

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN

G O U R M E T O U R



SHERRY & CHEESE FROM SPAIN.
THE PERFECT MATCH

VIRGIN OLIVE OIL A LA CARTE

SPAIN, A PARADISE FOR
ACTIVE OUTDOORS TOURISM

WINES OF LA MANCHA

No. 39 MAY-AUGUST 1996

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

US \$5

CONSORCIO DE LOS QUESOS TRADICIONALES DE ESPAÑA



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



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



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

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

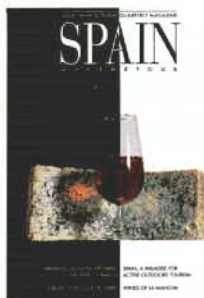
The uniqueness of these cheeses comes from a legacy of ancient cultures and traditions, from production processes refined over generations, and in particular from the milk that is used. Members of the Consortium use only milk from Spain's indigenous breeds of sheep, cows and goats — the flavor of which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

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

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



CONSORCIO DE LOS QUESOS TRADICIONALES DE ESPAÑA, S.A. C/. Gran Vía, 8 - 2.º
28220 MAJADAHONDA - MADRID - ESPAÑA
Tfno: 9 - 634 08 32 - 634 42 08. Fax: 9 - 634 15 64



Director
 Jorge Mariné

Editor
 Cathy Boirac

Publication Coordinators
 Sonia Ortega and Bettina Krücken

Editorial Secretary
 Angela Castilla

Publisher
 ICEX
 Pº de la Castellana, 14
 28046 Madrid
 Tel: 34-1-349 62 43
 Fax: 34-1-435 88 76

Art Direction and Design
 Luis Artime Diseño

Desktop Publisher
 Mabela Tamayo and Yolanda Martín

Circulation
 ICEX, Madrid

Advertising
 CEDISA, Almirante, 21
 28004 Madrid
 Tel: 34-1-308 06 44
 Fax: 34-1-310 51 41

D.L.
 M. 45.307 - 1990

ISSN
 0214-2937

Color Separations
 Producciones Digitales, S.A.
 Julián Camarillo, 26
 28037 Madrid

Printed in Spain
 Raycar, S.A.
 Matilde Hernández, 27
 28019 Madrid

COVER
 Photography: A. de Benito
 Still Life: Menchu Artime

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Spain Gourmetour

is a journal published by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the Economy and Finance 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 Spanish Embassy Commercial Offices (see list on page 21).

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Spanish Masterpieces



GONZALEZ BYASS

SHERRY & BRANDY

D

ear readers,

As an apéritif sherry is a classic. But in *Spain Gourmetour*, whenever we get the opportunity, we like to stress the many other possibilities of sherry. One such is as partner to Spanish cheeses and this is the subject of this issue's leading article. A sensitive palate should not miss out on the experience of trying a little Cabrales cheese with a Pedro Ximénez sherry. And that's just one combination. Not only are there several types of sherry (Fino, Oloroso, Pedro Ximénez, etc.), but Spain has over 100 varieties of cheese.

A wide range of flavours is also offered by Spanish olive oils. The many different types of olive produce a variety of aromas which also vary depending on the region of Spain in which they grow. That is the reason why our article is called "Virgin Olive Oil à la carte".

This time our section on fresh products deals with two products: mussels and garlic. Spain is the top producer of mussels worldwide - a tasty, very nourishing and cheap shellfish that can be prepared in a variety of ways. Strict hygiene and production controls guarantee top quality, and mussels have found their perfect habitat along the inlets of the southern coast of Galicia.

Garlic was given a very bad name in centuries past by some of the famous travel writers, but things have changed in Spanish gastronomy and garlic no longer dominates the scene as it once did. Garlic is certainly an essential part of the Mediterranean diet and our article describes how to use it to take full advantage of its qualities.

Our series of articles on the great wine rivers of Spain this time covers the Ebro, inviting us to visit no less than eleven D.O., some as important as Rioja, Penedés and Navarra.

And further south, the wines of La Mancha have also come a long way. Their edges have been polished and they now offer flavours and nuances which would never have been thought possible a few years ago.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who answered our questionnaire. Your opinions will help us to improve and encourage us in our task. A summary of the very positive results of the survey carried out by Nielsen is given in the following pages.



Spanish Olive Oil



La Española

Since 1840



"It is in 1840, in Sevilla, when we begin the production and marketing of our olive oils. After 150 years, we have learnt and accumulated many experiences: the best selection of olives and right "cold press" in our own mills, correct refining and advanced techniques for perfect packing. Therefore, we can offer a genuine quality of our oils, packed under our traditional brand... "LA ESPAÑOLA".

Nowadays, our products are being exported to more than fifty countries all over the world".

PRODUCED BY:

ACEITES DEL SUR, S.A.

Formerly ACEITES Y JABONES LUCA DE TENA, S.A.
Ctra. Madrid-Cádiz, Km. 550,6
E - 41700 Dos Hermanas SEVILLA-ESPAÑA
TEL.: - 34 - 5 - 469 09 00 FAX: - 34 - 5 - 4690450

OLIVE OIL FROM



RESULTS OF THE SPAIN GOURMETOUR SURVEY

At the end of last year, the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX), commissioned the firm Nielsen to conduct a questionnaire-based survey on the readership of its magazine SPAIN GOURMETOUR, the results of which are published here, as we announced.

Point of Departure, Aims and Conclusions

The aim of the survey was:

- to gauge the degree of information transmitted and the amount of interest aroused by the publication;
- to assess the professional quality of the magazine and the extent to which it attains the goals for which it strives;
- to be able to judge contacts made by readers with the Spanish food sector, taking into account the degree to which the experiences gained as a result of these contacts correspond to the impression conveyed by SPAIN GOURMETOUR.

The questionnaire was translated into the magazine's three languages English, French and German and was included with the December issue, together with a Freepost envelope addressed to the editorial team. In the questionnaire, we asked respondents to identify their area of business and themselves, if they wished to do so. By April 8th, 1996, of a total of 26,682 magazines sent out - from an edition of 44,700, partially assigned to sectorial fairs and other activities - 1,523 questionnaires had been sent back to the editorial team from the most important countries world-wide, and these could then be evaluated.

The results of this survey are extremely positive and we are delighted to be able to present you here with the major conclusions of the analysis.

- The overall quality, and in particular that of the photos, was rated to be extremely high and leads to 61% of SPAIN GOURMETOUR readers either collecting the magazines or passing them on to other professionals.
- SPAIN GOURMETOUR coincides with the picture which professionals in the sector have of Spain, meaning that the magazine has a very positive influence on the country's image.
- SPAIN GOURMETOUR has exerted a positive influence on establishing new business contacts. 61.2% of the questionnaires returned revealed new con-

tacts made as a result of the information published. In most cases, this was information related to a particular product. Business contacts were positive and even slightly exceeded expectations.

- The orientation of SPAIN GOURMETOUR was therefore considered to be correct in all respects, although there was some demand for more practical information.

The Results

The average participation rate of the different groups of countries was 5.7%. (See Table 1.)

The areas of business for which participation figures were highest are the importers, the media and in third place, catering. Many importers also identified themselves as specialist shops or chains of retail shops. (See Chart 1.)

Business Contacts

61.2% of respondents to the questionnaire made a new business contact as a result of SPAIN GOURMETOUR (see Chart 2), with specialist shops and catering the most active areas of business in this respect (71.9% and 68.9%). The most important trigger sparking off these business contacts was information about a product (81.3%). Information about companies (47%) and advertisements published in the magazine (45%) gave rise to business activity of almost the same proportions. The figures given in Chart 3 are the result of the possibility respondents had to give multiple answers.

Contacts were generally assessed as positive on a scale of 1-10, with an average score of 7.86 (see Table 2). 44% of readers felt that their expectations of what would come out of these contacts were surpassed, whilst 43% felt the contacts met with their expectations. The business contacts resulting from information on a particular product exceeded expectations by 45%. On a semantic scale of five, the results pertaining to expectations were given an average of 3.56.

On a scale of 1 to 10, the overall quality of SPAIN GOURMETOUR is rated positively across-the-board with an average score of 8.79 points. Here, there are seen to be only very slight variations in all the different countries and areas of business covered. 41% of readers rate the quality of SPAIN GOURMETOUR to be optimum, whereas only 25% are of the opinion that some improvement could be made to the already high standard. The quality of the photos ranks highest in this rating, supported by the lay-

ALIMENTOS DE EXTREMADURA

Arte sano



En Extremadura, a lo largo de la historia, se ha sabido mantener un sabor tradicional que gusta disfrutar.

Sus gentes aman lo bien hecho.

Cosechas de vinos nobles, que envejecen en sus bodegas año tras año. Y, vinos jóvenes con delicioso paladar.

Jugos de la tierra y del sol.

Carne de retinto, roja, tierna, sabrosa, carne de un ganado vacuno que pastorea libremente por nuestros campos.

Miel de montes de esencia.

Pimentón color, arte y sabor. Tradición de cinco siglos.

De la mejor leche de Extremadura el mejor queso artesano.

Aceitunas verdes y negras, arte del aderezo, fruto del saber.

Jamón de Extremadura, jamón de cerdo ibérico. Caminante desde siempre por dehesas extremeñas. Orgullo y nobleza de su raza.

Alimentos de Extremadura, la herencia generacional de lo bien hecho.

ALIMENTOS DE EXTREMADURA
arte sano


Alimentos de
Extremadura

JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA
Consejería de Agricultura,
Industria y Comercio

out of the cover. The balance between text and photos is deemed to be correct by 88.6% of readers.

The professional experiences of the respondents correspond fairly closely with the image SPAIN GOURMETOUR conveys of Spain. On a five-point scale, 57.5% of readers award an average score of 3.92. An important point to make here is that those readers who have maintained the contacts made initially are more in agreement with the picture conveyed of Spain than those who have not made any contact in Spain.

SPAIN GOURMETOUR has a positive effect on the improvement of Spain's image. 47.5% of readers state with the highest possible evaluation on a semantic scale that their view of Spain has "improved greatly." This improvement is clearest in the Far East peatly and Canada/USA/Australia and in the hotel and catering industry.

63% of the respondents consider that the articles in SPAIN GOURMETOUR are approached from the right angle, with 34% of the readers who suggest changes particularly wishing to see the cultural (48.7%) and practical (46.3%) areas bolstered. Readers from Germany/Austria/Switzerland/Netherlands are the most critical and would like to have more practical information.

The goal of promoting Spanish culture, tourism, food products and companies is considered to be attained, being given the average score of 8.24 on a ten-point scale. The most effective, according to our readers, is the promotion of products in the food sector, with a score of 8.68, followed by promotion of Spanish culture (8.34), tourism (8.00) and Spanish companies (7.92).

Finally, we would like to mention the high percentage (44.1%) of readers willing to pay for a subscription to SPAIN GOURMETOUR.

Table 1

READERSHIP PARTICIPATION

	%
FRANCE/BELGIUM	9.4
UNITED KINGDOM	7.5
SWEDEN/FINLAND/NORWAY/DENMARK	6.6
GERMANY/AUSTRIA/SWITZERLAND/NETHERLANDS	5.7
CANADA/USA/AUSTRALIA	4.5
JAPAN/HONG KONG/SINGAPORE	1.6
OTHERS	6.9

Table 2

EVALUATION OF THE CONTACT

	AVERAGE
TOTAL	7.86
GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	
CANADA/USA/AUSTRALIA	8.11
UNITED KINGDOM	7.78
GERMAN/AUSTRIA/SWITZERLAND/NETHERLANDS	7.74
FRANCE/BELGIUM	7.82
JAPAN/HONG KONG/SINGAPORE	7.61
SWEDEN/FINLAND/NORWAY/DENMARK	7.57
OTHERS	7.70
ACTIVITY SECTOR	
IMPORTER/DISTRIBUTOR	7.54
SPECIALIST SHOPS	7.60
HOTEL TRADE	8.11
TOURISM	8.16
LARGE STORES	8.15
CATERING	7.95
COMMUNICATIONS	7.81
INSTITUTIONS	8.06
OTHERS	7.84

Chart 1. ORIGIN / ACTIVITY SECTOR (%)

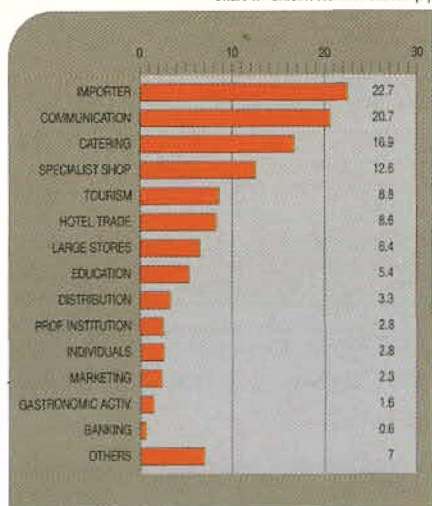


Chart 2. BUSINESS CONTACTS RESULTING FROM THE MAGAZINE

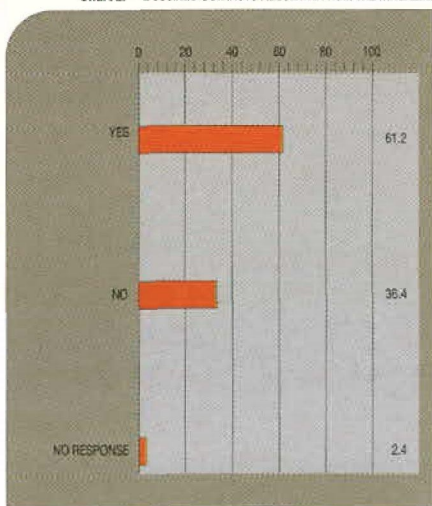
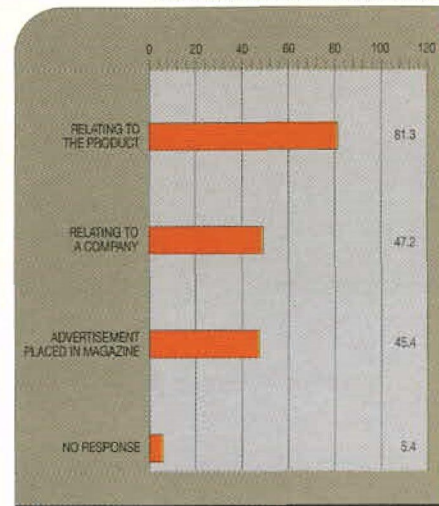


Chart 3. ELEMENTS LEADING TO BUSINESS ACTIVITY



Compiled by
BETTINA KRÜCKEN



10TH INTERNATIONAL GOURMET FAIR IN MADRID

People from the delicatessen trade converged on the 10th annual international Salón del Club de Gourmets, which was held from 19th to 22nd April, 1996. More than 30,000 visitors - 17% more than last year - took the opportunity to attend the various special events. The winner of the 5th Spanish Culinary Championship, Mikel Mayán Ayerdi of Extremadura, will be a worthy representative of Spain at the World Culinary Championship, the "Bocuse d'Or", which will be held in



JULIAN CHIVITE COMPLETES HIS COLLECTION

The missing piece from the Collection 125 of Bodegas Julián Chivite of Navarre has taken its place in the collection of quality reds and whites from this traditional cellar. The vintage Chardonnay 94, fermented in wood, and the Gran Reserva 88, produced 100% from Tempranillo are completed by the Reserva 92, 80% Tempranillo, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Merlot, recently presented at the Thyssen Bornemisza museum in Madrid. The completion of the trilogy was accompanied by a choice menu prepared by Juan Mari and Elena Arzak, of the restaurant Arzak in San Sebastián which possesses three stars in the Michelin Guide.

Another new wine, the Chivite Vendimia Tardía 1995 (late vintage Muscatel), was presented to the public on the same occasion. This Muscatel wine, fermented in French oak, brings back the full-bodied sweet wines which have nearly been forgotten.

SPANISH CUISINE TAKES OFF

In cooperation with the Spanish Academy for Gastronomy, Iberia Airlines. Is offering its passengers twelve new specialities which have been created by the chefs of some of the best Spanish restaurants, such as the El Amparo, Cabo Mayor, El Cenador de Salvador, El Bulli, Jockey, Hotel Palace, and Zalacain. The new menus are served in first class and business class on inter-continental flights from Madrid, and in the preferential class on flights to the Canary Islands and within Europe. The recipes have been sensitively adapted to the requirements of the catering service by Iber Swiss and give passengers a pre-taste of Spanish cuisine. On the menu, Iberia Airlines mentions the restaurants and chefs responsible for the original recipes, which are also included.

PARADORES DE TURISMO SPONSORS YOUNG ARTISTS

This year, the hotel chain Paradores has mainly concentrated its activities on promoting the arts: concerts, dance, lectures, sculptures and exhibitions of paintings by young artists will be organized in historic buildings and will form part of the culture program which has been created with the support of the Ministry for Culture. Some of the hotels will set up libraries for promoting Spanish literature. The aim is to make tourists more aware of the links between history, nature and art. The various events will take place at different Paradores hotels throughout Spain. Continuous investments are being made in expanding, restoring, buying, and refurbishing the hotels in historic palaces, monasteries, or monuments, many of which are located amid wonderful scenery or in places of significant cultural interest.

Another new development of this very active company, which, this year received an award for its services to tourism, is the *Amigos de Paradores* card. This card, which is free, offers the "Friends of Paradores" many advantages, such as preferential treatment for reservations and choice of rooms, a free welcoming drink on arrival, free use of the parking lot, gifts for the children, and other benefits. Tokens are awarded each time the card holder stays or eats in a Parador hotel and these tokens can then be redeemed at any of the 83 hotels belonging to the chain, in the form of free room accommodation according to a special tariff.

For further information, please contact Paradores de Turismo, Requena, 3, 28013 Madrid, Tel: (34-1) 51 66 66, Fax: (34-1) 516 66 63.
Internet: www.parador.es

the French city of Lyon in January, 1997. The 2nd Spanish Sommelier Championship for Sherry Wines was won by Katarzyna Anna Romanska of the Pedro Larumbe Restaurant in Madrid. The 3rd Spanish Ham Carving



Competition, which, as usual, was sponsored by the Regulatory Council of the D.O. Dehesa de Extremadura for Iberian hams, was won by José Manuel Castro of Burgos for his style, the fineness of the slices, the creativity of his presentation, speed, and precision. Another attraction at the fair was the "wine tunnel," where 10 varieties of grapes grown in Spain could be tasted in varietal wines. This highly informative event, organized for the second time, was again a major attraction.

