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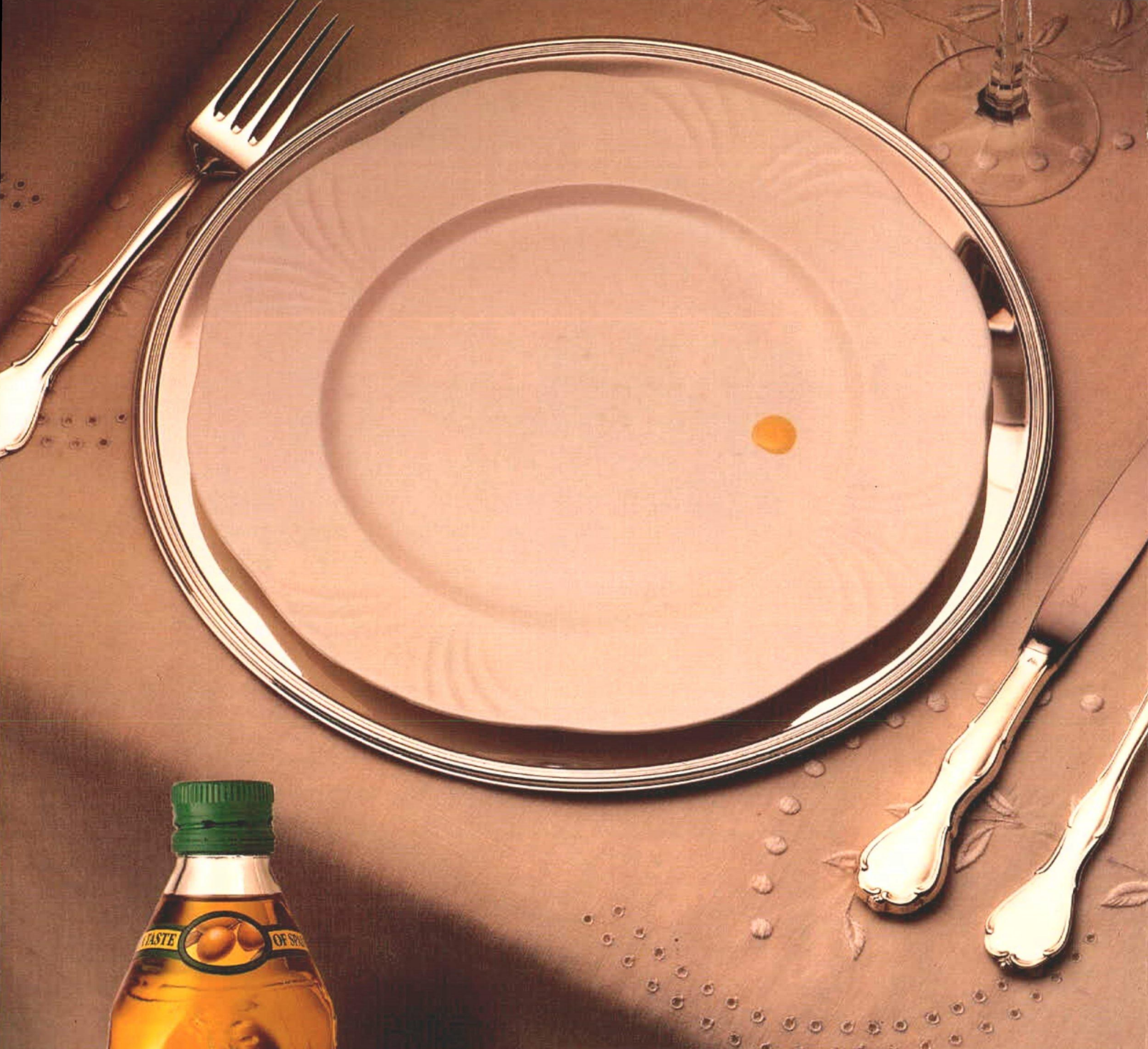
# SPAIN

G O U R M E T O U R

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

US \$5

A TASTE FOR OLIVES • THE WINE RIVERS OF SPAIN. THE RIVER DUERO  
• TRAVELING IN STYLE. VINTAGE LUXURY ABOARD THE AL ANDALUS TRAIN

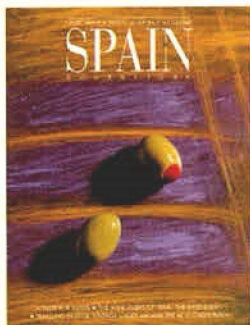


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**Spain Gourmetour**

is a journal published by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the Tourism and Commerce Ministry to promote Spain's food and wines, as well as its cuisine and culture. The magazine is issued three times a year in English, French and German, and is distributed free of charge to professionals in the sector, through the Commercial Offices of the Spanish Embassies (see list on page 17).

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SOLERA GRAN RESERVA  
**CARDENAL MENDOZA**

*Brandy de Jerez*

SANCHEZ ROMATE HNOS. JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA



# D

ear readers,

If behind a great man there's always a great woman, alongside a good wine there's often a great river. In this issue we begin a series of articles on the great rivers of Spain that are closely associated with the wines produced along their banks. The first is the River Duero, which crosses the Castilian plateau watering the soils of four different Denominations of Origin -Rueda, Ribera del Duero, Toro and Cigales.

A little further north, the wines of Navarre continue their spectacular upward trend of recent years by incorporating new wineries to this D.O. which is now exporting in large quantities.

The olives on our front cover remind us that Spain is the top producer worldwide of this Mediterranean fruit. This time we have approached the subject of olives from a different angle suggesting a symphony of tastes and aromas based on olives of all sorts - green, black, stuffed... The whole range of varieties is covered in our colorful and original cocktail.

Olives stuffed with anchovies are a much-prized speciality for Spanish consumers. But we go a step further with an article on whole salted anchovies and anchovy fillets in oil. These are a traditional product in Spain coming mostly from Cantabria and the Basque Country along the north coast and Catalonia where the salting process has remained practically unaltered over the centuries.

Now to fresh products -loquats and lamb. Loquats, still considered something of an exotic fruit, have a delicate, fresh flavor. And the top quality of Spanish lamb is the result of centuries of experience in sheep-farming.

A visit to the market of any Spanish town is a must for visitors interested in gastronomy. The old markets are managing to survive in spite of the invasion of hypermarkets and there can be no doubt that they offer a great deal more charm than their competitors as well as surprisingly fresh and varied quality products.

Not just surprising but perfectly delightful is a trip on the Al Andalus Express visiting some of the most beautiful of the Andalusian cities. The old carriages decorated in the 'belle époque' style are back on the rails for the enjoyment of those who fancy savoring travel as it used to be.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who responded to the survey in our last issue. We are still working on the results and plan to give you a summary of them in our next edition.



Compiled by  
BETTINA KRÜCKEN



## SPAIN by MONDINO

PASSION FOR LIFE - A PERSONAL VIEW  
BY JEAN BAPTISTE MONDINO

### SPANISH PASSION FOR LIFE

The advertising campaign being run by Spain's Ministry for Trade and Tourism is based on the impressions of well-known photographers like David Bailey, Elliot Erwitt, Michael Kenna, Annie Leibovitz, Jean-Baptiste Mondino, Herb Ritts, Sebastiao Salgado, Jean-Loup Sieff, Ellen von Umwerth and Javier Vallbonrat. A far cry from the hackneyed image of sun and sand, the focus is now on the cultural aspects which mark Spain out from other tourist destinations: paintings by Picasso or Tápies, dancers, horses, landscapes in La Mancha,



### NEW LARGE FORMAT FOR VIÑA SALCEDA 1991

The firm Bodegas Viña Salceda in Rioja Alavesa recently brought out a one and half liter magnum of their red Crianza 1991. This is a fruity, ruby-red wine with a slightly woody aroma and a pleasantly long finish. After eighteen months cask-aging, it is bottled and allowed to age for a further ten months to bring out its characteristic, well-balanced bouquet.

With this new format, which aims to ensure the wine's optimal aging and elegance, Bodegas Viña Salceda is confirming its policy of producing wines of the highest quality.

### ANTONIO BANDERAS ADVERTISES SPANISH OLIVE OIL AND IBERIAN HAM

The film star from Andalusia, Antonio Banderas, will soon be playing another major role -alongside Spanish olive oil and exquisite Iberian ham.

The Andalusian regional government is investing over 300 million pesetas (US\$ 2.5 million) which will be spent on television commercials and advertisements in the printed media. The campaign has been planned both for the European and the American market and will start with ham in early spring and move on to olive oil in September when the new harvest comes on to the market.

### SPANISH OLIVE OIL ON BRITISH AIRWAYS CONCORDE

Since January 18th this year, British Airways Concorde passengers are being offered Spanish native Virgin Extra olive oil for meals on all flights. Olivo de Cambil is a pure Picual olive oil with the Denomination of Origin (Denominación de Origen) Sierra Mágina from the Sierra Mágina National Park in the Andalusian province of Jaén. The oil will be served in small 25 ml jugs specially designed for that purpose, to enable passengers to dress salads and other food. With a fresh and fruity aroma, very slightly spicy in the mouth, it leaves an intense lasting flavor of olives.

### A NEW BRANDY DE JEREZ FROM OSBORNE

Osborne y Cia will launch a new brandy this year. The brandy, called Conde de Osborne, is a Gran Reserva, the maximum quality within the Specific Denomination (DE) Brandy de Jerez.

The first new brandy launched by Osborne for 25 years, it has been carefully aged and the *soleras* (see Glossary on page 113) have been created for many years in order to prepare for this product. This brandy is aiming to become a leader among Brandies de Jerez and will be supported by advertising and promotions in key markets like Spain, Germany, Mexico and the Far East.

### CREATIVE HOLIDAYS IN ANDALUSIA

Two local entrepreneurs in Andalusia are attempting to provide varied and, at the same time, luxury holidays by offering a program of courses. "The Spirit of Andalusia" is the name of a series of exclusive holiday courses which will be held at the foot of the Sierra de Ronda in the little village of Gaucin and the surrounding area. The cookery courses are designed for lovers of both the Mediterranean cuisine and its way of life. In addition to actual cookery classes, there are visits to the market of Cádiz or Sanlúcar de Barrameda, a sherry *bodega*, the Spanish



Lanzarote etc., all providing the impetus for a more individual type of tourism, offering something more than just blue water and white sand.

In 1996, the Ministry will be investing around 2.2 billion pesetas (about US\$18.3 million) in the international tourism campaign, dubbed "Passion for Life", which will be advertised in 17 different countries. The countries where most will be spent on this marketing, which includes 14 different advertisements in the printed media, four television commercials and four billposter themes, are Germany, Britain, France and the United States.



riding school in Jerez and even two-day trips to Tangier. Accommodation will be provided for the guests in two private country manors in the midst of splendid scenery.

A series of cookery courses featuring Spanish foods will be presented by "Learning for Pleasure" at an Andalusian country house (see photo) near Jimena de la Frontera in the province of Cádiz. Courses of four to six days include a shopping trip to the market; wine, cheese, ham and olive oil tastings; and hands-on experience in the kitchen. Instructors are American cookbook author Janet Mendel, the Times cookery writer Frances Bissel and tutors from the Leith's School of Food and Wine in London.

*Learning for Pleasure*, Apto. 150; 29650 Mijas (Málaga); Tel: 34-5-248 62 10, Fax: 34-56-640 102.

*The Spirit of Andalusia*, Apto. 20; 29480 Gaucin (Málaga); Tel/fax: 34-52-151 303.

#### QUALITY CERTIFICATE FOR SOL-MELIÁ HOTELS A FIRST IN EUROPE

At FITUR, the international tourist trade fair held in Madrid in January, the Sol Meliá hotel group became the first in Europe to obtain the ISO-9002 certificate for its quality achievements. This European standard establishes a series of requirements a service company must fulfil to guarantee the quality of its facilities and customer service. The hotel's managers see this distinction as an incentive for the future.

#### ALIMENTARIA 1996

The international food fair Alimentaria, held from March 4-9, 1996, provided the backdrop for numerous food sector conferences and sessions, including the First International Food Forum and the First International Congress on the Mediterranean Diet, which was organized by the recently founded Association for the Promotion of the Mediterranean Diet. In the last few years, the nutritional model of Mediterranean countries like Spain has gained international stature as an example of a well-balanced and healthy way of eating.

In the Interlact (dairy) sector, the educational exhibition "Spain: country of a hundred cheeses" was received with particular interest, and special events were also very popular in other sectors.

After several years at the same level, the exhibition area at Alimentaria '96 was increased by 5%, and participation by international firms was up 9% on two years ago. The total exhibition surface area was over 72,000 square meters and the service area some 16,000 square meters.

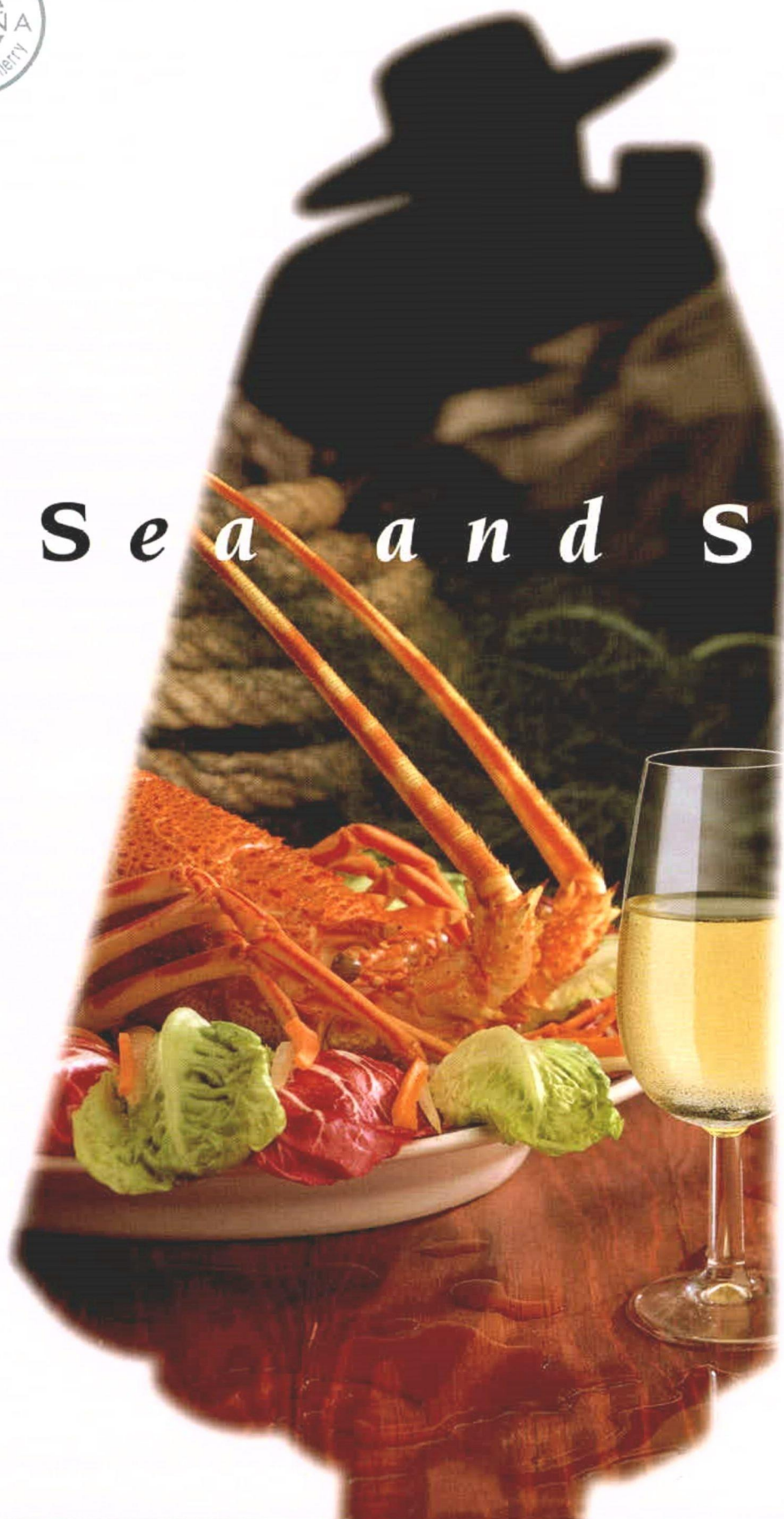
Coinciding with the fair, the French gourmet magazine Gault-Millau produced a 50-page section in its March edition on Spain as a tourist destination and producer of select delicacies such as Iberian ham.

#### NAVIDUL GROUP OBTAINS ISO-CERTIFICATE

The Spanish standards organization AENOR has awarded Navidul, the cured ham producer, the international ISO-9002 certificate for its head office in Madrid and plants in Olías del Rey, Torrijos, Candelario and Soria. This provides both confirmation and acknowledgement of its efforts to improve quality at all levels and meet international requirements.



# Sea and Sun



Sandeman Dry Seco:  
That very special touch  
of light that makes  
a luncheon by the sea into  
something unique.



**SANDEMAN. The Traditional Spanish Sherry**

Text: Graham Hines

Photo: Robbie Jack/ ICEX

## "Only Sherry is Sherry"

**T**he imposing setting of the Spanish Embassy residence in London's Belgrave Square formed the background for a unique event last December. The occasion was the celebration of the end of a thirty-year struggle to recover the exclusive rights to the name Sherry in the U.K. for the unique wines originating from the region of Jerez in Andalusia. At last in the U.K. as it has long been in the rest of Europe.

Strange as it may seem, Sherry has never had the legal protection in the U.K. (its main market for many years) which it enjoys in dozens of other countries. Various imitations have been marketed in the U.K. for many years using the word Sherry as part of their composite names, like Cyprus Sherry, and British Sherry which ironically is neither British nor Sherry being made from imported dehydrated grape must.

To add insult to injury, Sherry has been taxed at a rate almost half as much again as that of its imitators, and these two factors have

seriously inhibited the U.K. consumption of Sherry in recent years.

For a long time behind the scenes activity has taken place to put this right, and after representations by the Sherry Industry, the Spanish Government took up the cudgels for Sherry with the result that it has now gained both the exclusivity of the name Sherry for Spain, and a substantial reduction in the duty rate charged... and both with effect from the 1st January 1996.

It is not hard to see why the Embassy was the scene of such joy. Overlooked by

paintings from the Spanish National collection which adorn the walls of the main salon, a large gathering of Sherry producers and shippers, press, and important retailers, and representatives of official wine organizations, gathered to share a *copita* or two of Sherry in celebration, and hear speeches from the Ambassador H.E. Don Alberto Aza, and Don Rafael Coloma, President of the "Consejo Regulador de Jerez - Xérès - Sherry y Manzanilla - Sanlúcar de Barrameda".

### Good News for Everyone

The Ambassador made a witty and erudite speech in which he quoted significant mentions of Sherry in literature by Shakespeare and Samuel Pepys whilst also reflecting on the fact that Sherry was the first wine into the new world, carried as ballast in Columbus's ships. He underlined what good news these changes were for Sherry, Spain, Britain, and the British consumer. For Spain, because this unique wine is only produced in Andalusia, for Britain, because approximately half of the Sherry Industry is owned by British interests, and for the British consumer, because he or she will no longer be confused as to what is and what is not Sherry.

The Ambassador noted the backing of the Spanish Administration, particularly the Commercial Office in London headed by Julian García Valverde with Javier Burgos as Commercial Counsellor. Looking to the future, he said that the best news for the Sherry producers was that they had a real impetus to sell more Sherry now that they were no longer dogged by imitators, and he believed that Sherry would continue to be in the center of British life.

Replying, Rafael Coloma, President of the Regulatory Council, expressed his de-

light at what had been achieved and thanked all those who had played a part. In particular he mentioned the Ambassador, the Spanish Administration in Madrid, Juan Calabozo formerly of the Spanish Embassy Commercial Office, Graham Hines and his team in the Sherry Institute of Spain, José Manuel Rodríguez Molina and Juan Luis Bretón of the Sherry Exporters Association A.C.E.S. and David Sills of Monier Williams, legal adviser to the Regulatory Council.

Amongst the many distinguished guests present was the eminent author and wine writer, Hugh Johnson.

Speaking of the distinctive and unique character of Sherry he said: "The only word to explain the taste is finesse. There is finesse in the flavor which is subtle and 'moreish' and appetizing and you just cannot wait to get the next glass".

He put the difference down to the unique combination of Palomino grapes, grown on brilliant chalk soil and cooled by soft atlantic breezes -a combination found nowhere else in the world. "The Fino, the very dry Fino is unbelievably appetizing in summer and I love it with smoked salmon, and in the winter time *Amontillado* is nutty and marvellous -a real cockle warmer", he enthused.

The Ambassador's reception closed on a high note of anticipation when, to celebrate regaining ownership of the name Sherry, all the guests were presented with an individually numbered especially bottled Sherry from a 14 butt *solera* of rare *Oloroso* laid down for private consumption in 1830.

**Graham Hines** is Director of the Sherry Institute of Spain at the Spanish Embassy Commercial Office in London.



REAL SHERRY  
COMES ONLY  
FROM SPAIN



FINO QUINTA

*La Quinta Esencia Del Fino*

## Second Annual "Taste of Spain" Recipe Contest at the Culinary Institute of America

**F**ood from Spain, the food marketing department of the Commercial Office of Spain in New York, held its second annual "Taste of Spain" recipe contest for student chefs in late January.

The contest was held in conjunction with the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, America's foremost culinary school, which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. Many CIA students entered the competition this year, vying with each other to create the most innovative dishes using Spanish food products and culinary techniques.

The cuisine and culture of Spain were highly visible on campus while students developed, tested, and shared samples of their tasty creations. Eight finalists were selected to participate in the tantalizing final cook-off on January 29.

The Culinary Institute of America (C.I.A.) was founded in 1946 in New Haven, Connecticut to help satisfy the country's need for professional cooks and chefs. Today, the Institute's east coast campus is in Hyde Park overlooking the Hudson River in New York State. The recently opened west coast facility is located in Napa Valley, California (see Spain Gourmetour Nos. 37, 27, 14). The CIA, which is recognized as the coun-

try's premiere program for student chefs, restaurateurs and hoteliers, today has more than 2,000 students from every state and many foreign countries enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs in culinary arts, baking, and pastry arts. The faculty is made up of more than 100 chefs and instructors from 20 countries.

The Taste of Spain Recipe Contest was initiated last year to promote the food, culture and products of Spain among the future chefs of America, and to give students an opportunity to showcase their talents in the kitchen. Utilizing Spanish foods in imaginative and creative ways was the goal of the participants, each of whom was required in the first round to submit their entry recipe on paper. Chef Instructors from the CIA evaluated the recipes and narrowed the group down to eight finalists, who then had the opportunity to actually prepare their recipes in the Hyde Park kitchens. The final cook-off was held on January 29, 1996. The delicious, beautifully prepared dishes were tasted with care by a group of six prestigious judges, including Susan Wyler (cookbook author and publisher), Andrew Birsh (of *Gourmet Magazine*), Gerry Dawes (food and wine writer), Rosa Ross (food and wine writer), Charlie Pinsky (television producer) and Javier Rodero of Foods from Spain.

The three prize winners were: Mark Boisvert Lavasseuse, whose "Iberian Ham-Wrapped Cod on Shellfish

and Tomato Sauce" was a taste-bud tantalizer, Second Place: Daniel Traster, preparing a delicious "Braised Lamb Shanks with Dried Fruit Nuts", and the Third Place: Jeffrey Vakassian, pleasing the judges with his "Rack of Lamb with Roasted Piquillo Peppers and Thyme". The prizes won by the three rising young culinary stars will certainly reinforce their interest in the cuisine and culture of Spain. Mr. Lavasseuse, the first-prize winner, receives a two-month trip to Spain to work in three top restaurants of San Sebastián, the northern city with plenty of excellent restaurants. In addition to producing a host of creative new recipes by these young chefs, the Recipe Contest raises the awareness of Spanish cuisine and culture among an important group of people, for graduates of the CIA go on to work at the world's top restaurants and hotels. Their increased knowledge and appreciation of Spanish foods gained through this contest will be useful to them in their future careers and will benefit the Spanish food industry, the source of these delicious products.

*Rory Callahan is the editor of Foods from Spain News published by the Commercial Office of Spain in New York, and has written extensively on food and wine. He speaks frequently at food and wine conferences throughout the United States.*



# LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA

•It's *tapa* time again. Our last issue reported on the guide called **De tapas por Madrid**. Now we have three new booklets from the same collection but this time on Seville, San Sebastián and Bilbao, all written by local *tapa* connoisseurs. After a brief introduction to the significance of *tapas* in their respective cities, they give a selection of their favorites, plus recipes and details of where to find the best-cooked versions. A number of city routes are given with numerous maps that make *tapa*-hunting easy even for non-locals. For each bar there is a brief description, a list of its specialities and a grading using not stars but 1, 2 or 3 wine-glasses. Finally, the full indices make these guides (sponsored by the Regulatory Council for Sherry Wines) essential handbooks for the noble occupation of what Spaniards call *tapeo* or *tapa*-tasting.

•Now for another trio of guides but this time on Spanish wines, two by wine writers and the third by a team of writers. The **Guía Peñín de los vinos de España 1995-96**, by the veteran wine writer José Peñín, covers about 5,000 brand names, with over 3,000 tastings and ratings for almost 1,600 wines. A novelty in the latest edition is a summary of the current situation of wines both within Spain and worldwide together with the background to Spanish wines and a note on certain wines that are no longer in production. The second writer is Andrés Proensa who has published the second edition of **La guía de oro de los vinos de España 1996**, in full color, giving a selection of almost 600 of the best wines produced by 239 wineries in the different Spanish D.O. The label is shown for each wine next to a full description of its characteristics, history, how to serve it, etc. The book has an attractive design and practical information and the wines are classified in four categories according to quality. Finally, the longest-established of the Spanish wine guides, now in its eleventh edition - **Guía de vinos Gourmets 1996**. This guide gives the fullest information on the panorama for Spanish wines and the different D.O.s as well as specialist shops, etc. but perhaps there is room for rather more personal comments.

•**Travelers' Tales. Spain**. A little gem of a book giving selections from writings by 20th cen-

tury travelers to Spain. The selection by Lucy McCauley includes texts by renowned writers such as García Márquez alongside other less well-known travelers on aspects of the 'typical' side of Spain -flamenco, bull-fighting, etc. - and on more general topics related to the Spanish way of life and Spaniards. Through recollections by foreign students of Spanish in Spain or tales of experiences on modern pilgrimages along the Road to Santiago, the aim is to give a pre-visit introduction to Spain as a complement to other classic works or tourist guides. Of interest too is the section entitled "Books for Further Reading".

•"Everything you always wanted to know about oil and olives and never dared to ask". This could be the sub-title for **El libro del aceite y de las aceitunas**. First published in 1989 and now re-edited, the authoresses give exhaustive information but in a well-structured and pleasant way making the book of interest to gastronomes and general readers alike. In addition to a history of the olive there is a very full selection of recipes using olive oil or table olives and information on a broad range of related topics including oil extraction, olive oil chemistry, organoleptic characteristics, etc.

•Think of a Spanish food product. Did anyone say oysters? Hardly! So how come we're talking here about a book called **A Passion for Oysters**? Well, oysters go perfectly with certain Spanish products such as sherry, saffron or *cava*. The proof is offered in this little book by Shirley

Line, a devoted oyster-lover and food writer. She gives an interesting selection of recipes centring on oysters: Barley Salad with Oysters with a dressing featuring sherry and sherry vinegar, Oysters with Spinach and *cava* sauce or Jiffy Oyster Feast in which oysters are teamed with rice flavored with sherry and saffron. And what is the best drink to go with oysters? While champagne continues to be the classic accompaniment, Ms Line also suggests a chilled dry sherry.

•The idea behind this **Historia de la gastronomía española**, first planned during the sixties and seventies, was for it to be a textbook for the students of the Madrid Catering School giving a history of cooking in Spain over the centuries. It first appeared in 1981 but rapidly disappeared in its original version and for years was only available, though very popular, in abbreviated form. But now the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the La Val de Onsera publishers -both very active in the publication of interesting texts on Spanish gastronomy- have re-published the whole work in a luxury coffee-table version with plenty of illustrations. From prehistoric times to the twentieth century, the book describes the food of the Iberians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Arabs, Jews, etc. If there is one thing that characterizes Spanish cooking, it is that it came out of the melting-pot of cultures and peoples peoples that have inhabited Spain over the centuries. And the numerous literary quotations give added interest to this carefully-prepared work.



