

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

# SPAIN

G O U R M E T O U R

No. 36 MAY-AUGUST 1995

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

US \$5



EUROPE'S HUNTING GROUND  
BARREL FERMENTED WHITE WINES • BAZTAN. A WORLD WITHIN A VALLEY

# GIRALDA OLIVE OIL

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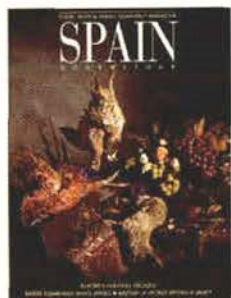


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# THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL GOURMET CLUB SHOW

## Madrid, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1996

### What is the Gourmet 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 magazine for gastronomes and users of tourist and good food guides).

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

**Don't you miss it!**



### 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.).

### Activities and conferences

During the period of the Show, a number of talks and championships will be taking place, among which the V Spanish Chefs Championship stands out.

the 437 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 more than 27,000 professionals visited the show.

### The result of the ninth Show

The ninth Show occupied a total area of 19,000 sq. m. among

### Forecast for the tenth Show

Exhibitors: 475.  
Professional visitors: 30,000.



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

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# D

ear readers,

Hunting is a much-loved sport the world over and Spain has a great tradition of hunting. In addition to the Natural Reserves where permits for hunting certain protected species are only granted under special conditions, there are many private reserves with abundant supplies of partridge, a favorite of hunters.

But hunting is more than just a sport. There are other aspects involved such as the many gastronomic specialities based on game products and a wide selection of *chorizos* made from venison, wild boar, etc. Better known, however, are the classic pork *chorizos* that are probably the most popular of the sausages in Spain and are highly esteemed in other countries such as France where they are eaten regularly. An article describes how the different varieties are prepared.

A speciality of a different kind are the lollipops produced by Chupa-Chups which are now popular with children from Japan to the United Kingdom.

"Mediterranean Diet, Spanish Style" this time goes to Catalonia, to the El Bulli restaurant, a special place with a new and different cuisine.

Also new are most of the white cask-fermented wines that are being made today in Spain in many Denominations of Origin with very pleasing results.

And, finally, in our tourism section, we pay a visit to one of the forgotten corners of green Spain: the Valle del Baztán, a beautiful, quiet spot with many old traditions.



Compiled by  
BETTINA KRÜCKEN

## **THE PICOS DE EUROPA BECOME OUR CONTINENT'S LARGEST NATIONAL PARK**

*In May this year, the Picos de Europa National Park situated in Northern Spain was extended to a total of 65,000 hectares (160,615 acres), and now covers almost the entire mountain range of the same name. Parts of Cantabria and Castile-León have now been added to the original area of the Montañas de Covadonga National Park in Asturias, and together they form Europe's largest park of natural protection, harboring endangered species like the brown bear and the wood grouse.*



*Investment of about US\$ 20,161,000 is to be distributed over a 4-year period to promote environmentally sustainable agriculture, which will, at the same time, provide support for these continually disadvantaged regions. The National Park will be run by a joint commission, comprising representatives from the three regions involved, and will ensure the prevention of any use of the park which could jeopardize either its environment or ecological balance.*

## **NEW VINTAGES NOW ON THE MARKET**

- Bodegas Irache, D.O. Navarra have brought out four 1994 vintage varietal wines, classified as "excellent". Thus, along with its traditional Navarra Tempranillo grape variety, for the fourth time since 1990, Irache is offering the varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and the white Chardonnay grape in limited quantities.
- 100% Riesling from Miguel Torres. The young white, Waltraud 1994 is produced at a controlled temperature in steel tanks and has an alcohol content of 12.5°.
- Two new 1991 vintage Crianzas from Viñas del Vero are also now available. The Compañía Vitivinícola Aragones, D.O. Somontano, has launched Duque de Azara 1991 made from the Tempranillo and Moristel grape varieties, and Val de Uga 1991, which is 100% Pinot Noir.
- The Nineties wine Viña Pedrosa with D.O. Ribera del Duero can now be bought from Hermanos Pérez Pascuas. It has been left to mature in American oak for 26 months and aged in the bottle since March 1993.
- Barón de Chirel Reserva 1988 from Bodegas Marqués de Riscal is bringing back the character of the almost forgotten Graciano variety, with 25% of this complicated and rare grape. The Reserva Especial 1988 is total confirmation of the new style of Bodegas Campillo. After 18 months in American and French oak, it is aged in the bottle for 30 months.

## **THREE PARADORES OPEN UP THEIR DOORS TO NATURE**

This summer, the state hotel chain, Paradores de Turismo, has re-opened three of its premises, now refurbished, and is offering guests luxurious relaxation in the midst of almost untouched nature. The Paradores of Cervera de Pisuerga in the province of Palencia, Fuente De at the heart of the Picos de Europa National Park, and Puebla de Sanabria in Zamora, all enable any sign of the hectic pace of daily life and stress to be swiftly forgotten. In the next two years, approximately 87 million dollars will be invested in improving and refurbishing Paradores all over Spain. This project will accord special attention to the hotels which have been housed in former palaces and monasteries on the one hand, and those located in particularly beautiful natural landscapes on the other.

*For further information, contact Paradores de Turismo, Madrid, Tel: (1) 55 900 69.*

## **EXCELLENT WINES FROM RIOJA AND RIBERA DEL DUERO**

The renowned Bodega Faustino Martínez of Rioja is launching four new wines worldwide: Faustino I Tinto Gran Reserva 1987, Faustino V Reserva 1990 and two 1994 wines, Faustino V Rosado and Faustino V Blanco, which as soon as they appeared on the market were both awarded the Prix d'Excellence for wines of the highest quality at Vinalias '95.

A gold medal and the title "Best Buy" (for the product which is the best value for money) was awarded to the 1991 Crianza Viña Mayor of Ribera del Duero by the Chicago Beverage Testing Institute at the World Wine Championship 1995.

Vega Sicilia Valbuena 5<sup>a</sup> Año 1988 was nominated best wine in the world by the distinguished American wine journal "Wine Enthusiast". The D.O. Ribera del Duero red, which had initially been admitted to the list of the world's 3,380 best wines in numerous tasting and selection procedures, was eventually selected as the best from seven "World Champions".

## **ISO-CERTIFICATE FOR SUGAR AND BEER**

Sociedad General Azucarera is Spain's first sugar producer to have the ISO 9002 Certificate of Quality, and thus joins the forerunners of the European sector.

**RIOJA: 1994 CLASSIFIED AN  
"EXCELLENT" YEAR**

The Regulatory Council for the Qualified Denomination of Origin Rioja has given the 1994 vintage the highest possible grade, which has been awarded only seven times since the council was founded in 1926. A rigorous process of



control and classification, with some 3,000 tests of a total of 177 million liters of young Rioja wine, has confirmed what was predicted at the beginning of the harvest. The young wines stand out for their good color, extract and body; alcohol content and acidity and pH values are well-balanced and bode well for the aging process. According to some specialists, we can even expect another mythical vintage year, comparable to 1964.



Beer producer Alcázar, which is part of the Cruzcampo Group, is the first Andalusian brewery to receive the ISO 9002 certificate and to put a purification plant into operation for the waste waters produced in the manufacturing process. The plant is evidence of the company's intensive efforts to catch up with its European competitors.

**VALDEPEÑAS INCREASES ITS EXPORTS**

Last year, exports of Valdepeñas wines rose by 27.16% to 7,986,099 liters, with the lion's share of 90.43% going to the reds. 71.67% of the exported products were bottled wines which went to its main purchasing countries Netherlands, Britain, Sweden and Germany.

**SPANISH COOKERY COURSE IN CALIFORNIA**

Next October, the Culinary Institute of America, the world's major gastronomic teaching establishment, with its headquarters in New York, will be organizing a course on Spanish cuisine, in its new Californian branch specifically devoted to Mediterranean cookery. Fifteen students, five journalists and two top international Spanish chefs, who will introduce and promote their country and its products, have been selected for the seven-day course.

For further information, contact: Mr Javier Rodero, Spanish Trade Department in New York, 405 Lexington Ave, floors 44-45, 10174-0331 New York, Tel: 1212-66 14 59/60/61/62, Fax: 972 24 94.

**GOLD FOR SPANISH CHEESE**

At the London IFE'95 (International Food Exhibition) four gold medals, one silver and one bronze were awarded to cheeses from Spain. The goat's cheese Majorero of the Fuerteventura Co-operative and Montebro from Queserías del Tiétar both received the highest honors. The hand-crafted Manchego sheep's cheese, Pasamontes, made from unprocessed milk, received the silver medal. Gold and bronze went to two mixed cheeses, Fanbar and a Patamulo type, both from goat's, sheep's and cow's milk and produced by the Fanbar firm. In the hand-crafted cheese variety section, the gold medal went to the goat's cheese Garrotxa of Formatgeria Artesana del Baix Montseny.

**RIBERA DEL DUERO SUPPORTS THE RESTORATION OF BURGOS CATHEDRAL**

Since last December, a campaign has been underway to save Burgos cathedral from collapse. On the initiative of the Control Council, Bodegas of D.O. Ribera del Duero are contributing to the conservation of this Gothic monument by purchasing specially produced labels for the back of their wine bottles. The proceeds of this action will be handed over to the Foundation of the Friends of Burgos Cathedral after early summer 1996.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST...**

The Spanish Association of Professional Designers, member of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, the International Council of Graphic Design Associations and of the Bureau of European Designers Association, granted one of the five awards for the best products in the Spanish sector to the magazine *Spain Gourmetour* in June this year. Of total of 36 products nominated from all sectors, whether it be Media and Communications or Industry Design, the best products were selected which, by their conception, contributed to an elevation of the quality of life, either culturally or economically.

Export

VALOR  
Chocolates



Chocolates Valor, s.a.

# LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA



Spring is a time of flowers and, in Spain, of gastronomic and travel guides. The most popular annual guides are published in April and May and this year there are several novelties. The BMW guide, which until this year was produced by the Grupo Editorial Club de Gourmets, has now gone independent and has brought out its guide alone. The Club de Gourmets has published its guide again with its previous name of "Gourmetour". Altogether there are four national guides - **Guía Campsa**, **Guía del Viajero** and the two above - **BMW** and **Gourmetour** - in which travellers in search of good food will find all the information they need as well as practical details on places to visit, monuments, hotels, etc. It's just a pity that no-one has yet decided to put out a version in the English language.

- At the end of last year, the Regulating Council of the Jerez D.O. sponsored the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium on Wine Archaeology organized by the International Wine Office. This interesting meeting of archaeologists and wine experts has now given fruit in the form of a work called **Arqueología del vino. Los orígenes del vino en occidente** which goes back to the arrival of the Phoenicians on the Cadiz coast where important remains of wine-presses, etc. have been found. Although the book is in Spanish, each paper is summarized in English.

- The title says it all: **Un toro negro y enorme** (A

Huge Black Bull). The famous Osborne bull that all travellers in Spain have inevitably seen standing out starkly against the Spanish countryside is the star of this book. More than just a trade mark, it has come to be a symbol, almost a totem. It has generated photography, design, publicity and even literature and all this is covered in this striking and well-designed book that obtained four international awards for its graphic design: Laus de Oro, Barcelona; Gold Award and Special Gold Award of the '94 Donside Graphic Design Print Awards, London; Diploma for Excellent Typography of the Type Directors' Club of New York.

- An interesting facsimile publication is this **Nuevo manual de la cocinera catalana y cubana**. It was first published in the middle of the last century when Cuba was a Spanish colony and Catalonia's relations with the Caribbean island were particularly close. The author, Juan Cabrisas, used to be the chef at the Fonda de los Tres Reyes Inn and he wrote this book for Cata-

lans living in Cuba who were keen to conserve their traditional methods of cooking. The result is an unusual and varied collection of recipes.

- A curiosity that no lover of wine and literature should miss is **Los vinos de España vistos por los viajeros europeos** (Spanish wines seen by European travellers). This brings together the opinions on Spanish wines expressed in the works of about sixty travel writers over five centuries (15th to 19th). From Giacomo Casanova to Victor Hugo and from Saint Simon to George Borrow, British, French, and Italian writers all wrote on the different Spanish wines and on many customs related to the world of wine in Spain.

#### **Guía Campsa '95.**

Road maps and service stations. Repsol, Comercial de Productos Petrolíferos, S.A. Paseo de la Castellana, 278-280-28046 MADRID Tel.: (1) 348 80 00. Fax: (1) 314 28 21

#### **Guía del Viajero.**

Shell, España 1995. Plaza & Janés Editores, S.A.

Enric Granados, 86-88  
08008 BARCELONA  
Tel.: (3) 415 11 00  
Fax: 415 69 76

#### **Gourmetour 1995**

Grupo Editorial Club de Gourmet  
Claudio Coello 52, 1<sup>a</sup>  
28001 MADRID  
Tel.: (1) 577 04 18  
Fax: (1) 431 13 59

#### **Guía BMW 1995**

BMW Ibérica  
Paseo de la Castellana, 149 - 28046  
MADRID  
Tel.: (1) 335 05 05  
Fax: (1) 335 06 08

#### **Arqueología del vino. Los orígenes del vino en Occidente**

Several authors  
C.R.D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and  
Manzanilla-Sanlúcar  
Av. Alvaro Domeca, s/n  
11405 JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA  
(Cádiz)  
Tel.: (56) 33 20 50  
Fax: (56) 33 89 08

#### **Un toro negro y enorme**

España abierta  
Quintana, 20, 4<sup>a</sup> - 28008 MADRID  
Tel.: (1) 547 83 01  
Fax: (1) 547 20 63

#### **Nuevo manual de la cocinera catalana y cubana**

Compiled by Juan Cabrisas  
Editorial Planeta, S.A.  
Córcega, 273-279 -  
08008 BARCELONA  
Tel.: (3) 415 41 00  
Fax: (3) 217 77 48

#### **Los vinos de España vistos por los viajeros europeos**

Pedro Plasencia  
Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación  
Paseo de la Infanta Isabel, 1  
28014 MADRID  
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Fax: (1) 347 57 22

## Banana

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Tel.: (28) 88 21 00/22 00 - Fax: (28) 88 30 50

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Pedro Morales Denis, 126 - 35411 ARUCAS (Las Palmas)  
Tel.: (28) 60 01 23 - Fax: (28) 60 57 23

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46988 PATERNA (Valencia)  
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28109 ALCÓBENDAS (Madrid)  
Tel.: (1) 661 50 70 - Fax: (1) 661 54 70

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Avda. Antonio Fuertes, 1 - Apdo. 12 - 30840 ALHAMA DE MURCIA (Murcia)  
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**GEMI ALIMENT, S.A.**  
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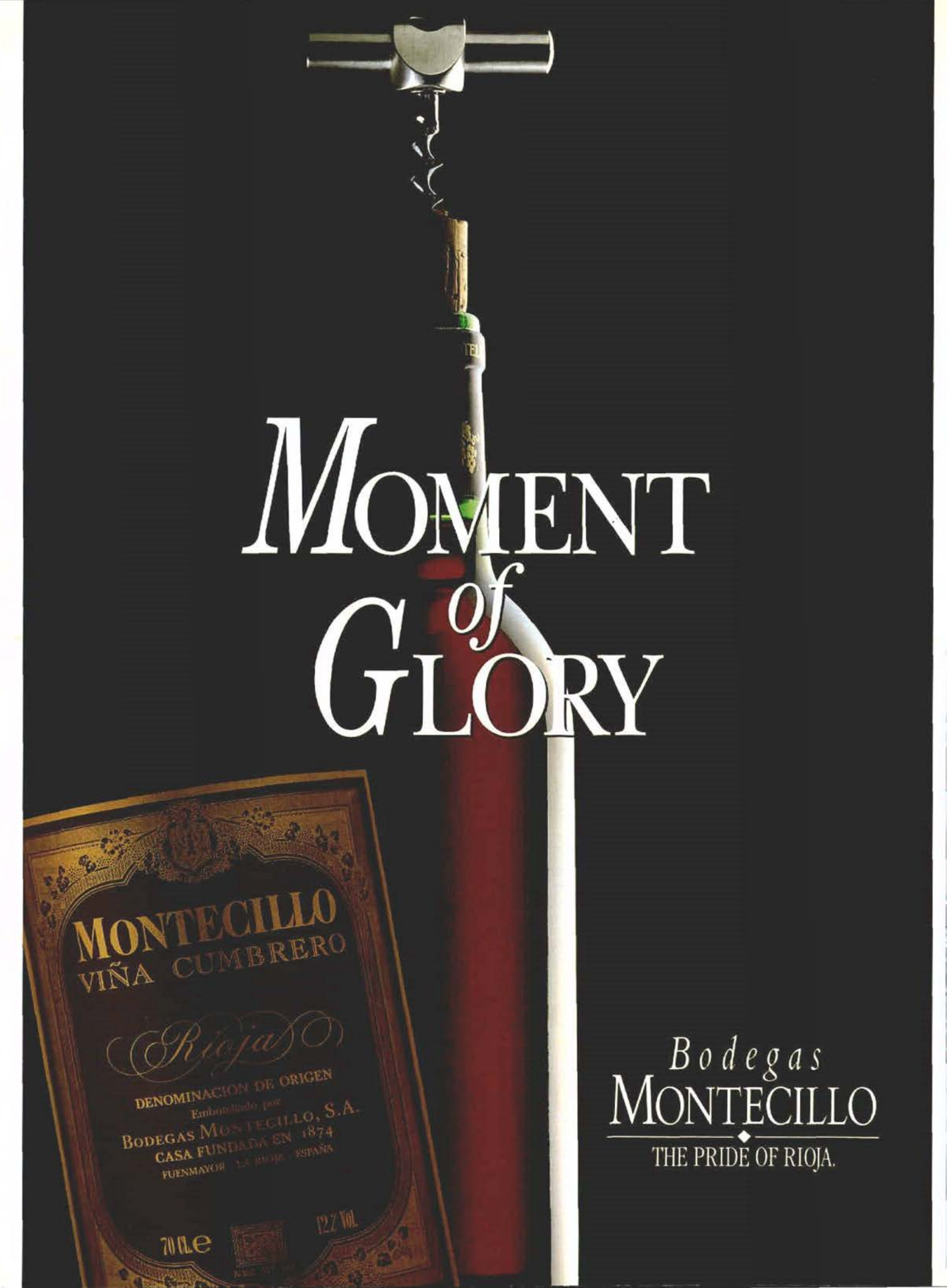
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# Europe's Hunting

Text: Luis Palacio



*The red partridge is one of Spain's most prized game species.*

**D**id you know that 70% of Spain's national territory is occupied by game preserves? Or that it has over 40 game species, many of which still live and breed in the wild? Small wonder that hunting enthusiasts from all over the world are visiting Spain in ever-increasing numbers.

"(...) THE LAW CONSIDERS DAYS WHEN IT SNOWS EXCEPTIONAL, AND HUNTING IS FORBIDDEN. WHOEVER MADE THAT LAW NEVER SAW THE PARTRIDGES AROUND MIRANDA FLYING THROUGH THE SLEET." (*Diario de un cazador, 1955*)



PABLO NEUSTADT/SOBREMESA

*The range of game in Spain is still very varied, amounting to more than 40 huntable species.*

# Ground

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

Back in the 1950s, and even into the Sixties, it was still possible in Spain to set off with a dog for a bit of impromptu hunting and to bag half a dozen partridge in a single day. Those times, when red partridge and foxes abounded in the Spanish countryside, are the stuff of Miguel Delibes' writing -*El último coto*, (The Last Preserve) *Los santos inocentes* (The Holy Innocents) and, particularly, *Diario de un cazador* (Diary of a Huntsman).

Miguel Delibes, Professor of Law, journalist and 1993 winner of the coveted Spanish literary prize, the Premio Cervantes, likes to describe himself as "a huntsman who writes". His love of hunting is an aspect of his love of Nature: he refines the description with the proviso that he is 'a hunter of rabbits and red partridge, but not of bigger animals with eyes like humans'.

Nowadays, that romantic, off-the-cuff, local approach to hunting is a thing of the past. A high proportion of Spain's native species are covered by special protec-

tion measures -in some cases, such as the bear and the capercaillie, the protection is total.

So is hunting on the decline in Spain?

Not a bit of it. What is happening is that modern attitudes are taking over, so that hunting is becoming less the casual sport it used to be and more a businesslike industry. With the number of hunters at a steady 1,200,000, the new approach seems to be doing it no harm at all.

Alfonso Sánchez-Fabrés has been in the business for 20 years. His company, HuntinSpain, specializes in selling 'hunting tourist' packages to North American clients. Like many other land-owners, Sánchez-Fabrés opted to convert his property in Salamanca Province into a hunting preserve. He is optimistic about the future: "Spain has two attributes which make it prime hunting territory. One is the climate: not only is it excellent for open-air activities, but it also produces fine game animals. The other is its vast areas of unspoiled land."

PABLO NEUSTADT/SOBREMESA



PABLO NEUSTADT/SOBREMESA



**W**ith 70% of its territory given over to game preserves, Spain is a hunter's paradise



**S**pain's climate provides not only good hunting weather but also conditions in which game species thrive



The 70% of Spain's territory that is given over to game preserves translates into 505,000 square km (195,000 square miles), much of which lies within the southernmost two-thirds of the Iberian Peninsula. The explanation for the existence of these vast areas is partly historical (Spain has traditionally favored livestock over agriculture) and partly demographic (the mass exodus from the country to the towns left huge areas depopulated, making them available for conversion into game preserves).

The greater part of these are *cotos privados* -private preserves- and are run by individuals and municipal authorities. Additionally, each of Spain's seventeen Autonomous Communities manages a certain number of *reservas or cotos nacionales de caza*. These national game preserves, amounting to about 70 in all, are the habitat of species requiring special protection.

National preserves date back to the turn of the cen-

tury, when the mountain ranges known as the Sierra de Gredos (near Madrid) and the Picos de Europa (up in the far north of the Peninsula) were declared royal preserves with a view to protecting the mountain goat (*Capra Hispánica*) and chamois, respectively, from extinction. Many other national game preserves of very different areas and characteristics have since been created all over the country, the best known being Sonsaz, Reres, Saja, Cazorla and Ronda.

Private and national game preserves are run very differently. The former are owned either by individuals or municipalities who manage them directly or rent them out. Preserves in this category usually employ a warden who is responsible for maintenance, animal feeding, anti-poaching measures, and so on. To hunt in a national preserve, hunters must submit an application for permits to hunt in specific preserves on specific days: these are allocated by drawing lots.



P. SANGHO-MATA/ICEX

"(...) HE STARTED HUNTING WHEN HE WAS JUST A LITTLE BOY, AND HE WAS MAD ABOUT IT, GANGAS (BIRDS OF THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY) IN JULY, AT THE POND OR THE MUDHOLES, QUAIL IN AUGUST IN THE STUBBLE LEFT AFTER THE HARVEST, PIGEON IN SEPTEMBER ON THE WAY SOUTH, PARTRIDGE IN OCTOBER IN THE PLOUGHED FIELDS AND IN THE SCRUBLAND, WILD DUCK IN FEBRUARY, (...)" (*Los Santos Inocentes*, 1981)

The range of game in Spain is still immensely varied, amounting to more than 40 huntable species. Two of these -the red partridge among the game birds, and the mountain goat, or *Capra Hispánica*, among the big game- are specific to Spain and give it a competitive edge over its geographical neighbors. Others are wild boar, red deer, moufflon and chamois, fox, partridge, hare, pheasant and pigeon to name only some of the species covered by the three Spanish categories of big game, predatory mammals and small game. Hunting is hugely popular.

Figures vary depending on source, but each year in Spain some four million partridge, 16 million rabbit and hare, 30,000 wild boar and 20,000 deer are taken. To sustain quantities like these, the increasingly experienced industry behind the scenes has to breed stocks of small game species (partridge, pheasant, quail, hare, rabbit). There is a growing awareness, too, that to take the same approach to the big game species would be no bad thing.

"Though Spain has traditionally opted for quantity rather than quality -the bigger the bag, the happier the huntsman- recent years have seen some landowners concentrating on the quality of the game in their preserves. As time goes by, selection and careful feeding are starting to show results in the form of top class specimens," explains Sánchez-Fabrés.

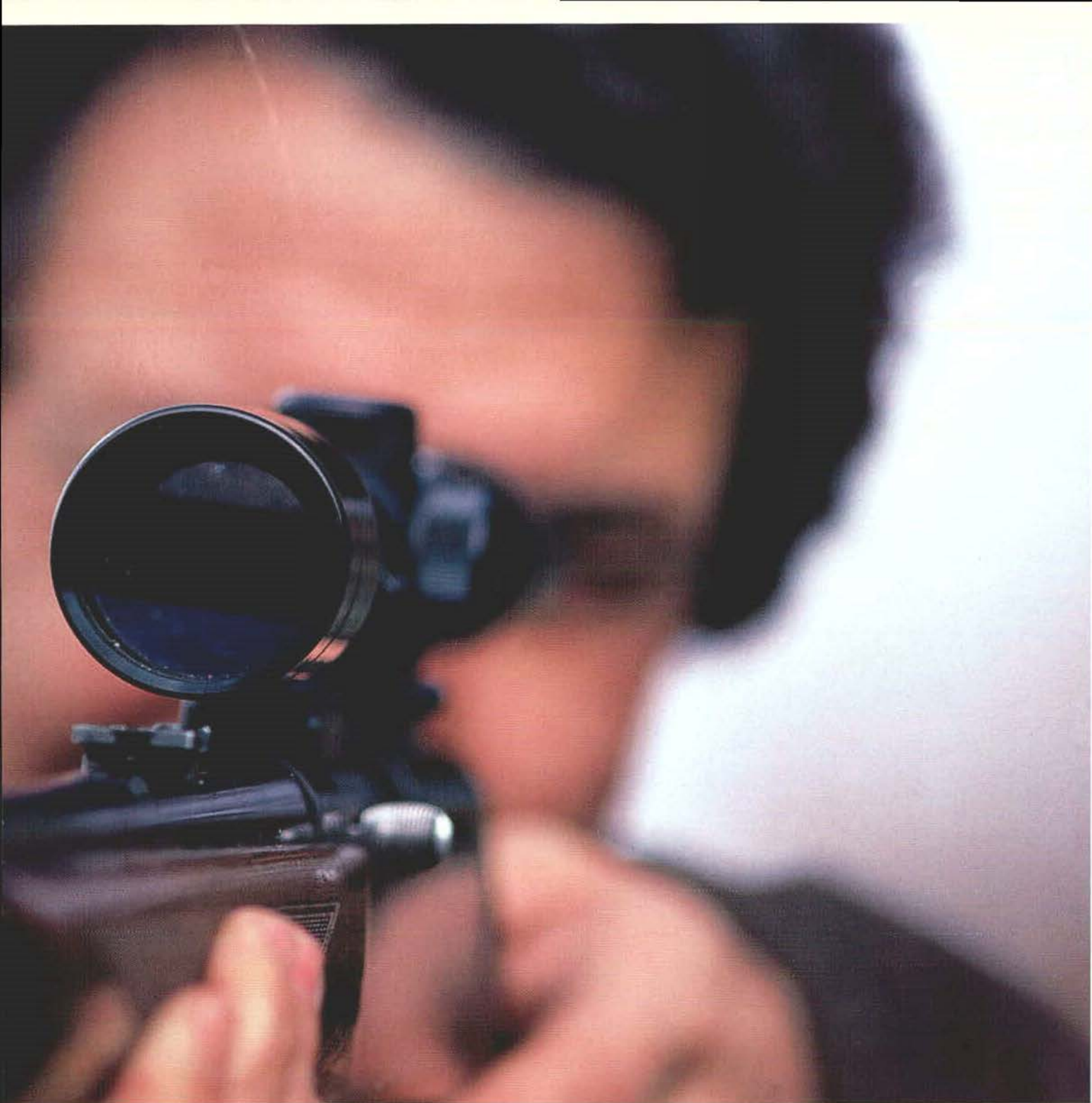
Though a high proportion of the huge quantities of small game taken by hunters are supplied by restocking farms, sportsmen can still pit their wits and skills against "wild" animals. Hunting en-

PABLO NEUSTADT/SOBREMESA



P. SANCIO-MATA/CEX





**A**s hunting in Spain has become increasingly sophisticated, so service companies have appeared which specialized in providing “complete hunting packages” for enthusiasts from abroad.



thusiasm and Madrid gunshop owner Alvaro Hernández explains that preserves with good terrain, pest and poaching control, and adequate food and water supplies for the animals can still provide excellent sport and a good bag without artificial restocking.