NAVIDUL RECEIVES EXPORT CERTIFICATE FOR THE USA

The ham producer Navidul, has received approval for two of its eight factories for cured hams and can therefore export its products to the United States of America, where the demand is approximately 30 million hams a year. The group has invested a total of 1.6 thousand million pesetas/12.5 million US dollars in modernizing the recently acquired factories of Revilla, another ham and sausage producing company, in order to obtain the necessary certificates.

CAMPOFRIO'S EXPORT PROFITS UP 154%

The growth in exports of the meat and sausage producers Campofrio brought the group a net profit of 4.6 thousand million pesetas/35.9 million US dollars in 1995. The factories in Russia, the Philippines and Mexico made an important contribution to this success. The group has recently changed the Campofrio logo: the colors and form symbolize the quality, health and safety of the products. Investments in factories in the Dominican Republic and Argentina should increase sales in 1996 to around 100 thousand million pesetas/781 million US dollars.

NEW DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN

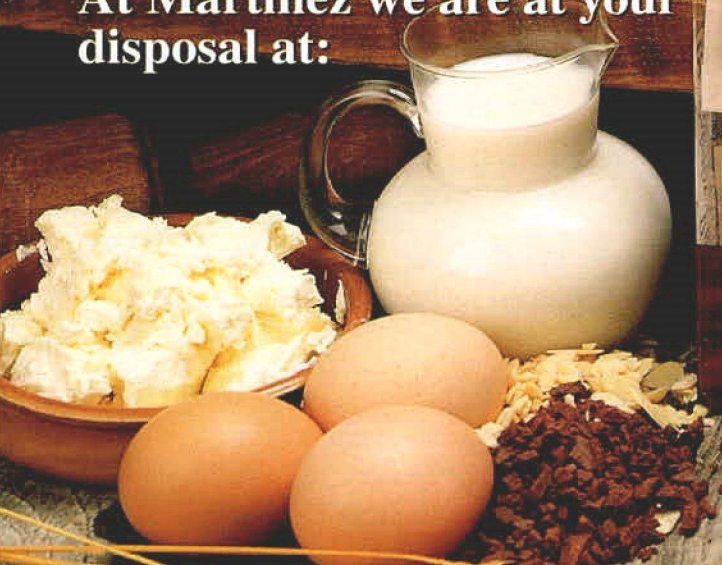
The most recent Denomination of Origin for wine in Spain is Monterrei from the Galician province of Orense. At the moment, there are 47 D.O.s licensed and registered by INDO (National Institute for Denominations of Origin). El Hierro and Valle de Orotava, on the Canary Islands of El Hierro and Tenerife, are the newest ones of last year. The oldest region with strict rules for the cultivation and production of wine is the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and Manzanilla of Sanlúcar de Barrameda D.O., established in 1935.



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... you'll like us.



SONIA ORTEGA

- The Museo del Prado is a must for all visitors to Madrid. But for those who can't get to see this outstanding art gallery in person, here is a book that shows the best of classical painting - **El Prado. Painting Collections**. It comes in a bilingual edition in Spanish and English with an introduction covering the history of the museum and its collections. Each of its seven chapters deals with one of the schools on display in the museum - Spanish, Italian, Flemish, French, English, German, and 19th century. As we have come to expect of a coffee table book of this type, there are magnificent reproductions including, in some cases, enlargements of detail.

- Penelope Casas is one of the American cookery writers with the greatest knowledge of Spanish cuisine, being one of the pioneers in introducing the *tapa* concept into the U.S. With two books already published on Spanish food, she has now brought out a third, called **¡Delicioso! The Regional Cooking of Spain**, full of interesting recipes based on traditional dishes but with modern touches added by the latest generation of cooks. Her sources are the family recipes of her many Spanish friends and a wide variety of restaurants. The first section is on *tapas* - with many new and interesting ideas. She has divided Spain into seven large regions according to their most characteristic cuisine. So, for example, one region specializes in roasts, one in sauces, etc. And here and there, as in her other books, there are inserts dealing in detail with a specific subject or product.

- In the Lasting Impressions section of our No. 37 issue, we reported on a book, for those interested in the Arab history of Spain, outlining the 11 routes devised within the cultural and tourism project of the Al Andalus Legacy, most of which are in Andalusia and Murcia. Now a book has come out called **The Routes of al-Andalus** which presents the subject very attractively, with maps, inserts, drawings, and many small but very illustrative photographs showing all the visual wealth of these routes and giving concise but varied information. A very thorough guide full of original suggestions.



- Iñaki Oyarbide is heir to an exceptional family culinary tradition. His name is linked to top Madrid restaurants such as the Príncipe de Viana and Zalacaín, the latter with the coveted three stars in the Michelin guide. This chef has now found time to embark on a prolific adventure in collaboration with the Everest publishing house. He is the author, chef, and gastronomic soul behind a collection of 30 titles, with an attractive design, excellent photos and clear and concise explanations that ensure successful results. Starting with **Los mejores guisos caseros** (The Best Home Stews) and **Guisos tradicionales del mar** (Traditional Seafood Dishes), two new titles will be published, every two months, giving not only the best of Spanish dishes but also including a chapter on wines, cooking utensils, and keys to good eating relevant to each of the titles.

- Three years ago, the El País/Aguilar publishing house started up a collection entitled **Guías con encanto** (Guides With Charm) covering especially attractive hotels, towns, beauty spots, etc. In view of its great success, the collection has grown and some of the titles are being revised every year. One such is the 1996 edition of **Pequeños hoteles con encanto** (Small Hotels With Charm) which lists 534 hotels throughout Spain selected for their atmosphere, historic and architectural interest, hospitality, and cuisine. Although some are in large cities, most are in outstanding landscapes that make a stay in them doubly memorable. The lat-

est edition in this collection is **Pueblos con encanto de Andalucía** (Towns With Charm in Andalusia) which not only covers the emblematic towns but reveals the delights of other towns off the beaten track that are often gems of Spanish rural architecture.

- If you are planning on visiting Madrid and its restaurants, and the usual gastronomic guides are not your cup of tea, perhaps this one will suit you. Called **En boca de todos** (On Everybody's Lips), it quotes the opinions of the Madrid locals on 700 restaurants of all sorts and conditions. "Very simple and welcoming". "Best of all are the croquettes". "Whatever you do, don't ask for a sirloin steak. It's terrible". "Very good wine list." These are just an example of the sort of comments given.

- **Cocina monacal** (Monastic Cooking) gives 218 simple recipes for some of the dishes cooked daily by the nuns of the Order of St. Clare in 71 convents in Spain. The occasion for the book is the eighth centenary of the birth of the Order's founder; and the recipes could best be described as tasty, healthy, and good value for money. As stated in the introduction written by two of the top Spanish chefs, Juan Mari Arzak and Pedro Subijana, "these recipes tell of a love for things well done, care in the choice of natural products, and the knowledge that comes from experience. The book - in a pocket version or a large format with photos - is now in its fifth edition and profits from sales go to Unicef.

El Prado - Painting Collections
Lunwerg Editores, S.A.
Beethoven, 12
08021 Barcelona
Tel.: 34-3-201 59 33
Fax: 34-3-201 15 87
Manuel Silvela, 12
28010 Madrid
Tel.: 34-1-593 00 58
Fax: 34-1-593 00 70

¡Delicioso! The Regional Cooking in Spain
Penelope Casas
Alfred A. Knopf
201 East 50th St.
New York, NY 10022 USA
Tel.: 1-212-751 26 00
Fax: 1-212-572 25 93

The Routes of Al-Andalus
Ediciones El País-Aguilar
Juan Bravo, 38
28006 Madrid
Tel.: 34-1-322 47 00
Fax: 34-1-322 44 71

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Iñaki Oyarbide
Crta. León-La Coruña, km. 5
24080 León
Tel.: 34-87-80 20 20
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Ediciones El País-Aguilar
Juan Bravo, 38
28006 Madrid
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RST Publishers
Lagasca, 102
28006 Madrid
Tel.: 34-1-578 01 36
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Cocina monacal
S.P.A.M, S.A. e IKASTARIES
Azpeitia, 9-2º A
20010 San Sebastián
(Guipúzcoa)
Tel.: 34-43-45 52 55
Fax: 34-43-47 15 59

Editorial Planeta, S.A.
Córcega, 273-279
08008 BARCELONA
Tel.: 34-3-415 41 00
Fax: 34-3-217 77 48

Garlic

AGROTECNICA EXTREMEÑA, S.A.

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AJOVAL, S.L.

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Tel.: 34-6-121 17 19 - Fax: 34-6-120 17 12

ALL-EXPORT, S.A.

Zona Industrial Pont Xemma, s/n - 17844 CORNELLA DEL TERRI (Gerona)
Tel.: 34-72-59 40 83 - Fax: 34-72-59 46 13

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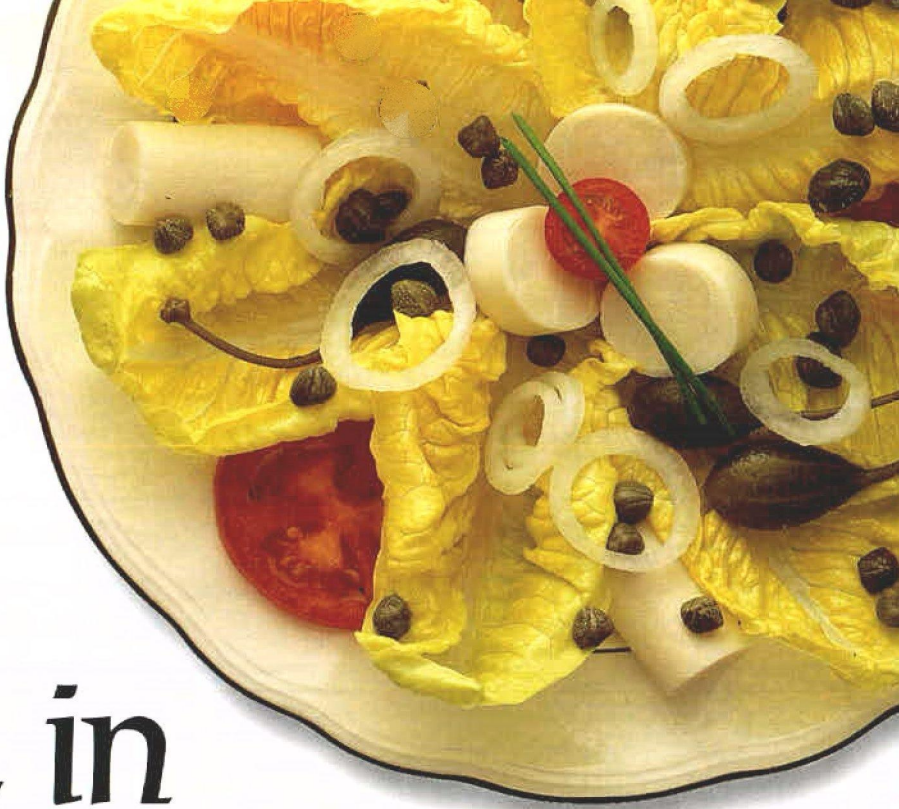
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Erratum: The photo in the article "The River Duero" published in *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38, page 54, is not by Juan José Gómez Daza but by Juan José Moral Daza.

MAY-AUGUST 96



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THE PERFECT MATCH

OPINIONS VARY ABOUT PAIRING WINES WITH FOODS. SOME PEOPLE THINK IF A WINE IS OF GOOD QUALITY IT WILL GO WELL WITH ANYTHING, WHEREAS OTHERS TEND TO STICK TO A SINGLE FAVORITE, WHETHER IT BE RED, WHITE OR CAVA, AND ARE HAPPY TO DRINK IT WITH ANYTHING.

Both these approaches are perfectly valid because it is essentially a question of personal taste. There can be no dictates on likes or dislikes. If tastes are understood to be a source of pleasure, we have to accept that they are a matter of individual preference.

But the question of wine has often been utilized by those who like to impose their own views of what is right and wrong. Such people insist that we should drink white wine with fish and shellfish and red wine with meat.

According to this theory, harmony between a wine and a food depends on the color of the wine and this, to me, seems to be an insult to the intelligence of wine-drinkers.

In my opinion, color has nothing to do with it. The color of a wine is just an accident of birth, a matter of esthetics. What really matters is its taste.

Pairing wine with food is a question of balancing flavors. A good relationship depends on combining flavors of similar intensity and this approach, if successful, leads to a whole world of possibilities.

When we try to find the right combination between a dish and a wine we hope to gain additional pleasure. It is not a matter of enjoying the food on the one hand and the wine on the other but of enjoying both together, bringing together the sensory stimuli - the aromas and flavors - of both the food and the drink.

This means that neither one nor the other should predominate. Neither the flavor of the wine should be stronger than that of the food, nor vice versa. The flavor and aroma of the wine should blend with those of the food giving rise to different sensations that are generally much more complex, delicate, and pleasing.

A STARTING-POINT

There is no absolute truth for partnering sherries with cheese. The result of any combination may vary according to factors such as the maturity of the cheese, the length of the ripening period, the type of pasture the milk came from (summer grazing gives a milk with a much lower fat content) or the stage of development of the wine.

The findings of the tasting-session, therefore, can serve only as an indication or a starting-point in the search for similar combinations.

The name "sherry" is given to wines produced in the area of the Denomination of Origin for Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and Manzanilla - Sanlúcar de Barrameda, located in the west of the province of Cádiz in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia.

The Denomination of Origin covers 10,600 hectares (26,192 acres) of vineyards, 94% of which grow the Palomino variety. Four per cent grow Pedro Ximénez and the D.O. also allows two other white varieties - Palomino de Jerez and Moscatel.

The personality of these wines and their international prestige (they are the best-known of Spanish wines outside Spain) make this one of the most important wine-growing areas of Spain.

TEXT: IGNACIO MEDINA

STILL LIFES: MENCHU ARTIME

PHOTOS: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

TRANSLATION: JENNY MCDONALD





TETILLA AND PALE CREAM The basic characteristic of Tetilla cheese is the lightness of its flavor, as with all cow's milk cheeses that are only lightly matured. Tetilla, produced in Galicia, in the northwest of Spain, is at its best when cured for less than one month. It is a creamy, soft, and mild-flavored cheese which combines perfectly with the slight sweetness of Pale Cream. The bitter touch to the wine and its sweetness, help to recover the delicate flavor of the Tetilla and combine to give very subtle and pleasant, though short-lasting, flavors.

It is surprising to see that, although the flavor of Tetilla cheese is not persistent, when combined with Pale Cream its presence on the palate lasts longer. The cheese flavor is prolonged and its personality is brought out.

RONCAL AND PEDRO XIMÉNEZ Roncal is produced in the Roncal Valley in the Pyrenees within the Autonomous Community of Navarre to the north of Spain. It is a ewe's milk cheese with a springy texture and the cheese for the tasting-session is medium-cured. Its taste is slightly piquant, the tang combining well with the balanced sour and salty tastes. Its flavor is profound and persistent.

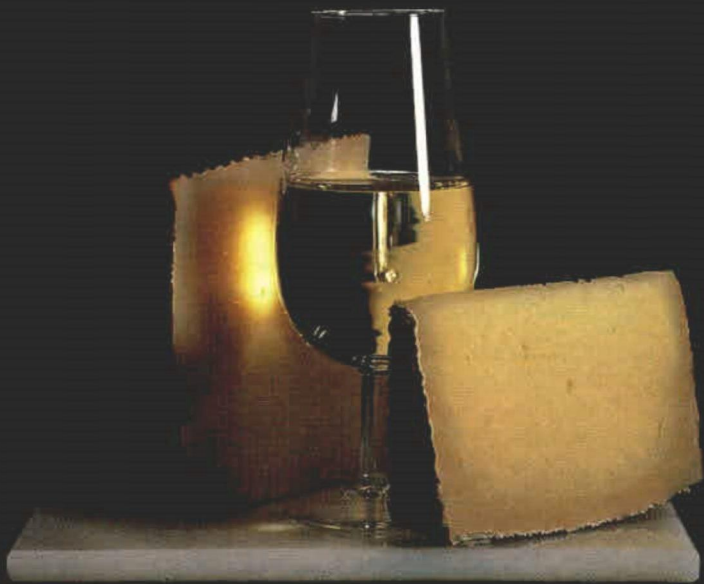
The sweetness and raisin aroma of the Pedro Ximénez initially predominate, concealing the taste of the cheese, but gradually the wine taste loses intensity and blends with the cheese and the bitter, sour, sweet, and salty tones combine together giving rise to much more complex, mild, delicate, and very pleasant aromas.



GARROTXA AND OLOROSO Garrotxa cheese is produced in La Garrotxa in the province of Gerona, in the northeast corner of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. We chose a short-cured cheese which is basically acid, being a goat's milk cheese. It has earthy, spicy aromas with plenty of nuances. The aftertaste is both sour and bitter.

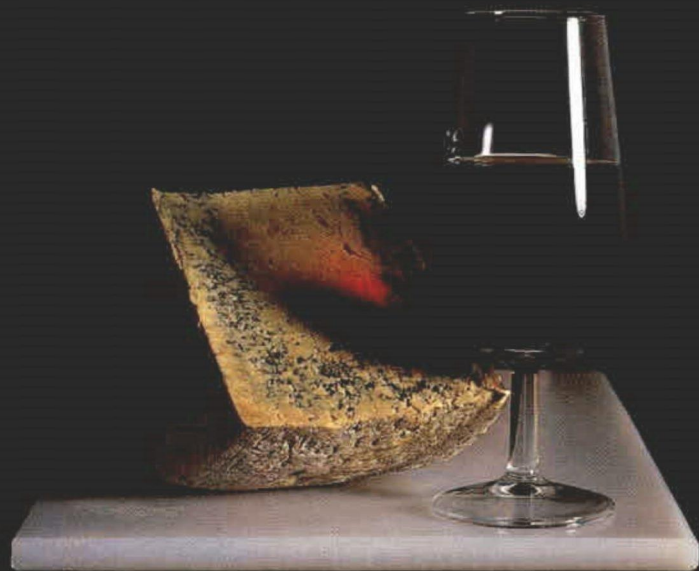
The character of the Oloroso, especially its smoky aromatic tones, combines with those of the cheese, giving a multitude of nuances. The result is extremely elegant; the acidity gives way to the bitter notes giving a complex mix of aromas. After a while, the acidity of the cheese comes back.





