás (15th century), but it is closed to the public. If you want, you can walk up its Renaissance staircase and if not, I, nevertheless, suggest that you talk with the priest, Francisco Javier Gómez Oña. He is often the guide at the Collegiate Church and, as he is so kind, he will become your best and most erudite host.

History

Covarrubias was supposedly inhabited as of 1000 B.C. The first historical reference is to the presence of a Celt Iberian tribe: the *Turmódigos*. The Romans constructed the first tower where the present one now stands and the Visigothic, King Chindasvinto, built a primitive church (7th century), where the Collegiate Church is located today. It is believed that this king put up the ramparts around the city, but that they were destroyed by the Arabs at the beginning of the year 700. As a result of the Moslem invasion, the entire area became "no man's land" and its settlers fled to the mountains in

the North. Two hundred years of abandonment and silence followed.

At the beginning of the year 900, Alfonso III of Asturias, in the North of Spain, managed to extend the border of his dominions to the South, until the Duero River. This became the natural border between Moors and Christians. Following along the Carolingian model, many different counties were created in this *marca* or border zone. The King rewarded his paladins for their services by granting them a title, lands and autonomy. They, in turn, took charge of the repopulation and the defense. The Arlanza Valley corresponded to Count Gonzalo Fernández. Thanks to him, Covarrubias was reborn as an important defensive stronghold before the frequent Islamic forays. Cantabrians, Basques and Mozarabs — Christians in Moslem territory— went to establish themselves there as colonists, attracted by the offer of fertile lands and the status of free farmers.

Gonzalo Fernández's son, Fernán González, is the great historical personage of the town. The current Town Hall was one of his homes and he rebuilt the superb tower. Fernán González, the Count of Lara and a clever man, took advantage of the fact that his lord, the King of León, dedicated all his efforts to fighting against the King of Navarre, and so, he annexed the closest counties and proclaimed himself the independent Count of Castile (960) —the name is due to the many castles characteristic of this border area—. His independence implied the hereditary nature of the title and the ownership, and a greater military and taxation autonomy. In summary, he created a new kingdom, but without calling it such, so as not to pose a direct challenge to the King. *Cherchez la femme*, says the old French adage. Behind Fernán's political wisdom, we find his mother, Muniadona, nicknamed the *Condesísima* or High Countess. In fact, women played

a very important role in the following period, that of greatest historical relevance of Covarrubias.

Castile's independence was consolidated. The war receded towards the South and agriculture prospered. The counts enjoyed hunting, war and intrigue, but they preferred to leave the unpleasant administrative tasks in the hands of the clergymen. Of course, every family turned over one of its members to the Church, even if it was only as the "President of the Board of Directors". For example, and with this purpose in mind, Garci Fernández, Fernán González's son, created the *Infantado* or Appanage of Covarrubias (978) for his eight year old daughter, Doña Urraca. The girl took vows of chastity and became an abbess, although she was, in fact, a laywoman, of the Monastery of San Cosme and San Damián. The *Infantado* administered an important cultural, agricultural and stock breeding wealth, for it covered an enormous extension of properties, towns (more than seventy), monasteries, mills, etc. It also bolstered the repopulation of the land based on granting privileges and tax exemptions. Three tombs at the main altar of the Collegiate Church contain the remains of three princesses, three single, virgin women who ruled all this wealth.

However, at the end of the 12th century, everything changed. Alfonso VIII dismantled the *Infantado* or Appanage, partitioning its



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possessions and tax collection rights. For forty-two years, abandonment and desolation ruled. Fortunately, Fernando III, his grandson, restored the lost hegemony of the Appanage which was as of then ruled by abbots, instead of abbesses, and which remained under the direct protection of the Vatican. The first abbot would be Don Gonzalo and he was succeeded by Prince Felipe, a young man with a brilliant career who had studied in the Sorbonne, and had St. Albert Magnus as his teacher and St. Thomas Aquinas as his companion. At twenty

years of age, he was named Abbot, even though he had not received his sacred orders, but he soon renounced his ecclesiastic benefits in order to marry ... Christine of Norway. After him, however, the successive abbots would all be true clergymen. Prosperity returned to Covarrubias: the privileges were recovered and so, the profits of their productive cereal and wool industries no longer left the region. The 15th and 16th centuries were those of maximum splendor and those to which the town owes its current appearance. A well-to-do class of clergymen and no-

bles was born, which promoted urban development. In 1590, Covarrubias was hit by a mortal plague and it requested help from Francisco Valles, a native son and royal doctor of Felipe II, who was nicknamed "the Divine". The bad crop harvest only made the situation worse. Valles ordered the ramparts to be demolished, in order to ventilate the city. It was a useless effort, and from two thousand inhabitants, only one hundred and seventy survived.

The calamities continued: a fire in the 18th century and the repeated sacking of the town during the different

wars. The Church was losing its power: in 1759, the closing of the Abbey was decreed and, in 1851, the Collegiate Church was eliminated and converted into a parish church.

The last misfortune—a new fire—occurred in 1942. From then on, Covarrubias has only seen its peaceful existence "upset" by visitors who come to admire its beautiful landmarks.

Diego Díaz is a freelance journalist and photographer and collaborates with various publications.

Recommendations

Gastronomy:

Two specialties must be singled out: the roast baby lamb, which is exquisite throughout the region. My advice is that on the way to Covarrubias, you stop at "Casa Antón", in Lerma, in order to try it. It is really the only dish which is served in its typical, family style dining room and is certainly the best lamb I have ever tasted.

The *olla podrida* (rotten stew): the name of this dish is terrible, but it has an excellent flavor. It is a stew of red beans, accompanied by *chorizo* sausage, black blood (*morcilla*) sausage, lean meat and bacon. Order it at the Mesón Galín, or at its branch, the Galo. They are the best restaurants in Covarrubias; Galín is more popular, and Galo more refined, but the quality of their cuisine is identical.

Accommodation:

The Hotel Arlanza is a National Tourism Inn or *Parador* and is set in a restored medieval building. The wood panelling makes it very cozy. The large size of its rooms is appreciated. Anyone who wants more intimacy can request the cute little attic rooms. Located in the Plaza Mayor, the Hotel organizes medieval dinners on Saturdays.

Holidays:

The San Cosme and San Damián festivities, as of September 26th, which celebrate the Grape Harvest. The most unusual event is the "*Rueda Chespona*", an ancestral dance in which all the local residents join hands forming a circle.

Excursions:

The surrounding area of Covarrubias is as interesting or

maybe even more so than Covarrubias itself. Everything we are mentioning below is located less than 50 kilometers (32 miles) away.

Art:

Santo Domingo de Silos! the monastery which has become world famous for the Gregorian chants of its monks. It has the most beautiful Romanesque cloister I have ever seen. In addition, the beautiful Visigothic sanctuary of the village of Quintanilla de las Viñas, with its delicate bas-reliefs. It is found in an isolated setting, with a marvelous view.

Ruins:

Very close to Covarrubias, the remains of what was the grandiose Monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza would have surely inspired Lord Byron on a moonlit night. This

is a ghostly, nostalgic and moving place.

Nature:

La Hoz de la Yecla. Just two kilometers (1.2 miles) from Silos is a narrow canyon carved out of the rock by the Mataviejas River, which can be visited thanks to a walkway. Immense walls of rock rise up above our heads, birds of prey fly about and the water roars at our feet. We find ourselves amidst a splendid forest of savins.

Archaeology:

Clunia was an important Roman city of about 70,000 inhabitants. Scarcely ten per cent has been excavated at present, but it already astonishes us: the forum, the thermal baths, the theater, and, above all, some very beautiful mosaics. It is located on a hill close to Peñalba de Castro.

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



66 CHILTERN STREET, LONDON WIN 1PR



THE NEW-WAVE TROPICALS

Text: **Vicky Hayward**

WRITING IN 1589 OF THE NEW FRUITS HE TASTED IN THE NEW WORLD, FATHER JOSÉ ACOSTA EXPLAINED TO HIS READERS THAT SUCH WAS THE VARIETY 'IT WERE IMPOSSIBLE TO INTREAT OF THEM ALL.' TODAY, CENTURIES AFTER THE PRICKLY PEAR AND TOMATO REACHED THE OLD WORLD THROUGH SPANISH PORTS, A NEW WAVE OF TROPICAL AND SUBTROPICAL EXOTICS - FROM THE AMERICAS AND ELSEWHERE - IS COMING TO EUROPE IN SPANISH HANDS.

Still Lifes: **Menchu Artime**

Photos: **Antonio de Benito**



Spain's capacity to produce so many fruits is a mirror of its unique range of microclimates.

If you drive along the Andalusian coastline, from western Almeria to Cadiz, you will find lush new rivers of green foliage running from the mountains towards the coastal strip. They tell the story of tropical fruit growing, which in the last four decades has boomed from a few avocado and cherimoya groves to cover 13,000 hectares (32,110 acres) and produce 10 million pesetas worth of fruit a year. The Canaries, too, had its own, smaller boom.

A UNIVERSITY OF WEATHER

Spain's capacity to produce so many of these fruits is a mirror of its unique range of microclimates. In the north, kiwi flourish in the damp, mild rias of Galicia; in the Ebro Valley are orchards of peaches, paraguayas or nashi pears; far to the south are the balmy Canaries, with winter temperatures rarely dropping below 12_C (53_F), where the banana is king.

Within each such area lie smaller pockets. The drive from Almeria to Cadiz in Andalusia takes you from desert-like plains, past the humid Costa Tropical between Motril and Almuñecar to the Malaga coast - all protected by inland sierras which keep cold northern winds and frosts at bay. Here, the microclimate can change from one valley to the next. And further down the coast again is Huelva's strawberry-country.

Today's fruit growers are not the first to have realized the possibilities of these microclimates. In Moslem times, sugar cane, pomegranates, bananas and small green mangoes grew well in Andalusia with the help of Arab irrigation systems.

Then came the conquistadores. They brought back guavas, prickly pears and later the cherimoya; Bernardo Cobo claimed in his *History of the New World* that he had the first fruit brought to Peru from Mexico in 1629. The specimens in botanic, monastic and aristocratic gardens multi-

plied in the 19th century, when emigrants to Cuba and Venezuela brought back and planted mango, papaya, and avocado seeds. In Andalusia, the trees lent a shady colonial air to towns; in the Canaries, they also bore fruit.

MICROSCOPES AND MARKETS

But it was the application of systematic scientific research that allowed fruit growers to begin realizing the possibilities of these crops some forty years ago. First came the avocado. At experimental farms in Malaga, Granada and Tenerife, new varieties were acclimatized, selected and improved. Further research into pruning, fertilisers, soil maintenance, pests, pollinating and irrigation in the 1973-85 was also fundamental to growers' success. Today, the farms, such as La Mayora in Algorrobo, are constantly researching other fruits and act as seed banks, while field workers relay advances back to producers.

Growers have also been propelled along by the expanding European market. The search for new tastes, healthy eating habits and the opening of trade borders have made 'exotic' fruits an everyday sight in European markets. Transport innovations, such as the cool chain system, and geographic proximity give Spanish fruits an added advantage, allowing them to be left longer on the tree than in the tropics and reach prime ripeness. An Andalusian avocado reaches Rungis market, Paris, by refrigerated truck 30 hours after picking; a top quality Canarian mango can arrive by plane in within four hours.

THE AVOCADO: BUTTER FROM THE WOOD

It is the avocado - called by the Aztecs *ahuacatl* or 'butter from the wood' - that has transformed southern landscapes more than any of its other fruits. Groves there now cover nearly 9,000 square hectares (22, 239 acres). On a smaller

The search for new tastes and healthy eating have made tropical fruits an everyday sight in Europe.



The valleys between Almuñecar and Motril are home to the biggest cherimoya plantation in the world.

scale, it also flourishes in the Canaries, especially on La Palma and Tenerife, producing smaller quantities of superb quality fruits.

Now so familiar that it's hardly an exotic, the avocado is the easiest going of the new crops. Pests are rare, fungicides are unnecessary and harvesting time is flexible. Ripening finishes after picking. Since a steady water supply is crucial, plantations have computer controlled irrigation, with on-screen checks of any changes in the required levels. The fruit, cut by hand (with ladders for larger trees), is taken to warehouses where it's brushed to polish up oils in its skin and graded by size. Damaged avocados with cuts or rubbed 'crocodile skin' are discarded and stoneless fruit from unfertilized female flowers, called cocktail avocados, is put to one side.

By the 1980s boom, when over 500 hectares (1,235 acres) of avocados were planted a year, growers were able to work around consumer tastes. Today the purply-black, alligator skinned Hass accounts for 50% of production in Andalusia and 75% in the Canaries, while smooth skinned varieties such as Fuerte and Bacon extend the season. More than half of production - nearly 40,000 Tm - is exported; over 75% goes to France, next comes the UK, which favours smooth skinned varieties. There is also a growing specialist market in northern Europe for organic fruit, which accounts for some 15% of production.

In recent years, the main development has been the strengthening of the chain linking growers to the foreign marketplace - called the *línea de confianza*, or line of trust, by exporter Antonio García Puertas. Growers now look to exporters, whether private or cooperative, for agricultural advice, quality control and coordinated harvesting to supply a steady flow to the overseas market. Moves are underway in Andalusia to organize a similar label guaranteeing size, quality and ripeness.

Now there are fewer new plantations - although they have spread as far west as Huelva - but as those already planted come to maturity over the next five years, production will increase to reach an estimated 100,000 Tm by the end of the century.

THE CHERIMOYA: NATURE'S MASTERPIECE

A native of the high Andes, the cherimoya is curiously little known in Europe outside Spain, perhaps because in appearance it is misleadingly similar to the custard apple. Close relatives, they share the same smooth, green, multi-faceted skin with large black seeds embedded in the white flesh. But the cherimoya's creamy intensity - somewhere between strawberry, banana and pineapple - and flowery aroma makes the custard apple pale into blandness. The naturalist Haenke called it 'the masterpiece of nature'.

Grown on a small scale since well before the avocado, the cherimoya has always been highly rated by the Spaniards. But the microclimate sets the limits of the area under cultivation, currently some 3,350 hectares (8,278 acres) on the mainland. As a result, the verdant trees with fragrant yellow flowers fill every nook and cranny of the protected valleys between Motril and Almuñecar where they grow at their best in a delicately balanced, frost free microclimate. The largest plantation in the world, it is said to produce fruit of higher quality than the Andes. Nearly all is consumed in Spain.

In the last twenty years, yields per hectare have tripled. Trees are more densely planted and fruit-bearing has risen enormously since cross-pollination by spray gun or insects was introduced. Varieties - Fino de Jale, Blanco and Campas - have not changed although research has widened the genetic base, making the flesh less perishable and reducing the number of seeds.

It was the application of scientific research that allowed fruit growers to start planting avocados and mangoes.



The Canarian climate comes into its own for the full tropicals: the mango, guava and papaya.

THE EXPANDING TROPICAL FRUIT BOWL

As the new subtropicals flourished in the 1980s, fruit growers began to diversify, turning their attention first to mangoes for the home market. Production has been rising since the beginning of the decade; 164Tm were exported in 1993. Quality is also improving, as researchers work towards thinner-skinned, less fibrous fruit.

But the full potential may be much greater. Andalusian varieties are still being adapted to the subtropical climate, and some growers think the scale of cultivation could double in the next decade, particularly for a midwinter season. In the Canaries, mango, papaya and guava flourish and are not expanding only because profits do not compete with those offered by the banana.

But the quality of fruit there is superb. Canarian mangoes and papayas - Hawaiian varieties - are exported by air. The improvement of guava varieties, increased agricultural care and the extension of their season through paced harvesting is also opening up their commercial possibilities.

The most recent additions to the mainland tropical range, already appearing in shops and markets around Spain, are thin-skinned limes and kumquats. Persimmons have been around for much longer in Granada, where they are dried in strings, but have reappeared as kakis, while loquats, grown on a greater scale in Levante, have early season production in subtropical areas.

THE NEXT GENERATION

While large volume production will center on the avocado and cherimoya for at least the next five years, new fruits are being tried all the time. Smaller niche markets exist for passion fruit, its purple-skinned varieties grown as climbers between the groves; for the *babaco*, which is grown under cover in the Basque country; and for the carambola, with its crunchy, yellow star-

fruit, which can be found dotted around larger plantations. Curiously, its botanical genus was identified by (and is named after) the 12th century Cordoban scholar Averroes.

Although still at an experimental stage, the lychee seems to be a rising star.

Today's varieties, brought from China to Australia in the 1980s, are producing excellent quality fruit and research is now speeding up the lead time before fruit bearing. Eyes are also on the Peruvian *lucuma*, or eggfruit, which has sweet apricot-colored pulpy flesh around a hard pit and grows well along the Andalusian coast, and honey-sweet red bananas from Africa and Asia.

With the question of water supply ever topical, there is a special interest in dry or desert fruits. Pomegranates, which have been cultivated since Arab times in Levante and Andalusia, are already exported right around the world for their high quality. Of nearly 40,000 Tm exports, the main buyer is Italy (12.795 Tm), with smaller quantities going around the Middle East. Equally, the prickly pear, grown wild here for centuries, is sold spine shaved in local markets and beginning to appear in smart Spanish city fruit shops. It is already being improved and launched as a fruit for the nineties in California. A newer possibility is the cactus-like pitahaya from Columbia, cultivated on trellises, which produces a knobbly yellow fruit filled with white pulp and small dark seeds. Still at a trial stage, it is already fruiting well.

And so the list goes on. Many other fruits grow well: the pineapple, macadamia nut, lungan and tamarillo (tomato-tree), for example, but not in large scale plantations. Yet these too may have their time. For the growers, as Father José de Acosta wrote, 'it were impossible to entreat of them all'.

Although still at an experimental stage, the lychee seems to be a rising star.

A brief Dictionary

A selected listing of the new Spanish fruits, with their Spanish and botanical names, and growing season.

AVOCADO:

(*aguacate*; *Persea americana*; Sept-May mainland, Sept-Aug Canaries) Originally from tropical Central America, planted by the conquistadores throughout the New World. Its high vitamin E content gives it the reputation of an aphrodisiac.

BABACO:

(*babaco*; *Carica pentagona*; Apr-Aug) A pentagonal yellow hybrid from the papaya family, originally from Ecuador, with enzymes which help to digest fats and proteins. Grown under cover in the Basque country, where it's made into jam.

CHERIMOYA:

(*chirimoya*; *Annona cherimolia*; Sept-Mar) Intensely perfumed and flavored relative of the custard apple, at its best in autumn. Ripens within 5-6 days of harvest at room temperature. Refrigeration turns the flesh black.

DATE:

(*dátil*; *Phoenix dactylifera*; Sept-Dec) The date palm forests of Elche and Orihuela (Alicante) are thought to date back to Phoenician times. They produce fresh dates for local consumption, but most of Spain's supply is imported.

GUAVA:

(*guayaba*; *Psidium guayava*; Oct-Jan). Its green ripening to yellow skin hides a spongy pinkish flesh which

is wonderfully aromatic when perfectly ripe. In its native Latin America, it's widely used for jams and jellies, sorbets and cheese.

KAKI:

(*palo-santo*, *caquí*; *Diospyros kaki*; Sept-Nov) A temperate exotic, the persimmon - not newer sharon-fruit - has been grown for a long time in Granada, Malaga and Levante. Usually cut in half and eaten with a spoon.

KUMQUAT:

(*kumquat*; *Citrus japonica*) The oval varieties of this bitter-sweet, mini-citrus fruit with edible rind grow commercially near Seville. Highly decorative, they are sold fresh in punnets in specialist fruit shops.

LIME:

(*lima*; *Citrus aurantifolia*, Nov-Feb). Thin-skinned fragrant varieties with yellow flesh are grown on a commercial scale in Malaga, Murcia and Levante, and on a smaller scale between oranges and lemons.

LOQUAT:

(*níspero* or *níscola*; *Eriobotrya japonica*; Mar-Jun). Native to China and South Japan, with scented orange plum-like flesh and a large seed, these fruit grow well in Levante and in Granada, which produces early season fruit in March.

LYCHEES:

(*lichí*; *Litchi sinensis*; Aug-Sep). These prized fruit, with sweet white translucent flesh inside a rough pinkish skin, have adapted well to the southern Spanish climate. Production is likely to grow rapidly over the coming years.

MANGO:

(*Mango*; *Mangifera indica*; Jan to May) Now produced commercially in the Canaries and Andalusia, although varieties are still being improved. One mango contains twenty times as much vitamin A as an orange of equal size.

PAPAYA:

(*papaya*; *Carica papaya*; Oct-May). Mainly grown under cover in Tenerife, though local demand and the fruit's fragility keep exports down. Its enzyme papain, used as a meat tenderizer, makes it ideal for upset stomachs and babies.

PARAGUAYA:

(*paraguaya*; *Prunus persicae*; Jun-Jul.) A temperate exotic, with the appearance of a flattened peach, its pinky-white downy skin hiding an exquisite flesh. Production is small because the season is short. Imported by France, Belgium and Germany.

PASSION FRUIT:

(*pasionara*, *maracuyá*, *granadilla*; *Passiflora edulis*;

Sep-Nov). Small, leathery-skinned round fruit which cut open to sharply fruity flesh, with seeds attached. Purple-skinned grow better than the yellow-skinned varieties.

PINEAPPLE:

(*Piña tropical*; *Ananas comosus*; Sep-Jun) Principally found around the Canarian coasts in covered beds, but not grown on a large scale because production cannot compete with imports from Africa or the Azores.

POMEGRANATE:

(*granada*; *Punica granatum*; Sept-Jan). Medium-size plantations of this tree thrive in hot, dry areas of Levante and Andalusia, producing very high quality fruit. Open the leathery skin by squeezing it to reveal the gem like, juicy red seeds.

PRICKLY PEAR:

(*biga chumbo*; *Opuntia laevis*; Aug-Nov.) After growing wild for centuries, spine-shaved fruit is now sold to markets in Almeria and Malaga and fruiterers around Spain. The flesh, pinky-peach to red, can be eaten raw or stewed.

STAR FRUIT:

(*carambola*; *Averrhoa carambola*; Sep-Nov). Bright yellow, crunchy flesh, slicing across to a perfect star-shape. Spanish growers are working with sweeter varieties; cultivation is still in an early phase.



The tropical Spanish kitchen

While the Canarians have taken to the new tropics in a big way - they are Europe's champion avocado eaters, tucking into 1.7kg per head each year - the new fruits are taking longer to filter into everyday eating on the Spanish mainland.

Inevitably, with prices still high, it's chefs who are so far producing the most imaginative dishes. Ignacio Mugurruza, a young Basque who came south to Benalmadena six years ago, finds ideas suggest themselves by looking at local produce.

"Nature is so wise," he comments, "you can be sure that if the land and sea produce things in the same area, they will combine. You just have to know how to analyze ingredients properly."

He buys his tropical fruits from a local farm, using them in all kinds of unexpected ways: hot sauted *co-*

quinas (wedge-shell clams) on a bed of avocado puree; a main dish of fresh local pork with a lightly curried mango and banana sauce; or *escabeches* (marinates) of fish from the tuna or shark families combined with cherimoya for its fruity moistness. Sweet things include a pitted lychee encased in blended sheep's and fresh white cheeses and finished off with a coating of chopped toasted almonds.

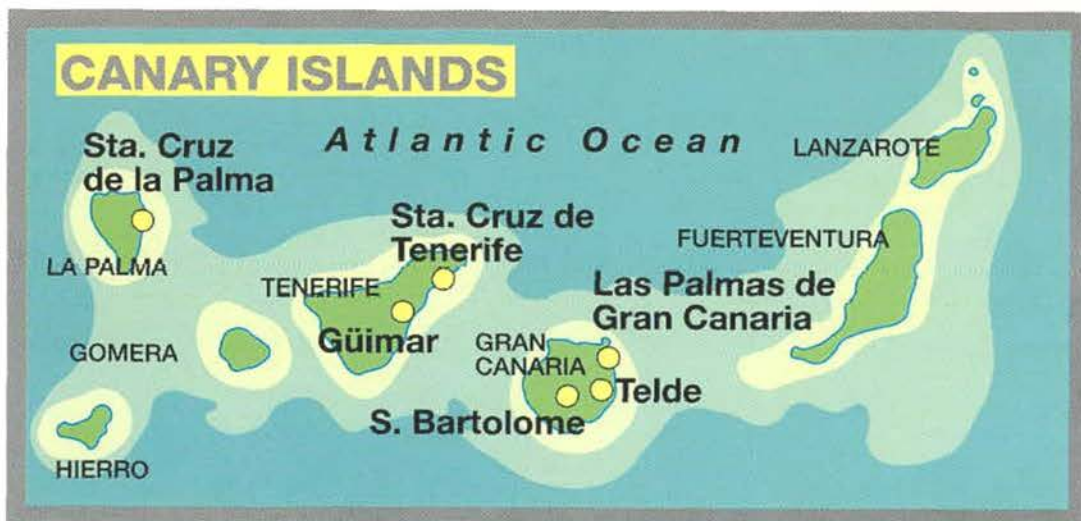
Meanwhile, the growers themselves have their own simpler ideas. One of them, Don Eduardo Braun, swears by an avocado milk shake. Others mash ripe avocado into a vegetable butter flavoured with lemon, pepper and onion for spreading on bread or toast. The Canarians make sauces and salads, some with shellfish such as *langostinos*. Pawpaw is said to make a win-

ning combination with charcuterie and *jamón*.

To eat the fruits plainly - still the most popular way - the most important thing is to know how to open them up. A cherimoya can be halved and eaten with a spoon, or sliced onto a plate and the seeds removed. A mango is least messily eaten off two length ways slices cut down either side of the stone, with cubes then cut in the flesh and the skin bent back. Many people love to suck the stone, but be prepared to get sticky. A papaya, the easiest of all, opens up like a melon and is excellent with lime juice.

Vicky Hayward lives in Madrid. She works as a freelance feature journalist, travel writer and book editor.

Editor's Note: We would like to thank *Compañía de la China*, for lending the objects for the still lifes.



Brandy de Jerez

The area of Jerez in southern Spain has been producing world-class wines for centuries but it is also the home of another equally noble drink - brandy. The unique ageing process of the *criaderas y soleras* is used for both the wines and brandies produced in this corner of Andalusia.