*Travelers' Tales, Spain*  
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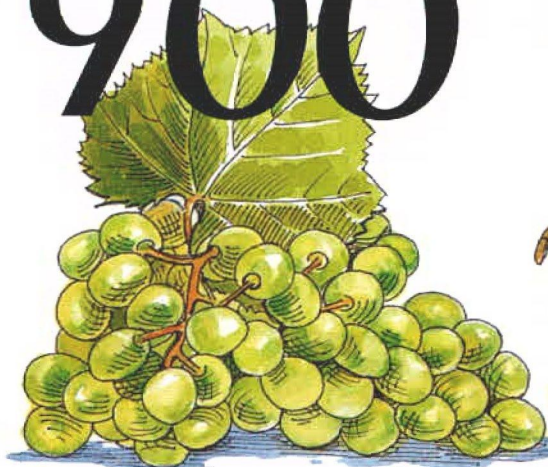
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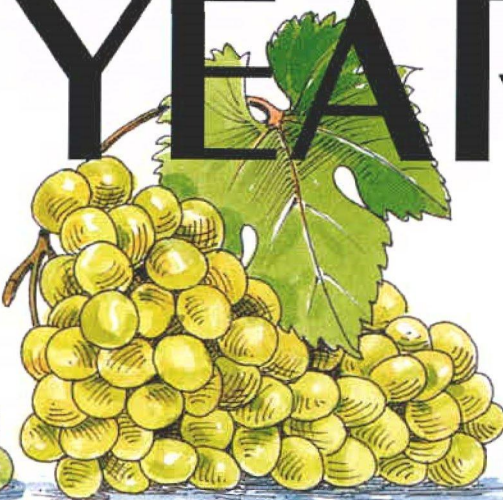
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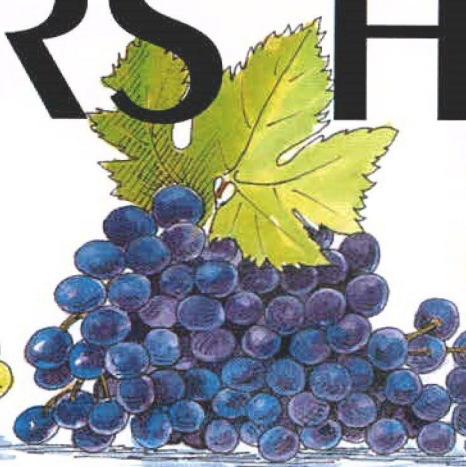
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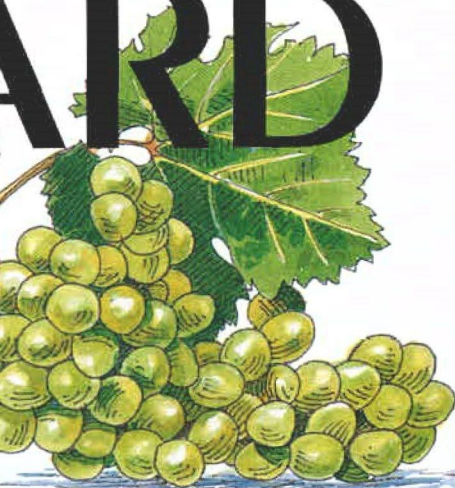
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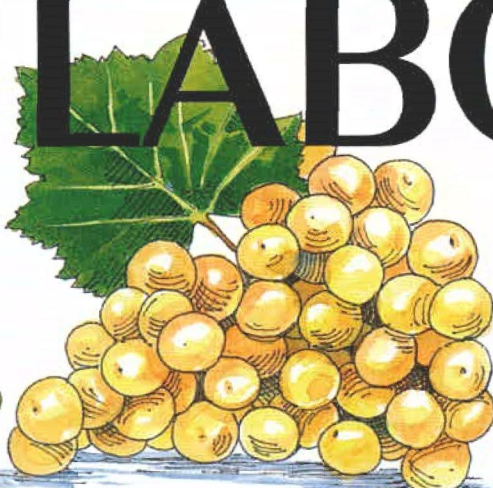
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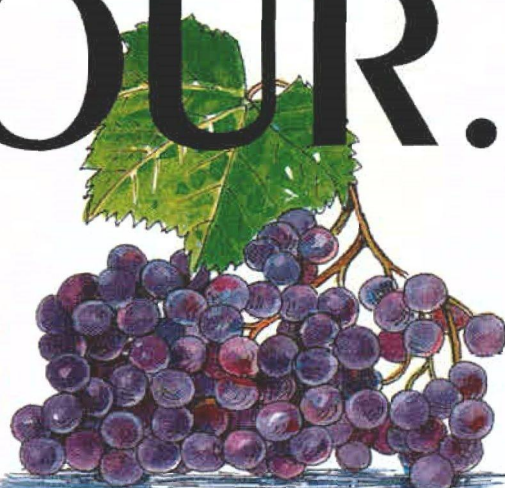
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## Anchovy-Stuffed Olives

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# EVERYTHING BUT THE ELEPHANT...



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

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

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

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

The river Duero flows through a lush green landscape of fertile soils and rolling hills under a crisp, alpine-blue sky. This is a land of wildflower meadows and sheep-farms as well as castles and kings, known as the breadbasket of Spain for its production of quality cereals...And soon to be known for another of its outstanding contributions to gastronomy: the wines of the Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero. The vine thrives in the

chalk and sandstone soils here, at an altitude of 2,500 feet: the very limit at which grapes can be grown and ripened anywhere in Spain.

The high, cool spring, hot summer and autumn, and very cold winter ensure that only the healthiest vines survive to produce grapes, and the combination of freshness, acidity and ripeness of those grapes is

unique in Spain, and the rest of the world. The vine is the Tinto Fino, or Tempranillo, which has evolved its own unique characteristics in this high Castilian

plâteau – characteristics which have been much prized by those in power in the major cities of the region: Burgos, where El Cid launched his campaigns against the Moors; Segovia, where Isabella – mother of the Infanta Catherine – was proclaimed Queen; Valladolid, former capital of Spain and Soria, for many years the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain.

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

In the countryside, too, people had a healthy thirst for good wine, and in

almost every village you'll see *luceras* – strange towers like giant spears of petrified asparagus which stick up almost everywhere, between the houses and on the hillsides.

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

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

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

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



WINES FROM



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**Erratum:**

The photo in the article "Clementines" published in Spain Gourmetour No. 37 is not by Félix Lorrío but by IVIA, the Valencian Institute for Agricultural Research.



# TASTE FOR OLIVES



*"Son aceitunados tus ojos  
y están aderezados  
de orégano y sal"*

Your eyes are the color of olives,  
and they're seasoned  
with oregano and salt  
(Popular rhyme)

*"Como la oliva verde  
es el querer que te tengo  
sumiso y blando por fuera,  
entero y fuerte por dentro"*

My love for you  
is like the green olive,  
yielding and soft on the outside,  
sound and strong on the inside  
(Folk song)

*'Los ojos de mi morena  
ni son chicos, ni son grandes  
son como aceitunas negras  
de olivaritos gordales"*

The eyes of my dark  
one are neither big nor small;  
they are like the black olives  
of the little gordal trees  
(Folk song)

Text: **Alicia Ríos**  
Still lifes: **Menchu Artime**  
Photos: **A. de Benito/ICEX**  
Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

Ship's Captain-Style Black Olives





# A TASTE FOR OLIVES

Our taste for olives dates back 6000 years. Since we first started cultivating olives, some four thousand years BC, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, they have been an integral part of human history. We have been eating olives for sixty centuries, and we eat them now for the same reasons we always have. That is to say that for both flavor and nutritional input, they are still quintessentially the same.

The process of preparing olives for eating and enhancing their flavor with different seasonings is an art that has been handed down to us in a direct line from our ancestors. Though technology has improved standards of hygiene during processing and the durability of the end product, the intrinsic qualities of the olive remain intact. The essential medium is, and always has been, brine.

Tradition has it that our ancestors discovered the secret of making olives edible by accident. The first olives were eaten on the beach, after oiling the body, like Ulysses, before breasting the wave. Though unpalatable straight off the tree, it was discovered that olives which had fallen into the sea and been washed about a bit lost their bitterness and became almost sweet. The same effect could be achieved with well-water and salt from the salt-flats, around which the aromatic plants that thrive in dry soil grow wild. The sun concentrates the essential resinous oils found in plants such as fennel, marjoram, thyme, rosemary and sage. These were added as flavorings to the base liquid in which the olives were im-

mersed to produce the natural lactic fermentation which makes them edible and longer lasting.

The boundless creativity of the peoples who inhabit the shores of the Mediterranean is well-known, as is their proverbial instinctive wisdom in matters of health and well-being. The art of seasoning olives encapsulates something of both.

## The art of seasoning olives

The condiments used for dressing olives are by no means random choices. They are governed by various factors: how ripe the fruit is, what time of year it is, what other seasonal produce there is about and, importantly, local traditions. Preferences for particular flavors are characteristic of particular regions, and the ingredients used to complement the taste of the olive vary accordingly.

For a start, there are several botanical varieties of olive-tree which produce *aceitunas de mesa* -'table' or 'eating' olives. These include the Manzanilla Fina, eaten green and dressed in the Seville style, the Gordal, the Hojiblanca, the Cacereña, and the Arbequina. They share the characteristics of low oil content, abundant meaty flesh, and closely-packed fibers.

Whatever the variety, one vital factor that governs the choice of dressing for olives is how ripe the fruit is. Olives start off green and, as they ripen, undergo various changes of color and flavor as the oleuropein they contain is gradually transformed into sugars. During this phase of devel-

opment, the fruit turns from bright green to green tinged with violet, to purple, and finally to black, by which time it is fully ripe and almost sweet. That said, though, some of the black olives on the market have been blackened by the so-called 'Californian' process whilst still relatively unripe. This explains why these can be combined successfully with dressings which would not work well with olives ripened on the tree.

Green olives, bitter in flavor and tart on the palate, are best complemented by acidic condiments and the rustic flavors of aromatic herbs. Ripe black ones call out for dressings in the sweet-sour range - spicier, exotic and more sensual. Nature herself provides further inspiration. We start eating olives when they are still bitter, around mid-September: at that time of year the palate yearns for a taste that whets the appetite, and the dry flavor of olives crushed between two stones. At that time of year, the Mediterranean table is laden with the sweetest of melons, grapes, honey-rich figs. Then a little later on come the pomegranates, quinces and persimmons. By winter-time, with its cold weather foods like sausages and hearth-cooked stews, olives have reached a state of sweet blackness that makes them almost dessert material.

## Spain's production of table olives

Spain is the world leader in the production and export of table olives. Their official denomination *aceitunas de mesa* (or *aceitunas*

*de verdeo* or *aceitunas de agua*) signifies technically that they have undergone a natural 'de-bittering' process which involves submerging green olives (whole, split or crushed) in a bath of continually running water, or in a container of brine or water with a specific content of sea salt.

Spain's average annual production of the various varieties of eating olives (as opposed to oil-yielding ones) is around 330 million kilos. The country's most important olive-producing region is Andalusia, within which the provinces of Seville, Cordoba and Malaga are the leading sources. Next come the regions of Extremadura and Castile, followed by Aragón and Catalonia. Other regions produce less significant quantities, though the quality is equally high. Though the Spaniards themselves are constant and enthusiastic olive-eaters, foreign demand is such that 50% of the olives Spain produces go for export all over the world.

Olives are so intrinsic a part of Spanish life that they feature constantly in popular culture, the folk verses with which this article begins being just a sample. And they also have their sociological significance: olive-growing and processing require huge manpower resources and the employment they provide plays a significant role in preventing the depopulation of Spain's big olive-producing areas.

To appreciate the full panoply of olive varieties and different ways of preparing them, Spain's local markets are the places to go. There you get the

full benefit of traditional know-how combined with technical progress and charming sales technique: stall-holders are always delighted to let you taste before you buy.

There they all are -green ones, stoned and unstoned, small, medium and downright plump; crushed or split; stuffed with anchovy (Spain's favorite, this one), red pepper paste, lemon, almonds, hazelnuts, garlic, chili pepper, capers, even tuna or salmon. Then there are mauve ones, and black ones, whole, sliced, crushed....

Samples will be scooped up and held out to you in a perforated wooden ladle. Try to concentrate -closing your eyes helps- and carry out a serious tasting to assess all the sensory qualities: aroma, flavor, texture, degree of piquancy. Bitter green ones, crushed between two stones and dressed with thyme, fennel, garlic, lemon leaf evoke the elegance of the Latin tradition. Black ones dressed with cumin, mint, orange rind, even honey and quince, encapsulate the seductive legacy of the Moorish kingdom of Al-

Andalus. A dressing of red and green peppers, chili and tomato hints at Aztec and Mayan ritual....

Thanks to modern canning and bottling methods and speedy transport, these delicious nostalgia-charged experiences can be yours. Available now, at a store near you.

**Alicia Ríos** has a degree in philosophy and psychology and is a professional cook. An expert on olive oil and olives, she heads a panel of tasters of virgin olive oil. She is the author of *El libro del aceite de*

*oliva y de la aceituna and of The Heritage of Spanish Cooking, both written in collaboration with Lourdes March. Among other activities, she stages Food Performances, and is currently working on three Symphonies of Sensations, for Australia.*

**See list of the main exporters on page 16.**

## OLIVES STUFFED WITH ANCHOVY

Off the coast of Alicante, in eastern Spain, lie the *almadrabas*, or tuna fisheries, where, since ancient times, tuna has been caught by means of a system of surrounding nets. The nearby salt-flats at Torrevieja supplied the salt for salting the anchovies, mackerel and tuna whose entrails the Romans used to make their prized *garum* sauce. This is a landscape steeped in history, framed to this day by olive and almond trees.

Nostalgia for Classical times is ever-latent hereabouts. This must surely have been what inspired the tavern-owner in the inland town of Alcoy to serve his bar customers a little dish half-full of home-salted anchovies and half of green olives bought from travelling vendors from Seville. They were a huge success. Olives and anchovies together made a delicious combina-

tion. Eager to please his customers still further, he began to stone the olives by hand and to stuff each one with a little fillet of anchovy. Demand was soon so huge that he could not keep up, and the delicious little bar-snack was withdrawn to general dismay.

A witness to the event, a local industrial food-canner, suggested that he could invent machinery to produce it on a large scale. And that's how it all began. Spain's anchovy-stuffed olive industry was born.

The traditional little anchovy fillet with which each olive was stuffed has today been replaced by anchovy paste. To comply with maximum quality and hygiene standards, the tin containing the anchovy-stuffed olives in brine undergoes pasteurization, which consists of passing through a steam-bath at a temperature of 95° C/203°F.

It was found that though this process caused the anchovy fillets to dissolve, anchovy paste remains intact.

The current process complies with WHO technical and health requirements. The preparation process is completely natural. The anchovies are salted and the olives brined, the salt content being kept within limits so that the nutritional properties are maintained at a recommended optimum.

The olives are sorted by size so as to standardize the number of stuffed olives per tin: it works out at the equivalent of 240-260 olives per kilo net weight. The entire process is automated, except for the visual inspection at the conveyor belt on which the stuffed fruit travels before canning, to check that it is in perfect condition and that each one has been closed with its 'lid' - the slice that was re-

moved at the stoning stage. These tiny green ovoids symbolize the quintessence of *tapas*, the inventing, serving and sampling of which constitute a Spanish art form, and one to which the rest of the world aspires. And as well as being the neatest of aperitif snacks, the anchovy-stuffed olive provides instant zing in salads and many other dishes, by no means exclusively Spanish.

The flavor is unique, and could be defined as a sort of integration of nuances. It is more than the sum of its two basic components -anchovy and Manzanilla fina olives. The integration takes two months to complete. By that time, something new has been created: the magic of intense fruitiness and slight bitterness, with just a hint of salt. They're just the thing with your favorite drink -not necessarily alcoholic- and a so-cial little invention.

Moorish-Style Green Olives



Imperial-Style Green Olives



# OLIVE RECIPES

To explore the potential of Spanish olives to the full, the author of this article looks to traditional combinations and classic flavors. In her role as expert taster and a creator of sensory experiences, she shopped for various types of Spanish olives in the market, surrounded herself with spices, herbs and condiments, and set about creating these combinations. They synthesize folk know-how and modern good ideas.

## MOORISH-STYLE GREEN OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) green olives
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
- 1 orange
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp fresh mint, chopped
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl.

Wash the orange well under the cold tap. Dry it and peel off the zest, carefully avoiding the white pith. Cut the zest into fine strips and add to the bowl. Cut the orange in half, remove what remains of the peel, cut the segments in half and add to the olives.

Crack the peppercorns using a pestle and mortar, then add the sesame seeds to the mortar and mix in with the pepper crushing very slightly. Add the oil and the chopped mint, mix well and pour over the olives. Mix in thoroughly and eat immediately or leave to macerate in the fridge for a couple of hours. Garnish with a sprig of mint.

## IMPERIAL-STYLE GREEN OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) green olives in rings
- 100 gr serranocured ham in 2 thick slices
- 6 medium-sized gherkins in vinegar
- 1 tsp dried or fresh chopped dill
- 1 tsp chopped parsley
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil

Drain the olives and place in a bowl. On a wooden board, cut the ham first into thin strips and then into 1 cm (3/8 inch) dice.

Add to the olives. Then slice and dice the gherkins and add to the olives and ham.

Lastly, chop the dill (if you are using fresh) with the parsley and add to the bowl. Pour the olive oil over and mix in well. Garnish with a sprig of parsley. This can be eaten immediately or left in the fridge to macerate for an hour or two.

## BODEGA YARD-STYLE ANCHOVY-STUFFED OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) anchovy-stuffed green olives
- 1 fleshy green pepper
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh basil
- 1/3 dcl (or a sherry glass full) sherry vinegar
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp white peppercorns

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl.

Wash and drain the pepper and cut first into thin strips and then into 1 cm (3/8 inch) cubes. Place on top of the olives. Chop the basil on a board, or crush it in the mortar along with white pepper (do no more than crack the peppercorns). Pour the vinegar and olive oil into the mortar and mix well, then pour over the olives.

They may be eaten immediately or left to macerate in the fridge for a couple of hours. Garnish with whole basil leaves to serve.

## SHIP'S CAPTAIN-STYLE BLACK OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) black olives
- 150 gr salt cod fillet
- 1 tsp hot paprika
- 1 tsp fresh dill, chopped or in sprigs
- 1 tsp fresh parsley, chopped or in sprigs
- 2 bay leaves, fresh or dried
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Rind of 1 lemon
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl.

Wash the salt-cod under the cold tap to get rid of excess salt, then drain it and, on a wooden board, cut into 1 cm (3/8 inch) cubes or slices.

Sprinkle with the paprika, mix, and add to the olives.

On the same board, chop the dill and parsley together, then mix into the contents of the bowl.

Crush the bay leaves between your fingers, and add to the bowl.

Wash the lemon under the cold tap, dry it, then peel off the zest, making sure not to cut into the white pith. Cut the zest into fine strips and add to the bowl. Squeeze the lemon and beat together the juice and the olive oil, then add to the olives.

They are equally good eaten immediately or left to macerate for a couple of hours.

## MALAGA-STYLE STONED GREEN OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) stoned green olives

- 50 gr seedless raisins
- 100 capers in brine or vinegar
- 1 tbsp fresh mint, chopped
- 1 small clove garlic
- 1 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 tsp white peppercorns
- 1/2 dcl olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl. Add the raisins and capers.

Chop the mint, then the parsley, and mix together.

Using a pestle and mortar, crush the garlic well with the peppercorns. Add the chopped mint and parsley to the mortar, then pour in the olive oil. Mix thoroughly and pour over the olives. Mix well and leave to macerate in the fridge for a couple of hours before serving. Garnish with sprigs of parsley.

## MENORCA-STYLE BLACK OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) black olives
- 150 gr Mahón cheese (or other cows' milk mature cheese), grated
- 2 large ripe tomatoes
- 1 tbsp fresh basil leaves
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 small clove garlic
- 1 tsp white peppercorns
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl. Add the grated cheese.

Wash, dry, peel and seed the tomatoes. Chop the flesh and add to the bowl.

In the mortar place the basil



**ARAEX**

# 9 outstanding brands of Rioja Alavesa united by a common expertise

(just slightly torn in your fingers), the oregano, the garlic clove and the peppercorns, and crush them all together. Pour the olive oil into the mortar over the resulting paste and mix thoroughly. Add to the olives and mix in well.

They can be eaten immediately or left to macerate for a while in the fridge. Garnish with a few whole basil leaves to serve.

## JEREZ-STYLE STONED BLACK OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) stoned black olives
- 2 sticks green or white celery
- 1/2 small onion
- 1 tsp thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 dcl sweet wine
- 1/2 dcl sherry vinegar
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1/2 dcl olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl.

Wash and dry the celery sticks, and slice thinly.

Chop the onion as finely as you can. Mix together the celery and onion, then add to the olives.

Crush the bay leaves slightly in your fingers, then add them and the thyme to the bowl and mix in.

Place the sweet wine, sherry vinegar and olive oil in a bowl and beat well so that the mixture emulsifies.

Crush the peppercorns with a pestle and mortar and add to the dressing, then pour over the olives. Mix thoroughly and eat immediately while the celery is still crisp and before the onion changes flavor.

## FARMHOUSE-STYLE BLACK OLIVES

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) black olives cut into rings
- 1 green pepper
- 8 radishes
- 100 gr sliced almonds, raw or toasted
- 50 gr pine nuts, toasted

- 1 dessert spoon chopped fresh parsley
  - Juice of a lemon
  - 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil
- Drain the olives, and place them in a bowl. Wash and dry the green pepper and cut it first into strips and then 1 cm (3/8 inch) squares. Wash and dry the radishes and slice them.

Add the pepper, radish, almonds and pine-nuts to the bowl of olives.

Wash, dry and chop the parsley and mix in.

Squeeze the lemon and mix the juice thoroughly with the olive oil in a cup, then stir this into the mixture in the bowl.

This is best eaten immediately, while the almonds and pine-nuts are still crunchy. Garnish with a sprig of parsley.

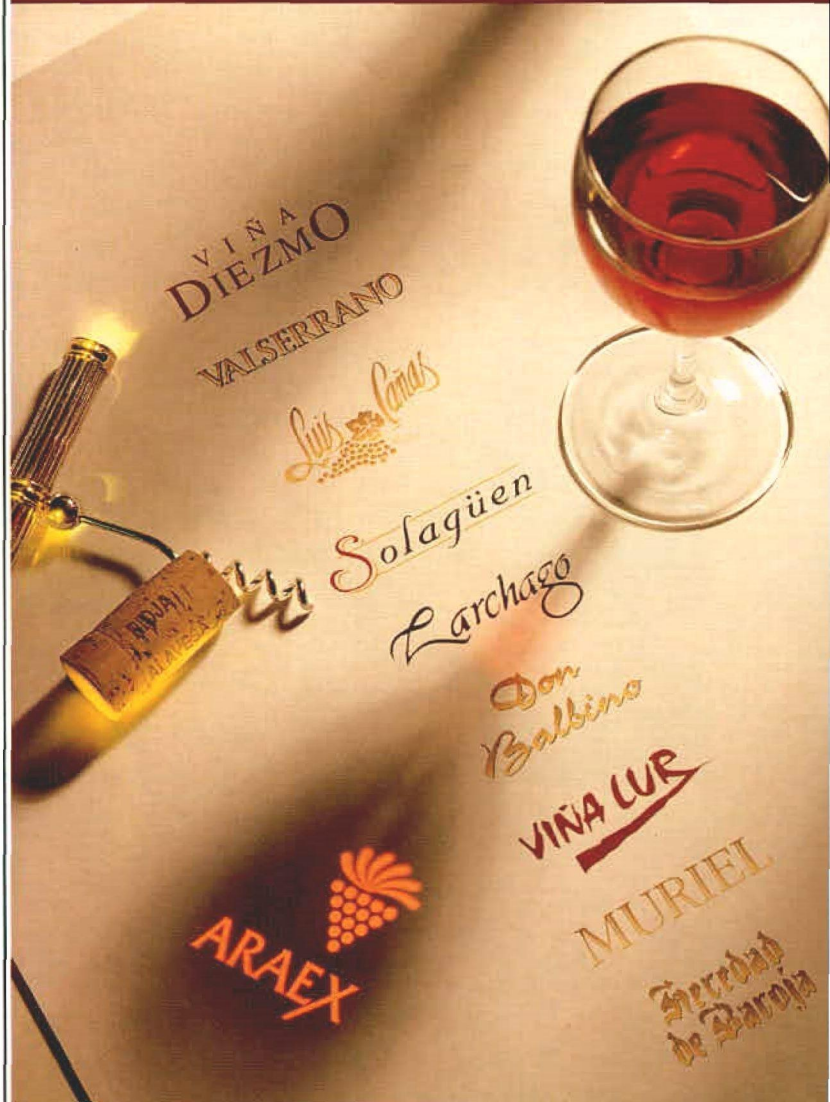
## OLIVES STUFFED WITH RED PEPPER

- 1/4 kg (or a medium tin) pimento-stuffed olives
- 1 red pepper (150 - 200 g)
- 1 piece fresh ginger (2cm<sup>3</sup>)
- 1/2 tsp sweet paprika
- 1/4 tsp ground cumin
- Juice of a lemon
- 1/2 dcl extra virgin olive oil

Drain the olives and place them in a bowl.

Wash and dry the red pepper, chop it into little cubes, and add to the olives. Peel the ginger and grate it into a cup, being careful to catch the juice. Add to the cup the paprika, cumin, lemon juice and olive oil. Beat well and add to the olives, stirring thoroughly so that the ingredients are well mixed.

The olives can be eaten immediately or left to macerate in the fridge. Give them a stir before serving, and decorate with strips of red pepper.



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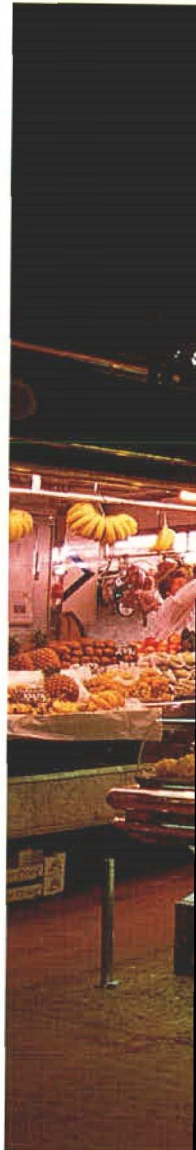
Part and parcel of the tradition of the weekly fair, the Arab souk, the huddle of stalls at the city gates, and later in the market square, Spain's Markets with a capital M are covered enclosures containing interlocking aisles of attractive stalls selling fresh produce. Organized, clean, picturesque, these markets not only provide the retail outlet for a vast range of fresh produce but also nurture the traditional one-to-one relationship between shopkeeper and customer. In this issue of *Spain Gourmetour* we begin a two-part exploration of some of the most interesting markets in Spain. In Part I, we visit the Boquería in Barcelona, San Miguel in Madrid, and Sánchez Pea in Cordoba. In our next issue, Part II visits the market in Santiago de Compostela, the Central in Valencia, La Brecha in San Sebastián and the Central in Zaragoza.



Córdoba's market building dates from the 16th century when it was built for a very different purpose from its present one: it was the city jail.



With its elegant iron pillars, San Miguel Market in Madrid is a fine example of the architecture of the turn of the century.



Some years ago, the descendants of one of the Boquería's first stallholders marked the centenary of their stall by having it reconstructed in its original Catalan Modernist style.



No stairs or doors lead you into the Boquería. One minute you are on the Ramblas and the next you find yourself on the other side of a beautiful arch which serves as a sort of atrium to that little microcosm.





Today's retail markets, our equivalent of the market square, reflect and respond to a pattern of daily shopping. Yet they supply far more than mere raw materials: the local color, the infinite variety of products and vendors, the evocative smells, the bustling humanity are all integral to their being. Each market has its own unwritten code of practice which governs the interaction between buyer and seller. When you shop at a Market, you size up the produce by shopping around from stall to stall before you make your choice; or regular customers will consult their usual butcher, fishmonger and fruiterer for that day's recommendations.

### An Uncertain Future

For some of Spain's city markets, though, the future looks far from secure. Many are not holding their own against the new-style shopping centers and the desirable central locations they occupy often makes them susceptible to take-over for other uses. Others, however, continue to thrive like the long-established institutions they are, their familiar time-honored clientele now bolstered by tourists fascinated by the whole vivid spectacle. One such case is the Boquería, right in the heart of Barcelona and almost as much of a tourist magnet as the city's Picasso Museum and Gaudí-designed Parque Güell. Spain's first covered markets



Stalls heaped with gravity-defying displays of mouthwatering fruits, from the familiar to the exotic, form a vivid frieze apparently designed by some artist of the Baroque era...



...Their awnings are festooned with skeins of garlic, dried red peppers, chilies and onions, their sides clad in a dense spread of vegetables.

San Miguel Market was built in 1913 on one of Madrid's most central sites. This classic neighborhood market has provided the scenario for various works of literature.





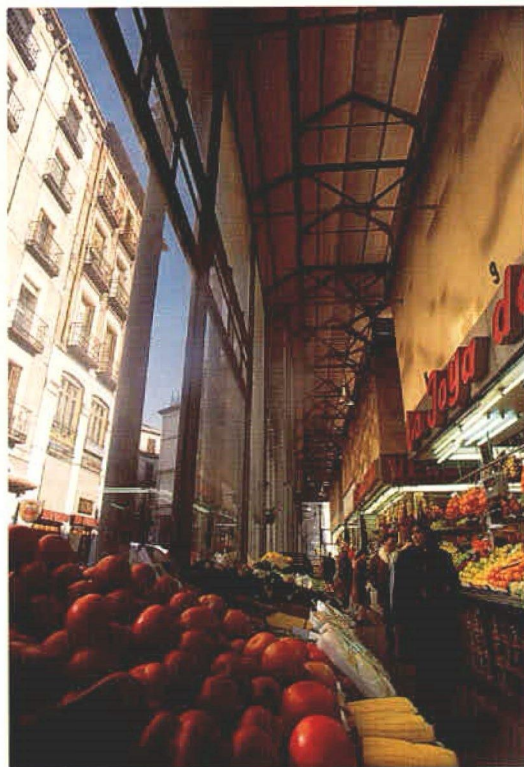
were built between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was rather later than their equivalents in central and northern Europe since regulatory and public health measures took longer to apply in Spain than in France, Germany and Britain. There, however, most of the covered markets have now been lost, and the most architecturally interesting buildings have been converted into cultural centers or shopping malls. Many of Spain's covered markets were built in the cast-iron architecture made fashionable in Europe at that time by Eiffel and his followers. One example was Madrid's Mercado de San Miguel, built close to the

city's Plaza Mayor and now a designated National Monument in its own right. Less frequently, they were installed in buildings originally designed for a different purpose: Sánchez Pea market in Córdoba, popularly known as the Mercado de la Corredera, occupies a 16th C building which was originally the local prison and also served briefly as a hat factory.

#### La Boquería: More Than Just a Market

Although the city of Barcelona opted for celebrating the 150th anniversary of La Boquería in 1986, it is far from clear how far back this fascinating European answer to the *souk* actually dates.

The earliest records that mention it are dated 1301, and concern the passing of a bye-law prohibiting the sale of meat in Barcelona anywhere other than around the Boquería. For centuries, a higgledy-piggledy assortment of makeshift stalls occupied the Rambla (one of the main roads of the city center), with peasant farmers from the surrounding countryside selling their produce alongside animal carcasses and locally-caught fish. Over the years, particular areas became associated with particular products: fish was sold behind the Palacio de la Virreyna; game, poultry and meat alongside the (now



The sides were later glassed-in response to stallholders' complaints about cold and drafts, San Miguel Market has remained virtually unchanged since its origins.

demolished) Convento de San José; and beyond that, fruit and vegetables. But by the mid-19th C, government-imposed public health measures were becoming compulsory, and it became necessary to organize the stalls which were blocking the public thoroughfare. The Mercado de la Boquería was built in 1836 on the site occupied until that time by San José convent, which explains why it is also bears the subtitle of Mercado de San José.