MANCHEGO AND MANZANILLA There is no more popular cheese nor any that is better known in Spain than Manchego, produced in the Community of Castile-La Mancha in the center of Spain. The cheese used in this tasting-session is short-to-medium cured. Manchego cheese can undergo various degrees of curing. This determines its characteristics, the longest-cured cheeses having a piquant and very intense flavor. This cheese is distinguished by the elegance of the flavor typical of ewe's milk that points to careful preparation. A very well-balanced and pleasant flavor that is persistent on the palate and very aromatic. The aromatic intensity of manzanilla makes it an excellent foil for this cheese. The result is a magnificent combination of aromas giving new sensations of complexity and elegance. Each brings out the flavor of the other and the fresh aromas are reminiscent of flowers, nuts, and lavender.

CABRALES AND PEDRO XIMÉNEZ Cabrales comes from the Picos de Europa in the east of the Autonomous Community of Asturias in the Cantabrian mountains. This is a naturally-fermented blue cheese made of cow's milk to which small quantities of ewe's or goat's milk are sometimes added. The degree of ripeness characterizes the cheese. On this occasion the cheese selected was one that had undergone only a short ripening period, with a creamy paste that had not yet been completely invaded by the *penicillium* bacteria. Its sharp taste, which is both piquant and sour, is toned down in combination with the sweetness of Pedro Ximénez giving pleasant, very complex sensations. The result is a balanced and complex combination of sour, salty, sweet, and bitter tastes.



DIAZÁBAL AND PALO CORTADO Idiazábal is produced with ewe's milk in the mountainous areas of the provinces of Alava, Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa (in the Basque Autonomous Community) and in part of Navarre, that is, in the north of Spain close to the French frontier. We used an unsmoked Idiazábal (there are several alternatives - unsmoked or various degrees of smoking). This cheese has a buttery paste and a slightly tangy flavor which the palate perceives slowly together with its salty tones. It is persistent, intense, and pleasant. The combination with the sherry dampens the insistent piquancy of the cheese, causing sensations that are pleasant and harmonious. The balance remains, although the taste of the Idiazábal is strong and seems as if it is going to predominate, but after a few seconds the sherry comes into its own.



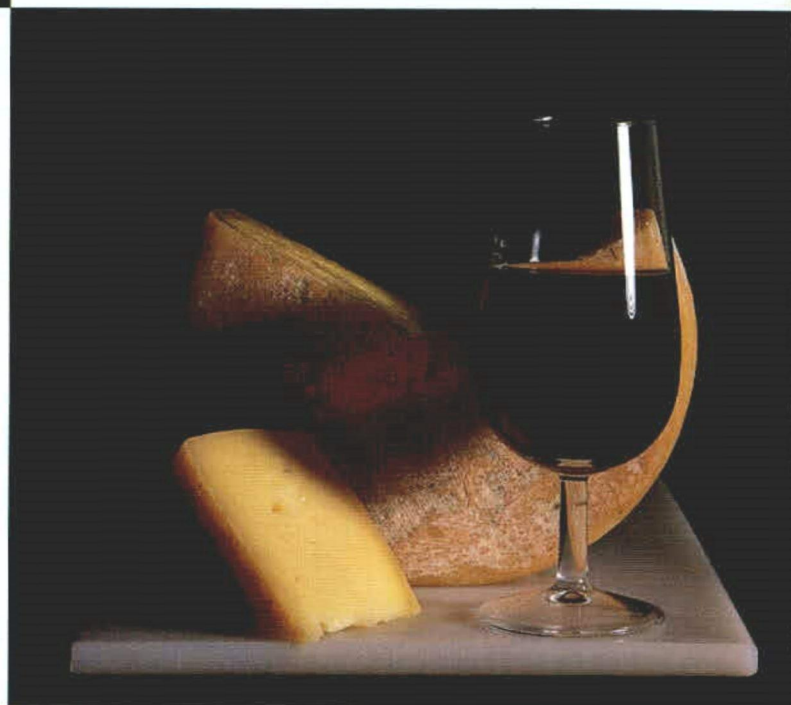
BORES AND FINO We used one of the two varieties of Ibores (one has a hard, dark crust whereas the crust of the one used is coated with paprika). This cheese is produced from goat's milk in the north of the province of Cáceres, in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, close to the frontier between Spain and Portugal.

It is a fairly soft cheese with a compact mass and, being made of goat's milk, is slightly acid. Its flavor is intense but not at all aggressive.

The fino is best chilled at about 7 or 8°C (44.6 or 46.4°F) to tone down its flavor and reduce its aromatic intensity. The bitter almond nuance of the fino combines to perfection with the acidity of the cheese, creating a slightly pungent but very pleasant and delicate taste. The personality of the sherry is noticeable but does not predominate.

L A SERENA AND PEDRO XIMÉNEZ The area of production of La Serena cheese is concentrated in the Serena and Castuera areas of Badajoz, one of the two provinces in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura along the western border of Spain.

This is one of the most unusual cheeses produced in Spain. It is made of ewe's milk but the characteristics of the local pasturelands make the milk exceptionally rich in fats. The result is a cheese with a profound and insistent flavor that is bitter and slightly sour. The texture is so creamy that when properly ripened it becomes spreadable. The cheese used in the tasting-session is creamy so it combines magnificently with the Pedro Ximénez. In partnership, the strength and aggressiveness of both cheese and sherry disappear and the sherry seems less sweet, the predominant aromas being young and fruity, from the Pedro Ximénez grapes.



BÉRICO AND CREAM This cheese is made throughout Spain from a blend of ewe's, goat's and cow's milk. The paste has an elastic texture. Its flavors are balanced but leave behind a slight acidity.

The characteristics of this cream sherry combine perfectly with the flavors of the cheese, creating a complex of intense, persistent and elegant aromas. A subtle blend and a real pleasure.





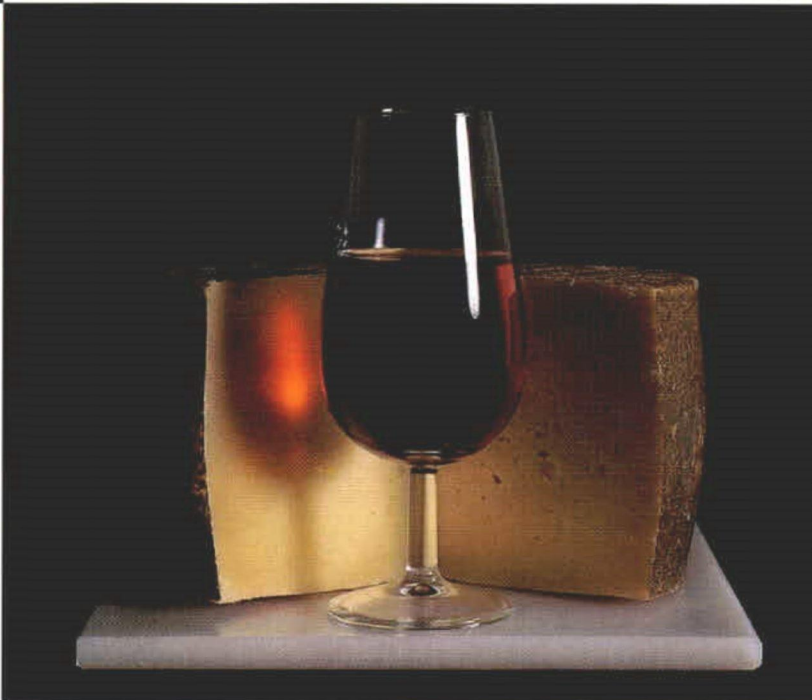
MAJORERO AND PALE CREAM Majorero is a splendid representative of the less well-known cheeses of Spain - those made in the Canaries, the southernmost territory of Europe in the Atlantic Ocean off the African coast.

Made on the island of Fuerteventura, with goat's milk, this cheese has a springy texture, is slightly acid with a mild and rather persistent flavor and very fresh aromas. It is mild, delicate, pleasant, and gives a slightly salty aftertaste.

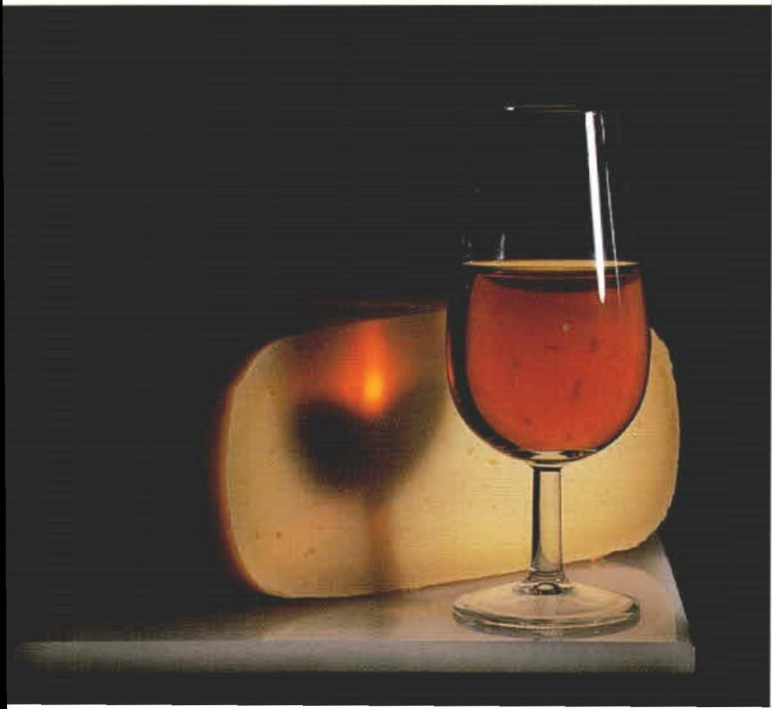
When combined with Pale Cream the result is unexpected. The character of the cheese is quickly toned down by the sweetness of the wine which disappears as it mitigates the most aggressive characteristics of the cheese. The slight bitterness of the wine then takes over, giving rise to a wide range of the spicy aromas that are typical of Oloroso sheries. Altogether, the combination gives very complex and persistent flavors and aromas.

ZAMORANO AND CREAM Zamorano cheese is produced from ewe's milk following the same procedures as with Manchego cheese but it comes from the province of Zamora in the Autonomous Community of Castile and Leon.

The cheese used is medium to very ripe and has a buttery texture. Its flavor is slightly piquant, intense, and pungent. As with Manchego cheese, there are two ways of ripening it - either with short curing, giving a delicate, fresh cheese, or well cured making it piquant, pungent and aggressive. The sweetness of the cream sherry combines with the piquant tones of the cheese so that both are toned down. The final result is complex, very pleasant, full of nuances, and very persistent on the palate. The elegance of the combination is remarkable.



MAHÓN AND PALO CORTADO Mahón cheese is from the island of Menorca, one of the Balearic islands in the Mediterranean. It is a buttery or creamy cow's milk cheese. Its flavor is mild but the aftertaste is slightly acid and salty, or even bitter. It is light and not very persistent. The Palo Cortado brings out the personality of the cheese, stressing its characteristics. The flavor of the wine seems to predominate but it gradually loses strength and allows the taste of the cheese to return. The combination is very pleasant, giving very subtle sensations.



WINE CHART

MANZANILLA

Type of wine: dry
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 15.5% approx.
Fine wine produced in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. With delicate aromas, lighter than fino but without the aromatic complexity and structure of fino.

FINO

Type of wine: dry
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 15.5% approx.
Pale gold color, pungent but delicate aroma reminiscent of almonds light, and dry. Mainly produced in Jerez de la Frontera and El Puerto de Santa María.

AMONTILLADO

Type of wine: dry
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 17% approx.
Brilliant amber color of delicate and rich flavor. Smooth and elegant on the palate.

PALO CORTADO

Type of wine: dry
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 18% approx.
With a dark amber color, somewhere between Amontillado and Oloroso, it has the aromas of Amontillado and the structure and flavor of Oloroso.

OLOROSO

Type of wine: dry
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 19% approx.
With a deep amber shine, it offers the richness and intense aromas given by a long aging process. With a velvety, finish, it is a dry, deep, and smooth sherry.

PALE CREAM

Type of wine: sweet
Grape variety: Palomino
Alcohol content: 17% approx.
Fino wine with a sweet taste due to the addition of concentrated and rectified grape must. Pale gold color with delicate floral aromas. Very light and smooth on the palate.

CREAM

Type of wine: sweet Oloroso
Grape varieties: Palomino and Pedro Ximénez
Alcohol content: 17.5% approx.
Shiny mahogany color. Combines the aromas of Oloroso wine with hints of old oak and raisin. Smooth, slightly sweet, and very pleasant.

PEDRO XIMÉNEZ

Type of wine: sweet
Grape variety: Pedro Ximénez.
Alcohol content: 17% approx.
Dark mahogany color with an amber aura. A complex and harmonious aroma full of nuances but with the raisin flavor predominating. Dense, velvety, and very persistent on the palate.

CHEESE CHART

D.O. TETILLA

Area of production: Galicia
Type of milk: pasteurized cow's milk from Galician Rubia and Friesian breeds
Minimum fat content: 45% of dry matter
Short ripening period, very creamy. Characteristic breast shape. Yellowish rind, soft and creamy paste with an ivory yellow color.

IBORES

Area of production: Cáceres (Extremadura)
Type of milk: raw goat's milk from the Retinta breed of Extremadura
Minimum fat content: 50% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped cheese characterized by the paprika coating on its rind. White, mild and buttery paste.

D.O. MAHON

Area of production: Menorca (Balearic islands)
Type of milk: pasteurized cow's milk from Friesian cows
Minimum fat content: 38% of dry matter
Loaf-shaped with a yellow crust. Compact yellowish-white paste.

D.O. MANCHEGO

Area of production: Castile-La Mancha
Type of milk: pasteurized ewe's milk from Manchega sheep (also made from raw milk)
Minimum fat content: 50% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped. Pale yellow or black-grey rind with plaiting marks around the sides. Firm, compact paste varying from ivory white to yellowish.

D.O. ZAMORANO

Area of production: Zamora (Castile-Leon)
Type of milk: raw ewe's milk from Castellana and Churra sheep
Minimum fat content: 45% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped with a smooth, dark greyish rind. Firm, hard, yellowish paste with no holes. Strong taste but not piquant. Aromatic.

D.O. RONCAL

Area of production: Valle del Roncal (Navarre)
Type of milk: raw ewe's milk from Latxa and Rasa sheep
Minimum fat content: 50% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped with a smooth, reddish-brown rind. Hard paste with holes. White to yellow color. Strong, slightly sharp taste.

D.O. IDIAZÁBAL

Area of production: Alava, Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa (Basque Country), and part of Navarre
Type of milk: raw ewe's milk from Latxa sheep
Minimum fat content: 45% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped with smooth, greasy, bright yellow to orange rind. Compact, buttery, yellowish paste with some holes. Strong taste, slightly piquant, and sour.

IBÉRICO

Area of production: throughout Spain
Type of milk: pasteurized ewe's, goat's and cow's milk
Minimum fat content: 54% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped with dark yellow rind. Sides with plait marks. Whitish-yellow paste. Mild and buttery flavor.

D.O. CABRALES

Area of production: Picos de Europa (Asturias)
Type of milk: raw cow's milk, and occasionally small quantities of ewe's and goat's milk
Minimum fat content: 45% of dry matter
Moldy and greasy rind, soft and buttery paste with green-blue veining. Has the piquant, salty and aggressive taste that is characteristic of blue cheeses.

D.O. LA SERENA

Area of production: La Serena (Extremadura)
Type of milk: raw ewe's milk from Merino sheep
Minimum fat content: 50% of dry matter
Shallow wheel shape. Semi-hard, dry and smooth rind. Soft paste of white or yellowish color that becomes spreadable when fully ripe.

MAJORERO

Area of production: Fuerteventura (Canary Islands)
Type of milk: raw and pasteurized goat's milk from the Canary breed
Minimum fat content: 55% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped, 7-8 cm high. Light brown rind with the marks of the mold formed with palm leaves. Yellow paste with small holes.

GARROTXA

Area of production: La Garrotxa, Gerona (Catalonia)
Type of milk: pasteurized goat's milk from Murcia, Granada, and Malaga goats
Minimum fat content: 50% of dry matter
Wheel-shaped, rind covered with dark grey mold. Soft white paste without holes.

Ignacio Medina: In November 1982 he became editor of the Club de Gourmets magazine and in July 1986 set up the Club del Vino y la Mesa and a new magazine, Gran Reserva, which he edited until April 1990. Since 1986 he has been collaborating with several publications of both specialist and general interest. He is a restaurant critic and food writer for the newspapers El País and El Sol and magazines such as Ronda Iberia, Panorama and Epoca.



SOLERA GRAN RESERVA
CARDENAL MENDOZA

Brandy de Jerez

SANCHEZ ROMATE HNOS. JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA





From Reinoso,
the river passes
through or near
eleven wine
regions which
experience the
influence of
this great
watercourse.