Spirit of the south

Every January 19th for the last forty-five years, the tombstone of Edgar Allan Poe has been adorned with an opened bottle of brandy and three red roses. At four in the morning someone dressed in black regularly pays his respects to the writer who is buried in Westminster chapel, Bal-

timore. The author of famous stories such as *The Cask of Amontillado* lies in rest here after a romantic but tormented life of poverty in which alcohol was a constant companion. In 1838, eleven years before the death of Poe, another well-known writer, the Englishman, George

Borrow, told his readers how he had been amazed to see the sailors in Sanlúcar de Barrameda - a town in the Jerez-Xères-sherry denomination of origin area - drinking brandy in the hottest of summer temperatures. This has in it elements of the poetry of survival.



The aroma of a brandy should waft gradually from the bottle. It should not be heady like a perfume but should flavor the atmosphere slowly, like a Havana cigar.

Tradition attributes the invention of alcohol to the legendary Lao-Tsé who is said to have drunk it after galloping through the Chinese rice fields astride a buffalo. Alcohol, eau-de-vie or brandy - all have something of that evanescent magic that has ever since served as spiritual adviser to so many unhappy writers or anonymous heroes. In times of the Roman Empire, these warming spirits were already popular. The Romans divided their meal-times into two parts - the first with women and the second without. With the excuse that they had to pay a tribute to the gods, they drank without female company.

This custom lasted over the centuries and was adopted by the English aristocrats who made a practice of ending their meals with a drink, a cigar and conversation in a room apart from the women. Brandy drinking thus became a serious, formal affair, almost a question of honour that required time and apprenticeship.

The aroma of a brandy should permeate the room gradually like the smoke of a good cigar. The hand holding the glass warms the brandy and stimulates it to release the first, subtle aromas. Then the brandy is gently swilled around the glass and the second 'nose' - to use the taster's jargon - emerges with less volatile aromas and a fuller bouquet.

The outstanding quality of Brandy de Jerez undoubtedly qualifies it as one of those select spirits that are drunk following a ritual. In certain countries, it is often drunk with soda whereas in others a new custom is becoming fashionable - that of drinking it 'on the rocks' in the early evening as a light, digestive drink.

It has been proved that a little alcohol helps the digestion and also facilitates communi-

cation. In Spain, the perfume of Brandy de Jerez has pleasing associations - it is reminiscent of enjoyable after-dinner conversations or lively, informal gatherings.

If compared to French cognac, Brandy de Jerez, which is aged in the wineries of the southwest of Spain, is darker and fruitier. It is smooth, has low acidity and bears clear traces of oak. For many Spanish palates used to the sensorial characteristics of Brandy de Jerez, cognac tastes drier and is less expressive and complex. When Spaniards talk of brandy, they are referring in most cases to their much prized brandies de Jerez that are aged in huge oak casks (holding up to 600 litres) previously used to contain in sherry. Brandy de Jerez differs from the cognac of La Charente in many aspects of its processing and maturing. The wine is distilled without the lees, unlike cognac. While the origin or variety of the grapes is considered of great importance in Jerez, even more stress is placed on the quality of the distilling process. The type of still is different, as are the size of the casks and the way in which the spirits are aged using the 'dynamic' system of *criaderas y soleras*.

The name of Brandy de Jerez

In 1853, when the writer Manuel Lerdo de Tejada published his work, *Foreign Trade in Mexico From the Times of the Conquest to Today*, he spoke of 109 arrobas (a measure of weight and liquids) of "aguardiente coñac" from Jerez. This is the earliest written reference we have today. The trend to call Spanish brandy *coñac* steadily gained currency until in 1914 the French term entered the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy.

Neither *cognac* nor *brandy*

are Spanish words; the former refers to a specific area of France and the latter, of Dutch origin, was imported by the street vendors who sold "burnt wines" in the cities, crying their wares just like barbers, water sellers or knife sharpeners.

In their concern to show that their brandies were a historically original product, the wineries in the Jerez area chose to call them "Brandies de Jerez" and, under this name, they were awarded the specific Denomination. Subsequently, in 1989, the EC gave them its official recognition. This name was awarded the Specific Denomination by the European Community in 1989, the highest recognition earned by a Spanish drink. The European Union has recently reached an agreement with the United States authorities whereby the legislation of the country of origin, in this case Spain, guarantees product quality. Brandy de Jerez is not alone in being covered by this agreement; it also applies to certain other European spirits of prestige such as cognac, Armagnac and Scotch whisky. In exchange, the European Union countries have accepted the same legal terms for certain North American quality distilled drinks such as bourbon and Tennessee whiskey.

When it comes to exporting, the French cognac dealers rely on their classic names - Camus, Courvoisier, Martell, Otard or Hennessy; with the standard abbreviations indicating age such as VSOP, XO. The Jerez wineries, however, preferred to give each of their brandies a different brand name, according to age. High-sounding, venerable names that sometimes detract from the commercial energy of the *bodegas* - Añejo del Zar, Veterano, Conde Duque, Gobernador, Gran Capitán, Monseñor, Soberano - while



In Jerez emphasis is placed not only on the origin and variety of the grapes but especially on the quality of the distillation process.

others boast of their quality - Deseado, Espléndido, Fabuloso, Insuperable, Magno, Maravilla, Respetable.

Spain is a great consumer of its own brandies. Not even the total consumption of cognac in Japan, the United States and France together, to take just the three greatest admirers of this drink, would equal the figures for consumption of Brandy de Jerez in Spain. However, Spanish dedication to these spirits from the south is on the decline and, if trends are to recover, while the former epic levels are never likely to be repeated, this will have to be through the top quality range which best represents the specific characteristics of these fine spirits.

Criaderas y solera

Brandy de Jerez is based on distilled wine. The alcohol content of the resulting distillate depends directly on the duration and heat applied during the process. The operatives stoke the wood burners following the dictates of their noses to control the speed of distillation.

The *bolandas* or "low alcohol" spirits (65/70°) resulting from distillation are rich in impurities and essential elements and are not rectified like the "high alcohol" spirits (over 80°). They are the basis of Brandy de Jerez and sometimes are used alone. Under no circumstances is it allowed to use spirits with an alcohol content in excess of 86° in a proportion exceeding 50% of the brandy.

Both brandy and wine in Jerez are aged in carefully-arranged and well-ventilated bodegas with high ceilings and floors of the typical local yellowish sand. All these features help to control temperature and moisture levels. The locals call these monumental halls "cathedrals".

Another of the special charac-

teristics of the Brandies de Jerez is their oaky flavor. As with all wines, various oak extracts add to the flavor and aroma of the brandies. Experience has shown that ideal cask capacity is 500 to 600 liters if the right balance is to be achieved between the wood surface and the volume of brandy.

The *solera y criaderas* system basically consists of storage in oak containers that are divided into groups called "scales" according to the age of the brandy they contain. The "scale" with the oldest brandy is called the *solera* and is followed in decreasing order of age by the first *criadera*, the second, third, etc. A small quantity is periodically taken from the *solera* casks for bottling and distribution. This quantity is replaced by another equivalent quantity from each of the casks of the first *criadera*. The latter receive an equivalent quantity from the second *criadera* and the process is repeated down to the last *criadera* which is filled with the youngest spirits. The ageing period thus lasts as long as the average age of the spirits gradually being decanted through the system.

The terms of the Specific Denomination of Brandy de Jerez also allow the brandy to be matured in yearly batches with the brandy for a specific year remaining in the same cask throughout the ageing process but, in practice, this is only done as a preliminary step before starting the traditional system.

There are three classifications of Brandy de Jerez - Solera, Solera Reserva and Solera Gran Reserva - which are determined according to the different lengths of the ageing process and the presence of volatile acids, aldehydes, esters and higher alcohols. Taken together, these are known as the non-alcohol coefficient.

"**SOLERA**" brandy is aged for a minimum of six months and its nonalcohol coefficient should be over 200 milligrams for every 100 cubic centimetres. "**SOLERA RESERVA**" is aged for at least one year and has a nonalcohol coefficient of over 250 milligrams. "**SOLERA GRAN RESERVA**" is the title given to brandy aged for a minimum of three years with a nonalcohol coefficient of over 300 milligrams.

The Solera type is amber-colored and its aroma, denoting recent distillation, blends with those from the oak which are reminiscent of caramel and vanilla if the cask was previously used to mature oloroso wine, or slightly saline if it was used for *fino*. It is dry on the palate and the harsh tannins from the wood can be distinguished.

The Solera Reserva, older than the Solera, is darker in color and its greater age gives it deeper aromas reminiscent of roasted coffee beans, caramel, etc. All the different elements have blended together more thoroughly and the end result is more harmonious.

The Solera Gran Reserva, the patriarch of the Jerez family, are mahogany colored brandies with a golden aura. Their aromas are complex and concentrated and are reminiscent of cocoa, fruit cake, tobacco. On the palate they are as smooth as velvet, with the alcohol masked by the other elements.

Victor Rodríguez is a food and wine writer. He writes regularly for the main specialist journals (Club de Gourmets, Sobremesa, etc.) as well as for other publications of a general nature (Dinero, Geo, El País, etc.). He has also directed and chaired programmes on several radio channels (Cadena SER, Onda Cero...).



AÑO DE 1632



REASONABLE DOUBTS

Brandy de Jerez should be served in the typical brandy balloon if drunk neat. The glass should be designed to allow the aromas to be savored by the nose.

These complex aromas are born by the volatile alcohol vapors. If the temperature reaches 35°-45°C, the alcohol overrides the more subtle elements and the bouquet becomes unpleasant.

The ideal temperature for consumption is similar to that for a good vintage wine

- about 18°C (64°F). The custom of heating the balloon before serving is considered to detract from the seductive powers of the brandy.

Those who like long drinks will find the perfect, though often unknown, solution in Brandy de Jerez. In Asia and America it is customary to drink brandy with ice. Connoisseurs have just one ice cube in their brandy glass, even if it is a sophisticated Solera Gran Reserva, as they

do with the great malt whiskies. The quality of this sublime drink is unalterable. Storing Brandy de Jerez will neither improve its quality nor perfect its bouquet. Nor should it be transferred to a glass decanter unless one wishes to place the emphasis on aesthetic values.

Once the bottle has been opened the alcohol tends to escape gradually and, with time, the brandy will lose its cheer.

THE SOLERA GRAN RESERVA BRANDIES

GRAN DUQUE DE ALBA

One of the top brands of Jerez brandy, it comes from the historical Williams & Humbert *bodega*. The color is golden mahogany; the aromas are sweet, with reminiscences of olorosos and Pedro Ximénez with dates, carob, old wood. On the palate its smoothness surprises even when the alcohol notes remain. It is fairly dense and ethereal.

TERRY I

The *bodega* of Fernando A. de Terry in El Puerto de Santa Maria has been producing brandies de Jerez for over a hundred years. Its origins go back to the English Terry family. The color is mahogany with a golden luster. Its aroma is intense, pleasant and complex as a result of its long maturing in oak. It is full of taste on the palate - sweet, creamy and with a roasted aftertaste.

LEPANTO

This label produced by González Byass, the *bodega* of the famous Tío Pepe dry sherry, has an enormous following amongst serious *aficionados* of brandy. The col-

or is a golden amber; the aroma is both delicate and elegant with a hint of cedar and vanilla; the flavor is dryish with a spicy aftertaste.

CONDE DE OSBORNE

This long established Andalusian brandy in its Dalí-designed bottle is today magnificently represented by the striking giant bulls that stand out all over the Spanish countryside. The family-run *bodega* is located in El Puerto de Santa Maria. The color is dark amber with mahogany undertones and a golden luster. On the palate it is rich, thick and smooth with reminiscences of charred wood and caramel.

CARLOS I

This is the jewel in the crown of the Pedro Domecq *bodega* which is the largest producer of brandy worldwide taking the production of both of its Jerez and Mexico establishments. The color is golden amber. The aromas are elegant and the subtle flavors from the ageing process blend perfectly with the original elements of the excellent distillate. Dry and harmonious on the palate.

CARDENAL MENDOZA

Sánchez Romate is a real specialist in the production and ageing of brandies. The company was set up in the center of Jerez de la Frontera over two centuries ago. Cardenal Mendoza is one of the prestige, top-ranking brandies. The color is deep mahogany. The aromas are reminiscent of the old oloroso and sweet Pedro Ximénez sheries for which the casks were previously used. On the palate it is sweet and strong, with the flavor of old oak.

GRAN CAPITAN

Bobadilla is one of the Jerez *bodegas* with the greatest tradition in the production and ageing of brandies. It was recently purchased by Osborne, another of the great names. Gran Capitán is the *gran reserva* of this brand which also produces another brandy called "103" that is very popular on the Spanish market. Gran Capitán has a golden mahogany color and a slightly roasted aroma. It is somewhat sweet on the palate.



El Brandy, de Jerez.





Text: **Iñigo Moré**
Photographs: **Pablo Neustadt/ICEX**
Translator: **Muriel Feiner**
Still Life: **Menchu Artime** Photo: **A. de Benito**

Ducks

" T A K E O F F "

in Spain

S_{pain}

has never really had a duck breeding and production tradition, despite the fact that it is now one of several countries actively engaged in this activity. Since the last decade, an entire industry has been created around what had only been a limited practice and today the breeding of ducks has been consolidated in our country.















The

words *foie* and *bígado*, its

Spanish equivalent, come from the word

bigo or fig, a food which the

Romans fed to the geese to fatten them up.

Respected Spanish food critic Dionisio Pérez, better known by his pseudonym "Post-Thebussem", complained at the beginning of this century about how difficult it was to find *foie gras* in Spain. "It would not be a bad idea for us to incorporate the frequent use of *foie gras* into Spanish cooking," said Post-Thebussem pleading for industrial breeding of ducks and geese to be undertaken in Spain.

Despite this famous gastronome's suggestion, the industrialization of duck production in Spain is only very recent and dates back to the last decade. Thanks to the efforts of several firms created at the time, the shelves of the gourmet stores and the menus from the best restaurants were suddenly filled with *magret*, *confit* and *foie gras*. This exquisite and incipient industry which would have delighted Post-Thebussem has strangely enough grown stronger still in the nineties, despite the crisis affecting all of Europe. Spanish production of the delicious *foie gras* is increasing at an annual rate of 20 per cent and more than half a million ducks are slaughtered annually. This number will not impress the French at all, for they know that seventeen million ducks are raised every year in their country.

However, it is necessary to take into account that fifteen years ago, the Spanish production was so limited that there was not even any data available in order to be able to determine to what extent it existed.

We wanted to study the birth of this industry with our very own eyes and so we prepared a small excursion which would take us to Catalonia and Navarre, where most of these birds are raised.

We left Madrid thinking that just fifteen years ago, it would have been extremely difficult to make a similar trip. Up until that time, the duck's presence was limited and depended upon the rate of their annual migrations which made them cross our country on their annual journey from the marshlands of Northern Africa to the Central European lakes, and vice versa.

And it is precisely these migrations which work the culinary miracle on the *foie gras* — the fatty liver — the most highly prized part of the duck and the justification for its existence and breeding. Just as in the case of the geese, the ducks possess the ability to accumulate lipids in their body, which furnish them with the necessary autonomy to undertake these long migrations. The liver is precisely its main storehouse for nu-

tritive reserves.

The raising and force feeding of these ducks began possibly when someone noticed that their livers were even tastier if the bird had been captured right before its migration, when the liver was filled with fat. This individual — surely an ancient Egyptian as is suggested by the bas-reliefs of several funeral chambers — decided not to go without his beloved delicacy until the next migration and so he tried to fatten up a goose in order to stuff its liver with fat. This feeding method receives the name of force feeding and we are all quite familiar with the results of such an operation.

This custom went from ancient Egypt to Imperial Rome, where the geese were fattened with figs according to a method attributed to the Roman gourmet, Apicius. This liver — *iecur* — in Latin, received the name of *iecur ficatum*. Such must have been the success of his method that the ancient French and Spaniards only remembered the figs in order to give that name to the *iecur*, which they henceforth called *foie* or *bígado*, respectively.

At present, corn is used in the force feeding, for it furnishes much better culinary results and is cheaper than figs. This cereal originally came from America and so

the Romans were not familiar with it. It was the Spanish discoverers who brought corn to Spain in the 16th century, after the Conquest of Mexico, and from there, it traveled to Italy and France. Therefore, it is not at all unlikely that the Spaniards were the first to fatten ducks and geese with corn.

A JOURNEY TO THE WORLD OF THE DUCKS

With all this information in our heads, we arrived in the Catalonian province of Gerona, specifically in the region known as La Selva, where the town of Sant Martí S'Aprés is located. A little farther beyond its limits, Mas Parés, a typical 17th century *masía* or Catalonian country manor, is found, set behind enormous stone walls. We were greeted there by several very menacing dark clouds and also by Jordi Serra, the manager of Sehisa. This firm, which began operating in 1981, was the very first to industrialize the breeding and elaboration of ducks in Spain. Jordi Serra explained to us, while we visited the very modern offices, whose walls of bare stone are more than 300 years old, that they chose "Mas Parés" as the brand name, as a tribute to the *masía* in which the compa-



B

arbarie

ducks came from the Andes and were brought to Europe by the Spaniards in the 16th century.

ny is housed. As we went down to the workshop, located on the lower floor of the building, Jordi Serra told us that not all ducks could be used to make *foie gras*.

There are more than 40 varieties, but the Mas Parés products are elaborated exclusively from ducks of the mallard breed, a hybrid born from a father who was a duck of the *barbarie* breed and a common mother. The mallard duck's liver is considered to be better than that of the rest of the species. It is smaller but, in proportion, has more cellular tissue which allows it to accumulate a greater percentage of fat during the force feeding process. In addition, its liver disintegrates less when it is prepared hot and has a more pronounced flavor.

Years ago, *barbarie* were the most commonly used for they could be raised in cages, which lowered production costs, although the quality of their products was inferior. These ducks came from the central high plateau of the Andes and were brought to Europe by the Spaniards in the 16th century, following the discovery of America. Any information which we have about duck breeding for force feeding is subsequent to this date and is always related to the *barbarie* which is, by the way, completely mute.

Jordi Serra told us that they themselves raised the ducks, but sell them when they are fourteen weeks old to the force feeders so that they can take charge of the process, at the end of which the ducks are repurchased. After four weeks of being fattened, the ducks arrive at the Mas Parés workshop, ready to be processed. There, the livers are used to prepare the whole *foie gras*, the semi-cooked *mi-cuits* and the *blocs*, a preparation which consists of mixing pieces of liver with mashed liver puré in different proportions. These products are always manufactured without the addition of truffles or Armagnac, as is traditional in France. At most, they are seasoned with a little pepper, which brings out the true quality of the product.

This company is relatively small: its sales in 1993 amounted to 320 million pesetas. Its production is not massive either, but as Jordi Serra says: "What is important, the philosophy behind our company, is Quality, not Quantity." We listened to him, thinking that the second stage of our trip would bring us into contact with a much larger firm and we wondered if this would be a disadvantage for elaborating products with a similar quality.

EN ROUTE TO NAVARRE

We left Mas Parés at the end of the morning. The dark clouds which we noted upon our arrival, had produced a big thunderstorm. We bid farewell to the beautiful *masía* in order to cross the Pyrenees to the other side of the mountain range, to the Navarre town of Vera de Bidasoa, which is where the headquarters of the firm Conservas Martiko, the largest Spanish producer of duck end products, is located.

Thanks to this firm, the restaurants Zalacaín, Ake-larre and Arzak have something in common, in addition to their several stars in the *Michelin* guide: they all serve their clients duck end products produced by Conservas Martiko. These restaurants use a "specially selected" quality of *foie gras* which we can enjoy, even if we do not dine in their establishments, for these products can be purchased under the Martiko and Ibarden brands in any gourmet store. This makes us think that "Quality" need not always be at odds with "Quantity". Our visit to one of this company's farms would convince us of the special care with which Conservas Martiko prepares its products, despite the fact that they annually process 160,000 ducks. Our appointment with Pedro — Peyo — Martikorena, the

major stockholder and General Director of Conservas Martiko, was at a farm a few kilometers from Vera de Bidasoa, right on the border with France and beside the Señorío de Bertiz, one of the most beautiful forests in Europe. Peyo was wearing his work clothes and was covered with mud up to his waist, something very unusual for the proprietor of a firm which, in 1993, billed 1,200 million pesetas. He had just repaired a pipeline which delivered fresh water from a spring at the top of a nearby mountain to the farm.

One of the key factors in their production is precisely the purity of this water. "It may seem strange," said Peyo, "but if the water the ducks drink does not have a high level of quality and if it is not free of chlorine and other foreign substances, it is impossible to produce quality livers."

Peyo's willingness to work hard was fundamental in the success of a firm created in 1985 almost by accident. The Martikorena family only participated in the duck business as an investor at that time, but when their partner in charge of production left, they found they had to take over the business themselves. That was a time which Peyo insists he will never forget, for he thought that "the world had come to an end, especially because I

The

breed of duck most used in Spain is the
mallard, a hybrid born from a
barbaric father and a common mother.

knew practically nothing about production and breeding." However, he resolved all the difficulties with the help of Jean — Kiki — Labarte, considered to be the greatest duck expert in southwestern France. Labarte had worked for more than thirty years for the prestigious French firm, *Labeyre*, specializing in *foie gras*. A year before his retirement, he began to collaborate with *Conservas Martiko*, a firm with which he continues to maintain close ties, despite the fact that he is over 70 years old. "Without his technical advice, it would have been very difficult for us to have come this far," declares Peyo. We saw on the farm that this company also uses mallard ducks, which live in semi-freedom within areas the size of basketball courts. "When the grass has been entirely consumed in one area," Peyo explains, "we move them to another where the grass has already grown back." These areas have the food trough at one end and the water at the other, which forces the ducks to do a lot of exercise, making their meat more flavorful. "Breeding in closed stables would be much easier for us," says Peyo, "for the mortality factor would be a lot lower, but if you want to achieve a quality product, you have no choice but to reject this method."

Oddly enough, *Conservas Martiko* only raises male ducks. "We do not wish to discriminate against the females," says Peyo, "but it is because the quality of the liver in the males is far superior, as it has less gristle and is softer than that of the females."

THREE WEEKS OF FORCE FEEDING

The force feeding of the ducks takes place on the same farm when the birds are fourteen weeks old. During the three or four weeks that the process lasts, they will receive two meals a day, consisting of half a kilo of semi-cooked corn, a little bit of bicarbonate to facilitate digestion and a small amount of duck fat so that the food slides down the esophagus easily. Force feeding is extremely complex and is also the most delicate part of the entire process for an excess of food could cause cirrhosis of the liver, making it unsuitable for producing *foie gras*. Only the most expert professionals are capable of determining the exact point, directly before degeneration, in which the liver is in a perfect state and the duck is ready to be killed. At the bottom of this farm is the workshop, where this task is carried out. After

slaughtering the animal and draining the blood, the liver is removed and worked while it is still hot, between 28 and 33 degrees C (82 and 91° F). According to Peyo, "this affects the quality of the product, especially the liver which is sold fresh, because it will disintegrate much less when the cook puts it on the grill." This is the right moment for making the selection, when the extra quality pieces can be detected, for use in making the whole *foie gras* and the *mi-cuits*.

The line of products is completed with the *parfaits*, *mousses* and *patés*, different preparations in which the percentage of liver differs from 98 to 50 per cent. In order to take full advantage of the duck, the process does not stop here for every part of this bird, just like the pig, can be used for something. The breasts or *magrets* are sold fresh, or are used for making duck hams, which are cured according to the typical Spanish tradition. This implies the loss of moistness in a natural manner instead of by centrifugation as is customary in certain European countries. The thighs go into the making of the *confits*; the feathers are also used and are sold to pillow manufacturers. Even the tongues are preserved and the beaks are set aside for making buttons. In fact, Peyo Martikorena

states that the difference in price between the *foie gras* from duck and that of goose "lies in the different use made of both birds and not in the quality of their livers. From the goose, only the liver and feathers are utilized, for its meat is less tasty and does not allow for such a wide variety of products. In addition, the geese need to be force fed three times a day instead of only two for the ducks. The result is that the full cost of the breeding of the geese must be reflected in the price of its liver, and so, it is more expensive." *Conservas Martiko* also produces smoked salmon and salmon *patés*. In addition, its company has holdings in other businesses but, as Kipling would have said, that is another story. We departed Navarre at night. We left behind an inspection trip into the world of the duck, whose tradition was almost non-existent in Spain a few years ago. We can now say that an equally exquisite industry has finally been set up in our country.

Iñigo Moré is a freelance journalist who collaborates with a variety of publications, including the daily newspaper El País.

Editor's Note: We would like to thank Grupo 13 and Mulberrys for lending the objects for the still life.

Grupo Gallo

Success Abroad (VI)



Untouched by human hands from wheat fields to warehouses, Grupo

A SPANISH PASTA GIANT COMPETES ABROAD



Gallo's top quality pasta is made from Andalusian durum wheat.

Untouched by human hands from wheat fields to warehouses, Grupo Gallo's top quality pasta made from Andalusian durum wheat is rapidly winning over pasta lovers around the world. Wooed by multinationals, and especially by Italian pasta companies, Grupo Gallo intends to remain 100% Spanish owned and controlled.

Text: Ana Westley

Photos: Pastas Gallo



Although Marco Polo is credited ...



• • • with introducing Europeans to spaghetti in the 13th century, some form of pasta is thought to have existed in many countries before this legendary merchant set out to explore the East. In fact, pasta dishes are thought to have been part of the Mediterranean diet practically since the cultivation of wheat. The raw materials, after all, are simple and basic: ground wheat and water. But as any pasta lover can testify, not all pastas are alike by a long shot. Italy, with the highest per capita consumption of pastas (35 kilos per capita per year), has claimed to be the world expert in this international favorite.

While most northern European countries made noodles from plain white refined flour that is also used for bread making, the Italians preferred their pasta made from ground durum wheat germ which gave a better flavor, a more attractive amber color, and a tougher consistency. Durum wheat pasta when cooked correctly is always slippery, slightly tough and chewy, and definitely not sticky. In Spain, as in most other countries, noodles and macaroni were made from ordinary pastry flour from soft wheat and were used mainly as fillers in soups or casseroles.

SEMOLINA VERSUS FLOUR

The secret of good pasta in Spain was practically unknown until José Espona, the founder of Grupo Gallo, decided to introduce Catalan pasta makers to durum wheat semolina in the 1950s after a trip to Italy. This decision would eventually revolutionize the entire Spanish pasta market.

Mr. Espona noted that Spain, in particular Andalusia and Extremadura (south and southwest of Spain, respectively), happened to produce some of the best quality durum wheat in the

world that would be perfect for pasta. The climate and soil were similar to parts of Italy where the hard and glassy golden grained durum wheat is also grown.