"EVERYONE KNOWS THAT WHAT YOU CAN'T HUNT IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER YOU CAN'T HUNT LATER" (*Diario de un cazador, 1955*)

Hunters accept closed seasons as a necessary evil. From mid-winter to late summer, depending on area and species, closed seasons apply all over the country to protect the animals during their periods of reproduction and rearing their young. Closed seasons in Spain date back to the 18th century, when they were imposed by the Reales Maestranzas, successors to the medieval chivalric orders, to protect certain game species which were at risk of dying out. Early Autumn weekends after the lifting of the closed season are intensely active in hunting circles. Groups of parked cars beside a country road mean that, if you scan the fields, you are sure to see a party of huntsmen with their shotguns at the ready while their dogs rummage around in the scrub for partridge and hare. The closed season does not, in fact, put all hunting activity on hold. There are some (very restricted) exceptions to the rule, and full advantage is taken of them. Game authorities grant specific permits for the out-of-season killing of animals (usually wild boar) which are causing damage to crops, or of particular animals which are too old to be reproductively active, for example. Additionally, some ten preserves are authorized to organize drives of game supplied by restocking farms throughout the year. As hunting in Spain has be-

come increasingly sophisticated, so service companies have appeared which specialize in providing "complete hunting packages" for enthusiasts from abroad. Hunting parties are booked one or two years in advance: the type of quarry is specified and the operators organize every aspect of the trip, from obtaining the relevant permits, in the case of national preserves, or hiring private preserves, to arranging accommodation, transport, guides, food and so on. It is estimated that about 30,000 foreign hunters use Spain's game preserves every year, most of them from within the EC, though Americans also make up a fair proportion. Hunting package companies with established reputations attract their share of the action at get-togethers and fairs like the Safari Club International in Las Vegas and Reno (USA), the European Game Fair in Paris (France), and Expocaza in Lisbon (Portugal). At these events, mainly through established clients, new contacts are

made and the new season's diaries fill up. Client reports on preserves they have visited, evaluating its attributes (animal specimens, setting, logistics) constitute a major marketing aid at events such as these.

Hunting package companies structure their product according to different styles of hunting: still-hunting and stalking are sometimes combined with raising (flushing) red partridge. In still-hunting, a style typical of Spain, hunters draw lots for a 'stand', or 'place', from which they are not permitted to stray, and from which they shoot at the quarry, usually deer and wild boar, steered towards them by dogs. Stalking consists of combing an area accompanied by a guide who knows the lie of the land, armed with a rifle and binoculars. Once the quarry is sighted, the hunter has to get close enough to be able to shoot. For shooting partridge, hunters position themselves in hides towards which the beaters drive the birds.

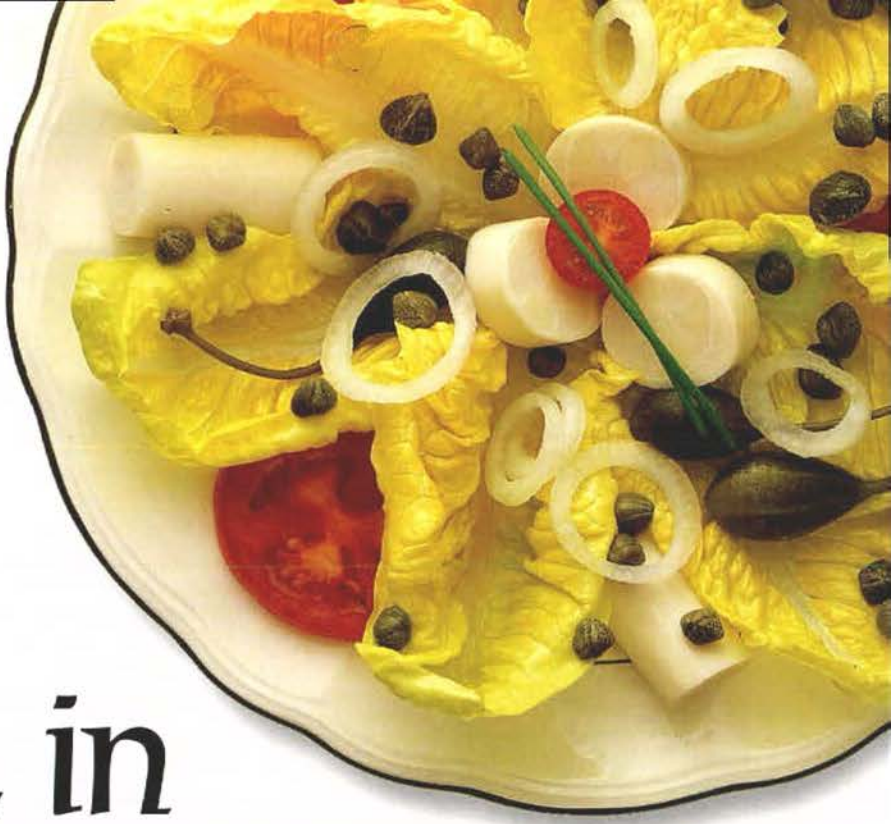
"IN THE END MELECIO, BEING THE COUSIN, CARRIED OFF PEPE'S HARE, AND PEPE TOOK THE BIG HARE AND MELECIO'S PARTRIDGE." (*Diario de un cazador, 1955*)

Spain's hunting industry is now all-embracing, covering not only hunting proper but also the breeding and restocking of species, and even processing the game meat. In the old days, the day's bag would be shared out among the members of the party and be taken home for the stewpot or the roasting spit.

Nowadays, not only are huntsmen's motives radically different but the hugely increased number of hunters and hunted creates the additional problem of what to do with the resulting meat mountain. The problem is complicated still further by the fact that there is no great Spanish culinary tradition for certain game animals. One tends to find big game only in specialist restaurants aiming for a Central European tone, say Polish or German; venison and wild



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Free

boar are only genuinely local food in certain areas such as the Pyrenees. Smaller game is much more common, though. Partridge and rabbit have always been plentiful in Spain, and marinades and stews of both are frequent in popular cuisine: in Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia are Spain's biggest game-producing and game-eating areas, stewed partridge is a classic Christmas dish. Other traditional small game dishes are often very imaginative - consider rabbit with snails, hare with beans, quail with chocolate... Even so, Spain has no processing industry equipped to cope with the abundance of raw material that modern hunting creates.

There are signs of change, though. A few companies handle big game meat, particularly the readily available venison and wild boar. They buy carcasses wholesale after the removal of antlers and

tusks and after statutory health inspections. The carcasses are then transported to abattoirs where they are jointed and frozen for export to Central Europe, especially Germany. According to César Fernández de la Peña, Manager of Industrial Cinegética Andaluza: "This type of meat responds well to freezing; it tones down its *bravío*". The *bravío* is the gamey flavor.

Capitalizing on this plethora of game, a venison and wild boar charcuterie industry is growing up around the hunting territories. The south of Salamanca (the province as a whole is traditionally famous for its Iberico pork charcuterie) now produces vacuum-packed venison *chorizos* aimed at the domestic market. Venison, wild boar and pheasant patés have been on the market for quite a while.

The smaller game species, particularly partridge, are hunted in such quantities

that sportsmen take nowhere near all their bag away with them. 'Kill and return' arrangements are not uncommon with stock farms whereby live partridge are bought from a farm and sent back after the kill. The farm then supplies the meat to industrial processors. Demand for products made from these smaller species is more consistent than for big game. Consequently, the processing industries are often supplied by the farm not only with hunted game but also with game bred expressly for processing. Luis Collado is Director of Conservas Collado Hermanos, a Rioja company which has been processing game meat for over 20 years. He maintains that the economic crisis is limiting the scope of the market. His company's product list currently includes hare with wild mushrooms and chasseur-style, and stewed and marinated quail and partridge but the

potential of venison products has yet to be exploited. "We have to bear in mind, though", says Luis Collado, "that we Spaniards aren't really game eaters, least of all the younger generation".

*Luis Palacio is a journalist and the Director of Intermedios magazine. He is a regular contributor to Spain Gourmetour.*

**Main exporters are listed on page 16.**

**See recipes on page 101.**

## Hunting Agencies

### CAZATUR

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## FERRÁN ADRIÁ OF EL BULLI



# THE FUTURE'S HERE ALREADY

*Mediterranean cuisine is undergoing something of a period of reflection and self-examination in Catalonia. It is still ubiquitous in the form we have always known it, both as simple everyday and more complex special occasion food, in Catalan homes and traditional restaurants. However, it also appears in modern guise stamped with the individual style of professional cooks who know how to adapt and create while acknowledging both context and chosen lifestyle. Catalonia's El Bulli restaurant, not far from Rosas in the Alto Ampurdán, is a case in point. Widely acclaimed by discerning eaters, its food, staff and setting are the subject of our second article in the series on Spain's Mediterranean Diet.*

I have always been attracted to the little area of northern Catalonia which borders on France and the sea. I find it beautiful and, in a way, mysterious. I love its hidden Pyrenean valleys, its dramatically indented coast, its fascinating people and history. Painters, writers, sculptors and potters have looked on it with love, and still do. The paintings of Dalí and the prose of Josep Plá reflect the passion that this, their home region, inspired in them.

In her book *Comer en Catalunya* (Eating in Catalonia), journalist and writer Carmen Casas says: "Modern-day conquistadors from Barcelona head for the Ampurdán with their sights set on buying its beautiful old country houses at three quarters what they are really worth and, especially, on searching out some culinary delight". Casas also declares that the best of Catalan cuisine is still to be found around here. Its traditional food reflects its geography -mountain, plain and sea. This is an area of delicious rice dishes, fish, baby goose with pears or turnips, and the more elaborate style of cuisine known in Spanish as *mar y montaña*, a term we translate clumsily into English as "surf and turf". And much, much more. Local cuisine features genuine *allioli*, that perfect emulsion of garlic and oil, to which a few drops of bitter orange juice are sometimes added; *sofrito* of onion and tomato; almond or hazelnut *picada* sauces. The area's salt anchovies are unbeatable, as are the fungi in Spring and Autumn. Fish and seafood of supreme quality and variety are fundamentals of this cuisine. Its medieval culinary traditions received a shot in the arm in the form of newly discovered products from the New World, and throughout its history it has absorbed the influence of France and Italy. The area's economy is basically agricultural, with olives, cereal and grapes as the main crops.

It was in this Catalan frontier territory that, one day over 30

years ago, El Bulli came into being thanks to the energy and vision of Marketta Shilling. Originally Czech though of German nationality, Marketta first moved into the beautiful house on Montjoi cove in 1957. She still believes now as she did then that for many people, indeed for anyone who believes in the pleasure principle, good cooking -excellent quality, presentation and service- is a necessity.

I had to go to El Bulli. One of the great Basque chefs had recommended it, and when in Spain I always listen to the Basques on the subject of food. A chat on the phone with El Bulli's manager, Juli Soler, a copy of *El sabor del Mediterráneo* (this book written by its chef Ferrán Adriá was my first indirect contact with the restaurant), a reservation at the hotel they recommended and it was all arranged. It was a rainy afternoon in early Summer, and I was going to El Bulli at last. I left Barcelona by road at 5 pm and by 7 I was in the lovely village of Avinyonet de Puiventós, just a few kilometers from Figueras, 'capital' of the Alto Ampurdán. At the Mas Pau, an old Catalan country house converted into an hotel and restaurant, I rediscovered the sort of peace and quiet I thought no longer existed.

Seated in the ornate nostalgia of the Mas Pau's dining room after doing justice to a delicious dinner of calf's head with *sanfaina* (a regional sauce made with local vegetables), egg poached in mushroom and truffle broth, and monkfish with honey *allioli*, it came home to me that this was Mediterranean food, traditional to a certain degree and beautifully executed. The style and preparation technique seemed curiously familiar. Back in my room, I took another look at Adriá's *El sabor del Mediterráneo* (The Taste of the Mediterranean). The dishes I had just eaten were close relations of those photographed in the book. Next morning, I discovered that the Mas Pau's chef, Xabier Sagrista, had been chef



de cuisine at El Bulli for over eleven years under the leadership of Adrià, and was now starting a new stage in his career at the hotel.

I couldn't hold off any longer. That very morning I set off for the fishing port of Rosas and, more specifically, Cala Montjoi, the cove on which El Bulli stands. I didn't yet know it, but on my return to the hotel I was to write the following note: "After years of exploring the best of my country's gastronomy, unforgettable moments in restaurants, markets, shops and wineries in Europe, Asia, America and Australia, I have to confess that today my gastronomic world has been divided in two -before and after El Bulli".

#### CHRONICLE OF A LONG-AWAITED VISIT

Cala Montjoi is 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) from the port of Rosas, and tough kilometers they are since the road is very poor. However, the rugged, almost bleak, landscape of rock hewn by wind and rain, cropped grass dotted with little pink, yellow and blue flowers more than made up for the wear and tear on the chassis of my rented car. Winters can be hard in these parts, and their rigors show in the landscape. At last, rounding the final bend, I made out the beach of dark sand contrasting with the green of the flowering sea-side shrubs and the white building which contains the restaurant and its nerve-center.

For a moment I wondered if this was the right place: the simple entrance and the unpretentious garden did not match my preconceptions. Within minutes, though, I was seated at a welcoming little table by the fire, feeling quite at home. A picture window looks out onto the terrace, and I enjoyed the pots of plants and the view of the sea beyond. It was still raining. Through another window, I could see into El Bulli's dining room. Curiously for a place in which

change is a constant, the dining room is exempt by popular demand: the clientele like it as it is. White cloths, impeccable glassware, tiny flowers on the tables... the decor is both eclectic and very traditional: whitewashed walls with dark woodwork, a crystal lamp, assorted paintings, country-style furniture, large tables and others just for two, big chairs and comfortable sofas.

#### THE QUEST FOR INDIVIDUALITY

Juli Soler is the restaurant's manager and moving force. His first words were emphatic: "The food at El Bulli is unique. We have a clientele that has been with us for years, very cosmopolitan. American, Belgian, French, Basque, Catalan and Castilian. We get the young and the less young. But they all have something in common: they're all more interested in what they eat than in the *mise en scène*. We are by the beach and most of our customers are on holiday, some even arrive by boat. Star ratings and good eating guides are important of course, but in this restaurant keeping our customers happy is paramount. People come here expecting something different and that's exactly what we want to give them, even if it means departing from established practice."

El Bulli today is the result of many years' work, devotion, and continual change. Its culinary history is long and complex. The kitchen was set up many years ago by a great cook from Alsace, who was succeeded by various others, also French. In its early days its claim to fame was that it was very close to the border with France and served precise, competent French haute cuisine. It produced Spain's first sorbets, it offered a dessert trolley, and a cheese-board of the best Spanish and foreign cheeses. It was, in short, a pace-setter and it still is. "In

those days, we simply copied the best in Europe and made perfect imitations of other people's talent. But the day came when all that changed for ever". Twelve years ago, Juli Soler took charge of El Bulli and hired, among other cooks, a 22-year old without much experience but with plenty of talent who had worked at El Bulli the previous summer. Ferrán Adrià, a Catalan -a Mediterranean!- was not so much a dedicated cook as an instinctive one. They say that great cooks, those who create and teach, are born not made. That is clearly Ferrán Adrià's case, though he didn't suspect it when he took on his first student job in a very ordinary restaurant in Ibiza.

#### TIMES OF CHANGE

El Bulli was about to start developing a style of its own. They started off by studying the techniques of such and such a cook, reading all the great classics and, in off-duty hours, cooking thousands of different dishes. Juli Soler and Ferrán Adrià travelled the world in search of new ideas and new techniques. They decided that for a certain number of years, Ferrán would spend periods working in the kitchens of big names such as George Blanc, Jack Peg and Jack Massimin. Certain things can only be learned, and learn them he did. Four years ago, when he felt that the time had come to create his first dish, he focused on the Mediterranean and the style of his home region. From then on, El Bulli has sought its inspiration locally. It no longer looks to foreign models; it no longer needs to. Its clients are starting to understand its intentions, to appreciate its dishes, however simple or complex, and this is what spurs the team on. At this point in the conversation, I want to know more about the man himself. Where did his artistic and creative instinct spring

from? What are his more everyday tastes? I ask him what he eats when he is not at El Bulli. He replies that he likes the tapas style of eating -small amounts of all sorts of different things, juxtaposing various flavors and textures. He loves tinned cockles, seafood in all shapes and forms, anchovies, ham and bread. On the whole, he finds fish boring, especially in conventional cookery; sole less so than sea-bass, and salmon less so than sea-bream. He eats very little meat, if any. He can't understand why a gastronomic menu (the only sort that interests him -lots of dishes in small quantities) has by definition to culminate in fish or meat (a piece of grilled sea-bass or a chunk of roast meat, sauced or un-sauced) and he wonders what's wrong with a little bone marrow with caviare, or two shrimp in an intensely flavored dish. What he loves best is the 'here it comes, there it goes' effect of rapid but intense taste sensations on the palate. Artichokes, asparagus, broad beans, fresh peas (he calls them 'the caviare of vegetables') are his favorite vegetables, served in their season of course.

Two particular Adrià dishes marked his break with France: almond terrine and savoury tomato granita with fresh oregano. The first is a terrine made with truffle preserved in olive oil, peeled fresh almonds, sea water, a few leaves of gelatine and a little single cream (to remind us that the dairy pastures of the Pyrenees are close at hand). In *El sabor del Mediterráneo*, Adrià presents this terrine with little brochettes of tiny squid and artichoke. Not only is the combination of flavors extraordinary and incredibly fresh, but the presentation is also exquisite. The savoury tomato granita is served with *manjar blanco* in a stemmed glass. The ingredients could not be simpler:



ripe salad tomatoes, olive oil, chopped oregano and salt. *Manjar blanco*, a Catalan dish that dates back to the Middle Ages, is made in this case with flaked almonds, gelatine and sea water. It's a flavorful and refreshing summer recipe in which Mediterranean ingredients come into their own.

### THE HEART OF EL BULLI

We had switched the tape recorder off. It was lunch time, and the chef had to be in the kitchen. The kitchen is the living heart of El Bulli and never stops beating. El Bulli closes its doors as a restaurant from October to May every year, and these months are when the creative imagination and efforts of Adriá's team are hardest at work. Each Winter engenders the new dishes that will form part of the Spring, Summer and Autumn menus. Every dish created is tested until they are absolutely certain that it will meet with the unqualified approval of their regular clientele. This is also the time of year when El Bulli puts on courses and tastings, passing on its most intimate secrets to professional and amateur foodies alike.

To move from the restaurant at El Bulli and into the kitchen is to move from a traditional and predictable world into the kind of future that all restaurants should aspire to. The kitchen, which is new, measures over 325 square meters (3,500 square feet), of which 245 square meters (2,640 square feet) were excavated out of the rock against which the original building stands. There is no behind the scenes feeling here: it is an open area, designed to be both beautiful and functional. There are no flapping doors, no shouting, no rush, no dashing about. Except in Alice Waters' kitchen in Berkeley, I have never felt so close to the essence of a place where eating and just

being are a guaranteed pleasure. The kitchens of California's Chez Panisse and Catalonia's El Bulli are actually quite dissimilar but it is the response they evoke in the visiting observer that is so singular and pleasurable. It's the very look and feel of the places themselves and the food they produce.

Large glazed panels give onto the garden, letting in daylight and providing views of plants and flowers. There are sculptures incorporated into the work stations; cold-food areas are air-conditioned; there are state-of-the-art electric ovens and stainless steel hotplates, and separate areas where one can work quietly and pleasurably. I wish all the kitchens in the world were like this one: I'm sure we would all want to be cooks if they were. The desserts area is simply an extension of where the rest of the menu is prepared. There are no patissiers here -they are all just cooks. The bar, presided over by Agustín Peris, one of the best sommeliers in Spain, faces the main kitchen counter. If you like, you can drink your aperitif among the pots and pans. The cooks are apparently quite happy to let you be part of the job. Here it seems not so much a job as the exercising of skills acquired over many hours of discipline and application.

### THE MEDITERRANEAN WAVE

It was in this unusual kitchen in 1992 that, after years of work, *El Bulli, El sabor del Mediterráneo* finally saw the light of day. It is an incomparably beautiful book which reflects the spirit of the restaurant at the time when it was making its break with the past. It reveals Mediterranean cuisine as seen through the eyes of Adriá, namely from a professional, haute cuisine point of view. Adriá maintains that all Spain's styles of cuisine are Mediterranean, or are at least dom-

inated by Mediterranean ingredients: garlic, olive oil, wine, salt cod, tomato, onion, capsicum, seasonal vegetables, rice... He is adamant that its flavors are unequalled in any other cuisine. It's just that it is sometimes more complicated -*a la vasca* (in the Basque style); or is fresh and light -*a la andaluza* (in the Andalusian style), or made vividly colorful by tomatoes and capsicums. If my Basque grandmother were still with us, I am sure she would have a thing or two to say about this theory, but I do admit that as far as ingredients go in Spain's pluralist, multi-regional cuisine, Adriá is quite right. "I'm a Mediterranean man, and I've spent a lot of time doing Mediterranean haute cuisine in a restaurant on Spain's Mediterranean coast, and I believe this cuisine to be the most effective weapon we have against the overwhelming influx of the Anglo-Saxon influence (fast food, or whatever you like to call it)." Adriá prefers not to think of regional Mediterranean food or dishes but to think of Mediterranean cuisine in the abstract, as a lifestyle which has an unchanging gamut of basic ingredients. "I admit that the transformation we've been talking about was brought about by the Mediterranean. What is the most significant difference between an haute cuisine restaurant in Lyons, Rosas or Palamos? The difference lies in the variety, the flavor and the quality of the ingredients. We have to live with what we have around us". Adriá and his chef de cuisine buy fish at the Rosas fish-auction, vegetables locally and more specialized ingredients from Barcelona's Boquería market, one of the best in Europe. "But I want to go beyond the traditional -I want to feel untrammelled- that's what I'm putting all my efforts into at this moment".

### MAR Y MONTAÑA

Adriá's book shows very clearly how his style of cooking has been influenced by various festive dishes from the sea-faring cuisine of the Ampurdán. This is the style of cuisine known in Spanish as *mar y montaña*, sea and mountain, or surf and turf, best typified, perhaps by *Langosta con pollo* (lobster with chicken). "We realized that these dishes were the source of a very interesting principle, though they were rather outdated from the gastronomic point of view", explains Adriá. "In the traditional *Langosta con pollo*, for example, lobster is cooked with chicken in a delicious sauce, but in the finished dish the lobster has no role at all, except in the sauce. We decided to create a new El Bulli type of *mar y montaña* cuisine".

What, then, is traditional *mar y montaña* cuisine? In brief, special occasion food which combines meat and fish. Opinions differ as to its origins. We know that the Romans were skilled at creating unconventional combinations in which chickens or fowls were cooked in the same pot as shellfish and fish. This sort of cooking has always gone on in the Ampurdán and in other parts of Spain. In his book about the Ampurdán cooking of the Costa Brava, *La cuina de l'Amporda: la Costa Brava*, Jaume Fàbrega has a chapter on the so-called "food of fantasy" in which he mentions a spectacular recipe (*El Niú*) for a winter dish of cod, small game, onions, tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, saffron, hazel nuts, carquinyolls (small pasta made with flour, eggs, sugar and almonds), potatoes, aubergines and salt. I've never tasted it, but I am intrigued. Though it has disappeared from most restaurant menus, you can still find it at some very specialized ones in Palafrugell and La Bisbal, in Gerona Province. The most fre-



quent ingredients in *mar y montaña* dishes are: cuttlefish, snails, lobster, chicken, pig's ears and feet, cockerel's feet, sausages, *butifarra* (Catalan sausage). But there are lots more: sweet-and-sour combinations, fruit and vegetables...

It is not difficult to imagine what a man of Ferrán Adriá's creative capacity could do with all this. He says in his book: "*Mar y montaña* has become so integral to my style that it would be no exaggeration to say that my cuisine would perhaps not exist without that combination". His contribution, like that of other cooks who successfully apply new techniques to traditional cuisine, translates in practice into reducing the once traditional cooking times for fish and shellfish in the Mediterranean. But Adriá goes further again, using original ingredients which integrate perfectly. For his chaudi-froid of sweetbreads and saltwater crayfish, the crayfish are sautéed and served cold with sautéed sweetbreads, served hot, accompanied by a salad of onion and cauliflower in truffled vinaigrette with a dash of reduced liquor made from the crayfish heads. This is one of my favorite dishes. Adriá himself is particularly proud of a dish admired by Robuchon that I mentioned earlier: bone marrow with caviare: not such a Mediterranean combination perhaps, but a more daring one.

#### CURTAIN UP

If every time I went to a restaurant alone -and I often do- I could sit in some obscure corner of the kitchen, I think I would be a happy woman. Well at El Bulli not in an obscure corner, because there aren't any in Adriá's kitchen, and anyway we wanted to carry on talking. Generously, he really wanted me to understand what they are all about. I sat facing the counter, between

the bar and the window overlooking the garden. It was like being in the front row at the Covent Garden of Spanish cuisine. At two in the afternoon, the sommelier brought me a delicious and welcome glass of Galician wine from Bodegas Emilio Rojo (of the D.O. Ribeiro) made of Treixadura, Torrontés and Albariño grapes. Alongside came a dish of cinnamon-dusted potato chips and peeled pistachios fried in a feather-light batter of flour, water, sugar, salt and a little fresh yeast.

The first course was not far behind. Really, I don't know whether to call them courses, tapas, amuse-gueules, delights... The dish I had in front of me had been described as *Arroz a la cubana* (Cuban Rice). Mention *Arroz a la cubana* to any Spaniard of my generation and you transport him back to the school canteen. The standard version consists of a plate of boiled white rice topped with fresh tomato sauce, a fried egg and a fried banana. What the waiter placed before me was a beautiful dish containing a vivid tomato granita complemented with little packages of bacon-wrapped golden banana, and poached quail's eggs. A delicious and refreshing little dish: the banana was the best bit -I found the granita rather bland.