The River Ebro

The Wine Rivers of Spain (II)

Text: **Jeremy Watson**
Photos: **Fernando Briones/ICEX**

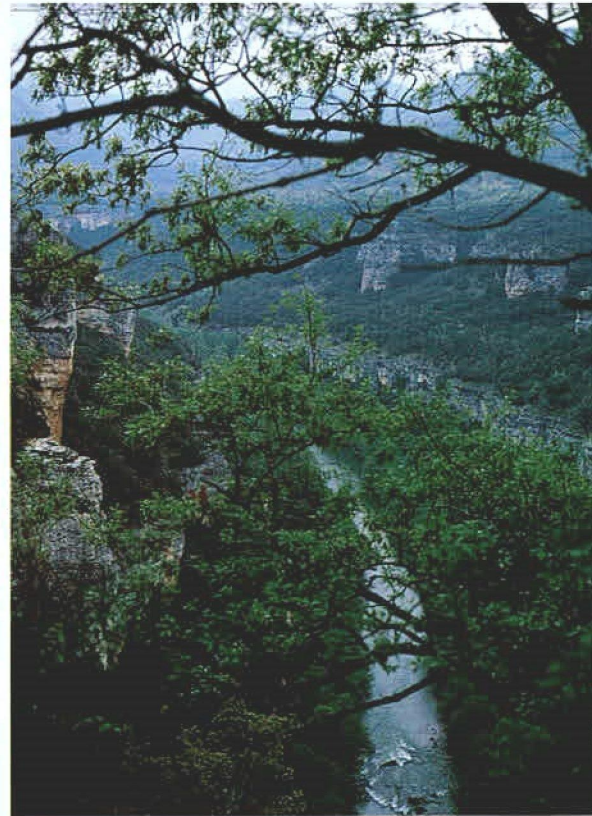
THE MIGHTY RIVER
EBRO POWERS ITS
WAY FROM ITS
SOURCE NEAR
SANTANDER IN THE
LUSH GREEN
CANTABRIAN
MOUNTAINS,
GATHERING THE
RAINS AND SNOWS
FROM THE PYRENEES
AS IT PROGRESSES
TO THE MORE
TEMPERATE,
ROCKY, PINE
SCATTERED TERRAIN
OF CATALONIA AND
THE MEDITERRANEAN.

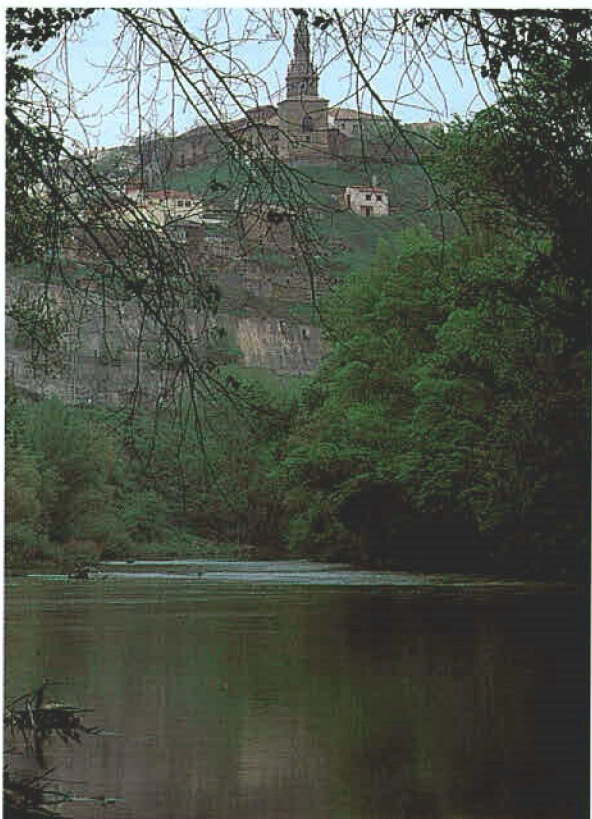


In a country with a reputation for lack of water, it really is a joy to see the relentless flow of a mighty river like the Ebro.



The river
bursts upon a
wonderful
landscape of
patchworked
vineyards
and wends
its way
gracefully
past the many
wine towns
of La Rioja,
towards
Navarre.





Zaragoza, an important agricultural and industrial center, is the main city throughout the length of the Ebro. The majestic *Basílica del Pilar* dominates the passing river.



As it slips
quietly out
to sea, in
the Ebro
Delta,
it is
fascinating
to reflect on
the variety of
environments
the river has
experienced
during its
lengthy journey.



IN ITS TRAVELS, THIS COSMOPOLITAN RIVER EMBRACES THE OLD KINGDOMS OF NAVARRE, CASTILE, ARAGON, AND CATALONIA, RECALLING THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF SPAIN'S INTERNATIONAL DOMINANCE.

In a country with a reputation for lack of water, it really is a joy to see the relentless flow of a mighty river like the Ebro, as it works its way across the northern Spanish landscape, flowing parallel to the Pyrenean Mountains, which are some 120 kms (75 miles) to the north, being constantly fed by the many tributaries carrying down the melting snows and rains.

The actual source is at 900 meters (2,900 feet) in the Picos de Tres Mares (Three Seas), so called because three rivers rise there - one, the Pisuerga, flows south into the Duero, which, in turn flows west to the Atlantic, another, the Nansa, flows north directly into the Bay of Biscay, and last, the Ebro, which almost bisects the country as it trundles the 928 kilometers (580 miles) east to the Mediterranean. It passes through some of the loveliest scenery in Spain, as well as spartan, treeless escarpments and plains, where the river gathers greater volume and pace during its relentless progress.

Its banks are steeped in history, from the first century B.C. when the Romans landed at Tarragona and headed west along the Ebro to Navarre. Evidence of their presence during the six hundred year occupation is to be seen at regular intervals, be they bridges like the remains of one near Baños de Ebro in Alava, an open wine storage tank in Navarre, or an amphitheater in Tarragona. There are traces of the colony of Caesar Augustus in Zaragoza, and the many signs of their arrival in Catalonia at Tortosa, which is, of course, also the scene of one of the bloodiest bat-

tles of the Civil War in which many Spaniards and members of the International Brigades died. The Ebro was also an important tactical feature of the two sieges of Zaragoza by Napoleon in 1808-1809.

In its travels, this cosmopolitan river embraces the old kingdoms of Navarre, Castile, Aragon, and Catalonia, recalling names like Rey Jaime, Don Sancho III, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabel of Castile, the Emperor King Charles V, and three hundred years of Spain's international dominance. The river passes within a few kilometers of the Monastery of San Millán in La Rioja, where in the 13th century, monk Gonzalo Berceo first wrote down the Castilian language, and, at Logroño, it flows under the Pilgrim's Way from the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela.

From Reinosa, and past the great marshaling yards of Miranda de Ebro, the river passes through or near to eleven wine regions which experience the influence of this great watercourse. Some lie on tributaries, which are substantial rivers in their own right, not least the Jalón, the Cinca and the Segre.

A Graceful Beauty

Dramatically, the river Ebro enters the northwest of Spain's premier wine region through a narrow gap in the Sierra Cantabria, known as Las Conchas, which is also the access for the railway and old road from Bilbao. The river bursts upon a wonderful landscape of patchworked vineyards and hilltop towns of undisputed charm, and wends its way gracefully past the many wine towns of Haro, San Vi-

cente de la Sonsierra, Briones, Cenicero, Fuenmayor and the capital of La Rioja, Logroño, towards the lower lying areas of Calahorra and Alfaro.

With Alava (Rioja Alavesa) on its north bank, and La Rioja (Rioja Alta and Rioja Baja) on its south bank, the river has created a series of horseshoe bends which follow the ridge, along which runs the main road, passing vast areas of beautifully maintained vineyards of Tempranillo vines. The **Rioja** region is one of the wealthiest per capita regions in Spain, and this is evident from the multiplicity of crops that can be seen, as well as thriving medium and light industries in the larger towns.

These people are pragmatic and conscientious, honoring their many traditions and proud of their heritage and success. Their cuisine reflects the best of several styles, like roasts - *Pimientos Rojos a la Parilla* - roast peppers, and a speciality of the region, or roast lamb.

The local *Morcilla* (rice-based black sausage) is delicious. Rioja is famous for *Cocido Riojano* or *Patatas a la Riojana*, both of which are based on *chorizo* and pork and use white beans and potatoes respectively, in a sort of potage.

The fame of Rioja precedes it, with more and more countries buying the wines in ever increasing quantities, indeed, their popularity is becoming something of an embarrassment to the region as it strives to cope with a demand which is rapidly exceeding supply. The rich, full, and fruity *Reservas* and *Gran Reservas* (see Glossary page 117) will accompany the very best of appropriate dishes

anywhere in the world, while the versatility of the *Crianzas* makes them ideal for matching all styles of cooking.

Toasted Oak

Over six hundred and fifty thousand casks lie in the vast *bodegas* of Rioja, nurturing the wines and giving them their soft aromas and flavors, which consumers find so attractive. The science of wood aging is a skill in itself. The multitude of casks used in Spain's wine industry are supplied by a few cooperages scattered around the country. Two of the most sought after are to be found on the Ebro's course, in Logroño and in Alfaro; it is said that the humid environment of the river helps the maturing process of the wood. These firms churn out a constant flow of oak casks of 225 liters (49.5 imperial gallons) made of American or French wood at considerable expense to their customers, the cost being up to 50,000 pesetas/\$397 each. It is thrilling to watch the extraordinary skill of the cask makers as they piece the staves together and then fire the barrel to toast the wood and soften it up for bending into shape so the hoops can be positioned. The level of toasting will vary sometimes, according to clients' needs, but a new cask is only one factor in the equation of the effects of wood on the wines. The type of wood, its country of origin, the age of the cask, the thickness of the staves, how they are kept, and how often they are cleaned and/or refurbished all play a part.

The use of wood is increasing as the understanding of its true contribution to the final product is perfected, and

THE EBRO, WHICH ALMOST BISECTS THE COUNTRY AS IT TRUNDLES THE 928 KILOMETERS (580 MILES) EAST TO THE MEDITERRANEAN, PASSES THROUGH SOME OF THE LOVELIEST SCENERY IN SPAIN.

more and more wine regions seek to produce better wines to meet market demands. This is true of the next region on the river's course. The ancient kingdom of **Navarre** has been producing wines with considerable success since Roman times, and despite the subsequent arrival of the Moors, a very strong wine industry was established here. However, the focus had been on young wines, not least *rosados*, and the use of wood was very limited. In recent times, however, many things have changed and Navarre has established its own identity for a sophisti-

cated range of red and white wines, many of which utilize oak casks in fermentation as well as for aging.

A Pink Kingdom

This has not been at the expense of the pink wines, for which Navarre is so famous, and which account for about forty per cent of sales, but has been to their benefit. The new technology that the wine revolution in Navarre has brought, has been utilized to the great advantage of these much underrated wines. This subject was touched on in the last article about the Duero (See *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38),

but it bears further emphasis. Many people deny themselves the pleasure of enjoying a light, dry, crisp, and fresh pink wine because they feel it is either a compromise (between red or white), or it is for summer drinking only, or they think it is sweet, or all of these reasons. They should know what they are missing. To start with, if one can drink a cold dry white wine with turkey in the heart of a northern hemisphere winter, then why not a pink? The color of pink wines zings in the glass and brightens the table; its lighter nature makes it an excellent aperitif

or lunchtime wine, but, above all, it is wine and good wine, and, believe it or not, takes as much, if not more, skill to make. Try one next time you visit your wine merchant, but make sure it is young, very few retain their freshness beyond two years of their vintage date.

Another great claim to fame for Navarre is the abundance of naturally grown vegetables of so many different types. In autumn, passing through the villages, women can be seen roasting peppers over coal braziers to remove the skins before pickling in olive oil and garlic. As a starter, there are let-



EBRO'S BANKS ARE STEEPED IN HISTORY, FROM THE FIRST CENTURY B.C. WHEN THE ROMANS LANDED AT TARRAGONA AND HEADED WEST ALONG THE RIVER TO NAVARRE.

tuce hearts, an apparently simple, but delicious, preparation with olive oil, garlic and salt topped with an anchovie; or the delicate *Menestra de Verduras del Tiempo* served hot - a compilation of cooked, fresh vegetables such as artichokes, peas, green beans, carrots, and asparagus, and is a dish every chef should have in his vegetarian portfolio.

All Spain recognizes Navarre as the kingdom of pink wines, but they are by no means exclusive to that region, and many other very good ones are made, especially where one finds the Garnacha grape variety.

The river has filled out now with the addition of the waters of the Aragon River, which, ironically, joins the Ebro before it reaches the province of that name, its next destination. Across the border from Navarre is **Campo de Borja**, a charming region of small compact hilltop villages prefacing the passage towards more bleak and unfor- giving countryside.

Whether in a canoe, or on foot, or on the motorway, in a car, the trek across the *Depresión del Ebro*, in Aragon, is seldom relieved until one reaches Zaragoza, the main city throughout the length of the Ebro, whose majestic *Basílica*

de Nuestra Señora del Pilar dominates the passing river. The city is an important agricultural and industrial center. The wine regions of **Calatayud** and **Cariñena** on the River Jalón that joins the Ebro in Zaragoza, like Campo de Borja, produce red, pink, and white wines with a high alcohol content, which, historically, were used for blending. More recently all three regions have developed a new generation of wines for the modern palate, but the name that is leading the way is the fourth denomination in Aragon, the small zone of **Somontano** in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Four New Jewels in the Crown

Somontano had the advantage of no real established trade beyond the local requirements of the town of Barbastro which straddles the River Cinca. Its success is due to several factors. First the influence of a French family who brought some of their varietals with them, and then, more importantly, the investment by two Spanish families - with the important help of the Autonomous Government - in modern wineries and the use of new technology. The results have been impressive, both with indigenous and foreign varietals,

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SO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIVES OF SO MANY, AND CONSTANTLY FED BY MANY TRIBUTARIES, THE EBRO IS, UNQUESTIONABLY, SPAIN'S MOST IMPORTANT WINE RIVER.

including Pinot Noir and Gewürztraminer. The proximity of the Pyrenees has an important influence on the microclimates for these varietals, as well as providing a ready market with all the tourists from over the border. The Cinca passes to the west of Lérida with hundreds of peach, apple and pear orchards lining its banks, and links up with the Segre, near Fraga, just before their confluence with the Ebro at Mequinzenza. Before this meeting, the Ebro has already assumed more exciting and impressive proportions, encouraged by three major dams. Above Mequinzenza, on the map, it looks like a long and twisted dragon as the water occupies every nook and cranny of the sheer rock sided valley through which it threads. Like the Cinca, the Segre, which descends from the mountains near Andorra, is a river valley of a thousand orchards and other and varied horticulture, the richness of which contrasts so strongly with the more barren nature of the approaching Sierra Blanca in Catalonia.

The **Costers del Segre** is a demarcated zone, in four parts, astride the river Segre, north of Lérida. It owes its origins to the enormous investment of the three thousand-hectare estate of Raimat, which also farms onions, potatoes and fruit in vast proportions. On a windswept and arid plain, they have planted half the estate with indigenous and foreign vine varietals to produce still wines that have really caught the imagination of markets everywhere. Their lead has encouraged others to follow and put the second jewel in the crown.

The country's original and leading wine innovator and, quite independently, an English winemaker, have been responsible for placing the third jewel in this mythical crown. **Conca de Barberá**, in the fork created by the Cinca and the Ebro, has come from nowhere in recent years to husband some of the most beautiful vineyards and create some very exciting wines. Miguel Torres has planted vines in the fabulous setting of the Monastery of Poblet at Montblanc, while Hugh Ryman has succeeded in persuading one of the co-operatives to revolutionize its wine making techniques. The result is that a region once dismissed as a likely extension of the Penedès, is now well established in its own right.

The fourth jewel, **Priorato**, is breath catching. In one of the most inhospitable agricultural environments one could expect to find, around Falset, in the center of Tarragona Province, four or five adventurous and extremely brave Spanish winemakers have developed truly boutique wineries producing exceptional and vastly expensive red wines in minute quantities. Here is a region that made its living from red wines with a natural alcoholic strength often exceeding sixteen degrees, which were consumed locally or used for blending, not least for Tarragona Ruby - the "Poor Man's Port" of the public houses of east London thirty or more years ago. How things have changed! 16,000 pesetas (\$128) is the sort of price being asked, and they get it, deservedly so.

The Catalans have been leaders in investing in new ideas, so perhaps it is no co-

incidence that three of these jewels are in their region. But nobody knows how to reward themselves better, as can be seen in much of the Catalan *cocina*, which indulges in some of the most exotic and varied dishes in all Spain, best illustrated by the way they combine the land with the sea (*mar y montaña*). The combination of lobster and chicken, with hazelnuts and unsweetened chocolate, conjures up a truly stimulating gastronomic experience, as also does the famous roast vegetable salad - *escalivada*.

The Last Stretch

At Priorato, the River Ebro turns south to pass along the northern boundary of **Terra Alta**, another tough place to grow anything but vines and olive trees. Despite determined efforts of investment by the autonomous government of Catalonia, many villages are now deserted as people have left the land to try and find a living in the towns and cities. Priorato is fairly remote, Terra Alta more so, and this is what probably prevents investors moving in there as well. Historically known after its main town of Gandesa, the Terra Alta harbored quite large quantities of the Garnacha White grape, which, when grown at seven hundred meters (2,300 feet) and cold fermented, produces a lovely, fresh mouthful, almost as if oak fermented, of dry white wine unfortunately early oxidization is a problem. Again, the reds and whites are high in alcohol and mainly go for local consumption and blending. The wine region of **Tarragona** has not enjoyed a particularly good profile for a very long time, maybe since the

Romans arrived there in 218 B.C. Saddled with the burden of producing high volumes of very low-cost wines, whether sweet or dry, for mass marketing in northern and eastern Europe or in West Africa, it has failed, until now, to establish any real identity of its own. Slowly this is beginning to change, and the new generation of competitively priced wines is showing the way for the future.

Now, the river makes a further turn, almost due south, passes through the last dam above Tortosa and immediately becomes the supplier of a very important and large canal. Apart from the local irrigation requirements of the rice farmers in the Ebro Delta, this canal has become a lifeline to areas in this part of Spain and to the Balearic Islands, who ship vast quantities of water from the canal, by tanker, to help cope with the enormous demand in the summer months.