In 1946, Mr. Espona had begun his own modest flour milling business in the outskirts of Barcelona with a small loan from his father. Yet, after his trip to Italy, he was convinced that the future lay in supplying the appropriate wheat semolina to pasta makers. Semolina is obtained by a coarser grinding of a hard wheat grain like durum wheat. With this type of milling, much of the fiber and vitamin content found in the nutritious wheat germ core is not lost as in refined white flours.

By 1956, Mr. Espona had managed to convince the agriculture and industry ministries which tightly controlled wheat production and refining in those days, to allow him to transform his flour mill into a semolina mill to supply pasta makers. In his native Catalonia (northeast of Spain) traditional pasta makers almost immediately latched on to the new raw material for their products.

FROM "THE GREAT FAILURE" TO A GREAT SUCCESS

"Catalonia, perhaps, was more open to outside influences and knew more about Italy, which lies just across the eastern horizon," Mr. Espona recalled. Cheered by his success there, he decided in 1963 to set up a factory in Cordoba, the heartland of durum wheat country.

"That was what I call 'my great failure,' he now recalls ironically. Pasta makers in the rest of Spain, were completely uninterested in changing the methods they had always used to make their product, Mr. Espona claimed. "With the banks breathing down my neck, I decided the only thing to do was to become a pasta maker myself to buy up all my semolina production,"

he recounted.

He began to buy and lease pasta factories and gradually created a pasta empire that now controls over 45% of the Spanish market and exports to over 30 countries. "Consumers are not dumb and quickly changed loyalties to a better product," Mr. Espona explained, "even if it was more expensive." Gallo's pastas are within the medium high priced brands. In 1946, Espona's flour factory milled 10,000 kilos of wheat in 24 hours. Today, Grupo Gallo mills that amount in a mere 20 minutes. Some 750 tons of durum wheat are milled daily in five factories to produce 500 tons of semolina. Over 350 tons of pasta are made daily at Gallo's five pasta factories.

100% SPANISH OWNED

Like many other family controlled companies, Mr. Espona is proud that his company is fully Spanish owned. Flattered that major Italian pasta makers would jump at any opportunity for a partnership, Mr. Espona admits to being a person "who cannot work with partners" and is convinced that family control is more agile than cumbersome multinational bureaucracies. "When we make a mistake, we are quick to correct it," he explains, while a large company with shareholders or multinational owners may persist in the error much longer.

Spanish's pasta king suspects that many multinationals are not as interested in acquiring the production capacity of a national market leader as in buying a domestic market share. "Once they have bought out a local brand, they are more likely to close down excess capacity if there is any production duplication," he explained. Rivals, even Italian rivals, do not even come close to Gallo's 45% market share in Spain. Although being the first to introduce durum wheat

semolina gave Gallo an edge, the company has had to continually invest in the latest state of the art technology and sophisticated marketing to continue to increase its market leadership position.

COMPETING ABROAD

"With a 45% market state, there is now little room for domestic growth," Mr. José Morancho, director of the Group's International Division, pointed out. Therefore the company decided to compete in the larger world market.

Pasta exports surged from a mere 82 tons in 1986, the year Spain joined the European Community, to almost 5,000 tons in 1993, while semolina exports soared from 2,730 tons in 1986 to over 31,500 last year.

"The Italians are very impressed by the quality of our semolina," Mr. Morancho pointed out with a smile, acknowledging that even Italian pasta makers import Gallo's top quality semolina. "They know good quality." Mr. Espona went further to concede that "there are probably a few areas in Italy that produce a durum wheat as good as our Spanish grown wheat."

Sales for the group amounted to 19.9 billion pesetas for 1993 with exports accounting for approximately 12.5% of these sales, a figure the company aims to increase to around 20%. Gallo currently exports to 32 countries in all areas of the world.

Foreign penetration in Spain's pasta market is still practically negligible, amounting to a mere 4000 tons of pasta, an amount below Gallo's own exports to other markets.

STATE-OF-THE-ART-TECHNOLOGY

Gallo's predominance in the Spanish market is more than just a matter of being the first to introduce an improved product. As consumer pref-

Grupo Gallo has some of the most sophisticated pasta technology in the world. Within a 24 hour period, Grupo Gallo can transform a field of wheat into packaged pasta.



erence for durum wheat pastas became clear, even at a higher price, other pasta makers were soon converted to the higher quality durum wheat pastas. Today there are practically no brands of pasta made from regular pastry flour in Spain.

To keep up with demand and stay ahead of competitors, Grupo Gallo invested over the last ten years roughly 1 billion pesetas year in top notch technology and innovating marketing. This undoubtedly also played a crucial role in Gallo's unquestioned market leadership.

Grupo Gallo now has some of the most sophisticated pasta technology in the world. Within a 24 hour period, Grupo Gallo can transform a field of wheat into packaged pasta, loaded on a delivery truck without ever being touched by a human hand. From field to truck, the entire process is fully automated. Even storage is now automated in a new "intelligent" warehouse recently added to the Granollers factory outside Barcelona where it takes only two workers to turn 3,500 tons of wheat a month into 2,000 tons of packaged pasta.

INVOLVEMENT FROM FIELD TO DINNER PLATE

"Rather than branching into unrelated activities, we prefer to concentrate on what we are best at, which is making pasta," Mr. Espona continued. The company produces some 70 varieties of pasta, including compounded pastas -those that include other ingredients such as eggs, spinach, cheese or tomatoes-, pastas with fillings, such as ravioli and tortellini, and pasta sauces. From field to dinner plate, Group Gallo is involved in the entire process. Technicians from the company begin by advising the farmer on the best methods to obtain the highest quality durum wheat which is harvested and deposited direct-

ly in factory silos where computers control the entire milling process, from automatic selection of only the best grains, through a series of washings, millings, mixtures, and kneading, to pastification, packaging and storage. "All this translates into consistent quality with the maximum efficiency," Mr. Espona argued.

SOPHISTICATED MARKETING

In advertising, Grupo Gallo was the first of the sector to begin an advertising campaign on television to educate consumers on the gourmet quality of good pasta. In one of its commercials that is still remembered in Spain, Italian actress Sofia Loren extolled the Spanish pasta as her favorite. The fact that she was Italian impressed Spanish consumers, according to Gallo marketing experts. The commercial aimed to elevate pasta from a mere kids' school lunch to a gourmet dinner.

EDUCATING CONSUMERS

In recent years, Gallo has spent part of its advertising and marketing budget on general information to the public about the nutritional value of pasta in general. Spanish consumption of this product at just 4 kilos per capita is well below the European average of 6 to 7 kilos per capita, and far removed from Italy's staggering 35 kilos per capita. U.S. consumption is increasing yearly as consumers become aware of the health advantages of pasta in the Mediterranean diet.

Together with other pasta makers, Gallo founded the "Academia of Pasta" in Spain to educate consumers about the nutritional values and gourmet possibilities of pasta. Taking this initiative one step further, Gallo launched a recipe book titled "Discover Pasta" that is delivered free of charge to faithful customers who have sent in 30 coupons clipped from packages. The book, now printed in 7 lan-

guages, has been delivered to over one million consumers around the world.

LOSING WEIGHT WITH PASTA

The 125 page recipe book contains over 100 new and traditional creative recipes. But it also highlights the major nutritional values pasta plays in the now highly recommended Mediterranean diet based on pasta, is not only low in cholesterol, but also helps dieters lose weight.

Yes, that's right. Contrary to popular belief, the latest scientific research demonstrates that a pasta diet actually helps reduce those excess pounds caused by a sedentary life style and unhealthy eating habits. Durum wheat pasta is not only high in protein, fiber, minerals and vitamins, but is also very satiating, which diminishes the impulse to overeat or snack between meals, experts quoted in the recipe book now affirm.

DIETERS AND ATHLETES REJOICE

Today's dieters are advised to forget worrying about carbohydrates and cut back on high cholesterol meats and fats. According to current health theories, it's even all right to help yourself to a large plate of spaghetti, topped with a vegetable, fish, or tomato sauce prepared with olive oil.

Athletes are also encouraged to eat a full plate of pasta a few hours before a competition rather than a high protein meat that actually decreases energy. Gallo's "Discover Pasta" book offers hundreds of other good reasons to thoroughly enjoy a good dish of pasta -without having to feel guilty about calorie or carbohydrate count.

Any consumers who may still think of pasta as a cheap and rather bland filler food for children, will change his or her mind after browsing through "Discover Pasta." Potential pasta connoisseurs

learn in the recipe book to distinguish between pastas made from ordinary white flour from soft wheat and those made from durum wheat semolina, which is more coarsely ground.

To begin with, according to the recipe book, the durum wheat grain itself is harder and almost translucent. Durum wheat pasta is uniformly amber colored, almost glassy looking, slightly rough to the touch and resistant to breakage. It takes somewhat longer to be cooked and increases its volume three times. It doesn't disintegrate or stain the boiling water. Once cooked it retains a yellowish color and easily absorbs sauces. Cooks are repeatedly warned to be careful not to overcook pasta which should always be served *al dente* with the inside slightly hard, or as the Neapolitans explain, "part of its soul must remain inside."

Consumers are warned that white flour pastas are greyish in the raw and when cooked are "pale, white and sticky, yet they don't absorb sauces." Without wheat germ or fiber, a large plate of soggy pasta can indeed be hard to digest and has evidently given pasta its bad reputation.

The book has recovered numerous native pasta dishes from various parts of Spain as well as variations on old time pasta sauce favorites along with many imaginative new ones. Anyone who follows the clear recipe directions can become a gourmet pasta chef certain to please even the most demanding palates.

Ana Westley is the Spain correspondent for The New York Times. She has also been too the correspondent in Spain for the U.S. weekly news magazine Businessweek since 1988. Previously, she was the correspondent for The Wall Street Journal. She has also contributed regularly to various other publications.

The company produces some 70 varieties of pasta, including compounded pastas, pastas with fillings, and pasta sauces. From field to dinner plate, Group Gallo is involved in the entire process.

GRUPO GALLO EXPORTS TO THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES:

EUROPA: GERMANY, FRANCE, GREAT BRITAIN, GREECE, HOLLAND, ITALY, IRELAND, PORTUGAL, SWEDEN, CHECK REPUBLIC, SLOVAK REPUBLIC, RUSSIA

AMERICA: U.S.A., PUERTO RICO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, MARTINIQUE, CANADA, CURAÇAO

AFRICA: MOROCCO, MAURITANIA, SENEGAL, IVORY, COAST, TOGO, BENIN, SOUTH AFRICA

MIDDLE EAST: SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, YEMEN

OCEANIA: AUSTRALIA

ASIA: HONG KONG, PHILIPPINES.

TOTAL SALES (in millions of pts.)

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
SALES	12,500	13,000	14,000	16,000	18,000	19,000
PROFITS BEFORE TAX	450	683	308	736	619	694
INVESTMENT (EXCEPT LEASING)	573	543	949	1,258	1,056	869

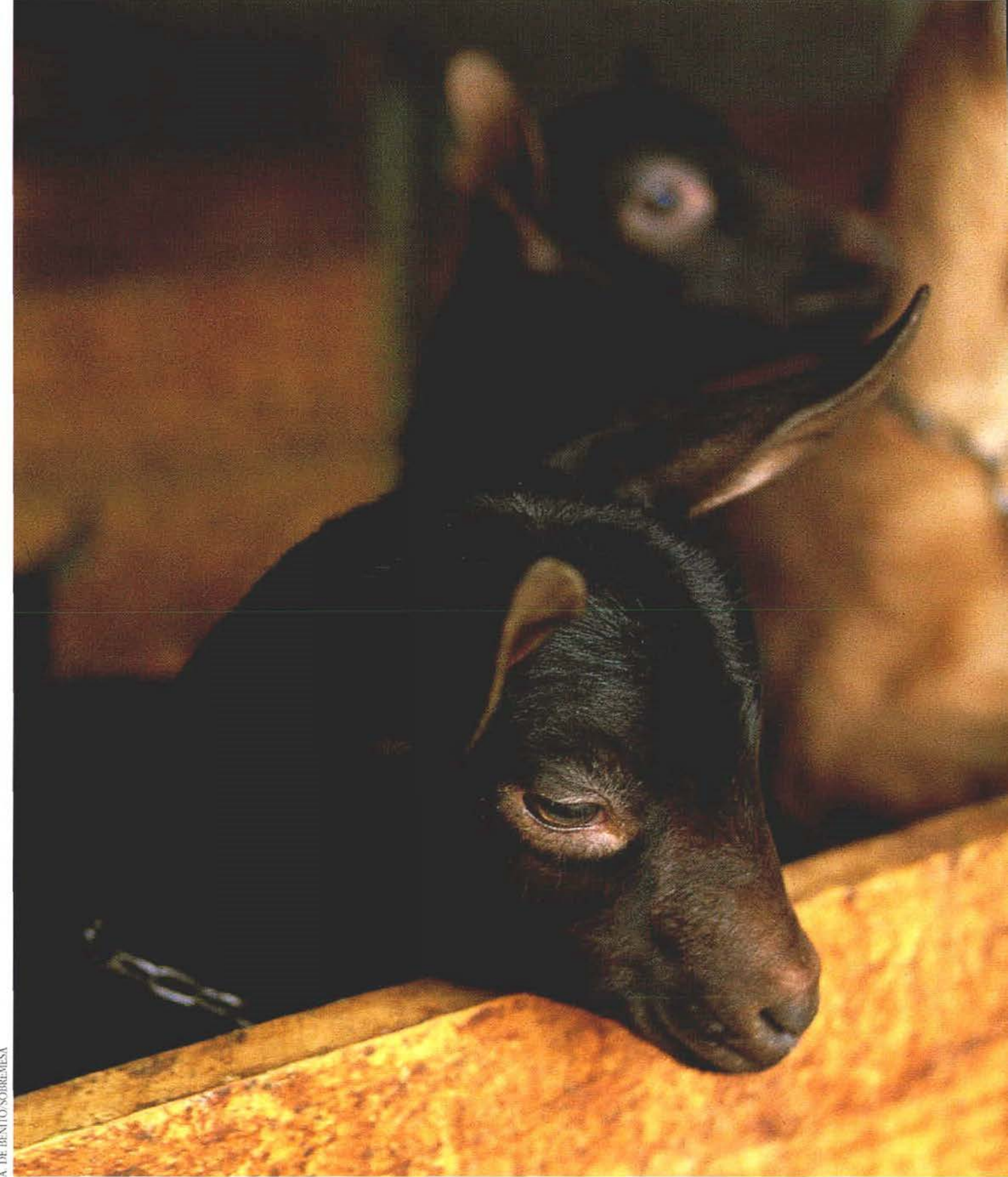
EXPORTS (in tons)

	1986	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
SEMOLINA	2,727	14,056	13,266	16,245	21,216	25,048	31,549
PASTA	82	228	859	2,247	2,435	3,172	4,947

PRODUCTION (in thousand of tons)

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
TOTAL VOLUME OF GROUND WHEAT	132.9	125.2	126.6	140.9	157.0	163.1
SEMOLINA	72.9	74.9	75.6	85.6	93.9	99.4
FLOUR	17.6	16.1	16.8	23.4	27.1	24.9
PASTA	55.4	59.5	57.3	62.5	64.5	66.5
SAUCES	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7

Source: Grupo Gallo



A. DE BENTO/SOBREMESA

Land of a Hundred Cheeses (and III)
Text: **Enric Canut** Translation: **Muriel Feiner**

Goat Cheeses: The



T

his article concludes the series which was aimed at offering a general view of, for many, the unknown and surprisingly broad panorama of Spanish cheeses. "The Land of the Hundred Cheeses" is not a gratuitous title, but a true reflection of a reality which we hope will gain greater recognition in the future. And the grand finale is provided by goat cheese, whose impressive variety becomes once again the overriding theme.



Small goat cheeses cured in pure olive oil with aromatic herbs are one of the specialties of Andalusia.

The goat has accompanied stock breeding families from half of Spain for many centuries.

Aroma of The Mediterranean

The goat is a typically Mediterranean animal, accustomed to the heat and dryness of our climate

The goat can take full advantage of the scarce grazing land of the dry mountains and enjoys pruning the brushwood and smelling the scent of the aromatic plants.



ANTONIO DE BENTITO/SOBREMENA





ANTONIO GIBRES/SOBREMESA

The cheese of El Montsec or cendrat (meaning "with ash" in Catalan) elaborated in an artisan manner in Catalonia mountains, is smeared with ash during the curing.



A. DE BENTO/SOBREMESA

*Goat's milk is very white.
It is much easier to digest
than cow's milk.*



In Spain, the goat is commonly referred to as the poor man's cow.

Such a statement, which might be taken as a disparaging remark, reflects many of the characteristics of this independent, serviceable and often considered crazy animal, but one which has accompanied stock breeding families from half of Spain for many centuries. In fact, the introduction of the dairy cow into Spain and, as a result, the consumption of fresh cow milk and dairy products, is a modern reality dating back only to the last half of this century. Before that time, and up until just twenty-five years ago, it was normal to see the goat herds cross the small Spanish towns and villages, on their way to the surrounding hills and grazing lands first thing in the morning. As they went through the town, the goatherd and his wife stopped to milk the goats right there in the street for the consumers. And with the milk left over, the woman made fresh cheese which she sold afterwards from house to house or in the local market.

This apparently folkloric scene was a daily reality not so long ago. The same can be said of the stock fairs and markets, featuring large herds of goats, particularly in areas of Murcia (on the Spanish Levante), Andalusia or Extremadura. Another classic image was that of the figure of the Malaga goatherd, migrating all

along the Mediterranean coast and selling his animals at the ranches he encountered along the way.

Each rural family had (and, in many cases, still has) several goats as a domestic animal which supplied the family with milk and cheese. The vast majority of the rural generations of the thirties to the sixties has grown up at some time or other, with this thick, fatty and sweet milk, with a mountain fragrance. It is a very white milk which is much easier to digest than cow's milk and it has even replaced mother's milk on necessary occasions.

This is because the goat is a typically Mediterranean animal, accustomed to the heat and dryness of our climate. It is an inveterate traveler and mountaineer, with austere customs and finicky tastes. It can take full advantage of the scarce grazing land of the dry mountains and enjoys pruning the brushwood and smelling the scent of the aromatic plants. We can find goats in areas where other animals cannot survive, in the harshest and most remote corners. And the goatherd is always off on his own but very close by.

It is not strange to discover that there is a broad range of breeds and crossbreedings. More than ten different strains have been recorded, of which three stand out because of their rustic nature and their milk-producing specialization, making them highly well-known and valued in the entire zootechnical world: the Murcia-

The Canaries can boast of long standing traditions of goatbreeding, elaboration and consumption of their own fresh and cured cheese.

Granada, Malaga and Canary Island strains.

And there are other worthy breeds which endow a special personality on a variety of autochthonous cheeses, such as the *retinta* or red, *verata* or Pyrenees goats.

THE FRESH CHEESES

The Mediterranean Coast is, historically speaking, a highly populated area and one of great agrarian, artisan and commercial activity. Since early Roman times, important centers were created in which the social functions and work were well defined and hierarchized.

The farming of the fertile plains and valleys surrounding these centers supplied the needs of the city dwellers and a domestic or even more extensive stock breeding (goats and sheep) took advantage of the horticultural by-products and the pasture lands and hills of the coastal ranges.

Therefore, the milk and cheese production was intended for immediate consumption by an enormous artisan population which depended upon the nearby resources.

It was not necessary to cure the cheese for a long time, for it was consumed either freshly made or after being well aired for just one or two weeks.

Direct sale and the marketplace were the most customary means of distribution and its short periodicity implied small sizes, for daily or weekly consumption; they also made cheeses, which were decorated for special

occasions. They were fresh, humid, sweet and milky cheeses oozing whey, which were eaten in no time at all. In Catalonia, we find the typical *mató*, an untranslatable word which refers to the soft and sweet curd of goat's milk coagulated with vegetal rennet (*berbacol*), replaced today with animal rennet. It is an unsalted cheese, elaborated and consumed the same day, as a dessert or snack and served with sugar, honey (*mel i mató*), anisette, dry fruit or jams.

If the sale of *mató* slackens, fresh or soft cheeses are elaborated, which are slightly compact, salted, highly moist and with a gelatin-like texture. It turns out to be something like a salted and drained *mató*. The sizes and shapes may vary, but the most common cheeses are the round and half-round ones, because the *mató* is obtained by draining the curd in cotton or linen cloths. Also popular are the truncated cone shapes for the fresh cheese which is made from a ceramic cheese mold shaped like a chalice.

In the Levante region, we find four very characteristic fresh cheeses. The *cassoleta* ("small casserole" in the Catalan language), that of Nucía, the *servilleta* or *to-valló*, and the fresh cheese of Alicante. The *cassoleta* looks like a volcano due to the wooden mold shaped like a cone in its central section. They are very small cheeses, weighing less than a kilo—there are even pieces of 50 grams—and they are profusely decorated with floral or linear motifs.

They are also known as *saladito* on the Valencian market, due to the fact that they are distributed in large jars, immersed in *salmuera* (or brine), and are desalted before consumption. This is a white cheese which reminds us in taste and texture of Greek feta.

The *servilleta*, or *to-valló* in Catalan (meaning "napkin"), is elaborated in the Costera de Ranes, to the south of Valencia, and it is sold mainly in the Xativa market. As its name implies, it is molded in cloths (formerly "napkins") which are knotted and slightly compressed, to give them a very characteristic spherical shape.

It is a white, compact cheese, fatty and creamy to the palate, with a half-sweet, half-acidic flavor, and a touch of salt. One local custom is to fry it before eating and serve it with green peppers, which are fried as well. Nowadays, it is also left to cure for one to two months before its sale.

The Nucía cheese takes its name from this small town on the Alicante coast. Here, in a small artisan cheese factory, this fresh, gelatinous and very smooth cheese on the palate, which is also known as "cake cheese", came into being 50 years ago. Its original shape has a very unusual history. In view of the increased demand for the cheese, Mr. Ferrer, the owner of the factory, began to use egg stands as draining molds, which conferred the truncated cone shape with a lateral rhomboidal engraving on the mass. Its shape became so successful that at

present only this unusual mold is used.

And finally, the *blanquito* cheese of Alicante or *blanquet*, in Catalan ("little white"), is prepared in the entire mountainous area of the province, mainly in the Upper Vinalopo Valley. It is a small cheese, weighing about half a kilo and with a flat cylindrical shape. The cheese is marked all over with the typical esparto-grass girth.

HEADING SOUTH

To the south of this area, the cloth and ceramic molds disappear and the esparto-grass girth emerges, which gives all the cheeses their typical cylindrical shape and engraves the rounded sides with the characteristic zig-zag marking.

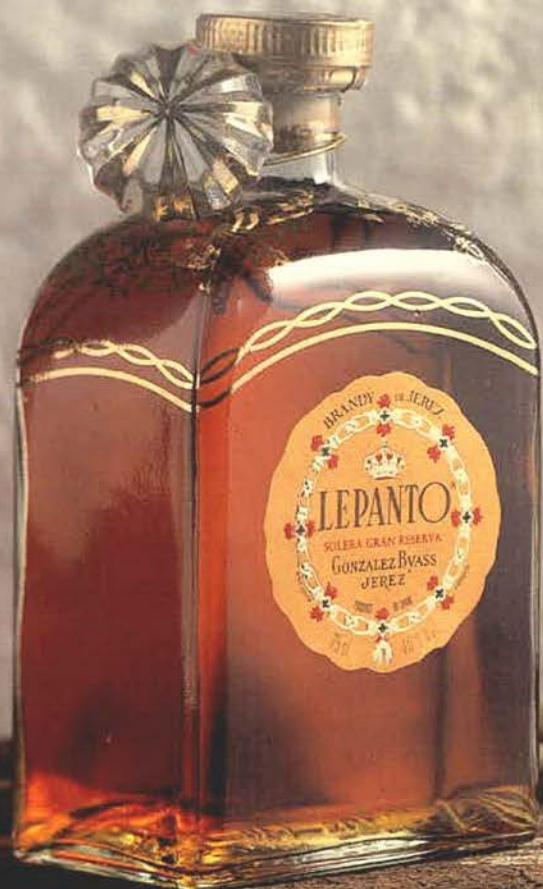
In the first place, we find the fresh cheese of Murcia, which is widely produced, accepted and consumed in this regional community. It is an average size cheese, weighing between one and two kilos, which is elaborated and consumed during the week, mainly as *tapas* or snacks in bars.

Two types of cured goat cheese have been developed recently, by the main artisan cheese factories of Murcia, especially in its mountain area.

This is the cured Murcia cheese and the Murcia wine cheese. Both are pure goat cheeses, with a short curing period, of one to two months, which confers upon them a soft, fresh texture and a creamy, acidic flavor.

The cured Murcia cheese is

Spanish Masterpieces



GONZALEZ BYASS

SHERRY & BRANDY



A

side from Mediterranean littoral, goat cheeses are made in an important and specific manner in other Spanish areas like Asturias, Extremadura and Castile.

similar in shape and flavor to a soft *Manchego* (from the La Mancha region). On the other hand, the wine variation is much softer still and smaller. During its curing period, the rind is rubbed with red wine from Yecla or Jumilla which, due to their high tannic content, darkens the rind and flavors it softly. There are many artisan cheese factories in all Andalusia, from Almeria to Huelva, which elaborate fresh and pressed, pure goat cheeses.

These cheeses are found in all the stores and markets in southern Spain and form a part of the daily diet of the Andalusians. They have a classic cylindrical shape, similar to a *Manchego* cheese, due to the use of the girth, but they are flatter and smaller, weighing about two kilos. The flat sides can be simply striped or profusely decorated with the floral or zoomorphic motifs which adorn the bottom of the cheese boards.

The most important areas of production are located in the higher mountain zones, especially in Almeria, Malaga, Cadiz and Seville.

TIME FOR CURING

However, the same cheese factories and cheese makers who elaborate fresh goat cheese also produce either seasonally or when they have excess milk, cured cheeses with the same shape and size. These cheeses, with more than a month and a half of curing, can be eaten soft, semi-cured, cured, highly cured and even con-

served in olive oil, which is one of the specialties of Andalusian goat cheese.