#### From Porticoed Plaza to Covered Pavilion

The Boquería was originally planned as a sort of porticoed quadrangle, in the

style of the traditional Spanish *Plaza Mayor*, or Main Square, with balconies supported by Ionic columns on all sides. But prolonged arguments over how big an area the complex should cover and how large its buildings should be prevented the project from being put into practice. Several new projects were submitted between 1836 and 1846, but all of them caused passionate disagreement among the city architects and local dissenters. Even when they finally seemed to have decided on an acceptable scheme for a plaza-market in 1850, and even started building it, it was declared out of kilter with

what was being built by Spain's European neighbors. Cast-iron architecture was then all the rage, and architects were temporarily usurped from power by engineers. And it was an engineer, Miguel de Bergue, who submitted up the design which finally won favor, albeit with modifications. His plan was for a large covered pavilion divided into five bays and supported by a basic structure of iron columns, buttresses and arches.

There has always been, and doubtless always will be, critical controversy about the architecture and stylistic harmony of the Boquería, but no-one can deny its unique



Each market has its own unwritten code of practice which governs the interaction between buyer and seller.



When exploring the beautifully rehabilitated building, with its spacious patio surrounded by a double arcade it is difficult to imagine that Córdoba's market was once a jail.



# QUALITY SHOPPING

appeal or its role as an unrivaled hub of city activity. The Boquería is where every Barcelonan goes to do serious food shopping, and no genuine explorer of the city should dream of missing the slice-of-life experience of a visit there.

## A Thrill for the Senses

No stairs or doors lead you into the Boquería. One minute you are on the Rambla and the next, as if drawn in by magnetic pull, you find yourself on the other side of the beautiful iron and stained-glass arch which serves as a sort of atrium to this little microcosm. Stalls heaped with gravity-defying displays of mouthwatering fruits, from the familiar to the exotic, form a vivid frieze apparently designed by some artist of the Baroque. Their awnings are festooned with skeins of garlic, dried red peppers, chilies and onions, their sides clad in a dense spread of vegetables. The stalls in the adjoining aisle display healthy red and, skillfully exhibited on white marble counters, plump poultry and game-birds adorned in plumage, and select charcuterie from Catalonia and all over Spain bearing Denomination of Origin labels to help customers identify them among the wealth of choice.

Many of the Boquería's original stalls were decorated by artists of the period, but these have since been lost to modernization. Some years ago, the descendants of one of the Boquería's first stallholders, a lady generally known as Ramona, marked the centenary of her stall by having it reconstructed in its original Catalan Modernista style. (The Modernist style, or *Modernismo*, was Spain's equivalent of Art

Nouveau). The Gaudí specialists of the Barcelona School of Architecture, top authorities on turn of the century Modernismo in Catalonia, contributed to the restoration of Stall number 540-541 which, with its metal structure, wrought iron decoration, stained glass and tile-fragment mosaics, now stands out like an island in the middle of the market.

The Boquería's central oval is occupied by fish and seafood stalls. Sea and river fish, fresh from the quay-side auctions, from imposing to tiny, glint red and silver. This is one of the market's liveliest sections, and the women who sell here do a very good line in repartee, engaging their customers with cries of: "They're alive, handsome and cheap!", "Buy it darling -it's straight off the boat!" "I'm selling lobster for the price of codfish!"...

Dried salt cod (*bacalao*) and wild mushrooms feature importantly in the cuisine of Barcelona, so the selection of both is excellent at the Boquería. The *bacalao* comes in large cuts, strips, chopped or crumbled; the variety of different kinds of mushrooms in all shapes, colors and aromas, and both these products sell in quantities of hundreds of tonnes a year, providing the basis for countless traditional local recipes.

## Madrid's San Miguel: A Cast-Iron Survivor

San Miguel Market was built in 1913 on one of Madrid's most central sites right next to the Plaza Mayor. This classic neighborhood market has provided the scenario for various works of literature and is the backdrop for various traditional events. It occupies a beautiful building which is fine example of the cast-iron architecture of its period and has now been declared a national monument.

In the early 19th C, Madrid was still little more than a largish town, sprawling and,

as described by the historians and writers of the time, none too sanitary. An open-air market selling game operated right in the town center between the two city gates known as the Puerta de Herradores and the Puerta Cerrada. One imagines that it generated a general atmosphere of buying and selling, loading and unloading, warehousing and dumping. Contemporary chroniclers mention heaps of crates and left-over produce piled up alongside the Plaza Mayor. Characters in the novels of 19th C writer Benito Pérez Galdós, whose prolific oeuvre recorded and celebrated the everyday life of ordinary people, include poulterers who sold their wares in the nearby street of Cava de San Miguel.

Public health and city planning concerns were to take their effect here, too. Madrid was among the first cities in Spain to build covered markets so as to facilitate the regulation of traders and produce. One of the first to be built was the Mercado de los Mostenses, an iron-framed building (now regrettably demolished) to which the game-market vendors refused to move, proposing instead that a new market be built in the Plaza de San Miguel.

## An Iron Monument

The design for the Mercado de San Miguel was commissioned from architect Alfonso Dubé in 1911; the building was partially completed by 1914 and roofed in 1915. Though the sides were later glassed-in in response to stallholders' complaints about cold and drafts, the building has remained virtually unchanged since that time. It consists of a cast-iron structured ground floor and a basement for storage, each level covering an area of 2,000 square meters (2,392 square yards). With its elegant iron pillars and interesting roof, the building

is not just a fine example of the architecture of its period which thoroughly deserves its national monument status. It also has symbolic importance as the only surviving iron-built public market in Madrid since the loss of Los Mostenses and La Cebada. San Miguel's traders are proud of their building, which is as important to them as their customers are. The stalls at San Miguel, some handed down within families from generation to generation, others transferred to new and enterprising proprietors, carry fresh produce of all sorts. Meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, fruit, bread, charcuterie, all occupy their zones of this privileged setting which, in addition to its regular local customers, is visited every year by thousands of tourists from all over the globe. The survival of San Miguel Market, right in the heart of the Spanish capital, flies in the face of the current trend towards the hurried weekly shop in out-of-town hypermarkets. The anonymity of that approach to shopping poses such a threat to the daily ritual approach, in which choosing and paying for the product are just one facet of the interchange - priceless for those who enter into the spirit - that occurs over the counter.

## Cordoba's Sánchez

Peña: The Old City Jail Sánchez Peña Market has occupied one of the most desirable sites in Córdoba since 1989, when it was installed in an historic building on the Plaza de la Corredera. When the building was revamped, every effort was made to restore the original look of it while highlighting the actual structure and adapting it for use as a covered market.

As in Barcelona and Madrid, the market in Córdoba also stands on a site which has been a marketplace for centuries. La

Corredera is an imposing quadrangular plaza surrounded by houses with arcades at ground level. Its present design dates from the late 17th C, though it had been the lively hub of trade in the city since the 16th C. Here butchers and the humblest vendors of the leftovers from slaughtered animals sold their wares, alongside peasants with baskets of fruits and vegetables, and herb gatherers with modest canvas bags of flavorings for sauces and dressings. In the lee of the market, a veritable army of enterprising hustlers offered their services as money-changers, scribes, melodramatic story tellers, and the inns and taverns around the plaza thrived. The market building, which occupies a central position

along one flank of the square, was built between 1583 and 1586 for a very different purpose from its present one: it was the city jail. Then, as now, it was a two-story building. In those days, though, the lower floor was occupied by cells and courtrooms and the upper one by the living quarters of the city judge, the *Corregidor*. When it became a market in 1887, when 87 food stalls were established inside, but before then it had also served as a military barracks and, for the previous forty years, as a hat factory.

#### Meat and Vegetables in the Old Dungeons

Exploring this beautifully rehabilitated building, with its spacious patio surrounded by a double arcade supported by granite-clad columns,

and light streaming in through its glass roof, it is difficult to imagine that where today's bright, uniform stalls sell meat and charcuterie, there were once dismal dungeons, that the fruit and vegetable stalls open up each morning in the former courtrooms, and the central patio where the fish stalls are was once paced by sinister warders and shady lawyers and bailiffs.

The present façade, restored to 18th C plans, is a stone frontage decorated on both levels with pilasters joined by a horizontal molding. The side entrances to the market are topped by two fine balconies, and the main entrance by the coat of arms of Córdoba. This building, the look of which owes more to the Baroque style

than to the Renaissance period during which it was actually built, now houses 47 produce stalls and serves as Córdoba's main fish market. The rehabilitation project has not only revitalized a noble and architecturally interesting building which had fallen into disuse, but also marks the beginning of a project to renovate the whole of the Plaza de la Corredera, one of the loveliest and most imposing plazas in Andalusia.

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## A MORNING AT THE BOQUERÍA WITH ISIDRE GIRONÉS

Ritual, duty or pleasure, doing the shopping has its secrets -it calls for technique. Regular shoppers at the Boquería are thoroughly familiar with the different qualities and variety of produce on offer and know where to head for what they like and want. But although they have regular ports of call, they will still vary their route around the market to be sure of not missing anything special. If the regular shopper in question happens to run one of Barcelona's best-known restaurants, tracking down just the right produce is an essential professional skill.

Isidre Gironés is owner and manager of Ca l'Isidre restaurant. He proved to be an excellent guide around the Boquería when we spent a morning with him exploring this gastronomic mecca. Like the professional he is, Isidre does his shopping first thing in the morning while the produce is practically still alive. The routine starts with a visit to the Bar Pinocho. The coffee there is almost as

much of a morale booster as the conversation with Juanito, who reminiscences about past and present celebrity customers, cracks jokes and flirts with the ladies. Juanito's bar opens at 6 am: customers at that time of the morning are a mixture of serious night-lifers who tell him all about that night's adventures, and early risers with whom he analyses the latest local gossip.

Led by Isidre Gironés, our shopping itinerary started at Guerrero the butcher's, where we picked up a superb piece of fillet which he had ordered in advance. Nearby is Blai's stall, at which several generations of the same family have been selling meat and charcuterie for over 80 years. Soley, right by the market entrance, rises like a great flat-topped pyramid of fruit and vegetables, and can proudly boast to be one of the oldest stalls there: it dates from 1888. Inside, alongside an astonishing array of vivid and fragrant spices, the present proprietor

shows us a photograph of his paternal grandfather standing in front of the stall, dated 1923. Others over a century old include A. Rosell's stall, one of the many dotted throughout the Boquería which sell an incredibly wide range of olives, and Vidal Pons' which specializes in fresh and preserved fruits and dried fruits and nuts. The central aisle leads us into the part of the market dedicated to fish. There, our hostess is Señora Lola -known as *Lola, la de las langostas*, or Lobster Lola-who at 82 can claim never to have missed a day at the market in seventy years. The bustle at the fish stalls, run by loud-voiced wise-cracking women, is a continuation of the atmosphere at the quay-side auctions where they buy their fish: they sing the praises of their sea-bass and sea-bream, shout about their fresh anchovies, boast of selling the best sea-food in the Mediterranean. Encircling the fresh fish stalls are the salt-cod stalls among

which, in Isidre Gironés' opinion, Gomá's is the best.

We stop to look at one of the market's star attractions, Ramona's stall, reconstructed in the purest turn-of-the-century *Modernista* style, then on to the Carnicería Orte, the butcher's which sells exclusively fighting bull's meat from Barcelona's Plaza Monumental bullring, and to Petras, whose stall is a mushroom lover's dream.

The itinerary now loops briefly outside the Boquería and into the Rambla, past the aloof period elegance of the Pastelería Escribá with its *Modernista* shop window, through the narrow streets and alleyways of medieval Barcelona and to the Plaza del Pi. Here, Solinger-París-Barcelona has been selling knives and cutlery since 1911 -a monument to early and enterprising Europeanism.

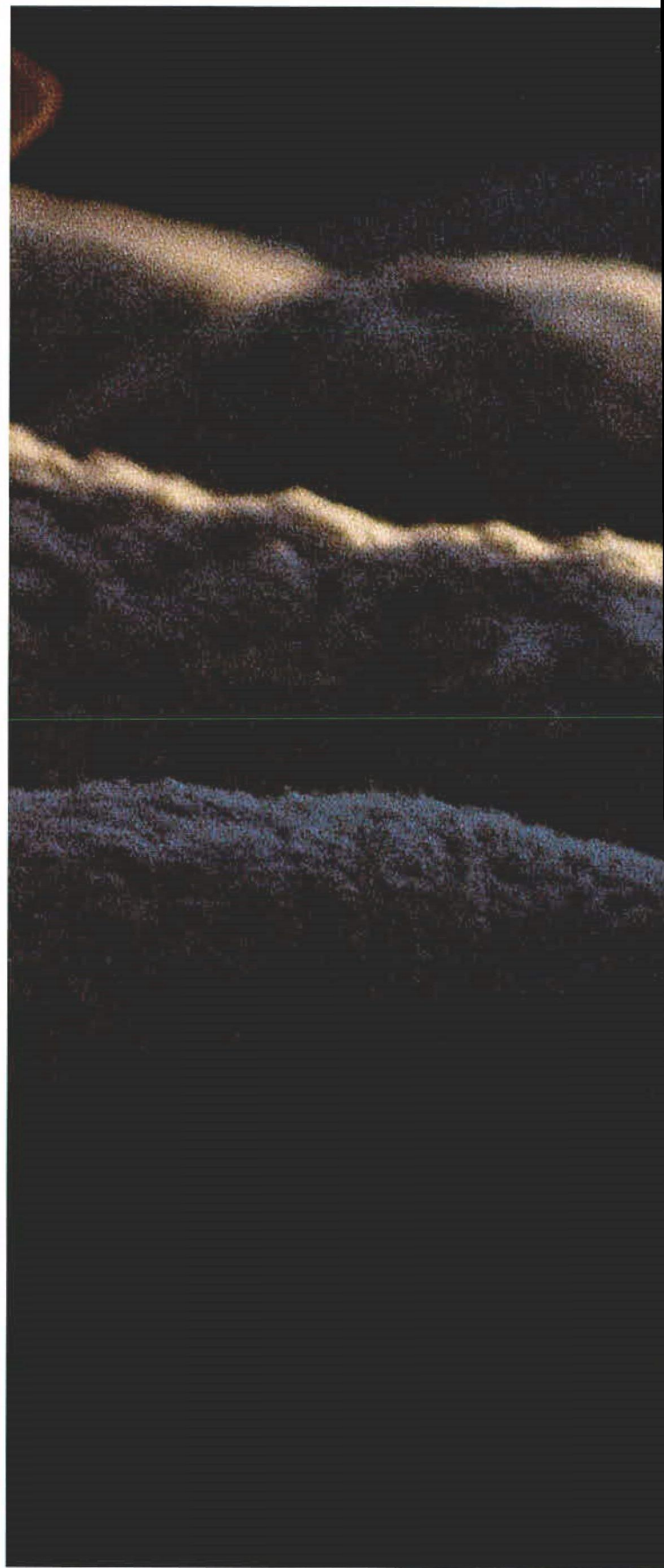
To round off our morning's shopping at the Boquería, Isidre had kept one final and delicious surprise: omelettes at the Bar Ca'n Mario. What a way to shop.

**P**icture Spain's sierras in your mind's eye and there, too, will be flocks of sheep moving quietly across distant hills. Once famous for their wool, the Spanish flocks still number over 20 million head of sheep. But today they are reared for their meat, eaten young and tender from milk and cereal-fed lamb. So appreciated is it in Spain that until recently there was little surplus for export. Now, however, high-quality spring lamb from Spain is beginning to find its way right around Europe.

Spain's flocks of sheep, and their shepherds, became an intrinsic element of the landscape in the war-torn medieval centuries. There had been flocks around the Mediterranean since palaeolithic times and the Moslems, in particular, had valued lamb above all other meats. They kept large flocks in Al Andalus, using the fine wool of a native breed they named Merino -supposedly after the Banu-Marin tribe- to make carpets renowned through Europe.

But it was in the reconquered Christian territories that sheep began to come into their own. Easy to transport and to defend, low in their demands on manpower, they could graze on wild terrain unsafe for settlement or cultivation and they produced milk, meat and manure. But, above all, they produced wool for textiles, one of the most valuable items of international trade.

As the Christian kings battled their way steadily south from the 11th to the 15th centuries, they repaid military support with grazing rights and the national flock grew steadily. By 1400, some 1.5 million sheep were journeying on the Castilian *cañadas*, or shepherds' paths linking southern winter and northern summer pastures. The shepherds' rights were protected by powerful guilds: in Aragón by the Casa de Ganaderos, founded in 1218, and in Castile by the Mesta, founded in 1273. Rising wool prices in Europe helped too and by 1477 there were 3 million sheep on the *cañadas*. At the beginning of the 19th century, when Napoleon made a national census, there were some 24 million sheep. The mainstay of the flocks in Castile and westerly Extremadura was the Merino, its wool so prized that the crown fought to keep a monopoly



## Spring Lamb

Text: Vicky Hayward



# from Spain

# Spring Lamb from Spain

on live animals until the Napoleonic invasion. But there were other native breeds distinctive by their adaptation to contrasting habitats: in the Basque Country the mountain Latcha, with its shaggy waterproof coat and curly horns; in Aragón the hardy Rasa Aragonesa, adapted to a diet of herby mountain scrub; on northern Castile's cereal plains the black-nosed Churra and Castellana; to the south, the gawky Manchega and its cousin, the Segureña, from the rugged eastern Andalusian sierras. Centuries later these breeds have survived and become the base for today's denominations of quality-label meat.

## A TASTE FOR YOUNG LAMB

Although the Spaniards selected and bred their sheep and lamb principally for wool, they also acquired a taste for lamb and mutton.

In fact, even in courtly recipes and household accounts, most lamb was the meat of *carnero*, or mutton, killed aged one year or over. *Carnero, comer de caballero* - lamb is food for gentlemen - runs one proverb. In his book *Arte de Cozina* (1614), Diego Granado, Philip III's cook, gave three recipes for *carnero adobado*, or lamb tenderized by slow braising with vinegar, spices and sometimes fruit or honey. And at the opening of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes quotes *carnero* as an ingredient of the knightly Don Quixote's *olla podrida*, or pot-au-feu.

But with the scarcity of pasture making it difficult to fatten livestock, sheep were clearly killed young and small. Jouvin, a French traveller writing in 1672, described lamb chops as 'so delicate to eat in Spain'. He may have meant milk-fed or spring lamb from Castile, where surplus lambs were killed young to release their mother's milk for cheese-making and pro-

voke a second lambing. These *lechales* or *lechazos*, suckling lambs, were winter and spring feast-day food. Older lambs fattened on spring grass were killed for Easter, and so were called *pascales*.

But until this century, such young lamb was a rare luxury reared for aristocratic tables. Many families would only ever have tasted *borrega*, mutton, or *machorra*, ewes' meat from animals five to eight years old but still small in size. Some Aragonese and Extremeño dishes which are now classics of regional cooking - for example, *chilindrón*, *caldereta* and *cordero a la pastora* (see recipe in *Gourmetour*, No. 32) - evolved at this time as ways of extracting the best from such tough, fatty but flavorful meat.

## REGEARING TOWARDS MEAT PRODUCTION

By the 19th century, the wool trade had begun to enter a long-term decline. The loss of the crown's monopoly on Merinos after the Napoleonic invasion, the enclosure of communal land (1813 and 1836) and the arrival of artificial textiles had all contributed. Spanish shepherds began to shift towards rearing meat animals, with husbandry following a Mediterranean pattern: lambing ran from November to June and, due to the scarcity of pasture, animals were killed young while their meat was light and tender.

'The abundance and cheapness of lamb', wrote Alexander Dumas after his journey south in 1846, 'is such that, according to a friend ... who had eaten it during a whole month, he found himself obliged to leave the country in order to be able to eat something else.'

Selection for improved meat production was initially haphazard. But in the last forty years the process has been re-

financed through cross-breeding to produce animals which, with a milk and cereal diet, may be killed after 3 months for tender young lamb. Ironically, many of these crosses have been made with reimported foreign Merinos, such as the Île-de-France or Fletcher, whose meat potential was discovered in northern European pastures. This has also produced less elongated and more compact animals, which give carcasses and cuts more similar in shape to those elsewhere in Europe.

Alongside this, native breeds endangered by indiscriminate crossing have been recuperated through breed associations' genetic controls. This was a necessary first step towards the quality-label meats launched in the last five years. Today a total of five quality-labels, or denominations, are either in production or being set up.

## THE NEW QUALITY-LABELS

Registered farms within each denomination follow quality criteria which cover breed, rearing conditions (including a hormone and antibiotic-free diet), optimum age and weight, and conditions of transport and slaughter. These are checked by spot-visits to farms, feed analyses, slaughter inspections and carcass grading. There are essentially two groups of labels. Basque 'Cordero Lechal' and Castile-León's 'Lechazo' are both tender, almost white meats from suckling lamb. The Basque lamb, from the Latcha and Carranzana breeds, is killed aged 3-5 weeks and gives a 5-8 kilo (11-18 pound) carcass, while lamb from Castile-León, principally from Churra and Castellana sheep, is one month old and weighs 9-10 kilos (20-22 pounds) at slaughter. In both cases, flocks are open-grazed and lambs are not weaned.

The other three quality-labels are for lamb fed on both milk and cereal. Their minimum suckling times and age at slaughter vary with the breed's

bone, meat and fat balance. 'Ternasco from Aragón', based principally on Rasa Aragonesa, is killed after 70-90 days and the finished carcasses weigh 8.5 to 11.5 kilos (18.7-25.3 pounds); 'Cordero Manchego', killed between 60 and 90 days, weighs from 10-13 kilos (22-29 pounds); 'Corderex', from Extremadura's Merinos killed with no more than 70 days, weighs 9.25-12.5 kilos (20<sup>1/3</sup> - 27<sup>1/2</sup> pounds).

Although Spanish quality-labels are still young, with domestic demand well exceeding supply, they have huge potential growth for the coming decade. *Ternasco* from Aragón, for example, has doubled its output since production began in 1992 and aims to handle 100,000 animals annually by 1997. *Cordero Manchego*, one of the newest labels, has an annual regional production of some 1.3 million lambs.

## MODERN HUSBANDRY

In many respects, husbandry remains traditional. Sheep are open-grazed on mountain scrub or meadowland when it is naturally available and, when grass is scanty during the dry months, the flocks' diet is supplemented by hay or cereal feeds. In Aragón, grazing remains communal and there is local transhumance between mountain summer and valley winter pastures.

Lambing peaks between March and May. Lambs stay with their mothers for the first two weeks of life and are then separated, initially for a few hours a day, until they are fully independent and feed on milk-substitutes and cereals. Hormones and other growth-boosters are practically unknown since they only take full effect after several months and, in any case, lamb's conversion rate of cereal to body weight is twice that of pork or poultry.

Entirely traditional sheep-rearing, however, is disappearing. The long-distance transhumance of wool sheep

has almost disappeared; just a few shepherds and their flocks make the journey, mainly by train. In part, these changes have come about for economic viability. Shepherds with just a hundred or so ewes and a dozen rams do survive, but there are increasing numbers of farms with purpose-built installations and pastures for up to a thousand sheep grazing on enclosed, sometimes irrigated pasture, padded out by cereals.

But changes have also come through the recognition that husbandry is as basic to quality as breed. The balance of milk and cereals is finely tuned to give meat the right fat-content. Temperature controls in shelters, walk-through classification systems for grading live animals, sheltered lambing and prolonged resting before slaughter are being used to reduce stress. Fertilization techniques -the separation of ewes and rams, the use of hormonal sponges and artificial insemination- have spread lambings evenly through the year and raised the frequency and number of births.

A third area of change has been market-led, with lambs now being fattened on cereal feeds to the larger weights preferred by northern European consumers. Certain native breeds, for example the Manchega and Merino, can happily reach 33 kilos (72<sup>1/2</sup> pounds) live weight while others, such as Rasa Aragonesa, are being crossed with native or imported breeds to raise their optimum weight at slaughter. Few of these larger lambs are sold on the Spanish market.

### FROM FARM TO MARKET

Traditionally, lambs were sold by shepherds through merchants who acted as middlemen. Aragón supplied Catalonia and the Basque country; Castile looked to its own powerful restaurant market and to the capital, Madrid; Andalusia sold to the Mediterranean cities. Prices fluctuated

enormously between 300 and 1,000 pesetas per kilo (2.50-8 US dollars), reaching their peak with the highest demand in the autumn.

Today, the markets and fairs have been replaced by telephone sales and prices are pegged by cooperatives, although they are still often quoted in old-fashioned *libras* or pounds. Rising imports and exports as well as the spread of lambing through the year are steadily balancing the supply and demand price curve.

The cooperatives, which handle the sale of between a quarter and a third of lambs in the different regions, are working towards unified supply chains stretching from farms to the final points-of-sale. They coordinate domestic and export sales with the transport, grouping and classification of live animals, the slaughter and refrigerated transport of the carcasses. Large private companies, such as González brothers in Aragón, also offer independent production chains.

Most lambs used to travel live by lorry to their final destination, but the tendency today is for them to be slaughtered close to production. This is encouraged by the supermarkets, who like to buy carcasses rather than live animals, and by the European Union's transport regulations limiting live animals' journeys to 8 hours.

### RIISING EXPORTS

Until recently, the Spaniards' love of roast baby lamb put a limit on export possibilities. While average annual per capita consumption is some 3.7 kilos (8 pounds), it rises in Aragón to a hefty 14 kilos (31 pounds) a year. Alongside this, Spanish lamb is not a cheap product because of the high cost of cereal feeds used to produce such prime young, tender animals. But it is remarkably healthy meat in modern terms, free from hormones or other feed additives and much higher in unsaturated fatty acids than that from a

pasture-grazed animal. And it is a gourmet's dream.

In the last three years, the plentiful supply of competitively priced lamb during the spring and its growing reputation for quality have fuelled rising exports to Europe's closely linked markets.-

'Today the traditional idea of import and export,' comments Paco Marcén of Carnearagón, an Aragonese cooperative exporting around Europe, 'is being replaced by continual exchanges of lambs at different weights throughout the year.' Producers are confident that export quotas will continue to rise. Don Mario Mera, sheep-rearer and president of Villanueva de la Serena cooperative in Extremadura, comments, 'The challenge now is to set up a smoothly running infrastructure and to get the concentration of quantity.' He believes the denominations are also important as flagships helping consumers identify Spanish lamb with quality.

Producers have already learned to cater to different tastes. Italy, for example, shares the Mediterranean taste for very young, tender animals and buys top-quality milk-fed lamb for roasting, especially at Easter. Most are sent as chilled carcasses which range from 5 to 11 (11-24 pounds) kilos in weight. The Italians prefer small native breeds such as Rasa Aragonesa, which reach a perfect balance of lean and fat while still largely milk-fed. Portugal buys along similar lines.

The French, on the other hand, prefer live animals sent to be butchered to their own tastes. They buy larger lambs, such as Merinos fattened to between 30 and 35 kilos (66-77 pounds), which adapt well to French cuts and sell as young, top-quality meat. Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (which occasionally buys the lamb frozen) and Norway, all of which produce older meat from pasture-fed lamb, are other markets for larger animals still very young

by their standards. The Middle East has other tastes again. For Ramadan and other feasts, they like baby lamb for roasting. On the other hand, Morocco buys live sheep of up to eight years old for its cheap flavorful mutton.

### LAMB IN THE SPANISH KITCHEN

Those coming to Spanish lamb for the first time will find it tender, fine-textured and juicy thanks to the easily melting fat produced by the cereal diet. The bone structure and size of cuts such as chops may vary with age and breed, but not substantially. In native Spanish breeds, this juiciness is accentuated by the high level of intramuscular fat distributed through the lean meat. By comparison, it has a relatively thin outer covering of fat. So well-basted home roasting or quick cooking such as grilling or frying work well, as do light braises with vegetables for lean meat and longer braises for bonier or gelatinous cuts.

Memories of lamb eaten in Spain are usually associated with the aroma of wood-smoke from a grilling fire or Castilian roasting oven. These are unbeatable ways of serving such light-flavored, tender lamb. Spanish home-cooking and shepherds' dishes also include some wonderful recipes designed for less tender cuts from older animals. These regional classics were originally made with mutton that needed hours of steady simmering, but the versions we give below are those which have evolved with shorter cooking times apt for today's meat.

**Vicky Hayward** is a freelance writer, journalist and book editor living in Madrid. She has written guidebooks and feature articles on Spanish society, culture, arts and food.

**See page 13 for main exporters and page 98 for recipes.**

# VINTAGE LUXURY ABOARD

TRAVELING



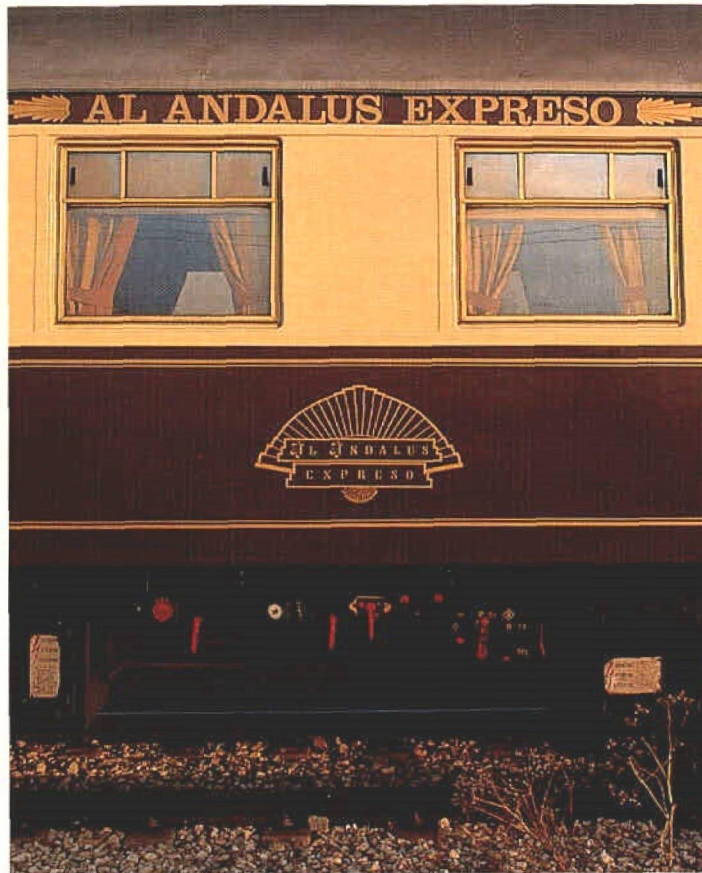
*Córdoba, famous for its huge  
mezquita or mosque, is the first stop of  
Al Andalus train.*

Text: Deborah Luhrman

ABOUT A DOZEN ANTIQUE-STYLE LUXURY TRAINS OPERATE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD -THE  
VENICE-SIMPLON ORIENT EXPRESS, INDIA'S PALACE ON WHEELS, AND BRITAIN'S ROYAL  
SCOTSMAN ARE SOME OF THE BEST KNOWN. ALL GIVE TOURISTS A CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE

# THE AL ANDALUS TRAIN

IN STYLE



*Passengers sleep while the train is stopped in stations or quiet railway sidings.*

Photos: Juan Ramón Yuste/ICEX

THE DECADENT STYLE OF TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY ARISTOCRATS, BUT ONLY ONE VINTAGE TRAIN - SPAIN'S AL ANDALUS - COMBINES THIS DELICIOUS FORM OF TRAVEL WITH VISITS TO THE MOORISH PALACES, MOSQUES AND FLOWER BEDECKED PATIOS OF LEGENDARY ANDALUSIA.