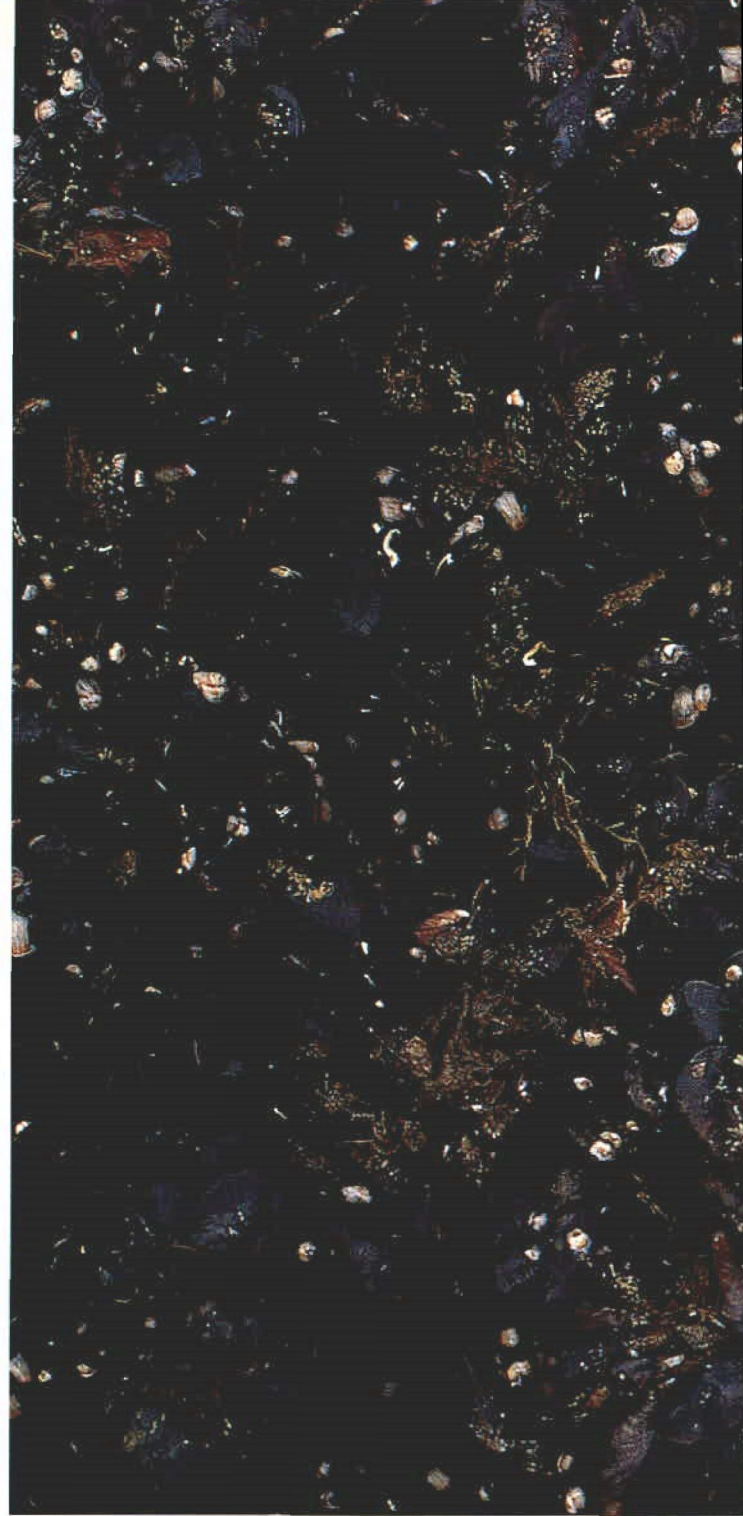
As it slips quietly out to sea, it is fascinating to reflect on the variety of environments the river has experienced during its lengthy journey. So responsible for the lives of so many, the Ebro is also, unquestionably, Spain's most important wine river.

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 104.



The success of Galician mussels is based on their quality. With little heavy industry, and washed by the rich waters of the Atlantic, Galicia is favored for its cultivation.



THE FRESH MUSSEL HAS LONG BEEN A KEY COMPONENT BOTH OF THE GALICIAN ECONOMY, AS WELL AS OF THE SPANISH DIET. ITS QUALITY IS SECOND TO NONE, BUT NOW THE MUSSEL IS DUE TO RECEIVE OFFICIAL RECOGNITION AS IT ACQUIRES ITS OWN REGULATORY COUNCIL.

NOT-TO-BE-MISSED

Text: **Nick Lyne**

Photos: **Miguel Palacios/ICEX**

MUSSELS



Currently, plants in the region are producing some 70,000 tons of fresh mussels a year, which makes this humble mollusk far and away the most profitable of all seafood in Spain.



Driving along the picturesque roads which wind their way by the *rías* - or fjords - of Galicia, the uninformed visitor to this north-western region can't help but wonder as to the purpose of the hundreds of enormous rectangular platforms lying out to sea. The answer is to be found when the traveler stops at the next town, and sitting

down to lunch, picks *mejillones* from the ample menu of seafood on offer. The plate of steamed, fresh mussels sitting before the eager diner will certainly have originated from one of those platforms, known in Spain as *bateas*. Only a couple of days before, the mussels will have been clinging to ropes hanging up to forty feet/12 m below the surface for almost

a year before being hauled up for harvest. They will then have passed through a rigorous quality-control process in *depuradoras*, or purifying plants. The Ría de Arosa is home to nearly 2,400 *bateas*, more than twice those of the other four *rías* of southern Galicia's Rías Bajas Region put together; undoubtedly the best place to learn about the mussel indus-

try. And as good a place to start as any is the Depuradora Paquito, the purifying, packaging and processing plant of Francisco López Silva. Mr. López's plant is typical of the more than 50 such enterprises in the region, represented by the mussel-processing industry body, AGADE, of which he is president. Some 200,000 tons of mussels are harvested annually



Of the 3,200 *bateas* in Galicia's *rias*, some 2,000 are individually owned by families. The sector employs more than 10,000 people directly and indirectly.

Some 200 million tons of mussels are harvested annually in Spain, more than 95% of them in Galicia, which means that this tiny area produces around 50% of all mussels consumed in the world.

in Spain, more than 95% of them in Galicia, which means that this tiny area produces around 50% of all mussels consumed in the world. Mussels coming into Mr. López's plant will end up one of three ways: frozen, canned, or left uncooked and fresh, to be shipped to markets all over Spain and abroad. Currently, plants in the region are producing some 70,000 tons of

fresh mussels a year, which makes this humble mollusk far and away the most profitable of all seafood in Spain. Overall, the sector generates more than \$100 million. Oysters and other shellfish barely make up 17,000 tons of fresh produce per year. Present production levels will most likely continue. The industry went through boom years in the early 1980s, when

240,000 tons of mussels were produced per year. Confronted by soaring growth levels, the government intervened to limit output in an effort to improve quality control and standardize production.

"WHAT'S GOOD, SELLS"

The success of Galician mussels is based on their quality.

Natural filters, the size, flavor, and tenderness of a mussel depend in turn on the quality of the environment they live in. With little heavy industry, and washed by the rich waters of the Atlantic, Galicia is favored. Nevertheless, explains Mr. López, Galician mussels have traditionally been strictly controlled and undergo stringent and constant checking. At the *depu-*



Mussels have been an integral part of the Galician economy for nearly fifty years. Around 30,000 tons of fresh mussels are exported mainly to Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom.

Galician southern fiords or *rías*, are dotted with more than 3,000 *bateas*, each supporting hundreds of mussel-covered ropes hanging down into waters rich with nutrients and well-stirred by unique currents.

radora, the mussels lie in enormous tanks of sterilized sea water, where they can filter out any potentially harmful bacteria.

Mr. López is keen to point out that the purifying process has nothing to do with controlling possible pollutants. "The industry is self-regulating in many ways," he explains, pointing out that the regional govern-

ment, mussel growers, and the processors are in constant contact regarding possible areas where contamination might be a risk. Proud of the success of the Galician mussel, he explains its popularity in simple terms: "What's good, sells." Some 44 natural nutrients have been identified in the Galician mussel.

Nevertheless, he notes that it

is the mussel processor who takes responsibility for the quality of the mollusk which goes on sale. Because of this, the purifying plants employ marine biologists who are constantly checking the mussels which come in. Public perception of quality is a key element in maintaining a market for the mussel. In many ways, the present control standards are overly cautious. For example,

explains Mr. López, the so-called red tide, an algae bloom which periodically hits fishing grounds in the area, wiping off entire catches, does not harm the mussel. However, the mussel cannot be harvested during these cyclical algae invasions, and must wait until the tide has moved on and the mussels have washed out the illness - you could compare it to a cold.





The role of the *depuradoras* has changed over the years, and plants like that of Mr. López have taken on the role of preparing and packaging the mussel directly for sale to food manufacturers for pre-prepared meals, or for canning in the rich, spicy *escabeche* marinade sauce which characterizes the Spanish canned mussel. Around 30,000 tons of fresh

mussels are exported, mainly to Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. Anybody who has had the good fortune to taste Galician fresh mussels will instantly recognize the plump, juicy, orange, flesh, as well as its larger size. The mussels produced further north literally pale alongside their Iberian cousins.

PROTECTING THE INDUSTRY

The mussel has been an integral part of the Galician economy for nearly fifty years. Back in the late 1940s, a local landowner in the Ría de Arosa decided to employ a version of a musseling technique which had originated in Japan. The lattice structure seen today has changed little over the

years. It was discovered that Eucalyptus wood (introduced to Galicia 150 years ago from Australia) was ideal, in that it absorbed a sufficient amount of water to allow it to bend with heavy swells. Strapped under the wooden lattice, lie floats. The average size of the *batea* is 460 m²/550 square yards, with a maximum of 500 ropes of up to

14.6 m/16 yards long, to which cling the mussels. A normal production amounts to 60,000-90,000 kg per year. The ropes are usually hauled up and stripped of their harvest by cranes these days, although some *bateas* are still run manually. The growing cycle takes around a year, and the ropes are first sown with the baby mussels, that are collected on the rocks.

The mussels grow for about four months, at which time they are hauled up again, retied to new ropes, and then left for a further eight months until they are around 10 cm/ 4 inches long. They are then ready for harvesting.

Of the 3,200 *bateas* in Gal-

icia's *rías*, some 2,000 are individually owned by families, explains Juan José Martín Rodríguez, president of OPMAR, the association which brings together mussel producers and defends their interests. The sector employs more than 10,000 people directly and indirectly.

He points out that many growers have begun to see hard times in recent years, as prices have fallen and domestic demand has dropped off. In many ways, says Mr. Martín, the growers' problems are a result of their own success over the decades. He notes that as there was always a market, many producers lacked vision and simply imagined that there would always be a

ready market. Prices are 20% lower than five years ago. In 1989, for instance, 110,000 tons of fresh mussels were sold, that was down to 60,000 two years ago.

Many producers, notes Mr. Martín, have left OPMAR and struck out on their own, seeking to sell at lower prices to processing plants. He aims to unify the sector and bring the current number of *bateas* registered with the organization up to 70%, from the current 40%. This is also the way to increase prices and bring them back up to levels of those of five years ago, he argues.

ESTABLISHING A BRAND IDENTITY

In these days of increased competition, denominations of origin, and regulatory councils, if you want a product to sell, it not only has to be of the highest quality, you have to let people know that it is.

The Galician mussel has no real competition either at home or abroad. At the same time, the industry is self-regulating, having established the highest standards of more than four decades. Nevertheless, the time has come for this incomparable product to be officially recognized. The Regulatory Council for Quality Mussels was formed in 1994 as a local initiative between producers and the regional government of Galicia, with European Union backing.

"What we're doing here is formalizing the way an already thriving and successful industry works," explains Joaquín Riveiro, president of the Regulatory Council. The

council has brought together scientists, producers, wholesalers, and local politicians to find common ground.

Walking round the airy installations of the Galician Institute for Marine Culture, which sits on a rocky promontory looking out to hundreds of *bateas* bobbing gently under a clear blue spring sky, Mr. Riveiro explains, "The problem with the industry so far is that it has lacked a global vision. In times of difficulty, the tendency is for the producers to lower prices as they seek to sell to the canning and processing plants. Yet we're all in the same boat," he observes correctly. "We have to strengthen the industry as a whole, and that means everybody concerned with it getting round the table and airing their problems, offering solutions."

At the same time, he says that the industry has to educate consumers as to the unique qualities of the Galician mussel. "Our natural market is Spain, but we're looking to consolidate France and Italy as well," he says. Part of the global vision of the council will be to undertake extensive marketing to identify consumers and new markets.

As of June this year, producers taking their mussels to purifying and processing plants find their product assessed according to criteria agreed by all parties. Mr. Riveiro expects that more than 70% of mussels will automatically meet the standards which will allow them to be graded into three categories: Normal, Special, and Select. However, Mr. Riveiro is quick to point out that

NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF FRESH MUSSELS (for every 100 g of the edible part)

PROTEINS	10.8 g
LIPIDS	1.9 g
CARBOHYDRATES	1.9 g
WATER	85.4 g
IODINE	0.035 mg
CALCIUM	80 mg
IRON	4.5 mg
MAGNESIUM	23 mg
ZINC	1.8 mg
VITAMIN (THIAMIN)	0.1 mg
VITAMIN (RIBOFLAVIN)	0.14 mg
VITAMIN C (ASCORBIC ACID)	TRACES
VITAMIN A	TRACES
VITAMIN D	TRACES
CALORIES	67

Source: Fundación Caixa Galicia and CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Submarinas).

there are no "bad" Galician mussels, it is simply a question of the consumer deciding and knowing what they buy. "You can buy a cheap wine or you can buy a *gran reserva* Rioja, it's up to you," points out Mr. Riveiro. These mussels will be immediately recognizable to the consumer by a distinctive label carried on the bag or box in which they are to be packaged. "Normal" mussels will have between 26 and 35 pieces per kilo/2.3 pounds, "Special" between 20 and 25 pieces per kilo/2.3 pounds, and "Select" less than 20 pieces for the same weight. At the same time, each mussel must comply with a minimum amount of *vianda*, or flesh, of 16% of its total weight.

The Regulatory Council will decide on which establishments meet the conditions for the quality label. The council's five-year plan, taking it up to the end of the century, sees up to 90% of Galician fresh mussels bearing its label by the end of this period.

Standing outside the premises of the Center for Marine Culture, and looking away over the *ría*, Mr. Riveiro gestures to the building behind as he explains, "We're looking at a three-pronged approach: to train professionals, to improve production standards, and to find new markets." The mussel joins a select list of other products from the region which will now be

able to bear the title of "a quality product of Galicia." Among the autonomous region's other culinary treats, either on the list or due to join it soon, are potatoes, veal, honey, cheese, a number of wines, and *orujo*, a spirit made from fermented grape skins.

AN ESSENTIAL PART OF A HEALTHY DIET

Part of the Regulatory Council's work will be to highlight to consumers the dietary and culinary benefits of the mussel. Rich in vitamins A, C, and D, the mussel has a high calorific content and is rich in proteins, iron, and magnesium. It is

worth noting that 100 gr/3.5 ounces of mussels provides an adult with a quarter of the daily required proteins. Significantly, mussels also contain high levels of Omega 3 oil, which combats cholesterol. Mussels are quick and easy to prepare; dropped into boiling water, they take but a few minutes to cook, after which they can be eaten with a little olive oil, or used in recipes with pasta, rice, or salads. Consumers should note that the rule which says never eat oysters unless there is an "r" in the month, doesn't apply to mussels. The mussel life cycle sees it reproducing between the end of March and late May. By July and August, the mussel is sufficiently recovered and up in weight for consumption, and will remain so until January or February. If buying loose or eating in a restaurant, apply the same standards as you would anywhere. Or better still, as Joaquín Riveiro points out, "Just look for the Regulatory Council's seal of approval."

Nick Lyne is a journalist living in Madrid for the past six years. He has worked for the Spanish news agency EFE, as well as freelancing for a number of specialist financial and trade publications, and currently is deputy editor at a company producing special country profiles for various U.S. and British media.

See Main Exporters on page 16 and Recipes on page 107.



Olive oil has been around so long it has become part of the culture of the Mediterranean countries. This is especially so for the Andalusians in the south of Spain where olive oil production has traditionally been a vital source of income, the ancient methods being passed down from generation to generation.

Virgin olive oil à la carte

Text: **Jerónimo Díaz**

Still Lifes: **Menchu Artime**

Photos: **Antonio de Benito/ICEX**

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**



In his book *Nuestro aceite* (Our Olive Oil), the head of the Denomination of Origin Regulatory Council for Baena olive oil, Cristóbal Lovera, states that olive cultivation was probably introduced into Spain towards the end of the second millennium before Christ when the Phoenicians began to settle in the western Mediterranean. Certain contemporary historians, however, such as P. Sáez Fernández in *Agricultura romana en la Bética* (Roman Agriculture in Baetica) and J.R. Harrison in *Spain at the Dawn of History*, consider that olives were already being grown in Spain when the Phoenicians arrived but that they improved cultivation and oil-pressing techniques.

Between A.D. 60 and 65, olive oil from the south of Spain started to be traded in Rome as during the second half of the 1st century, Italian oil production was insufficient to meet domestic demand.

José María Blázquez in *La exportación del aceite hispano en el Imperio Romano. Estado de la cuestión* (Exports of Spanish Oil to the Roman Empire - The issue as it stands) establishes the years A.D. 140-160 as the peak years for Spanish exports to Rome. The Roman domination of Spain was the time of the first Golden Age for olive cultivation in Andalusia. Orchards spread all along the Guadalquivir River which became the axis for the industry that grew up around olive oil processing, packing, and exports. Amphorae, the first non-returnable bottles in history, were fired in ovens all along the Guadalquivir. sixty of these ovens have been found in excavations along the left bank (which includes, amongst others, the provinces of Jaén, Córdoba and Seville) and 14 on the right bank. This gives an idea of the geographical distribution of the bulk of production in the Andalusian provinces. The use of olive oil as edible oil continued in Spain during the Byzantine and Germanic periods but was to become especially widespread under the Arab occupation from the 8th century on. The Arabs called olive oil *zait al zaytum* and the name for oil in Spanish, *aceite*, comes from this Semitic root. The Spanish word *almazara*, currently used for olive oil pressing plants, also comes from the Arab expression *ma'sara* meaning "press."