Among these cured cheeses, several stand out due to their reputation and recognition, and are highly valued on the Spanish market: the cheese of the Ronda mountain range (Malaga), the cheese of Albox or that of Filabres (Almeria), that of Grazalema (Cadiz) or the famous Aracena cheese, from the Huelva mountain range. In the southwestern corner of Spain, we find Extremadura, bordering with Portugal, which, although it is close to the Atlantic, has a Mediterranean climate with both continental and Atlantic influences.

Extremadura is an eminently stock breeding region. In addition to ewe cheese of recognized prestige, such as the *torta* or tart of El Casar or the cheese of La Serena, with Denomination of Origin (See Spain Gourmetour, issues 32 and 31, respectively), there is a broad variety of fresh and soft goat cheeses elaborated in the surrounding mountain ranges.

Among them all, we must single out the cheese of Los Ibores, elaborated in the area of Los Ibores and El Almonte, in northeastern Caceres. It is a small, cylindrical cheese, weighing about a kilo, with three different varieties: natural rind, oily rind and the most well-known paprika rind, with an orange color.

It is a cheese of mostly crafted elaboration prepared by migrant goatherders who traverse the Sierra de Gata or the Sierra del Almonte. Every week, they go to the

markets of Trujillo (See Spain Gourmetour nº 32), Plasencia or Aldeacentenera where they sell the cheese to the individuals who supply the "finishing touches" and complete the curing for about two months before their sale. It is a soft, but compact cheese, with very little salt, an acidic, creamy flavor and a fine aroma and perfume, which is highly valued by connoisseurs.

Similar to that of Ibores, there is a series of Extremadura goat cheeses, elaborated in those poorly inhabited regions and valleys dedicated mostly to stock breeding. There are cheeses, such as those of Siberia, Las Hurdes, Fregeñal de la Sierra, Acehuche, etc. However, among them, there is one that stands out because of its great originality. It is the *quesailla* of exclusively artisan and limited elaboration, which is produced mostly in winter and in spring. The *quesaillas* come from the strip of land bordering with Portugal, to the south of Badajoz.

THE EXCEPTIONS

Aside from the Mediterranean littoral, goat cheeses are elaborated in an important and specific manner in other Spanish areas. They are the exceptions to the rule.

Throughout Asturias (to the north of the country), we find certain varieties of goat cheese, of a cylindrical shape and small size, and a mixed or predominantly lactic coagulation, which enjoy recognized fame on the local markets. They are the Beyos cheeses, prepared in

the Los Beyos Mountain Pass, located in the eastern foothills of the Picos de Europa; and the Peñamellera and Rozagas cheeses, in its eastern foothills.

Similar cheese is also prepared in the Leon mountains (just to the south of Asturias) which takes the name of the towns or geographic areas from which they come, such as that of Valdeteja, Babia and Laciana.

In the Toledo mountains, bordering on Extremadura, or in the El Tietar Valley (Avila), goat cheese is produced with strong influences from the Extremadura cheeses, due to the fact that the wandering goatherders spend the summer in these central Spanish mountain ranges.

An anthropological relic is the cheese of Cameros, from the mountain range of the same name, located between La Rioja and Soria (in the north-central region of Spain). It is a small, fresh cheese and features a delightful shape, due to the mold used, a small, braided wicker basket, through which the curd drains.

And finally, on the island of Ibiza, to the south of the Balearic Islands, a fresh goat cheese, sweet and milky, is produced, which is used for the elaboration of the typical Ibiza *flaó*, a fresh cheese cake flavored with mint.

THE REQUESÓN OR COTTAGE CHEESE

There is an old Spanish saying: "Good cheesemaker, bad cottage cheesemaker". *Requesón* or cottage cheese is the protein extract ob-

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FROM SPAIN



La Quinta Esencia Del Fino

GOAT CHEESE

tained by the precipitation through heat (85° C - 185° F) in an acidic media (acidification) of the soluble proteins which remain in the whey.

It is, then, a by-product of the cheesemaking process but, in the case of goat's milk, it takes on special importance due to the fact that a third of its proteins are of a lacto-albumen and lactoglobulin type which remain in the whey.

Requesón is not considered a real cheese. However, it is eaten as such, fresh and without salt. It has a granular texture and a sandy palate, but it has a sweet, light flavor. It is eaten directly, as a dessert or snack, served with sugar, honey, jam, etc.

Requesón is elaborated and enjoyed throughout Spain, but has different names in different places. For example, it is called *nazurón* in Extremadura, *brossat* in Catalonia, *brullo* in Castellon and *gaztanbera* in the Basque Country.

THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Canary Island archipelago happens to be the area of Spain with the highest consumption of cheese per inhabitant and year. In addition to being a duty-free

port, through which abundant amounts of all kinds of cheeses enter the islands and are consumed, the Canaries can boast of long standing traditions of goat-breeding and elaboration and consumption of their own fresh and cured goat cheese. The Canary Island goat happens to be a breed, free of any infectious or contagious diseases.

It is calculated that they produce about 8,000 tons annually which are only consumed on the islands, mainly by the locals. Figures attribute about 6 kilos per person per year and that only refers to the local cheeses.

Each island produces its typical and differentiated cheese although they have

certain common characteristics such as being all made from raw goat's milk of the Canary Island breed; all are pressed and have an eminently enzymatic coagulation; they come in large sizes weighing more than 3 kilos and have a cylindrical format with a rhomboidal engraving on the rounded sides due to the braided palm leaf girth used in their production.

On the island of Hierro, a fresh, sweet and fatty cheese is made which is used to prepare the most typical dessert, the *quesadilla*, a spongy cake with a cheese base.

On La Palma, the cheese is made mainly in the north of the island and is smoked on

the outside over a fire of almond shells. On La Gomera, it is left to cure, until almost rancid, and then it is grated in order to prepare a typical sauce, the *almogrote*, which accompanies the *papas arrugadas* a Canary Island speciality of potatoes boiled with a large amount of salt until all the water evaporates.

In Fuerteventura, they make, perhaps, the best goat cheese on the Canary archipelago: the *majorero*. A highly pressed cheese with a long period of curing, a well developed but smooth flavor and an aftertaste of toasted dry fruit. And, finally, on Lanzarote, the *conejero* cheese is made in three forms: oily rind, paprika rind or with *gofio* (toasted wheat or corn flour) which gives it a very characteristic aroma.



Enric Canut is an Agricultural Engineer specializing in dairy farming, who has devoted most of his professional life to the world of cheese. He has published two books on the subject: A Handbook of Cheese, Cheesemakers and Cheese Experts and Cheeses in Catalonia (written in Catalan). He has been a regular contributor to publications specializing in gastronomy for more than a decade.

The Specialities

Aside from the fresh and soft goat cheese, in recent years, several specialties have been developed which have been very successful on the Spanish market. One example is the cheese of El Montsec (see Spain Gourmetour n° 5) or *Cendrat* (meaning "with ash", in Catalan), elaborated in an artisan manner in Clua, a small town in the Montsec mountain range (Lerida).

It is a compact cheese of lactic coagulation, with a flat disk-like shape, weighing about two kilos, which is left to cure in a humid cave for two months. During the curing, the rind is smeared with ash, covered with a layer of mold and yeast, which confers upon the cheese a fatty, oily texture and a pronounced but highly valued flavor.

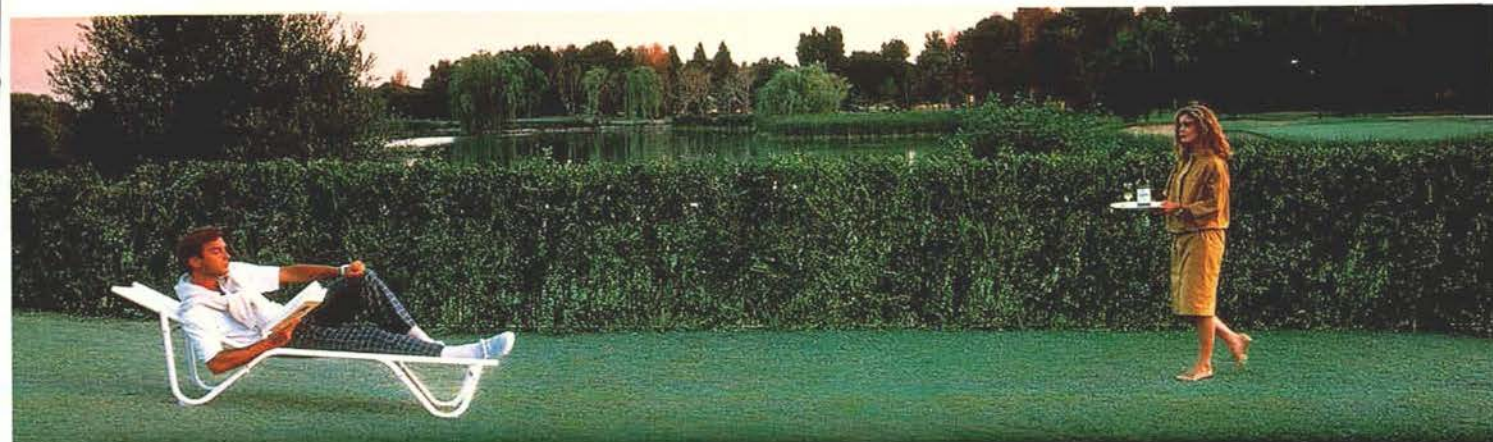
Another specialty is the *Garroxa* or *pell florida* (moldy rind) cheese. As its name indicates, it is a cylindrical cheese with rounded bor-

ders whose rind is covered with a *penicillium glaucum* mold, giving it a velvety appearance and a bluish-grey color. It is spreadable and its flavor is lactic with a touch of hazelnut. It is produced in a variety of artisan cheese factories throughout Catalonia.

In different points of Spain, mainly in Andalusia, Murcia and Catalonia, small cheese factories have sprouted up which are engaged in the production of very small cheeses, weighing between 50 to 100 grams a piece and

of lactic coagulation and self-drained paste. They are similar to the French *crottin*, but as they are made with raw milk from Spanish goats, highly differentiated textures and flavors are obtained, with a double fatty content (more than 60 % fatty material over the dry extract).

They can be found in different forms (natural rind, moldy or with black pepper), but there is one which has curdled especially well due to its exquisiteness: cured in pure olive oil with aromatic herbs.



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ASTURIAS

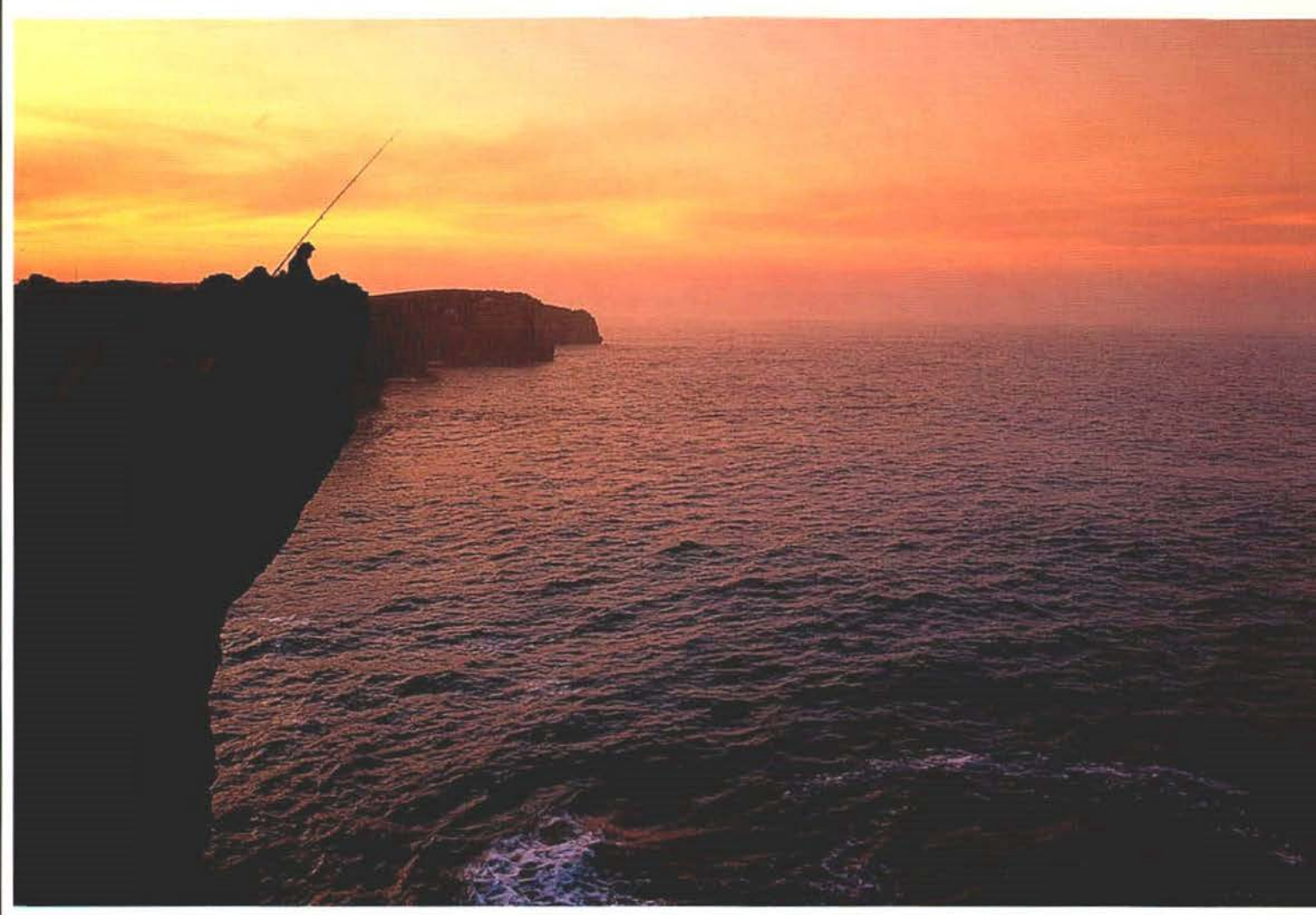
NATURE IN ITS PUREST STATE

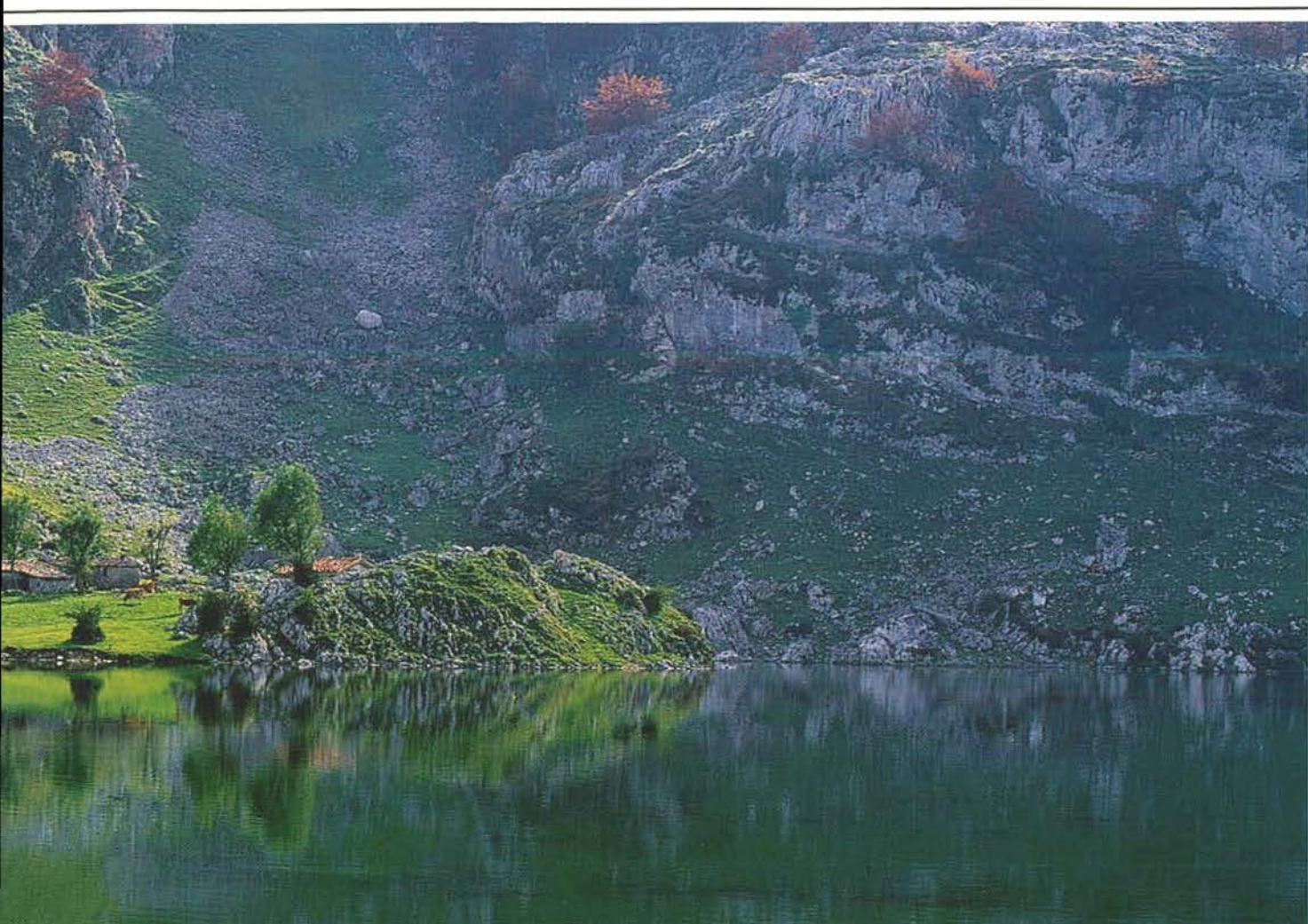
Text: Luis Palacio

Photos: Carlos Navajas/ICEX

Translator: Muriel Feine

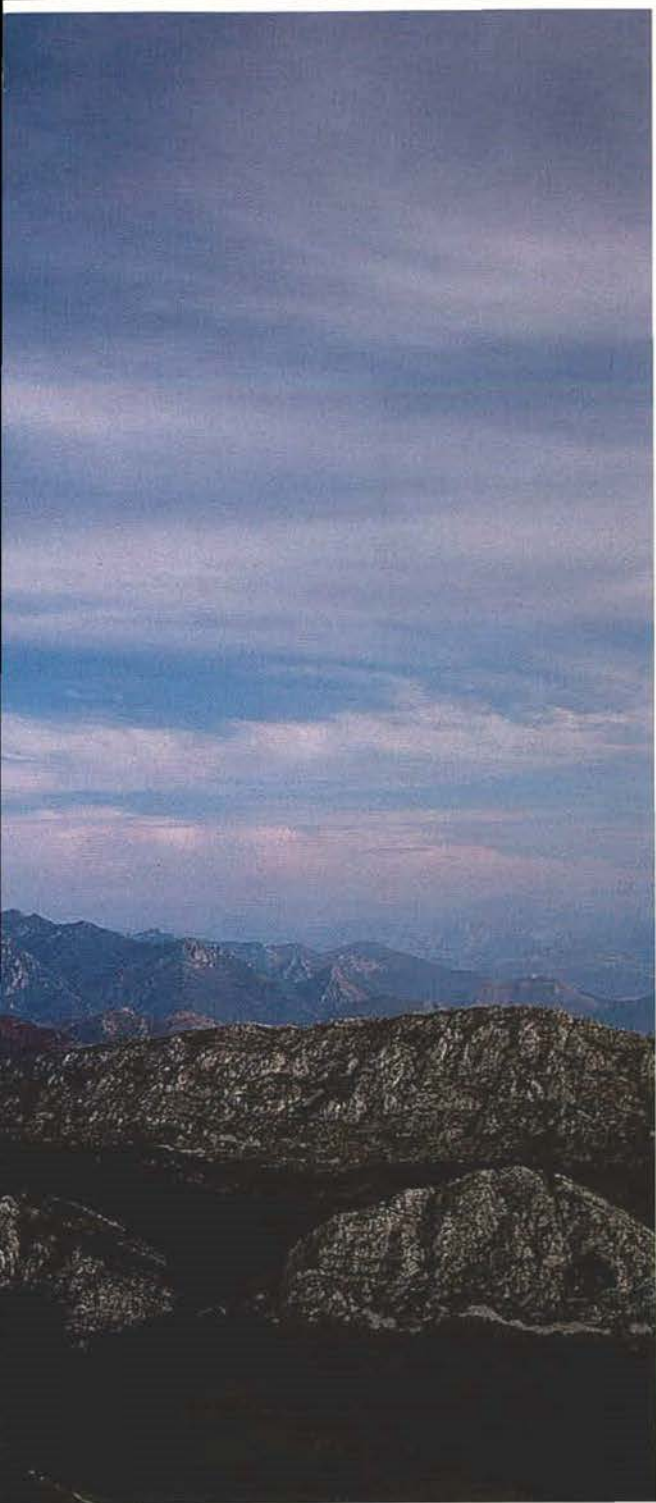
There has always been —and there still continues to be— many Asturias. The historic chronicles speak of the “Asturias





of Oviedo” and the “Asturias of Santillana”. This name, in plural, reflects the geographic, social, cultural, gastronomic... variety, which characterizes this region in the north of Spain and which is so different from the images which one customarily has of Spain.



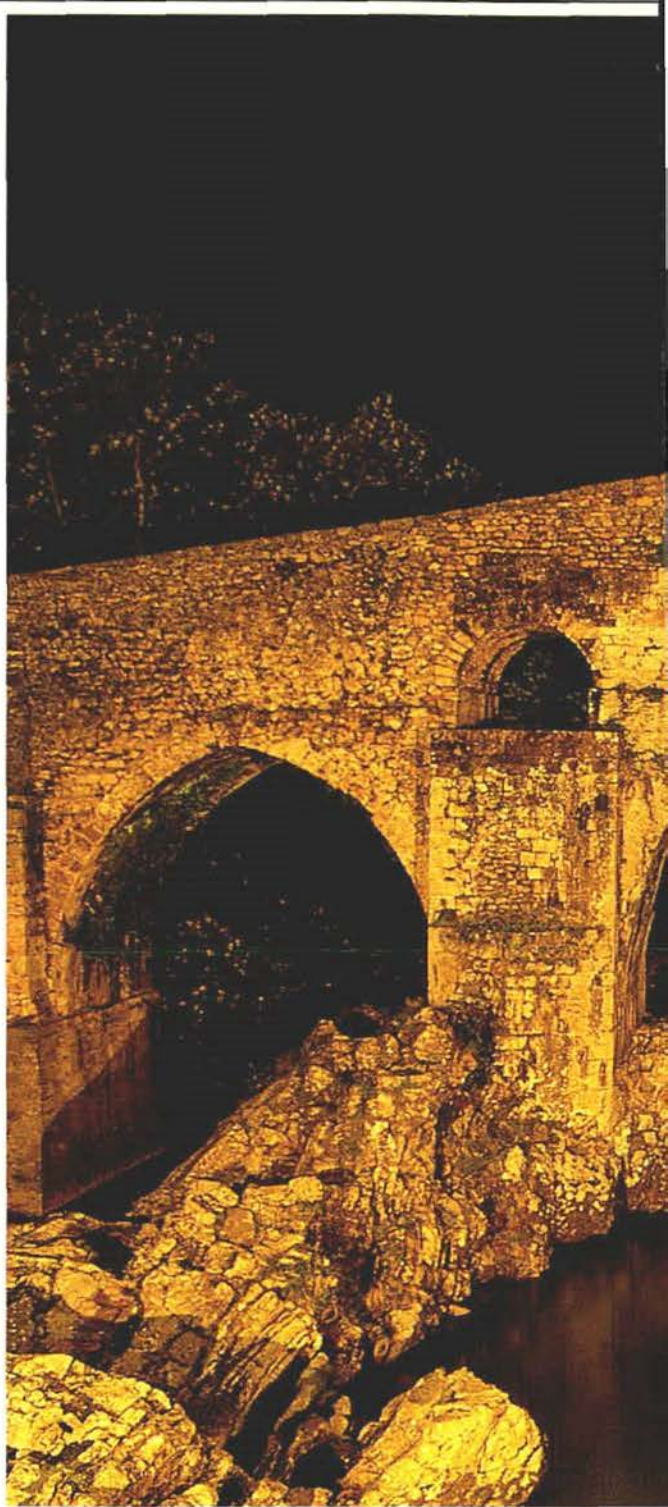


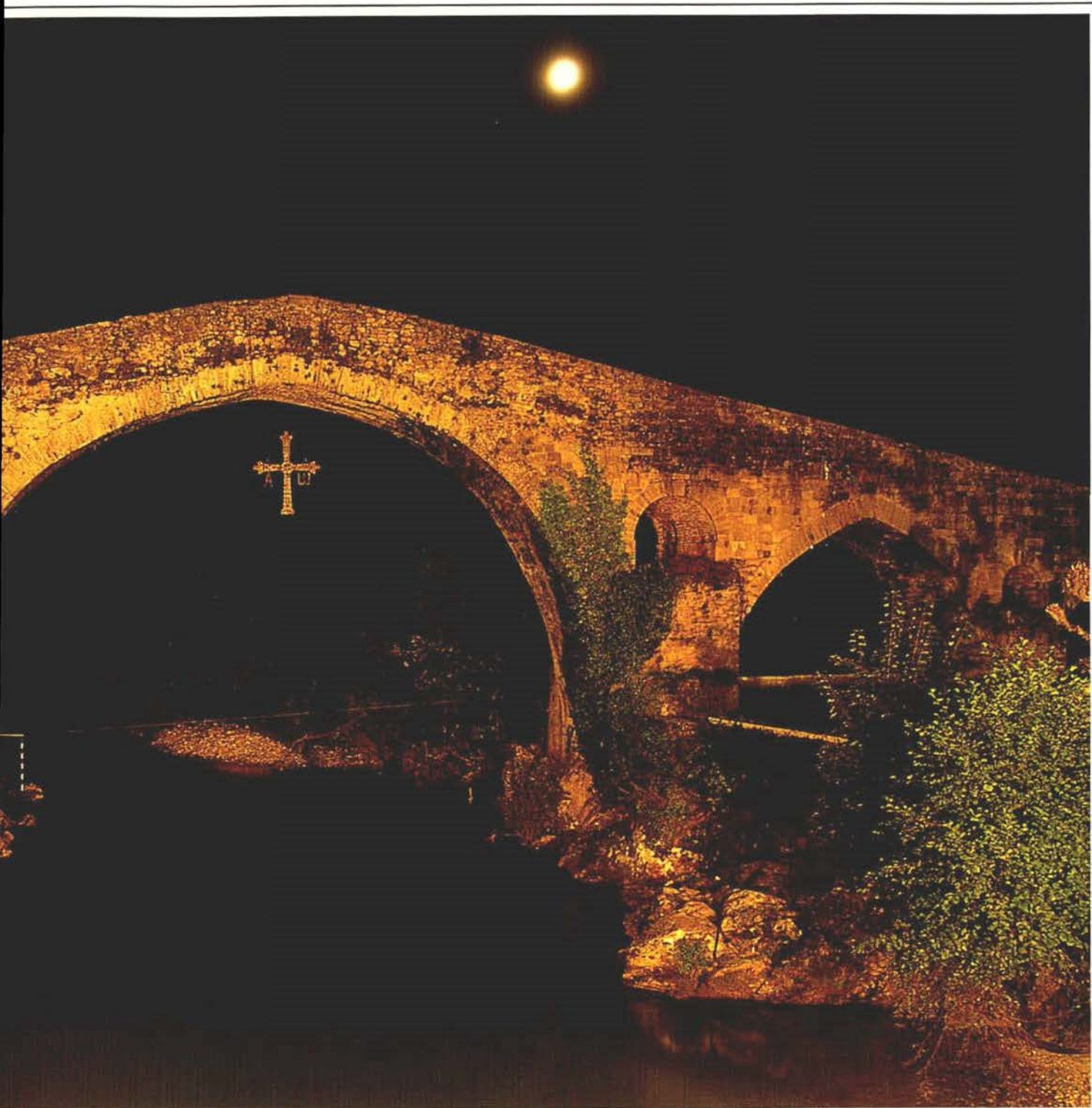
Landscape, gastronomy and art have appeared as the main tourism attractions for those who visit Asturias.