The kitchen was gradually getting livelier. When I had arrived, only two cooks were at work, but there were six of them by this time all producing dishes with painstaking pleasure and placing them on the metal trays for the waiters to take out.

An exquisitely delicate dish of the best rock mussels I have tasted for a long time focused my attention back on what I was eating. Next came creamed cauliflower and almond gratiné with garlic and olive oil. It was very good, and I relished it while Adriá talked about cooking being an art that evolves: if it stops evolving, it loses its vitality. He mentions col-

leagues of his who made it but then became bogged down, hampered by the burden of success and by the number of tables they had to serve each day. He prefers to cook well for just a few. Still with the cauliflower, I ask him what he thinks of vegetarian cooking. He replies that he respects it, but that not being able to use fish would impose too many limitations on him (over 70% of his recipes include fish or shellfish). We move on to the future, and the sea. Might the time come when this sort of restaurant is the only place able to provide the variety and quality of product that were once the norm but become things of privilege as they become scarce? Adriá is an optimistic and positive thinker: if he couldn't obtain meat and fish he would simply turn his attention to what he could get. "I'd just have to try even harder", he declares. He tells me about the two dishes I am going to eat next. *Menestra de verduras* (Vegetable medley) is one of the most traditional dishes there is, but at Adriá's hands it turns into something from the year 2025, composed of five fruits and vegetables whose flavor and texture tease the palate, both confusing and pleasurable. The other, *Capuchino de babas a la catalana con jamón* (Capuccino of broad beans Catalan style with cured ham) I give the recipe later on, so I need not comment further except to say that it is brilliant.

Adriá complains about the poor quality of certain products, such as potatoes. We talk about seeds and the close links that exist in California between certain restaurants and small farmers who grow specific products exclusively for them. We move on to vinegars of all sorts and then, inevitably, to olive oil. "Mediterranean cuisine can be a good showcase for olive oil, but not in all dishes. That is a mistake. I often use the lighter ones -

they suit my cooking better." Of the sturdier ones full of flavor and aroma, he likes the Catalan oils and the extra-virgin oil produced in Andalusia by Núñez de Prado. And what about pasta? Adriá admits that conventional pasta interests him less now than it did a few years back and he brings me a sample of his current approach to pasta. It is a dish both entertaining and delicious: *Navajas con macarones y espárragos en gelatina de hierbas* (razor clams with macaroni and asparagus in a herb jelly). He's playing again -which are the razor clams and which the macaroni? The palate can tell the difference. It's a delicious and unique dish. This is exactly what he wants to give his customers: palate games which cause the diner to think, taste and enjoy. I sample some 'noodles' that turn out to be creations of the sea rather than the land. They are the Mediterranean sea-cucumbers known as *espardenyes*, *llongos* or *pastissets* in Catalan (*Stichopus regalis* to scholars), a delicious relation of the sea urchin. I move on to snails with cured ham and creamed pumpkin with mint. Superlatives fail me at this point. Talking with the sommelier, I mention that customers can find it difficult to choose wine to go with such a wide range of flavors. He tells me that he is always ready to help but that the problem is largely pre-empted by two or three different wines being served with the gastronomic menu.

#### THINGS CAN BE PERFECT

The sommelier changes my glass again, replacing it this time with an elegant *catavinos* as used in Jerez. Though I often drink sherry, I am surprised to be served it outside Andalusia at this stage of the meal, namely with the last course before the dessert. In this case, it is a Manzanilla Pasada Barbado from Sanlúcar de



Barrameda, the color of old straw and with an individual aroma which makes it unmistakable in a blind tasting. Served at the perfect temperature, the wine is equally perfect. The dish it is to accompany arrives: gambas con queso, *Pedro Ximénez y confitura de limón* (prawns with cheese, Pedro Ximénez and lemon preserve). Now I understand the sommelier's choice: the complexity and characteristic versatility of one of the world's most classic wines allow it to combine perfectly with ingredients that would be very difficult to harmonize with anything else.

The service is well underway and activity is speeding up in the domain of Alberto Adriá, Ferrán's younger brother, who heads El Bulli's desserts team. As I said earlier, the desserts here are not desserts but further examples of cuisine, a continuation of the menu rather than a complete change. I remember as a child that when I had eaten some favorite thing I liked to wait

until the taste had completely gone from my mouth before I moved on to dessert, especially if it was anything other than fruit. I didn't want to let go of the taste before I had to. Mango slices with honey and local cheese; cinnamon and mandarin zabaglione; pistachio nougatine and wild strawberries with mascarpone; peach, celery, apple and courgette flower with dates; coconut mousse with red fruits; hot chocolate sablé with vanilla and bitter ice-cream; candied pine-nuts with spicy toffee and chocolate ... irresistible temptation. It was time for coffee, a stage of the meal we Spaniards always enjoy, even more so when it comes with a delightful surprise in the form of a tray of El Bulli's own petits fours. What to choose from among the little lollipops, chocolate mint leaves, cornets of smooth caramel and fresh mango...?

It was five o'clock by the time I got up from the table, full of admiration and en-

thusiasm for what the El Bulli team has achieved in such a short time in their Mediterranean setting. I understood that many of the dishes created at El Bulli are like a great dress-designer's garments. Some will be taken up by popular taste and be reproduced time and time again for years, but all will remain in the gustatory memory of those who, when they eat somewhere special want it to be an outstanding experience and place themselves in the chef's hands.

Currently, Juli and Adriá are involved in projects which could well influence the eating habits of young Spaniards, an important question in the Spain of today. They have already revolutionized the dining rooms of the Polytechnic University of Catalonia with a menu in which taste, ingredients and presentation have much more to do with the traditional Mediterranean style of eating - a healthy one, as we know - than with the dreaded fast-

food ethos imposed by marketing and advertising. The Soler/Adriá team is also involved in other restaurants, and these are the first beneficiaries of the advances made each year at El Bulli, with no rush, no dashing about, no flapping doors. El Bulli is now itself influencing the very kitchens they once dreamt of emulating, and their dishes, style and energy have become models for a new aspiring generation.

*María José Sevilla is an expert in Spanish gastronomy, the author of several books and BBC TV program on the subject, and is joint head of food and wine promotion in the Spanish Commercial Office located in the UK.*

**See recipes on page 107.**

## El Bulli Restaurant

### 1995 SUMMER MENU

#### First Courses

- Bone marrow with caviare
- Vegetable medley of textures
- Lobster gazpacho
- Crayfish with ceps and pine-nut vinaigrette
- Sweet-sour sea cucumber
- Octopus salad
- Pedro Ximénez-dressed prawns with cheese, rice and lemon
- Rock mussels in fennel gelée

#### Fish

- Shellfish suquet
- Sole with garlic, thyme, bay and rosemary
- Skate with razor clams and macaroni
- Whitebait with sea cucumber
- Red mullet with fresh almonds and apricots
- Turbot with lentils, oregano zabaglione and caramel vinegar

#### Meat

- Minute entrecote of stewed beef
- Rabbit in salmorejo sauce with mango and mascarpone purée
- Herbed loin of lamb

#### Our Petits Fours

- Mandarin chocolate flakes
- White chocolate, yoghurt and hazelnut praline
- Guayaquil with eucalyptus
- Aniseed, lemon and mandarin lollipop
- Fruit brochette with basil
- Mango cup
- Chocolate caramel
- Citrus and raspberry
- Chocolate soup with aniseed cream
- Banana and brioche fritter
- Filo star with frangipane and raspberries
- Caramelized raspberries
- Chocolate pot au crème

- Chocolate cup with mandarin granita
- Chocolate caramelized hazelnuts
- Pistachio wands
- Mandarin with rose and cinnamon

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**D**ARK CHOCOLATE  
TAKES PRECEDENCE  
OVER SWEETER MILK  
CHOCOLATE VARIETIES.  
COCOA BUTTER IS  
USED RATHER THAN  
CHEAPER VEGETABLE  
OILS OR PALM OIL AND  
DRIED FRUITS AND  
NUTS PREDOMINATE  
AS FILLINGS.

One after another, I left half a dozen Spanish chocolate makers tongue-tied with my very first question.

"What's the difference between Spanish chocolates and those world famous brands made in Belgium, France, Switzerland and Holland?" I asked.

Finally one of them had an answer.

"Nothing," said Ricardo Navarro, director of Nederland, a Barcelona company that provides top-quality cocoa products for much of the Spanish trade.

Blind tastings conducted by Nederland last year showed that even the best educated palates could not tell the difference between the pure chocolates of Spanish candy makers and those of their northern European counterparts.

The difference lies not in the quality of Spanish chocolate -which is made from scratch in the luxurious European style with a higher percentage of cocoa and less sugar than the rest of the world.

The difference lies in the creativity and imagination of Spanish chocolate crafters and their use of the highest quality Mediterranean nuts and fruits as part of their confections.

Some of the world's best nuts come from Spain. Plump, sweet Marcona almonds and flavorful Negreta hazelnuts are grown along the Mediterranean coast in Tarragona. Seville oranges and pine nuts also frequently find their way into Spanish chocolates and the results are delicious.

I have to admit it. I ate a lot of chocolate in researching this story -and not all of it was in the line of duty. I also noticed that at all the chocolate factories I visited, employees and management alike nibbled their way through the day. They called it quality control, but the truth is that Spanish chocolates are irresistible.

After sampling as much as possible, three very uniquely Spanish confections stand out in my mind: A delicate curl of candied Seville orange peel covered with bitter chocolate was one of my favorites. Even it was outdone by a sophisticated chocolate drop called Bric -made from a giant caramelized Marcona almond covered in rich white chocolate and dusted with unsweetened pure cocoa.

But, the one I'm going to buy for my next dinner party is called Victoria. It is a simply elegant wafer of pure dark chocolate decorated with one perfect almond, one perfect hazelnut, one perfect walnut and a quarter of sweet raisins -all artfully arranged by hand.

There are few places left in the world where so much creativity and hand-finishing goes into a box of chocolates. The man who said there is nothing different about Spanish chocolates was wrong.

#### Master Craftsmen

It was in the suburbs of Barcelona that I met Manuel Villanueva, who was squeezing well-practiced chocolate swirls from a wax paper decorating tube onto a tray of chocolate-covered toffee almonds. Well-practiced because he has been hand-making chocolates for the Blanxart company since it was founded in 1954.

Blanxart is typical of Spain's boutique chocolatiers. They make nearly 100 varieties of bonbons and chocolate-drenched fruits or nuts. The orange curls and Bric mentioned above are created here, as are chocolate truffles, clusters of chocolate-coated pine nuts, pralines, and an array of chocolates filled with liqueurs, including the local *marc de cava*.

While production at Blanxart is slow and small, they go to great lengths to ensure a quality product at every step

of the process -starting with the raw cocoa beans.

"We start from scratch partly because we enjoy the romance of being purists, it's not cost-effective," said Blanxart director general Ricard Peral, "but there is also a practical side because by roasting and grinding our own cocoa beans we have more control over the delicate bouquet of the final product."

A mixture of cocoa beans is selected from Ecuador, Brazil, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and Guinea to ensure the right blend of aroma, cocoa butter and elasticity. From here it takes at least two days to roast and refine the beans; blend the resulting cocoa powder and cocoa butter with sugar to make chocolate; and "conch" the chocolate between curved granite slabs to give it smoothness and workability.

The same elaborate process is repeated at the opposite end of Barcelona at the Ludomar chocolate factory, which specializes in high-quality "made to order" chocolates sold in hundreds of pastry shops throughout Spain, England, France and Germany.

"We aren't interested in selling in big supermarkets", said Ludomar director general Francesc Casals, "because it is too difficult to maintain our high quality if production is increased".

One of the best Ludomar creations is a variation on the famous Catalan desert called *Postre de música*. The original *Postre de música* is simply a dish of mixed nuts and raisins, often served with a liqueur or glass of port wine. Here it becomes a mouth-watering cluster of chocolate-covered hazelnuts, almonds and raisins. Another specialty is plump, pitted cherries, with stem intact, smothered in chocolate. You are supposed to throw the stem away, but most people end up licking

it clean first.

In a separate candy kitchen at Ludomar, 22 rotating copper kettles spin out small batches of what the Spanish call *grageas*. These are usually almonds or hazelnuts coated with dark chocolate, white chocolate or toffee—a sophisticated, grown-up version of M&Ms raised to an art form.

The chocolate makers at Blanxart and Ludomar have typically Mediterranean tastes. Their use of dark chocolate takes precedence over sweeter milk chocolate varieties. Cocoa butter is used rather than cheaper vegetable oils or palm oil. Dried fruits and nuts predominate as fillings, rather than the creams, jellies or marzipan more frequently used in northern European countries.

Both companies distribute the vast majority of their delicacies to small shops, which sell them as their own homemade treats. While this method works fine for the shops, it has kept the chocolate companies' names somewhat of a mystery among consumers.

Blanxart is working to remedy this lack of company image with a line of brand-name chocolate bars and boxed chocolates launched just a year ago. Their tasteful, rustic packaging is a good reflection of the natural, hand-made chocolates inside, but building brand-name recognition takes time especially in foreign markets. For now, many of Spain's best chocolate makers are still a sweet secret.

#### Art and Games in Chocolate

Image is less of a problem for Ramón Roca, who puts his name on every piece of chocolate that leaves his busy Gerona Factory. Roca's luxury chocolates are a favorite with former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. They grace

the tables of many of Spain's best restaurants, bankers give them to one another as Christmas gifts, they are left on the pillows of the country's finest hotels and they travel in first class on some of Iberia's intercontinental flights.

Globe-trotting director Ramón Roca, whose father founded the company in a local pastry shop in 1928, now exports to 17 countries around the world. His success is due to a creative imagination and a flair for showmanship.

Señor Roca got his first taste of the limelight when he went to the Chicago Fancy Food fair for the first time in 1988 to introduce Victoria bonbons—the dark chocolate wafer topped with nuts and raisins, named for his mother. Victorias were awarded the first-prize blue ribbon. But his luck didn't end there. To decorate his stand, he had brought along a hand-painted chocolate copy of a 12th century tapestry that hangs in the Gerona cathedral. It was truly a work of art and curators of the American Crafts Museum of New York liked what they saw. They included it in an exposition of candy art and later the piece went on tour to 12 cities throughout the United States. Four years later Ramón Roca returned to New York with a 500 kg chocolate sculpture of the Statue of Liberty, decorated with American images such as the moon landing, Marilyn Monroe and a bottle of Coca-Cola. Macy's department store featured the sculpture in its front window and resulting publicity landed Sr. Roca's photo on the pages of newspapers and magazines.

More recently he has turned his imagination to edible consumer products, creating a unique line of table games made from luxury chocolate. There are domino sets, checkers, chess games, battleships and, soon to be released, a backgammon set.

Roca's innovative chocolate games were voted the star product of the ISM food fair in Cologne earlier this year. Japanese consumers are wild about the chocolate games. They are currently on sale at Tokyo's Meiji Seika Kaisha emporium and are being snapped up by delicatessens and gift shops around the world.

"Spain does not have a reputation for making chocolate and we can't afford to compete with the big-budget promotions of other companies, so we have had to rely on imagination and offer the market something different", explained Ramón Roca.

#### The Chocolate Tradition

It has been nearly five centuries since Spanish chocolate created such a sensation in other countries. Cortés and Columbus brought cocoa beans to Spain from the New World and Spanish nuns were the first to make it palatable by mixing the ground beans with sugar and water.

Chocolate made its first appearance in Spain as a beverage and a cup of hot chocolate and *churros* (strips of fried dough) remains to this day one of the country's most popular treats. It is served for breakfast or for a mid-afternoon snack and a cup of hot chocolate with *churros* in the wee hours of the morning is still the preferred way to end a night out on the town.

Spanish hot chocolate was served at the wedding of the sister of King Felipe IV, Anne of Austria, to France's Louis XIII in 1611. From the French court chocolate became the passion of royalty throughout Europe and soon was adapted into hundreds of different desserts and candies.

Chocolate in Spain remained primarily a beverage. As recently as the turn-of-the-century, *chocolateros*

**T**HERE ARE  
FEW PLACES  
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would go from to house with a curved granite slab strapped to their back and bags of cocoa beans tucked under their arms. For a few pennies, they would stop and grind the cocoa right at your doorstep, in much the same way as the Aztecs did in pre-Columbian times.

Valor López Lloret was one of these itinerant chocolate men, who traveled door-to-door in the town of Villajoyosa on the Alicante coast. His fledgling enterprise, founded in 1881, is now presided over by third generation great-grandsons, who have built Valor into one of Spain's largest and most technologically-advanced chocolate companies.

Valor's factory was rebuilt in 1990 with US \$13 million of new German equipment, making it one of the most modern in Europe. You can tell it is a chocolate factory, because it smells so good, but otherwise it would be difficult to guess what is going on here. The cocoa beans pass through the roasting, refining, mixing

and "conched" processes in a series of gleaming stainless steel tubes. The chocolate is never exposed until it reaches the packing line and the entire plant is spotless. A computerized command center overlooking the factory bears a striking resemblance to the helm of space ship.

Fortunately for consumers the old-fashioned quality of Valor's products remains unchanged.

"Quality is the only weapon we have and that's fortunate because the market is becoming increasingly sophisticated -it's the premium segment of the chocolate trade that is growing", said Valor's deputy director Pedro López, whose office windows look out over and endless expanse of lemon trees and almond groves.

Valor is Spain's leading producer of hot chocolate mixes, sold both in powder and in solid bar form. But they also produce 40 other high-quality products, among them luxury chocolate bars studded with Alicante al-

monds or filled with toffee cream, truffle or *tiramisú*. They produce gift boxes of gold-foil wrapped chocolate bonbons, which are made with a crunchy hazelnut praline filling; individually wrapped chocolate wafers called Doblones; and tiny four-piece boxes of chocolates for impulsive chocoholics.

Logically, Valor's specialty is chocolate-covered almonds fresh from the nearby groves. They are sold in bags and boxes under the name chocolate pearls or in a luxury gold gift pack under the name Almond Heart. Eye-catching packaging is an important element in Valor's strategy for exports, which began just three years ago. The idea is to turn the box itself into a gift and make buying chocolate a special occasion.

Valor currently exports to specialty shops in Portugal, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. They are set to enter the U.S. market in September through a distribution agree-

**A**S RECENTLY AS THE TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY, CHOCOLATEROS WOULD GO FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE WITH A CURVED GRANITE SLAB STRAPPED TO THEIR BACK AND BAGS OF COCOA BEANS TUCKED UNDER THEIR ARMS.

EXPORTS OF SPANISH FINE CHOCOLATES (Mn. Pts.)

	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990
PORTUGAL	159	38	15	4	2
ANDORRA	46	38	30	18	8
FRANCE	44	19	5	-	17
RUSSIA	28	7	-	-	-
USA	18	-	-	1	3
SAUDI ARABIA	15	27	11	25	-
HONG KONG	14	-	-	-	-
ARGENTINA	13	8	11	-	-
BELGIUM & LUX.	8	3	-	-	-
JAPAN	8	5	7	5	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: ICEX

ment with Liberty Richter and are testing the northern European market through a promotion of Spanish products at Germany's Karsdat department store.

"Exporting chocolates from Spain can be a bit complicated", acknowledged Mr. López, "first of all people don't believe that we can have a chocolate factory in Alicante where it is so hot. Then each market is so different. The Japanese, for example, are very demanding of quality and even more demanding of packaging. But what we find is that after they try our chocolates and start buying them, they become loyal customers".

### Introducing Turrón

Valor scored a packaging hit in Spain last Christmas with a handsome, brass-latched, wooden gift box for their chocolate and almond *turrón*. *Turrón* is Christmas tradition in Spain -just as essential as the *cava* on New Year's Eve- and every chocolate maker produces it.

*Turrón* first became popular during the centuries that Spain was ruled by the Moors. Originally it was an Arab sweet -a sticky and delicious concoction made of almonds and honey. But over the centuries dozens of different varieties of *turrón* have developed. They are all shaped like a bar and can be soft or solid (see Spain Gourmetour n° 34). Most varieties have nuts and one of the most luxurious types is made with rich Spanish chocolate.

The Lacasa company of Zaragoza, which produces one-third of Spain's traditional Christmastide chocolate *turrón*, makes it much the same way as they have been since the company was founded in the late 19th century. They load it with top-quality Marcona almonds -60 percent to be exact.

Lacasa has been successful in selling an elegantly

wrapped triangular shaped chocolate *turrón* in Canada and hopes to get it introduced in other international markets next Christmas.

Like Valor, Lacasa -a major producer and exporter of children's sweets- sees a future in high-quality, sophisticated adult chocolates. In September 1994, they purchased one of Spain's best-loved traditional chocolate makers, the Uña company of Valladolid, in Castile.

Uña already has a solid reputation for luxury boxed chocolates and is famous for a three-layer praline bonbon called *cortados*. Uña's quality teamed with Lacasa's modern marketing techniques are set to make a splash in Spanish supermarkets in September.

Their product range is being narrowed and the packaging is being upgraded to reflect the quality of the chocolates inside. But there are no near-term plans to take Uña abroad as yet. When exports do begin, they will likely be to the mass markets that other Spanish chocolate makers shun.

But this could be a sign of the future. "We're considered the innovators in Spain", said Lacasa marketing director David Burns, "Whenever we bring out a new product or make a move in the market, the others follow right along".

Whatever the future holds for Spanish chocolate makers, it is certain that with their high-quality and imagination they will not remain Europe's best kept secret for long.

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

See list of main exporters on page 12.

## Marqués de Cáceres

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### Sin Crianza

*Marqués de Cáceres White is made from 100% Viura fermented at cold temperatures to preserve the fruit's vibrant character and fresh acidity. Silky smooth, with a lightly floral bouquet, this wine is crisp, dry and distinctive. An ideal wine for a light aperitif that will delight the taste buds and a perfect accompaniment to fish and seafood.*

### Crianza

*Marqués de Cáceres Crianza White has been aged in French Tronçais oak casks just long enough to give it a touch of oak, balanced with elegant fruit and good acidity. Produced from selected cuvées, this wine has complexity and structure for an excellent development in bottle. Delicious as an aperitif, it combines especially well with shellfish, fish and beef prepared in sauce, sautéed vegetables and mild cheese.*



### Antea

*Antea from Marqués de Cáceres is barrel-fermented, produced from Viura grapes with a small percentage of Malvasia. This fine wine has a bouquet of ripe apples and is well-balanced and complex with a perfect combination of fruit and delicate notes of vanilla. It may be served as an aperitif or with all kinds of fish, shellfish and lobster as well as rice and pasta dishes prepared with seafood.*



### Satinela

*Satinela from Marqués de Cáceres is a slightly sweet wine made from late harvested Viura grapes with a small percentage of Malvasia. It has a fresh bouquet of apricot, peach and acacia flowers and is perfectly balanced with good length. A very original wine for drinking at any time, it can be served as a refreshing aperitif or to accompany sweet and sour dishes, curries, foie gras and goat cheese. It also exquisite with light desserts.*



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## BAZTÁN: A WORLD WITHIN A VALLEY

Nestling in the foothills of the Pyrenees, just across the border from France, the Baztán valley is a miniature paradise in the northern part of the region of Navarre. The valley, caressed for most of the year by the soft rain and mists so characteristic of this part of Spain, is a world apart, a land of green fields, ancestral homes and primeval forests, in which a society has forged its life-style and customs out of ancient Basque traditions.

Text : **Frank Smith**

Photos: **Juan Ramón Yuste/ICEX**

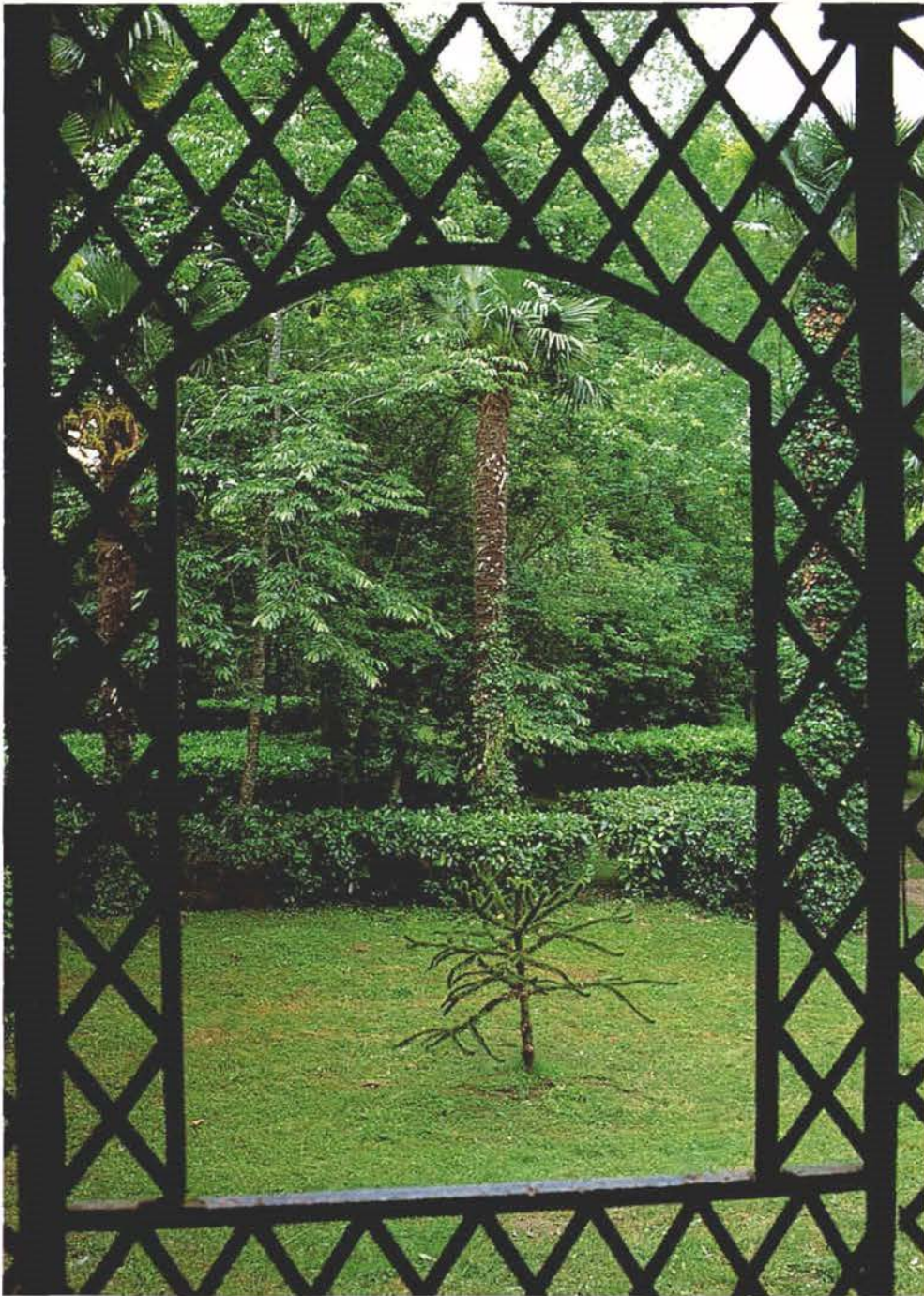


**T**HE PALOMERAS ARE SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED TOWERS TO CATCH BIRDS BY NETTING THEM. A TRADITION THAT GOES BACK CENTURIES, ALLOWED BY SPANISH LAW ONLY IN THIS ZONE.