Historians over the ages have sung the praises of virgin olive oil for a multitude of uses - in medicine, skin care, as fuel for light, and as an excellent condiment.

The Olive Tree and Olive Oil Production

The olive is an evergreen tree, its leaves being a light silvery green. The shape and size of the tree varies depending on growing conditions - soil, light, and climate.

The fruit is an ovoid drupe with fleshy pulp and a high fat content. The tree has deep roots and can withstand extreme temperatures, frost, and drought. It is famed for its longevity.

Olive oil represents 7% of the vegetable oils produced throughout the world, and the European Union is the main producer with over 75% of the total.

Spain and Italy are the largest producers in Europe, historically taking turns in the lead in line with the alternate bearing pattern of the olive, and both reaching about 35-40% of European production. But in the last five years, Spain has been gradually extending its olive orchards and introducing drip irrigation. Provided drought conditions are not too severe or persistent, this should enable Spain to produce 600,000-800,000 tons of olive oil annually, making it the leader worldwide. Irrigated olive farming and the young age of the trees mean that alternate bearing is no longer a problem because the trees recover rapidly from fruit-bearing, blossoming profusely and giving the same level of yield year after year.

It is fair to say that the infrastructure for olive oil production in Spain in the second half of the nineties is now the most advanced in the world, including Italy, and Spain has hopes that it will soon be responsible for 50% of European production and 35% of worldwide production.

Olive oil cultivation in Spain is irregularly distributed over four Spanish regions.

Andalusia, which comprises eight provinces, accounts for 75% of Spanish production, the equivalent of 25% of worldwide production. The province of Jaén on its own, produces about 200,000-250,000 tons of olive oil, which is equivalent to the average production of Greece, the third producer worldwide. Distribution amongst the Spanish provinces is approximately as follows:

- Andalusia: 75%
- Castile-La Mancha: 14%
- Extremadura: 6%
- Catalonia: 4%
- Others: 1%

Spanish Olive Varieties

Each area of production, for reasons of cultivation methods, soil characteristics, climate, etc., produces olives with different characteristic qualities. The virgin olive oils produced from them also vary in both chemical composition and organoleptically.

A large number of different varieties of olives are grown in Spain, although, strictly speaking, many are sub-varieties with names that vary from one area to another. These, however, are generally grown in small quantities and are not usually processed separately for oil.

The names given to the varieties are generally related to some special characteristic of the fruit or leaves, or to the area of origin. The most representative for their volume of production are: Picual, Hojiblanca, Lechín, Cornicabra, Arbequina, Picudo, Verdial, etc. The Hojiblanca (White Leaf) gets its name from the silvery color of the underside of the leaves, Cornicabra (Goat's Horn) from the shape of the fruit, Arbequina from its town of origin (Arbeca), etc.

The most widely grown variety of all is Picual which represents 97% of trees in Jaén and 37% in Cordova. 50% of Spanish olives are of the Picual variety. This is a vigorous tree with a well-developed canopy. The fruit is ellipsoidal and medium-to large-sized and oil yield is high, about 27-28%.

The Hojiblanca variety represents about 15% of Spanish olive trees and is grown from the north of Malaga to the south of Cordova and east of Seville. The tree is of average vigor, the fruit-bearing branches are long and the canopy is of medium-density. The fruit is oblong-shaped and its weight ranges from 1.4 to 4.3 grams. The average oil yield of about 25% is lower than that of the Picual variety.

The Cornicabra and Lechín varieties are next in popularity, each representing about 12%. The Cornicabra tree is of average vigor with medium-length branches. The fruit weighs between 3-3.5 grams and average oil yield is 23%. The Lechín tree is also of medium vigor and has short branches. Fruit size is fairly large - 3.5-3.8 grams and average oil yield is 25%.

Virgin Olive Oil

The definition of virgin olive oil as given in the International Agreement administered by the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC), the Codex Alimentarius (WHO), and the EEC Regulation is: "the oil obtained from the fruit of the olive tree solely by mechanical or other physical means, under conditions, particularly thermal conditions, that do not lead to alterations in the oil, and which has not undergone any treatment other than washing, decantation, centrifugation and filtration."

It is therefore strictly a fruit juice and must be treated as such from the agronomic point of view and during all the steps leading up to the extraction of the oil from the fruit pulp.

It is the only oil that is obtained without the use of solvents. The fact that it is a natural fruit juice is supported by the fact that over the centuries the fruit has continued to be picked and processed in the traditional manner, and that technological innovation has merely helped to improve the quality of the end product.

The old harvesting methods of hand-picking or beating still compete with modern tree-shakers. In beating and machine harvesting, nets are laid out beneath the branches to prevent stones and earth from being taken up with the fruits and damaging them during transport to the pressing plants, as skin damage can encourage fermentation processes. On arrival at the mill, any leaves are removed and the fruits are washed in water, sorted according to ripeness, and processed within a maximum of 24 hours after harvesting.

There are two types of processes:

- The traditional pressing process in which the washed fruit is first crushed in hammer mills. The resulting paste is placed on pressing mats that are stacked and placed in hydraulic presses which press out the oily must. When this liquid is left to settle, the oil floats to the top of the vegetable water and is separated.
 - In the other "continuous" process, the olives are also crushed but water is added and separation of the solid and liquid phases takes place in horizontal centrifuges. The vegetable water and olive oil are then separated in vertical centrifuges.
- This brief description of the processes shows to what extent this is a natural product and how virgin olive oil continues to be obtained by what are essentially the same age-old methods. From the health, nutrition and gastronomic viewpoints, these are definite advantages.

Olive Oil à la carte

Virgin olive oil quality used to be classified according to somewhat ambiguous and subjective terms which often focused on organoleptic characteristics without mention of other sensory qualities or defects. This led to problems because tasters, whether experts or not, tended to give subjective opinions.

After many years of research into the volatile compounds of virgin olive oils, a methodology was drawn up to attempt to give a rating, according to a numerical table, for the sensory value of a virgin olive oil after assessing its olfactory-gustatory-tactile notes. The profile sheets listed both the positive attributes and any possible defects arising for reasons of fruit maturity, poor handling or incorrect obtention methods.

It took a long time but eventually an objective method of organoleptic assessment by panel test was drawn up by the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC).



This organization, with its headquarters in Madrid, represents all the main olive-producing countries: its main aims are to monitor the worldwide olive oil and table olive market, carry out research into cultivation and production methods, and promote consumption of olive oil and table olives.

The methodology has been amended since its inclusion in the IOOC Trade Standard and the EEC Regulation but it has established itself as an essential tool in the olive oil world.

The amendments do not affect the methodology itself, which is now standard practice for the training of tasters, tasting room, tasting glass, temperature, etc., but they do affect the expression of results. Today the IOOC Trade Standard and the EU Regulation attempt to determine whether or not an oil has defects, with less emphasis on its positive attributes, the reason being that no official classification should be made in relation to certain attributes which in different countries may be considered positive or negative, depending on local tastes. But many experts consider the initial profile sheet to be much more descriptive, and prefer it.



The methodology requires the use of a specific vocabulary for olive oil to describe attributes and defects, and the following are some of the positive attributes given on the initial profile sheet used by the tasters:

- **Almond:** taste on the palate of fresh or dry, healthy almonds
- **Bitter:** characteristic taste of oils obtained from olives that are not very ripe
- **Sweet:** a pleasant but not sugary taste
- **Fruity:** flavor reminiscent of the fresh, healthy fruit
- **Grass:** flavor reminiscent of freshly-cut grass
- **Apple:** smell reminiscent of apples
- **Pungent:** a pungent sensation characteristic of oils obtained early in the year and of oils from certain specific origins

Some defects are:

- **Fusty (*atrojado*):** typical flavor of oils extracted from olives that have been stored for a long time and have undergone some type of fermentation
- **Winey/vinegary:** characteristic flavor, reminiscent of wine or vinegar, of oils containing considerable amounts of acetic acid, ethanol, or ethyl acetate amongst their volatile compounds
- **Rough:** specific sensation in the mouth, of oils with an unusually pronounced viscosity
- **Muddy sediment:** flavor the oil acquires when left in prolonged contact with the sediment
- **Rancid:** typical flavor of fats and oils that have undergone heavy oxidative deterioration

Most olive oil processing in Spain today is done under the right conditions, so defects are generally avoided, but there is an extra added value. Spanish virgin olive oils, of which there are four Denominations of Origin - Baena, Siurana, Sierra de Segura and Les Garrigues - have a wide range of flavors that do not exist in the oils of other producer countries.

Taking the D.O. virgin oils, these range from the light yellow Siurana oils that are pleasantly sweet and especially good for mayonnaise, to the oils from Les Garrigues that are characterized by their fruitiness which makes them ideal for fine vinaigrettes. The Baena and Sierra de Segura oils, while perfect for salads, are just as good for frying or stewing.

But apart from the exceptional D.O. oils, the range of flavors goes from the sweet Hojiblanca, Picudo or Empeltre varieties, to the body and personality of the Picual or Cornicabra varieties, and the ripe fruity flavor and apple smell of the Arbequina olives, to give a few examples.

Not only does each variety have its special characteristics but the microclimate and relief of each olive orchard can give rise to oils with very different organoleptic characteristics. This multiplies the number of possible blends and allows us to prepare foods using different Spanish virgin oils that provide whatever flavor we fancy.

In the opinion of many experts in the sector, this is the main virtue of the panel test methodology because, with the wide range of Spanish virgin olive oils, it is possible to establish the quality of virgin olive oil required for any specific part of the world or market niche and produce it, as our title says, "à la carte." This can only be done with Spanish oils.

Altogether, the production infrastructure, the intrinsic characteristics of the Spanish olive varieties, the stability of Spanish oils thanks to their natural components that protect them from oxidization, and their balanced acidity and potential for blending, all these seem to reasonably point to an excellent future for Spanish virgin olive oils based on consumer education and information.

Jerónimo Díaz is a chemist who specializes in olive oil. He is technical advisor to ASOLIVA (Spanish Association for the Olive Oil Industry and Export Trade), he collaborates with the Higher National Council for Scientific Research and coordinates the scientific committee for the private olive oil sector.

See Main Exporters on page 18.

Spanish virgin olive oil in cuisine in the 21st century

Text: Norberto Jorge

Photo: Félix Lorrio/ICEX

People are often surprised when cooks emerge from their kitchens to see what's going on in the world outside. But travel helps everyone to widen their horizons and see things in perspective and it's good for cooks to get away from their pots and pans and see the direction taken by cooking in other parts of the world.

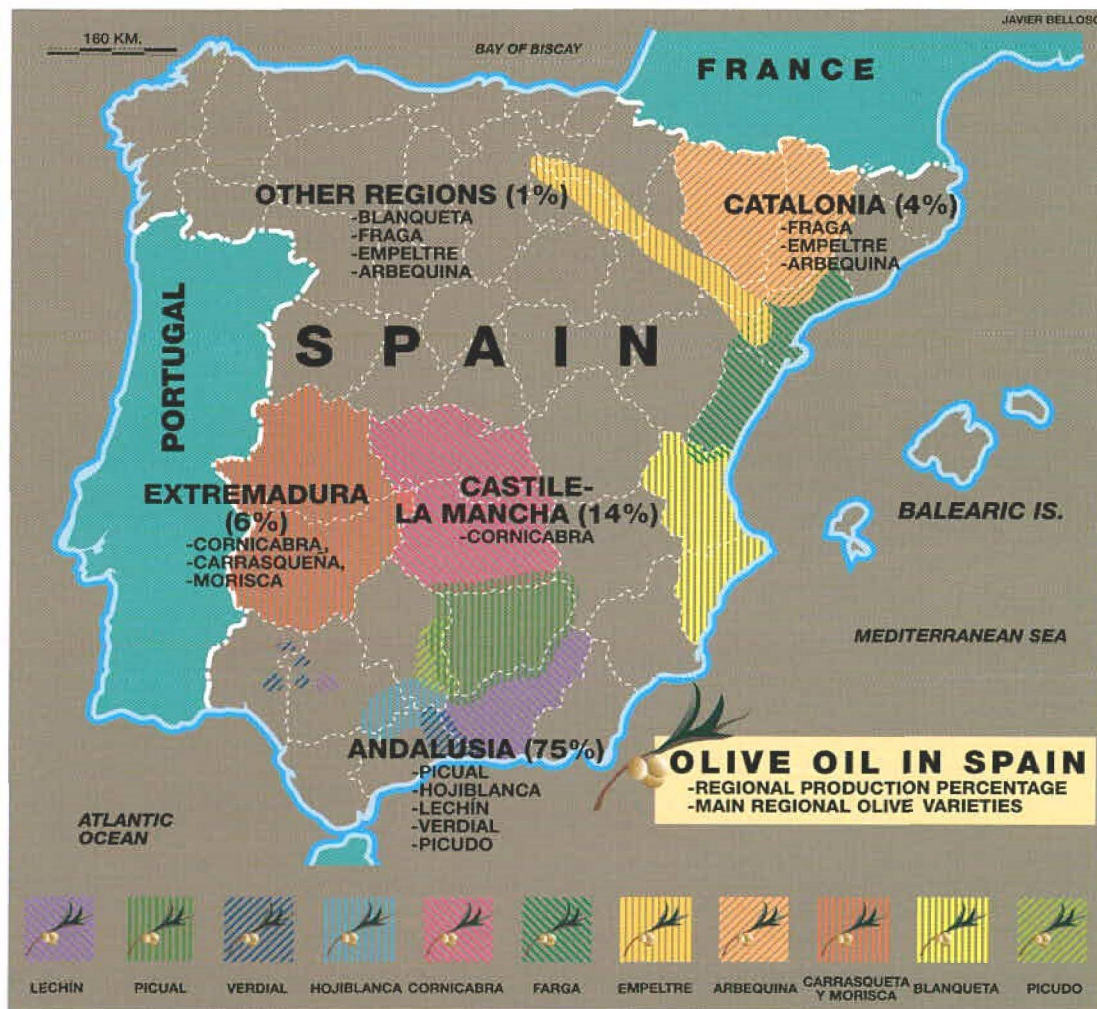
Being from Alicante, and like all *alicantinos*, I like to travel whenever I get the opportunity. Regular visits to Oslo for family and professional reasons, as well as occasional trips abroad to promote Spanish cuisine outside Spain, have helped me get an idea of what the future of cooking might be. Progress in cooking, as with

any other cultural activity, is always a question of building on existing foundations rather than making an elitist selection; and today's progress has to take place in a world in which distance no longer counts, and in a society that is nostalgic for its past. In my opinion, cooking in the future will have two main characteristics. On the

one hand, we shall have the cosmopolitan cooking of the "global village" incorporating what is best from a number of national cuisines: the taste and aroma of Mediterranean cuisine; oriental esthetics in food presentation, as in the cuisines of Japan, China, Vietnam, etc., and the concern for diet and healthy eating of the American West Coast.

On the other hand, nostalgia and a fear of loss of identity will lead us to take a special interest in regional and national cuisines, the authentic flavors of each people, culture, region, and season. Common to both these tendencies, which I believe will be developing in parallel, is the search for diversity and originality, as opposed to standardization and monotony. Spanish virgin olive oil is a noble product that meets all the requirements of cooking for the next century.

The great variety of olives existing in Spain, together with a great diversity of microclimates, result in a wide range of oils. The Picual variety (generally found in mountain areas) from Granada has body, is sweet and fruity with a slight but pleasant touch of bitterness, ideal as an accompaniment for salted fish preparations such as *mojama* (salt-dried tuna) or tuna roe or for *exquisadas de bacalao* (crumbled cod salads typical of Catalonia and the east coast of Spain). The Hojiblanca oils of Malaga are



fresh, sweet oils with a slightly piquant "nose" that are also pleasantly bitter. These are ideal as a dressing for raw vegetables and salads and for fish *a la sal* (whole fish packed in sea salt, baked in the oven). The Arbequina oil from Seville is a sweet oil with fruity nuances reminiscent of the fresh Arbeca olives but mild, ideal for mayonnaise and warm shellfish salads. These can be extra delicious if the oil is first flavored by macerating the prawn and crayfish shells in it. The Arbequina olives from Arbeca (Lérida) give very fruity, fresh oils whose aroma announces the pleasant piquancy of their aftertaste. They are slightly bitter and have nuances of exotic fruits that make them perfect for all marinades of raw fish, vegetables, or meat. The Cornicabra olives from Toledo make oils that are

like ripe fruit juices, the Picual olives from Jaén are characterized by their bitter flavor and good keeping quality. There are many more - Nevadillo, Empeltre ... and all can be used on their own or blended to complement each other. The Cornicabra from Tole-

do, when blended with Hojiblanca from Seville, receives the latter's fineness, disguising, to some extent, its rusticity, and the Hojiblanca receives from the Cornicabra its bitterness and marked character. What's more, olive oil is a frankly beautiful oil that

keeps its attractive appearance whatever the temperature, varying between fresh green and a warm gold color. As to its dietary virtues, apart from what the experts are continually telling us, it is the only natural oil which is a fresh fruit juice that undergoes no fermentation nor chemical processing. There is every indication that this basic and age-old ingredient of the cuisines of the Mediterranean is going to be one of the main protagonists of good cooking in the next few decades.



Norberto Jorge is the owner and chef of the Casa Benigna restaurant in Madrid (see Spain Gourmetour No. 37) which specializes in Mediterranean cuisine, and where customers can choose from a very wide range of oils classified according to the olive variety.