A journey on Spain's Al Andalus train is a trip back in time to a slower and simpler era. An era when the privileged few-kings, queens and Europe's noble classes-traveled in great style. Moving from once palace to another with the social seasons, taking in a change of scenery to recover from lost loves, or simply amusing themselves with a refined adventure recorded on sketchpads and in diaries. Just as today's elite have their

own private Lear jets, the aristocracy of the early 20th century traveled in their own lavishly decorated train cars adorned with leather and brass, crystal and crushed velvet, and inlaid hardwoods. Most of the 14 cars that make up the Al-Andalus train were once the private cars of Europe's upper crust. One of the sleeping cars, for example, was used by the Kings of England -George V, Edward VIII, and George VI-during the 1930s as they

made annual jaunts through France to the Riviera. The club car, which is named Medina Azahara for the ancient Moorish ruins just outside Cordoba, is perhaps the most luxurious. It is fitted with walnut panels inlaid with designs of bird and flowers, frosted crystal and brass lamps, and salmon-colored damask draperies. Ample leather chairs in British racing green are arranged around mahogany tables where passen-

MOST OF THE 14 CARS THAT MAKE UP THE AL ANDALUS TRAIN WERE ONCE THE PRIVATE CARS OF EUROPE'S UPPER CRUST.

*The cars were restored in a harmonious Belle Époque style in 1985. While they are packed with Old World charm and shimmering details they also have modern comforts.*



gers can spend time playing cards, writing or just visiting. It has a section for viewing videos separated from the rest of the car by elegant etched glass dividers. It also retains four antique ebony panels with oriental paintings from the car's original decoration when it was used as a Wagon-Lits dining coach on aristocratic trains throughout Europe. In addition to the club car, the Al Andalus is made up of two restaurant cars, a bar

and discotheque car, five sleeping cars and two shower cars. All were restored in a harmonious Belle Époque style by the Spanish National Railway Company RENFE in 1985. While they are packed with Old World charm and shimmering details, like the fish-shaped brass faucets in the lavatories, the restoration team was able to add modern comforts such as a Grand Class suspension system that provides an

exceptionally smooth ride. The Al Andalus accommodates 80 passengers and operates as a tourist train from April through October, making five-day circles of Andalusia that include visits to Spain's most popular sites, Seville, Córdoba, Granada, Ronda and Jerez de la Frontera. The rest of the year the train is chartered for private parties with customized itineraries throughout Spain. Passengers sleep while the

DAYDREAMING SEEMS TO COME NATURALLY WITH THE ROCKING MOVEMENT OF A TRAIN,  
ENJOYING PEACEFUL REVERIES.



train is stopped in stations or quiet railway sidings. Breakfast is eaten on board and lunches and dinners of typical Andalusian cuisine are taken at the region's finest restaurants.

#### A CRUISE ON RAILS

The first day of the Al Andalus journey is a swirl of contrasts. I arrived at Madrid's Atocha station filled with excitement and images of old-fashioned elegance, only to be whisked

away to Seville on the ultra-modern AVE high-speed train. Launched in 1992, AVE is the pride of the Spanish railway system. It is akin to flying in the first-class section of a good airline, with wide comfortable seats, well-dressed stewardesses, good food and *cava*—the Spanish sparkling wine. It covers the 450 km (281 mile) run to Seville in just over two hours.

Al Andalus passengers coming from abroad are treated

to the first night in Madrid's palatial Ritz Hotel, built to house royal guests attending the marriage of Spanish King Alfonso XIII to the granddaughter of England's Queen Victoria in 1906.

At Seville's Santa Justa station, arriving Al Andalus passengers were assembled in our own private lounge with reading materials, drinks and snacks. We shyly sized each other up, knowing that by the end of the trip there would be

IT IS THE KIND OF HOLIDAY WHERE EVERYTHING IS TAKEN CARE OF AND ALL THAT IS LEFT TO DO IS SIT BACK, RELAX AND ENJOY IT.

*The Al Andalus  
accommodates  
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Spain's most  
popular sites.*



some new friends among the strangers and wondering who they might be. By now I was feeling quite pampered and when the train was announced I floated to the platform imagining myself in a black and white 1930s film and playing the starring role. But curiosity soon replaced fantasy as we all scrambled off to locate our cabins and explore them. My roommate, another *Spain*

*Gourmetour* staffer, and I were assigned a wood-paneled compartment with a blue-grey crushed velvet sofa, a comfortable armchair and a writing table. There were two tiny closets, mine just big enough to hang the two dresses, skirt, pants and blouses I had brought. There was also a miniature bathroom, equipped with a tiny shower, thick terry-cloth bathrobes and all types of luxurious lotions and shampoos.

#### ABOARD THE AL ANDALUS

As the Al Andalus moved slowly out of the station, we were called for a welcome cocktail in the Giralda bar car. I met genial barman Servando Maceda who has been serving up drinks on the Al Andalus since it was inaugurated ten years ago. "Antonio Banderas is probably the most famous person I've served on the Al Andalus," he told me, winking as he mentioned the

THERE IS PLENTY OF TIME TO EXPLORE THE ALHAMBRA, BEAUTIFUL RONDA OR TO PAY A VISIT TO ROYAL SPANISH RIDING SCHOOL IN JEREZ.

handsome Spanish film star. "You mean I may be sleeping tonight in Antonio Banderas' bed?" I asked.

"Sorry but no," he replied, "Banderas was here for a private premier party organized to launch the film 'Bajarse Al Moro' and we traveled from Madrid to Barcelona, but he stayed up all night dancing."

As we rolled through the olive groves of Andalusia, the welcome cocktail also gave me a chance to meet some of my fellow Al Andalus passengers. There was a group of friends from Germany who vacation together every year, searching out the most luxurious places they can find. There was a fascinating, wildly-dressed theater director from New York, two French sisters, a Spanish couple on a second honeymoon, American retirees, and a Dutch television crew.

The TV crew was filming the final episode of a 13-week series on the world's greatest train journeys. What a job! We were all terribly envious until they assured us that the Al Andalus was the most luxurious and most comfort-

able of all the vintage trains they had been on -and they had tried them all.

#### EXPLORING ANDALUSIA

Our first stop was Córdoba -for five centuries the capital of the Moorish part of Spain which in Arabic was called Al Andalus. Córdoba is probably the most typical city of Andalusia, with its maze of narrow streets, white-washed houses, and wrought-iron balconies dripping with geraniums. It is dotted by quiet patios with softly splashing fountains, patios that seem like a private discovery when you stumble upon one.

But Córdoba is most famous for its huge *mezquita* or mosque, supported by a forest of red and white striped arches. Built in the 8th century, the *mezquita* would still be the world's largest mosque if it had not been turned into a cathedral during the Christian reconquest in 1236. Local guides were provided in English, German and Spanish. Other languages can be accommodated depending on the needs of the group.

There was just enough time

for a snack and glass of sherry in the cool bar of Córdoba's famed Caballo Rojo restaurant before it was time to climb aboard our rolling luxury hotel again.

The scenery outside of Córdoba was spectacular, with an impending thunderstorm in the distance and the strong Spanish sun shooting through the clouds and spilling over golden hillsides. The amateur photographers in our group ran for their cameras, but I enjoyed a quiet moment in the cabin watching the rain arrive and imagining the sound of horses galloping through the olive groves while evocative strains of Spanish guitar music played in my head.

More than the pampering, the socializing or the luxury decor, it were these peaceful reveries that I really enjoyed most aboard the Al Andalus. Daydreaming seems to come naturally with the rocking movement of a train. It was the kind of holiday where everything is taken care of and all that is left to do is sit back, relax and enjoy it.

Day two brought us to

Granada and the Alhambra Palace, immortalized by U.S. writer Washington Irving, who served as one of the first U.S. ambassadors to Spain. With communication so slow in the early 19th century, it must have been a wonderful time to serve in the diplomatic corps. Irving took several months off from his post in Madrid and traveled by horseback to Granada, where he installed himself in some vacant rooms of the crumbling old palace and collected legends about the era of the Moors and the Spanish reconquest. While his legends all seem to have the same plot (beautiful Arab princess falls in love with forbidden Christian soldier), his book *Tales of the Alhambra* is still a best seller in Granada and perfect for reading on the train.

There was plenty of time to explore the Alhambra, which was the last stronghold of the Moors in Spain until they were finally expelled in 1492. Its intricate Islamic decoration seems to cover every available surface. Its sprawling Generalife gardens are a profusion of color and sparkling water, which the desert-hearty Moors considered to be the ultimate luxury.

Reluctantly we headed back to our own type of luxury aboard the Al Andalus train, which by now was beginning to feel like home. Once again we traversed the rolling hills, this time dotted with the white-washed villages and the ochre and white church towers typical of southern Spain.

Day three found the train in Ronda, the most famous of Andalusia's white villages. The best thing to do here is simply wander the steep streets, drinking in the atmosphere. We also had a chance to tour the oldest bullring in Spain and visit the elegant mansion of the Marquis of Salvatierra, which is still used by family members during bullfight season. With another peaceful night



and more copious Andalusian meals under our belts, we arrived on day four in Jerez de la Frontera. There are a number of towns with the words *de la frontera* tacked on their names in this part of Andalucía and it is not because Portugal is not too far away. But this region was for a long time the disputed frontier between Moorish and Christian Spain.

Jerez, or Xerez, which was corrupted into English as 'Sherry', is home to about a dozen world-famous sherry cellars. We were promised a chance to sample sherries, but first there was a quick trip to the beach at nearby Puerto de Santa María -the current "in" spot for Spain's jet set. Then we were treated to a visit to the Royal Spanish Riding School in Jerez and a show put on by the highly-trained "dancing horses of Andalusia" featur-

ing classic dressage movements set to Spanish music and 17th century costumes. At the Pedro Domecq sherry cellars later that day, we learned how the wine is made and saw casks signed by world leaders, film actors and even rock stars. Later the promised tasting materialized along with tasty *tapas* and a sumptuous dinner served in a converted barn in the middle of the Domecq family vineyards. With the sun setting over the vineyards and our journey coming to an end, I wondered how hard it would be to get back to my own not-so-luxurious lifestyle at home. Day five brought us back to Seville and on our way to Madrid, while the passengers from abroad enjoyed the sights of the Andalusian capital, a flamenco show and a final night at Hacienda Benazuza.

The director of the Al Andalus train told me that it was started as a way to boost cultural tourism to Spain and prove, especially to foreign visitors, that the country has more to offer than its traditional image of sun, sand and *sangría*. I already knew that, but the luxury Al Andalus journey proved to me that Spain has style.

**Editor's note:** *The Al Andalus itinerary has been changed slightly for the 1996 season. The 7-day, 6-night package includes an overnight stay at a luxury hotel in Madrid or Seville and five nights aboard the train. Marbella has been added to the sightseeing destinations, which will be visited in the following order: Córdoba, Granada, Ronda, Marbella, Jerez, Seville.*

*Excursions to Marbella and Jerez are by deluxe coach. Prices start at 185,000 ptas (about \$1,550) per person double occupancy from Seville and 214,000 ptas (about \$1,780) from Madrid, including all meals and excursions. For more information contact:*

*Iberail.*

*Tel.: 34-1-571 57 50/58 15.*

*Fax: 34-1-571 14 17.*

*American-born journalist Deborah Luhrman has lived in Spain for seven years, reporting on a variety of Spanish topics including food, wine and travel. She is currently serving as press attache for the Madrid-based World Tourism Organization.*

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JUAN JOSÉ GÓMEZ DAZA/IC

All along  
its course  
the influence  
of the great  
Kingdom of  
Castile is  
reflected by  
the many  
castles and  
fortresses  
that line its  
banks, like  
Peñafiel,  
here emerging  
from fluvial  
mistiness.

## The River Duero

The Wine Rivers of Spain (I)

MANY OF THE WORLD'S WINE REGIONS ARE TO BE FOUND ON OR NEAR LARGE RIVERS, WHICH CREATE MICRO-CLIMATIC CONDITIONS PARTICULARLY SUITED TO THE VINE. SPAIN HAS SEVERAL SUBSTANTIAL RIVERS ALL OF WHICH PASS THROUGH DEMARCATED WINE AREAS, BUT, IN GENERAL, THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE WINES HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED. WE BEGIN THIS SERIES WITH A LOOK AT THE DUERO, WELL KNOWN AS THE DOURO, FOR ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PORT REGION, BUT LESS SO FOR THE WINES IN ITS VALLEY IN SPAIN.

Text: **Jeremy Watson**



CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX



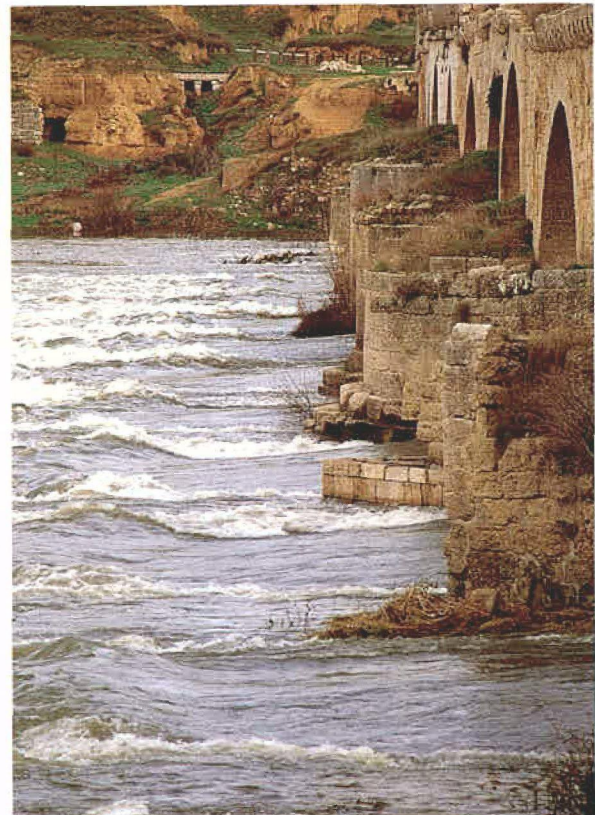
P. SANCHO-MATA/ICEX

Despite its length and strong flow at source, the Duero does not assume substantial proportions until its halfway point, where it meanders through fields between columns of massed poplar trees.



SANCHO-MATA/ICEX

The river's route is West to the Atlantic across the vast Northern Meseta of Castile. In the Duero valley lie some of the classic images of Spain's long and outstanding history.



P. SANCHO-MATA/ICEX



CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX



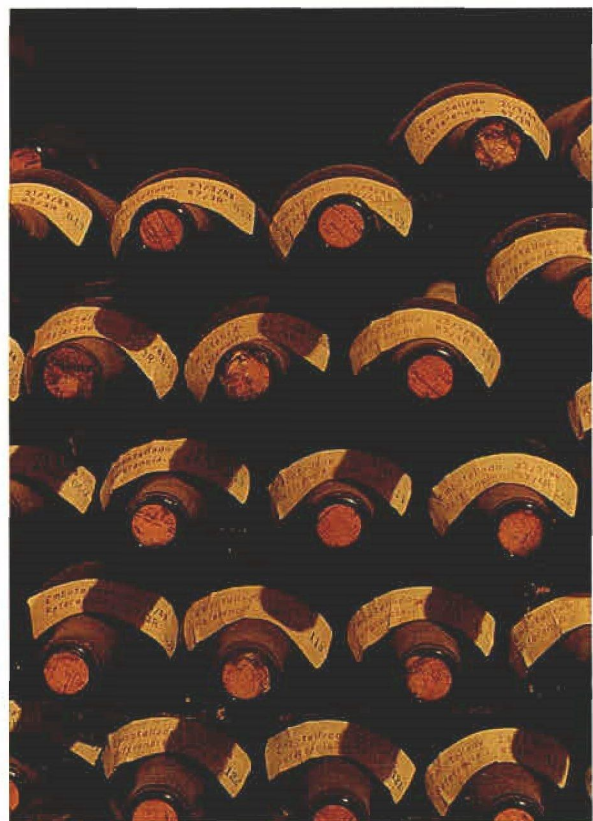
CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX

The Duero wines are almost entirely reliant on indigenous varieties, which fortunately include some of Spain's best. The most important is the Tinto Fino, the local name for the Tempranillo.



P. SANCHO-MATA/ICEX

The river Duero flows through four Denominations of Origin of Spain. They are Cigales, Ribera del Duero, Toro and Rueda. These are regions that have already made their mark, and, yet will improve still more.



P. SANCHO-MATA/ICEX

RIBERA MEANS "RIVER BANK", HENCE THE REGION'S TITLE, AND VINEYARDS LINE BOTH BANKS ALL THE WAY.

A venture to the source of a great river can easily end in anticlimax. Often, journey's end can be some bleak, windswept piece of high marshland. This is not the case with the River Duero.

The Laguna Negra (1700 meters or 5600 feet) in the Picos de Urbión is a pool of crystal clear water fed by two springs that cascade from the cliff above. This, in itself, is beautiful enough, but the surrounding verdant, lush meadows, chalet style houses and Nordic pine forests all contribute to a picturesque environment more reminiscent of the Pyrenees or Alps than of central Spain.

The waters of the Laguna Negra descend through the rock and then the gullies of the hillside into the Pantano de la Cuerda del Pozo—a reservoir fed by several other tributaries from the surrounding Sierras within the Sistema Ibérico. There is a regular flow through the dam towards the continuing passage of the River Duero.

#### Castile's Own River

The river's route (900 kms or 560 miles) is West to the Atlantic across the vast Northern Meseta of Castile. The plain is bounded by the Sistema Ibérico in the East, the Cordillera Cantábrica in the North and the Cordillera Central in the South. In this valley lie some of the great classic images of Spain's long and outstanding history. Cities like Soria, Burgos, Segovia and Valladolid all evoke memories of the glo-

rious period of the Catholic Kings and the unification of Spain. Castilla y León is the river's home in Spain as it flows through the provinces named after those evocative cities, and then, while forming part of the Portuguese border, Salamanca as well, before leaving Spain to become the Douro down to Oporto.

All along its course the influence of the Moors and the great Kingdom of Castile is reflected by the many castles and fortresses that line its banks. They include Soria, Almazán (a major prize in the Aragón-Castile conflict during the 15th century), Berlanga de Duero, Fortaleza de Gormaz (a fortress on a table top mountain), Peñaranda de Duero, Peñafiel (one of Spain's most picturesque castles), Tordesillas, Toro and Zamora (the last three being town fortresses each high on the North bank of the river). They were built to hold the line after the Moors were first thrust back in the early 11th century.

#### A Journey Back in Time

Almost more interesting, today, is the classic Castilian culture of the region. Those familiar with the great international Spanish cities and coastal resorts will feel they have travelled back in time. The influence of the tourist is minimal, and, while the region is opening up rapidly with the investment in new and existing roads, the charm remains. The small *pueblos* that dot

the landscape exist to serve the vast agricultural crops of the river's course. The inhabitants live in comfortable but frugal circumstances, and passing through these towns, one senses that the old moral values still prevail amongst old and young alike.

It is a tough, conservative environment, with a harsh climate. Cervantes described the Southern Meseta of La Mancha as having *nueve meses de invierno y tres meses de infierno*—'nine months of winter and three months of intense heat', and this reasonably describes the climate of the Duero valley as well. In addition, and especially for the young, anything other than fairly basic, leisure attractions are rare and, sadly, many are leaving the land for the big cities with their mythical streets paved with gold. With them, bit by bit, goes a little more of the innocence and romantic qualities of Spain.

Here they eat not just *cordero asado*, the famous roast lamb, or, indeed *cochinillo* (suckling pig), but also wonderful *sopa castellana* (a bread and garlic soup), traditional *cocidos* (assorted meat stews with chick peas, or, in Zamora, with potatoes and peppers), *morcillas* (black sausages), *arroz a la zamorana* (rice and pork) and bread such as the *pan castellano* made with olive oil.

There is a temptation to describe the Duero valley as a poor region, because of the deserted villages that are to

be found, but the agriculture is varied and, for the most part, prosperous. In fact, in the many surviving villages there are clear signs of the growing wealth of the sector. To the East vegetables and fruits are cultivated, while to the West are the rolling hills of the plain so illustratively described by Laurie Lee (the renowned English travel writer, author of *As I Walked out one Midsummer Morning*) when he walked out that summer's day! In this almost treeless, sun-scorched and tranquil environment, the vast areas of wheatlands and the multiplicity of grain silos amply illustrate why it is known as 'the breadbasket of Spain'. The main crop in the center is sugar beet. In fact the quantities are so great that Segovia, especially, might be called 'the sugarbowl of Spain'! And, amongst all this are the vines of the increasingly prosperous wine industry of the Duero Valley.

#### The River of the Wines

Despite its length and strong flow at source, the river does not assume substantial proportions until the *Ríos Cega* (rising in the Sierra de Guadarrama, North of Madrid), *Pisuerga* (Sierra Cantabria) and *Adaja* (Sierra de Gredos, South of Ávila) join it between Valladolid and Tordesillas—the river's halfway point. It meanders through the towns, villages and fields between columns of massed poplar and birch trees, the colors of which, in Spring and Autumn, are so

CIGALES IS  
 PREDOMINANTLY KNOWN FOR  
 ITS *ROSADO* WINES,  
 THOUGH IT DOES PRODUCE  
 SOME EXCELLENT REDS  
 AS WELL.

rich as to be almost overpowering. The birds, predominant amongst which is the chaffinch, chant their songs, while its banks in early Summer are adorned with wild flowers reminiscent of English hedgerows. When it reaches Zamora the flow is swollen again by the *Río Esla*, (Picos de Europa on the León-Asturias border), and the *Río Tormes* (Sierra de Gredos). The river then glides through deep, sheer sided, rocky gorges, passing through seven dams on its way to the border. The Phoenicians first introduced vines into Spain, in Cádiz Province, but, as with so many regions of Western Europe, the Romans were responsible for introducing the vine to the Duero valley. During the great days of the Kingdom of Castile and the

Spanish Empire, these wines enjoyed considerable prominence, but, later, in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries they slipped away so much in popularity that many vineyards were replaced with other and, at the time, more profitable crops. Then, in the late 1970s the production of quality wines took on a different meaning. Led by visionaries such as the Torres family or Raimat in Catalonia, and some stalwarts in Rioja and Navarre, and responding to the increasing demands of foreign markets and the decline in consumption at home, wine producers in Spain began to replace the indifferent, high volume wines that had been sold under Government price control until 1975, with the sort of wines that the Duero region, amongst

others, is now becoming famous for. The Duero is almost entirely reliant on indigenous varieties, which fortunately include some of Spain's best. The most important is that known variously as Tinto Fino, Tinto del País, Tinto de Toro, and commonly accepted to be the local name for the Tempranillo (see *Spain Gourmetour* No.20) that is so well known further North in Rioja. The River Duero flows through four demarcated wine regions (*Denominaciones de Origen*) of Spain; they are Cigales (1991), Ribera del Duero (1982), Rueda (1980) and Toro (1980). These are regions that have already made their mark, and, yet will improve still more.

### The Pinks of Cigales

A British Master of Wine in Bordeaux, described Spanish *rosado* (pink) wines as really being like very, very, light red wines. There is a lot of truth in this, especially when they are compared to the pink wines of the Loire and the South west of France. However, they do have a similarity to those of Provence. Many of these crisp, dry, fruity wines are produced from the indigenous variety, Garnacha (see *Spain Gourmetour* No.37). The wines, which were originally known as *claretes* in Spain, were once rather darker than today. This style of pink wine was a Mediterranean phenomenon, not just Spanish, but has disappeared as tastes changed and European Union regulatory controls intervened.



SINCE ITS TRANSFORMATION  
 BEGAN, RUEDA HAS BEEN  
 CLAIMED AS BEING THE  
 BEST REGION FOR WHITE  
 WINES IN SPAIN.

Contrary to popular belief, *rosado* is a wine in its own right, and often more expensive to produce than the equivalent qualities of red and white. The color varies according to the depth of color in the grape skins and the time that the *mosto* is left in contact with the skins. Cigales is predominantly known for its *rosado* wines, though it does produce some excellent reds as well. The predominant variety is *tinto del país* with Garnacha in support. It is centered around a small town of the

same name just to the North of Valladolid on the *Río Pisuerga*. The permitted area for vines is 3,500 hectares (8,650 acres), but only some sixty per cent is under cultivation. And, judging by the flourishing housing developments (still a comparatively recent phenomenon in Spain) being built around the town, one has to doubt whether all will be planted. The town is noteworthy for its network of underground cellars hewn out of the chalky clay soil long ago by family vineyard owners.

**Spicy Reds of Ribera del Duero**

Much has been written about this region of late, (see Spain Gourmetour No. 32) and deservedly so. It was the tremendous success of Vega Sicilia over the past 130 years that encouraged others, not least Alejandro Fernández of Pesquera, to try their hand as well, and there has been some impressive investment. But, it was the willingness of Vega Sicilia to join the new Denomination of Origin at the outset which really kickstart-

ed the area's development. Having such a pinnacle to try to match, others have made such good progress that there are now too many of them to mention here -at least twenty five Bodegas (40 per cent) have made their mark in little more than ten years. Ribera del Duero can be compared in structure to Rioja, as Burgundy is compared to Bordeaux. Ribera del Duero with its small units and limited production is the Burgundy of Spain, while Rioja with its larger



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TORO PRODUCES RED, ROSÉ  
AND WHITE WINES BUT IT  
IS FOR ITS FULL FLAVORED  
RED WINES THAT TORO IS  
BEST KNOWN.

Bodegas and productive capacity is the Bordeaux. Thus the regions complement each other, rather than compete head on.

The river flows right through the length of the Denomination dividing it in half. *Ribera* means 'river bank', hence the region's title, and vineyards line both banks all the way. The wines are deep colored, full bodied, rich reds with a minimum of 85 per cent of the Tinto Fino grape variety, and a limited quantity of crisp, dry *rosados*. The reds are sold both young (*Joven*), and with oak cask aging as *Crianza* (see glossary on page 113), *Reserva* or *Gran Reserva*. The climate during the past three years has been unkind, and yields have been low. Late frosts and drought have been the causes, however, and especially in 1994 and 1995 the quality has been Very Good or Excellent. In these circumstances the prices of the wines have been higher than many would have wished, but, in retrospect, this may have been a good thing while the Ribera del Duero adapts to its new found popularity.

#### **New Look Rueda**

The river is the Northern boundary of this Denomination of Origin. Tordesillas is a good viewing point for the River Duero and a mere ten kilometers (6 miles) from the small town of Rueda with its 5700 hectares (14,084 acres) of vineyards spread over a very large area.

Since its transformation began, Rueda has been acclaimed by many experts as being the best region for white wines in Spain. However, for many years it specialized in producing *Rancio* wines, which might, hesitatingly, be described as sherry-like, but, God forbid, ever be thought of as a suitable alternative to the great wines of Jerez! In days gone by, their rather heady nature found popularity both locally and on the North coast with the miners and steelworkers of Asturias and Cantabria. They are produced from the Palomino grape variety and are still made, but to meet an ever declining demand.

In 1970, one of the country's leading Rioja wine producers opened a new Bodega to produce white wines. Marqués de Riscal wanted to make white wines with the same level of excellence as their reds. With the advice of the then Guru in Bordeaux, Emile Peynaud, they selected Rueda. Faced with the inevitable resistance of the farmers and their representatives, Riscal fought long and hard to break ingrained traditions and achieve their objectives. They focussed on the Verdejo grape variety, persuading the authorities to permit higher percentages in the blends, the classification *Rueda Superior* now has a minimum of 85 per cent Verdejo, and introduced Sauvignon Blanc. More recently they consulted a British winemaker, Hugh

Ryman, who has achieved even better results. In 1994, both the Sauvignon and *Rueda Superior* achieved levels of quality at commercial prices that proved the experts right, as well as showing that Spain can make good white wines. Others have recognized the potential of Rueda. Carlos Falcó, the Marqués de Griñón, has played an important part both with 100 per cent Verdejo wines and with wood aged contemporary Rueda wines, and Antonio Sanz is another name that must not be omitted.

#### **Tintos de Toro**

This is one of the best places to see the River Duero. Whether down at the water's edge looking up at the Colegiata Church and the rest of the town, or from the *balcón* looking down as the river takes a ninety degree bend on its way to Zamora. One man is almost entirely responsible for the existence and the success of the Toro Denomination. Manuel Fariña was the first President of the *Consejo Regulador* (Regulatory Council), and it was he who invested in a splendid new Bodega in Toro, built half underground, and established his reputation from an early moment with his Colegiata and Gran Colegiata red wines. Regrettably, nobody else seems able to match him, though there are two Bodegas in Morales which are making good progress.

Toro produces red, rosé and white wines from the Tinto

de Toro, Garnacha and Malvasía grape varieties respectively, but, it is for its red wines that Toro is best known. Their deep, full flavored characteristics are distinctive to those of Ribera del Duero. In this same Province of Zamora there is a substantial production of *Vinos de la Tierra* (French: Vin du Pays), and cork tree plantations can be found near the border.