**T**HE FIFTEEN TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF THE BATZÁN FORM A SINGLE MUNICIPALITY, WITH ITS TOWN HALL IN ELIZONDO, THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF THE VALLEY.







PRIVATELY OWNED UNTIL 1949, THE SEÑORÍO DE BÉRTIZ WAS BEQUEATHED TO THE PEOPLE OF NAVARRE. VISITORS ENJOY THIS PARK, A TRUE BOTANICAL GARDEN WITH MORE THAN 120 SPECIES.



**T**HE BAZTÁN VALLEY IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE PRESERVED, NOT ONLY ITS HISTORICAL HOUSES -LIKE THE PALACE OF THE JAUREGUÍZAR IN ARRÁYOZ- BUT ALSO SOME OF ITS MOST ACIENT FORMS OF MUSIC AND DANCE.



# BAZTÁN: A WORLD WITHIN A VALLEY

The best vantage point for a general view of the Baztán valley can be found just above the town of Irurita, on the narrow country lane that wends its way towards the village of Ciga. There, from a look-out point on the roadside, it is possible to see across most of the valley and a map, hewn out of stone, helps identify some of the towns and villages that make up this rural community of ten thousand people. Less than twenty minutes away from the Basque country to the west, the green lushness of this countryside contrasts sharply with the arid open spaces of southern Navarre and it looks and feels much more like the Basque country. It is no coincidence therefore, that the majority of people in the Baztán valley are bilingual. Both Spanish and Basque are officially recognized languages, although in some villages and hamlets Basque predominates, especially among the older generation, many of whom struggle to express themselves in Spanish. But unlike some areas of the Basque country, the Baztán remains totally unspoiled by the ravages of industry. This is a rural country through and through. Walk down the high street of any of the towns or villages in the valley and you feel you are being transported back in time to a world that has stood still for the past four centuries. The smells are predominantly agricultural even in the center of town. The old houses remain intact and many have been painstakingly restored. By and large the Baztanens have managed to avoid putting up the modern architectural eyesores that characterize so many other country areas of Spain. And yet this deeply conservative and rural society is trying to adjust to the 21st century by opening up

to the outside and inviting tourists to share the delights of their small and beautiful world.

One of the curious features of the Baztán is that as well as being a valley it is also known as a university. But it would be a pointless exercise to try to find the ivory towers of academia here, because, in this case, "university" simply refers to the system of local government in the valley. The fifteen towns and villages of the Baztán form a single municipality, with its town hall in Elizondo, the administrative capital of the valley. Eighty per cent of the land is held communally and farmers have the right to use it, even outside the confines of their own villages. So, the valley is a "university", in the sense that it belongs to all its inhabitants. They also share a single coat of arms, in the form of a chess board, topped by the head of a knight in armor. It can be seen proudly displayed on many of the houses in the valley.

## NOBLE ARCHITECTURE

Architecturally, the Baztán has a richness that betrays its historical importance. It is a frontier land, whose inhabitants built fortified tower houses in stone, to repel invaders from armies that were not always foreign. Navarre had a long history of fighting for its independence and was only fully incorporated into Spain in 1522. Some of those stone towers still stand, notably the palace of the Jaureguizar in Arráyoiz, but the top part of the building is clad in wood. Some historians believe that the owners were obliged to dismantle part of the fortified structure, after Navarre was subdued, to prevent further conflict between the Baztanese and their new Spanish masters. Other historians say the

adaptation was merely part of the new world order the Baztanese were forced to accept and the wooden structures were added to store grain as the valley was transformed from a predominantly military society into an agricultural one.

Whatever the truth, the houses of the Baztán valley are well preserved. The house of the Ursúa family in Arizcun, is perhaps one of the most impressive. Built in the local dark red sandstone, it is a living reminder of the historical richness and importance of this region. Pedro de Ursúa was one of the first Baztanese to make his mark in the New World, as the Spanish Empire was established in Central and South America in the 16th and 17th centuries. He started a long tradition of emigration from the Baztán to the Americas. But Ursúa came to a sticky end. He was murdered by a subordinate, the Basque, Lope de Aguirre, usually better known in Spanish history books by his nickname, "the traitor". The rebellion occurred on the ill-fated expedition to find El Dorado. The Baztanese who followed Ursúa across the Atlantic in the ensuing centuries went for similar reasons, although most fared better. Many returned home with great riches which enabled them to establish themselves as the new landed gentry of the Baztán, building the *casas señoriales*, or manor houses, that are such a distinctive feature of the valley.

So, too, are the *caseríos*, or farmhouses, that are typical of the Basque region generally. In the Baztán, these rural homesteads are large and are built from local wood and from the same red sandstone as the palaces, although many are plastered and painted white. Property in this area has remained

largely undivided and unchanged throughout the centuries because of the inheritance laws, with everything being handed down to the eldest male. That is the main reason so many Baztanese emigrated across the Atlantic. Deprived of the opportunity of making a living at home, they travelled to Mexico and the United States in search of a golden future. As recently as the Sixties, many went to work as shepherds in the desert lands of California and Arizona. But that wave of emigration has now dried up and the Baztanese have been forced to fall back on their own devices to map out their future at home.

For any small agricultural community within the European Union nowadays that is no easy task. The restrictive system of the Common Agricultural Policy, with its quotas and set-asides, has meant that many farmers in the area have had to adopt painful reconversion measures. But even today, the wealth of the valley depends largely on traditional agricultural produce from three main sources: cattle, sheep and pigs. But it is a way of life that is under threat. Young people are still obliged to leave the valley in order to find work in industrial cities outside the Baztán and the population is aging.

"Unless we are very careful", says Lander Santamaría, a writer from Elizondo, "we might find that in ten or twenty years our distinctive way of life will have disappeared. We must ensure that our future is based firmly on our past, otherwise the valley will become unrecognizable".

## TOURISM, A GREEN ALTERNATIVE

Efforts to adapt the traditional way of life of the Baztán to the 21st century are being made in the field of tourism, especially with the promo-

tion of rural houses. In the past couple of years, many old and abandoned farmhouses have been refurbished with the aid of regional government grants, converting them into establishments offering either bed and breakfast or self-catering units, where for the equivalent of 150 dollars a week you can hire a house that sleeps eight people.

It is a way of conserving the traditional houses of the Baztán and, at the same time, of bringing a much needed injection of tourist cash into the local economy. Since 1993, the tourist capacity of the valley has been more than doubled. There are now over a thousand beds available in hotels, bed and breakfast establishments and rural houses. The new breed of hoteliers, some of them active farmers still, are hoping to attract even greater numbers of tourists this year.

As a tourist region, the Baztán has many things in its favor. The jewel in the crown of this place of idyllic beauty is a nature park, known as the Señorío de Bértiz, which covers an area of more than 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) and contains forests of beech, oak, alder, chestnut, cherry, yew and hazel trees. From satellite pictures, the park appears to be a green lung in the center of the region, darker than the areas surrounding it, because the ancient forests have been left largely untouched over the centuries. Little wonder, then, that this place, through which flow many of the small streams that run into the Bidasoa river, is also the natural home of the fauna that has inhabited the Baztán region since time immemorial. The Palace of Bértiz was privately owned until 1949, when the last proprietor died and bequeathed it to the people of Navarre. It has been open

to the public for over a decade now and visitors have been able in that time to enjoy the delights, not only of the nature park itself, but of a botanical garden in which more than 120 species of trees, plants and shrubs from all over the world have been collected over the years. Nowadays, the park has a state-of-the-art information center, in which the visitor is able, with the help of video shows and computer terminals, to establish exactly what there is to see in the area. Children are catered for, too, with organized sports activities such as horse riding, canoeing, hang-gliding and rock climbing, all of which are done under professional supervision within the confines of the park.

#### A GOURMET'S DELIGHT

The Baztán region serves some of the best food available anywhere in Spain. The locals are fond of eating and tend to consume large quantities. Their rotundness speaks volumes for the quality of their cuisine. When I was unable to finish the last crumbs of an excellent dinner one evening in

Elizondo, I mumbled apologetically about the size of the portions served in one of the many excellent local restaurants. "Finish it up", I was encouraged, "for the capacity to eat is a sign of a good person. A healthy appetite is the best way to suppress human nastiness".

The local meat is excellent. Whether it be veal chops, fillet steak or roast lamb, they are as good as the best meat I have tasted anywhere in Spain. And, in true Basque tradition, the fish dishes are also first rate. Anything with *bacalao* (salt cod) is worth having, as is the monkfish or the excellent clams and the delicious crab dish known as *txangurro*. But these are not dishes that are genuinely Baztanese, although the Atlantic seaboard is only a few miles away. Salmon and trout, on the other hand, most definitely are. The Baztán and the neighboring valley of the Bidasoa share the same river. Its name changes from the Baztán to the Bidasoa as it flows out of one valley and into the other. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that

both enjoy equal renow

for the quality of their salmon and trout. Nowadays, salmon is scarcer, although at the beginning of the century King Edward VII was one of the many English visitors who used to come to the Bidasoa to fish for these monarchs of the river.

For my money, it is the vegetables that make the Baztán and surrounding areas a gastronomic must. Again, some vegetables are not genuinely Baztanese. The asparagus, artichokes or red peppers are grown almost everywhere in Navarre, but the best specimens come from the region south of the Baztán. But the mushrooms and red beans, or *alubias rojas*, that grow in the Baztán valley are unequalled anywhere. The beans are deceptively easy to prepare. According to Teresa Santxotena, the owner and chef of the restaurant in Elizondo that bears her surname, the secret lies in the beans themselves. When cooked slowly (a minimum of two hours on a very low flame is recommended) they release their own juices that are transformed into a wonderfully rich sauce. Nothing except water (double the amount of the beans) and a few cloves of garlic are needed to prepare them. Salt is added only at the end, when the beans are tender.

Perhaps the most typically Baztanese dish is the one known as *Txuri-ta-Beltz* (literally "black and white"), a combination of black and white pudding made from those parts of the lamb that most of us would consider throwing away but which turn out to be delicious.

#### PIGEON FANCIERS

Another favorite dish of the region is wood pigeon, served in the Autumn months. But its novelty lies not so much in the way it is



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# BAZTÁN: A WORLD WITHIN A VALLEY

cooked, but in the way the birds are caught. To the north of the Bidasoa valley lies the small town of Echalar, the only place in the whole of Spain that is allowed by law to catch birds by netting them. It is a tradition that goes back centuries. Echalar lies on the migratory route of wood pigeons as they make their way from northern Europe to the warmer South for the winter. In the hills high above the town, on what used to be the border between France and Spain, there is a mountain pass through which the birds fly, with clockwork regularity, every October. Each year, the townsfolk of Echalar prepare four huge nets, about twenty meters high and hang them between a clump of tall trees in a narrow valley in the mountains. The secret is to make the birds fly low enough to ensnare them into the nets. To that end, the people of Echalar have devised their own secret weapon. As the birds approach the appointed spot, several men await their arrival, atop specially constructed towers, about thirty meters (100 feet) tall, from which they launch wooden bats at the flock of birds. The bats, a kind of medieval frisbee, look exactly like modern table tennis bats, painted white. When the flock of pigeons spots the objects flying towards them, they believe they are under attack from birds of prey and immediately alter their flight path, dipping low towards the clump of trees for safety, ending up entangled in the nets.

## ANCIENT SPORTS

For those less inclined to endure the rigors of the dinner table, preferring instead a more active form of entertainment, the Baztán valley can offer several sporting activities unique to this part

of Spain. Just about every hamlet in the area has its own fronton where the traditional Basque game of *pelota*, in its many variants, is played. The most curious of all is the most ancient. A game called *laxoa*, in Basque, *guante* or glove in Spanish. It is played in the village square and pits two teams of four players against each other. Each player wears a glove made of cowhide, with which he hits the leather ball, as hard as a cricket ball, from one side of the square to the other. The scoring is devilishly complex, but basically, and herein lies its interest, it is exactly the same system of scoring as used in the game of tennis: 15-love, 15-all, 15-30 and so on. As this game has been played for over a thousand years, it is not difficult to decide who copied whom. But a word of warning. If you ever come across a game of *laxoa* being played in a village square and you decide to stay and watch, do keep your eye on the ball. It is exceedingly hard and is hit with frightening speed and could cause a nasty accident to any unwary member of the crowd.

## MUSIC, DANCE AND MYTHS

The Baztán valley is fortunate to have preserved some of its most ancient forms of music and dance and visitors can still enjoy performances of the famous *mutil-dantzak* (literally boy-dance) in village squares throughout the summer fiesta season, as well as at weddings and during religious festivals. This type of dance is executed exclusively by men, ideally bachelors, accompanied by music played on traditional instruments such as the *txistu* (a type of three-holed vertical flute), *tamboril* (small drum similar in sound to a kettle drum) and *tambor* (bass drum).

The dances are performed in a circle with simple steps but multiple combinations - there are in fact 19 variations of the *mutil-dantzak* and the accompanying tunes have been described as "austere and virile". Women are banned from taking part in these dances, their role being to watch admiringly. As well as the *mutil-dantzak*, there are a further 12 set dances known as *irri-dantzak* (play dances), whose choreography originates in rural work, depicting different tasks in a humorous and comic atmosphere. The preservation of these traditions is thanks largely to the monk and musicologist, Father Donostia, from the former Capuchin school in Lecaroz, who devoted most of his life to collecting and compiling folkloric material for posterity. More latterly, credit should also be given to a father and son duo of *txistu* players from the village of Arizcun, Xabier and Patxi Larralde, who have recently produced a record album and booklet on Baztán dances and music and are doing much to ensure that the tradition is kept alive among the young. These days, virtually all young men can join in at least some of the *mutil-dantzak* performed during fiestas. There are also a few mixed dances, where women are allowed to join in, such as the Basque *fandango*, *soka-dantzak* and *gaita*. Some intrepid girls have even tried to break with tradition by attempting to join the ranks of *mutil-dantzak*, to the consternation of the older generation. Other interesting ancient folkloric traditions can be seen in action at various times of the year, connected with particular fiestas or religious festivals and perhaps the most spectacular of these are the activities of villagers from Zubietta and

Ituren during Carnival, at the end of January. The celebrations last four days and are focused on the visits made by the *Zanpantzar* -men wearing strange costumes consisting of a large pointed hat and sheepskin tunic or apron around which two enormous and weighty cowbells are strapped- from one village to the other. The sound of the cowbells is primitive and somewhat eerie, evoking some ancient fertility rite. No one is very sure of the origin of the *Zanpantzar* -there may be some connection with the French medieval carnival figure called *Saint Pansart*- but this does not bother any of the participants, who enter into the magic and excitement, the eating and drinking of the four days with great gusto. To the north of the Baztán, outside the valley proper, as the Baztanese like to emphasize, there is a complex of caves stretching from Zugarramurdi to Urdax and across the border to Sara in France. Legend has it that these caves were inhabited by witches in past centuries. Records dating back to 1610 show that the Spanish Inquisition investigated 300 people on charges of witchcraft, finding thirty-one guilty and condemning them to life imprisonment or execution. Six were actually burnt at the stake. Nowadays, popular interpretation of these events is that the "witches" were probably nothing more sinister than Basque-speaking herbalists, but the stories of satanic masses and other strange rituals performed in the caves keep the visitors flocking.

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Castillo de Monjardín  
Chardonnay  
NAVARRA

MARQUÉS DE ALELLA  
ALLIER

VINA NORTE  
TENERIFE

CHARDONNAY  
MARQUÉS DE  
MONISTROI

Blanc de Duvon  
CHARDONNAY

SCIA DEI  
Agramoni  
Cuvée 1994

RIOJA  
1994  
Muga  
EXCMUNICADO EN BARRICA DE ROBLE

Príncipe de Viana  
CHARDONNAY

CHARDONNAY

RAIMAT  
Chardonnay

CHARDONNAY  
1993  
ANOS FERMENTADO  
VINAS DEL VERO

FRANSELA

Dalacio de Borrios

CONDE DE VALDEMAR  
VALLE DE NAVARRA  
VALLE DE NAVARRA

# WOODWORKS

BARREL  
FERMENTED  
WHITE WINES

BARREL FERMENTED WHITES ARE CURRENTLY ALL THE RAGE IN SPAIN. THOUGH THIS METHOD OF VINIFICATION HAS BEEN IN USE THERE FOR OVER 20 YEARS, IT IS ONLY IN THE LAST TWO OR THREE THAT IT HAS MADE ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT. TODAY, NEARLY ALL THE WINEGROWING AREAS OF NORTHERN SPAIN PRODUCE BARREL FERMENTED WHITES, AND THE TREND HAS EVEN SPREAD AS FAR AS THE CANARY ISLANDS.

The effects of barrel fermenting are obvious up at the aspirational end of the white wine market. Barrel fermentation spread in the wake of the Chardonnay invasion which started in the early 70s. It is a traditional method of vinifying Chardonnay, and as the grape variety spread throughout the world, so did this particular style. Today, the finest "New World" whites (from California, Australia...) are Chardonnays, as indeed are many top whites from Europe's pedigree winegrowing areas. Used more and more for Chardonnays, the method is now being applied to other varieties, an experimental area in which Spain is among the pioneers. In La Rioja, the best-known of Spain's northern winegrowing areas, vinification is traditionally carried out in large oak vats, a method to which many of this proud region's traditionalists still adhere. While the process is similar to barrel fermentation, it is rather too far removed to be considered a direct antecedent. There is another common practice in La Rioja, however, that is a closer

relation. This consists in fermenting white wine in new barrels which are later to be used for maturing reds. The aim is to "soothe" the aging vessels so that the aggressive quality imparted by completely new wood is tamed. Jesús Marrodán, oenologist for many years at Bodegas Marqués de Murrieta (one of La Rioja's oldest and most prestigious wineries) habitually barrel fermented whites for this exclusive purpose. The resulting wine was never put on the market; once fermentation was complete, it was racked off immediately and combined with conventionally vinified whites destined for barrel ageing. The modern method of barrel fermenting requires that the vessels be new and small (225 liter Bordeaux-type). Fermentation is followed by a period of aging on the fresh lees produced during the fermentation process. Variations such as using different types of oak, stirring up the lees (*batonnage*), and so on, are just the fine-tuning; barrel fermentation imparts a very specific character to white wines.

Text: **Andrés Proensa**

Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

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

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

THE FIRST BOTTLES OF SPANISH BARREL FERMENTED WHITE WINE WERE PRODUCED BY JEAN LEÓN'S PENEDÉS BODEGA IN OCTOBER 1972

### **Pace-Setting Penedés**

Though it has only recently become so widespread, the first recorded appearance of barrel fermentation in Spain occurred some 25 years ago up in the north-east, in the Catalan Denomination of Origin (D.O.) of Penedés. The original pioneer was Jean León, a Spaniard who had emigrated to the US, and whose hugely successful La Scala restaurant in Los Angeles was the haunt of Hollywood stars. (See *Spain Gourmetour* No. 21).

León decided to start producing his own wine back in Spain as a sideline. Some time in the mid-1960s, he acquired land in the heart of the Penedés and set about creating the sort of wines he liked. California had obviously had its influence since, after various experiments, he settled on a Cabernet Sauvignon red and a barrel fermented Chardonnay white. These are the only two types he currently produces. Bodegas Jean León produced the first bottles of Spanish barrel fermented white in October 1972, using 1971 vintage grapes.

Jean León Chardonnay did not become available in Spain until 10 years later. Until that time, the bodega's entire output, reds included, was exported to the US. When it eventually did arrive on the Spanish market in the early Eighties it was still regarded as a novelty, rated as a "speciality wine" in the trade magazines. It retained this status until the appearance of Miguel Torres' Milmanda white, also a product of D.O. Penedés, in

1986 and also a barrel fermented Chardonnay varietal. Miguel Torres is perhaps the most internationally known of Spain's winemakers, both for the scope of the market he has created for Penedés wines and for his expansion into the leading New World wine areas: he has wineries in California and Chile.

D.O. Penedés is known for its readiness to absorb new viticultural and vinicultural influences in the areas of both grape varieties and in ongoing updating of production methods. Geographically, the area covered by the D.O. coincides with the biggest *cava* producing area. *Cava*, Spain's famous sparkling wine, was an important pace-setter in the process of modernizing vineyards and wineries and in the introduction of new grape varieties.

### **The Individuality Factor**

The bodegas of the Penedés are generally equipped to state-of-the-art standards and the quality of the wines they produce is hard to beat. Having achieved this particular goal with unusual single-mindedness, the region has since focused on the individuality factor.

A significant element in this striving for 'different' wines was the introduction in the early Nineties of many grape varieties with a view to combining them with the area's three traditional staples: Macabeo, Xarel.lo and Parellada. As was the case throughout the wine world, Chardonnay became one of the favorites

Small wonder, then, that the next step should be towards varietal Chardonnays and barrel fermentation, following the example established by Jean León and continued by Miguel Torres. From the early 90s on, barrel fermented Chardonnays began appearing under new labels.

Notable among them were Augustus, from Bodegas Puig & Roca (another winery that plumped for Chardonnay whites and Cabernet reds) and others from cava wineries such as Cavas Hill and Marqués de Monistrol. The method was also applied to other varieties: the delicate Parellada variety, for example, is barrel fermented by Cellers Grimau Gol for their Caliú white, and a meld of varieties -Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Chenin and Sauvignon Blanc- for Magnificat, from Bach.

This experimentation with different varieties produced another gem: Miguel Torres' Fransola, one of the best whites produced in Spain today, is the result of a refinement of the same method: Sauvignon Blanc and Parellada are vinified separately and half the wine is barrel fermented.

Barrel fermenting of whites spread rapidly from D.O. Penedés to other parts of Catalonia, such as D.O. Alella, a little area just a few kilometers north of Barcelona. This *denominación* has two outstanding brands -Marqués de Alella Allier and Roura, both Chardonnays. D.O. Costers de Segre's Raimat is another example. Raimat's spectacular winery and vineyard are

distinctly Californian in tone, and barrel fermented Chardonnay is among its stock-in-trade.

There is something Californian, too, about D.O. Somontano (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 35). This area, which lies further inland and extends parallel to the line of the Pyrenees, is currently one of the most modish in Spain, largely due to its 'new wines' approach. Among its claims to fame are two barrel fermented Chardonnays -Viñas del Vero, made by Covisa, and Enate, made by Viñedos y Crianzas del Alto Aragón. This latter bodega, which opened in 1993, has made a huge impact on the Spanish wine scene.

### **Whites from Navarra**

Barrel fermenting has also caught on in D.O. Navarra. This area, which borders on La Rioja, lies further west than Somontano, on the banks of the River Ebro. Navarra is traditionally the source of Spain's top rosés, though it has been diversifying successfully over the last ten years, concentrating particularly on reds.

Navarra's whites had been something of an also-ran until the arrival of the Chardonnay phenomenon in the early 90s. The barrel fermentation method was adopted almost immediately, with the result that the local whites are acquiring status, especially since the appearance of Julián Chivite's 125th Anniversary Collection in 1994.

Besides Chivite's, other barrel fermented Chardonnays from Navarra are also enter-

IN SOME BODEGAS IN LA RIOJA, IT WAS CUSTOMARY TO FERMENT WHITE WINE IN BARRELS FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF TEMPERING THE NEW WOOD

ing the upper echelons, among them Palacio de Muruzábal (pioneer of the style in this region), Príncipe de Viana, and newcomer Castillo de Monjardín.

Though Navarra marks the limit of Chardonnay's principal sphere of influence in Spain, the influence of the barrel fermentation method for whites is far more widespread. D.O.C. Rioja, Spain's most famous winegrowing area, has a reputation for resistance to novelty, not so much in vinification methods as in the introduction of new grape varieties. Yet even there, barrel fermentation of whites has caught on. Though D.O.C. Rioja is most famous for its reds, it also has a long tradition of matured whites. This area is a bastion of traditional values, and continued barrel-aging its whites relatively unperurbed in the face of the Young Whites Wave. It showed a similar determination to defend its wines' regional traits against the invasion of fashionable new grape varieties. In the light of all this, the fact that the D.O.C. Rioja has adopted the barrel fermentation method for whites seems a particularly significant innovation. Unsurprisingly, local varieties, particularly Viura, are used.

Bodegas Martínez Bujanda blazed the trail in 1990 with its Conde de Valdemar '89, a wine acclaimed for its structure and character. The next year brought Bodegas Bretón's Loriñón '90, a lighter, fresher, and altogether fruitier wine.

There has been something of

a consolidation of the tendency during 1994 and 1995, though the number of wineries that are currently experimenting with this style of vinification suggests that the boom is yet to come. In 1994, the historic Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España (CVNE) produced a barrel fermented companion for its classic matured white Monopole. Also called Monopole, the new wine is presented in a different bottle -Burgundy, not Rhine- and with a new label.

This year, two other heavy-weight Rioja wineries have launched their own barrel fermented whites: Bodegas Muga, of Haro (a pedigree bodega which uses only oak and glass in all phases of vinification and aging), and Bodegas Campo Viejo which launched its barrel fermented Viña Alcorta in Spring 1995.

D.O. Rueda lies in the heart of Castile, on the banks of the River Duero in Spain's vast central plateau. It, too, produces various good barrel fermented whites made from the local native variety, Verdejo. Keep an eye out for Marqués de Griñón's Rodas, a new brand-name though as Marqués de Griñón Selección Especial this wine was a relative early-comer having made its first appearance in 1990. Note, too, Palacio de Bornos from Bodegas de Crianza Castilla la Vieja. In 1994, the same winery also released a small quantity of barrel fermented Chardonnay as a non-D.O. wine, since Chardonnay is not one of D.O. Rueda's authorized varieties.

### Barrel Albariño

The influence of barrel fermented whites has reached right up into Galicia, in far north-western Spain. D.O. Rías Baixas lies along the Atlantic coast. This is white wine country whose prestige rests on its elegant native grape, Albario, source of highly aromatic and sophisticated wines, drunk young. Even so, some bodegas have been experimenting with aging and others with barrel fermenting, the latter giving more the successful results of the two. So far, there are two barrel fermented Rías Baixas whites: Organistrum, an Albariño varietal from Bodegas de Vilariño-Cambados, and Terras Gauda Etiqueta Negra, from Adegas das Eiras, in which Albariño is combined with Caño Blanco and Loureira. Both have been on the market only for the last two years.

The most recent addition-but-one to the barrel fermented list comes from the southernmost part of Spain, the Canary Islands, opposite the west coast of Africa. Viña Norte is a white wine produced by Bodegas Insulares Tenerife, the leading winery in the D.O. Tacoronte Acentejo. This is an interesting area of the most viticulturally productive of the Canary Islands, whose most characteristic wines are young reds. At the time of going to press, the very latest barrel fermented white to reach the market-place is Blanc Prior from the Scala Dei winery in D.O. Priorato (Catalonia).