Asturias was isolated for centuries from the rest of the country due to its rugged orography.

Traveling to Asturias is traveling back to the very origins of the Spanish nation. It was here, in the 8th century, that the *Astures* rebelled against the Moslems.

The Gothic bridge in Cangas de Onís, over the Sella River.







Located at the most northern border of Spain, on the shores of the Cantabrian Sea, Asturias rests on the 43rd parallel, as do Florence, Sapporo or Toronto.

It has never been very easy to get there. It was isolated for centuries from the rest of the country due to its rugged orography. Even today, when it is nevertheless fully integrated into the national networks of highways, railways and air routes, Asturias is still off the mass tourism routes. Why? Because of its frequent rain—almost 1,000 millimeters annually—which, although it certainly assures a green and fertile landscape, excludes it from the plans of the international tour operators, who are more interested in a bright

Between the 8th and 10th

centuries, an artistic

movement known as

Asturian Pre-Romanesque

came into being. Santa

María del Naranco

(Oviedo) is an example.

sun and blue skies.

Thanks to this isolation—which was absolute before and now is only partial—the region has been kept relatively virgin. In Asturias, it is still possible “to get lost”. To leave the known roads and highways and enjoy Nature in its purest state; to surprise a herd of *asturcones* (wild, autochthonous horses) on the Sueve massif, a group of chamois on the heights of the Reres Reserve or a Cantabrian brown bear in the thick Somiedo forest. One can also converse with

the sailors who mend their fishing tackles by hand in the Port of Cudillero, or chat with the shepherds of any flock in the Picos de Europa, while they make cheese in their cabins.

“Asturias is a small, mountainous and extremely pleasant province,” wrote the writer Luis Valdés in the 15th century. His description is correct. Asturias is, in fact, small because it measures little more than 10,500 square kilometers (4,054 square miles), which form a narrow strip about 250 square kilometers (155 miles) long.

It is mountainous, as few regions in Spain are, especially if we consider that more than half of its surface area is located 700 meters (2,300 feet) above sea level, and that the *Cordillera Cantábrica* or Cantabrian Mountain Range, its border on the southern flank, rises frequently above 2,000 meters (6,560 feet).

Its orography caused its isolation and this conditioned its economic development. Asturias remained rural—and almost medieval—until the first half of the 19th century, when the mining and iron and steel industries began to settle here. It was then that mine entrances began to sprout up in the coal beds of the Nalon and Caudal rivers, and blast furnaces were built in order to transform the iron ore which arrived by sea from the Basque country.

The mines and blast furnaces attracted many families from the east and west of Asturias to the central area of the province, causing the depopulation of the former zones. As a result of these internal migrations, today, six cities—Aviles, Gijón, Langreo, Mieres,

Oviedo and Pola de Siero—concentrate 65 % of the 1,091,000 inhabitants which Asturias registered in 1991.

At present, and despite their decline, the mining and iron and steel industries continue to be the financial support of the region, although new and powerful industrial alternatives are arising. In recent years, many international companies have established themselves in Asturias, such as DuPont, Suzuki and Thyssen. In addition, the agricultural and tourism sectors have gained importance of late. “Even though it is difficult for these industries (tourism and food), to replace the current ones on a short-term basis,” says Amador Robles, General Manager of the Regional Tourism Society (SRT), “it is encouraging that in recent years, investment in these sectors has increased in a sustained manner with rates of close to 20 %.”

ONE THOUSAND AND ONE ASTURIAS

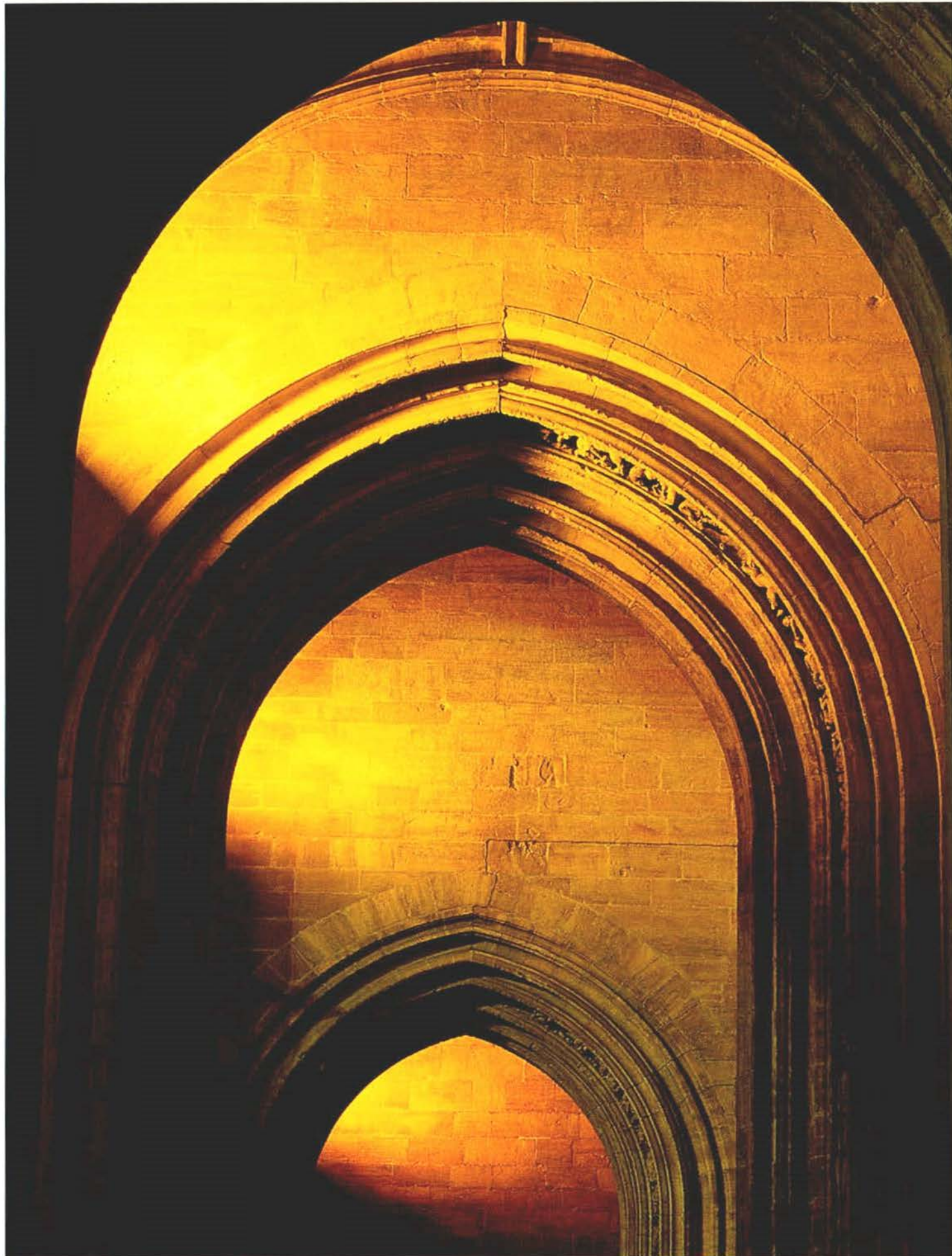
In Asturias, Nature imposes itself upon the traveler. This is shown by the surveys carried out by the Regional Tourism Society which intended to analyze the tourism demand of traveler in the area. Nature, landscape and mountains appear in first place as the main reasons for visiting Asturias, far ahead of its gastronomy and its artistic treasures.

Mother Nature's predominance is not strange if we consider how highly varied the Asturian landscape is and the very attractive possibility of being able to radically change one's surroundings in just a few kilometers. There are only 28 kilometers (17 miles) between the beach of Barro, in eastern Asturias, and the maximum

altitude of the region, the Torrecerrado peak (2,648 meters or 8,700 feet high), a minimum distance if we consider that it is what separates the coast and the corn fields, from the tall mountains, where we only find rock and perpetual snow.

The “Asturias of the Mountains” surprises the traveller with its immense verticality. This occurs when we enter Asturian lands through the impressive natural gap of the *Desfiladero* or Narrow Pass of Los Beyos, carved out of the rock by water and to which Man's hand has only managed, with immense difficulty, to add a highway at the end of the 19th century. In a classic text about Asturias (Aurelio de Llano: *Bellezas de Asturias. De oriente a occidente*—“Beauties of Asturias. From East to West,” 1928), we can read: “The cut of the rocks is imposing: they compress the river which flows down, with roaring rapids, as if it was in a hurry to refresh the pleasant, fertile valleys. Moreover, we can go from one bank of the Sella to the other, crossing over the river on daring bridges.”

However, if, instead of heading inland from the coast, the visitor chooses to travel all along the coast, once again he encounters variety—and the possibility of making a choice. Along its 250 kilometers (114 miles) of littoral, the Asturian coastline offers a hundred beaches, among which there are sandy ones (Niembro), rocky ones (Artedo), open ones (Rodiles), ones with a nearby island (Ballota), ones enclosed between cliffs (Llames de Pria), secluded ones (España), untamed ones (San Lorenzo), inaccessible ones (Meron)



and even ones exclusively reserved for nudists (Torimbia). Nevertheless, without making a list—which always turns out to be oversimplified—the main characteristic of Asturias' Nature is its accessibility. Any detour off the main highways will take you to it and, even, from the main cities—Gijón, Oviedo and Avilés—it is only necessary to drive for a few minutes—fifteen at most—in order to leave the noise, traffic and stress behind and feel the northeastern breeze on your face, which sweeps over the Campa Torres; walk along the slopes of the Naranco Mountain; or sink one's feet into the sands of the peaceful Verdicio Beach, sheltered by the Peñas Cape. However, under the heading of what is truly exceptional, we must mention two very unique places. First, the

The Gothic style

cathedral of

Oviedo is one

of the master-

pieces of

Asturian art.

Picos de Europa, the mountainous massif rising up in eastern Asturias, which is shared with the neighboring provinces of Cantabria and Leon, and which was recently declared a National Park, when the one created in 1916 as Covadonga Mountain was expanded. "Los Picos" (or "The Peaks"), as the Asturians call them, in order to distinguish them from the rest of the Cordillera Cantabrica, boast of fertile, green meadows, such as the Ario; lakes, such as that of Covadonga; beech and oak

forests, such as that of Escobaño; and deep gorges, like the one formed by the Cares River. Together, they create a true paradise for hiking, mountain climbing and speleology lovers.

Secondly, we can cite the whole area to the west made up of the Somiedo Mountains and the biological reserve of Muniellos: The mountains, because they are home to the largest proportion of existing Cantabrian brown bears, scarcely a hundred in number nowadays. The reserve, as it is one of the largest forests in Europe, measuring 372 square kilometers (144 square miles) of woods and more than a million oak trees, all of which encloses areas which have barely been visited by Man.

Such a privileged natural landscape as this one has become an exceptional setting for all kinds of sports events, especially what is known today as "active tourism". At present, about thirty companies located in Asturias offer from the most classic sports, as hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding, to the more daring ones, as hang gliding, regattas of hot air balloons or rafting.

However, in addition to this natural setting, it offers other attractions, which range from sports to folklore, such as the descent of the Sella River or the popular pilgrimages.

As for the Descent of the Sella, which has been held on the first Sunday of August since 1933, it attracts canoeists from all over the world anxious to fight the river rapids at some points and the scarcity of water, at others. Meanwhile, thousands of fans watch the competition, either from the shores, or from the "River Train", which runs parallel

to the river and stops at strategic points so that fans can encourage the paddlers. The pilgrimages, as occurs in most of Spain, are really a joyous celebration and represent a combination of the towns' religious festivities with Nature. In Asturias, the *vaqueira* pilgrimage stands out, which is held in August in Alto de Aristebano, near Luarca. During this pilgrimage, there are always a couple of *vaqueiros* getting married. The *vaqueiros* are a peculiar ethnic group which, up until a few years ago, lived from the livestock they raised in a migratory manner, between the coastal towns and the *brañas* (pasture lands) of the mountains.

TRAVELING

BACK TO THE ORIGINS

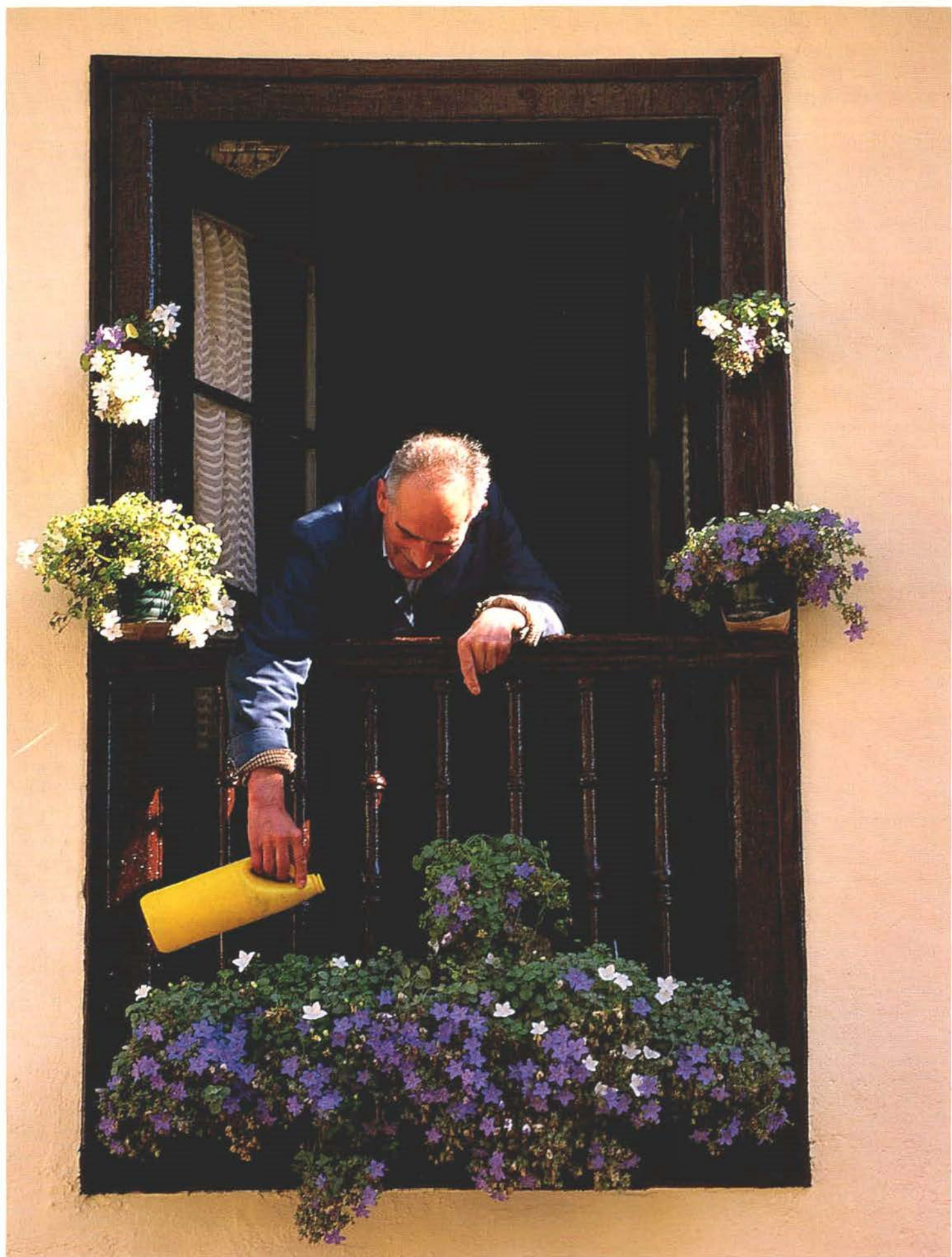
Traveling to Asturias is, in one way, traveling back to the very origins of the Spanish nation. It was here, in the 8th century, that the *Astures* rebelled against the Moslems who had invaded the Peninsula. Contrary to what occurred in other areas of northern Spain, their rebellion proved successful and led to the creation of the Kingdom of Asturias which centuries later would move its headquarters South, becoming, successively, the Kingdom of Leon, the Kingdom of Castile, and after the expulsion of the Moslems in the year 1492, the Kingdom of Spain. In the year 1388, as recognition of their fundamental role in founding his kingdom, Juan I of Castile created the Principality of Asturias, a title which has been held from then on by all the direct heirs to the Spanish Crown. At the very beginning of the Asturias Kingdom, between the 8th and 10th centuries, an artistic movement known as Asturian Pre-Romanesque

came into being. According to Madrid historian, Vidal, it was "an art of great originality with very diverse aspects, conceived as an instrument of prestige and self-affirmation". The main examples of this movement make up, together with Mother Nature and the local gastronomy, another of the major charms of the region. Its buildings, as well, offer the uniqueness of being located in naturally privileged areas, far from the big cities. Valdediós is an example.

It is worthwhile to ascend, from Villaviciosa, one of the rivers forming its estuary, up to the peaceful valley of Ambas. Deep in the valley, where one only hears the murmuring of the wind in the eucalyptus and apple trees, is the Church of San Salvador de Valdediós, rebaptized by the locals as "*El Conventín*" or "Little Convent". A visit inside the church, constructed in about the year 820, in order to contemplate its mural paintings—currently undergoing restoration—or caress its stone lattice work—of evident Arabic influence—will take the traveler back a thousand years.

However, in addition to *El Conventín* of Valdediós, one can visit in Asturias a dozen other Pre-Romanesque churches, such as those of San Juan de Santianes (Pravia), constructed by King Silo and which is considered as the very start of the movement; those of Santa María and San Miguel de Lillo, on the slopes of Monte Naranco, near Oviedo; or the church of Santa Cristina de Lena, known as "the church of the hundred corners", due to the complexity of its layout.

Nevertheless, limiting the artistic offering of Asturias to Pre-Romanesque archi-



ecture, painting and sculpture would be excessively simple. The prehistoric and Roman remains and, above all, the architecture of the "Indianos" demand the traveller's attention as well.

"Indiano" was the popular name given to the Asturians who, after emigrating to Latin America in search of fortune, returned to their hometowns wealthy. To them are owed a multitude of churches, fountains and public schools and, most especially, the villas of the "Indianos", lavish nineteenth century mansions which contrasted with the simple local architecture. The visual reference is the palm trees which the Indians planted in their garden as a differentiating feature. Today, they serve as a sign to the traveler that, beneath them, one will find very unique and outstanding buildings, such as Villa Excelsior (Luarca), the Palace of Peñalba (Figueras), currently converted into a hotel, and the Quinta Guadalupe (Colombres), recently reconstructed by the Provincial Deputation and which happens to house the "Archives of the Indianos", an authentic reflection of the history of the Asturians on the American continent.

Asturias is a

small,

pleasant

region, which

has been kept

relatively

virgin.

FROM THE SEA AND FROM THE LAND

In the third place, Asturias offers an additional attraction and one of great importance from a touristic point

of view: its gastronomy. Its cuisine is highly varied, the result of its natural diversity. There is, then, in terms of the raw materials available in each region, a cuisine of the sea and of the coast, another of the farmland and, even a third, of the mountains, which respectively rely on the fish and seafood of the Cantabrian, the fruits and vegetables of the fertile river valley, and the meat, game and fish of the mountains and streams.

A certain debate is going on regarding the characteristics of Asturian gastronomy. From a traditional point of view, one can speak of "the 'brutal' Asturian cooking... perhaps the most medieval, strong, rugged, honest and noble cuisine of the Spanish regional cuisines", as defined by gastronomy critic José María Villabella, in his *Gastronomic Guide of Asturias*. There is no doubt that this view of Asturian cooking responds, to a great extent, to a widespread assumption, which is supported by the heartiness of dishes such as *fabada* (a stew of beans with bacon, black *morcilla* blood sausage and other pork derivatives) and the *pote asturiano* (another type of stew).

However, the regional cooking has evolved considerably in recent years. Some of the best proof of this can be found in the *fabada* itself. As of its traditional formula—reflected in this expressive definition: The *fabada* consists of a pig "thrown" over some *fabes* (*fabes* are broad white beans)—, the Asturian cooks have revitalized the dish in order to attain such succulent treats as *fabes* with vegetables, with clams and with lobster.

Nevertheless, aside from this natural evolution in Asturian cooking, there has always

been a vein far removed from the heartiness of the traditional dishes, as is deduced from the contents of *The Traditional Cooking of Asturias*, a cookbook published for the first time in the 1890s. In that book—aside from the peculiarity that neither the *fabada* nor the very popular rice pudding are mentioned (the latter dish is so magnificently prepared here thanks to the quality of the local milk and the burnt sugar with which it is covered)—, such elaborate and delicate dishes are included as "Roast Christmas Eve Sea Bream", seasoned with oranges and walnuts, and the "Omelette of figs and white bread".

Regardless of the diversity of perspectives, the truth of the matter is that Asturian cuisine is most known for three products or dishes: the already mentioned *fabada*, the Cabrales cheese and the cider.

Cabrales cheese, which is prepared in the caves of that eastern town, where the Picos de Europa rise tall, is a variety of blue cheese, similar to the French Roquefort and to the Italian Gorgonzola. Despite its fame, *cabrales* meets with stiff competition, for in Asturias, nineteen different kinds of cheeses are elaborated, all of which undergo an artisan elaboration. Only in the towns bordering with Cabrales, can one find that of Los Beyos, in Onis and Ponga, and those of Peñamellera. In the areas bordering with Galicia, the Oscos cheese is prepared, while the entire region is familiar with that of *Afuega'l pitu*, which is a variety of fresh cheese.

In the world of Asturian gastronomy, the *chigre* and the cider are intimately united. The first is the bar where the second is preferably drunk. *Chigres* are found through-

out Asturias, although with greater abundance in the central area and around the cider producing centers in the towns of Villaviciosa and Nava. Each *chigre* often has cider of one, two or three varieties (*palos*) coming from just as many apple presses. Therefore, drinkers usually more from one *chigre* or bar to another in search of the best *palos*.

Drinking cider demands a specific ritual which lies in the way in which it is served—the liquid is poured from a certain height and is made to hit the side of the glass, in order to oxygenate and beat it—and the way it is drunk. All of those present must drink from the same glass.

A whole culture has developed around cider and its consumption which reaches its high point when the drinker raises his elbow and tastes the liquid and then displays one of a great variety of expressions.

And when the cider and the company are right, it is not unusual for the visitors to the *chigre* to form a choir and begin to sing. Then, the absolute must in their repertoire is *Asturias, patria querida* (Asturias, beloved homeland), the hymn of the region and one of the country's most popular songs. The Asturians have, however, modified one verse, changing the word "some" to "all", and which is now sung as follows: "*Quien estuviera en Asturias, en todas las ocasiones*" ("Whoever goes to in Asturias, on each and every occasion..").

See recipes on page 160

Luis Palacios is a journalist, director of the *Intermedios* magazine and a regular collaborator with *Spain Gourmetour*.

IN SEARCH OF THE GREEN PARADISE

In the small town of Amandi, a little more than a kilometer from Villaviciosa, and on the shores of its estuary, we find La Casona de Amandi, a hotel with nine rooms, housed in a typical Asturian ancestral home built in 1850. La Casona, like the Rectoral, in Taramundi, or La Posada de Babel, near Llanes, forms a part of more than a dozen houses recovered as hotels and which are experimenting with a relatively new hotel concept for Spain in order to attract quality tourism.

"The secret lies in offering peace and quiet and integrating the visitor into the life of the house", explains Maribel Armero. She and her husband, Rogelio Fernández, reconverted what was up until then a second residence into a small hotel a few years ago, when they were faced with the need to sell the building. La Casona opened its doors to the public in June of 1991, attended directly by its owners. Rogelio put aside his profession as a lawyer in order to become a receptionist, gardener, tourist guide, administrator and even carpenter, whenever necessary. Maribel, from her end, adapted

her work as an antique dealer to the new setting—she has set up a wing of the property for this purpose—and she took charge of the decoration of the hotel, while she also assumed the daily household chores.

Except in the truly high season—which in Asturias is limited to the months of July and August and to Easter week—the Casona de Amandi always has a free room. This is due in part to their decision to attract only a select and quality tourism—but not "elite", its owners hasten to add—which is becoming increasingly more popular every day in our country and which responds to a very unusual hotel marketing. "Our promotion, for example, is very limited and is really reduced to what our clients tell their friends," says Rogelio Fernández. "In a certain sense, the clients like it that way, and I think that if we were to adopt the more typical measures employed in mass tourism to attract more visitors, we would destroy the image which we have now."

The example of La Casona is very significant in the transformation which the Asturian tourism industry is un-

dergoing, with the support of the regional authorities.