One cannot be so chauvinistic as not to acknowledge that the original fame of the River Duero began with Port wine and its close association with the Douro. But, in these few words it has only been possible to touch on the many exciting aspects of this Wine River—the historical factors are legion, the cultural and scenic qualities are extensive, the stories of the wines will fill many pages, and the ambiance surrounding the River Duero's whole environment is totally captivating. Most of all, here is a valley that needs to be visited for its richness to be fully appreciated.

*Jeremy Watson was Director of Wines from Spain in London for twelve years, and now lives in Mallorca, working as a Consultant and exploring and writing about the Peninsula and its wines.*

**See recipes on page 105.**



LOQUATS FROM  
CALLOSA D'EN SARRIÀ

# mediterranean exotica

Text: **Julia López de Sagredo**  
Photos: **C.R.D.O. Nísperos de Callosa d'en Sarrià/ICEX**  
Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**



**T**hey arrived as foreigners, many years ago, at a picturesque little town in an idyllic area of Alicante known as La Marina. Since 1992, their name has been inextricably linked with that town by their Denomination of Origin (D.O) title "Nísperos de Callosa d'En Sarriá". The nísperos are loquats, and Callosa d'En Sarriá is the place in which they have settled so happily. An ideal physical environment, expert work and judgment on the part of scientists and growers, skillful handling by the local women who work at picking and packing the fruit, have all combined to produce the sort of quality necessary to merit D.O. status. The people hereabouts look favorably on the cooperative approach to business, and it has worked well. Commercial foresight and professional standards have succeeded in creating an ever-wider international market and ensuring that this delicate exotic fruit reaches its most distant destinations in a state of perfect freshness and redolent of springtime in the Mediterranean.

**i**ts prime time on the market lasts just one month, from mid-April to mid-May.

Arriving at La Marina in Alicante, south eastern Spain, is a bit like entering a walled fortress: imposing rocky-crested mountains surround one on all sides but one, which opens onto the sea. Within this protective wall of mountains lies the Valle del Algar-Guadalest through which flow the two rivers, the Guadalest and the Algar, which not only give it its name but also contribute picturesque waterfalls to its overall beauty. Within the valley, the landscape is gently rolling, with villages of steep and winding streets perched on the hills. The land is systematically planted with almond, olive and carob trees on the high ground and oranges and lemons lower down. These cover the land with a year-round carpet of green and charge the atmosphere with the smells and colors of fruit. This little orchard domain enjoys its own privileged subtropical micro climate in which temperatures rarely drop below 0° C (32° F) or rise above 32° C (90° F). And this is where the loquat, very far from its origins, has found the perfect environment in which to thrive.

#### A FAR EASTERN FRUIT

The Japanese loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*, Lidl), whose original provenance is China and Japan, was grown over a thousand years ago both there and in India as an ornamental tree. Not until 1800 was it grown for its fruit. The Jesuits took it to the island of Mauritius, whence it was transported first to France, in 1784, and subsequently to Italy, in 1812. It was introduced into Spain over 200 years ago by

a merchant seaman named Captain Roig. From Sagunto (Valencia) where it was first landed, it spread all over the Levante and south eastern Spain. In the Mediterranean Basin, the loquat acclimatized beautifully, thanks largely to its benign climate. New varieties emerged there, as did larger fruit. Within the Mediterranean Basin, it was in Alicante's La Marina that the *Eriobotrya japonica* found its most totally comfortable natural habitat, to the extent that it is now permanently associated with the name of the town where it was first grown commercially - Callosa d'En Sarriá - which features in its official Denomination of Origin designation.

#### AN OFFICIAL PEDIGREE

The Denomination of Origin *Nísperos de Callosa d'En Sarriá* became official on 14 January 1992. Quality controls had been applied since 1987, though, starting with the introduction of category and size standards for loquats for the domestic market.

The D.O. area covers nineteen villages or municipalities in the Marina Baja area and the Algar-Guadalest valley, and its quality guarantees apply only to loquats in the *extra* (red label) and *primera* (green label) grades, both of which require a minimum size of 32 millimeters, which excludes P caliber fruit (see chart).

The specified varieties are Algar, or Algérie, and Nadal as principals, with Golden and Magda as pollinators. Angel Rodríguez Pérez is the D.O.'s Secretary and author of the only book in existence on the subject of Spanish loquats. He explained that the Regulatory Council carries out daily quality checks on the fruit, and issues numbered counter-labels only to those that pass. "In this area, we achieve a quality and size of loquat unrivaled anywhere else; it is our strong point and is the reason why our main customers at the moment are actually loquat-producing countries themselves. They know the prod-

uct and recognize the quality that we achieve." The area's production in 1995 reached 18,957,028 kg, topping the previous year's figure of 18,514,469 kg (see chart). The area planted with loquats in Alicante accounts for 44% of the national total, and produces 48% of the total national production of this crop. The highest proportion of the loquats grown within the D.O. area are G caliber, followed by GG. Together, though figures can vary from year to year, they represent 88% of the production.

#### FIRST TASTE OF SPRING

By today, the *Níspero de Callosa d'En Sarriá* is synonymous with the Algar, or Algérie variety. It originated in 1950, in an Algerian garden whose owner, Miguel Martínez Sánchez, sowed the seeds which produced this excellent fruit variety. He personally took a cutting to Callosa, from where it spread throughout the area, though the parent tree was lost when a new road was built through the garden in Algeria. Because of its ready acclimatization and exceptional qualities, this variety ousted others already established in the area. In 1973, Algérie accounted for 3.7% of the loquats grown in what is now the D.O. area, and Nadal for 78%. By today, 99% of the loquats grown here are of the Algérie variety.

It is an early variety which begins to flower in November and December, when its multiple racemes of little white flowers fill the air with a strong smell of almond. In January, the fruit sets and begins to grow. The first ripe loquats mark the imminent approach of Spring, of



# Loquats are 'lite' and healthy, yet contribute a distinctive flavor to any dish.

which their flavor and smell provide a privileged foretaste. The flesh of the Algérie variety is orangey-yellow, plump, melting, juicy and aromatic; the flavor is exotic and the texture firm. Just one bite triggers off a variety of responses - a thrill for the palate. This variety gives the biggest caliber fruit, the average weight being 60 - 70 grams, up to a maximum of 100 gr. The fruit is oval and its skin is a fairly uniform orangey yellow; being slightly coarser, it peels away readily from the pulp and also helps the loquat survive the rigors of transport. There are three to four seeds per fruit, and the seed to pulp ratio is 1/4.5. All these characteristics inherent to the Algérie variety have been capitalized on to the full by the people of Callosa. This fact, in combination with optimal environmental conditions, accounts for the achievement of D.O. status.

**ACHIEVING IDEAL CONDITIONS**  
Wind is the loquat's worst enemy. Its ideal habitat is a valley protected by a horse-shoe wall of mountains opening onto the sea. The valley should enjoy relatively high humidity and moderate temperatures, ideally no lower than 6° C (43° F) and no higher than 32° C (90° F). La Marina, with its subtropical micro climate, not only satisfies all these conditions but also has good sources of water for irrigation and very fertile, medium consistency, deep soil in the lower reaches of the rivers and mountains. This is where, below 250 meters in altitude, to avoid damage from the cold, the loquat plantations are. Like its fruit, the loquat tree is very delicate and sensi-

tive. Its roots are very close to the surface, which makes it susceptible to any change in external conditions. One of the biggest problems in loquat growing is what is known in Spanish as *mancha morada*, or purple spot, which manifests itself simply as a color defect in the skin while having no effect at all on the pulp within. Nevertheless, it affects its market value adversely. The Regulatory Council refuses to issue the D.O. counter-label to fruit with this defect. Though it is caused by a broad amalgam of inter-related factors, it is fundamentally the plant's response to very severe evaporation, which causes a lack of active calcium. This is why strong, dry winds and too much sunshine are some of the most dreaded conditions.

Experiments are currently being carried out in Callosa with micro-misters in an attempt to create a micro climate of moisture without the intense evaporation that occurs when certain factors conspire. Using plastic to protect plantations from wind, hail and direct sunlight is also becoming increasingly frequent, and this helps achieve fruit which is earlier, more uniform in color and better in quality.

"For a while we tried putting bags over the loquats to protect them while they ripen on the tree as they do with Vinalop grapes, another D.O. product from Alicante (Spain Gourmetour No. 37). But though the results were good, it just wasn't economically viable, so we gave it up", explains Angel Rodríguez Pérez. Research into obtaining seedless fruit was also abandoned, since the fruit produced were much

smaller and not commercially interesting.

## THE FRUIT OF LOVE

The area's growers have adapted sensitively to various market conditions, while remaining committed to the quality, competitiveness and individuality of their product. The nature of the local terrain and the small scale of local farming -over half the landholdings cover less than 1 hectare (2.4 acres)- makes mechanized farming inappropriate. This explains the rationale behind opting for products which are not run-of-the mill -they require a high degree of manual labor and therefore fetch high prices in the marketplace and make the plantations cost-effective.

"We owe much of our success with loquats in Callosa d'En Sarriá," says Angel Rodríguez Pérez, "to our women workers. They know how to handle the fruit as gently as it needs to be, especially during picking and packing the boxes." Picking is, indeed, a laborious process. The fruit is so delicate that it barely withstands being touched. The picking is done in stages, as the fruit ripens, by taking hold of the stalk and detaching it. The fruit is then placed in padded baskets with a maximum capacity of 2 to 2.5 kg, and taken to the classification center. There the loquats are turned out onto tables -also padded- and the stalks are trimmed down to less than half a centimeter before the fruit goes on to be classified and sorted by size. All these processes are manual, since loquats are too fragile to survive conveyor belt treatment.

While the women workers have unquestionably played an essential role in this area's success as a loquat producer, the role of the growers and their expert advisers has been equally vital. It takes skilled cultivation techniques to achieve the quality and size of fruit produced here. One of the most important of these is "thinning out", or manual pruning. This is done at four different stages of the growing cycle and on different parts of the tree: branches, shoots or buds, flowers and fruit. The aim is to maintain the balance of the tree while producing conditions which yield the right number of fruit per tree for the required size to be obtained, protect the fruit from being battered by leaves in windy conditions, or indeed from friction of any sort, while at the same time leaving enough foliage to deflect direct sunlight. Loquats require constant attention during growing, then need tender handling during picking and transport to the consumer. They are also credited with aphrodisiac properties. Inevitably, some people call them *fruto del amor* -fruits of love.

## A BRIEF MARKET SEASON

La Marina has clearly geared itself towards early varieties with a view to export, unlike other producing areas in Valencia and Castellón which grow later varieties, such as Tanaka, aiming at the domestic market.

The loquats' prime time on the market lasts just a month, from mid-April to mid-May, though there is ripe fruit about from the second half of March, and picking continues until late May and even early

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### Young White

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. Ideal as a light aperitif that will delight the taste buds and a perfect accompaniment to fish and seafood.

### Crianza

This wine 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, it has complexity and structure for an excellent development in bottle. Delicious as an aperitif, with shellfish, fish and beef prepared in sauce, sautéed vegetables and mild cheese.



### Antea

Barrel-fermented, produced from Viura grapes with a small percentage of Malvasia. A fine bouquet of ripe apples, well-balanced and complex with a perfect combination of fruit and delicate notes of vanilla. Can 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

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 refreshing aperitif and an exquisite accompaniment to sweet and sour dishes, curries, foie gras, goat cheese and light desserts. A very original wine for drinking at any time.



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# i

## n Alicante's La Marina, extricably linked with

June. The dates vary from year to year depending on weather and growing conditions. José María Savall Pérez, President of the Callosa d'En Sarriá Agricultural Cooperative, told us: "When we harvest depends on what happens in February. If it is cold, harvesting dates are pushed forward and loquats have to compete with other stone fruits, with a resulting drop in price. Growing the fruit under plastic brings the harvest back to early March -fruit has sometimes been picked as early as February, which means it's unchallenged in the marketplace and fetches very good prices."

Loquats are sold in small, padded wooden boxes given that they are a very delicate which does not withstand pressure without bruising. The two sizes of box used are 5 - 6 kg and 7 - 8 kg. Top grade and top size (GGG, 53 mm or over) loquats are packed in 3 kg boxes.

The fruit is pre-chilled before transportation to ensure that it arrives in good condition. It travels to its destination in refrigerated trucks at temperatures above 2° C (35° F), since it is harmed by lower temperatures. "The product is picked at just the right stage of ripeness, handled and packed manually, and transported in such a way that it reaches the market as if it were straight off the tree", comments José María Savall Pérez.

Currently, about 83% of production goes for export, compared with just 13% in 1960. The main customer is Italy, which takes up 60 - 63% of exports, followed by Portugal, which has only been buying for a few years but now imports 17% of production. Other customers lag further behind in

terms of volume bought. They are, in descending order, France, Germany, Belgium and Britain.

José María Savall Pérez explains: "Our aim is to open up new markets and consolidate our presence in those countries which hitherto have been irregular buyers of small quantities. We are looking for consumers with buying power and a taste for unusual and rather exotic products, such as the Germans and Swiss."

### CALLOSA: COOPERATIVE BY NATURE

In La Marina, over 80% of the farms sell their loquats through cooperatives. The D.O.'s leading company is the Cooperative Agrícola Callosa d'En Sarriá, founded in 1919. Ángel Rodríguez Pérez considers it "an outstanding example of cooperativism in the agricultural sector". Here, the cooperative and the town are one and the same thing. There is a consumer cooperative, with its own chain of supermarkets, and another for services, marketing, education -with a private school-, and credit. This last is commonly known as *la casa grande* -the big house- which indicates how familiarly it is thought of, and handles 95% of the town's money. Members are obliged to sell their entire production exclusively to the Cooperative.

In 1994, the Callosa d'En Sarriá cooperative, along with the other two leading companies in the area, marketed 18,220,254 kg of the 18,514,469 kg of loquats grown within the D.O. area. The Callosa coop accounted for 73% of these, sold under the Ruchey label, the other two companies, Cooperati-

the loquat has found its ideal home. Its name is now in that of Callosa d'En Sarriá -the town where it was first grown.

va de Altea and Bernia Agrícola SAT, accounting for 13%, under the Frut Altea label, and 14% under the Nis-Sol label, respectively.

In 1992, these three companies set up an *Agrupación de Interés Económico*, (Economic Interest Group), 75% of whose sales the Callosa d'En Sarriá cooperative is responsible for. The group's motto - "We have joined together to serve the farmers' interests better, and to provide a better service for our customers" - reflects its aim of communal marketing through a single channel of supply, achieving high quality control standards, seeking new markets, outlets and marketing methods and promoting their products. José María Savall Pérez recognizes the importance of the work being done by the *Agrupación*: "Improving the marketing and promotion of the product are areas we consider of prime importance. To achieve them, it is vital to work jointly, concentrating our efforts and supply. This is why it was decided to set up the *Agrupación*, and results are proving very satisfactory."

The fourth producing company within the D.O., Frutas Esther, is owned by a private individual from Murcia, and is smaller scale than the other three.

The cooperatives also sell the associates' other products, which include Verna and Primofiori lemons all year round, and Navel, Sanguina, Verna and Valencia-late oranges and Marcona almonds. The Callosa d'En Sarriá cooperative also works with canning companies in other areas to produce preserved loquats, which are either sold by the cooperative under the Ruchey label or by the manufacturer under his own label.

#### A PERMISSIBLE INDULGENCE

Loquats are not just a delicious fruit but also an unusual one, and these are qualities that go down well with the modern consumer whose nutritional requirements are more than satisfied and who wants to introduce some exoticism and adventure into life, starting with what he eats. Loquats have a bitter-sweet taste, and its balanced acidity, delicate sweetness and aroma

and the hint of the Mediterranean present in the color of its skin and flesh all contribute to its special appeal. Furthermore, it qualifies as 'lite' and healthy. In brief, it is a permissible indulgence. It is recommended for weight-watchers, since it is low in calories (44 kcal per 100 gr), low in sodium and high in fiber, and acts as a diuretic and an intestinal anti-inflammatory. The composition of the flesh, and the pectin, tannin and citric, tartaric and mallic acid content also give it anti-diarrheic properties, working on the intestinal mucus as an astringent, regulator and tonic. These properties make it the ideal fruit for people with delicate stomachs and digestive problems. Its fiber content also enhances the assimilation of other nutrients and helps prevent infections

of gastro-intestinal tract. The loquat's pectin and potassium content make it a valuable aid to preventing cardiovascular problems, since it also reduces cholesterol levels in the blood. It is an important source of Vitamin A, containing up to 5800 IU per 100 gr of edible fruit, and is also rich in calcium and phosphorus.

**Julia López de Sagredo** is an agronomist. She worked seven years at the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Düsseldorf, Germany, promoting Spanish food products, and currently lives in Almería, where she writes for agricultural and foreign trade publications.

See list of main exporters on page 14 and recipes on page 107.

#### LOQUAT SIZES

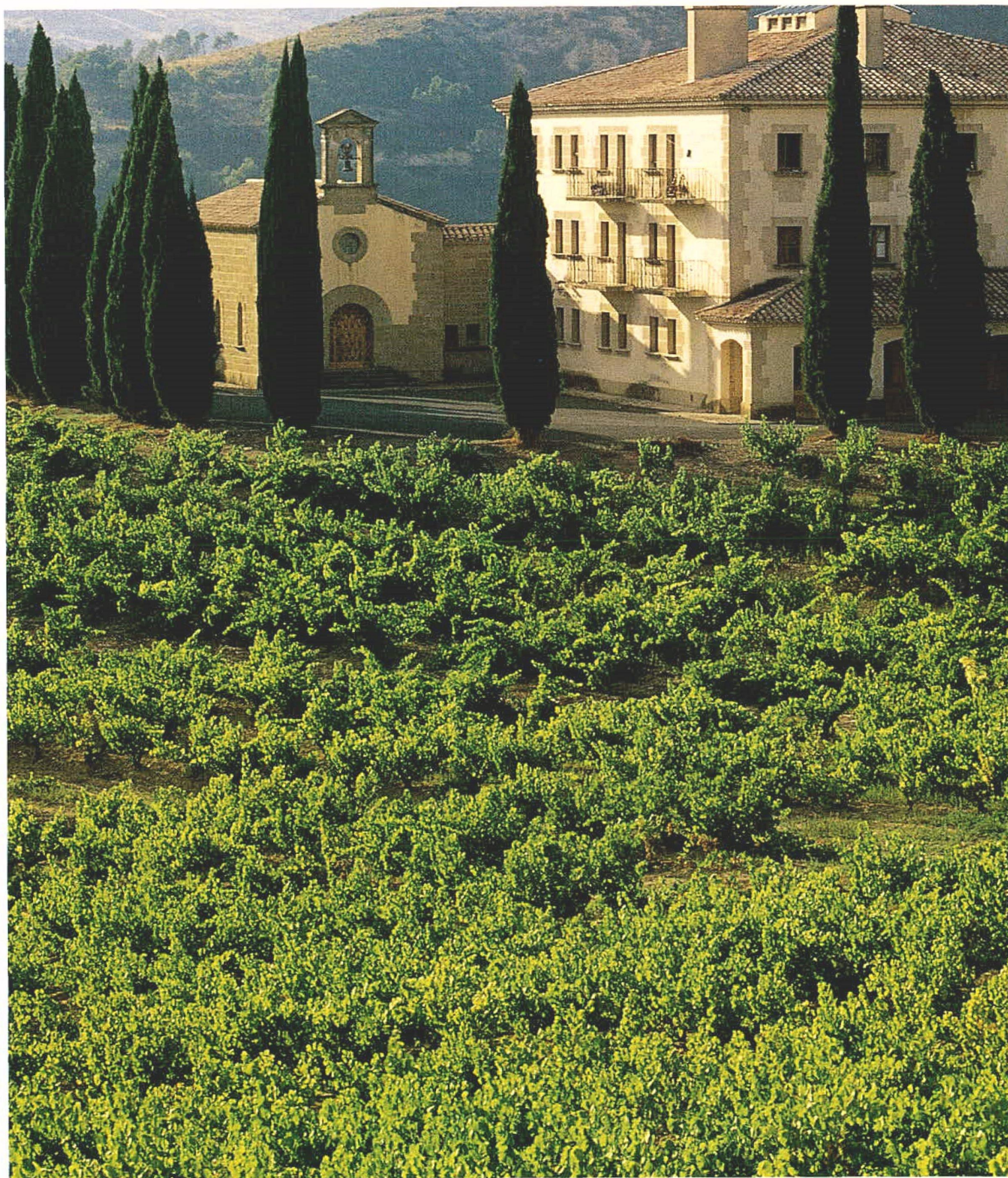
Diameter in mm  
Size identification code

53 and over	GGG
46 to 53 excl.	GG
39 to 46 excl.	G
32 to 39 excl.	M
25 to 32 excl.	P

#### TRENDS IN EXPORTS OF LOQUATS WITH D.O. (in tonnes and % of total production)

COUNTRIES		1992	1993	1994	1995
ITALY	T	8,037	8,580	9,967	10,501
	%	53.8	53.2	53.8	53.9
PORTUGAL	T	2,508	2,755	3,110	3,282
	%	16.8	17.1	16.8	16.8
FRANCE	T	764	818	947	1,003
	%	5.1	5	5.1	5.1
GERMANY	T	475	488	589	613
	%	3.1	3	3.1	3.1
BELGIUM	T	200	252	248	265
	%	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.3
BRITAIN	T	169	192	210	231
	%	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
OTHERS	T	299	322	371	389
	%	2	2	2	2

Source: Regulatory Council for the D.O. Callosa d'en Sarriá loquats



# Navarre: Individualist Gaining Ground



*Navarre is a little wine universe in its own right and produces an increasing number of first-class white and red wines.*

# T

radition stands for ideas or customs which, in the course of history, are developed and passed from one generation to another. And yet by no means does that imply uniformity and homogeneity. Instead, traditions change. They are affected by wars, natural disasters, political upheavals, economic transformations and that permanent shifting in tastes, which is known as fashion. There are hardly any cultural assets or consumer goods in Spain which have such an age-old tradition as wine. And there can hardly be any other region which has renewed its wine-growing tradition so consistently as Navarre.

Text: **David Schwarzwälder** Photos: **Carlos Navajas/ICEX**

Translation: **Word Works**



*In addition to the classic Viura white wine grape, there are now 150 hectares of new Chardonnay plantations.*

From a historical perspective, Navarre is an open region. It has been open ever since, in the early Middle Ages, believers from all over Europe began to follow the pilgrim's way to Santiago de Compostela to visit the grave of Saint James, the apostle. (See Spain Gourmetour, No. 30). The pilgrims brought new customs, different languages, fresh ideas and religious and moral support with them. At that time, the North of Spain was in desperate need of assistance of any type, since, in the early 12th century, in the war against Moorish predominance on the peninsula, the tide was just beginning to turn in the Christians' favor. The Route of Saint James, which winds its way from Roncesvalles practically to Logroño through the Navarre region, brought the already existent infrastruc-

ture laid by the Romans back into working condition and turned Pamplona into an important thoroughfare. Trade flourished and, together with their memories, the pilgrims took the wine from this kingdom back to their native lands. Navarre's wine tradition dates back over 2000 years. In agriculture, even today, only the farming of cereals exceeds wine in importance. In the Middle Ages, the independent kingdom of Navarre produced considerably more wine than it could itself consume, which, naturally enough, led to its early orientation towards exporting. Initially, wine exports were limited to the rest of the peninsula. Later on, newly conquered territories on the American continent joined the ranks of its major importers. Drinking habits underwent constant change. Thus in

the 16th century, white wine was drunk. In the 17th and 18th, rosé was in fashion and in the 19th century, the watchword was red.

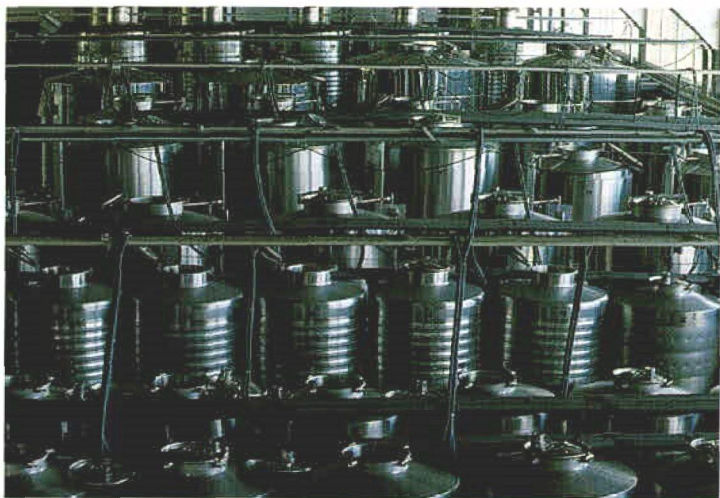
In 1880, during the phylloxera outbreak, the French bought up huge quantities of wine from Navarre. In 1889, when the phylloxera crossed the Pyrenees, there were almost 50,000 hectares (approx. 123,550 acres) of vines. Only 700 (1,730 acres) survived this plague. As a result of its high yield and extraordinary resistance to blight, Navarrese growers began to plant their vineyards with the Garnacha or Grenache grape. In good times and in bad, Garnacha represents the keystone of recent wine history of Navarre. For most wine drinkers, Navarre is synonymous with rosé. There is nothing strange about this when we remember that the first generation of quality bottled

wine was the famous *Rosado de lágrima*, a wine made from the pure must, which is drained off practically without any mechanical pressing. For varietal wines, the Garnacha grape was and is suitable for red wine production only up to a certain point because it tends to oxidize quickly. For thirty years, this rosé, dominated Navarre's bottled wine production.

The considerable success of the bottled quality rosé both at home and abroad, however, could not hide the fact that there were limits to this market, and that, unless there were effective changes, this Garnacha barrel product would continue to set the scene for what had once been such a famous wine-producing region. The direction that had been taken with rosé was to mark the bottled wine policy to be pursued, with-



*The proportion of the fine indigenous  
Tempranillo red wine grape grown  
has now risen to over 20%.*



Navarre is producing quality...

out copying neighbouring Rioja. And thus began, on the initiative of a few brave wine-growers, and later with the decisive support of the *Consejo Regulador* (Regulatory Council), the revolution of the new grape varieties.

Now the tables have turned. The days of Garnacha's domination would appear to be numbered.

#### A REGION WITH A PROFILE

The geographical shape of the autonomous region of Navarre is one of the keys to understanding the potential of the Denomination of Origin (*Denominación de Origen*) Navarra. You could be forgiven for thinking that Creation went on the rampage here and then had a break until it got to Andalusia. Wine grows from the Pyrenean foothills through to the hot plateau bordering on central Spain. The wine growing area is divided up into five zones. From Tierra Estrella, Valdezarbe and the hilly Baja Montaña, with its moist Atlantic breezes, right across Ribera Alta and down to Ribera Baja, the

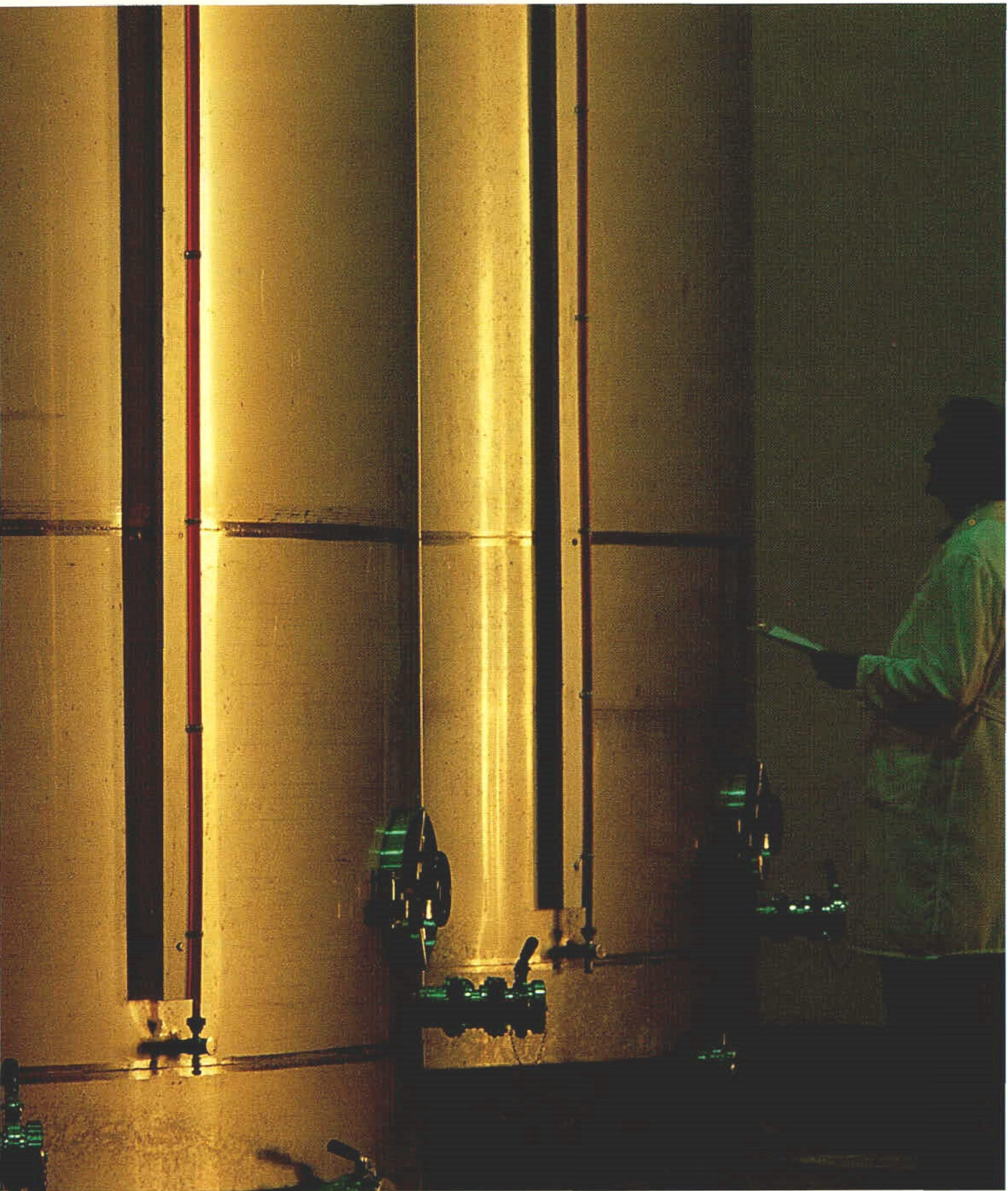
southern part of Navarre with its Continental-Mediterranean climate and the largest wine-growing area of the five zones.