### Good with Food

Setting aside specific differences attributable to grape variety (Chardonnays and Albariños tend to be fuller-bodied), different wood treatments, and length of time on the lees, barrel fermented whites present a fairly uniform profile. They are well-structured wines, structurally comparable to reds, with lots of alcohol (nearly always about 13% by volume, though generally very well balanced) and punchy, both in the mouth and nose. This makes them good candidates to consider when looking for a wine to partner challenges to the palate such as smoked foods, duck or goose liver, caviare, strongly flavored seafood (Spanish favorites such as goose barnacles, sea urchins, or *changuro* made from the body-meat of the spider-crab) and the salty fishy flavors of Mediterranean specialties like *mojama* (cured tuna meat) and roe. They go well, too, with more the everyday oily fish (the tuna family, swordfish and so on), and classic Spanish recipes such as *Merluza a la vasca* (hake in a parsley and garlic flavored "green sauce"), *Besugo a la espalda* (grilled sea bream dressed with fried garlic, oil and vinegar). Meat eaters should consider them with carpaccio or cold rare roast beef.

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**Editor's note:** We would like to thank Tonelería Magreñán of Alfaró (La Rioja), for lending the wood for the still life.



"IN ALL WELL-RUN HOUSES..."

... observed Alexander Dumas during his journey around Spain in 1846-7, "chorizos are made for as many days as there are in the year, that is to say, 365 "chorizos and another 50 for the days when there are guests." Perhaps Dumas was exaggerating; not all families could have afforded a "chorizo every day for the stewpot. But today rusty-red chorizos aromatic with red pepper are still to be found in most Spanish larders. Full of flavor and needing no preparation, they are a perfect traditional fast-food for hurried modern times.

SPICED, MARINATED AND CURED:

THE  
**F F**  
FULL FLAVOR  
OF SPANISH CHORIZO

Text: **Vicky Hayward**  
Stillife: **Menchu Artime**  
Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

Paternina



Greatness from Rioja.



*Chorizos* as we know them, with their characteristic reddish tinge, seem to have been a 16th century invention from the westerly region of Extremadura, where the first seeds for red peppers from the New World had been planted by Jeronimo monks at Guadalupe. By 1611, a recipe had been published in royal cook Francisco Martínez Montañón's book *Arte de cocina*.

"You will take swine meat that shall be more lean than fat, and put it in a marinade of only wine, and a little vinegar, and the meat should be cut in slices; the marinade needs to be scant, no more than to cover; season it with spices, and salt, and the meat shall be in it for twenty four hours; and then stuff the chorizos, the intestines are to be a little fat, and pass them through boiling water. These keep all the year ...."

Whether his spices included the pulp from dried red peppers is not clear. But many of the hallmarks of today's *chorizos* are there: the coarsely-cut meatiness, the marination of the meat with seasonings and vinegar to help start fermentation, the final curing throughout the following year. By the 19th century, when the pepper-growing regions began to mill finely powdered red pepper, or *pimentón*, the recipe was fixed.

### Farmhouse Chorizo-Making

In the intervening centuries, *chorizo* recipes have been passed down by word of mouth as part of the traditions of the *matanza*, or farmhouse pig-killing, which once provided country families' winter meat supply.

Today, home *matanzas* still flourish but more as a fiesta than a necessity. The *chorizo*-making, along with ham-salting and making of other types of sausage, is spread over several days and the work is shared among family and neighbors. The day before the pig is killed, the

seasonings will be prepared: the garlic, salt and herbs crushed and mixed with the sweet or hot paprika. Once the pig is butchered come the long tasks of chopping the meat and fat -today, a mincing machine is used- and washing the intestines for sausage skins. The seasoned chopped meat, or *picadillo*, is then left overnight -or sometimes for two days- for the flavors to develop and for the meat's natural lactic fermentation to begin. Sometimes a little wine is added to help it on its way. Finally, before the meat is piled into a sausage-making machine to fill the skins, a trial quantity is fried and tasted to check the seasoning. Tied by string into lengths and pricked to let out any air bubbles, the *chorizos* are then hung to cure, or air-dry, sometimes starting off with an initial smoking in the chimney. Some are eaten fresh, that is raw cooking sausages, but most are fully cured and eaten sparingly over the Winter and Spring months. As haphazard as farmhouse *chorizo*-making can appear, it is a highly skilled process. The proportions of meat to fat, the meat's cut and seasoning, the times and temperatures for curing may be judged by eye, but behind that lies the practise of many generations.

### Regional Flavors

And as with so much Spanish produce, it is also a highly inventive process. Within the regional range -but setting aside family secrets- there are some fifty or so recognized *chorizo* types from around the country. If you are travelling in Spain, it is worth looking out for these since they include some of Europe's most varied and original *charcuterie*. From regions with game, such as Asturias or Huelva in Andalusia, come venison and wild-boar *chorizos*. These originally developed as a way of making sure none of the high-energy

pork fat would go to waste after the lean meat was finished up, but today they are gourmet products. Other popular regional specialities based on the same idea are the *patatero rojo* from Extremadura, which includes cooked potato, the Galician *ceboleiro*, with onion and smoked for a month before curing, and the very finely cut Pamplona *chorizo*, which contains some beef.

Other *chorizos* are marked out by their seasonings. While *pimentón*, finely ground red pepper or paprika, is an infallible defining mark, it may be sweet or spicy-hot and smoked or sun-dried. Apart from acting as a natural flavoring and coloring, its essential oils also help conserve the meat. The most Spanish of all spices, brought back from the New World by Columbus in seed form, the pepper is produced either in the valley of La Vera in Extremadura, where it is smoke-dried before milling, or in southeastern Murcia, where it is traditionally sun-dried. Often, the two types are mixed to give a balanced flavor.

But alongside the *pimentón* you will find a blend of other flavors: perhaps garlic, oregano, the pulp from dried peppers, aniseed or coriander seed. Andalusian food writer Pablo Amate divides regional *chorizos* by these flavors into four main geographical families: smoked from northern Atlantic regions; spiced from the Mediterranean; those with most *pimentón* from central Castile; and Andalusian or Extremeño versions pungent with garlic and herbs.

Then, the *chorizo* may vary in size, depending on the skins used as casing. Generally speaking, the coarseness of the meat cut is also in proportion to the skin-size. A *morcón*, for example, bulges with curves and chunks of meat inside the pig's large intestine while Salamanca *chorizo*, is made in large straight skins the size of a church candle. In

some areas, there is also a tradition of potting the cured *chorizos* in pork fat or olive oil, or a mixture of the two, to conserve them at their best for the rest of the year.

Last but by no means least comes *chorizo ibérico*, made with the deliciously nutty sweet meat of native black Iberian pigs. The high level of fat finely filtered through the flesh gives charcuterie made from it exceptionally rich flavors and a satisfying unctuous texture. A luxury product unique to Spain, it is made in limited quantities but is to be found around the country in top-quality restaurants and charcutiers.

### The Chorizo Industry: a Long Tradition

While *chorizo*-making remained a farmhouse tradition in many regions, it quickly grew into a small-scale craft industry in areas close to the source of the raw materials. By the 17th century, the small towns of Candelario in Salamanca province and Montánchez in Extremadura were famed for their *chorizos*, which were sold in big cities around the country by travelling street-hawkers called *choriceros*. A portrait of one of them, Tío Rico, which was done by Goya's son-in-law, Ramón Bayeu, as a tapestry cartoon, hangs in the Prado museum. By the 1840s, some 8,000 native black Iberian pigs a year were killed in Candelario every winter and visits were made to the makers' houses to check the *chorizos* were made of pure pork.

But it was not until the middle of this century that small family butchers began to grow into today's specialized cooked and cured meat companies. Today, a total of over some thousand small and large companies produce 64,000 tons of *chorizos* -around 40% of Spanish industrial charcuterie production- every year to satisfy the national market. *Chorizos* are not only added to regional stews or eaten in

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sandwiches as a tea-time snack, but are also one of the most popular *tapas*. Remarkably, despite the change in scale and investment, the final product has remained close to the original article. On any Spanish charcuterie counter, you will find side by side half a dozen or more types of *chorizo* -say, from Salamanca, Cantimpalos, Pamplona and the Rioja- made by specialist manufacturers in their respective regional styles.

In part this authenticity reflects the high quality expected by Spanish buyers, the continuing competition from farmhouse *chorizos* and the strict specifications of government food regulations. But independently, often because their roots are in family butchers, many of today's industrial producers have kept a sense of tradition as the basis of quality. They have harnessed a mechanization and scientific monitoring of the last decades in order to improve rather than alter their products.

### Quality in an Age of Change

So today, while the quality of Spanish industrial *chorizo* still rests on traditional prime ingredients, nothing is left to the eye.

Now the sausage meat ingredients -mixed lean and fat pork, top-quality *pimentón*, fresh garlic, salt and dried herbs- all undergo laboratory analysis of samples for bacteria and quality control. Some leading companies have extended this by adding pig-rearing and feed-manufacturing to their production chain. The only ingredients new to industrial *chorizo* are preservatives. During the 1980s additives were drastically reduced as legislation was steadily tightened, but basic minimum preservatives such as nitrifying salts are essential to control the bacteria provoked by the seasonings, especially the *pimentón*.

A similar combination of old and new can also be found

in the making process. Essentially, the method is the same as Montañó's or a farmhouse one: the meat is chopped, mixed with seasonings and left to marinate for a day before being stuffed into skins.

But today huge steel mincers and mixing vats on wheels have replaced the old iron, wooden and pottery utensils; seasonings are measured down to the last milligram; the rhythm of the meat's lactic fermentation is regulated by a yeast-like additive to prevent excess acidity, gas or free ferment; and the sausage-skins are vacuum-stuffed to prevent air entering before being machine-tied and stapled. The skins themselves, which have replaced the intestines, are made from natural products, usually vegetable cellulose and animal collagen.

The single biggest change comes at the curing stage, with vast electrically air-cooled curing chambers replacing haphazard natural air-drying. They revolutionized *chorizo*-making when they were first introduced from the 1950s onwards because they allowed year-round production and curing during the hot summer months. Today, they are computer-controlled and also allow fine tuning of the temperature and humidity; during the month to six weeks curing the moisture level is increased gradually so that the *chorizos'* natural water content is drawn very slowly to the surface, to prevent the meat from drying out. But at the same time these darkened chambers keep their own microflora, just like a farmhouse cellar, which is vital to the finished *chorizos'* flavors.

When the *chorizos* are ready, they are taken down and packed into sealed bags filled with an inert gas which prevents further curing and drying for up to three months. Increasingly, this packaging is geared towards sale in self-service outlets, using transparent bags

around country-style loops (*sartas*), slicing sticks (*velas*), strings of smaller *chorizos* (*ristras*), or cut slices (*lonchas*) labelled with one of the four Spanish quality gradings which lay down maximum levels of damp, fat, meat protein and carbohydrates. Only the top two qualities, Extra (with minimum 30% meat protein) and Primera (with minimum 26% meat protein), are exported.

### Export: The French Phenomenon

Outside Spain, the French are Europe's biggest *chorizo* lovers. They picked up the taste in Algeria where a few of the many Spaniards who emigrated at the beginning of the century built factories and adapted their recipes to make spicy-hot, finely cut *chorizos* suiting local taste. Such is the popularity of this *chorizo* in France today that some 7-9,000 tons -most of it still spicy and finely cut- are manufactured there every year for eating fully cured, usually sliced up as a *tapa* or *apéritif*.

However, since Spanish manufacturers began exporting in 1989-90 the French have begun to take to the genuine Iberian *chorizo* as well. In 1993, some 1,500 tons of Spanish *chorizo* -60% of it spicy- were exported to France and it is thought that over the next ten years that quantity will double. Although Spanish producers have adapted their product to French tastes, there are important differences. All Extra and Primera Spanish *chorizo* is made from pure pork, with an average of 20-30% fat content to allow the traditionally coarse, meaty cut. *Chorizo* made in France, with a fine cut, allows a higher fat content, averaging an estimated 45% fat according to the CIC (Centre d'Information de Charcuteries). It also allows the frequent use of '*mélange*', that is, sausage meat mixed with beef or other meats mixed with the other pork.

Elsewhere, the potential of export markets is only now being explored. Large-scale manufacturers, such as Fuertes -selling as El Pozo-, Campofrío, Casademont, Oscar Mayer and Hesperia de Alimentación are now establishing subsidiaries abroad in major markets such as Portugal and France, while working through distributors elsewhere. Four of these companies have joined forces for a unified three-year promotional campaign in France, starting in 1995, with the possibility of its extension to other markets later (see logo page 71). Another 3,000 tons go to other EC countries -principally Portugal, Belgium, Germany and Britain- while Russia and eastern Europe are other emerging markets.

At the same time that exports are growing, they are also diversifying. In most European countries, it's now possible to find the softer vacuum-packed grilling and semi-cured cooking *chorizo* in supermarkets as well as top-quality *ibérico*, large lean Salamanca. Spanish manufacturers are also making smoked Portuguese-style *chorizo* specially for the export market while farmhouse producers in the Rioja are producing *chorizos* jarred in oil or fat. In this respect, there is no problem with developing the range of products. The only problem would be to know where to begin.

**Vicky Hayward** is a freelance features journalist, travel writer and editor. She has written two guidebooks (*About the Costa Blanca and Madrid, where she lives*) and published numerous articles in the Spanish and British press.

**See list of main exporters on page 11.**

# Chorizo in the Kitchen

As soon as *chorizo* is opened to the air it begins to dry out, so it is best to buy and slice it (or open packaged *chorizo*) only

when you need it. Wrapping a piece of tin-foil or cling-film around the cut end helps it not to dry out, as does keeping it cool, but if

you have it in the larder for more than a few days you may still need to shave off and throw away the first slice.

## Tapas and Other Quick Ideas

While fully cured *chorizo* is excellent eaten just as it is -the *ibérico* should be sliced as thinly as possible- with a glass of red or fruity white wine, *fino* or *manzanilla*, there are plenty of ways of cooking it. Apart from wonderful regional Spanish *cocidos* or stews from every region, there are stuffed breads such as *bornazo* from Salamanca, flat *empanadas* from Asturias and *chorizo* baked in the embers of a fire from green northern Spain. Here are another dozen easy, quick ideas for *tapas* and more substantial dishes.

### FRIED CHORIZO:

Quickly fried *chorizo* slices, browned in a little olive oil, make an excellent *tapa* on their own or served with crusty bread. Fried whole *chorizos* also make a great snack, eaten in a roll like a hot-dog or with fried eggs.

### CHORIZO IN CIDER:

For this, you should ideally use fresh or semi-cured *chorizos*. Put them in an flameproof dish or pan, half-cover with dry (or hard) cider and simmer for half an hour. The idea is not to make a sauce, but to cook the fat into the cider, which is thrown out. Serve sliced.

### CHORIZO AND MUSHROOM OMELETTES:

Sauteéd *chorizo* pieces, mushrooms with a dash of *fino* (dry sherry) and chopped parsley added at the end make a delicious filling for a rolled French omelette.

### SPANISH OMELETTE WITH CHORIZO:

For Spanish omelettes, you can use 500 gr potatoes and 1 *chorizo* for a fat 6-egg omelette. Serve hot or cold, sliced for a meal or cut into squares for *tapas*.

### BAKED CHORIZO:

Cooking *chorizo* is excellent cut into chunks and sauteéd to seal in olive oil, then baked in the oven for 5-10 minutes.

### GRILLED CHORIZO:

Fresh grilling *chorizo* is excellent done over a wood fire or wrapped in thick, absorbent brown paper moistened with wine and cooked in the embers of the fire.

### MACARONI WITH CHORIZO:

Sauté *chorizo* chunks in a little olive oil and toss with cooked and drained macaroni. The pasta absorbs the *chorizo* and oil flavors well.

### BAKED EGGS AND CHORIZO:

A few *chorizo* slices can be added to eggs broken into ramekins or pottery dishes for baking in the oven for 20 minutes.

### GREEN LEAF SALAD WITH CHORIZO:

Mix washed green leaves - young spinach, lettuce, rocket- toss them with olive oil and a few drops of sherry vinegar and finish off the salad with small pieces of fried, well drained *chorizo*.

### CHICKEN BRAISED WITH CHORIZO:

Small chunks of *chorizo* are good in a braised chicken casserole together with paprika, garlic and onion. Other flavorings can be more *pimentón* and white wine as well as the basic white *sofrito* of garlic and onion in olive oil.

### RICE WITH CHORIZO:

Sliced *chorizo*, spicy or plain, is excellent in rices - say, with chickpeas, tomato and garlic, or with fresh pork and sliced, fried and peeled red pepper strips.

### LENTILS WITH CHORIZO:

After soaking small brown Spanish lentils, stew them slowly (or more quickly in a pressure cooker) with a few onion chunks, garlic cloves, a bay leaf, a little olive oil and a chunk of fatback ham. Just before serving, fry sliced *chorizo* and add it to the lentils with a pinch of *pimentón* and pepper.



This logo distinguishes "True Spanish *Chorizo*" from the imitations that are on the market. It guarantees the high quality of the product as well as the authenticity of its Spanish origin. Four of the biggest companies in the field: Campofrío, Fuertes (El Pozo), Casademont and Hesperia de Alimentación, are going to use it on their sausages as a distinctive trademark and will back it up with an advertising campaign in the French market over the next three years.

## Bocuse's Favorite Potatoes

This country dish of potatoes with *chorizo* so impressed Paul Bocuse when it was prepared for him at the centenary celebrations of one of the Cune wine bodegas in the Rioja that he asked why they had bothered to invite him there to cook for them. In fact, although the ingredients are so simple, it needs to be carefully and slowly made. Here is a recipe from Lorenzo Cañas, chef-proprietor of Logroño's excellent restaurant La Merced, who was cooking alongside Bocuse on his visit and also made this for King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofía on a recent visit to the Rioja.

### Riojan Potatoes

SERVES 4:

1 kilo of potatoes (of a boiling, not frying variety)  
200gr semi-cured *chorizo*  
3 cloves of garlic  
1/2 onion  
Olive oil for sautéing  
1 bay leaf, optional  
1 dried red pepper (not spicy)  
Generous pinch of sweet *pimentón*  
Salt to taste  
Peel the potatoes, wash them well and cut into smallish chunks -like very large garlic cloves- snapping back at the end of the cut to break the potato grain (this allows the starch to come out and thicken the cooking liquid).

Cover the bottom of a flame-proof casserole or dish with olive oil for sautéing, add the chopped onion and garlic and the *chorizo* cut into four pieces. Add the potatoes, sauté them well, add the pinchy of paprika, bay leaf and dried pepper. Cover everything with cold water -but only just cover- and add a little salt, then cover and cook slowly at a simmering boil for 35-45 minutes until the potatoes are tender and the liquid thickened. Leave to sit for half an hour before eating. The ideal accompaniment for this is peeled roasted green peppers dressed with olive oil and a little finely chopped garlic.

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# ALBARIÑO GRAPES

## THE ESSENCE OF THE GALICIAN "RÍAS BAIXAS"

*Mother to the princess of the Atlantic white wines, the Albariño grape has become practically synonymous with the area of Galicia where it has been proudly growing for centuries. It is a traditional crop that is making rapid strides into the next century.*

Text: **Guillermo Campos**

Still Lifes: **Menchu Artime**

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

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

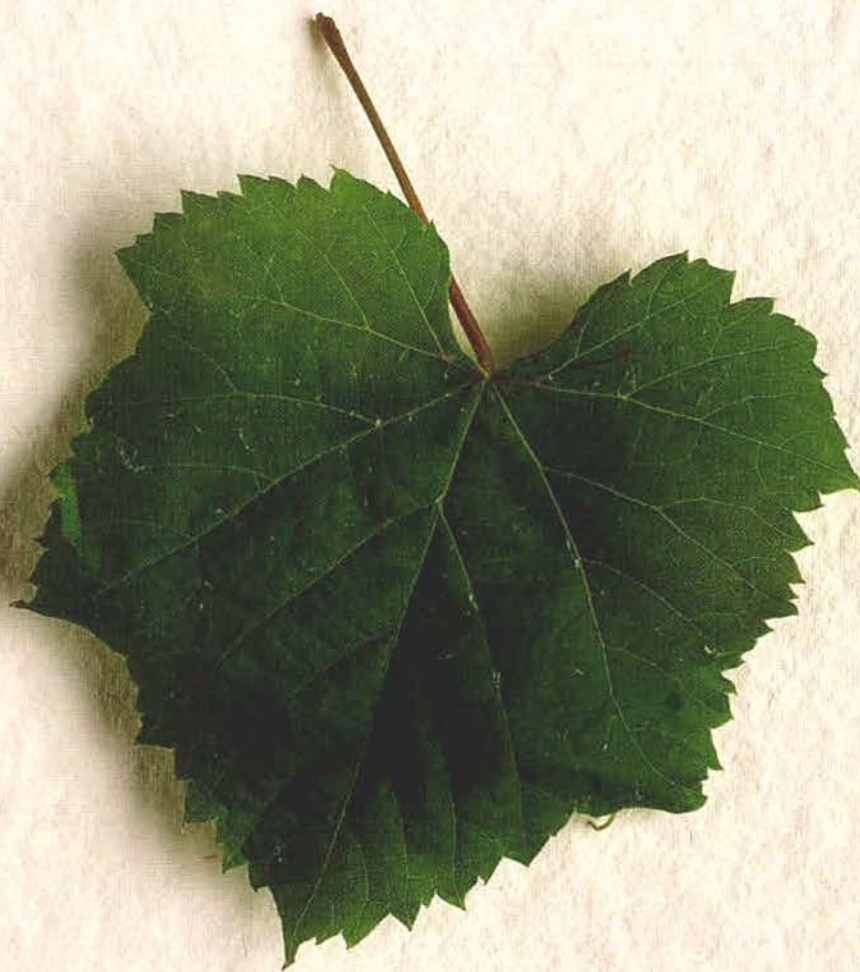
**T**he myth and ceremony associated with this grape and its wine and typical of the Galician people that cultivate it probably stem from uncertainty concerning its origin. Although some consider it a native species, several tales have arisen about how it was brought to Galicia. The most widely-held theory is that it was brought by the Cluny monks when they settled in the Val do Salnes area to the north of Pontevedra some time during the twelfth century and it is quite likely that the vineyards could have spread along the valley from the Armenteira monastery. Another of the legends goes back even earlier, to the eleventh century, and suggests that the first

stocks were brought by Raymond de Burgundy husband of the Castilian queen, Doña Urraca. The queen was much devoted to taking the thermal waters of Caldas de Reis in Pontevedra.

Whether it was a native Galician plant or whatever its origin, there are records dating from the eighteenth century showing that it was growing at that time in the Rías Baixas and the inland areas between the Ulla and Miño valleys and even as far as the town of El Ribeiro in the province of Orense.

The natural habitat of this vine is the Atlantic ecosystem and it is under these conditions that it gives the best results, especially in terms of organoleptic quality.

N<sup>o</sup> 3



*Possibly a native Galician variety, the natural habitat for the Albariño vine is the Atlantic ecosystem.*

N<sup>o</sup> 4



*The bunches are small, as are the grapes which are spherical or elliptical in shape with a greeny yellow skin and a delicate flavor.*

*It matures well in  
all three districts  
covered by the  
Denomination  
of Origin  
producing  
exceptional  
white wines.*

### THREE DISTRICTS

Rías Baixas is the name given to the Atlantic coastal area of southern Galicia, mainly the coast of the province of Pontevedra. The area basically comprises three different types of landscape -flat lands in Salnés, gently sloping valleys in O Rosal and slightly more mountainous lands in O Condado. These three districts make up what is known as the Rías Baixas D.O. and the Regulating Council is based in Pontevedra, the provincial capital, which lies at an equal distance from each of them.

The Salnés district has the best soils. Its main town is Cambados, an aristocratic, rather grand town much admired by the Galician poet, Ramón Cabanillas (1986-1959). The Albariño grape likes shallow, sandy soils, preferably slightly acid, although it can also grow in heavier, fresh soils as long as they are not too moist. The whole province of Pontevedra, except for the most eastern parts, is suitable for growing this species.

The geographer García Fernández has written that the rural landscape plays an essential part in local history and must be considered not only from the point of view of space but also over time. This vine has formed part of the Galician landscape for so long that it is undoubtedly tied in with the most deep-rooted sentiments of Galicians.

It grows intermittently all along this green strip of land where the rainfall and hours of sunshine are similar to those in certain Mediterranean areas. The sea keeps the temperatures mild.

The grapes mature on the hillsides and in the valleys. The bunches are small and the grapes spherical or elliptical with a pale, greenish-yellow skin. According to Jorge Freijanes, an expert on Galician agriculture, the flavor attributes are already balanced and enticing even in the new berries.

These are delicate grapes that need careful tending but in Galicia they are positively pampered. If the local growers had always devoted as much time and attention to the preparation of the wine as they have done to the vines, the technological revolution that has taken place over the last decade in this sector would have been much less remarkable and significant.

Although the Albariño stock is vigorous and sends out its shoots early, its hermaphrodite flower grows best from the third bud upwards and on long branches. The traditional method of training the vines over trellises is still used today because the small orbicular leaves and fruits do not flourish if grown too near the often damp soils.

The smooth stocks send out early shoots although maturation is of average duration, except that the lighter soil the faster it is. Millardet 420-A has been grown on the most fertile and dry soils but the most successful stocks for dry land are the 110 Richter, Castel 196-17 and Couderc 161-49 which have gradually ousted the traditional Riparia, Berlandieri and Rupprecht stocks. The pH of the soil is slightly acid -between 4 and 6.

### ALBARIÑO EXTENDS ITS INFLUENCE

Cultivation of the Albariño variety has shot up over the last decade, as has wine production in this area. It is therefore risky to give figures for this sector, especially because the tiny size of many properties, typical of farms in Galicia, makes it difficult to keep track of domestic production and also because this variety is often grown alongside others in the small vineyards scattered along and around the Salnés valley.

In less than 15 years, the land area growing Albariño has multiplied by ten. Now it is not only the variety producing the best white wines but it is also the most wide-

spread, best known and most popular of the Galician native vines. Albariño has boosted the market for white wine both within and outside Galicia and has raised its quality standards.

This variety is so much the protagonist in the Atlantic area of Galicia that, when the current geographical area was established, it was based on the Albariño Specific Denomination that previously set the standards for the local white wines, the great majority of which came from the Albariño variety.

Albariño is a quality, pleasant-tasting wine. It varies between pale yellow and golden and average alcohol content is 12 degrees. Its acidity is around 6 g/liter expressed in tartaric acid and the high quantity of sugar in the must makes it a sweet wine.

Albariño wine can continue to boast of its relative scarcity and top quality for two reasons: firstly, because of the nature of the vine itself which does not produce large numbers of grapes and, secondly, because of protectionist regulations which limit

production from the grape to a maximum of 65% per kg and only allow a maximum of 10,000 kg to be produced from every hectare (2,471 acres).

The total area with its three districts measures, according to Professor José Manuel Santos Solla, 675 square kilometers (260 square miles) and has about 155,000 inhabitants. He considers the geographical area should be extended to include the Vigo and Pontevedra "rías" or estuaries.

Santos Solla points out that the parameters for the Salnés and Bajo Miño areas are fairly uniform and typical of the whole "Rías Baixas" area-annual rainfall of about 1,500 mm, average temperatures of 14°C (57°F) with no frost and little fluctuation and low rainfall in summer. The geological substratum comprises granite, gneiss, metasediments and recent

deposits so that throughout the area the soils are acid and very permeable. According to Santos Solla, the only difference between the Cambados area and the area around the river Miño as it passes through Pontevedra is the "greater abundance of Quaternary formations including limey-clayey marismas, terraces and alluvial-colluvial areas".