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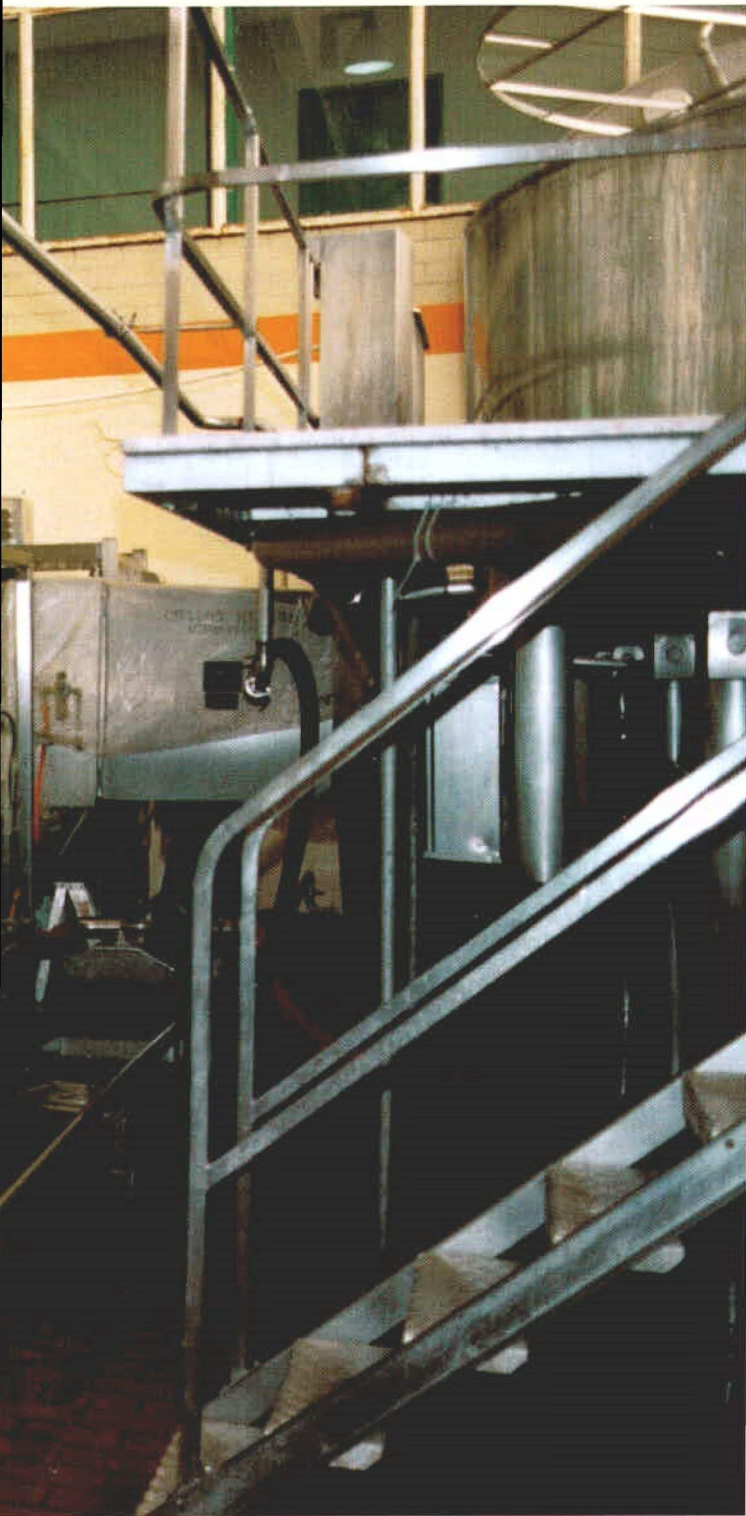


Reny Picot, having started production in an abandoned school building, grew rapidly and today sells cheeses in three continents.

Texto: **Iñigo Moré**

Photo: **ILAS**

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**



ilas

Spanish dairy products in three continents

INDUSTRIAS LACTEAS ASTURIANAS (ILAS) IS NOT QUOTED ON THE STOCK MARKET NOR DOES IT HAVE A LARGE FINANCIAL GROUP AMONG ITS SHAREHOLDERS. YET IT HAS FACTORIES IN SPAIN, CHINA, MEXICO, THE UNITED STATES, AND FRANCE. ITS RELATIVELY LOW TURNOVER OF 35 BILLION PESETAS (US\$ 292 M.) SEEMS INSUFFICIENT TO GIVE IT THE NECESSARY MUSCLE FOR SUCH WORLDWIDE EXPANSION. SO WHAT IS ITS SECRET?

SUCCESS ABROAD (XI)

ILAS HAS BASED ITS INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION ON SPOTTING UNUSUAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MILK PRODUCTS SECTOR AND HAS SEEN ITS WAY TO PROFITS IN SUCH UNLIKELY SITUATIONS AS A SETTLEMENT OF ANABAPTISTS IN THE CHIHUAHUA DESERT.

Companies are often said to be the image of their creators. Many would say this is true of ILAS, a company with the same "get-up-and-go" as its founder, Francisco Rodríguez. ILAS has based its international expansion on spotting unusual business opportunities in the milk products sector and has seen its way to profits in such unlikely situations as the excessive appreciation of the dollar or a settlement of Anabaptists in the Chihuahua desert.

Not only is Francisco Rodríguez, "Paco" to his friends, quick on the uptake. He is said to have business acumen in his blood. He was born in a tiny corner of Asturias called Cangas del Narcea on the rugged northern coast of Spain that has produced several of Spain's top entrepreneurs including Pepín Fernández, who created Galerías Preciados, and his rival, Ramón Areces, founder of El Corte Inglés, the privately-owned company with the largest turnover in Spain. These are department store chains set up at the start of this century that were continuously battling for supremacy in the market until finally last year, El Corte Inglés claimed the victory and bought up Galerías Preciados.

Rodríguez is considered by some to be the most brilliant of Spanish businessmen although his methods are somewhat unorthodox. He was not liked by some Catalans because his company once sponsored the Real Madrid football team, the

eternal rivals of the Catalan Barça team. But the dairy farmers of Asturias have always had a great respect for him. The sort of person that stirs up strong feelings, before he had been one year at the head of the National Federation of Dairy Industries, his detractors had set up their own parallel organization. Yet his supporters have nothing but good to say about him.

How It All Began

The history of ILAS, a company that defines itself as "a permanent exercise in self-financing," began in 1960 when Francisco Rodríguez preferred to leave the family dairy business, Mantequerías Rodríguez, to set up on his own. At the time, his only asset was that he spoke French but, in his own words, "Empires have been built on less." He decided to produce a Camembert-type cheese, possibly because he was one of the few in his sector that could pronounce it correctly. He wanted a brand that would evoke the prestige of French cheeses so he invented the name of René Picot that not only sounded French, but was easy for Spaniards to pronounce. But the registrar warned him that complaints could be made by somebody with that name so he changed "René" for "Reny" and started producing his cheese in an old abandoned school building in the west of Asturias. The company grew and went on to produce milk and Manchego-type cheese. He eventually bought up the

small family company and came to sell his products throughout Spain.

By 1980, however, he had decided that Spain was too small. "What we could do, we could do beyond the Spanish market. There was not much scope for expansion within Spain."

So he set out to find a country with a large consumer market, an underdeveloped dairy sector, and a stable political and monetary set-up. The country chosen was Mexico, partly because of its historical and cultural links with Spain.

"We were right in everything, except for the monetary stability," says Rodríguez. Two years after setting up operations there, Mexico suspended payment of its foreign debt and its currency crashed. But just a few months before, Rodríguez had taken the precaution of converting his company's debt into Mexican pesos and the assets into dollars. So the devaluation meant that the Mexican subsidiary had tripled in value.

When Rodríguez heard about the Mennonites, a sect of Anabaptist Protestants who had been allowed by the Mexican government to settle in the desert area of Chihuahua, he was quick to investigate. These are a traditionalist people whose lifestyle depends on agriculture and rejects any form of industrialization. They produce their own cheese but, and this was where Rodríguez's business flair came into play, the whey left over

after the cheese-making process was just discarded. He went in to collect it and started producing lactoproteins and demineralized whey, one of the main ingredients of infant's milk.

It might sound like a tall story but Industrias Lácteas Chihuahuenses reached sales of 5.5 billion pesetas (US\$ 45.8 m.) in 1995 and practically has a monopoly of these products in Mexico, the largest consumer and producer of cheese in Latin America.

After the success of his first overseas adventure, difficulties arose on the home market with Spain's entry into the EEC. Brussels allocated a quota for dairy production in Spain of 4,650,000 tons which was to go direct to the industries when consumption exceeded this amount by 25%. "It was suddenly impossible to grow in Spain except by doing damage to other producers," states Rodríguez. "The quota system introduced by Brussels meant that raw materials were insufficient so the Spanish market turned into a free-for-all."

Prices rose as producers tried to gain access to the scarce milk products. "The lack of raw materials increased costs and the Spanish dairy companies were no longer able to participate in the European market," Rodríguez explains. "The companies with the heaviest losses were being generously bailed out with state funds, so expansion became impossible for the really private businesses."

IN 1995 ILAS BOUGHT A MAJORITY STAKE IN THE JOINT VENTURE, BEIJING EVERGREEN DAIRY PRODUCTS. LOCATED IN BEIJING, THE COMPANY PRODUCES MILK, YOGURTS, BUTTER, ICE CREAM, AND POWDERED MILK, ALL UNDER THE NAME OF RENY PICOT.

This was an unhappy situation for industrialists like him who obviously preferred to compete for sales rather than just produce limited quantities of milk. So Rodríguez set out to look for another "large, stable and unexploited country" and, surprisingly, found it in the United States.

America, Here We Come

Here was a "financial" business opportunity. Around 1989, the United States was the largest importer in the world because of the tremendous strength of the dollar, the rate being practically double that of today. North Americans were able to import European products at a low cost. The French firm of Perrier was successfully exporting mineral water to the U.S. and the French producers of Brie and Camembert had also found a niche on the American market. But the U.S. was accumulating a huge balance of payments deficit and it was unlikely that the dollar would be able to stay at such a high rate for long. Rodríguez was confident that it would settle down and that American consumers, having tried European cheeses, would not be happy to forego them. In 1989, he purchased a dairy in Benton Harbor, on the shores of Lake Michigan, and went back to producing cheeses similar to Camembert and Brie. Sure enough, when the dollar fell and the North Americans looked around for a home-produced prod-

uct, he was there to meet their needs. In 1995, Old Europe Cheese, Inc., located in Michigan, reached sales of 1.2 billion pesetas (US\$ 10 m.) and its products had won several awards, amongst them the bronze medal in the "Flavored Natural Cheeses" category in the World Cheese Championships held every two years in the United States.

In 1991, ILAS bought a dairy in France, certainly a large and stable country, but with a dairy sector that is hardly unexploited. All the same Rodríguez set his sights on a dairy called Le Chèvrefeuille in Nontron, a small town southeast of Limoges, Bordeaux. The official reason was "to include goat's milk cheese in the company's catalogue" but it is surely every dairyman's ambition to own a factory

in the heart of France. "The company needed to expand," says Rodríguez while accepting that with a turnover in 1995 of almost 350 million pesetas (US\$ 3 m.) the new acquisition was little more than a drop in the ocean. But the new goat's milk cheese went on to win the silver medal in the above-mentioned World Championship, with a score of 99.55%.

The fourth "large, stable, and unexploited" country was China. In 1995 ILAS bought a majority stake in the joint venture, Beijing Evergreen Dairy Products, formed with one of the municipal communities of Beijing, which provided the raw materials. Located in the capital of China, the company produces milk, yogurts, butter (mostly for industrial use), ice cream, and powdered milk, all

under the name of Reny Picot. Cheese is not one of its products because the Chinese are not cheese-eaters nor, according to Rodríguez, do they consume butter. And, until recently, the Chinese only drank milk as babies, but the entry into China of various producers of milk products and additives, such as the Spanish company Nutrexpia and Cola-Cao (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33), has led to increased consumption of milk and a new market with tremendous potential.

The Future

On the matter of expansion abroad, Rodríguez believes that "Asturians have a vocation for travel." This is certainly true of an Asturian transport company, the Grupo Alsa, which is also investing in Mexico, the United States, and China. Rodríguez is now preparing to disembark in Brazil, a large and unexploited market, but one that could be more stable. He has not yet decided what products they will be producing there, but he has hopes that in a few years' time, over half of the company's income, which amounted to 35 billion pesetas (US\$ 292 m.) in 1995, will come from outside Spain. He's probably already on the lookout for another large, stable, and unexploited market.

Iñigo Moré writes for the Business Section of El País.

1995 TURNOVER OF GRUPO ILAS (in millions of pesetas)		
COMPANY	TURNOVER	COUNTRY
LE CHEVREFEUILLE	350	FRANCE
OLD EUROPE CHEESE	1,200	U.S.
BEIJING EVERGREEN DAIRY PRODUCTS	2,000*	CHINA
INDUSTRIAS LACTEAS CHIHUAHUENSES	5,500	MEXICO
OTHERS IN SPAIN	25,950	SPAIN
TOTAL FOR GRUPO ILAS	35,000	

* expected figure for 1996

Source: Grupo ILAS

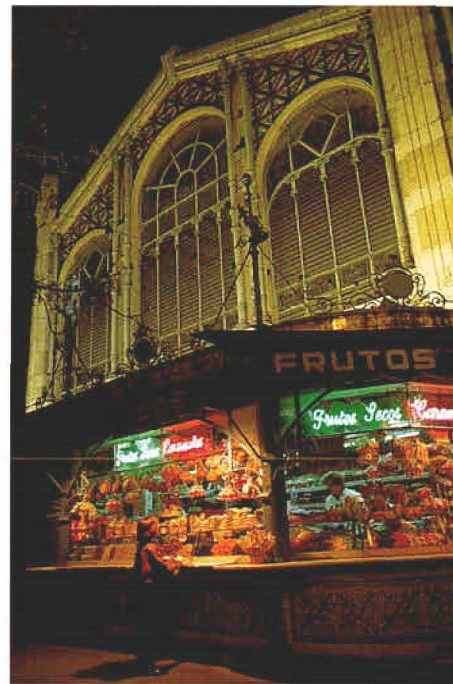
FOR PRODUCE THAT'S FRESH, LOCAL, AND ARTESAN

Text: **María Unceta**
 Photos: **Blanca Berlín/ICEX**
 Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

Most of Spain's covered markets have undergone big changes in the last few years. In part, this has been a response to an increasingly demanding buying public, while the competition posed by the big supermarkets, their main rivals for customers, has provided further impetus. Market buildings have been remodeled, and market-traders' associations have sprung up everywhere. Conscious that they have the edge when it comes to supplying fresh produce, these work to keep quality standards high and carry out communal improvement and promotional schemes. In this second (and final) article of our series, we visit the markets of Valencia, Santiago de Compostela, San Sebastián and Zaragoza.



Outdoor stalls sell the ironmongery needed to make *paella*, the most important being *paelleras*, the wide, flat, two-handled pans in which the famous rice dish is cooked.



The market is the last link in a chain which begins in the fertile Valencian hinterland.

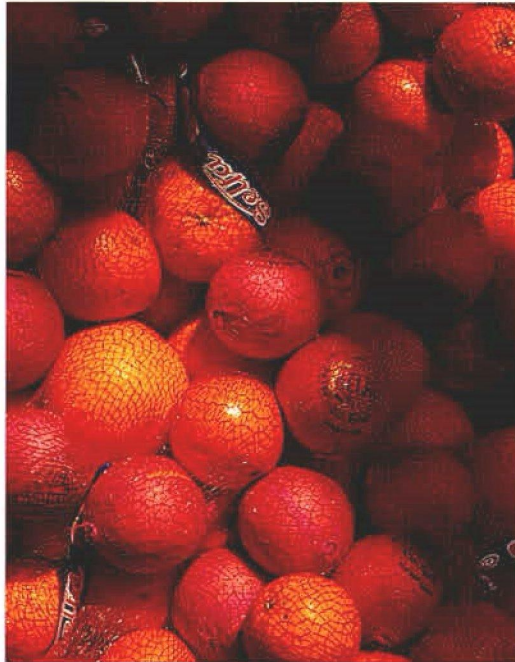


Valencia's central market looks more like a cathedral than a hub of commerce: huge arches support the bays, slender columns stand along the façade, and elegant ironwork decorates the canopies and two external cupolas.



Popular clichés always have a core of truth, and if anywhere lives up to the idea of Mediterranean Spain as the home of flamboyant behavior, vivid color, and the mercantile tradition, then it is Valencia's central market. Built under the direction of Alejandro Soler March and Francisco Guardia Vidal (pupils of the Catalan *modernista* architect Domènec i Montaner) over a period of eighteen years, it was ceremonially inaugurated in 1928. A splendid example of *modernista* architecture (Spain's equivalent of Art Nouveau), it stands within an enclave of exceptional buildings: the Lonja, or Exchange building, focus of trading activity since the Middle Ages, and the Iglesia de los Santos Juanes,

one of the oldest churches in the city. This is the very heart of the Old Town, a ramshackle web of streets, teeming with activity, which encapsulate centuries of history. Looking at it from the outside, one gets no idea of how huge the market complex is: it covers more than 8,100 square meters (9,687 square yards), enclosed by gentle polygonal shapes whose façades give onto streets and squares. Its white stone and marble walls, brightened by a frieze of yellow-decorated tiles, play cleverly with planes and angles to fit the irregularly shaped site that the building occupies. This is a sunny, clear-skied part of Spain, and the lateral and front walls are punctuated by many win-



Fruits and vegetables are arranged with precision, with an eye to pattern and color.

Every market trader keeps a close eye on the stalls alongside and competes with others in the presentation front.

The main façade of Zaragoza's market, with its grand central arch and two half-height lateral arches, echoes the three bays of the interior, supported by a splendid iron structure.



Of all the markets visited, Santiago's is perhaps the one which best captures the feeling of being on the cusp between urban and rural life.





dows whose rainbow-colored depictions of flowers, garlands, and coats-of-arms make it look more like a cathedral than a hub of commerce. Iron features importantly in both structure and ornamentation: huge arches support the bays, slender columns stand along the façade, and elegant ironwork decorates the canopies and two external cupolas, each topped by its own weather vane - in the form of a fish over the fish section and a parrot over the central section.

Fruits and Vegetables From the Country

Activity inside the market starts at 6 a.m. At that time every day, tarpaulins are removed, blinds are raised, and work begins on setting out displays of fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish. The corridors which run the length of the market's bays, become dense with a traffic of hand-

carts skillfully stacked with crates. Every market trader keeps a close eye on the stalls alongside, and competes with others in the same line as himself on both the price and presentation fronts. Fruits and vegetables are arranged with geometric precision, with an eye to pattern and color; fish are laid out on vast trays looking out towards potential customers; meat presentation tends towards the solemn, though the nearby charcuterie displays are more eye-catching.