Until the end of the 1970's hardly a single wine-grower realized that it is precisely in these agricultural contrasts that the strength of the D.O. lies. Who would then have thought that precisely the individual planting of foreign grape varieties in the different climatic areas would bring out the real wealth of subtleties of Navarre wine, and allow them to step out from behind the shadow of the Garnacha domination.

Today, faced with the stark differences in character of the many wines from different sub-regions, many experts call for the D.O. to be divided up into two completely independent quality wine-producing areas.

In 1970, twenty years after Bodega Vitivinícola de Navarra bottled the first rosé, and thus offered an alternative to the barrelled variety, the Magaña brothers began, on their own initiative, to plant grape varieties that were unknown to the





*..needless to say,  
with contemporary  
technology.*

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# Navarre

region. Sixty hectares (148.26 acres) were planted with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, almost overnight. In the early eighties, E.V.E.N.A, which today is the regional oenological research institute, started work and began experimentation on 30 different grape varieties.

## CHANGING COURSE

In the meantime, the D.O. scenario has undergone something of a change. The Garnacha now only covers 9,000 (22,239 acres) of a total 16,000 (39,536 acres) hectares of registered wine-growing land. The classic Graciano grape has practically disappeared. The proportion grown of Tempranillo, the noble indigenous Spanish red wine grape, has now increased to over 20%. To the classic white wine grape, Viura, 150 hectares (370.65 acres) of new Chardonnay plantations have now been added. A further 7% of the wine growing area is covered with Cabernet Sauvignon, and about 2% of Merlot completes the picture for red wine grapes.

The driving force behind these new plantations are, of course, the *bodegas*, whose interests are principally focussed on marketing bottled wine, and increasingly geared towards the export business. The majority of *bodegas* which are keen on experimentation have been in the export group Asociación de Exportadores de Vinos de Navarra for years now. This year, the association is targeting the German market in one of its campaigns.

The new wine style, that is blending traditional grape varieties with the new French grape varieties has given rise to vehement debate nationwide and, of course, in Navarre as well, on the dangers of a possible

loss of identity of classic Spanish wine. The wine-growing estates that work with the new varieties, however, argue, and rightly so, that never in the history of Navarre wines has such high quality been produced, that grapes not native to the area will never dominate and should only play a complementary and improving role. In recent years, Navarre is increasingly frequently dubbed the California of Spain. This hackneyed term describes this quality wine-producing area as inadequately as the monotonously repetitive adjectives "modern" and "*afrancesado*" (in English "Frenchified"). What unites the 15 or 20 top wine-producing estates which currently make up the D.O. (and almost every year a new *bodega* appears on the scene) is above all the desire to produce quality. How this quality is produced is another story. Needless to say, contemporary technology is used in the process. Yet in many cases, this is complemented by keeping old traditions in mind. The picturesque castle-wine-estate of Guelbenzu for example, is using wooden butts for storage once again (see Spain Gourmetour No. 37). Javier Malumbres has opted for the huge advantages of several age-old Garnacha fields which produce wine with a particularly rich extract, and even export giant Bodegas Julián Chivite is moving increasingly from his enormous steel tanks to barrels. The aim is to make different and better wines than in the past and to focus less on copying other areas or pressing modern lightweight liquids.

## A WINE UNIVERSE

One of the nice things about the group of top wine-producing estates in this former kingdom is their individuality. The different estates and wines are only distantly related to one another. Fernando

Chivite hits the nail on the head when he says, "To make good wine, I need to renew my quality philosophy every year".

More than in the south of Navarre, the *bodegas* in the west and central parts of the D.O. region have perhaps the prerequisites for world class Chardonnay production. A few of the newly planted Chardonnay vineyards are already offering superb quality. The Castillo de Monjardín estate (a pearl near Estella) and the Nekeas estate both have Chardonnay plantations on the higher slopes of the valleys, where the climate almost reaches Burgundy proportions.

Concha Vecino, an oenologist with Nekeas, is fearful of difficulties in the bad years, but predicts the best white wine in Spain when the weather conditions are good. Julián Chivite is offering top international class wines with his Colección 125 Aniversario, Chardonnay, fermented in the barrel, thus proving that even large concerns are able to make individual, high quality wines.

Particularly amazing are the red wines, however, especially the blends made from indigenous and new grape varieties, which can now be found scattered all over the quality wine area.

Every wine-producing region has its master, its *mag*o (magician) as the Spanish say and in the case of Navarre, there can be no doubt that this is Javier Ochoa. This former head of the E.V.E.N.A. wine research center produces red wines which, for their body and depth, will bowl over even dyed-in-the-wool Bordeaux fans.

Navarre's best Cabernet is refined and delicate, the Evo of the Guelbenzu estate, which, in its own way, sets standards and which cannot be compared to any national *tinto* Cabernet. Juan Magaña must be the epitome of the obstinate individualist and it is thanks to his pioneering efforts that

Spain's professional wine critics stand almost united behind Navarre's new wines. His last creation, the red Eventum will probably go down history as the first designer wine (in the positive sense of the term) of D.O. Navarra. Juan Magaña describes the origin of this wine as follows, "After a few years experience with my Merlot *Reservas* (see page 113), it became clear to me that my wines were too serious and very expensive. I looked for a new, fresh type of red wine to complement my line of *Reservas*. So specifically for this new wine, we decided to plant 35 hectares of our vineyards with five different grape varieties. The result was Eventum".

The Chivite brothers can be proud of their varietal Tempranillo 125 Aniversario. For many years now, this splendid wine is proof that good Tempranillos do not just come out of Rioja.

The oenologist of Bodegas Vitivinícola de Navarra is also going his own way. "We were the first to recognize the potential of the Garnacha grape and to put a *Rosado de lágrima* on the market. And I am still trying to produce fruity wines." For all of those who are not keen on the woody notes, Jesús Lezaun's Cabernet is warmly recommended. The fruitiness and elegance of this wine is quite exemplary. Moreover, this Cabernet is excellent for newcomers to wine, who have difficulty with the woody Bordeaux products.

## CONSOLIDATING QUALITY

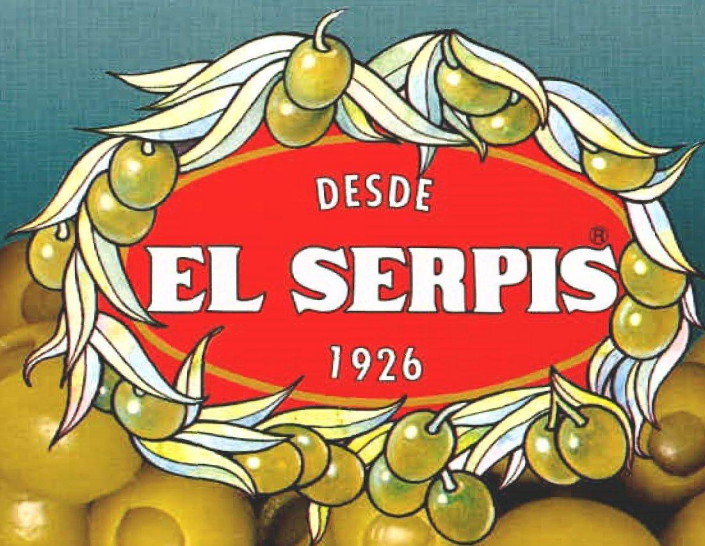
Of course, all that glitters is not gold. In any consideration of the courage and achievements of the wine-growers and the supportive measures implemented by the government, it should not be forgotten that the debate on the storage and future prospects of specific Navarre wines is still in full swing. To date, there is no possibility

# THE LOOK OF A NEW GENERATION.



From 1926, the first olive stuffed with anchovy.  
**EL SERPIS** quality, as ever in everybody's mouth.

That's the way **EL SERPIS** is, and this, the look of the new generation.



here of falling back on the age-old experience with new grape varieties from which Catalonia benefits.

Many white and red wines get too strong a cask flavor en route. To make matters worse, the majority of varietal products are wines from new estates, which lack extract and backbone. These shortcomings, like the lack of experience in handling the new grape varieties can only be remedied by time.

The general trend, however, is proving the individualistic wine grower from Navarre right. Exports to other parts of Europe, especially Britain and Scandinavia, are growing all the time. Slowly but surely, the unbottled product is losing its significance and the whole panoply of Navarre wines is gaining profile and character. A clear indication of the wines' growing prestige is the decrease in the tendency of many critics and consumers to use Rioja as the constant benchmark -above all, because the new quality coming out of Navarre is not far behind many of the so highly praised Riojas.

### "LIKE THE KING IN NAVARRE"

In contrast to the erratic developments in the wine sector, Navarre's cuisine has always been characterized by its consistency and quality. The opulence at the courts of the kingdom were legendary. The chefs employed by neighbouring French nobility had to measure themselves against the standards set by the arts of their colleagues in Navarre. The longevity of certain Navarre princes, however, can be explained not so much by the skills of their kitchen staff, but more by the natural diversity of the raw materials, which provides the basis for this superbly balanced cuisine. Navarre's menu is the reflection of the region's agriculture and climate, and is blessed with a unique selection of delicacies, of which there

are too many to mention. The gastronomic potential with which plentiful nature has endowed this autonomous region is the reason why Navarre's cuisine has always proved to be an expanding force. Spain's first temple for gourmets was Navarre in origin. The Zalacaín restaurant in the center of Madrid was founded as far back as 1973 and is given three stars in the Michelin guide.

For Navarre, the natural and healthy gastronomic culture did not have to be invented first. It has always existed. The unique asparagus, the lettuces, the small intense-tasting artichokes, the tasty red peppers and the many other types of veg-

etable are the basis for the light Mediterranean cuisine of this region.

In the Pyrenees, an absolutely inexhaustible selection of edible mushrooms and some of the best sheep's cheese in Europe can all be found.

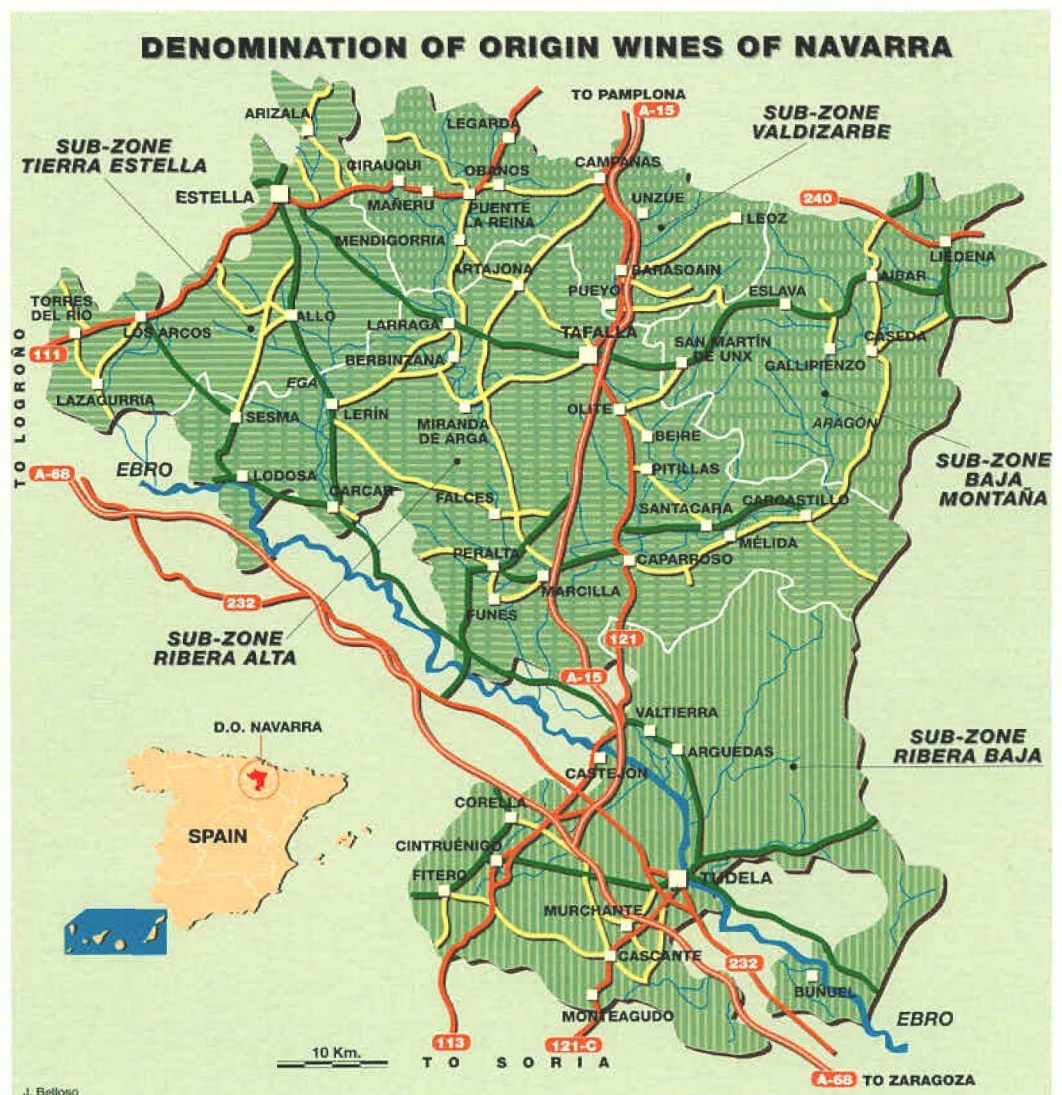
Fish also plays a main part. Stuffed shellfish and fish *ajoarriero* style are the high points both in simple and in sophisticated restaurants. The term *ajoarriero* is used for a sauce made from stewed onions, garlic, red peppers and potatoes, which is added to the widest variety of fish and seafood such as crayfish. Equally tasty are the snails and poultry, with particular emphasis on duck.

Needless to say, in the regional capital, Pamplona, there are a wider selection

of excellent restaurants to be found than in any other part of Navarre. However, in other respects gastronomic skills are evenly distributed across the entire former kingdom. A few tips: the Europa restaurant in Pamplona, the Maher restaurant in Cintruénigo, Casa Ignacio "El Pichorradicás" in Tudela and the García restaurant in Murchante.

*Having studied in Salamanca, David Schwarzwälder now commutes between Germany and Spain and, has been working in journalism, covering Spanish wine and food, for the past seven years.*

**See main exporters on page 15.**







# Codorníu

## a Royal Connection

WHEN KING JUAN CARLOS' ELDEST DAUGHTER, ELENA, WAS MARRIED IN SEVILLE LAST YEAR TO JAIME DE MARICHALAR THE 1,300 GUESTS TOASTED THE COUPLE WITH CODORNIU'S CAVA. THE CHOICE WAS NATURAL, BUT NOT AUTOMATIC, FOR CODORNIU CREATED SPAIN'S FIRST TRADITIONAL METHOD SPARKLING WINE -KNOWN AS CAVA- IN 1872 AND 15 YEARS LATER IT WAS APPOINTED A PURVEYOR TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD. IT STILL PRODUCES A SPECIAL RESERVE FOR THE ZARZUELA PALACE. ANXIOUS TO AVOID ANY ACCUSATIONS OF FAVORITISM FROM THE MORE THAN 250 OTHER PRODUCERS, THE FAIR-MINDED KING HAD THE CAVA FOR THE WEDDING CHOSEN AT A BLIND TASTING ORGANIZED BY THE REGULATORY COUNCIL OF THE CAVA INDUSTRY. CODORNIU, THE LARGEST SELLER IN SPAIN AND THE SECOND BIGGEST EXPORTER CAME UP TOPS. IF IT HADN'T, THE PRIDE OF THE 300-STRONG RAVENTOS FAMILY, WHICH OWNS 100 PER CENT OF CODORNIU, WOULD HAVE BEEN SEVERELY DENTED.

Codorníu has been in the wine business for close to 450 years. The earliest known reference is the will dated 1551 of Jaume Codorníu which lists his possessions including cellars, wine presses, barrels and vats. In 1659 his daughter María Anna Codorníu (there was no male heir) married Miguel Raventós and established the winemaking dynasty.

It was José Raventós, born in 1825, who put Codorníu on the world map. He visited the Champagne region in France where he found wines that reminded him of those of his Catalan homeland. But they sparkled with a life unknown to the winemakers of Penedés, the region in Catalonia which then was mainly producing red wines and today produces more than 90 per cent of all *cava*. Don José returned to Spain and began to experiment in a subterranean cellar built in the garden of his Barcelona home with a second fermentation which takes place in the bottle instead of in large vats (or *granvas* method).

He imported the necessary equipment, but instead of the grape varieties of Champagne he used local white grape varieties, particularly Parellada (today one of the seven authorized varieties for *cava* along with Macabeo, Xarel·lo, Subirat, Monastrell, Garnacha and Chardonnay). The Chardonnay vine was brought to Spain from France by the Codorníu family. Don José opened the first bottle in 1872 and seven years later put 72 cases of *cava* on the market in Barcelona. The new style of sparkling wine took the Penedés by storm. In 1880 Codorníu's *cava* won two gold medals at the Barcelona Universal Exhibition. Don José is commemorated in a copper engraving on a 15th century cask which lies in the Cava Codorníu, the company's holy of holies, 30 meters below the surface in its cellars at San Sadurní de Noya, the *cava*

capital, near Barcelona. The engraving has four bullet holes: at the beginning of Spain's 1936-39 civil war anarchists entered the estate in search of members of the Raventós family but they had all escaped. They took out their frustration on the engraving of Don José which was then above ground in the reception hall. Don José's son, Manuel, who took over the business in 1885 was equally enterprising. He was talented in many fields and not just viticulture. The Spanish wine historian, Manuel Llano Gorostiza, said Don Manuel was "much more than a pioneer or a clever businessman. He had scientific knowledge and financial structures far superior to those cellar owners who followed his example in the elaboration of sparkling wines."

A restless man, Don Manuel made frequent trips to

ducing region) to Cuba and Argentina. International recognition came the same year as it began to export when Codorníu won gold medals in Antwerp and in Bordeaux in 1895. The latter award was particularly significant: the deliberations of the judges were tense and slow, as some were unwilling to award the top prize to a foreign sparkling wine.

Codorníu's production of *cava* grew from 3,000 bottles at the turn of the century to 300,000 just before the outbreak of the first world war in 1914. Today Codorníu exports around 12 million bottles a year - a quarter of its total sales - to some 140 countries. The main markets are Germany, which took 47% of exports in 1995, the United States (18%), the United Kingdom (7%) and Sweden (4%). As part of its expansion Codorníu built a vast under-

ground network of cellars, the world's largest, and other buildings at its headquarters in San Sadurní between 1895 and 1915. The architect was José María Puig y Cadafalch, a pupil of Gaudí and a leading exponent of the Art Nouveau style. The famed cellars stretch for 30 kms (19 miles) on five levels and contain some 120 million bottles of wine (roughly two years' sales today). The cellars provide a constant temperature of 14° C (57° F) and protection from vibration, light and drafts. The jagged Montserrat mountain provides a magnificent backdrop for the cathedral-like hall, resplendent with stained glass windows and sweeping, elliptical brick arches. "God is in heaven," says José María Martí, the public relations chief at Sant Sadurní, pointing skywards, "but the trea-

sures are in the ground." Don Manuel foresaw the importance that publicity would have this century and in 1898 he organized competitions among Catalonia's leading artists for posters advertising the Codorníu wines. Casas, Utrillo, Tubilla and Junyent submitted evocative posters - in the Toulouse Lautrec "style" - with images of society beauties and dashing escorts. The precocious Picasso (born 1881 in Málaga) was by then in Barcelona, but was not then well known enough to have participated. His flair for publicity also had an unconventional streak. On one occasion he ordered his delivery carts to drive the wrong way up Barcelona's narrow streets. Chaos ensued, and Codorníu was fined for breaking the traffic laws. It was a small price to pay for promoting *cava*. The name Codorníu reached the royal household in Madrid and on April 17, 1904, Alfonso XIII had lunch at Codorníu's headquarters in San Sadurní after surviving an attack on him in Barcelona. He sent a telegram from there to calm his mother, María Cristina, -which today is reproduced and hanging on a wall in the Grand Cellar- saying, "I am very well and very happy." He had Non Plus Ultra, which is still one of Codorníu's best sellings *cavas* in Spain, with his *entrecote*. Today the cellars and the company's museum (which has 13th century barrels) are visited by more than 200,000 people a year. They are driven through the cellars in motorized trains. The visit is free: Codorníu believes it is paid back with the extra bottles of bubbly that are drunk by people who come away from the tour laden with history.

### Quality Segment

Codorníu competes in the popular segment of the market through its Rondel brand, whose aging process (10 months) is not as long as it is for Codorníu's brands

## JOSÉ RAVENTOS WAS THE FATHER OF CAVA. HE OPENED THE FIRST BOTTLE IN 1872 AND IN 1879 PUT 72 CASES ON THE MARKET IN BARCELONA. IT TOOK THE PENEDÉS WINEMAKING REGION BY STORM.

France, determined to bring back to Spain as many secrets as he could. It is said that he always took a walking stick with him when he visited French cellars - it had a hidden thermometer at one end. He brought French winemakers to Penedés and replanted the family vineyards when the Penedés area was devastated by phylloxera (a leaf and root-gnawing insect) with grafted, phylloxera-resistant vines.

### National Monument

By the 1890s Codorníu had recovered from phylloxera and in 1894 it shipped Spain's first exports of sparkling wine produced by the traditional method (as *methode champenoise* is now called under European Union regulations to protect France's Champagne pro-

(two-five years). The minimum period for aging is nine months under *cava* regulations. The Rondel cellars were built in 1949 at Cervelló, a village near Barcelona just inside the Penedés region, when Manuel Pagés Raventós was Codorníu's chairman. The family saw ahead and realized the need to expand capacity to deal with future demand, and they wanted to be able to combine tradition with the latest technology and labour-saving devices to produce good quality at a lower cost than the Codorníu brands. Rondel is the third best selling *cava* in the world. In the late 1960s, Rondel's cellars were expanded and today they hold 35 million bottles.

In Germany, Codorníu's biggest export market, Rondel sells at DM 9 (\$6.25) a bottle and competes with Freixenet, whereas the two higher quality *cavas* exported under the Codorníu label -the Clásico Brut Chardonnay and the Codorníu Brut-cost DM 14.95 (\$10.3).

Codorníu's share of the premium market in Germany was estimated at 83 per cent in 1995, while Rondel had 20 per cent of the popular market.

Japan, a growing market, receives another version of the Clásico Brut Chardonnay as tastings have shown that the Japanese prefer something sweeter.

In 1991, after many years of exporting, Codorníu moved directly into the US market - it had established a trading company in Long Island, New York in 1986- when it opened its winery in the Carneros district of California's Napa Valley. Codorníu spent five years scouting potential new vineyard sites in various countries before deciding on the Carneros district because of its winning combination of climate, excellent growing conditions and the advanced technical expertise for which Napa Valley winemakers are renowned. The Davis and Fresno universities with whom Codorníu

has been working for many years are nearby.

The Codorníu Napa Brut produced in California is a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. Pinot Noir is not yet allowed for *cava* production in Spain. Total production is 200,000 bottles a year. Most of it goes to the US market - Codorníu had 98 per cent of the premium US *cava* market in 1995- and the rest is exported to countries like Japan, Argentina and Switzerland.

Domingo Triay, who designed Codorníu's Rimat winery, was also the architect for Napa Valley. Triay again found that the best approach was to use artificial banks, clad in earth and vegetation. This blended the winery into the landscape -the artificial hillock is barely noticeable- and contributes to the thermal insulation necessary to

Unlike the successful US venture, Codorníu's big export drive into the Russian market has left a bitter taste: some 230,000 cases of *cava* were stolen by the mafia in 1993 en route to St. Petersburg from Moscow. Codorníu's manager on the spot was in league with the mafia. "The Russians like sparkling wines," said Xavier Pagés. "They are big consumers." The robbery forced Codorníu to close its subsidiary in Russia and was the main factor behind losses for the financial year ending July 1994. Top level contacts with the Russian authorities have failed to lead to the recovery of the *cava*.

### Not Only Cavas

Codorníu is largely known abroad for its *cavas*, but it also produces and exports quality wines through its Rimat and Masía Bach com-

pany. The Rimat estate was castle he found two symbols carved in stone -a cluster of grapes and the hand of man- which bore testimony to the estate's previous glory. In the old Catalan language the word for grapes is *Raim* and *Ma* is the word for hand, Thus the Rimat estate was born." Manuel Raventós Doménech's decision to buy the 3,200 hectare (7,900 acre) barren estate was regarded as rather odd. But he soon struck lucky or had inside knowledge and proved himself again as an astute businessman: shortly after the purchase the Catalonia and Aragón canal was built, bringing water from the Pyrenees that dramatically transformed the area's agricultural life and with it Rimat's fortunes. The two most widely-planted grapes at Rimat are Chardonnay and Cabernet-Sauvignon.

The Masía Bach estate lies in the Upper Penedés near the village of Sant Esteve Sero-vires, an area renowned for wine production for over 2,000 years. It was bought by Codorníu in 1975. The 60 hectare (144 acre) estate is also used to grow virus-free rootstocks and vines, both of Spanish and imported varieties, for Codorníu-owned vineyards and grape growers under contract to Codorníu companies.

The Masía Bach still red and white wines are mainly exported to Sweden, Canada and Denmark and the Rimat still red and white wines and rosé to the United Kingdom, Holland and the United States (as of this year). These two companies also produce *cava*.

## CODORNIU MOVED DIRECTLY INTO THE U.S. MARKET IN 1991 WHEN IT BUILT A WINERY IN THE CARNEROS DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA'S NAPA VALLEY. IT HAD CLOSE TO 100 PER CENT OF THE PREMIUM U.S. CAVA MARKET LAST YEAR.

ensure a constant indoor temperature -a vital factor in any bodega.

The Napa bodega is Codorníu's only production center outside Spain. Xavier Pagés, a member of the Raventós family and the exports chief, says the company will consolidate its position in the US market before deciding whether to produce *cava* in another country.

panies. The Rimat estate, complete with a 17th century castle, on the border of Catalonia and Aragón in the rugged countryside of Lérida, was acquired in 1914. Its history, in the words of Xavier Farré, Rimat's head, is well summed up on the label: "When my great grandfather acquired our property it was a desert wilderness. But over the entryway to the ancient

### BREAKDOWN OF CODORNIU'S EXPORT MARKETS IN 1995 (ESTIMATED FIGURES)

CANADA	2%
GERMANY	47%
SWEDEN	4%
UK	7%
US	18%
OTHER COUNTRIES	22%

Source: Consejo Regulador del Cava and Nielsen.

### Everything under Control

Codorníu has a very serious control over quality because it is a vertically integrated company -which means that it is responsible for every stage of the *cava* process. Whereas most producers buy all or most of their wine from cooperatives, Codorníu has its own vineyards and does not buy in any wine. Even when it has to increase



the harvest to meet market demands, this is done by buying grapes instead of wine as is normal in the Penèdes region. Codorníu has 1,500 hectares (3,700 acres) of vineyards, 1,200 (3,000 acres) of which form probably the largest single estate vineyard in Europe.

The quality of the grapes is rigorously controlled: they are given a second test, after being brought from the vineyards, just before entering the presses at San Sadurní. In less than five minutes, the company knows the degree of acidity, sugar and pH content of each shipment of grapes. Codorníu uses gentler presses which prevent the must from dissolving in excessive polyphenols, oxidases or grassy flavors from the stalk, pips or skin of the grape. Its continuous belt presses with perforated bands gently squeeze the grapes: these devices permit rapid juice extraction without oxidizing the must. "Oxidation is our main enemy," said Nathalie Naval of the public relations department who guided me around the complex at San Sadurní. Pressing only takes two minutes, giving Codorníu unprecedented control over the amount of time skins are in contact with the must. The must extraction for a good *cava* is limited to the first 60 per cent: to extract and use more reduces the quality of the wine and, consequently, the *cava* from which it is made. The presses are only used two months of the year (end August until late October) and are idle

the rest of the time. It is an expensive business, but one which guarantees quality.

The Codorníu family prefers not to delegate the task of following the development of the wines for the *cava*. In the Sant Sadurní cellars, the most expert family members personally monitor the evolution of the wines and the first tasting takes place. The wine basis is then determined and the proportion which will be used for the different types of *cava*. The blending is a skilled process and the family gambles every time on the success of the vintage.

The leading members of the family running the company keep their palate in trim by meeting every Friday for a blind tasting. "It helps to maintain the quality of our products," says Xavier Pagés. "Our main limitation is the taste we have for our own products, which can influence us." Six *cavas* of other producers and usually one of Codorníu are tasted every week and all are bought from the same shop so that the physical conditions are the same.

### Inventions

One of the most time consuming and expensive parts of the *cava* process is the regular turning of the bottles -known as riddling- to get the sticky sediment produced in the secondary fermentation down to the neck. Traditionally, this was done by placing the bottle necks in racks, almost horizontally,

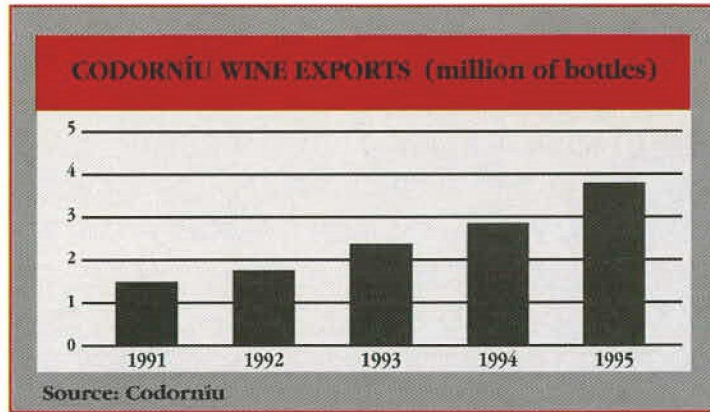
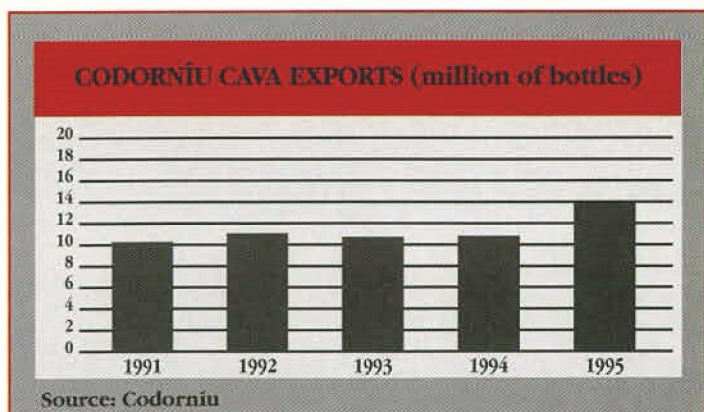
with the neck slightly inclined downwards. Every day for about a month, cellar-workers moved the bottles, vibrating them a little while giving them an eighth of a turn and inclining them more towards the vertical. The sediment gradually slides down the bottle and accumulates under the cork. Codorníu invented in the 1960s a far simpler method known as the "ticono" after the engineer who discovered it (Mr Ticó). This consisted of moving a pack of bottles and not just one bottle. This was then further developed into the "girasol" where 504 bottles are laid side by side in a metal or wooden cage which stands on a rocking base. The whole block can be turned at once. The "girasol" gave birth to the "giropalette" in France's champagne region. Rondel has gone one step further and developed the "rocker", which holds 675 bottles.