In its promotional work, the Board of Industry, Tourism and Employment and the Regional Tourism Society have both fostered the creation of a touristic infrastructure based on the region's main assets—its landscape, its gastronomy and its artistic treasures—which make its possible to counter-arrest its main handicap, the abundant rain. Thus, a diversified offer has appeared which complements the region's more well-known poles of attraction: the beaches and the Picos de Europa.

Among the steps undertaken, the regional government has instituted a plan for the recovery for touristic use of traditional homes and buildings, located far from the most populated and developed areas. This has led to the creation of "centers of rural tourism", such as Llanures (Quiros), La Tahona (Peñamellera Alta) and Taramundi. It is a matter, in the majority of the six existing centers, of a unique building—a palace or flour mill, for example—converted into a hotel and situated in an area of artistic, natural... or gastronomic interest.





The Premium Leading Brandy from Spain.



LA HACIENDA BENAZUZA SARACEN REMINISCENCES

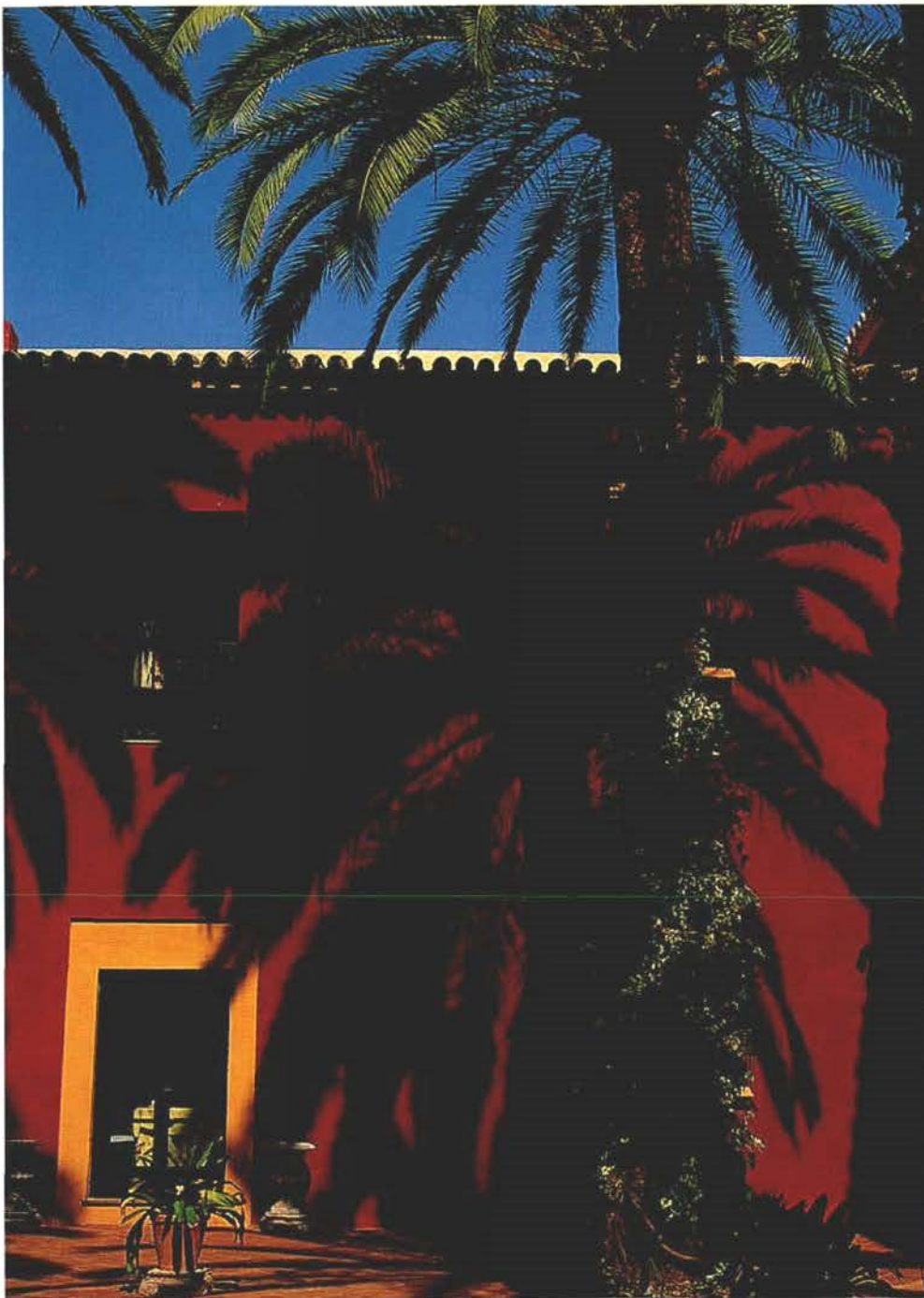
Fifteen kilometers from Seville, on the edge of the village of Sanlúcar la Mayor and spanning long views over rolling countryside, La Hacienda Benazuza has been a lovingly tended manor house for more than 1,000 years. From its earliest owners, a princely Saracen family called Benazuza, onwards, the Hacienda has been revered and beautified and now, as a deluxe hotel, it rewards its guests with a long distilled tranquility, with graciousness ... and with beauty.

Text : Tom Burns

Photos: Carlos Navajas/ICEX

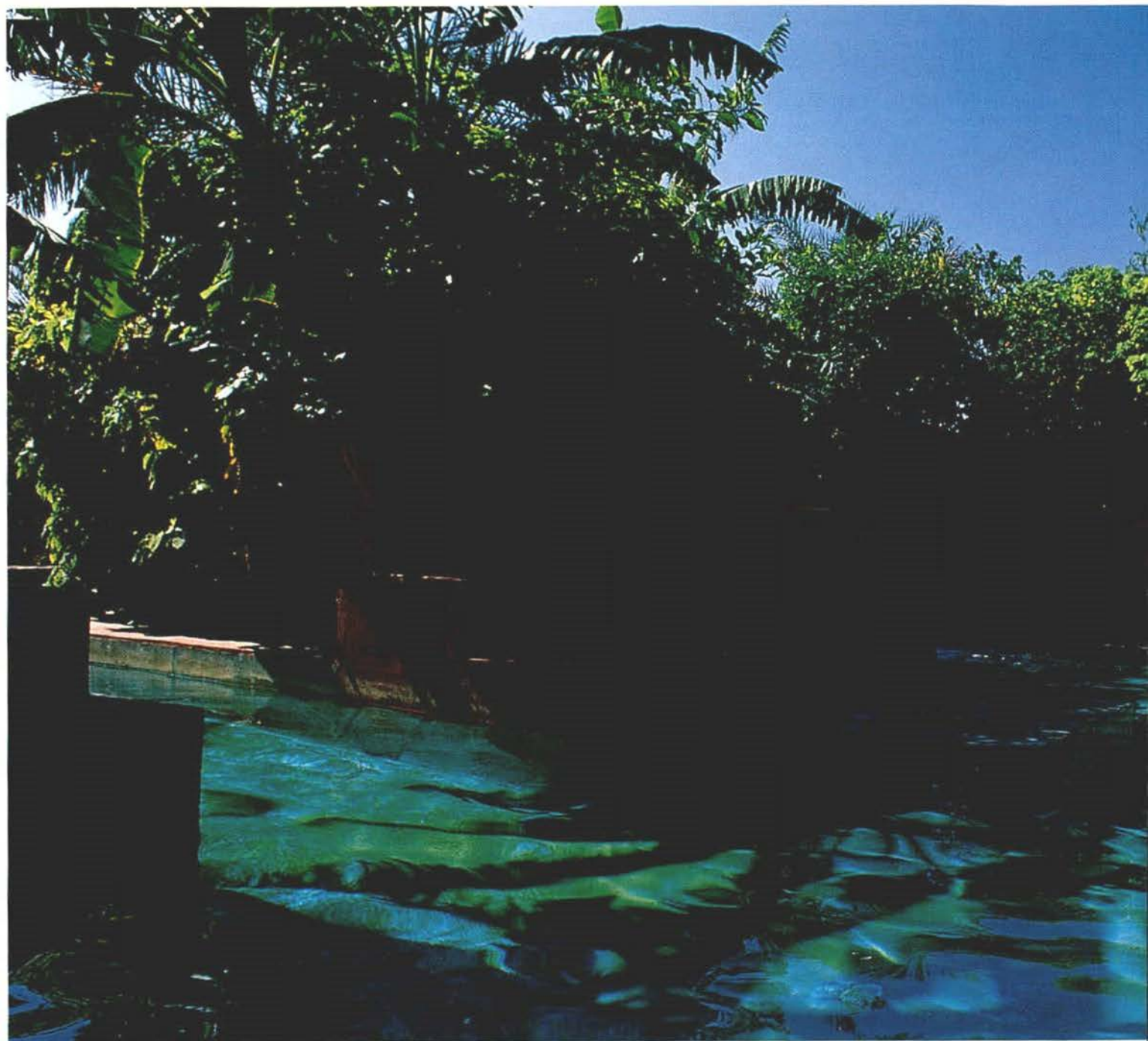


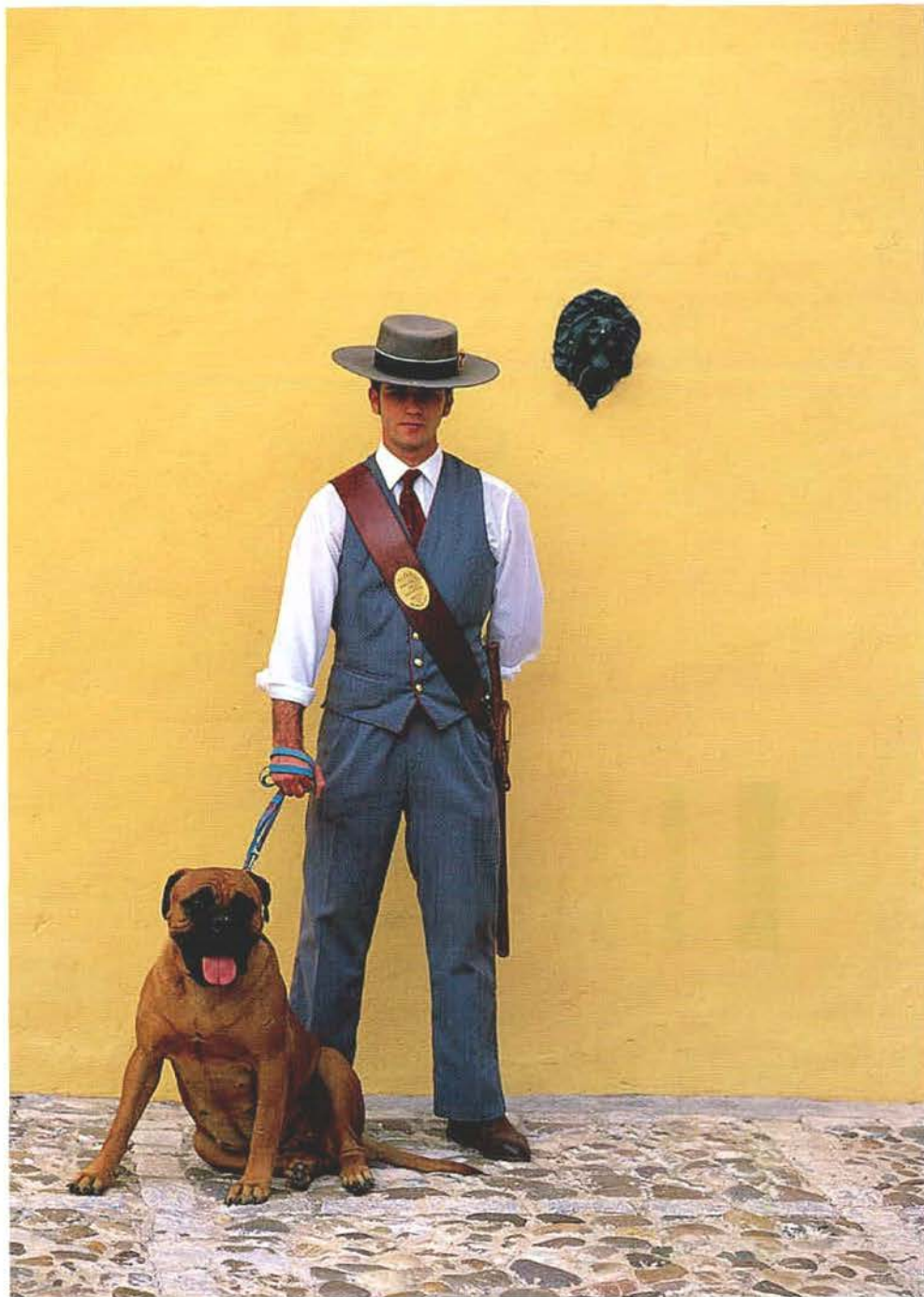
Hacienda Benazuza is a combination of manor house and farmhouse, the sprawling center of a community's life and a direct descendent of the self-sufficient Roman villa.



Those familiar with the Relais & Chateaux world order know what to expect when they check into the Hacienda Benazuza but the likelihood is that the reality of the place will supercede their expectations.







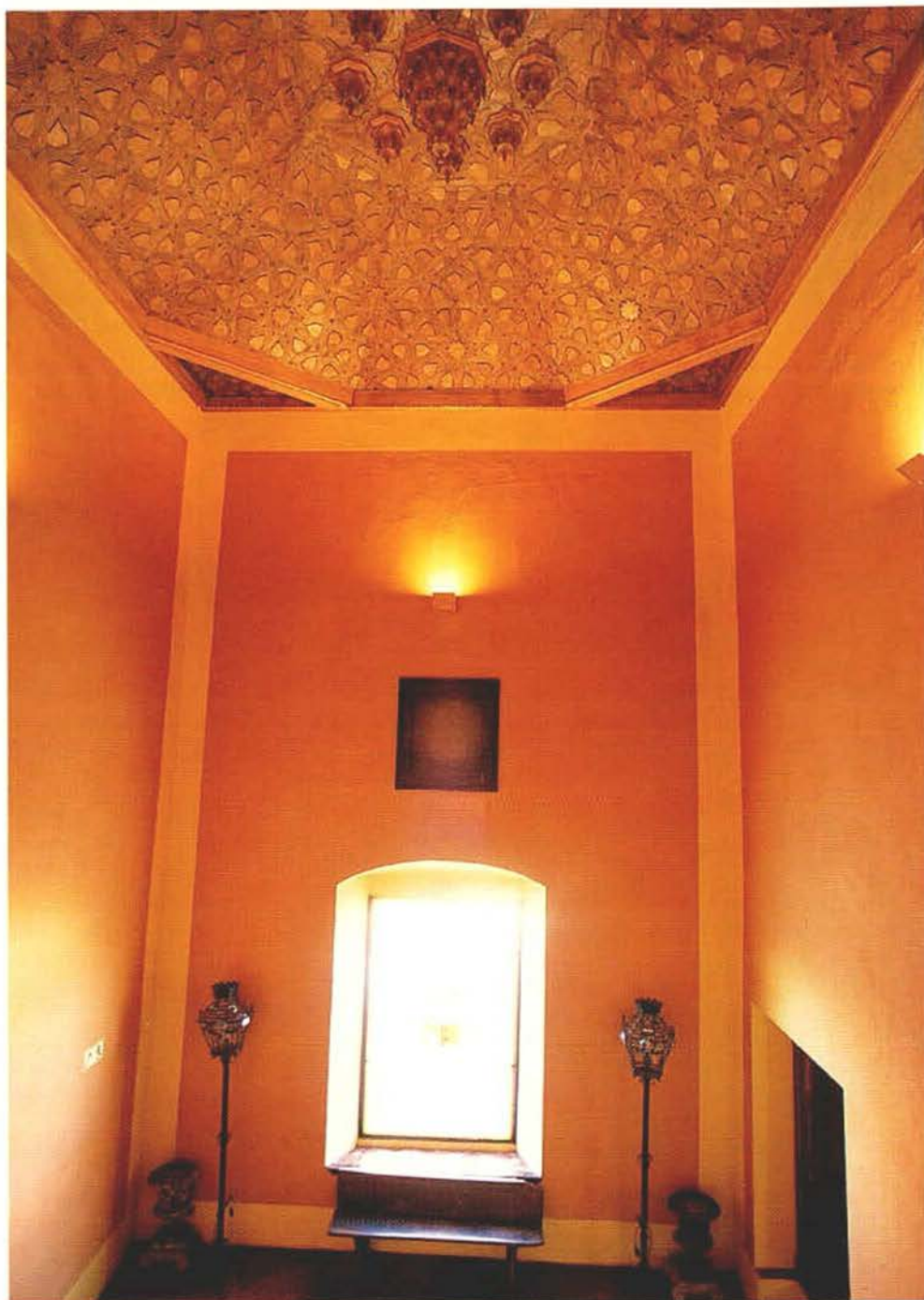
The Hacienda is called Benazuza after a dynasty of Saracen princes who rebuilt the main house and began clearing, once more, to farm in an area that had first been cultivated by the Romans.



Since 1992 it has been transformed into a haven for discerning hotel guests, with 25 double rooms, 15 suites and three deluxe suites. It has now become a triumph of grace and beauty.







The wine cellar is very interesting indeed. A serious wine drinker who wants to delve deep into what Spain has to offer will be amply rewarded by a stay in Benazuza.

LA HACIENDA BENAZUZA

What, I wondered, did the large group of Americans, Britons and Germans make of it as they sipped sherry in one of the Hacienda Benazuza's elegant drawing rooms and watched a *Coro Rociero* sing and dance. The visitors were on one of the special train tours called Al Andalus (see Spain Gourmetour n° 18) that gently takes its travelers in turn of the century luxury through Southern Spain and they had just been bussed the 15 kilometres from Seville to the village of Sanlúcar La Mayor to spend the night at Benazuza.

The 30 strong *Coro Rociero*, which included Sanlúcar grandmothers and their grandchildren, had dressed up for the occasion in flouncy polka-dotted gypsy dresses and tight fitting Andalusian cowboy costumes; it had brought along its guitarists, flutists and drummers and it was giving the visitors a spot of local color welcome. The room was full of song and movement and of changing handclapping rhythms as Sevillanas and Rumbas succeeded each other. This was a surprise laid on for the Al Andalus travelers even before they had had time to get used to their Benazuza surroundings.

"Amazing, quite, incredibly amazing," said one of the foreigners, a retired banker and one time cavalry officer from southern England. "Is this the real thing?" he wanted to know as he swept his arm around the the well-proportioned Hacienda Benazuza state room to take in everything from its coffered Moorish ceiling to the happily swaying choir at the room's far edge that was going through its *Rociero* paces. "I mean is this usual, normal you know? Do places like this really exist and are people so spontaneous around these parts?"

EL ROCIO

As I suspected he did not have a clue what to make of it all. The elderly but fit looking Englishman wanted reassurances and explanations and I was not quite sure where to begin. "The choir is made up of *Rocieros*," I started, "and they are so called because every Whitsun they go on a pilgrimage, walking, on horseback and on carts pulled by oxen to the shrine of the Virgen del Rocio which is some 60 kilometers southwest of here as the crow flies. There are *Rocieros* in every village of Andalusia and as far away as Barcelona and tens of thousands of them get together, all of them dressed up like these people from Sanlúcar, at the Virgen's shrine for a three-day long session of partying, picnicking and praying."

"Before they leave for the Rocio," I went on, "Sanlúcar's pilgrims stop here at Benazuza for a spot of spiritual and material encouragement to help them on their way. For hundreds of years, long before the Hacienda became a hotel, they have had a mass said for them at daybreak here and then they get a few drinks inside them so that, in every sense, they can set off in good cheer." The retired banker's face lit up and he used a somewhat eccentric but not entirely inappropriate comparison to show that he was starting to make sense of it all. "So the hotel is the local manor, is that it? And all these chaps come along like the local hunt does to get a stirrup cup before they set off."

I couldn't help laughing but I saw his point. Substitute a devotion for the Virgen del Rocio for a passion for pursuing foxes, the joyful flamenco folklore for the

huntman's bloodcurdling cries, the sunkissed olive groves and vines and the dusty tracks of Andalusia for England's damp shires and, yes, stretching the imagination until it snaps, you more or less have "the picture" as my new friend put it. Where he was quite right was his labelling of Benazuza as the local manor house, the stately home that lords it over the village.

THE HACIENDA

To be entirely accurate you would have to say that the Hacienda Benazuza is a combination of manor house and farmhouse, the sprawling center of a community's life and a direct descendant of the self-sufficient Roman villa. It is set on the high plateau called the Aljarafe above Seville and looks out over rich agricultural land, punctuated by shimmering whitewashed *pueblos*, that rolls towards the Atlantic. It is an Hacienda because, until it became a deluxe hotel, it was the lordly headquarters for an area of intensive farming and endowed with its own olive oil mill. It is called Benazuza after a dynasty of Saracen princes who rebuilt the main house and began clearing once more for farming an area that had first been cultivated by the Romans.

"I wish I knew that I could spend another night between the garden and the pool, amid the groves of olives, noble legacy where turtledoves signs and birds trill" wrote Al Mutamid, Poet King of Seville, wistfully remembering Benazuza. But there was not to be another night for him in this agricultural pleasure dome. Seville was conquered, late in the 13th century, by the Christian army of King, subsequently Saint, Ferdinand

III and Benazuza became the property of the city's first archbishop. Later the estate passed into the hands of the Order of Santiago, a Spanish crusader equivalent to the Knights of the Temple, and later still it became the property the Portuguese-born Duarte family which obtained fame and fortune in the service of the 16th century Holy Roman Emperor Charles V who reigned in Spain as Charles I.

THE HOTEL

Al Mutamid's descendants can of course return now to Benazuza, just as I stayed there and as the Al Andalus passengers spent their night of Andalusian magic. In its one but last reincarnation, Benazuza was a well appointed country home for Seville's Pablo Romero family, a family that has for years and years bred legendary fierce and powerful fighting bulls. Since 1992 it has been transformed into a haven for discerning hotel guests, with 25 double rooms, 15 suites and three special suites. It has now become a triumph of grace and beauty.

The Hacienda Benazuza has gained for itself a vital seal of approval in its efforts to give the best to its guests. It now belongs to the French-based Relais & Chateaux association that groups superlative old buildings over the world which have been converted into very comfortable hotels or top restaurants. The Relais & Chateaux demands superior quality from its member establishments and those who run them and it insists on a close observance of what the association calls the "the rule of the five Cs": Character, Courtesy, Calm, Charm and Cuisine.

Those familiar with the Relais & Chateaux world order know what to expect when

they check into the Hacienda Benaluz but the likelihood is that the reality of the place will supercede their expectations. I took the second and the fifth Cs — Courtesy and Cuisine — in my stride for they were well up the mark. The staff, most of whose members wear morning coats and sport carnations in their buttonholes as if they were off to the Royal enclosure during Ascot week, were perfect in their quiet attentiveness. The main restaurant, La Alqueria, together with its wine cellar will amply satisfy the most truculent gourmet.

Courtesy and Cuisine are the sort of things that are mostly man or woman made and a genius level can be attained in both departments if there is an infinite capacity for taking pains over them. Character, Calm and Charm, however, require what I would unhesitatingly call a supernatural intervention to reach the highest standards. No amount of painstaking attention to detail will in the short or even long term create an atmosphere that is instantly recognizable as decidedly different and superlatively special.

THE GARDENS

Hacienda Benazuza inevitably owes its Character, Calm and Charm to its long history as a center for gracious living and to the abundant favors bestowed on the property by those who were fortunate enough to own it. The rooms and suites are each individually decorated with mostly fine Spanish antiques, some of them very fine indeed, and they have all the mod. cons. one could wish for. All present but mercifully unobtrusive. But individuality and top interior decorating do not in themselves give a building a per-

sonality of its own nor make it come alive. Benazuza projects its own genuinely distinctive calm character because it has been that way for a very long time.

You will begin to understand all of this in its gardens which lead one into the other and are all purposefully tended to induce peace, repose and the appreciation of beauty. The main garden has lawns and bricklined water channels, moorish-style, running though them amid the cyprus trees, the palms and the olive trees and walks laid out in the deep golden clay-like sand that is known as *albero* in Andalusia. Leading off it there is a heavenly walled herb garden scented by mint, rosemary and lemon balm, another garden modeled on the more severe French norms with box shaped hedges setting off the orange trees and beyond that a rose garden.

There is also a stylish, long rectangular cobbled patio studded with more orange and with bougainvillea and jasmine creepers climbing its walls. A series of suites, which each have their own private garden, lead off into this patio and at one end of this brilliantly achieved space is the stylish whitewashed steeple of Benazuza's 18th century church. The church, which

is attached to the main building (the royal suite has a door that leads directly into its choir stall), is entered by Benazuza's main gardens, a mature mini park of oleanders, pine trees, yuccas and magnolias. A fortified entrance with huge and heavy oak doors, darkened with age, stands alongside the church and beyond it lies what was once the Hacienda's very spacious stabling yard and the olive oil press, now the hotels reception lodge.

THE PATIO

The real architectural triumph of the Hacienda is its main Renaissance period patio which has colonnades on three sides and has four towering slender palms in its center. A stately large staircase leads off from this patio towards more suites and rooms and beneath the colonnades there are fine old oak tables, large old table lamps and *candelabros*, comfortable old sofas, old oil paintings of religious themes and of romantic Andalusian landscapes and massive pots with bushy ferns. The high walls of this extraordinary patio, its colonnades and its eaves set themselves off with that brilliant mix of Andalusian pastel colors, red, ochre, burnt gold and deep white-

wash. A very snug bar, a billiard room and a reading room lie off the patio at ground level and who, quite frankly, could ask for more? There is more in fact. There is the period restaurant which was founded by Paul Schiff, a celebrated Belgian chef who opened up near Marbella and was tragically killed in a recent accident. Schiff would be very proud of how his perfectionism is being continued at Benazuza. It shows in a delicate aubergine terrine encased in glacé tomato and accompanied by a yellow pepper sauce, in a first class fresh foie, in an exquisite sea bass coated with crushed and toasted pistachios nuts and a hearty dish of partridge stewed in red beans. The wine cellar is very interesting indeed for it has the full range of what Spain has to shout about over wine, and pleasantly priced to boot, as well as an expertly chosen selection of non-Spanish vintages. A serious wine drinker who wants to delve deep into what Spain has to offer will be amply rewarded by a stay in Benazuza.