## THE EIGHTIES: A DECADE OF CHANGE

Ten or fifteen years ago, vines were a secondary crop and wines were produced on a small, family scale. Of the 18,500 vineyards exceeding 25 hectares (62 acres), 99.9% were privately owned and 99.4% produced less than 99 hectoliters. None was able to produce over 25,000 hl and not even 50 of them were able to bottle their own wine. The change during the Eighties proved to be quite spectacular. What remains is

the tradition and the fact that wine production is monovarietal. The Salnés area, "the most developed coastal plan in Galicia", earns its living from the occasional orchard, seafood and tourism but especially from its over 2,500 hectares (6,200 acres) of vineyards comprising one quarter of the province of Pontevedra. The O Rosal area has just 500 hectares (1,236 acres) and O Condado 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres). Not only is Albariño the mostly widely grown stock but it is the only one that is steadily increasing. At the close of the Seventies it occupied only 300 hectares (750 acres) and today approaches 1,700 hectares (4,200 acres) and, moreover, it is a variety that develops fast. Data concerning production are more specific. These grapes are highly appreciated but do not grow in abundance. The crop today reaches only about 70,000 hectoliters, amounting to about 5 million bottles, although prospects are that it

will increase by about 50%. The grapes ripen equally well in any of the three districts with just about one week's difference depending on their proximity to the sea. Trellises are used throughout, with the stakes holding the horizontal wires being sometimes of granite and sometimes of wood. The planting layout is 4 x 2 for a density of between 600 and 1,200 stocks (pies) per hectare (2,471 acres). The quality is exceptional. So too is the price paid for the grapes -about 250 pesetas, or two dollars, per kg. This has helped to develop Albariño cultivation but has also helped to place bottles of Albariño wine towards the top end of the market. The medium-sized grapes of a greenish-yellow color with a fleshy skin produce a wine that goes from pale yellow (straw, lemon) to golden -it used to be prized for its old gold color. Its characteristic flowery and fruity aromas make it a fresh and cheerful wine that leaves behind a balanced, velvety sensation that is always luxurious.

These are the special features of wines produced exclusively from the Albariño variety and honored annually in the Fiesta del Albariño in Cambados, a tradition since 1953 when Cambados becomes the center of attraction of the Rías Baixas. On the first Sunday of August, a young couple representing the Albariño grapes are submitted to the test of the harvest, their praises are sung and they give back to man and to mother nature what they have received. Thanks are given and the wine is much enjoyed.

*Guillermo Campos, a journalist and wine expert, writes for El Correo Gallego and the journals Club de Gourmets and Vino y Gastronomía. He is also a member of the official tasting panel for the Rías Baixas D.O.*

*Over the last fifteen years, vineyards growing Albariño vines have multiplied by 10 but the wine continues to be fairly scarce and highly esteemed.*



# *The* **Global**



## Success Abroad (VIII)

***Lollipops conjure up kiddie-culture and that means Spain. One of the first things a foreign parent who settles in Spain learns about the country is that its native inhabitants really like children. The child is the pampered king/queen of the household, adored by parents and***



# *Lollipop* **Up**

Text: **Tom Burns** Photos: **Chupa-Chups**

*neighbours, welcomed and admired everywhere for he/she is held to do no wrong. It is therefore eminently suitable that Chupa-Chups, a Spanish company, and a family-owned one at that, should manufacture the World's Best Selling Lollipop, as the publicity blurb puts it.*

In most places outside Spain if your child acts out his spoilt self in a restaurant and screams his head off, frosty stares will chill the back of your neck and you'll soon be heading, embarrassed, towards the exit. In Spain the waiter is more inclined to be kindly towards the kid. He'll pat him/her gently on the head, compliment the perturbed parents on the strength of their offspring's lungs and, more likely than not, slip the brat a Chupa-Chups to shut him up. Spaniards don't believe, as the Victorian English, for example, did, that children should be "seen but not heard" and, preferably, seen at a distance. So if the whole culture is geared to dancing to what ever tune the little terrors vocally demand that they want played, it is as well to have a lollipop handy to achieve a period of peace and quiet every so often. Thus Chupa-Chups, founded more than 30 years ago by Enrique Bernat, deserves the heartfelt thanks of each and every Spanish parent, as well as fellow restaurant diner and waiter. Such gratitude, moreover, extends well beyond Spain's frontiers.

### Don't Worry About Dentists.

Chupa-Chups, as befits the global number one, is sold in all of 127 countries at the latest count and is the biggest lollipop seller in more than half of them. It has production plants in France, Russia and China, as well as Spain and it will soon have one in India. Thousands of millions of lollipops are sold world wide and that means whole eras of peace and quiet for stressed-out grown-ups as the little 'uns grasp a Chupa-Chups stick in their tiny fists and concentrate on getting gooey mouths as they apply themselves to the lollipop's glucose and flavoring. It is all too good to be true, a dream story, and I thought a tough point was in order early on. "Dentists," I remarked to Xavier Bernat, the company's deputy chairman, "must love you." Son of Enrique

Bernat, who remains the Chupa-Chups chairman, Xavier looked amused.

"It all comes down to parents who have to teach top dental hygiene to their children," he said. "And anyway a biscuit or a piece of bread is potentially more dangerous because those things can get caught up between the teeth. A lollipop doesn't," he explained patiently as if he were talking to a space alien who had actually never tried a Chupa-Chups.

In fact I had sampled his wares not an hour earlier at the Chupa-Chups factory in Manresa, half-an-hour's motorway drive from the company's Barcelona headquarters where we had met. It was impossible not to pick up a handful of Chupa-Chups on the tour of the plant. And, yes, almost as soon as I had polished off one Chupa-Chups, I was furtively unwrapping the next one.

Handsome packaged lollipops cascaded out of production lines that had commenced several minutes earlier mixing huge dollops of thick syrup and shaping the glucose mass into a tube. Robots and machines were doing just about everything. They cut up the endless tube into bits, turned the bits into little balls, popped a stick into each one of them and then wrapped up each little stick and ball.

Angela, a cousin of Enrique's who was on hand for the guided tour of the Manresa plant, had handed me

a white coat and cap before tackling the production

line. I felt a bit absurd in the get up but it was clearly de rigueur if I was to enter the hallowed lollipop kingdom's machine room. "You just might get splattered by liquorice mix," she said making me fear I was about to enter a custard pie chucking contest.

### Four Million Lollipops a Day.

As it turned out liquorice, apparently much favored by Chupa-Chups fans in northern Germany and Scandinavia, was not on the menu that morning and the vats were churning up strawberry-flavored glucose by the ton for the mixing slabs. And in any case there was no danger of getting splattered by anything. The production lines worked with the effortless smoothness of a Rolls Royce and the whole place was as clean as a whistle - an image that struck me as appropriate because part of the plant was given over to producing Melody Pops, a Chupa-Chups that is a lollipop and a whistle and about which more in a moment.

"Four million units a day," whispered Angela making herself perfectly audible for the endless machinery and the robots were surprisingly quiet. I gaped and she broke down that staggering figure to make it more - well digestible. The plant, she explained, produced on a daily basis two million standard lollipops, one million melody pops and a further one million fantasy balls. The latter consists of bubble gum inside a transparent lollipop covering and, again, more about this how-to-keep-your-child-quiet invention in a short while.

Four million lollipops a day means that the Manresa plant is producing them as if they were ball bearings. But then that is exactly what the

maker of the World's Best Selling Lollipop has to do at its Manresa plant and at its other production centers in order to keep up with demand.

In Germany the latest count is an annual consumption of 400 million Chupa-Chups. In the United Kingdom it is 50 million but if a huge publicity campaign aimed at the British consumer, the largest per capita confectionery eater in the world, pays off, there will be 150m Chupa-Chups sold every year as from the end of 1996.

Understandly the firm likes producing statistics with a long line of noughts in them. The Chupa-Chups lollipops sold world wide come in at billions of units and if they were put end to end they would circle the earth around the equator several times.

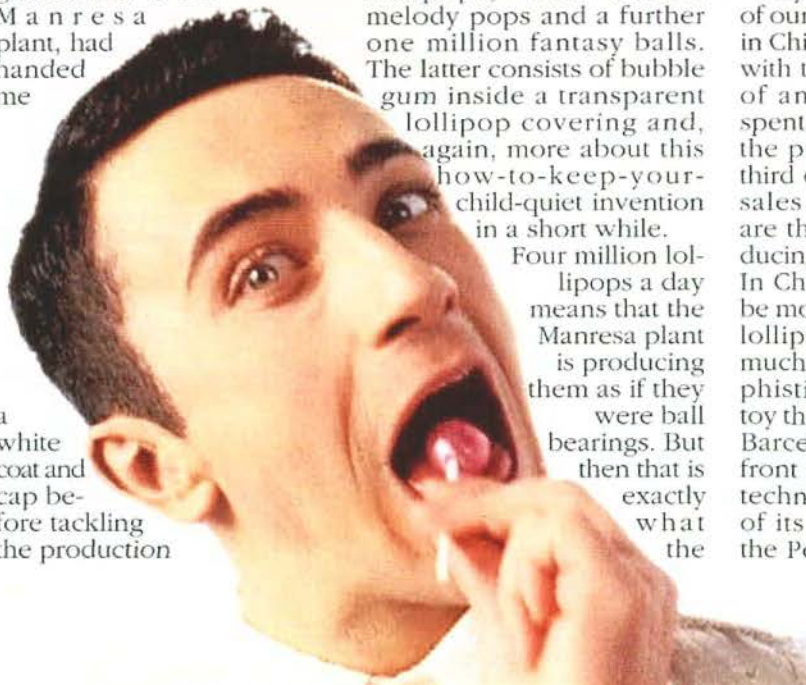
### The Global Lollipop.

Soon Chupa-Chups will be dealing with the sort of figures that will blow a fuse on a good pocket-sized calculator. The firm is expecting that by the year 2,000 its new plant in Shanghai will be accounting for a quarter of its annual output.

If all goes according to schedule, towards the end of 1997 Chupa-Chups will have practically doubled its present production total of three billion lollipops a year. "We will be manufacturing between and five and six billion," says Xavier Bernat.

"Why shouldn't 25 per cent of our lollipop consumers be in China," Xavier Bernat says with the unanswerable logic of an executive who has spent a lot of time studying the prospective market. "A third of the world's cigarette sales are in China and we are the only big brand producing lollipops there."

In China, Chupa-Chups will be mostly selling its standard lollipop. There will not be much of a market for the sophisticated lollipop-come-toy that has firmly placed the Barcelona company on the front edge of confectionery technology. At the top end of its product line there is the Pen-Pop which is a biro



incorporated to a lollipop. The beauty of the Pen-Pop is that the Chupa-Chups is cleverly encased in a plastic coating that opens and shuts fast at the push of a finger. A kid in class can therefore be sucking away happily at his lollipop and then hide it in a flash when the teacher comes round. All the teacher—who should know nothing about Pen-Pops—will see is the child conscientiously scribbling with his pen. The Pen-Pop however is not for your average Chinese kid, at least not at the moment, for it sells at between \$3-\$4 or the equivalent of a weekly wage in China. The writing implement/lollipop is an example of the Chupa-Chups products that are emphatically aimed at the dental hygiene conscious, upper-income bracket of the developed world.

### The Lollipop Toy.

Along with the Pen-Pop, Chupa-Chups has over the years come up with a dazzling array of novelties. There is the Pop Machine, for example, which must be the ultimate for the totally laid-back lollipop fan. It works on the principle of the automatic toothbrush for it consists of a battery operated holder which spins the lollipop for you. All you have to do is put the Chupa-Chups in your mouth and press the machine's "on" button.

A more active child will go for the Windball which has the lollipop doubling up as a game that consists of blowing a little plastic ball in the air and catching it in your basket—or passing it to another Chupa-Chups fanatic who is also an expert windball blower. If the kid is a really brilliant huffer and puffer he will go for the Monster Funball. This novelty lollipop toy is for the true master of the art for it consists of keeping two little plastic balls in the air and catching them at the same time.

The emphasis on the novelties, on the fun toys that go with the lollipop, is one of the three keys of the Chupa-Chups success story. The second, which is linked to

the fun and novelty thrust, is the aggressive marketing that is very much part of the Barcelona firm's trademark. The third key is the quality of the lollipop itself, a quality that remains consistent through its considerable range of flavors.

There is a clear reason for the novelty pitch. In the developed world there are fewer and fewer children growing up—Chupa-Chups' core consumer falls into the 5 to 12 years old bracket—and the inevitable fall in demand has to be made up with value-added products. Thus in a Pen-Pop, for example, retailing at \$4 the actual lollipop component of the product represents around 10 per cent of the price.

"Value added products is the obvious course," said Xavier Bernat. "Grandparents are quite happy to pay \$4 for a lollipop and make it a serious present to their grandchildren and so are parents who worry that they may be neglecting their children."

### Keep Inventing.

Chupa-Chups is incredibly clever about getting every ounce of flesh out of one of its novelty products. The Pen-Pop is a case in point. It has now developed Pen-Pop "heads"—the plastic bubble that encases the lollipop—shaped into different sporting balls, such as a football and a rugby ball. As soon as the child has got one, you can bet your

bottom dollar that he will want the whole collection. There is also a Pen-Pop shaped like a Karaoke microphone which has to be a must for every serious Chupa-Chups aficionado. The Pen-Pop novelty was bought by Chupa-Chups from a U.S. design

company but this source of innovation was the exception rather than the rule. The Pop Machine, the Windball and the Monster Funball variation were in-house novelties and so was the Port-a-Chups, a plastic lollipop holder that is moulded in the shape of the latest television cartoon monster and is attached to a cord so it can hang around the neck. The first and to date the biggest breakthrough in the firm's Not-Just-a-Lollipop strategy was nevertheless the Melody Pop.

"We have a group of 20 people, all with a top marketing and sales experience, whose job it is to think up new ideas, to dream up novelties," said Xavier Bernat. By any yardstick this "inventor" section of the firm is fantastically important. But for this unit you just have a lollipop like any other manufacturer. "Basically we are just selling a bit of sugar on a stick," was how Xavier Bernat put it.

The Melody Pop was, any way you look at it, a genius idea. It takes an awesome leap of imaginative intelligence to combine a lollipop stick with a whistle. If you are very good with your Melody Pop stick you can play really fancy tunes on it, such as the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. That was, at least, what Chupa-Chups demonstrated when it launched the whistle lollipop in television advertising campaigns.

The Fantasy Ball is another in-house product that illustrates the continuous

drive to innovate. What could be simpler and what could be more complicated than to manufacture a lollipop that consists of a fruit-flavored transparent coating with a printed bubble gum ball inside it.

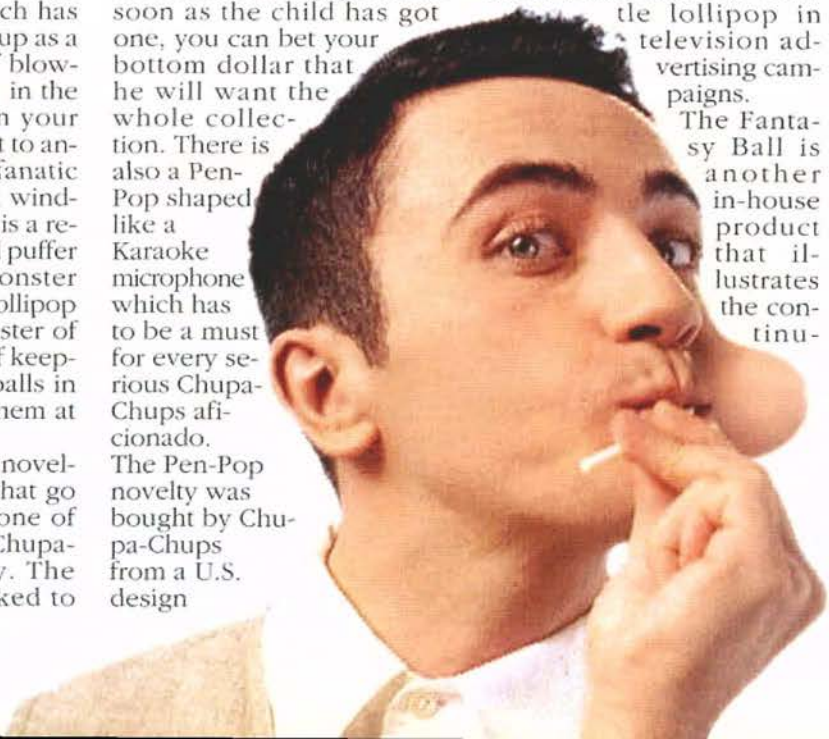
Add a sticker to the product—Power Ranger stickers are the latest craze—and you have a winner. You have the lot with a Fantasy Ball for you blow your bubble gum when your lollipop is exhausted and when the chewing is over you have the all-important sticker. If the sticker is already part of your collection you trade it for one you haven't got with the nearest Fantasy Ball consumer. To judge by the sales of the lollipop-cum-bubble gum there is bound to be one very close by.

### Television and Licensing.

"When you are selling to children," Xavier Bernat said, "you have to invent the whole time." You also have to make sure that you are giving the latest that international merchandising—be it Jurassic Park or Kitty of the Power Rangers—has to offer. One of the most revealing aspects of the whole Chupa-Chups corporate culture is its constant attempt to go the extra mile in its aggressive attempts to market what it produces. This is a consequence of its dependence on what is essentially a single product—on what Xavier Bernat cheerfully calls "a bit of sugar on a stick".

Enrique Bernat, Xavier's father, was in every respect a revolutionary in the confectionery business, a business that his family had long been involved in. What he did back in the 1960's was to get rid of the normal wide product range that confectionery company, big or small, has on its books. Enrique Bernat got shot of chocolates, sweets, candy of assorted kinds, and decided to focus solely on lollipops. With hindsight it was a brilliant decision.

Bernat senior's breakthrough move shocked other family members and fellow shareholders in the confectionery



business. Nonplussed, the future lollipop maker, he was then aged 36, bought out everybody else's shares and then moved the whole company from Asturias, on the north Spanish coast where it was based, to Barcelona, the original home of the Bernat family. Engineering and machine tool work shops are thick on the ground in Barcelona and the young visionary soon acquired a company that he adapted to become a mechanized lollipop production line with a wrapping machine included. Chupa Chups, which is how he christened the revamped business, was launched.

"When you have reduced the range to just lollipops you are forced to be amazingly good at selling them," said Xavier Bernat. I could see his point. Lollipops and just lollipops is basically what Chupa-Chups is all about. That is how highly skilled merchandising comes into the picture. That and invention for invention is, of course, the mother of necessity and Xavier Bernat had staked all on a single product. Fortunately for Chupa-Chups nowadays the big franchise holders come to the Barcelona firm offering their wares and the Bernat family and its top executives

can more or less pick and choose the merchandise that most suits the Chupa-Chups products. Such most favored treatment from the franchise sector is the consequence of being very big and very global.

"We may be offered up to 50 franchise opportunities a year and we take up two or three," Said Xavier Bernat. His main criteria for making a decision is that the merchandising should be instantly recognizable wherever Chupa-Chups sells and that it should mean something immediately to five- to 12-year-olds all over the world. More often than not this de-

gree of instant awareness everywhere means, as in the case of the Power Rangers, a television series. It is an article of faith at Chupa-Chups that more and more stickers dealing with the latest global fad means more and more lollipops sold.

#### And Now the Grown-Ups.

With Russia and China under its belt now and India soon to come, there seems to be little doubt that Chupa-Chups has the lollipop world well and truly sewn up. It has the production base, the sales network, the marketing muscle and all the inventive gimmicks that experienced know-how and money can buy.

Can you go any further with lollipops? Xavier Bernat is convinced he can. He said, unsurprisingly, that the company was "investing in new ways to sell better". One development was the success recorded in selling directly to the consumer attractively designed presentation tins (one of which is modelled on a milk churn) that were formerly produced for a Chupa-Chups wholesaler. There must be 150 lollipops per tin and they were a huge hit last Christmas when their sales possibilities were tested in the toy departments of large Spanish retail stores. The big breakthrough will come when lollipops cease to be preserve of children and the handout to keep them quiet and when the waiter in the restaurant becomes himself a Chupa-Chups consumer. Johan Cruyff, the legendary Dutch soccer player and now the manager of Barcelona football club, has become an obsessive, and very public, Chupa-Chups consumer ever since he gave up smoking. "We're going to see a lot of grown-ups getting on with their lollipops in the street and not feeling in the slightest bit ridiculous," said Xavier Bernat.

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

### CHUPA CHUPS WORLD WIDE

COMPANY	COUNTRY	CONSOLIDATED CONFECTIONARY SALES 1994
S.A. CHUPA CHUPS	SPAIN	PTA 3.5 BILLION
REGALIN INT S.A.	SLOVENIA	PTA 356 MILLION
STE BERNAT ET CIE	FRANCE	PTA 1.7 BILLION
CONF AFCHAIN S.,A.	FRANCE	PTA 241 MILLION
NUEVA CH CH A/O	RUSSIA	PTA 2.8 BILLION
DE JONG S.A.	SPAIN	PTA 296 MILLION
COMNFIPAK	SPAIN	PTA 522 MILLION
S.A.C.C.D.I (SPAIN)	SPAIN	PTA 2.7 BILLION
UNICONFIS GMBH	GERMANY	PTA 3.2 BILLION
UNICONFIS CORP	U.S.	PTA 2.3 BILLION
CH. CH. TRADING	U.S.	PTA 2.5 BILLION
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>PTA 31.4 BN</b>

### NEW VENTURES

<b>INDIA:</b>	PROJECT INVESTMENT	PTA 800 MILLION (FIRST PHASE NEW PLANT)
<b>RUSSIA:</b>	PROJECT INVESTMENT	PTA 3 BILLION (REPLACING EXISTING PLANT AT ST. PETERSBURG)
<b>CHINA:</b>	PROJECT INVESTMENT	PTA 600 MILLION (ENLARGING EXISTING PLANT AT SHANGAI)

### CONSOLIDATED CONFECTIONARY SALES GROWTH

<b>1992</b>	PTA 16.7 BILLION
<b>1993</b>	PTA 21.6 BILLION
<b>1994</b>	PTA 31.4 BILLION

Source: Chupa Chups

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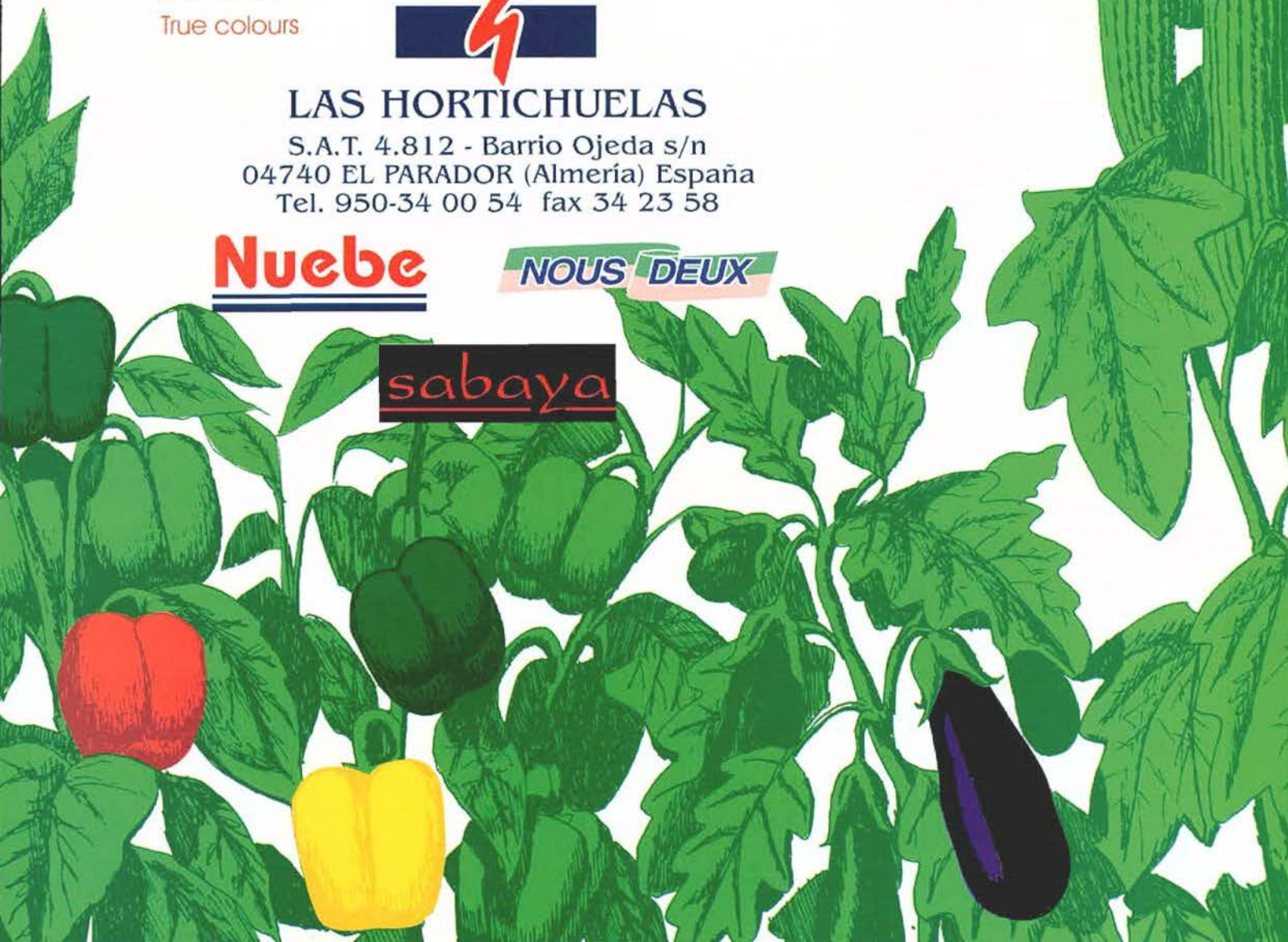
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# BANANAS FROM THE CANARIES

## TAKE ON THE FREE MARKET

Text: **Iñigo Moré**

Translation: **William Myers**

**T**

he Spanish conquistadors carried the banana tree to Latin America in the 16th Century. Four centuries later, in the 1960s, bananas grown in Latin America by U.S. multinationals crossed back over the Atlantic to sweep the European markets, leaving growers in the Canaries only their protected markets within Spain. In 1993, the Spanish market was opened to Latin American crops. There were fears of a second, definitive, death of the Canary Islands banana, but they proved groundless.



The commercial death of a crop is not common. The survival of a crop sentenced to death is even less so. The Canary Islands banana was facing this fate in July of 1993, when the Spanish market was opened up to worldwide competition. Waiting at the gates of the European Union were tons of "dollar bananas", so called because they were grown within the orbit of the U.S. multinationals. The Canary Islands producers were discouraged, but, despite everything, they prepared with dignity to fight the final trade battle.