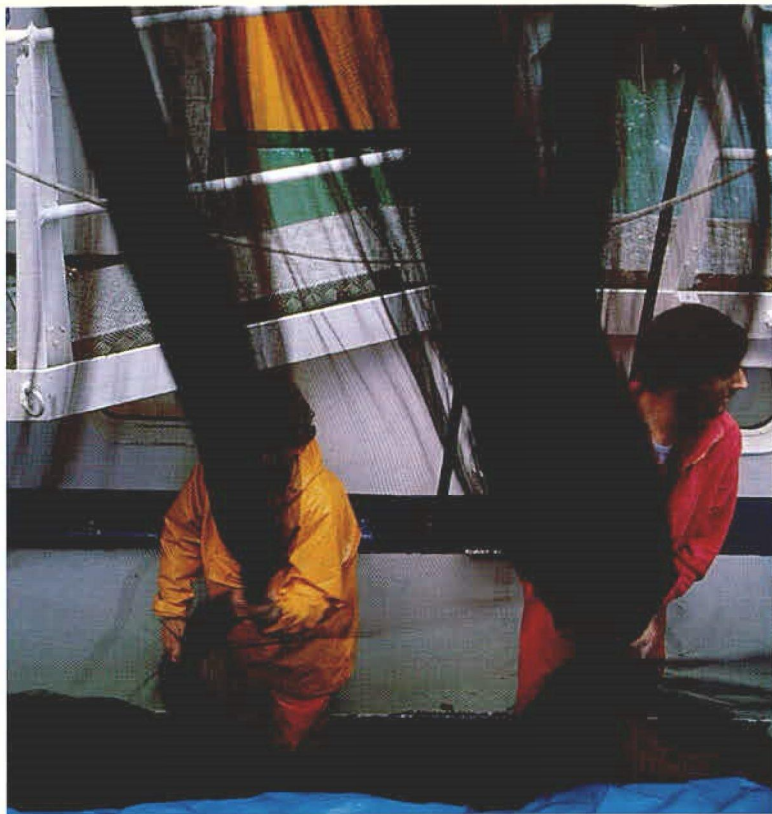
Codorníu produces five main *cavas* in Spain: Gran Codorníu, Non Plus Ultra, Anna de Codorníu, Extra Codorníu Brut and Gran Cremant Codorníu Brut. Top of the range is the Gran Codorníu whose aging process lasts for up to five years. Anna de Codorníu was the first *cava* to contain the Chardonnay grape variety. Brut means that it only has 10 grams of sugar per liter, compared with 20 grams for sec (dry) and 35 for medium dry. It goes without saying that Codorníu's advertisements in Spain do not have to explain what is *cava*. They are

run under the general slogan of "Born in the Mediterranean." But abroad it does have to, and with reason. *Cava* drinking still represents a very small proportion of total wine consumption. Germany is the largest market and even that is not very bubbly: per capita consumption of sparkling wines (including champagne) was 7 bottles in 1993, 23.5 per cent of the total of 30 bottles of wine drunk. In the case of France, consumption is 6 bottles of sparkling wine a year (a mere 6.7 per cent of the total of 89 bottles of wine drunk per head a year) and in the United States only 0.67 bottles are drunk (8.6 of wine overall). But the most surprising figure is that although Spain is the home of *cava* Spaniards only drink 2.5 bottles of sparkling wine a year (51.5 of wine all together), and most of that in Catalonia over Christmas.

The potential for increased sales is thus enormous, and Codorníu is bound to benefit from changes in drinking habits which make *cava* more popular. The sky is still the limit.

**William Chislett** was a correspondent for *The Times* in Madrid (1974-78) and the *Financial Times* in Mexico (1978-84). He has written books on the Spanish, Portuguese, Chilean, Ecuadorian, Panamanian and Finnish economies.



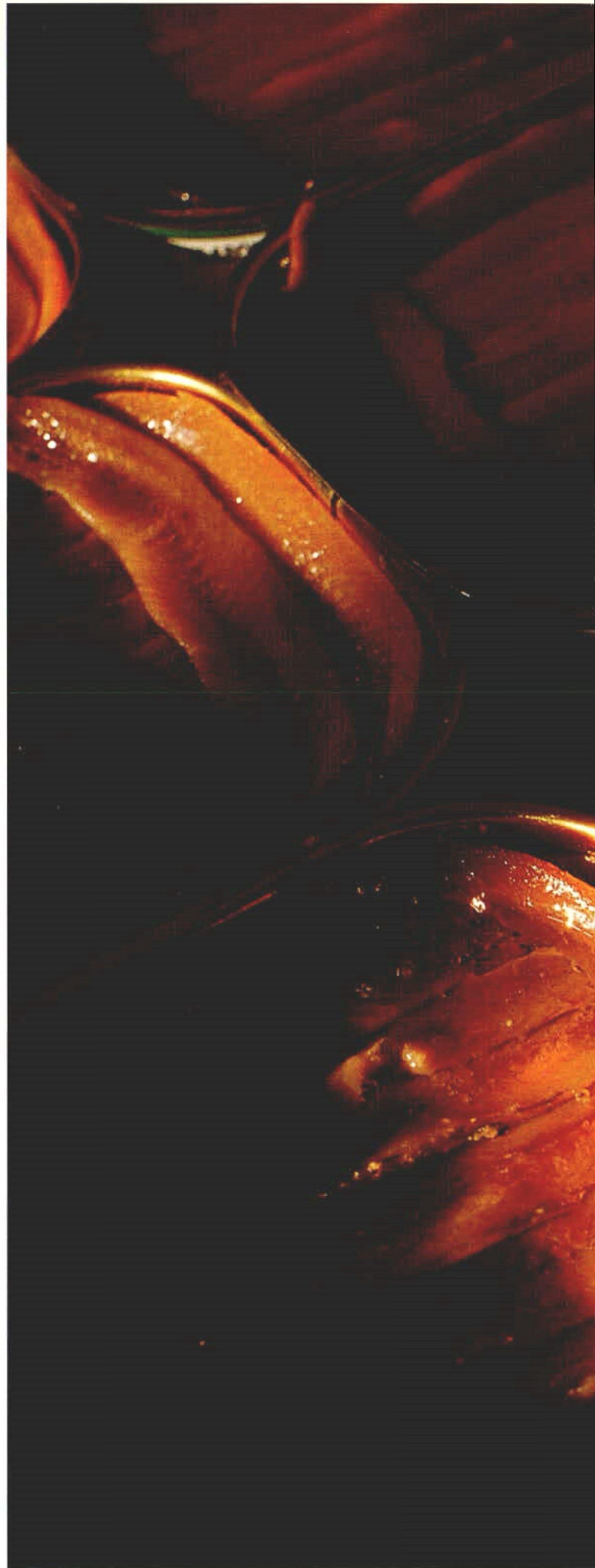


Text: **Cristina Martínez**  
Photos: **Félix Lorrio/ICEX**  
Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

# ANCHOVIES

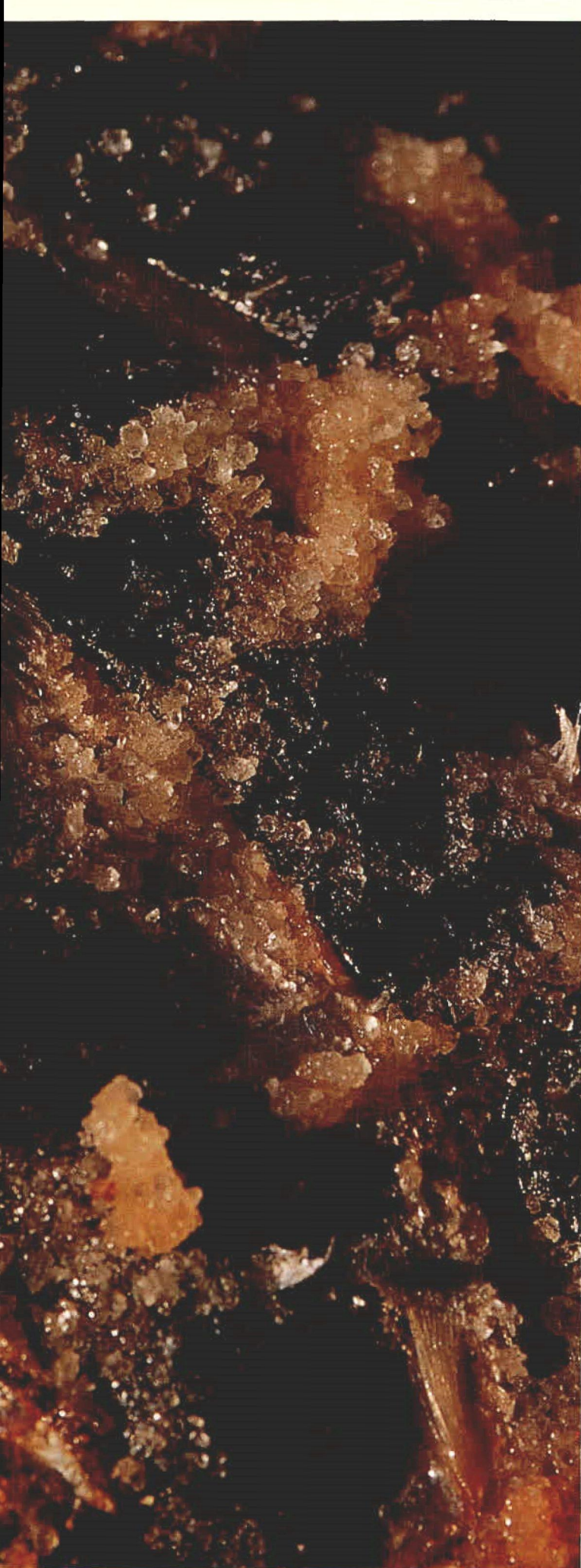
## SMALL BUT STYLISH

IT WAS IN 1386 THAT THE SPANISH SALT FLATS CAME UNDER CROWN OWNERSHIP, SALT BEING THE MOST HIGHLY-PRIZED OF CONDIMENTS. TODAY IT IS AN INDISPENSABLE INGREDIENT FOR PRODUCING ANCHOVIES -ONE OF SPAIN'S PRIME FOOD PRESERVES AND A VERSATILE AND TASTY CONVENIENCE FOOD THAT CAN BE TEAMED UP WITH PRACTICALLY ANYTHING.









**T**he Greek and Roman ruins of Ampurias near the Catalan town of La Escala on the Mediterranean Costa Brava include the remains of an ancient salting plant -the courtyard where the fish was cut and prepared, large containers where it was salted and the storehouse where it was packed into jars. The salting process is part of the legacy left by the Romans in the countries of the Mediterranean basin and, although today's production centers on the northern coast of Spain, it was via the *Mare Nostrum* that this technique for preservation first came to Spain.

In fact, the production of salted anchovies became established along the North coast of Spain -the regions of Cantabria and the Basque Country, mainly-long after the Roman occupation of Spain, reaching its peak during the 19th century. At first

the fish were just salted and only later were they produced in the form of small fillets in oil. The expansion in production was the result of increased catches of anchovy in the Bay of Biscay.

Unlike most of the products of the preservation industry, anchovies are not submitted to temperatures above 100°C/212°F for sterilization so are considered semi-preserves. Ideally, they should be kept in a refrigerator at 5°C/41°F and under these conditions should last for six months.

#### SPRINGTIME IS FISHING TIME

Saint Joseph's Day, 19 March, is traditionally Day One for the anchovy fishing season off the coast in the Bay of Biscay. In early spring the sea temperatures are around 10-13°C/50-55°F and in April the fish have just the right organoleptic characteristics



(aroma, taste and color) so this is the ideal month for the boats to go out.

The schools of anchovies are detected with radar and attracted, no longer with flaming torches but with the special lights that are typical of inshore fishing. They are caught in nets, never with hooks. Average weight per fish is 38 grams (approximately 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> ounce) so every kilogram contains 26-27 fish (about 12 to a pound).

In the Bay of Rosas on the Catalan Mediterranean coast between La Escala and Rosas, the anchovy season starts later, half way through spring. From time immemorial, this part of the *Mare Nostrum* has been a rich fishing area. By the month of May the fish have gained sufficient fat to face the summer and this is the best time for the fishermen to cast their nets. The bay becomes alive with the comings and goings

of the fishing-boats. The anchovies from La Escala are often smaller than those caught in the Bay of Biscay.

#### THE SALTING PROCESS

When the catch is brought in to port, the anchovies are placed in large buckets of brine where they remain until all the blood has drained out. The process that follows, though now partly mechanized, is largely dependent on women who do much of the work. In just one swift movement, the heads are removed and the fish gutted. It is most important to not remove the thymus gland that keeps the anchovy fresh for the first few days. Any fish losing it tend to rot quickly.

The fish are then laid out on huge trays for classification and selection and the real salting process begins converting the fresh fish into anchovies as we know them.





CONSERVES AL VAIERO, S. V.  
P. B. Via S. ANTONIA CANTARINI 100 - NAPOLI  
FILETS D'ANCHOIS  
A L'HUILE D'OLIVE  
POIDS NET 50 g  
POIDS ÉQUILIBRÉ 33 g  
SARDELLENFILETS  
IN OLIVENÖL  
NETTOGEWICHT 50 g  
HALBKONSERVE  
OHNE KÖHLING HALTBAR

FILETS  
A L'HUILE  
POIDS NET 50 g  
POIDS ÉQUILIBRÉ 33 g  
SARDELLENFILETS  
IN OLIVENÖL  
NETTOGEWICHT 50 g  
HALBKONSERVE  
OHNE KÖHLING HALTBAR

CONSERVES AL VAIERO, S. V.  
P. B. Via S. ANTONIA CANTARINI 100 - NAPOLI  
FILETS D'ANCHOIS  
A L'HUILE D'OLIVE  
POIDS NET 50 g  
POIDS ÉQUILIBRÉ 33 g  
SARDELLENFILETS  
IN OLIVENÖL  
NETTOGEWICHT 50 g  
HALBKONSERVE  
OHNE KÖHLING HALTBAR

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## THE SALTING PROCESS IS PART OF THE LEGACY LEFT BY THE ROMANS IN THE COUNTRIES BORDERING THE MEDITERRANEAN

Normally, the largest fish are packed whole in salt (*salazón*). In Cantabria they use large cans of different sizes (holding alternate layers of fish and salt). When the cans are full, a weight is placed on top and the fish are left to mature in contact with the salt for a minimum of three months. When the optimum degree of maturation is reached, the can is closed and sent out for distribution. In the Bay of Rosas, especially in La Escala, although the process is the same, the anchovies are packed in large glass jars.

These whole salted anchovies are generally packed on the day they are caught and are therefore designated, using the Italian term, anchovies "alla vera carne". This is one of the most important parameters for determining the quality of this type of anchovy. When they reach the final consumer, the backbone is removed together with any excess salt and the fish are washed and dried before dressing to taste and serving. The custom in Spain is to place the fish on a slice of bread and sprinkle over a few drops of olive oil.

### ANCHOVIES IN OIL

So much for the large anchovies. The small ones meanwhile are used for produced anchovy fillets in oil. Here the process is different with the fish being arranged in cylindrical barrels in star-shaped layers. When the container is full, brine is poured over (sometimes containing pieces of pepper) and heavy stones are placed on top to press down the anchovies. The anchovy fillets in the Cantabrian are flatter than those from La Escala because the stones used to weigh down the fish in the Bay of Rosas are not as heavy

as those used in the Cantabrian factories.

They remain in the barrels for 3 to 6 months depending on the type of fish and the temperature -heat speeds up maturation but it must never exceed 25°C (77°F). The characteristic features of any anchovy salting plant are the pungent smell and the damp, cool air. The fish from the Bay of Biscay require less time for maturation than those from La Escala and this is one of the factors making anchovy production in northern Spain more economic as the production period is shorter.

The osmotic pressure resulting from the contact of the salt with the fish leads to the dehydration and maturation of the fish turning them into anchovies. They can then be preserved in barrels for up to one and a half years, as long as the temperature is kept at 10-15°C/50-55°F.

When the anchovies are removed from the barrels they are traditionally rinsed in brine in factories along the North coast and just with water in La Escala. They are then laid out on cotton cloths in parallel rows and rolled up inside the cloths. The "parcels" are then centrifuged to remove any excess water before being packed or canned. They usually lose up to 55% of their moisture during the process.

The most skilled part of the process is undoubtedly what comes next. In all the anchovy salting plants, it is the deft hands of women that remove any remaining skin and the bones. They then divide each fish into two -each half is one fillet- and pack them in cans

### TRENDS IN EXPORTS OF ANCHOVY SEMI-PRESERVES

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	JAN-JUNE 1995
VOLUME (T)	2,301	2,004	1,621	1,556	1,770	1,002
AVERAGE PRICE (PTAS./KG)	964	1,144	1,198	1,317	1,381	1,417
VALUE (MILLION PTAS.)	2,218	2,293	1,941	2,049	2,445	1,420

### MAIN COUNTRIES BUYING ANCHOVY SEMI-PRESERVES (Million Ptas.)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	JAN-JUNE 1995
USA	749,557	640,854	410,311	443,052	471,675	579,998
SWITZERLAND	456,237	498,282	480,132	500,413	582,979	260,649
ITALY	274,844	380,480	335,314	407,686	523,502	175,969
UK	-	-	131,867	184,366	179,009	131,151
CANADA	374,880	292,780	200,417	245,591	185,251	107,199
AUSTRALIA	99,834	159,221	-	-	-	29,252

Source: Anfac

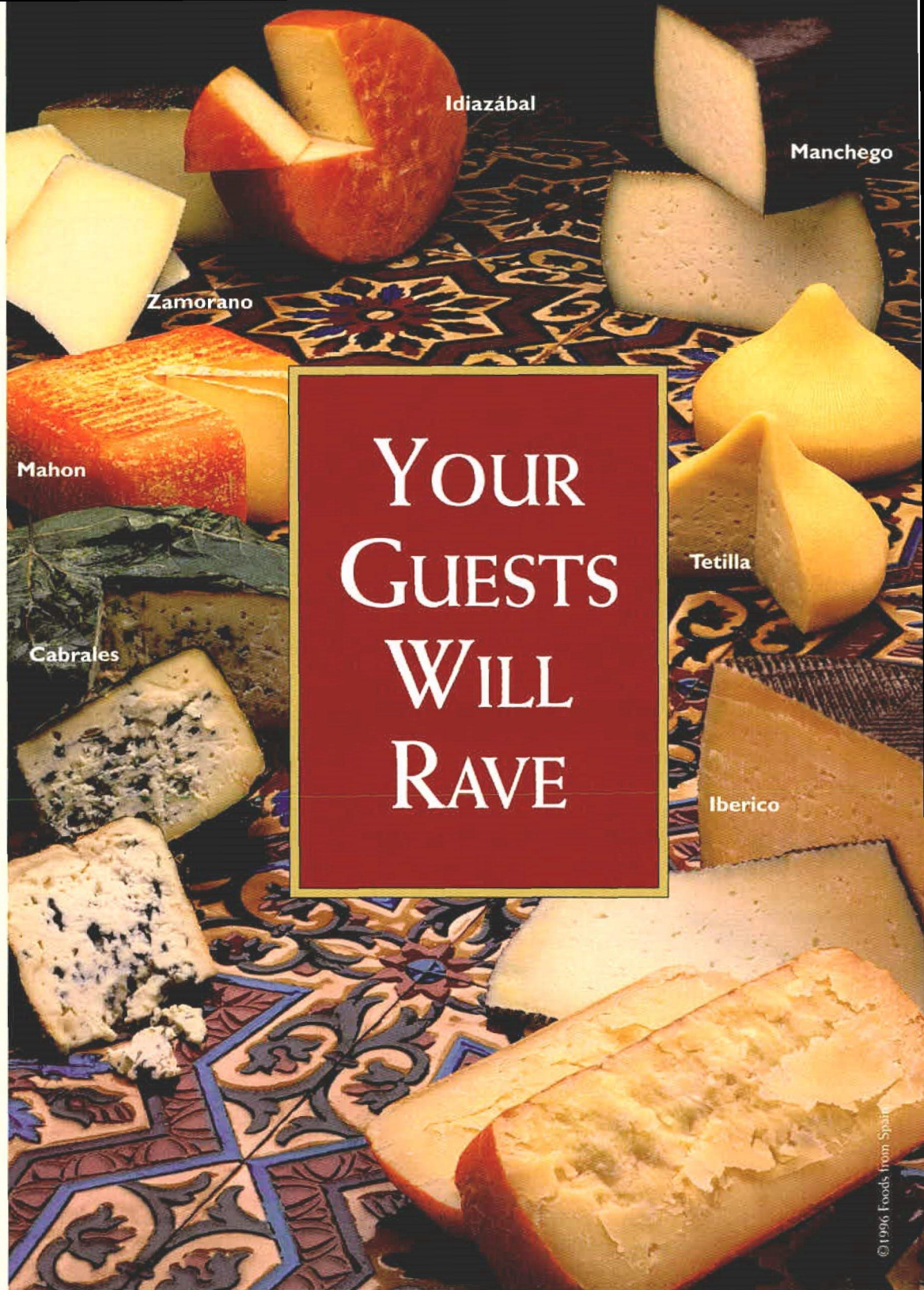
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## IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1995, THE UNITED STATES WAS THE WORLD'S TOP IMPORTER OF SPANISH ANCHOVIES

with olive or sunflower oil. In La Escala they are usually packed in glass bottles and along the North coast in cans although the Catalan influence is leading to greater use of glass in the north of Spain too.

### THE CLOSED SEASON IN GERONA

Anchovy producers are currently very concerned about the falling levels of anchovy catches. The fishing of fry outside the season is the greatest enemy of the anchovy sector and, though widely practiced, is generally recognized as being counter-productive. However, a solution has been found for Gerona. In 1990, the Catalan regional government (Generalitat) instituted a two-year closed season in winter to be subsidized equally by the Generalitat and the European Union. A further closed season has been agreed for the period 1996-2000 during the months of October, November and December. It is to be subsidized to the tune of 100 million pesetas (US\$ 833,000) by the Generalitat. The local producers are well aware of the benefits of these measures.

### LA ESCALA ANCHOVIES: A MEDITERRANEAN DELICACY

The top quality of the La Escala anchovies that results from a delicate and skilled manual process was acknowledged by the Denomination of Quality awarded by the Catalan Regional Government in 1988. Five companies are covered by this Denomination - Casa Bordas, Solés, El Xillu, Fill

de Callol i Serrats and Anxoves de L'Escala. Since these are very small, family-owned companies, they have had to make special efforts to be included amongst the 15 Catalan products that bear the "Q" of Qualitat Alimentaria. Their products have to pass chemical quality control tests and the plants themselves have to be kept under perfect technical and hygiene conditions; it is also forbidden for producers to use imported fish to make up for any shortfall in supply. Although contacts are being established with a view to selling La Escala anchovies on the French market, to date they are only sold in Catalonia and in quality delicatessen stores in the rest of Spain.

Since 1989, the first week in October has been fiesta time in La Escala. This is the Gastronomic Week of the Anchovy during which twelve restaurants prepare their best anchovy recipes. Undoubtedly the favourite local *tapa* is thick slices of crusty bread moistened with fresh tomato and topped with just a few anchovies. But this a versatile fish that can be presented in a thousand and one ways with just a little imagination.

One of the local restaurants, the Hotel Ampurdán belonging to Josep Mercader, set a fashion for eating fried anchovy bones. After the whole salted anchovies have been rinsed for dressing and serving, the backbones are removed and placed for a few minutes in a dish of milk. They are then dipped in very hot olive oil. The

result is a crunchy and very tasty titbit.

### A CLASSIC FROM THE BAY OF BISCAY

Is it because of the plankton they eat? Or is it because of the rough northern seas? The reason why the anchovies from the Bay of Biscay are unique is a mystery, even for the experts. Carmelo Brambilla, Chairman of the Association of Cantabrian Fish Canners (CONSESA), is adamant that they are quite exceptional. "In season, our anchovies are the best in the world", he insists. Next door to Cantabria, anchovies are also produced in the Basque province of Vizcaya in such picturesque fishing towns as Bermeo or Elantxobe.

But if we are to identify each product with its region, then the anchovy belongs to Cantabria. In the 19th century, the fish were just salted and the custom of producing fillets was introduced later. Traditionally, the busiest fishing towns were Santoña, Laredo, Colindres, Castro Urdiales and Argoños but today, of the 48 companies that belong to CONSESA, 21 are based in Santoña, 8 in Laredo and 5 in Colindres.

If you enter a bar in any one of these towns, you are likely to see anchovies on most of the canapés laid out along the bar. Served with peppers, cheese, prawns, olives ... there is any number of combinations. The most sophisticated palates might like to try the latest fashion in *tapas* - anchovy with melon.

Over 90% of the Spanish production of anchovies comes from the Bay of Biscay and 25% is exported.

According to data provided by the Association of Fish and Shellfish Canners (ANFACO), Spain (not including the Canaries) exported 1,770 metric tons of anchovies in 1994 for the sum of 2,444.8 million pesetas (US\$ 20.37 million). During the first half of 1995, exports have increased in comparison with the same period the previous year and a total of 1,002 tons was sold outside Spain for 1,420.8 million pesetas (US\$ 11.84 million).

The countries that consumed the largest quantities of Spanish anchovies in 1994 were Switzerland, Italy and the United States. During the first half of last year, they changed places and the United States became the top importer, followed by Switzerland, and Italy.

Carmelo Brambilla expects that by the end of 1996 the Cantabrian anchovies will also have received the Denomination of Quality. This should help to standardize the product and achieve greater quality guarantees for consumers.

*Cristina Martínez has a Master's Degree in financial journalism and specializes in foreign trade. She writes in several publications that aim to internationalize Spanish business.*

**See the list of the main exporters on page 13 and recipes on page 109.**

**I have to confess that I am very partial to the fruits and vegetables enjoyed by Spaniards during the winter and the ways in which they are prepared in different parts of the country using home recipes. Tender artichokes from Tudela or Sanlúcar de Barrameda simply dressed with olive oil and garlic or as part of the elaborate Menestras (a multi-colored vegetable dish) adored in Rioja and Navarre.**

I cannot resist the early *Inavizas* or turnip tops used in the Galician broths or the wild asparagus and *tagarninas* (small cardoons) preferred by the Andalusians in omelettes and *revueltos* (scramble eggs). If you are in a restaurant, ask for roasted or grilled leeks, endives, courgettes and aubergines, often they can be the best thing on the menu. Looking for new ideas and searching especially for the flavor and glorious smell of bitter oranges, I travelled South to the Bética of the Romans, the Al-Andalus of the Moors. Brought by the Arabs to give pleasure to their senses, the bitter orange tree still adorns the streets of Sevilla, Jerez and Málaga. Because of the intensity of the natural fragrance in the blossoms, the Arabs used them to make perfumes and flower waters. In Spain the beautiful fruit of the bitter orange was seldom put to culinary use, while the British and particularly the Scots, who imported and consumed practically the entire Spanish crop made marmalade, the joy of breakfast.