And still more? Yes. From the Hacienda there is all of Western Andalusia to explore with its long, unspoilt Atlantic beaches, its sierras, home of some of the best cured ham in Spain, the marshlands of the Guadalquivir River estuary that make up the Coto Doñana wildlife park and, naturally the Virgen del Rocío shrine which lies just on the edge of this nature reserve. And there is Seville itself, a trap if ever there was one of all that is fun, picturesque, historic and artistic in Spain, 20 minutes away.

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



IBERIAN HAM A GILT-EDGED PORK PRODUCT

Just sit back and think for a moment of caviar, goose foie gras, truffles. They bring to mind the height of luxury, gourmet products par excellence. Such delicacies belong to a closed circle of a happy few. But perhaps the time has come to open the way to a new member - Iberian ham.

This exquisite ham is nothing new to Spanish gourmets - it proudly appears at the most select social gatherings. However, for one reason or another, Iberian ham is practically unknown outside Spain. Those who have had the chance to try it are unanimous in awarding it top marks.



Still Life: Menchu Artime
Photos: A. de Benito/ICEX



Fulvio Pierangelini, the well-known Italian chef of the Gambero Rosso restaurant in San Vicenzo (Livorno, Italy), considers the flavour of Iberian ham to be one of its most outstanding characteristics. He first had the opportunity of tasting Iberian ham in 1992 during a dinner offered by King Juan Carlos in Madrid and was impressed by its texture and minimal saltiness.



Juan Mari Arzak is the owner and chef of Arzak, one of the most emblematic restaurants of Spain with a 3-star rating in the Michelin guide. He considers Iberian ham to be one of the best food products in the world because of its inimitable taste and the centuries of tradition behind it. Arzak, who this year received from the French Ministry of Culture the medal for the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for his contribution to the culinary arts, places special emphasis on the authenticity of the whole production process - from the breeding of the Iberian pig and its unique diet to the completely natural curing and maturing of the ham.



Iberian ham is a fragrant, delicately flavored pork product that melts in the mouth leaving an exquisite aftertaste. A prime cut of Iberian ham it's streaked with fat. The color of the lean meat is between pink and a purplish-red, depending on its degree of curing. The yellowish-white fat is often translucent and sometimes shiny because of the low melting point of the fat. The diet of acorns from the holm and cork oaks on which Iberian pigs are reared is the key to the fattening process.

Iberian hams are generally known as *pata negra* (black legs) although this term is not strictly correct since not all the pigs belonging to this breed have black hair. Their clearest distinguishing features are their long, thin legs and their black or greyish hooves.

The fat in these prime hams is much more obvious than in those from other breeds of pig and it is the intramuscular fat that makes them so richly fragrant. Without the thin veins of fat throughout the meat that gives it a marbled look, these hams would not be so highly appreciated.

Iberian hams are long rather than wide. On the outside surface the skin is cut in a V-shape and the inside is covered with a thick layer of fat dotted with the inevitable white or blue-grey mycotic flora, the mark of the slow curing process.

The weight of Iberian hams depends on various factors but, on average, they weigh 6 -7.5 kilos (13-17 lbs.) In general, long hams with a smaller perimeter are heavier and leaner than short, thick hams.

The ritual

The pleasure Iberian ham affords makes cutting open a whole new ham nearly as serious a business as uncorking a vintage wine or brandy. An almost sacred rite is followed.

The first consideration is that it should not be eaten as soon as it is taken from the storehouse. It needs to acclimatize for a few days until its inside temperature reaches around 23-25°C (73-75°F). Nor should hams be kept for long in shops or private homes before being eaten because the relative humidity or other factors in such places may impair their quality.

The ritual of correct tasting

Igles Corelli confesses to unceasing admiration for Iberian ham, the outstanding characteristics of which led him to take a special interest in Spanish gastronomy. After thirteen years at the helm of the Il Trigabolo restaurant in Argenta (Ferrara, Italy), he is now a consultant for Italian and foreign restaurants. As founder and chairman of the association 'Sapere e Saporì' (knowledge and taste), he is behind the organisation of cultural and gastronomic events such as the annual 'Dinners in a Convent' which this year focused on Spain and during which Iberian ham was one of the main protagonists.

requires correct cutting. Whether sliced by hand - always preferable - or by machine, the slices must be almost transparent, melting in the mouth with hardly any chewing.

Manual cutting by an expert is a pleasure to watch. Machine slicing may not be so spectacular but a good Iberian ham is succulent however it is cut. With the hoof pointing upwards, first the outside of the ham is cleaned, carefully removing the skin and any excess fat. Then the ham is slowly and meticulously cut into wafer-thin slices.

With the help of a long narrow knife which must be flexible and perfectly sharp, slices with different tastes are obtained: first comes the *tapa*, the prime cut that is heavily veined with fat and sweeter than the part nearer the bone; then comes the less fatty *contra* from the other side. The meat of the hock, which is the part most closely covered by skin, is sinewy but very sweet and aromatic, as is the *culata* at the base although it tends to be somewhat saltier.

A symphony of aromas that vary from one cut to the next, depending on their proximity to the bone and the percentage of fat in each slice.

Machine slicing is not as subtle as hand slicing. First the ham has to be perfectly boned - this includes the hip bone where there are several muscle endings.

However, this method does make it possible to obtain especially fine slices which require almost no chewing. For machine slicing, the ham is placed across the grain in order to obtain perfectly tender slices, whereas hand slicing follows the direction of the muscles.

Whatever the method used, slicing should always be carried out at the very last minute. As soon as the ham comes into contact with the air, it starts to lose its perfume.

In large, top quality hams, the lean meat is sometimes dotted with tiny white spots. These are by no means a bad sign. Quite the opposite - they are crystals of thyroxine resulting from the breakdown of proteins and denoting that the ham is of good quality and has been properly cured.

Breed, nature and patience

Three factors go into making Iberian hams a prodigy of gastronomic art. First, the breed which is reared in the wild and thus gives a very tasty meat; second, the ecosystem of the *dehesa* with its holm and cork oak woods that covers the southwest of the Iberian peninsula and on whose fruits - acorns - the pigs range freely for the last 4 or 5 months before slaughtering (see last issue of Spain Gourmetour); and, third, the

natural, slow curing methods used that allows the hams to give their best only after 18-20 months.

It is not clear where the present system of salting, curing and maturing Iberian hams was first invented although it is used with just slight variations in all the areas of Spain where they are traditionally produced.

As is often the case with outstanding recipes, the final formula was probably the result of patient, methodical observations that led eventually to a method based on intuition and plenty of time.

Curing is now carried out by family run factories that have learnt to handle the natural process, benefiting from the microflora and the environmental conditions of their location, while keeping a constant eye on all the aspects involved in the curing and maturation of the hams. These industries are usually located in remote spots between open valleys or on steep slopes. The only thing they have in common is their altitude - they are usually over 500 m (1,640 ft) above sea level and are frequently to be found at altitudes of over 1,000 m (3,280 ft).

The towns most famed for their Iberian hams are Jabugo, Cortegana and Cumbres Mayores in the province of Huelva; Guijuelo, Ledrada and Candelario in Salamanca; Piornal and Montanechez in Caceres; Villanueva and

Pozoblanco in the Pedroches valley in Cordoba; Ronda and Benahojan in Malaga; and Jerez de los Caballeros, Zafra, Fregenal de la Sierra, Higuera la Real, Monesterio and Fuentes de Leon in Badajoz.

The long curing process

After traveling to the slaughterhouses, the pigs are always left to rest for a minimum of 24 hours so that the pH of their meat returns to normal.

After all the blood is drained off, the hams are hung to air during the winter months (December-February).

The specific climate of each area is also decisive for the flavoring characteristics of the hams, starting from the initial salting process when they are piled up between thick layers of rock salt.

In most areas, especially Andalusia and Extremadura, the salting period usually lasts for 1,5 days for every kg (2.2 lb) of weight although in Guijuelo (Salamanca) the very cold and dry winters make it possible to reduce this to one day for every kg of weight.

After salting, the hams are washed and shaped and then left to settle. For thirty or forty days, they remain under refrigeration at 6-8°C (42-46°F) in order to gradually lose their surface moisture.

They then go to natural dry-

Corelli considers that this product differs from Italian ham in its taste and its fat. He states, "What I like most is the flavour which is both marked but harmonic and persistent. The fat that is distributed evenly throughout the meat is delicately fragrant and literally melts in the mouth, bringing out the full flavour of the ham."

ing areas, usually in the attics above the industrial premises, where their internal fats undergo a slow melting process.

The maturing process then becomes more dynamic depending on the degree to which they have matured and the outside temperatures.

With the approach of spring, the hams sweat more intensely. The delicate process of dehydration has to be carefully watched.

It is basically a matter of forgetting the time. It is no use trying to speed up maturation - the temperature of the hams has to rise gradually. Doors and windows are opened or closed accordingly to protect the precious hams from any sudden changes in temperature.

In summer the hams sweat profusely and fat drips off. Changes in temperature are an essential part of the process during this period, with the fat running through the meat during the day and concentrating and cooling off during the night. All the hidden aromas begin to make their presence felt. The perfume from the fat spreads into the lean muscle bundles.

In autumn, when temperatures drop again, after a minimum of six months in the drying areas, the hams are moved to the lower floors for the final stages of curing.

In dark rooms at uniform temperatures of 8-10°C (46-

50°F), the miracle of the fungal process begins. The microflora present in each part of the ham helps the fat to stabilize and round off the curing process leaving the hams ready for consumption. They have now reached perfection both in tenderness and texture.

After two summers in the drying rooms, a minimum of 18 or 20 months after slaughtering depending on the weight of the individual hams, they are finally ready to be eaten.

The outside surface ends up with a generous coating of *Penicillium roquefortis*, which is vital to the process of fixing the surrounding microflora.

Iberian ham and wine: parallel worlds

The whole process is long and meticulous, not unlike the preparation of the best table wines. It could be said that the slaughterhouse takes the role of the wine-press, the drying rooms carry out a similar function to the *bodegas* for fermentation and the curing rooms are similar to the halls in which alcoholic drinks are aged.

But there are still more similarities. In Jabugo, Guijuelo or Montanhez, certain years produce exceptionally good hams and the experts are able to distinguish between old *reserva* hams and those in which curing was shorter (in the Spanish wine world, *reserva* wines are those which have been aged

for a determined period of time in oak casks and in the bottle). It is very difficult to find two Iberian hams on the market with identical flavors. However small the differences, there are always certain features that make each ham special.

Three parameters need to be taken into account to evaluate the quality of Iberian hams: the flavor of the meat, saltiness and the time taken for curing.

From the point of view of flavor, age is a decisive factor. As with wines, there is an optimum time for consuming an Iberian ham at its best, usually after a curing period lasting 20-26 months. Flavor invariably begins to decline if the maturing process goes on longer than this. The ham is likely to become saltier, the lean side will begin to dry out and the external fat will turn rancid. Prevailing weather conditions can speed up or slow down the ageing process and, as with the best wines, there is a whole range of subtle factors underlying the quality of an Iberian ham.

Luxury pork products

While Iberian ham is at the top of the gourmet's list, there are other pork products - *caña de lomo*, *chorizo*, *salchichón* and *morcón* - that rank high amongst the elite of European charcuterie. Spain has a longstanding tradition in the preparation of

pork products thanks to its Iberian pigs, its geographical location and its environmental characteristics.

Spanish skill in making pork products first developed during the period of Roman domination and undoubtedly continued under Muslim rule in spite of religious prohibitions.

Many of the traditional Spanish sausages - *salchichón de Vic*, *sobrasada de Mallorca*, *morcilla de Ronda* - owe their fame to the quality of the Iberian pork meat.

All over southwest Spain are large areas of holm-oak woodlands, the natural ecosystem of this breed of pig. These trees produce the acorns on which the pigs graze freely during the last few months before slaughter and which give their meat and fat a unique flavor resulting in first-class sausages.

Some of these deserve comment.

The *caña de lomo*, also known as *cinta de lomo*, *lomo embuchado* or *lomo curado* is a luxury sausage obtained by inserting a whole boned loin into beef tripe. The loins are taken preferably from the largest pigs with a greater amount of intramuscular fat.

First the external fat is removed then the whole fresh loins are left to macerate between 24 and 48 hours in a mixture of garlic, salt, paprika, and certain other spices (nutmeg) and aromatic herbs (oregano, thyme...).

It was more than 25 years ago that **Catherine Michel**, a well-known Swiss food writer, first tried Iberian ham. "I have never since tasted anything like it, not even in the best Parma hams", she says. "The consistency and taste of Iberian ham are incomparable and, if accompanied with a good fino, the result is quite memorable." However, Catherine Michel is worried that the opening of new markets for Iberian ham will end up altering the traditional methods of breeding Iberian pigs. She is concerned that outside Spain many gastronomists still confuse Iberian ham with Serrano ham.

The meat is then stuffed into the beef tripe and the sausages are left in the drying rooms for 2-4 months at a humidity of approximately 75-80%.

The *caña de lomo* is an unusual product, its aroma depending on the length of the curing process.

It is eaten raw, sliced wafer thin so that its full flavor can be appreciated slowly and is excellent when accompanied by a leisurely glass of dry sherry.

Chorizos and morcones

Another very special sausage is the *morcón* which is an uneven, roundish shape. It is prepared from the cuts of the loins, together with the meat from the shoulder, all cut into medium-sized nuggets and inserted into a wide section of pork tripe.

As with the whole loin sausages, the most highly appreciated animals are the largest with a high degree of fat distributed through the meat.

The meat is first marinated in a mixture of paprika or the pulp of a special variety of capsicum (*pimiento choricero*), garlic, salt, white wine, herbs such as oregano and thyme and spices such as cloves.

After two days macerating at a low temperature, the meat is packed inside the tripe

and is left to dry out and cure for 4-6 weeks. Then the tender, aromatic meat of the *morcón* is ready for consumption. Thinly sliced, the perfect partners are a slice of fresh, crusty bread and a glass of dry sherry or montilla.

There is also a whole family of *chorizos*. The different varieties - *cular*, *vela*, *berradura*, *ristra* - are made according to the traditions of the towns where they are produced.

The meat and fat are minced, more or less finely according to local tastes, and left to macerate in a cool temperature in salt, garlic, paprika, spices, white wine and parsley.

After 24 hours the meat is stuffed into pork tripe. The sausages are tied at both ends and hung in drying areas for 4 or 5 months for a natural curing process at

temperatures between 10° and 5°C (50° and 41°F).

While curing the *chorizos* dry out, decrease in size and develop a characteristic aroma resulting from the action of the microflora inside the meat and on the surface of the sausages.

Chorizos can be preserved for quite a long time (2-3 months) as long as the climate is not too dry.

Traditional custom in many Spanish villages is to preserve them in *orzas* (glazed earthenware pots) full of rendered lard. This way they keep in perfect condition for a much longer period.

The *chorizo cular*, in which the meat is stuffed into sections of large intestine, is eaten raw like the *morcón* and *caña de lomo*. Other varieties of thinner *chorizos* are generally fried or cooked in oil or used in the traditional stews and

soups to which they give an unmistakable flavor.

Salchichón

Iberian pork *salchichón* deserves a special mention.

The preparation of *salchichón* is even simpler than that of other types of sausage. After mincing, the meat - with a medium fat content - is seasoned with salt and pepper and left to rest in a cool place at 5-10°C (41-50°F) for 24-48 hours.

It is then inserted into beef tripe and the sausages are left to hang in natural drying areas for between three and five weeks. As they mature the surface gradually becomes coated with molds and yeasts which are responsible for the characteristic flavour of these *salchichones*.

The aroma is that of the meat itself although the flavor becomes more intense with the curing process. Eaten raw in slices or cubes it is exquisite.

All told, the different Iberian pork products are enormously varied in shape, appearance and flavor - a delight to the eye and the palate.

José Carlos Capel is a Spanish food writer who writes regularly for the most important Spanish food publications. He has also written several books on gastronomic subjects.



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 oak 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.

THE PALACES OF MADRID

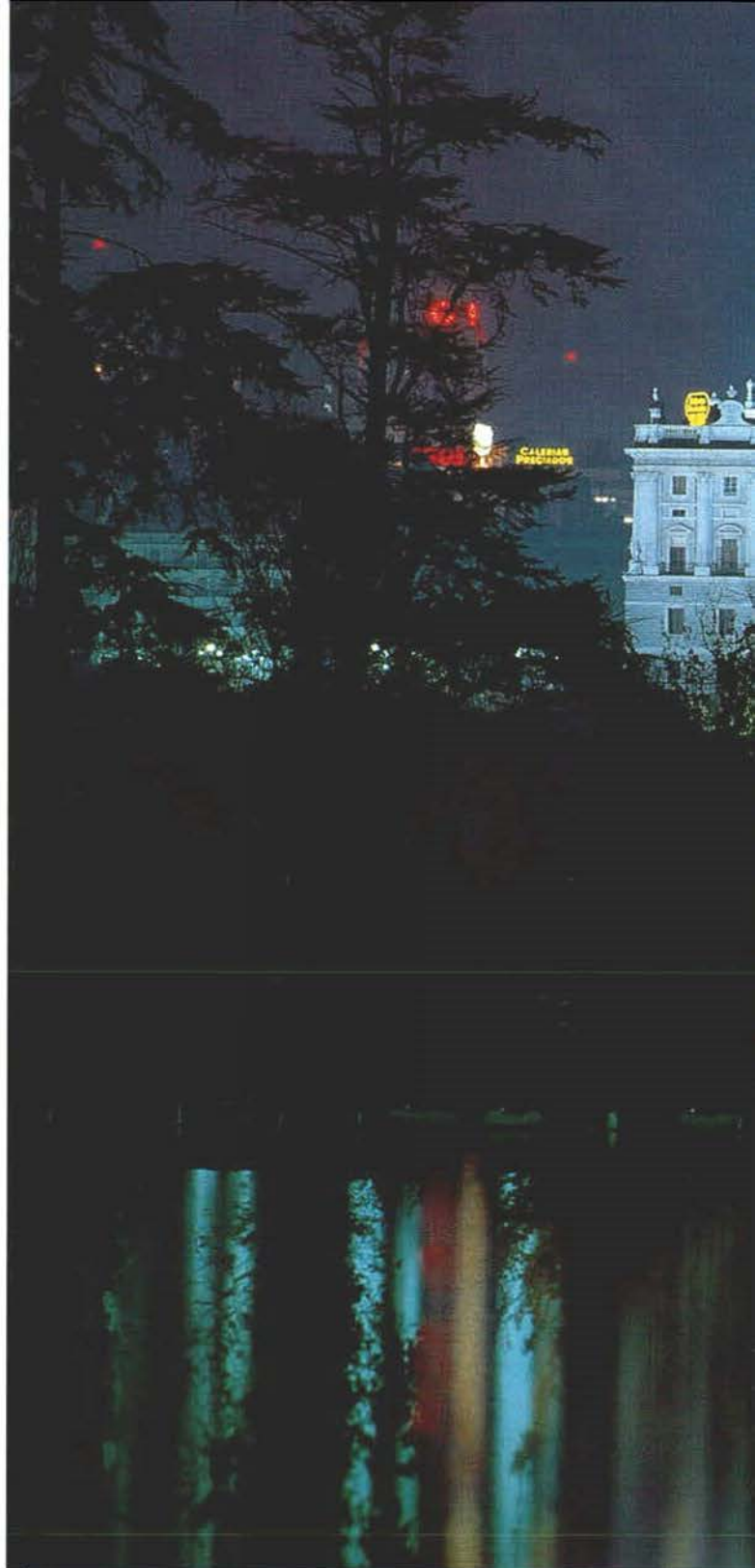
Text: Meg Campbell

Photos: Félix Lorrío/Patrimonio Nacional

The last article in our series on Spain's royal sites explores two of the Spanish monarchy's most elegant palaces: the Royal Palace of Madrid and the nearby Royal Palace of El Pardo. Both palaces are living museums, portraying the past of the Spanish dynasties while also providing a regal setting for a wide variety of events, such as the 1991 peace talks and lodgings for visiting heads of state.



The Royal Chapel, in the Royal Palace of Madrid.



View of the Royal Palace of Madrid from the Campo Park.



The
Royal Palace, constructed on a steep hill
overlooking the river Manzanares, is a spot
that had been used as a fortress with a castle
since the occupation of the Moslems
to defend the city.



The
Royal Palace has been in the limelight for
more than 400 years, since King Felipe II
established Madrid as the city of the monarch's
permanent court.



*Fresco paintings
on the cupola
of the
Royal Chapel.*

El Pardo

The Royal Palace of El Pardo is a flurry of activity on a beautiful spring day in March. Palace employees rush about lugging heavy rolls of rugs, moving furniture, polishing floors, in general readying the palace for its next distinguished visitor.

In two days, the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan arrives in Spain, and, as with all visiting heads of state, will stay at El Pardo. "Every time a chief of state comes, we have to convert the palace from a museum to a hotel", explains the palace's curator, Flora Lopez Marsá, sidestepping a ladder in a courtyard being transformed into a reception room.

The palace, tucked away in the small town of El Pardo not ten miles from Madrid, is an elegant venue for such events. Its beautifully decorated rooms and outstanding art pieces have charmed such guests as France's François Mitterand and Argentina's Carlos Menem.



*Dome of the main
stair, in
the Royal Palace.*

Until 1975, the palace was the permanent residence and office of Spain's own head of state, General Francisco Franco, the country's dictator for nearly forty years. On this same spring day, a camera crew from the Basque country's regional television station has set up their equipment in Franco's rooms to tape portions of a documentary on the last days and death of Franco.

The documentary's director, a Basque nationalist who had spent many years of the dictatorship in exile, hotly debates with a representative of the office of National Patrimony about what can be captured on tape, and whether a doctor being interviewed can sit in the General's chair. "It's been nearly twenty years since Franco's death, but we still get as many visitors, maybe more, interested in these rooms as those interested in the rest of the palace and its nearly 600 years of history," Lopez Marsá muses.



The Borbones courtyard in El Pardo Palace.



Main dining room or "Salón de Consejos" in El Pardo Palace.



El Pardo
Palace enjoys a splendid collection of
objects, in particular the collection of 18th
century clocks and porcelain.

T

he Royal Palace hosts myriad official acts, and in fact was in the international spotlight in the fall of 1991, when it was used to host the Middle East peace talks.

A retreat for the hunt

The palace has its origins as a hunting lodge, founded perhaps as far back as 1342, although a better documented date is 1405, when King Enrique III had a fortress built. "The hills of Madrid were excellent hunting grounds, and Madrid itself was a very strategic spot for the Spanish monarchy," Lopez Marsá explains. "The city is in the center of the country, and its hills make it easy to protect." The Christian monarchs of medieval times began spending more and more time in Madrid, and thus constructed the fortress in nearby El Pardo and used it also as a hunting retreat. "For kings and knights, hunting was a way of keeping their fighting skills sharp during times of peace," López Marsá notes. The tradition of the hunt continues today, and the small town of El Pardo is renowned for its game dishes. Madrileños come frequently to the town's small taverns to enjoy such fare as wild boar, rabbit, and venison.

Enrique III's fortress was converted into a regal Habsburg palace in the mid 1500's by Carlos V. A particularly Habsburg element is the black slate roof added by his son Felipe II. A very popular style in Flanders, the slate was used for the first time in a Royal building in Spain, and prompted the creation of a local school of slate workers.

The small chapel attached to the palace which was originally inside the palace. Around the palace are well-manicured gardens from the 1800's, fun renaissance gardens full of surprises, such as labyrinths with dead ends and fountains that squirt water on unsuspecting strollers.

Bringing the palace to life

Inside, the palace is also something of a labyrinth, a maze of rooms with sumptuous decoration and furniture. "When tourists visit places like the Palace of El Pardo, they often leave dizzy after trudging through the rooms and listening to a guide droning on about eighteenth century clocks and sixteenth century tapestries," frowns López Marsá. "But the decoration of the palace was not arbitrary. It always reflected the tastes and education of the monarch of the time." The rooms of the palace and their decoration tell its history.

For example, she says, Felipe II was a renaissance man, heavily influenced by the Italian courts, and the elaborate frescos on the ceiling in the queen's portion of the palace reflect this. More than just mythical and biblical illusions, the characters chosen represent Felipe II's virtues, while at the same time demonstrating the King's knowledge of the classics, which was extensive.

The tapestries hung in the palace also demonstrate a profound knowledge of an-

cient Greece, and a big change from the themes of the Middle Ages, explains López Marsá. "The tapestries are not laden with symbolism, but rather are decorative, and rather whimsical," she says. "This was a refreshing change from medieval times, when everything was deep, dark and mystical."

Portraits of Felipe II and his wife, Margarita of Austria, serve as excellent documents for the dress of the period. Countless portraits of monarchs were completed, not just to stroke a king's vanity, but to preserve his image and to send it to monarchs in other lands.

In the king's portion of the palace, (kings and queens had their own wings and led essentially separate lives) the rooms follow a strict hierarchy. They are arranged in a straight line, the last room being the king's bedroom and inner sanctum. As the king left his private chamber, he passed through a series of antechambers that led to the throne room. Certain members of the court were allowed in the different rooms, with only the king's closest confidants getting as far as the antechamber closest to his bedroom.

The Bourbon influence

Much of the palace's decoration and objects are from the 1700's and clearly demonstrate the hand of the Bourbon dynasty, when French King Louis XIV was the most

influential monarch in Europe and his Versailles palace set the trends. Versailles established fine artisan workshops for such arts as porcelains, crystal, and tapestries, and Spain's king, Felipe V - first king of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain - imitated the French innovations. By the end of the 18th century, the court was a self-sufficient microcosm, and the artisans became more and more highly skilled, producing by the end of the century magnificent pieces. The change of dynasties also marked a change in mentality: the Bourbons stressed the pleasures of living, which is reflected in everything from the objects they collected to the smaller cozier size of the rooms. The more coordinated decoration of the rooms also reflects the new dynasty; for the first time, furniture, wallpaper, rugs and objects were coordinated and colors matched.

The palace also enjoys a splendid collection of objects from France, in particular the collection of 18th century clocks and porcelains, which were purchased during the reign of Carlos IV at the end of the 1700's. The king, who had grown up in the court of Naples, had refined tastes, and devoted enormous sums to the purchase of all manner of artworks, from furniture to toys, from chandeliers to lace and buttons. He and his wife, Maria Luisa de Parma, sent merchants all over the world

Around

El Pardo Palace are well-manicured gardens from the 1800's; fun renaissance gardens they resemble labyrinths with dead ends.

who shopped for the king. One of the most delightful 18th century elements of the palace is a small theater of the court. All palaces had theaters, but this is the only one in Spain that has survived. It is a small chamber with a stage, a beautiful high ceiling, and one box in back where the king and queen enjoyed the first comedies, operas and chamber music.