After two years of struggle, the Canaries banana has not only managed to fend off the attack of the powerful multinationals on its own turf, it has even managed to gain footholds in the European markets outside Spain. How was this possible?

That's just what I was asking myself as I boarded a plane amidst a fierce storm. I was travelling to the Canaries in search of answers, but the bad weather delayed the take-off. I spent the extra time talking about the purpose of my trip with the person in the next seat, a Canary Islander who was unaware that his ancestors were the ones who introduced the banana tree into Latin America.

This plant is a native of Southeast Asia and was brought to the Canaries in the 15th Century by Portuguese sailors, who were then the lords and masters of the Indian Ocean. The Canary Islands offered a warm, subtropical climate well suited to the cultivation of bananas, although widespread production was not to come until much later.

In 1516, the friar Tomás de Berlanga, of the order of Preachers, travelled to the New World. Like all voyagers, he wanted to take along some keepsake of his native land. He chose the banana tree. From Palmas,





on the Grand Canary island, he picked out a few plants, which were received with glee by the residents of Hispaniola, the Caribbean island now divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The banana tree was a great success, and as the padre Bernabé Cobo reminds us in his *History of the New World*, finished in 1653, the plant "very quickly spread from Hispaniola throughout the Americas". It's easy to imagine that the fruit's novelty played a large role in its popularity. It's also easy to imagine the gratitude of those early Latin Americans. Perhaps for that reason friar Tomás Berlanga was swiftly promoted, rising to become the Bishop of Panama.

There is some debate as to whether this first mention of the banana tree refers to the simple *Platanus Cuneata* or to the *Musa Acuminata* which we are discussing here. But there is no doubt, as later references show, that the cultivation of this fruit in Latin America was fathered by the Spaniards, so that, in the words of the friendly Canary Islander who chatted with me on the plane: "the dollar banana almost committed patricide".

### Towards the World of the Banana

During a brief let-up in the storm, my plane took off, soaring into the sky above Madrid. The Canaries lay some 2,500 kilometers (1,553 miles) to the southwest, at a latitude similar to that of Miami and just 300 kilometers (183 miles) above the Tropic of Cancer. The seven islands combine some desert features -in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura camels are raised- with the lushness of the jungle. A third of the plant species are indigenous, and they include everything from pre-historic forests to unique vineyards. Thanks to their

isolation, the Canaries are the only part of Europe that escaped the phylloxera epidemic and that still grows grapes similar to those that produced the wine enjoyed by Napoleon or by the kindly friar Dom Perignon, the inventor of champagne.

Flying over Tenerife, the importance of banana-growing in the Canaries became clear. The northern part of the island is a deep green blanket composed of countless plantations, with a sprinkling of anarchic little white houses. This beautiful landscape not only reveals the presence of a strong agricultural sector, but also provides a lovely garden for tourists. Some 12 per cent of the island's total area (7,351 square kilometers or 2,840 square miles) is devoted to banana plantations. This percentage is more impressive taking into account the scarcity of arable land due to the steep terrain, which rises from sea level to a height of 3,700 meters (12,136 feet) at the peak of Teide, the volcano which towers over Tenerife and is, by the way, the legendary abode of Guayota, the "Evil One" according to the lore of the *guanches*, the indigenous people of the Canaries. After landing, my companion explained to me that the banana groves have not only put their stamp on the landscape, they have entered the local culture, to the point that on the island the unhurried, easygoing ways typical of tropical and subtropical climates are referred to as "bananalike". These habits should not be confused with laziness, as I was able to confirm in the first interview I conducted, with Francisco Delgado, Vice President of the Association of Canaries Banana Producers' Organizations (ASPROCAN).

The very time of the appointment left no doubt: 8:30 in the morning. Nor did

the beginning of the conversation, which took us back to the multinationals' first offensive, in the Sixties. Back then about half the Canaries crop was exported, mainly to Great Britain. But advances in trans-Atlantic trade through the use of faster ships and improvements in refrigeration technology allowed Latin American crops to penetrate European markets in enormous quantities.

### The Arrival of the Dollar Banana

The dollar banana arrived, sent by the U.S. multinational Chiquita, and would push the Canaries out of the European market.

In the Sixties, "their bananas were cheaper and looked better, explains Delgado, "they launched marketing campaigns, while the Canaries growers didn't even know what competition was. They quickly shunted us aside, because we couldn't compete with their costs, based on starvation wages, nor with the appearance of the product, even though we were growing a different variety".

The Canaries growers bunkered down and turned the Spanish market into their winter headquarters. But this market, "closed to competition and paternalistic, didn't require any improvement in quality, which for many years stayed at the same level", according to Delgado.

At the outset, the trade liberalization of July 1993 looked likely to lead to reliving the history of the Sixties, but instead "the Canary Islands bananas have withstood the competition". The reason for this can be found in the fact that "the Common Market Organization and the import system imposed by Brussels, together with aid and subsidies, helped to improve the sector", establishing a retaining wall that prevented a

repetition of the events of the Sixties.

After leaving Delgado's office, a phrase kept ringing in my ears: "a different variety". The next appointment took me to the office of José Luis Savoie, chief of the Rural Development Service of Tenerife's regional government, who thinks that the different variety grown and the genetic selection carried out in recent years are precisely what has improved the Canaries crop and has armed it against the competition from the dollar banana.

"Massive cultivation of the banana in the Canaries dates from the past century", he explained to me, "and it's here that a variety from the Cavendish group, known as the "small dwarf", was introduced. This variety adapted to subtropical regions, but the reason for its success can be found in the resistance of its short stature to the wind, the great enemy of banana trees. "You have to remember", José Luis Savoie pointed out, "that the banana plant is not a woody tree but really a grass-like plant, which has little resistance". This is so true that the banana trees are tied so they won't break under the weight of the fruit and so they won't be blown down by the wind. In fact, insurance companies offer coverage against damage from windstorms and most plantations are surrounded by walls to keep out the wind as well as the thieves. There are even greenhouses built mainly to protect the crop from the wind, rather than to speed its growth. At the beginning of the century, the rest of the banana-growing world was concentrating on other varieties, especially the Gros Michel. A few years later, this variety disappeared after a root fungus epidemic and a change-over was made to the Cavendish group. The "large dwarf", closely related to the tradi-

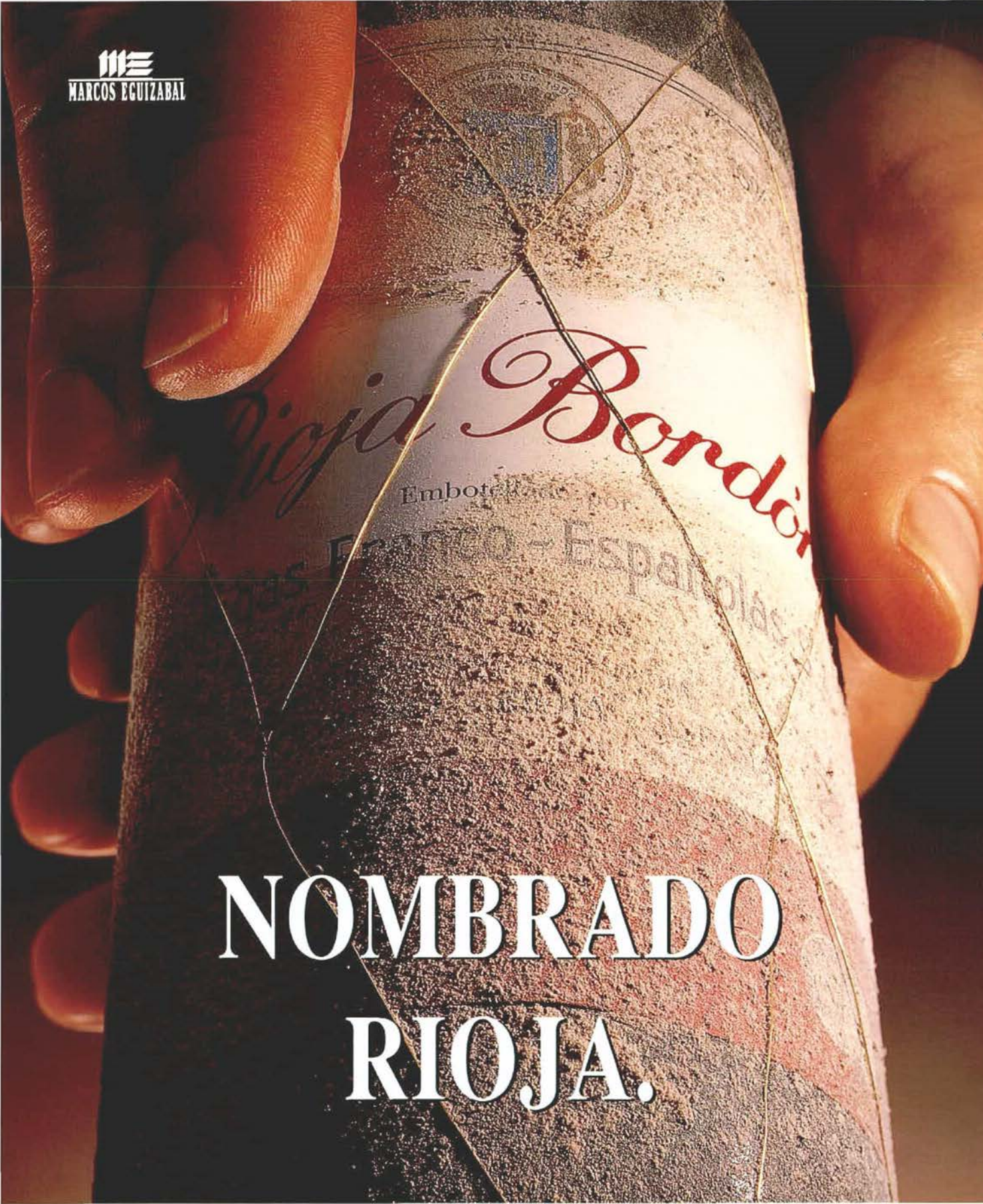


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tional Canaries variety, became the most popular in Latin America.

"Although we've been growing Cavendish for a hundred years," explains Savoie, "until now there had been no work done on cloning or developing different strains". Now the regional government, through the company Cultesa to which Savoie is an advisor, has begun the process of genetic improvement, selecting various clones, among them the José Brier, which bears the name of the exceptional grower whom I would later visit.

"The clones are in great demand", Savoie explained, "because besides increasing the harvest, their use allows the grower to standardize the crop. Now the plantations resemble rows of soldiers lined up on parade, whereas before they were somewhat unruly, with trees here and there, with quite a different look."

### The Secret of Flavor

In search of more information, I went off to Valle Guerra, to the Canaries Institute for Agricultural Research. The head of the department of Tropical Fruits, Víctor Galán, also believes that the Canaries banana has been able to stand up to the dollar banana because of its quality. Nevertheless, he feels that the difference in quality is due not only to the variety grown but also to "the closeness of the Canaries to the market".

According to his analysis, "what determines the quality of a banana is the conversion of the starches into sugars. More sugar means more and better flavor". The quantity of sugar depends, in turn, on the point at which the fruit is harvested. "The Latin American banana has to be cut when it's still quite green in order to be able to hold up during the process of transportation and refrigeration, which

takes more than two weeks. That may be too long for a perishable product. The Canaries banana, on the other hand, only takes two or three days to get to the markets, so it can be cut when it's closer to maturity" and has converted almost all its starches into sugars.

"Both the Canaries variety and the Latin American variety grown on the Canaries are superior to the rest just because of their flavor", Galán stated, as he showed me the different varieties of banana that the Institute is experimenting with. On the dollar banana the edges are sharper, while on the Canaries variety they are more rounded. "The Latin American banana is more angular, the Canaries more rounded". The reason lies in the fact that while the banana from overseas can ripen after being picked, it won't fill out any more. As long as the fruit is still on the tree, it goes on absorbing nutrients and, to put it simply, fattening up. Thus, the Canaries banana is rounder and fuller than the dollar banana.

Despite these advantages, the variety grown in the Canaries does have one drawback.

Its peel is more delicate and sensitive to handling. That's why in the Sixties it lost the battle to the dollar banana, whose shape is so perfect it could almost be made of wax, although it has little flavor.

A way around these problems has been found, thanks in part to the efforts of Miguel Montes de Oca, professor of Phytopathology at the School of Agricultural Engineering of Laguna and founder of the Quality Control department at Coplaca, the cooperative that markets most of the bananas grown in the Canaries. He happened to be my next appointment.

"Some years ago", Montes de Oca told me, "it was common for the banana

from the Canaries to appear with all kinds of abrasions and dark spots that nowadays are seen only occasionally". In fact, it's a small price to pay for the superior flavor. "The Canaries banana", according to Miguel Montes de Oca, "has a higher sugar content, even in the peel. These high concentrations facilitate the growth of microorganisms, especially the passive types, such as bacteria and fungi."

According to Montes de Oca, the scrapes and bruises that can be inflicted on the fruit during pre-sale handling "produce small wounds which permit the penetration of microorganisms, which then multiply, producing the typical dark spots, which, in any event, don't damage the product, on the contrary, they're an indication of quality in terms of sugar content".

Even so, the Coplaca Quality Control department preaches the importance of taking great care during handling, and makes recommendations ranging from wearing gloves to using certain fungicides. The result is that "there has been tremendous improvement in the handling of the fruit", as Miguel Montes de Oca stated with pride. This claim was borne out in the field.

### At Last, a Plantation

After hearing the theory explained, I was now eager to see how it was put into practice. The plantation I visited belonged to Manuel Hernández Suárez, a grower whose only education was the one he got in the fields. As he himself confessed, he grew up on the plantations, where he learned enough to become the head of the regional government's Department of Agriculture, a post he left only recently.

To start off with, we visited one of the three packing plants he owns. It's there that the fresh-cut bananas

come in and are sorted and sent on to the port. The entire process is conducted with exquisite delicacy. The clusters of bananas arrive wrapped in successive layers of blankets, quilting and plastic sheets with air chambers. They are no longer carried in the old trucks and trailers, but in compartmentalized cargo spaces, called cages, where they are stacked meticulously to avoid being bruised or crushed. As a result, nowadays the bananas are touched only by the person who harvested them and by the "separator", who breaks off the individual bunches ("hands") from the cluster. Each banana in a "hand", for the Canary Islanders, is, of course, a "finger".

"This much care wasn't taken in the old days, but now the bananas are handled with kid gloves", comments Manuel Hernández, who adds with some disapproval that the dollar banana growers "don't take this much trouble. They load the fruit on conveyor belts and use pallets instead of cages, taking advantage of lesser sensitivity of the variety they grow". We jump into his jeep to visit one of his plantations.

The fact that it is just "one of his plantations" is characteristic of the cultivation pattern on the Canaries. There are no big farms, and many growers have several small parcels because as the lands were handed down from generation to generation they were divided and subdivided again and again among the heirs. The average size of a parcel is not more than a hectare (2.471 acres). "In the Canaries you don't have the massive Latin American style plantations that are so large they're fumigated by plane and where it's not necessary to make much effort to turn a profit. They don't raise bananas there, they have industrial



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plantations", says Miguel Hernández.

The road becomes windier and windier as we approach the sea. The banana plantations are crammed into a thin strip of land next to the beach, subdivided ad infinitum over the centuries. This means that the roads going into them are a maze of curves and intersections along which run innumerable pipes that resemble metal boa constrictors. Manuel Hernández explains that "they carry water", one of the scarce goods on the island, along with arable land.

If northern Tenerife looks like a green blanket when seen from the air, from the subsoil it must look like a Swiss cheese. The Canary Islanders have sunk more than 4,000 wells and 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) of underground shafts to find water. This enormous job was backed by the sale of shares to finance the dynamiting and drilling. For this reason, in the Canaries water is privately owned, while in the rest of Spain and in

most countries of the world, it's public domain. Incidentally, this situation has given rise to the "waterlord", a peculiar member of the Canary Islands elite, the owner of the water.

Once inside the plantation, I found the same maze of tubes, but they were rubber and much thinner, as if they were small black snakes. As we walked along, Manuel Hernández commented that he has sometimes thought that bananas might not be the best crop to grow because they require too much water. "Before", he recalled, "irrigation was carried out by flooding the fields", a method that in the Canaries is referred to as blanket irrigation. "Today 80 per cent of the plantations use drip irrigation." That explained the pipes and hoses, which have greatly reduced consumption. "With just two hours a day of drip irrigation the plants have enough." The adoption of drip irrigation, also called microaspersion, has the added advantage of allowing nutrients to be

mixed into the water, constantly enriching the groves. Thanks to this, "the production per hectare in the Canaries is the highest in the world", claims Miguel Hernández. In Latin America they usually get 25,000 kilograms per hectare (2,471 acres), which the Canary Islanders produce in little more than half the space, a fanegada (plot) of 5,248 square meters (56,500 square feet). In the greenhouses, "production can reach 40,000 kilograms per hectare", Hernández says as we leave the plantation. He's optimistic about the future: "we've had to deal with the free market for a while now, with tough competition, and we've passed muster". In his opinion, the Canaries withstood the pressure of the multinationals, not only "thanks to the system set up by Brussels, but also to the quality of the product".

After my visit to the fields, I returned to the hotel with some of the secrets of the banana in the Canaries safely on tape. Its struggle with

the dollar banana hasn't ended, but for now it's holding its own. Apart from various independent factors, that is thanks to the product's improved appearance and genetic makeup, without giving up its traditional features. And also to its superior flavor, due to the fact that because it is harvested closer to maturity it has more sugar, and it reaches European consumers in perfect condition since the Canaries are only two days away by ship.

*Iñigo Moré is a freelance journalist who regularly contributes to various publications, among them the daily El País, and to Intereconomía, the first European radio station devoted to economic news.*

**See list of main exporters on page 10.**

## The Wizard of the Canaries

José Brier y Bravo de Laguna is one of the most exceptional and also successful growers in the world. His plantations show extraordinary yields, with banana clusters of 60 kilograms, when the average is not above 40.

Much of his success is due to the Brier clone, a local variety of the small dwarf which was found in one of his groves in the area of La Suerte, near Garachico. "I had been watching it for quite some time, but only decided to clone it six years ago", says Brier, who turned to the company Cultesa for

help with the technical process. This clone produces banana trees with a thicker and shorter trunk than usual, which give them extraordinary resistance to the wind. Thanks to their make-up, "they give you at least 7 kilos of fruit more than normal trees", and reach spectacular weights. What's surprising, and almost magical, is that Brier achieves these yields while rejecting the use of chemicals. He is sworn to biological cultivation, relying on methods closer to the Middle Ages and alchemy than to modern agriculture. For

example, he is guided by the position of the stars in deciding when to prune or to transplant offshoots, and he uses chickens, instead of pesticides, to get rid of spiders and the annoying local parasitic insect called the "picudo". "The chickens are savage", he says, "they don't leave a single bug alive. They eat up every one." Nor does he use chemical fertilizers, preferring the compost that he prepares himself, using, in part, scraps from the banana. In his plantations it seems natural to get record harvests all out of proportion to the primitive means

employed. It is precisely this disproportion between means and results wherein lies the magic.

Nevertheless, Brier maintains that his methods are only the application of philosophy to agriculture, although he confesses that the day he realized that they really worked he was "shocked". "When I started out ten years ago, the experts told me the plantation would keep going only as long as the residues of chemical fertilizers lasted. Now none of them recall having told me such a thing," he boasts.

*Gonzalez Bress-*

*Vintage 1963  
Jerez*





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Text: John Reeder  
Photo: González Byass

The venerable house of González Byass, perhaps best known world-wide for its classic fino Tio Pepe, founded in 1835 and currently celebrating the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first export of its wines to England, has decided to mark the occasion with a unique offering for the discerning sherry drinker: the launching of an extremely limited bottling of two selected vintage dry oloroso sherries, the 1963 and 1966 *añadas*.

Personally selected in the year following the grape harvest by Don Mauricio González himself, then aged unblended in single oak casks, a mere 933 bottles of the '63 vintage and 872 of the '66 are being released onto the market. Soberly but elegantly presented in wax-sealed, rather 19th century-looking bottles, duly numbered, signed and dated, they are available in cartons of a half-dozen bottles. A word of advice to sherry buffs (almost certainly unnecessary): don't dither, grab 'em while you can.



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# VINTAGE SHERRY

But just a moment. Surely sherry is aged in a *solera* system, scales of butts along which older wines are constantly being replenished and refreshed by younger wines of the same style, which then marry together to give a finely balanced blend, a blend in which these younger wines take on the complexity and character of their older partners. For some years now many of the older bodegas of Jerez have been bottling small quantities of sherry which have up to thirty or forty years of the *solera* aging, wonderfully complex, nutty old *amontillados*, like Valdespino's Coliseo, dense, black, raisiny Pedro Ximénez, like Domecq's Venerable or Lustau's remarkable range of old *olorosos*, the quite exceptional Reserva Emperatriz Eugenia, for example. Indeed, González Byass themselves have their own Rare Old Solera range, comprising the *Amontillado del Duque*, the slightly sweeter *Oloroso Apóstoles* and the Pedro Ximénez Noé.

These old *solera* sherries should not, however, be confused with González Byass vintage *-añada* to use the correct Spanish word—sherries, single-year, single-cask sherries, aged separately from the *solera*. Why age sherry by the vintage system when the *soleras* have always done such a fine job? Are the *añada* sherries just a bit of novelty marketing, perhaps? Not at all. González Byass, in common with other old-established sherry houses, have kept small quantities of simple vintage sherry since the second half of the last century. These *añadas* were never, however, bottled or sold to the consumer but were kept for trial and experimental purposes to see how unblended sherries evolve in

the cask over prolonged periods of time, for instance, or they were used traditionally in minute quantities to blend in with and lend depth and personality to the wines in the older *soleras*.

## How Vintage Sherry is Aged

A decision was taken at González Byass some thirty odd years ago to specially select and separate out each year around two hundred butts of the finest *oloroso*, a figure which represents about one percent of the bodega's annual production of wine, and to leave the wine to mature unblended. From these already tiny quantities, a further selection was made of a quantity of *oloroso* which constituted less than a thousandth part of the year's total amount of wine made. This selection went to make up González Byass' Vintage Collection.

Vintage sherry is, then, specially selected single-year unblended wine left to evolve naturally in oak cask in cool and airy cellars, optimum conditions for the aging of wine. The *oloroso* sherry in the cask is normally fortified to 18% a few months after fermentation, after which it tends naturally and imperceptibly to increase its strength to some 22% due to the effects of the process of evaporation which occurs during the long years when the wine is aging in the wood.

In the spring of 1994, unfiltered and unfiltered, just as they came from the oak cask, González Byass hand-bottled two vintages, 1963 and 1966, which were judged, after careful tasting, to have reached their optimum point of evolution in the cask. The Finest Dry Oloroso Vintage 1963 I tasted rated as one of the most elegant and pleasingly complex wines it has been my privilege to sample. A clean, deep amber color in the glass, marvellously fragrant, breathtakingly dry, refined

and balsamic, high in glycerine as one would expect of such an old wine, with a seemingly unending, equally dry and complex after-taste. As for the '66 I can do no better than quote from Michael Boradben's notes for Christie's sale of last May when González Byass' two vintage sherries were first placed on the market: "1966 is one of those rare enough years in which the growing conditions were ideal in all the classic European wine districts. Whether the wine is claret or vintage port, 1966's are firm and elegant. So is this sherry... These wines are now over a quarter of a century old. They are superb".

## Is Vintage Sherry Really Different?

All this effort and care, all this huff and puff, but what is the final result? Was it really worth it? Is vintage sherry significantly different from its *solera*-aged cousins? The answer must be an unequivocal yes. Both of the vintages tasted were unmistakably different from *solera*-blended *olorosos* of a comparable age. The vintage *olorosos* were both more pronounced examples of the *oloroso* style than any *solera*-aged blend I had tasted before, and possessed greater individuality and variety as single-year, single-cask wines than the altogether more homogenous blended *solera* wines. That is to say, they were more individual as wines, as befits single vintage wines which had been left to silently and undisturbedly evolve their own character over more than a quarter of a century. Like all wines of great age, each vintage, each cask, has evolved differently, each single-vintage, single-cask wine will therefore almost inevitably be possessed of its own unique personality. Only as more and more vintage sherries appear from different years and, hopefully, different bodegas, will

we be able to appreciate how different and diverse old sherry can be. Then a new and richly diverse wine world will open up. This, hopefully, is just the first step. González Byass, for instance, plan to release at regular intervals new additions to their Vintage Collection.

## Keeping and Serving

Perhaps a little extra care should be taken in storing and serving such fine wine. The optimum period of evolution in the bottle for these vintage sherries is naturally still unknown, but the oenologists I talked with hazarded an educated guess that a total age between cask and bottle of between twenty-five and forty years might be taken as a reasonable limit.

The long-corked bottles mean that González Byass Vintage Dry Oloroso are best kept in a fresh, clean, cool place, please NOT a kitchen—horizontal until the day before serving, when they should be stood up, so that any sedimentation, almost inevitable in wines of great age, can precipitate to the bottom of the bottle. The wine should then be carefully decanted before serving. At room temperature—that is, room temperature in an English Spring—around 14°C (57°F), not 35°C (95°F) in a room in a Andalusian summer or 26°C (80°F) in an over-centrally heated New York apartment in winter. If it is any warmer than 14-15°C (57-59°F), then cool before serving.

These fine old wines can of course be drunk at any time of day. I personally prefer a glass or two sipped as an after dinner digestif or nightcap.

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

Many people believe that tasting olive oil is very similar to tasting wine. It is not quite so. When tasting wine the basic elements to be taken into consideration are appearance and color, nose and palate. In terms of quality, with olive oil, color is quite irrelevant. It can give us information about the time of harvest, for unripened olives tend to give a greener aspect to the oil, but very little more. This is why as cookery writers we should insist on tasting olive oil in small opaque glasses to avoid false assessments before we even start.

Furthermore, tasting olive oil is more demanding than tasting wine and slightly harder on our senses. One needs true determination, stamina and love for this beautiful ingredient, to go beyond six or seven different samples in one particular session if one wants to be accurate. My palate gets more tired and confused with olive oil than it does with wine even if I use bread, apple or water to clear my mouth in between tastings. Perhaps if I taste as much olive oil as I do wine it will become easier.

Looking for new Spanish olive oils on the international scene with just one afternoon to spare, I visited at the end of April the International Food and Wine Exhibition IFE 1995 in London, where olive oils from Catalonia, Andalusia and Aragon were ready for tasting at the official Spanish Pavilion. The presence of many brands and different styles confirmed the interest and the relevance that this product begins to enjoy abroad.

Among the newly arrived I discovered Oleastrum, the name of a Roman city in the Catalan province of Tarragona, and the name chosen by fifteen Catalan cooperatives for their olive oil, produced in the Siurana and Garrigues Denominations of Origin. Oleastrum has an intense green color, plenty of fruit and a tantalizing peppery aftertaste. This is an olive oil of substance produced with 100% Arbequina olives by the company Oils de Catalunya. It can be purchased from delicatessen and speciality shops such as **Tivoli in Muntaner, 361 in Barcelona, tel.: (3) 3024394.**

Travelling in Catalonia is always a treat particularly if I am searching for new and old ideas to write about. The Catalans have some of the best markets in Spain, they are very demanding and they are prepared to pay any price for the right ingredient. With this in mind I drove from Barcelona to the town of El Vendrell in the Baix Penedés, where **José Puig**, the man behind the success of **Cellers Puig & Roca, S.A.**, was prepared to answer my questions and to quench my thirst for wine, olive oil and vinegars produced in his estate. Furthermore, he was going to cook for me. This is the man who often prepares legendary dishes for such people as Troisgros, Robuchon and Goddard. I felt enormously honored.