There are many marmalade recipes you can find among cookery books published in the British Isles since the 18th century using Spanish Seville oranges but the "Genuine Scotch Marmalade" (page 438 *Modern Cookery for Private Families* by Eliza Acton first published in 1845) has to be one of the best. Guaranteed as an excellent one by the Scottish lady from whom it was procured, it reads: "Take some bitter oranges, and double their weight of sugar; cut the rind of the fruit into quarters and peel it off, and if the marmalade be not wanted very thick, take off some of the aspongy white skin inside the rind. Cut the chips as thin as possible, and about half an inch long, and divide the pulp into small bits, removing carefully the seeds, which may be steeped in part of the water that is to make the marmalade, and which must be in the proportion of a quart to a pound of fruit. Put the chips and pulp into a deep earthen dish, and pour the water boiling over them; let them remain for twelve or fourteen hours, and then turn the whole into the preserving pan, and boil it until the chips are perfectly tender. When they are so, add by degrees the sugar (which should be previously pounded), and boil it until it jellies. The water in which the seeds have been steeped, and which must be taken from the quantity apportioned to

the whole of the preserve, should be poured into a hair-sieve, and the seeds well worked in it with the back of a spoon; a strong clear jelly will be obtained by this means, which must be washed off them by pouring their own liquor through the sieve in small portions over them. This must be added to the fruit when it is first set on the fire." *Oranges, 3 lbs.; water, 3 quarts; sugar, 6 lbs.*

However if you are in city of Seville you can find delicious marmalade or *mermelada de naranja amarga* at the **Convent of Santa Paula in Plaza de San Marcos (Sevilla) Tel.: 34-5 4421307, open from 09.00-13.00 and 16.30-18.30 Monday to Friday.**

You can also taste traditional recipes in Andalusia using this ingredient. Look for *Caldillo de Perro*, a substantial fish soup to which the juice of bitter orange is added before serving. Also look for *Raya a la naranja amarga* (ray in a bitter orange sauce), a speciality of Fernando Bigote at his restaurant in Sanlúcar de Barrameda and for *Sancochados* which are vegetable dishes flavored with the orange. Nowadays, the juice of bitter oranges is also used in combination with lemon or lime to marinate fish, particularly in the preparation of *ceviches*. On my way North to Catalonia by air I decided to stop off in Madrid. Just out-

side the city I visited a modern hypermarket. Being a traditionalist, I still believe that the fresh produce counter of a major retailer cannot compete with the appeal and choice of the local markets. Furthermore, how can a counter made of glass and steel compare with the smile of a farmer or vegetable seller. Well, surprise, surprise, though not unduly impressed by the fresh vegetables available, I did notice a selection of good looking produce packed in polythene bags. I bought some already washed and cut, spinach, chard and julienne prepared for soups. Printed on the back of the packets was useful information regarding cooking methods and times, suggestions and even the nutritional information. So lunch was good. My mother cooked the chard simply boiled with small potatoes and dressing of a flavorsome olive oil. These vegetables can be found in major supermarkets all over the country packed by **Vega Mayor S.A., Milagro (Navarre) Tel: 34-84 409102.**

Still in Madrid and still on my way to Northern Catalonia, while waiting for the flight to be called, I ventured into the duty free delicatessen shop at Madrid airport. The selection of cheeses, specialities such as honey, dried herbs, saffron and other spices although fairly pricy is excellent. Above all I was more than tempted by a promotion of two *chorizos de matanza* (traditionally made paprika and garlic sausage) for the price of one, produced by **Finca Tajuña in Fuentemilanos (Segovia) Tel: 34-21 485126.** This *chorizo* was devoured with much joy and approval in London by my family. I would also recommend from this delicatessen shop the 250-gram packets

## Bitter Oranges, Salted Anchovies

of dried figs prepared by **Industrias Higuera Alpujareña in Santísimo, 45, Motril (Granada) Tel: 34-58 825124**. With this type of figs the *basques* prepared in winter the traditional *compotas*, superb combination of dried fruits and spices and in London at the restaurant *Albero y Grana*, Angel García will delight any table with an excellent Duck with Dried Figs. You need a fresh wild duck, olive oil, chopped onions, chopped carrots, parsley, pinch of dried thyme, bay leaf, white veal stock mixed with fresh tomato sauce, a bottle of fine Port or Oloroso Sherry, dried figs, salt and pepper. Cut the duck into approximately 16 small pieces with the bone. Heat the olive oil and sauté the broken-up duck carcass with the onion, carrots and herbs. Add the wine and veal stock and boil to reduce the liquid by half. Strain this stock and set aside. Sauté the pieces of duck in a large frying pan until golden brown on both sides, then turn each piece skin side down in the pan, reduce the heat and cook for a further 5 minutes, so that the duck loses extra fat. Reserve this fat to sauté vegetables (pure naughtiness and it should be done only once a year.

Adored by the ancient Romans, demanded in huge quantities by modern day Italians and discovered recently by the Americans who in 1995 became the number one importer in the world, the salted anchovy from Spain is quite unique and has a magical taste (see article on page 86). Salted anchovies are mainly produced in La Escala in the northern coast of Catalonia and in the villages of Santoña, Laredo, Colindres and Castro Urdiales in Cantabria on the bay of Biscay. Although the fillets in olive oil are also delicious and

very convenient, the exquisite flavor and texture of the good looking salted anchovies are my favorite. In the Cantabrian villages they pack them in metal tins, but the Catalonian *Anxoves* from La Escala are always packed in glass jars.

There is no secret about this handsome little fish known in Castilian as *Anchoas en salazón*. Open the jar or tin, take as many anchovies as you need and remove the salt with fresh water. By pressing on the back of the fish with your fingers you will be able to remove the back bone and fillet it. Place them in a dish one by one, cover with olive oil to moisten them and leave them to rest for one or two hours, in the Catalonian Alto Ampurdán, anchovies on toasted *pan de pagés* (local bread), rubbed with fresh tomatoes are the great beginning of any serious or informal eating. At home I have been serving *anxoves*

from **El Xillu, S.A., Colsa de Llop, 18. 17130 La Escala (Gerona)**

**Tel: 34-72 770820 and from Conservera La Castreña, Barrio Samano s/n, 29709 Castro Urdiales (Cantabria)**

**Tel: 34-42 863211**. While Cantabrian anchovies are available all over Spain, Catalonia is the place to buy a jar or two of the speciality from L'Escala. A glass of *Fino* Sherry, a light dry wine from Penedés or a barrel fermented Rioja are the perfect accompaniment for any dish served with salted anchovies.

Talking about the fruits of the sea I have to mention a restaurant at La Escala where I tasted two exclusive delicacies. From the family of the holoturia (*Stichopus regalis*), the restaurant *El Roser* list in the menu *Espardenyes* (Castilian) or *Llongos* or *Patissets* in the Catalan, one of the most exciting types

of seafood I have tasted in the last few years. The fishermen cooked them with rice or sautéed with tomatoes, but at *El Roser* they were served as a first course *a la plancha* (grilled with garlic, parsley and a dash of Catalan virgin olive oil). Another personal recommendation from the fishing villages of La Costa Brava (from Cadaqués to Blanes) are *Erizos de Mar* (sea urchins), known by the locals as *garotes*. In this case the fishermen prefer them *al natural* as part of a delicious lunch or dinner with garlic shoots, fresh tender onions, bread or *coca* and of course wine. For my money, served in their own shell with the meat blended in a sauce of fresh cream, herbs, their own juices and a dash of truffle juice, they are a thing of rare beauty and ever lasting good taste.

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



## Braised Leg of Lamb with Sofrito, Spices and Honey

## LAMB

José García Marín, chef-proprietor of the Cordoban restaurant El Caballo Rojo, created this dish in 1992 for a royal dinner held to celebrate the region's Moslem heritage. He based it on a medieval recipe, which he believes came from Tadmor, today Palmira, a Syrian city known for its dishes of meat cooked with honey. Whatever its origins, the sauce is an inspired blend of Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Andalusian flavors and works well with the dry leg meat.

SERVES 6:

100 ml olive oil	Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste
1 kg of onions, thickly sliced	1 large pinch of saffron
1 kg green peppers, sliced in circles	2 dsps sweet paprika
1 head of garlic, skinned and sliced	250 ml full-bodied sherry ( <i>amontillado</i> or <i>oloroso</i> )
500 gr ripe tomatoes, skinned and roughly chopped	250 ml good quality wine vinegar
2.5 kg leg of lamb (weight with bone) or 2 kg boned leg or shoulder meat	250 ml honey
Powdered cumin, to taste	2 glasses of brandy

Ask the butcher to cut the lamb into serving portions on the bone. (If you prefer to serve the meat without the bone, then have it removed, and cut the meat into small fillets.)

Heat the olive oil, fry the onion, green pepper and garlic for about 20-25 minutes until they are all well softened, then add the tomato and cook together till well blended.

Sauté the lamb briefly until the meat is sealed, then add in the cumin, nutmeg, saffron, sweet paprika and wine. Leave to cook for another 10 minutes. Stir in the vinegar and honey and leave to cook gently until the meat is tender, adding water if you need more liquid. Five minutes before removing the pan from the heat, add the brandy. Leave to rest for 30 minutes in a warm place before serving. For the royal dinner, Señor Marín served this with a Ribera del Duero, Reserva 1985.

## Aragonese Roast Lamb

In the upland shepherding areas of Aragón, lamb was traditionally spit-roast for feast-days. Today, though, it is oven-roast spring lamb which has become one of the region's specialities. This recipe comes from the Venta del Sotón, a roadside inn in Huesca province, run by the Acín brothers. Salt, parsley and garlic are the seasonings; lard and lemon-water help to form the pan juices. Elsewhere rosemary-flavored lard is used and, in the mountains of the Maestrazgo, home-made truffle brandy is splashed on at the end. The Venta del Sotón's head chef,

## Baked Lamb Chops with Potatoes and Tomatoes

Marcel Pesajovich, emphasizes that the lamb is not supposed to be rare, rather very well done, with a crispy crust.

SERVES 4:

1 kg shoulder of spring lamb	Salt, to taste
4 garlic cloves, skinned and roughly chopped	200 gr lard
1 small handful of fresh chopped parsley	500 ml water
	Juice of 2 lemons

Heat the oven to 150 C, 300 F, gas mark 2. Rub the lamb with the garlic, parsley and salt, then smear it over with the lard and place it on a rack in an ovenproof earthenware dish (or roasting tin). Stir the lemon juice into the water and pour it into the roasting dish to 5 cm depth (keep the rest to hand for topping up). Put the lamb in the oven, basting it often with the pan juices and adding more water if necessary to stop the lamb sticking. Roast for 50 minutes, then turn up the oven temperature to 200 C, 400 F, gas mark 6 for the final 10 minutes of cooking time, to crisp the outside. The pan juices should have reduced to a small quantity.

Leave to rest in a warm place for 10 minutes before carving, to serve with the pan juices poured over the top. At the Venta del Sotón, this dish is served with *patatas panaderas* -layers of thinly sliced potatoes baked with garlic, parsley and sautéed onion in a dish alongside the meat- and a curly endive salad. Traditionally, the lamb can also be baked on the potatoes, but it is hard to control the timing. Locally, people like the meat juices over their potatoes or salad too.

Lamb chops in Spain are much smaller than those in Britain or France, with just a bite or two of tender meat on each. They are usually wood-grilled and served simply with a salad, bread and perhaps a garlicky *ali-oli* to accompany them. If you have a wood-grill or barbecue and want to give chops or cutlets a Spanish flavor, an alternative is to marinate them first for an hour or two in olive oil, chopped garlic, parsley and salt. For indoor cooking here is Ana Dolores Pabón Medrano's recipe from *La Cocina de Huelva*, the western Andalusian province, which works well with larger chops too.

SERVES 4:

Olive oil, for greasing dish	2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
500 gr baking potatoes	2-3 tbsps finely chopped parsley
Salt	2 level tpsps sweet paprika
125 gr dried breadcrumbs	1 wine-glass olive oil
1 kg lamb chops (about 16 baby chops or 8 larger chops)	1 small tumbler water
3 large tomatoes, sliced	

# Spanish Masterpieces



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## Knuckle of Spring Lamb with Artichokes

Heat the oven to 180 C, 300 F, gas mark 2. Oil a shallow ovenproof dish large enough to fit the chops, closely packed together. Wash and peel the potatoes, cut them into thin slices, and salt them. Place them, overlapping, in a layer covering the bottom of a baking dish and sprinkle with half the dried breadcrumbs. Bake for 20 minutes until the potatoes are beginning to turn gold and soften.

Place the chops on the potatoes and lay the sliced tomatoes over the top. Mix the remaining breadcrumbs with the parsley and the sweet paprika and sprinkle them over the tomatoes. Dribble the olive oil over the top and pour the water over the potatoes. Bake for another hour, covering half-way through with tinfoil to avoid the meat drying out.

Some of the most distinctive lamb dishes in the north are made with the *jarrete* -also called *garrón* in Aragón and Catalonia- the knuckle of spring lamb, which weighs in between 300 grams and 500 grams on the bone. It may simply be roasted, allowing one per person. But it is also an excellent braising cut for the gelatinous quality it adds to the cooking juices and there are tasty recipes using wild mushrooms or aged sweet wine. This dish, found in Navarre and Aragón, makes use of the artichokes that grow in the Ebro valley's market gardens. I have adapted the version here from Angela Alfaro Vidoreta's book *La Cocina de Angelita*.

### SERVES 4:

4 lamb knuckles,  
each weighing around 400 g  
100 ml olive oil  
4 garlic cloves, skinned and  
finely chopped  
1/2 onion, skinned and chopped  
A little meat stock  
Salt

8 medium fresh artichokes  
(about 1 kilo) or, if unavailable,  
use canned, jarred or  
frozen hearts  
4 slices of cured *serrano* ham,  
finely chopped

In a large casserole, sauté the lamb knuckles for 15 minutes in the olive oil, turning them during cooking so that they seal and brown on all sides. Add the garlic, onion and meat stock to them, and salt depending on the seasoning. Leave to cook over slow heat for half an hour.

If you are using fresh artichokes, trim them back to the tender inner leaves and blanch whole for 15 minutes. Cool and, if they are very large, halve. Remove the choke. Meanwhile, in a separate pan, sauté the *serrano* ham until it is lightly browned. You can prepare the dish ahead of time up to this point.

To finish the dish, add the artichokes to the lamb (if you are using canned or jarred hearts, rinse them well; add frozen artichoke hearts without thawing) and simmer for 10 minutes. Then add the sautéed ham and simmer for another five minutes.

# 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 manufactures, 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.*



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### Products to be shown

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Sweets, chocolates and biscuits.  
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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/. Claudio Coello, 52 - 1.ª Planta. 28001 - Madrid (SPAIN). Tel.: (1) 577 04 18. Fax: (1) 431 13 59.

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## Lamb Caldereta

The Spanish shepherd's dish par excellence takes its name from the cast-iron cauldron, *caldereta*, in which it was originally made. A well-traveled dish, it admits all kinds of local additions: wine, potatoes, tomatoes, onion, green and red peppers and garlic are typical ingredients. In old recipes from Extremadura, the cooking juices are thickened with breadcrumbs, lamb's liver and almonds, all pounded to a paste with stock. This recipe for today's young lamb comes from Miquel Gastañares, director of the restaurant in Badajoz's Hotel Zurbarán, who has developed various dishes for the local Merino lamb: for example, baked chops stuffed with boned lamb's feet and the local white earth truffles (*criadillas de tierra*).

### SERVES 4:

1 kilo of lean braising lamb (eg. leg, neck fillet)	Aromatic herbs, to taste (eg. thyme, oregano, bay leaf)
Salt and pepper	Plain flour, for dusting the meat
100 ml olive oil	1 small glass of brandy (optional)
2 onions, skinned and roughly chopped	2 wine-glasses of white wine
2 carrots, peeled and roughly chopped	3 wine-glasses of meat stock
2 leeks, trimmed and chopped	
2 garlic cloves, skinned and chopped	

Cut the lamb into chunky cubes (around 10 cm/4 inches square). Salt and pepper them, toss in flour and fry in half the olive oil. Drain on kitchen paper towels. Separately, in a heavy-based flameproof dish where the meat will also fit, sauté the chopped vegetables in the remaining oil with the herbs you choose to use.

When they are done, add the lamb to the pan and flambé the meat and vegetables with the brandy if you are using it. Cover with the white wine, simmer till the cooking liquid reduces by a half and then add the stock, leaving over gentle heat until tender. This will depend on the cut of lamb you choose to use: from 45 minutes for leg.

Remove the lamb to a heated dish, liquidize the cooked vegetables and then put them through a sieve. Pour over the meat and serve, garnishing with baby potatoes, asparagus, peas or carrots if you wish.

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## Lamb *Chilindrón* Stew

A *chilindrón* is one of those easy-going, practical stews designed to make use of all kinds of cuts of meat and often found at popular fiestas in Navarre and Aragón. In Navarre, the meat is cooked in white wine with dried red pepper; in Aragón the meat is cooked in a *pisto* of sauteed vegetables, as in this recipe. The name *chilindrón* is thought to come from an Aragonese card game or a variety of pepper native to the banks of the River Ebro. This recipe comes from *La Cocina Aragonesa*, by Jose Vicente Lasierra Rigal.

SERVES 4:

50 ml olive oil  
 50 gr lard  
 1 kilo stewing lamb (eg. scrag or middle end of neck, skirt, breast)  
 Salt  
 1 green pepper, finely chopped  
 1 large onion, skinned and grated

1 kilo of tomatoes, skinned and finely chopped  
 3-4 cloves of garlic, finely chopped  
 1 red pepper, cut into chunky pieces  
 2 glasses of dry white wine  
 1 glass of water

Heat the olive oil and lard in a flameproof casserole, add the meat, season with salt and fry, stirring well, until it is golden brown. If necessary, fry the meat in batches.

Meanwhile, separately, fry the finely chopped green pepper, grated onion and chopped tomatoes. When the meat is done, add to it the pepper, onion and tomato *sofrito* together with the garlic, red pepper, white wine and a little boiling water. Simmer over slow heat for 1½-2 hours, or until the meat is cooked and tender (the time will depend on the cut). Serve with bread, or *patatas panaderas* (see p. 99), and salad.

## DOURO RIVER

## Castilian bread

FOR 2 LOAVES:

1 kg flour  
 30 g salt  
 10 g yeast

0.4 l water  
 Olive oil

Mix all the ingredients but olive oil, and knead until the dough is smooth. Leave to prove in a warm place for 30 minutes.

Shape into 2 loaves measuring 30 cm in diameter. With your fingers make small dents on the top surface then brush with olive oil. Bake in a wood-burning oven at 200°C (390°F) for 20 minutes.

## Castilian Garlic Soup

This recipe makes a soup that is lighter than that normally served in the restaurants of Castile, where they usually fry the garlic and paprika in olive oil and mix this into the boiling water with the salt and oregano. The garlic taste in this soup is deliciously subtle and the pieces of bread should be cut quite small so that they do not swell too much and become 'soupy' and too strongly flavored with paprika.

**SERVES 4:**

1.5 liters water	25 gr bread, crusts removed and diced
3 teaspoons salt	1 egg, beaten (optional)
4 cloves garlic, peeled	A pinch of fresh oregano
1 tablespoon olive oil	
1 1/2 teaspoons paprika, sweet or hot	

Heat the water and salt in a deep flameproof casserole. Use a mortar and pestle to pound the garlic with the oil and paprika to taste. Blend well, then add to the stock and bring to the boil. Add the bread and egg, if using. Check and adjust the seasoning if necessary and add the oregano. Remove from the heat immediately, cover and leave for 10 minutes before serving.

This soup can be served in individual earthenware dishes, in which case the egg is added after the soup has been poured. Cover the dishes and allow the soup to rest before eating.

*From María José Sevilla's Spain on a Plate.*

## Zamoran-style Rice

**SERVES 4:**

1 pig's ear	250 gr turnips, peeled and sliced
1 pig's foot	A small bunch of parsley
1 pig's snout	250 gr chopped cured ham
1 sprig of thyme	6 thin slices of belly of pork, streaky bacon or cured ham
2 tablespoons pork dripping	1 teaspoon paprika
2 tablespoons olive oil	500 gr rice
500 gr onion, peeled and finely chopped	Salt
3 cloves of garlic, peeled and sliced	

Also sometimes called Alcañices-style rice, this is a powerful winter dish which makes resourceful use of various bits of the pig, from snout to the strips of *tocino* -or belly of pork- laid on top of the rice. In the days of coal fires, this was done by filling a concave iron lid with hot coals until the fat was browned and crisp. The recipe here.

Clear and trim the ear, foot and snout and scald in boiling water for a few minutes. Drain, then place them in a pan with the thyme, and cover with salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer gently for 3 hours or until tender (this is much quicker in a pressure cooker). Pour off the stock and set aside. Remove the meat from the pig's foot and cut into chunks along with the boned ear and snout.

Heat the dripping and olive oil in a large earthenware -or other flameproof- casserole, and add to it the onion, garlic, turnips and chopped

### Loin of pork with loquats

parsley. Cook all these ingredients together gently until they begin to turn golden, then add the chopped ham and the other meat ingredients.

Add 1<sup>1/2</sup> l of the reserved cooking liquid and simmer gently until the turnips are done. Stir in the paprika, add the rice and check for salt. If necessary, add more stock so that there is twice as much liquid as rice. Cook for 10 minutes, until the rice begins to dry out, then arrange the belly of pork in thin slices on the top. Place the casserole in a preheated oven for about 10 minutes or until the topping is beginning to brown.

Remove from the oven and set aside for 10 minutes before serving directly from the casserole.

*From La matanza del puerco by Teresa de Santos and Ignacio Sanz.*

## LOQUATS

SERVES 4:

4 cuts of loin of pork  
8 loquats  
Salt  
Oil  
1 glass of white wine

1 tbsp flour  
1 glass stock  
2 garlic cloves  
Chopped parsley

Season the pork with salt and fry gently in oil together with the 2 garlic cloves for 8-10 minutes until cooked through.

Transfer to a serving dish and keep warm. Pour off some of the oil from the frying pan, add the flour and mix well. Then add the wine with the stock and 4 peeled, seeded and chopped loquats.

Season to taste and boil gently until the sauce thickens.

Pour the sauce over the pork, sprinkle with the chopped parsley and garnish with the remaining loquats left uncooked but peeled, seeded and chopped.

Serve with deep-fried potatoes.

### Baked loquats

SERVES 4:

12 loquats  
100 gr raisins  
4 tbsps brandy  
Icing sugar

100 gr toasted almonds  
200 gr whipped cream  
Cinnamon

Place loquats on an oven dish and bake for 15 minutes at 180°C (350°F). Then peel, cut in half and remove seeds.

Arrange on a serving dish, sprinkle with the chopped almonds, the raisins (previously soaked in brandy for 2 hours) and the icing sugar.

Cover with the whipped cream and sprinkle with cinnamon.

Decorate with mint leaves (optional).

*These recipes were specially created for the D.O. Regulating Council for loquats in Callosa d'en Sarriá by Karlos Arguiñano, one of Spain's best-known chefs.*

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## ANCHOVIES

Below are a number of recipes using anchovies that have been kindly passed on to us from several restaurants in La Escala and Cantabria province, where most Spanish anchovies come from. The recipes all use whole salted anchovies but, if not available, these can be replaced with anchovies in oil. If using salted anchovies, remove any excess salt together with the backbone. Then, wash and dry the fish. Now, they are ready for the different culinary preparations.

### Anchovies and peppers on toast

SERVES 1-2:

4 thick slices of crusty bread  
12 whole salted anchovies,  
marinated in olive oil  
Red pepper (canned)

1 tomato  
1 garlic clove  
Chopped parsley

Toast the bread so that it is just golden but still soft inside. Rub with the garlic. Cut the tomato in half and rub the slices of bread with it (but without moistening it too much).

Place 3 anchovies on each slice of bread. Cut the pepper into thick strips and form into 4 flower shapes. Place the flowers on top of the anchovies (without covering them completely).

Arrange the slices of toast on a dish and sprinkle with the oil used for soaking the anchovies. Sprinkle the dish with parsley.

*Recipe from the El Molino restaurant in Puente Arce (Santander, Cantabria).*

### Anchovy and avocado salad

SERVES 1-2:

12 whole salted anchovies,  
marinated in olive oil  
1 avocado pear

Salt, pepper, lemon juice  
Virgin olive oil  
Diced tomato

Peel and slice the avocado. Place in a bowl and season with salt and pepper, then sprinkle with lemon juice.

Drain and arrange on a dish forming a circle and covering the center of the dish.

Starting from the center, arrange the anchovies on top of the avocado in a spiral shape.

In the centre place a small pile of diced tomato.

Sprinkle with the virgin olive oil in which the anchovies were previously soaked.

*Recipe from the El Molino restaurant in Puente Arce (Santander, Cantabria).*



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## Stuffed eggplants with anchovies

SERVES 4:

4 small eggplants	70 gr flour
200 gr carrots	200 ml milk
500 gr onions	30 whole salted anchovies
250 gr tomato	2 ml olive oil
A pinch of saffron strands	Salt
2 eggs	200 gr grated cheese

Cut the eggplants in half. Scoop out the flesh. Finely chop the onion, carrot, tomato and eggplants flesh and fry gently with the saffron in the oil. When soft, drain off the oil. Chop half the anchovies and add. Fry together for 5 minutes then mix in the flour, milk and eggs. Purée. Fill the eggplants with the purée. Arrange the remaining anchovy fillets on top and sprinkle with grated cheese. Place under the grill to brown.  
*Recipe from the Els Pescadors restaurant in La Escala (Gerona).*

## Anchovies au gratin

SERVES 4:

18 whole salted anchovies	Béchamel sauce
1 whole onion	Grated cheese
4 medium potatoes	

Boil the potatoes in their skins, peel and slice. Put aside. Peel the onions and slice finely lengthwise. Fry gently in olive oil and put aside. Rinse the anchovies and remove backbones.

Pour a little béchamel sauce in the bottom of an oven dish. Cover with a layer of potatoes followed by one of onions. Lay the anchovies on top then make a further layer of onions and one of potatoes. Finish with a layer of béchamel, then sprinkle with grated cheese and place under the grill until golden.

*Recipe from the Mesón del Conde restaurant in L'Escala (Gerona).*

## Red Mullet in a sauce of black olives and anchovies

SERVES 4:

8 200-gr red mullets (filleted)	1 garlic clove
2 medium tomatoes	100 ml olive oil
6 anchovy fillets for the sauce	4 new potatoes
16 fillets for the garnish	1 leek (only the white part)
200 gr black olives	

Wash and boil the potatoes in their skins and keep warm. Blanch the tomatoes, peel and cut into small dice. In a mortar make a paste with the garlic clove, anchovy fillets and olives. Add the olive oil.

Fry the red mullet fillets on both sides. Place on a serving dish on top of the diced tomato. Peel and slice the potatoes and arrange on the dish. Garnish with olives wrapped in anchovy fillets.

Transfer the crushed anchovy and olive mixture from the mortar to the frying-pan. Heat up then pour over the red mullet.

Garnish, if desired, with very thin strips of fried leek.

*Recipe from the El Roser restaurant in La Escala (Gerona).*

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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 at least three 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.

Every three months 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*.

## CAVA

Cava is the sparkling wine produced in a delimited area known as the "Cava Region" following the rules of the traditional method. This means that from the bottling (filling of the bottle for the second fermentation) till the disgorging (getting rid of the sediment), the entire process takes place in the same bottle which is the one offered to the consumer.

## 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

## 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

## 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

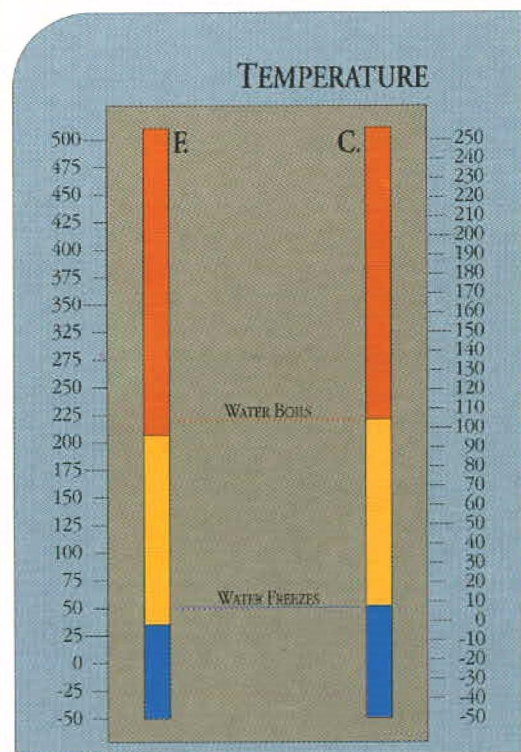
## Oven Temperature

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.*



# A QUESTION OF IMAGE (I) ANIS DEL MONO

**S**panish companies in the food and drink sector have sometimes established their brand images in the strangest of ways.

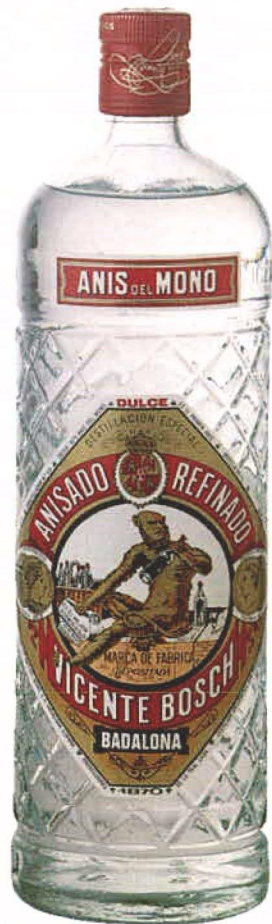
**In the next few issues, we shall be using this space to describe the history of some of these images.**

Vicente Bosch y Grau placed his bets right when he chose the *leitmotiv* for his very Spanish but widely-known "Anís del Mono". Apart from producing and selling aniseed liqueur, the Bosch family also had interests in merchant shipping and the souvenir they brought back from a trip to one of their foreign business concerns was a monkey that they kept in the distillery. The monkey was to become so popular that Mr Bosch y Grau decided to portray it on the liqueur label but changing the monkey's face for his own.

It took no time at all for the public to baptize the Bosch family anisette as the "anís del mono" ("monkey anisette") and in 1892 this brand name was officially registered.

But as much as by its label this drink is characterized by its diamond-patterned glass of the bottle, which has become the classic bottle amongst the Spanish aniseed drinks. Its origin goes back to a Parisian perfumery in the elegant Place Vendôme where Vi-

cente Bosch once bought a bottle of perfume for his wife. Not long afterwards, he was to contact the perfumer to ask for permission to use his bottle to hold "a different type of quality product that, instead of perfuming exteriors, would perfume interiors". The perfumer agreed and the design was registered on 22 December 1902. The original bottle even made its contribution to the world of art, being depicted in two still lifes by Picasso dated 1903 and 1915 (and mentioned in their titles). In 1956 Dalí took his inspiration from the "Anís del Mono" bottle for his work called "Living still life" (see the cover of Spain Gourmetour No.27). In their concern to make the product known, in 1898 the Bosch family held a competition for a



ANIS DEL MONO

poster advertising "Anís del Mono". All the top artists of the time were to contribute and the prize went to the Catalan painter, Ramón Casas (1866-1932), who painted a woman wrapped in a lavishly-embroidered shawl with a glass of anisette in one hand and holding a monkey in the other. She came to be popularly known as "Manola".

In 1909 only three firms in Europe had illuminated signs and one of these, located in the Place Brouquère in Brussels, was for "Anís del Mono". In 1913 theirs was the first illuminated sign to be erected in Spain, in the Puerta del Sol in Madrid with another one being set up later in the center of Barcelona.

In 1974 the Osborne company bought the brand and, true to its innovative spirit, introduced the idea of drinking "Anís del Mono" in a tall glass with ice. They continue to keep up with the times and, in the latest commercials, an up-dated monkey jumps out of the label to participate in the trendy sports of skiing, sailing or white-water rafting.

Another curious story dates from 1903 when a French expedition led by Doctor Charcot to the Antarctic ordered 125 bottles of "Anís del Mono" as an antidote to the rigors of polar weather.

**José María Ortega Sanz**

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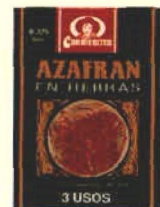
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