New uses for old treasures

The more modern uses of the palace cannot be ignored. Franco commandeered what had once been drawing rooms and salons for his offices, decorating them with furniture from the palace's collection, for example. Another room decorated with Goya tapestries is used today for "working breakfasts". Then there is the wing for the visiting heads of state, where the 18th century rooms are used for press conferences, official dinners, and of course, the private living quarters. A great favorite is a sitting room known as the piano room, which mixes old and new, from a 16th century flemish tapestry to the original ceiling fresco. "All the decoration is authentic, none of the pieces are reproductions," says Lopez Marsá, motioning to an exquisite 18th century writing desk with a porcelain front. "It's a little nerve-racking watching our guests move around the rooms and sit on the furniture, but it's wonderful to see it being used."

Madrid's Royal Palace: Spain's crown jewel

Not ten miles away from the palace of El Pardo, workers at the Royal Palace of Madrid are as busy as their counterparts in the country, preparing for the anniversary mass of Don Juan de Bourbon, the father of Spain's King Juan Carlos, who died in April of 1993. The walkways around the palace's sunny courtyard are filled with furled tapestries from the National Patrimony's collection waiting to be hung, while in the chapel, a curator carefully examines the silver pieces that will be used to celebrate the mass. With events such as these, the Royal Palace continues to play a vital role in the Spanish monarchy, despite the fact that King Juan Carlos and his family don't live here, but rather in a sheltered palace near the town of El Pardo. The Royal Palace hosts myri-

ad official acts, and in fact was in the international spotlight in the fall of 1991, when it was used to host the Middle East peace talks.

In Spain, the Royal Palace has been in the limelight for more than 400 years, since King Felipe II established Madrid as the city of the monarchy's permanent court. The king settled into the city's castle, constructed centuries before on a steep hill overlooking the river Manzanares, a spot that had been used for fortresses and castles since the occupation of the Muslims for defending the city.

Felipe II chose Madrid primarily because he had chosen the nearby mountains to build the monastery El Escorial. From the capital he could ride out frequently to visit the monastery and watch the progress of the construction.

The castle continued as a somber, solid fortress until

the reign of Felipe V, the first of the Bourbon kings. Used to the comforts of Versailles, Felipe found the draughty castle too severe, and set about drawing up plans for a new palace. The plans were set in motion when a raging fire in 1734 consumed the castle. "The king wanted to maintain continuity in the monarchy, and so even though his architects had plans to build a more grandiose palace in a different area, he insisted that it be built in the same place," explains Pilar Benito, curator of the Royal Palace. The palace he built is immense, six stories with a Spanish-style courtyard in the center. Gardens dotted with fountains lead down to the river and to the royal hunting grounds. Inside, rooms are large and lofty, their official nature apparent.

Each monarch has left his or her own mark on the palace, and as with the other royal sites, a tour through the rooms becomes a lesson in Spain's history. A good guide can make all the difference for a visitor, says the palace's curator, spinning a tale that mixes a king's tastes and a country's chronicle. In addition, although the different rooms have often remained the same, their uses have evolved over the years. The room of columns, for example, was once a ballroom, but King Alfonso XII transformed it into a room for official acts after



T

he Royal Palace is an immense building, six stories with a Spanish-style courtyard in the center.

using it to display his first wife's body after her death in 1878. The room was used for the 1991 Peace Conference, and also in 1985 for the signing of Spain's incorporation into the European Community.

Lavish decor, priceless collections

A visit through the palace begins at the main staircase, where visitors enter as any other distinguished guest would upon arriving to the palace. Symbols of the Spanish monarchy are all about, says Benito, indicating a stone lion and a statue of King Carlos III.

The most important room in the palace is the throne room, located in the center of the south wing, as it was in the castle lost in the fire. On one throne is a golden medallion with the image of King Juan Carlos, on the other the image of Queen Sofia. The thrones are new, and never used, as the monarchs never sit on them, always receiving their guests standing.

In another wing is the Gasparini salon, one of a series

of chambers originally occupied by Carlos III. The salon is one of the most fascinating in the palace for its decoration, and one of the few which has retained its original decor. The walls and ceiling of the room are covered with a rococo pattern of twisting leaves and vines. The effect is achieved on the walls with tapestries woven with the design, that took years and years to complete. Furniture was added with the same pattern embroidered on the upholstery, and the arms and legs following the same twisting pattern. The wainscoting has the same pattern through the use of inlaid wood, while the lamps and chandeliers are gilded sculptures that also match the theme. Although Carlos III ordered the decoration of the room, he never lived to see it finished as it took so long.

The yellow room shows of some of the palace's many exquisite tapestries. Spain's National Patrimony has the finest collection of tapestries in Europe, particularly 16th

century Flemish tapestries, while nowadays Belgium is part of the Spanish empire. Felipe V had a number of the 16th century pieces copied by Spain's own artisans so that they would not be lost or deteriorate from too much use. Many of the tapestries are the designs of famous artists, such as Goya.

Other fine collections include the collection of clocks, of French chandeliers, of Spanish porcelains that imitate the wedgewood of England, and of furniture from the different periods, from the baroque to the neoclassic to the rococo of Isabel II. There is a particularly lovely Florentine table of inlaid stones that belonged to Marie Antoinette.

A new addition to the palace is a collection of Stradivarius violins. It is the only collection in the world of its kind, says Benito, because it is a family of four instruments, made for the royal Spanish family by the Italian violin maker.

There is a set of rooms that

are not open to the public which are a sharp contrast to the rest of the palace, and reflect well a difficult moment in the history of the Spanish monarchy. The small, dark, almost utilitarian rooms were used by King Alfonso XIII and his wife Queen until their exile in 1931. The country's social and political upheaval beginning at the end of the 19th century meant that the palace went neglected for a long period of time, and under the rule of Franco was merely maintained and not renovated. After his death, ambitious projects of restoration were undertaken, which continue today, and which have brought much of the palace back to life.

Meg Campbell is an American journalist and 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.

ARMOR AND THE POLITICS OF POWER

Outside the palace proper extends another wing into the Armory courtyard, where the palace's arms museum is located. Curiously, the museum reflects not so much the strategies of war as the politics of power. "The weapons and suits of armor were certainly instruments of war, but were of-

ten more to reflect the power of the owner," explains Alvaro Solero, the Armory's curator. The objects are thus luxury items, comparable to something like a Rolls Royce in today's society, Solero suggests.

The pieces are indeed works of art, custom fit and hailing from very few cen-

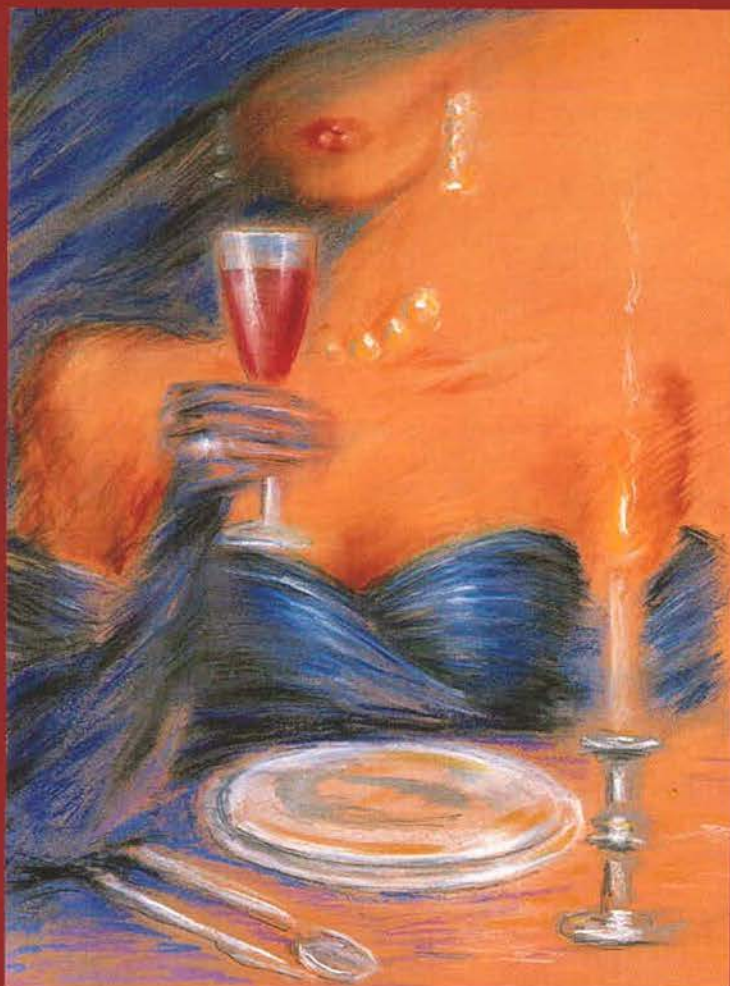
ters which existed only to outfit kings, such as Augsburg and Landshut in Germany and Milan in Italy.

Some of the finest pieces in the collection belonged to the Emperor Carlos V, who was King Carlos I of Spain, and to his son Felipe II. The decoration of the suits of armor, the

shields, and even the suits worn by the horses carry three basic themes: the monarchs' dynasty; classical mythology, in keeping with the monarchs' interest in Ancient Greece; and religion. The scenes always refer to the owners' virtues, says Solero.

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 circumstances 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 are 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 ninth Show

Exhibitors: 450
Professional visitors: 30,000

Products to be shown

Wines, spirits and liqueurs.
Sweets, chocolates and biscuits.
Condiments, spices, oils and vinegars.
Apéritifs and beers.
Cheeses.
Meat, fish and vegetable conserves.
Charcuterie.
Patés, foie-gras and duck and goose by-products.
Accessories 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 Ninth 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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BODEGAS FAUSTINO MARTINEZ

Text: **Jane Walker**

Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

As mighty oak trees stem from tiny acorns, so too one of Rioja's most prestigious bodegas has grown, since its founding in 1861 by Eleuterio Martínez Arzok, from the acorn of a modest family vineyard to the mighty oak as Spain's largest exporter of Reserva and Gran Reserva wines renowned around the world. In the early days Don Eleuterio only sold his produce in bulk to local bodegas for blending with other wines. But in 1930 his son, Faustino Martínez Pérez de Albéniz, inherited the company, decided to improve the quality and began to bottle and distribute his wines across Spain.

Julio Faustino Martínez, grandson of the founder, took over the reins in 1957. The decade between 1981 and 1991 was one of major expansion when the company planted new vineyards and introduced a policy of quality over quantity, producing a smaller amount of high quality wine rather than mass producing a cheaper product.

Now with the fourth generation of Martínez, the company is one of the few major wine producers in Spain to remain entirely in family hands, with 61-year old Julio Faustino still at the helm and his son José Miguel, 36, an economist and graduate in business management, handling the day-to-day business as managing director.

He frequently travels around the world visiting many of the 44 countries which import Faustino Martínez wines. His sister, Lourdes, a computer expert, is also closely involved with the family business.

A recent European Union study into the ideal geographical and climatological conditions for top quality wine showed that optimum conditions are short sharp winters, rolling hills at between 400 and 600 metres (1,300 and 1,950 feet), adequate spring rains and sufficient but not too many hours of sunshine in the summer. It was found that the higher slopes of the Rioja Alaveza region of Spain, sheltered between the foothills of the Cantabrian mountains and the Ebro River, fulfill all these conditions. Bodegas Faustino Martínez in Oyón are fortunate in that all their vineyards are in this area

and they now have over 500 hectares (1,235 acres) of vine planted with the four traditional Rioja grapes: 300 hectares (741 acres) of Tempranillo, 50 hectares (123 acres) of Graciano and 25 hectares (62 acres) of Mazuelo for reds and 125 hectares (308 acres) of Viura, the grape used to produce both Faustino white wine and the excellent recently introduced *cava*.

SELF-SUFFICIENT IN GRAPES

Since it is vital to maintain total control over the crop for top category wines —picking at the exact moment of ripeness, even if other vineyards in the area are not yet harvesting or cultivating vines in the optimum positions - Faustino Martínez is entirely self-sufficient in grapes for all its Reserva and Gran Reserva and virtually all of the white and rosado wines. However a small quantity of fruit is obtained from specially selected neighbouring vineyards for Faustino VII crianza wine.

A recent visit to Oyón coincided with the end of the harvest, as producers were celebrating what could, thanks to excellent spring rains and a hot dry summer, well become one of the great vintages for over a decade — possibly not one of the highest in quantity, but certainly top quality. The aroma of new wine filled the air as we walked around the modern pressing mills, many of which use the sophisticated 'hydropneumatic' process, of which Faustino Martínez were pioneers in Spain, whereby rubber walls of the vats expand to gradually squeeze out the grape juice without damaging the skins or pips. Fermentation of the 'mosto' was taking place in giant stainless steel tanks, with the temperature strictly controlled so as never to reach more than 30_C (86_F) for reds or 16_C (61_F) for whites. The ever expanding installations contain some of the most up-to-date winemaking equipment on the market, covering all stages of the process from the pressing, filtering through special ceramic "mili-pore" filters which prevent any form of impurities entering

the finished wine, the corking with specially produced Catalan corks, to the ageing in casks and in bottles. 105 employees work full time on the plant, with extra hands coming in at peak periods such as in the spring or at harvest time.

In order to maintain a high quality and reliable product, the Consejo Regulador de la Rioja (the region's Regulatory Board) imposes strict controls over the production of wines. They insist that any wine sold as Gran Reserva should be aged for at least two years in oak casks and in the bottle for a further three years before it is sold. A Reserva needs a minimum of one year in oak and two in the bottle. The process is a slow and laborious one. Every six months the wine is transferred from one oak cask to another to get rid of sediments and impurities which gather at the base of the barrel. The empty casks are then scrupulously cleaned and sterilized before being put into use again.

In Faustino Martínez there are 25,000 oak casks of ageing wine at the plant at any one time. The casks specially manufactured locally for Faustino Martínez, are mostly American oak and the remainder are Limousine oak from France. There are also stocks of at least 9 million bottles of the Gran Reserva Faustino I and Reserva Faustino V maturing on the racks, in addition to the *crianza* Faustino VII and the young whites and *rosados* which are usually on the market within a few months of picking.

TRADITIONAL WINES

The Regulatory Board is also anxious to preserve the unique character of Rioja wines and the traditional Tempranillo, Graciano and Mazuelo grapes used in its production. They do not

want growers to be tempted into introducing new vines which happen to be trendy or 'in fashion' at any particular time. Thus, and only on a very limited and experimental basis, the Campanillo Bodegas, a Faustino Martínez subsidiary at nearby Laguardia, have been granted permission to plant a small quantity of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. The lime-clay soil and the 650 meter (2,132 feet) altitude are proving excellent for this variety of vine. But although planting began in 1988, the wines are still not on the market. Early signs are that the quality is excellent, but the Martínez do not plan ever to produce it on a large scale at the expense of their traditional wines.

The family is also particularly proud of another recent introduction, Faustino Martínez Cava, which it has only been producing for the past seven years and which it describes as "the culmination of 125 years of vine growing tradition in the family." The *cava* is produced with the viura variety of Rioja grape grown on 125 hectares (309 acres) of the estate using the traditional "champanoise method". José Luis Santaolalla, formerly Export Director of Faustino Martínez, who now runs the image and marketing side of the business, admits that they are still only producing a limited quantity of *cava* but he is confident of its extremely high quality. "We produce Extra-Dry and Brut Reserva *cavas*," he says. "Up to now we have not publicized it very much because we weren't making large quantities, but we are currently building a new warehouse dedicated exclusively to Faustino Martínez Cava, and by next year we hope to increase our production sufficiently to be able to promote it on the national and international market".

EXPORTING TO 44 COUNTRIES

Faustino Martínez has won numerous medals and prizes in many countries for their products, most recently two awards for the 1989 Faustino V red Reserva, and the 1993 Faustino V Rosado in Paris. The export market is particularly important for the family. Faustino I Gran Reserva forms over a third (31.3%) of all exports of Gran Reservas from La Rioja, and the Faustino Martínez wines can be found on the shelves in 44 countries, with the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, France, Holland and Germany amongst the most important European customers, and the United States and Mexico featuring prominently on the other side of the Atlantic. Earlier this year, a small consignment of 65 cases and a larger one of 175 cases, including 10 cases of Faustino I Gran Reserva 1964, left for Poland. Marketing director Santaolalla says: "We are interested in making our presence felt in Eastern Europe so that we can watch the market, set up our distribution chains and hopefully increase our sales there when the economic situation improves." He says they have noticed no great shortage of currency in Russia and other East European nations. "Those who do have money seem to have plenty of it," says Mr. Santaolalla.

The Pacific Rim nations are also important customers for the Faustino Martínez family, with Japan topping the list, followed closely by Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. They are optimistic that there will shortly be a new market opening in China which is currently being handled through the Hong Kong distributor. Perhaps surprisingly another important customer is Australia, the country which produces so much wine of its own. "We find that countries which produce their own

wines are selective drinkers of the best wines of other nations," remarks Santaolalla. Rioja, like all of Spain's wine-producing regions, is currently concerned by a European Union proposal calling for the destruction of some 300,000 hectares (741,000 acres) of vines in order to reduce the flooded "wine lake". "We plan to fight this proposal," says Mr. Santaolalla. "We understand that no new vine should be planted but it is ridiculous to force us to pull up those already producing." Spanish producers are particularly sensitive about the practice of "chaptalization" of wines, the adding of sugar to a young wine in order to increase its alcohol content. This is common in countries such as Germany where the hours of sunshine are lower than in southern Europe, but unnecessary in Southern Europe where the summers are long and hot. "Our problem is the reverse. Spanish wines often contain too much alcohol rather than too little," he says. Recently published figures show an increase of over 12% in Rioja wine sales world-wide in 1993. Although much of this is a younger *sin crianza* wines (wines of the year), there is still an ever growing market for top of the line, Reserva and Gran Reservas. By concentrating on this sector, Bodegas Faustino Martínez are in a good position to maintain their status as principal exporter of quality wines.

Jane Walker, a British journalist and long-time Madrid resident, has been the Spain correspondent for Time Magazine since 1978. She also contributes regularly to the Irish Independent and Sunday Tribune as well as magazines such as Life, People and Town & Country.

Editor's Note: We would like to thank Tienda 42, Becara and Compañía de la China for lending the objects for the still life.

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Fabada Asturiana

ASTURIAS

The *fabes*, which should be of top quality, are soaked in water over night, so that they turn out better. The ham and shoulder of pork should also be put in water, in a separate container, the night before in order to desalt them. Cook the *fabes* in just enough cold water to cover them; add the black and chorizo sausages and the rest of the "sacraments" (ingredients), making sure that everything boils very slowly. When the *fabes* open up, add a little saffron and when the water boils out, keep adding a little cold water, until the beans are cooked, but do not allow them to fall apart.

Serves 6	1 piece of shoulder of pork
1 kilo of <i>fabes</i> , broad beans	1 piece of bacon
3 <i>chorizo</i> sausages	saffron
2 black morcilla blood sausages	salt
1 piece of ham	

Fabada, which is a very classic and, therefore, demanding dish, calls for the following precepts:

1. Do not stir it with a spoon; simply shake the pot.
2. Do not add the salt until the very end, for the ingredients already contain salt.
3. It usually takes about two and a half to three hours to cook the *fabada* on a low flame. Do not cover the pot entirely.
4. Serve in a deep bowl, with only a little broth, and place the *compango* (pork products) in a separate dish.

Sea bass with cider

Dice the onion and garlic, and brown in oil; add the tomatoes, cut into small pieces, and the parsley, and sauté everything together. Then add the cider and cook the mixture for a few minutes.

Roll the pieces of sea bass in flour and fry them in oil. Place the fish in a clay casserole dish and pour the prepared sauce over it, once it has been strained. Add the prawns and cook everything on a low flame. Add the clams right before serving.

If the sauce becomes too thick, or the fish dries out while cooking, add a little fish broth.

Serves 6	18 clams
2 kilos of sea bass	12 average size prawns
2 onions	1 glass of cider
3 cloves of garlic	oil
1/2 kilo of tomatoes	parsley
	salt

Casadielles

Prepare the dough, stretch it out well with a rolling pin and cut it into rectangular pieces. Add a spoonful of filling, made by mixing the ground walnuts (in some areas, toasted and chopped up hazelnuts are also included), sugar, anisette and butter together. Roll the dough up and crush the edges together with a fork. Put in the oven or fry in hot oil until they are brown. Dust with sugar and serve.

500 grams of puff pastry dough 2 spoonfuls of anisette
130 grams of ground walnuts butter
80 grams of sugar

Note: These recipes come from the book *Cocina Asturiana* published by Editorial Everest.

Fluid Measures

METRIC/ BRITISH STANDARD

10 millilitres = 1/3 ounce
50 millilitres = 1 3/4 ounces
100 millilitres = 3 1/2 ounces
250 millilitres = 8 1/2 ounces
500 millilitres = 17 1/2 ounces
1 litre = 1 3/4 pints
1 teaspoon = 5 millilitres
1 tablespoon = 18 millilitres
1 ounce = 28 millilitres
1 pint = 570 millilitres
1 quart = 1.14 litres
1 gallon = 4 1/4 litres

Weight

METRIC/OUNCES & POUNDS

10 grams = 1/3 ounce
50 grams = 1 3/4 ounces
100 grams = 3 1/2 ounces
250 grams = 8 3/4 ounces
500 grams = 1 pound + 1 1/2 ounces
1 kilo = 2 pounds + 3 1/4 ounces
1/2 ounce = 14 grams
1 ounce = 28 grams
1/4 pound = 110 grams
1/2 pound = 230 grams
1 pound = 450 grams

Fluid Measures

METRIC/U.S. STANDARD

10 millilitres = 2 teaspoons
50 millilitres = 3 tablespoons
100 millilitres = 3 1/2 ounces
250 millilitres = 1 cup + 1 tablespoon
500 millilitres = 1 pint + 2 tablespoons
1 litre = 1 quart + 3 tablespoons
1 teaspoon = 5 millilitres
1 tablespoon = 15 millilitres
1 ounce = 30 millilitres
1 cup = 235 millilitres
1 pint = 475 millilitres
1 quart = 950 litres
1 gallon = 3 3/4 litres

Oven Temperature

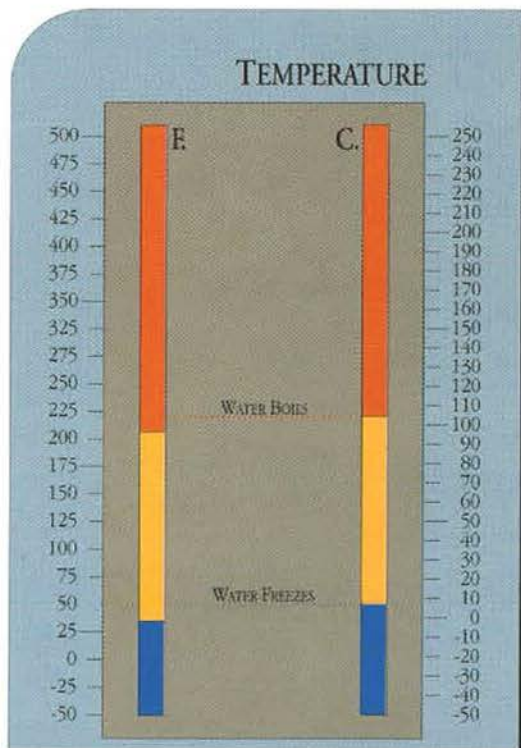
TEMPERATURE

DIAL NUMBER

Very slow = 250F/120C = 1/4
Slow = 300F/150C = 1
Moderate = 350F/180C = 4
Hot = 400F/200C = 6
Very hot = 450F/230C = 8

QUICK CONVERSION

In our recipes, quantities are given in metric measurements. The charts on this page show approximate equivalents between Imperial or American measures and metric measures.



JOSE DE RIBERA (EL ESPAÑOLETEO)



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At the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th, there was a certain reaction against the strict rules of mannerism in all western art. The new "baroque" art preferred direct observation of nature to the rigid classical models of the Renaissance. This demand for realism was to be reflected in painting through a special interest in light and its effects and gave rise to a pictorial style that came to be called "tenebrism". Spain produced numerous "tenebrist" painters but it was Ribalta, and especially Ribera, who were to produce the most masterly works.

Born in Jativa (Valencia) in 1591, José Ribera was a disciple of Ribalta. As a young man he traveled to Italy, where he lived first in Parma and Rome, finally settling in Naples. There he married the daughter of a Neapolitan painter and lived a life of poverty until his work was discovered by the Viceroy of Naples. They were to become great admirers of his work and eventually his patrons. In Naples, which at the time be-

longed to the Spanish crown, he set up a painting school and came to be known as "Il Spagnoletto". Although he was never to live in Spain again, his works were also well-known and much admired in his native country where he was always considered a Spanish painter. "Tenebrism", which had begun to develop in the paintings of the Italian, Caravaggio, was perfected by Ribera. His paintings are austere but totally realistic. His light effects do not look artificial and his portraits are full of vitality.

He mostly painted saints and martyrs but, while his works have a highly religious atmosphere, the figures are always lifelike and the darkness invites the observer to reflection.

Works by Ribera hang in many of the world's most prestigious galleries, the most famous being the Immaculate Virgin, Piety, Saint Andrew, the penitent Mary Magdalene, Saint Peter, Jacob's Dream, etc.

Ribera died in Naples in 1652.

In his painting, The Adoration of the Shepherds, as in almost all the "tenebrist" paintings, a shaft of light from the side makes the fig-

ures stand out from the mystery in the background. This light directly illuminates the face of the child, making him look as if he himself were radiating the light. The rest of the group is arranged around the focal point of the Virgin and child who seem supernatural - she with a soft complexion and dressed in bright turquoise and vermillion and he wrapped in a vivid white cloth. The other figures are dressed in brownish tones and are half concealed by the darkness. The group of adoring figures, with wrinkled faces, rugged bodies and poorly dressed, are reminiscent of other figures by Ribera, who liked to choose his models from the poorest classes. The elderly shepherd with a beard and white hair, the old woman with the basket of doves, the sinewy man holding the lamb, the piper, Saint Joseph himself, and the rosy angels. They all look like simple, living people as they lean in adoration towards the newborn child casting a divine light over them.

Text: **José María Ortega Sanz**
Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

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