Following in their ancestors footsteps, in 1982 José Puig, once export director of Bodegas Torres in Penedés, and Juan Roca his partner, a man who understands the vine, bought 9.5

hectares (23.5 acres) of land in which Merlot, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc grape varieties were planted. Today under the brand name of Augustus, quality wines are produced in a modern winery. They have given every vineyard and every wine the name of a Roman Emperor. The Vía Augusta, the old road connecting Ancient Rome with Spain, still crosses the bottom of this estate. Augustus Chardonnay 1994 is a wonderful complex wine full of ginger and smoky flavors given by the quality of the grape and the character of the Nevers oak barrels in which this wine is fermented. The 1990 and 1991, still lively, have acquired in the bottle the most exotic and classic taste. These wines are some of the most exciting Chardonnays made in the country. I wish I could also write with more detail about the qualities of the Cabernets and Merlots of which José and Carlos feel so rightly proud... Next time.

The visit to the bodega and the ancient small buildings in which the vinegars of the house are matured, ended with lunch. The menu was a succulent rice dish (*arros negre*), salad, local bread and wine. The wine was the rosé of the house made with the Cabernet Sauvignon grape. This is the

## Curiosities and New Temptations

recipe for a memorable dish (the name *arròs negre* refers to the color given to this rice dish by the caramelized onions and the artichokes. To serve 8 you need 800 gr Calasparra rice, 200 gr extra virgin olive oil (from the estate if possible), 80 gr vinegar, 1 rabbit cut into small pieces, 80 gr young runner beans, 80 gr red sweet peppers, fresh asparagus, 80 gr Boletus Edulis, 80 gr fresh peas, a little fresh thyme, garlic, parsley, 100 gr fresh tomatoes, peeled and chopped, meat stock (two and a half times the volume of the rice), 100 gr fresh artichokes, a little saffron and 500 gr onions, chopped. Cook the onions in olive oil until they are almost caramelized and set aside. In a large paella pan brown the rabbit, season with salt, pepper and thyme. Add the vinegar and reduce it. Add the green beans, artichokes and red peppers and cook for a few minutes. Next is the turn for the peas, the tomatoes and the onions (already cooked). Add the rice, stir and cook for a few minutes together with the rest of the ingredient. Start adding the hot stock little by little (following a similar technique for making *risotto*). Add the boletus, the asparagus and when almost ready the combination of garlic, a little olive oil and saffron, pounded in a pestle and mortar. Do not overcook the rice. When ready, remove from the fire, cover with paper and let it rest. The result should

be a fairly soupy rice of a beautiful shiny dark color and terrific flavor. *Que aprobeche!!*.

The taste given to the rice by the dried *ceps* (*Boletus Edulis*) convinced me I had to go mushroom hunting, one of the precious pastimes of the Catalans, this time to the **Boqueria Market** at the heart of the **Barcelona Ramblas**.

Lorenzo Petras' shop in the fresh vegetable section will provide demanding palates with any type of fungi they might desire, dried or fresh. Baskets, wooden boxes, glass jars, the display is here simply breathtaking. He also sells fresh and dried herbs, wild strawberries and courgette flowers. I would also recommend the new selection of dried fungi produced by Safinter, S.A., particularly the *Craterellus Cornucopioides* (sauces, salads of fresh pasta), *Marsmus Oreades* (excellent for the base sauces used in rices and pasta, meat stews and

the Fricando of the Catalans), *Boletus Edulis* or *ceps* (loved by all), *Cantharellus Lutescens*, and the *Cantharellus Cibarios*. Before you leave the market stop and have a glass of *café con leche* at Pinocho, the market coffee shop. Politics, music, and business are all high priority here.

My last stop in the city before returning home to London had to be to one of my favorite delicatessen shops, a place where I have tasted in the past unusual local cheeses, wines and the best that the Catalan and Majorcan charcuterie can offer. **J. Murria, founded in 1943 at the Carrer R. de Luria, 85 Barcelona 08009, tel. (3) 2155789**, is a traditional *colmado*, the name given by the Catalans to a convenience store. Apart from all the products from Cellers

Puig and Roca, S.A. and Safinter, S.A., Juan Murria, the proprietor, will be glad to guide you into the world of rice, pasta, olives, vinegars and above all, cheeses and sausages such as *butifarras* (black or whites), *salchichas*, *salchichones*, *fuet*, *chorizo*, and the succulent "*sobrasada Mallorquina*", a speciality unique to the Balearic Islands.

**M<sup>a</sup> José Sevilla** is an expert in Spanish gastronomy, the author of several books and BBC TV programs on the subject, and is joint head of food and wine promotion in the Spanish Commercial Office located in the UK.



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## HUNTING

The 'Madrid-Barcelona' restaurant, in the Catalan capital, is one of those places where time seems to have stood still and you find yourself transported back to the 1930s. It is not only the decor but also the way the waiters move around the tables. I shared this incredible dish with my friend Claudia Roden -the well known cookery writer and food historian- one spring when we were both working in that beautiful Mediterranean city. The chef at this excellent restaurant let me have his recipe.

SERVES 4:	4 partridges
6 small Spanish onions, peeled and chopped	250 ml meat stock
2 carrots, peeled and chopped	300 ml olive oil
2 tomatoes, skinned, de-seeded and chopped	150 ml red wine vinegar
6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	1 bay leaf
50 gr mushrooms, chopped	1 TSP chopped fresh thyme
2 pickled cucumbers, chopped	1 TSP paprika
	Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 3, 160°C (325°F).

Place the vegetables and partridge in a flameproof casserole. Add the stock, oil, wine vinegar, bay leaf, thyme and paprika, and season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Bring to the boil and cover tightly. Transfer to the oven for 1 1/2 to 2 hours until the partridges are cooked and the vegetables are tender.

(From the book *Spain on a Plate* by María José Sevilla).

SERVES 4:	10 peppercorns
4 partridges	3 cloves
75 ml oil	Salt
8 small onions	100 ml white wine
3 cloves garlic, crushed	100 ml vinegar
2 carrots, peeled	100 ml water
2 bay leaves	Lemon
1 tsp thyme	Parsley
1 tsp oregano	
1 tsp paprika	

Clean the partridges and rub them inside and out with salt and pepper. Truss them with string so they keep their shape. Heat the oil in a frying pan and slowly brown them, one or two at a time. When golden, transfer the birds to a casserole. Peel the very small onions and cut a slit in their stem end (helps to keep them from opening out) and add them to the oil with the crushed garlic and the carrots, peeled and halved lengthwise. Then add the bay, thyme, oregano, paprika, peppercorns, cloves, salt and white wine. Pour this over the partridges in the casserole and add the vinegar and water. Bring to a boil, then cover and cook very slowly until the birds are very tender, about 1 hour, adding more water as needed so there is always plenty of liquid in the casserole. When the birds are done, remove the pan from the heat and let cool thoroughly. Then remove the partridges and discard the string. Place them in a glass or crockery bowl. Strain the cooking liquid and pour it over the partridges, which should be covered by the liquid. Slice the carrots and add them and the onions to the bowl. Cover tightly and chill for a least 2 days. Serve at room temperature or reheat very gently.

(From the book *Cooking in Spain* by Janet Mendel).

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## Partridges with Chocolate Sauce

Some recipes from Navarra and Catalonia use chocolate as a special ingredient in their sauces. One classic example is the Costa Brava dish known as *mar y montaña*, or sea and mountain, which contains lobster and chicken. Another is this recipe from my grandmother's notes. Though the combination of chocolate and savoury foods sounds risky, the results are surprisingly delicious -believe me!

SERVES 4:

16 baby onions	2 celery stalks, cut into strips
2 partridges, halved	600 ml chicken stock
Salt and freshly ground Black pepper	2 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 tsp plain flour	1 baby leaf
4 tsp olive oil	4 slices stale bread
	100 gr bitter chocolate, grated

Place the onions in boiling water for 1 minute, then drain and peel, leaving them whole. Season the partridges with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and dust them with flour. Heat a little oil in a flameproof earthenware casserole and fry the partridges and onions until lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Add the celery and cook for 2 minutes, then stir in the stock, wine vinegar and bay leaf. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes.

Heat the remaining oil until very hot. Fry the bread until brown, then drain on kitchen paper and place on a serving plate. Remove the partridge halves from the sauce and place one on each piece of fried bread. Garnish with the celery and onions. Remove the bay leaf and bring the sauce to the boil. Check and adjust the seasoning if necessary and add most of the chocolate. Once the chocolate melts, it thickens the sauce instantly. Add a little more chocolate if necessary. Pour the sauce over the partridges and serve.

(From the book *Spain on a Plate* by María José Sevilla).

## Quail with Olives

SERVES 4:

12 quail	3 large carrots, diced
Salt	2 tbsp flour
Freshly ground black pepper	1 tbsp crumbled thyme leaves
4 cups chicken broth	1/2 tsp chopped parsley
6 tbsp olive oil	2 bay leaves
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	200 gr pitted olives
1 small onion, peeled and chopped	
150 gr serrano ham, diced	

Clean the quail, singe off pin feathers, if necessary, and tuck the wing tips under the birds. For the legs, cut a small slit on either side of the cavity, cross the legs and slip the tip of each leg through one of the slits to prevent quail from losing their shape. Season with salt and pepper.

Bring the chicken broth to a boil in a small saucepan.

Heat the oil in a large oven. Add the quail and cook over medium-high heat until browned on all sides. Remove the quail from the pan and set aside.

# Spanish Masterpieces



**GONZALEZ BYASS**  
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Add the garlic and onion to the oil remaining in the pan and cook until lightly browned. Add the ham and cook until lightly browned. Add the carrots and cook for 5 minutes longer. Sprinkle the flour over all and let cook, stirring, for a few minutes. Add the hot broth. Let cook for 20 minutes.

Return the quail to the pan, add the thyme, parsley, and bay leaves, and cook over low heat for 15 minutes longer, stirring frequently, and adding more broth if necessary.

Just before serving, add the olives and bring the sauce to a boil for several seconds. Remove the quail, arrange them on a large shallow platter and spoon the sauce over them. Serve very hot.

(From the book *The Taste of Spain* by Xavier Domingo and Pierre Hussenot).

## Hare and Partridge Stew (Morteruelo)

SERVES 10:

1/2 hare or wild rabbit, cleaned	1 tbsp paprika
1/4 chicken, or 1 thigh and 1 leg.	1/2 tsp ground cumin
1 partridge, cleaned	1/2 tsp ground cloves
250 gr Serrano ham	1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
250 gr pork liver	1/2 tsp freshly ground
250 gr smoked slab bacon	Black pepper
Salt	300 gr breadcrumbs
6 tbsp olive oil	

Rinse and pat dry the rabbit, chicken, and partridge. Place them in a large stock pot with the ham, liver, and bacon. Add enough cold water to cover, season with salt and cook over medium heat for 2 hours.

Remove the meats from the pan, reserving the cooking liquid. Skin and bone the meats and chop coarsely with a knife.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Add the paprika, stirring rapidly. Add the reserved cooking liquid, along with the cumin, cloves, cinnamon and pepper. Bring to a boil and stir in the breadcrumbs. Cook for 5 minutes and add the meats. Let simmer over very low heat for 20 minutes, stirring frequently to keep ingredients from sticking.

Correct the seasoning, if necessary, and serve with slices of toasted country bread.

(From the book *The Taste of Spain* by Xavier Domingo and Pierre Hussenot).

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## Rabbit in Salmorejo

As well as the cold soup made in Córdoba, the word *salmorejo* refers to a sauce that is made in the Canary Islands from olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper and shows undoubted Andalusian or Moorish influence. There can be nothing more pleasant than to savour this dish in the sunshine of the Islands' gentle Winter. The rabbit is cooked until tender, crisp and golden, and topped with an unusual and tasty sauce. It is traditionally served with *papas arrugadas* which is a dish of potatoes boiled in heavily salted water until they are soft, the water poured off and the potatoes cooked again over a very low heat until they are slightly wrinkly.

SERVES 4:

1 rabbit, cut into 8-12 pieces	1 green pepper, de-seeded and roughly chopped
250 ml olive oil	A pinch of ground cumin
1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped	1 tsp paprika
1 bay leaf	1 tsp sherry vinegar
1 sprig of thyme	1 tbsp water
Salt	
2 small chicken or rabbit livers	

Place the rabbit in a bowl with half the oil, half the garlic, the bayleaf, thyme and a pinch of salt. Marinate for 2 hour, turning occasionally, then remove from the marinade and drain.

Reserve 1 tablespoon of oil. Heat the remainder and fry the rabbit pieces for about 20 minutes until golden brown and cooked through. Drain and place on a warmed serving plate, keeping them warm.

Meanwhile, boil the chicken or rabbit livers in a little water and salt for about 8 minutes until cooked, then drain them. Transfer them to a mortar or food processor with the remaining garlic, the pepper, cumin and paprika, and pound or process to a thick sauce. Thin the sauce with the sherry vinegar, water and remaining oil, and season to taste with salt. Pour the sauce over the rabbit and serve immediately.

(From the book *Spain on a Plate* by María José Sevilla).

## MEDITERRANEAN DIET

SERVES 4:

200 gr baby broad beans, shelled and peeled	FOR THE MINT FOAM: 1 sprig mint
30 gr Iberico ham fat	1 dl pig's ear stock
1 dl Iberico ham stock	

Whizz 150 gr of the beans with the ham stock into a finely textured soup; set aside the remaining beans. Cut the ham fat into small cubes.

To prepare the mint foam, strip the mint leaves from their stems and infuse the leaves in hot water for 1/2 minute. Whizz in the blender then pour through a sieve and add the ear stock. Allow to cool, then whisk with an electric beater as if you were whipping cream.

Fry the ham fat cubes very gently, then add the reserved beans and heat through. Divide the mixture among 4 tall coffee cups. Heat the soup, and pour into the cups until they are 3/4 full. Top with the mint foam to create a spring capuccino.

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## Razor Clams and Macaroni with Chicken Jus

SERVES 4:

32 razor clams  
50 gr macaroni  
8 thick stalks asparagus  
2 dl herb gelée

1/2 dl chicken jus  
1/2 dl garlic flavored oil  
5 blood oranges

Drop the razor clams into boiling water for 10 seconds to open them, then remove the tubular fleshy part and cut diagonally into small discs.

Boil the macaroni, allow to cool, then cut up diagonally like the clams.

Peel the asparagus and trim -use only the tips. Boil in salted water, drain, then cut in half. Melt the gelée to nappage (coating) consistency and pour over the asparagus.

Squeeze the oranges and grate the rind of one of them. Place the juice and rind in a pan over a low heat and reduce to a syrupy consistency.

Place the chicken jus and garlic oil in a large pan over a low heat, adding the macaroni and clams and heating through without boiling. Place on a serving dish, heat under the grill then serve with the orange syrup poured around it and the gelled asparagus on top.

## Prawns with Mahón or Idiazabal Cheese and Sherry with Rice Parcels

SERVES 4:

12 large prawns  
100 gr Mahón or Idiazabal cheese  
40 gr double cream  
3 dl Pedro Ximénez  
1 dessertspoon lemon preserve

FOR THE RICE PARCELS:

4 thin rashers bacon  
100 gr basmati rice  
50 gr ceps (*boletus Edulis*)  
1 dl ceps jus  
20 gr foie gras purée

FOR 200 GR OF LEMON PRESERVE:

10 lemons of 50 gr each  
400 gr sugar

Cut the lemons into 1/2 cm dice (do not peel, but remove any pips), then place in a pan with the sugar and 4 dl water. Leave on a low heat for 3 hours. Cool and set aside.

Peel the prawns, removing the central intestine and cut in half lengthways without reaching the tail. Chop the cheese into small pieces and mix with the cream, heating the mixture very gently until the cheese melts then passing through a sieve. Reduce the Pedro Ximénez over a low heat until it forms a thick syrup.

Boil the rice for 15 minutes, then cool thoroughly spread out on a cloth.

Dice the ceps finely and brown lightly in a tablespoon of olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the rice and the mushroom jus and cook until the rice has absorbed the liquid. Add the foie gras purée. Make the rice into little parcels by wrapping in bacon.

Place a tablespoon of olive oil in a frying pan over a high heat and add the prawns until they are golden on both sides. Brown the bacon parcels in another pan.

Spread the cheese mixture on a serving dish, topped with the bacon parcels, the prawns and 4 pieces of preserved lemon. Heat the entire dish in a salamander and drizzle with the Pedro Ximénez syrup just before serving.

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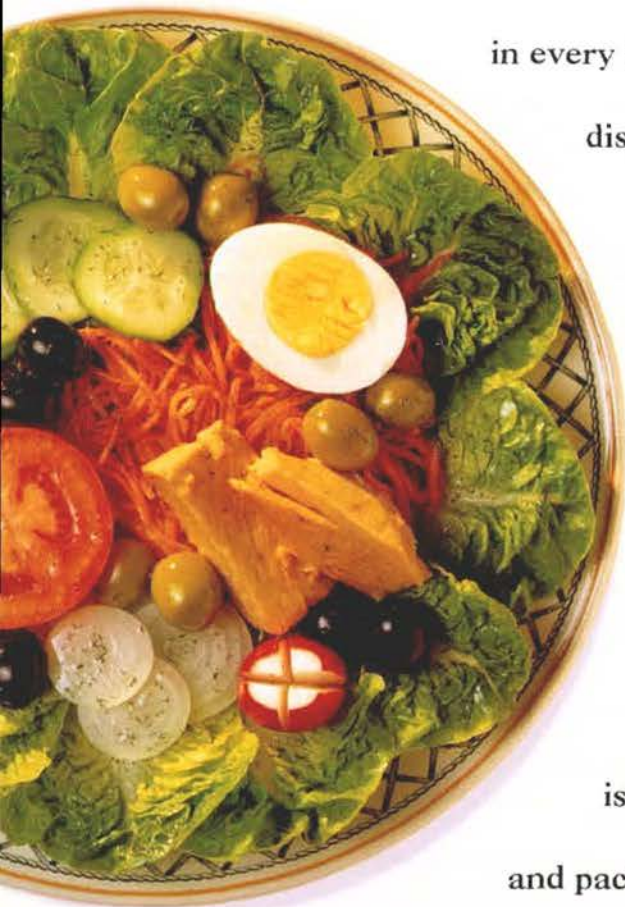
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# RECIPES

## Almond Soup with Lemon Curd, Red Fruit Compote and Sesame Biscuit

SERVES 4:  
8 eggs  
300 gr sugar  
Peel and juice of 8 lemons

FOR THE ALMOND SOUP:  
150 gr peeled fresh almonds  
50 gr water

FOR THE SESAME BISCUIT:  
Filo pastry  
1 tablespoon sesame  
Seeds  
1 dl syrup  
100 gr red fruit compote  
100 gr almonds  
80 gr wild strawberries

Whizz the almonds and water together in the blender to make a smooth 'soup', then set aside in the fridge.

Make a lemon curd by beating together the eggs, sugar and lemon and baking in the oven in a bain-marie for 10 minutes at 160°C (320°F).

Make the sesame biscuit by painting the filo pastry with syrup (use a pastry brush), sprinkling with the sesame seeds and baking in the oven until crisp and golden.

To serve, place two tablespoons of lemon curd in the center of each plate with the strawberries, a piece of sesame biscuit, a little red fruit compote and a few almonds. Serve the soup in a bowl.

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# GLOSSARY

**WINE** *Crianza*. This term is reserved for wines aged in the wood and bottle for at least 2 years, 6 months of which must be in oak casks.

*Reserva*. There are two types of standard for the use of this designation. Red wines must age for a minimum of 36 months in the wood and bottle, at least 12 of them in oak casks. For rosé and white wines, the minimum period is 24 months, 6 of them in oak casks.

*Gran Reserva*. This term is used exclusively for red and claret wines that have aged for at least 24 months in oak casks followed by at least 36 months in the bottle. For white and rosé wines, the minimum period is 48 months of which a minimum of 6 months must be in the wood.

In all cases, the barrels must be made of oak and must have a maximum capacity of 1,000 liters.

**SHERRY** The system used in Jerez for blending wines is known as *criaderas y solera*. The butts, or *botas*, are arranged in rows up to three high, the bottom row being called the *solera*. The upper rows are called the *criaderas*, that nearest the *solera* being the first *criadera*, the next one up the second *criadera*, etc.

When the time comes for bottling, about one third of the wine from each of the *solera* barrels is removed. Then one third of the wine in the first *criadera* is drawn off, blended in an operation called *cabeceo* and added to the *solera*. The process is then repeated with the second *criadera*.

## 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 millilitres  
 1 gallon = 3 3/4 litres

## Oven Temperature

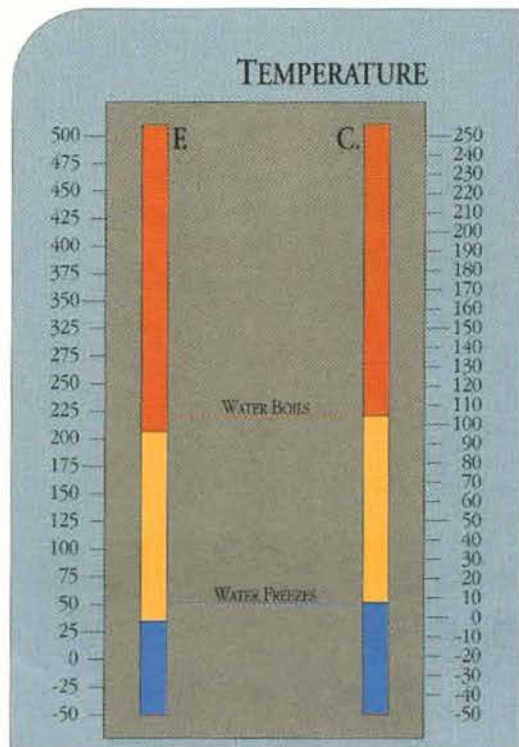
TEMPERATURE

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

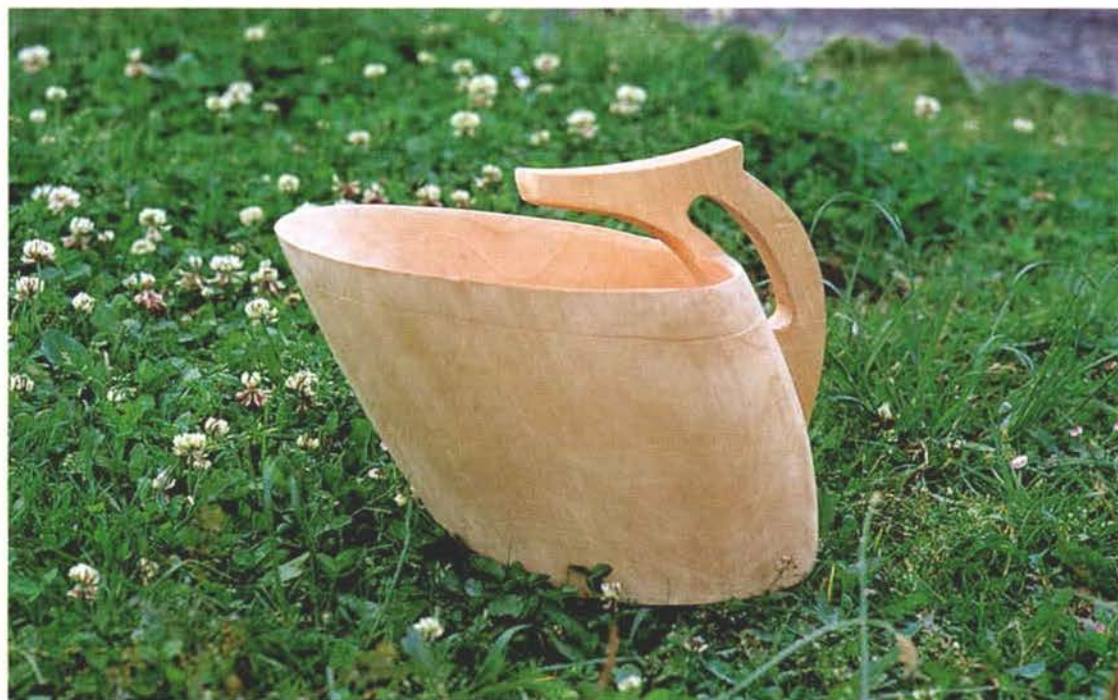
*In our recipes, quantities are given in metric measurements. The charts on this page show approximate equivalents between Imperial or American measures and metric measures.*



# KAIKU

## THE EMBLEM OF THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE BAZTÁN

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JUAN RAMÓN YUSTE/ICEX

**L**ike the Japanese *Haiku* -or three-lined piece of poetic perfection- which the sound of its name suggests, the *Kaiku* is a three-purpose article of perfection in woodwork that has become one of the symbols of Baztán craftsmanship, inseparably linked as it is with the highly prized *cuajada*, a dessert made from clotted sheep's milk. Shaped like an obliquely displaced mug, the *kaiku* is ideal for milking -the angle of the inclination making it easy to catch the milk without tilting the recipient- for carrying and pouring the milk and finally for the boiling and setting of the milk in the making of *cuajada* introducing a burning stone. *Kaiku* are traditionally hand-carved from the

trunk of a birch and come in various sizes, depending on their purpose. The larger *kaiku* are used for milking and the smaller ones for making and serving *cuajada*. The making of *kaiku* is said to date from thousands of years ago and the technique of carving the birch trunk has remained basically unchanged, requiring strength, time and patience. That is why, according to Domingo Etxandi, the leading craftsman in the whole of the Baztán valley, there are not many young woodcarvers willing or able to maintain the art. Living in the picturesque village of Errazu, in the northeast of the region, Etxandi has devoted over thirty years to the craft, as well as working as an ordinary carpenter. His house and workshop, where he also sells his *kaiku* and other traditional wood-

en implements, such as *abatza* (jug for boiling milk and cheesemaking), *idazkia* (funnel for filtering), *malatza* (beater), *zimitza* (cheesemould), *kartola* (drainer) and *oporra* (wooden mug), are a showcase of his craft. Nowadays, people buy *kaiku* and the other implements almost exclusively for their ornamental value. Apart from a few farmhouses, where *cuajada* and cheese are still made in the traditional way, European Union hygiene legislation discourages such practices as a risk to public health and rules that plastic implements be used instead. Nevertheless, you can taste the difference in a *kaiku*-elaborated *cuajada*, should you have the good fortune to try one, and you can certainly admire the beauty of the traditional wooden containers.

**Frank Smith**

Bodegas Bilbainas is owner of an estate of 260 hectares of vineyards surrounding the winery itself in Haro, the heart of Rioja Alta in Spain. The history of this estate in the world of wine goes back to 1859.

The red grape varieties grown in the 260 hectares of own vineyards include Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo.

The red wine VIÑA POMAL comes from the vineyard of 100 hectares of the same name within the property.



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