Valencia's central market is the last link in a chain which begins in the city's fertile hinterland. To walk among these stalls is to be plunged into the colors and sweet heady smells of vegetables, fruits and flowers being offered for sale, in many cases, by the people who grow them. These stalls are this market's strong point. Men and women with weather-browned

faces offer a choice of varieties of green beans, some of which (such as the local *garrafón* and *roget*) are an essential ingredient in meat *paella*. Then there are broad beans, spinach, broccoli, pepper, chives, celery, aubergines, and the many other vegetables which are so much a feature of local cuisine, incorporated into stews or simply roasted in the traditional style of the Levante, as this stretch of Spain's Mediterranean coast is known.

The fish section occupies a recently renovated octagonal space organized around an elegant cupola, and is a showcase for the fish of the Mediterranean. All the stalls here are fascinating, but if I had to choose any for special mention, it would have to be the ones selling *mariscos*, or shellfish, key ingredient in some of the region's top rice dishes, such as *paella de marisco*, and *arrós a banda*. Still agleam



No fixed prices are shown on the fish and shellfish stalls: horse mackerel, hake and scad, spider crabs and goose barnacles can vary in price in the course of the morning.

with seawater, there are shrimp, giant prawn, striped and red prawn, Norway lobster, cuttlefish, lobster, various sorts of crab... one can almost taste that inimitable fresh seafood tang just by looking at them. And you can buy them ready boiled, too. Outdoor stalls set up alongside the main entrance along the side wall facing the Iglesia de los Santos Juanes, sell the ironmongery needed to make *paella*, the most important being *paelleras*, the wide, flat, two-handled pans in which this famous rice dish is cooked. When the market opens to the public at 7:30 a.m., there is a big influx of customers, among them buyers for restaurants and bars. These are experts at choosing the best ingredients at the best price after a quick look around the stalls. Midday marks the end of

the busy period; later on, shoppers are of the idler sort and the stallholders are hard put to sell what they have left. Competition being the mother of invention, the *Asociación de Vendedores* (Traders' Association), which has been managing affairs on behalf of the amalgam of individual businesses that has made up this market for the past ten years, is planning to launch new schemes in the next few months in the form of credit card payment facilities and a home delivery service to solve the problems of customers who can't cope with carrying heavy shopping and the difficulty of parking in this part of town.

Santiago Market: The Country Comes to Town

In Santiago de Compostela, Galicia's capital of medieval pil-

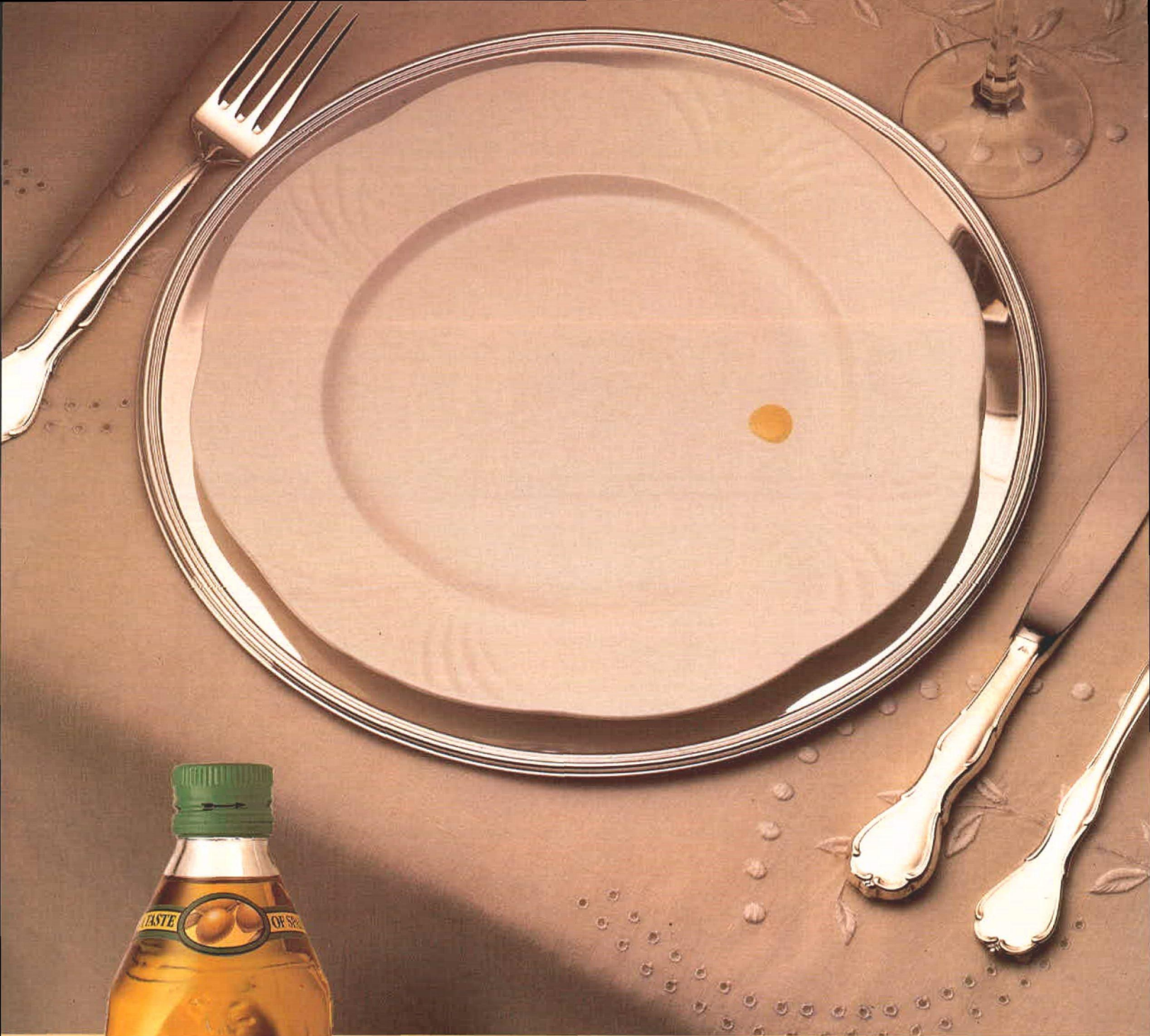
grimage and Baroque splendor, the day dawns cloudy though not actually rainy. The pedestrian streets of its marvelous old quarter are bustling with people on their way to work or to open up shop, and kids trailing their way to school. A few early-rising tourists, map in hand, are starting in the Plaza del Obradoiro on an itinerary that will take them through alleyways and little squares, churches and convents, ancient pilgrims' hospices, and university buildings. The grey granite façades of these historic buildings, hewn by human hands and by the passage of time, are enlivened and humanized by the houses which stand alongside, simple and harmonious in their architecture with the tall white windows typical of this area of northeastern Spain. Making

Chef Juan Mari Arzak's daily visits to the market, not just once but twice a day, are a combination of ritual, work, and pleasure.



La Brecha is something of a gastronomic mecca in the Basque Country. The fish section has something of a hallowed air about it.





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one's way from the cathedral along the Rúa de la Azabachería (historically the street of jet craftsmen), towards the Plaza de Cervantes, one becomes aware even this early in the morning that the market is not far away. Women dragging shopping baskets on wheels along the uneven pavements stop for the occasional chat, while deliverymen bringing in last-minute merchandise try to get their little vans as close to the market as possible.

The Mercado de Abastos de Santiago, to give it its full name, stands on the edge of the old quarter, between two fine churches, San Agustín and San Fiz de Solovio. The market's southeast façade looks out over a great step in the ground on which the city stands, forming a sort of long balcony alongside Calle de la Virgen de la Cerca. Along this street on Thursdays and Saturdays, local countrywomen set out their baskets of fruits, vegetables, and flowers grown on small holdings in the outlying areas. Along the market's opposite façade, on Rúa de las Almenas, a row of permanent stalls sells household linen, umbrellas, baskets, wellingtons and country boots, agricultural tools, pottery, and wooden spoons, in perfect symbiosis with the shops trading on the other side of the street. At either end of the market building, in the shadow of the churches, other specialties have their pitch: near San Fiz, women sell free-range chicken and eggs, while near San Agustín is the place where the *pimenteiras* set up their stalls. These are women who traditionally come into Santiago from the outlying areas during July and August to sell *pimientos de Padrón*, the little piquant green peppers of which the occasional one is far more piquant than the rest, a fact which gives them extra zing in more ways than one.

Architecture With Ecclesiastical Leanings

Eight low-roofed stone pavilions are divided into two facing groups of four. A little tower in the center contains the office of the *Asociación*

de Usuarios de las Casillas de la Plaza de Abastos, the impressive name for the market stall-holders' association to which over half of the total of 350 belong. This is Santiago Market. It was built in the 1940s, and its lines and proportions contain obvious references to the tiny pre-Romanesque churches of Asturias (home of its architect, Joaquín Vaquero Palacios), as well as the little Romanesque churches of Galicia itself. The most singular features of this market building are the simple restraint of its lines and the nobility of its building material, granite, and this combination achieves the feat of integrating it perfectly into its environment. The fact of its being made up of several units also contributes: the one-building solution tends to be standard for this kind of market, but has been rejected here in deference to location and sense of proportion.

The pavilions are organized by specialty, and numbered from 1 to 8. The meat stalls which, at nearly 70, make up the biggest group in the market, occupy three pavilions. Galician veal occupies pride of place here; it bears a *Denominación Específica* quality guarantee label and comes with leaflets describing its provenance and qualities. Two pavilions are given over to fish and shellfish; one - the most vivid of the lot - to fruits, vegetables, and flowers; and two to miscellaneous products, among them farm cheese, particularly Galicia's famous breast-shaped *queso de tetilla*. As one explores this market and its various pavilions, it becomes obvious how much attention has been given to the overall esthetic. The stalls are gradually being remodeled to comply with standard requirements, but this is being done within agreed norms sympathetic to the overall look of the building. Even the modern glass signs at the entrance to each pavilion, indicating its specialty, manage to look both imposing yet unpretentious. Though the look of the place is sedate, inside the market there is all the lively interchange charac-

teristic of small-scale shopping when buyers and sellers know each other; purchases are made unhurriedly to an accompaniment of local gossip and complaints about the cost of living. Of all the markets visited during this series, Santiago's is perhaps the one which best captures the feeling of being on the cusp between urban and rural life, both embracing modernity and cleaving to traditional ways. One custom that belongs firmly in the traditional category is the fact that no fixed prices are shown on the fish and shellfish stalls which do a brisk trade in this inland market so close to the sea. Pollack, horse mackerel, hake and scad, clams, velvet swimming crabs, spider crabs, common crabs, and goose barnacles, are just some of the top-selling seafood on offer here. Rather like shares on the stockmarket, they can vary in price in the course of a morning, depending on the time, or how sales are going, or the quantity you want to buy. Not to mention the custom of haggling - *releo* in local language - which features not only in sales of fish and shellfish but of fruits and vegetables, too. The uninitiated beware.

San Sebastián's La Brecha: Top Chef's Larder

San Sebastián is something of a gastronomic mecca in the Basque Country: good eating is part and parcel of local culture and its restaurants are one of the city's claims to fame. As one would expect, the market occupies a significant place, not only in the urban landscape, but also in the daily lives of the city's inhabitants. In San Sebastián, a trip to the Mercado de la Brecha takes on a significance akin to going to church, or visiting a museum. Daily visitors range from housewives to some of Spain's top chefs, such as Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Juan José Castillo and Karlos Arguiñano (see box on page 75).

Occupying one of the most historic and evocative sites in the city, La Brecha Market was built in 1871, five years after the city walls were knocked down to make room for urban expansion. It

stands on the spot where, in 1813, Anglo-Portuguese troops under the command of the Duke of Wellington opened a breach in the walls (hence the name - *brecha* means breach) and made their way into the city to confront Napoleon's troops, who were occupying it. Today, the Paseo de Boulevard on which it stands is one of the pleasantest parts of this lovely city, marking the entrance to the old quarter (also the restaurant quarter), and very close to the Teatro Victoria Eugenia where the International Film Festival has been held annually since 1953.

Contemporary accounts depict the building of the market as quite a significant event in the city. After centuries of selling in the open air, and then in the narrow arcades of the central Plaza de la Constitución, the women who came in from the countryside with their pitchers of milk and baskets of eggs and vegetables, animals and fruit, were now provided with a covered area in which they could display their wares in an organized way, and doing the shopping was no longer the jostled, uncomfortable experience it had been. Building work lasted for a year under the direction of city architects N. Berrio and J. Goicoa, and cost 559,776 *reales de vellón* (the currency of the time). Going against the contemporary trend set by the Parisian model of Les Halles for iron-framed covered markets, the builders of La Brecha opted for a building in dressed stone up to half height, with a pilastered central façade crowned by a pediment whose tympanum features the city's coat of arms. This solution was chosen both for reasons of finance - iron had to be imported from France, Belgium, and Britain - and location - this is a wind-buffed site. In addition to the central building just described, the Mercado de la Brecha also encompasses two other elements: the fish-market building which stands behind it, and the plaza which links the two. Each element has its own character and specialty. The main building contains stalls sell-

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ing meat and charcuterie, fruit, pulses, oil, cheese, salted products, and other foodstuffs. The female stallholders, who constitute one of market's main attractions, bring in the produce from their own small holdings - seasonal fruits and vegetables, eggs, and poultry. They sell from the center of the market, setting their produce out on long contiguous benches - green peppers, lettuces, local varieties of green beans, and *pochas* - fresh red or white beans which have their own special flavor. In the outside plaza, cheese and flower stalls predominate. This is certainly the liveliest and most esthetically pleasing of the three parts of La Brecha, open to passers-by and to the sound and smells of the sea, not far away. The Basque Country is known for the quality of its fish, and La Brecha's fish section has something of a hallowed air about it. Raised some two meters above floor-level in their altar-like stalls, women dressed in white oilcloth aprons, rubber gloves and bright headscarves against the winter cold, officiate among the ice on which they place the freshest of fresh fish, recently auctioned at the nearby Lonja. Red sea-

bream, cod, hake, exquisite *boquerones* (fresh anchovies) and sardines (their bigger relations), grouper, monkfish, and scad are some of the white and oily categories of fish which no self-respecting local restaurant can fail to have on the menu, and which can be found in the market every day, except when high seas prevent the boats from leaving port. *Angulas* from Aguinaga deserve a special mention. These are tiny river fish - baby eels - which, when simply plunged into hot oil with garlic and chili, constitute one of the most delicate dishes in traditional Basque cuisine. Anyone tempted to try them should avoid doing so around Christmas, though, when prices in the market soar to astronomical heights. They cost far less at other times of the year, and taste just as good.

Zaragoza's Mercado de Lanuza: Saved From Demolition

Zaragoza's central market reopened on 22 September 1986, after a much-needed renovation. It was originally built in 1902-1903. The city authorities, who own the building, opted for a radical renovation scheme in response to pressure from local citizen action groups formed

to combat plans to demolish the old market to make way for a grand avenue. The Plaza de Lanuza, on which the market stands, has been a focus of trade since the 15th century, as well as the site of far more sinister activities, such as *autos da fe* during the Inquisition and the execution of criminals. One such "criminal" was the Chief Justice of Aragon, Juan de Lanuza, beheaded by order of Philip II for his defense of *fueros* (privileges conceded to certain regions and cities) and other traditions relating to Aragon. The market is dedicated to him, and a stone plaque on the outside of the building marks the 400th anniversary, celebrated in 1991, of his execution in 1591.

The main façade, with its grand central arch and two half-height lateral arches, echo the three bays of the interior, supported by a splendid iron structure. The use of round arches and brickwork is reminiscent of the neo-Mudéjar style popular in Spain at the turn of the century, though the ornamental details are more *modernista*. There are two floors, each 3,360 square meters (4,018 square yards) in area, the ground floor being devoted to selling-space and the basement floor to warehousing, cold storage, and

meat product and charcuterie workrooms. There are 190 stalls on the ground floor, lit from above by windows which fill the space between the roof over the central bay and the lateral bays. Among the most attractive decorative details of the interior are ironwork panels set into the arch-spaces within which beautifully restored oil paintings feature the products sold in the market: fish, game birds, fruits, sheep and so on. Exploration of the interior reveals evidence of the renovation carried out less than ten years ago. The counters are designed so that they all match within each specialty area, and order rules in the way that the stalls are organized. Meat is a particular specialty of this market, particularly *ternasco*, a type of very young lamb produced in Aragon. Charcuterie specialties include *jamón de Teruel*, a Denomination of Origin cured ham which connoisseurs love (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 28).

María Unceta is a journalist who specializes in travel writing, and is also a publisher. Her articles have appeared in many magazines and newspapers, and she has also written and coordinated several series of tourist guide-books.

San Sebastián's La Brecha Market, as seen by Juan Mari Arzak

Juan Mari Arzak is the most internationally known of Spain's top chefs: his restaurant has three star status in the 1996 Michelin Guide. For him, a daily visit to the market is a combination of ritual, work, and pleasure. "La Brecha Market is a joy: it's a little market, it's convenient, and though its range is not huge, the produce is always absolutely dependable," he says, by way of introduction. "In the course of a long chat in his famous restaurant (Arzak, in the part of San Sebastián known as el Alto de Miracruz), Juan Mari Arzak told us about his shopping habits and what he appreciates most about the market he visits daily, not just once but twice in the course of the morning: first at half past nine and then again around midday. "Many days," he explains, "the

boats haven't got back yet with the *boquerones* (fresh anchovies), or the *niscalo* mushroom lady hasn't managed to get to market yet; it's best to have a second look round to see what's arrived in the course of the morning." He maintains that in this sense there are two markets, early and late. Sometimes he buys very little, but he always has a good look round, chats with people, meets other cooks. He tells us who he has met recently at La Brecha: Karlos Arguiñano (who owns the one star Michelin Guide restaurant bearing his name and hosts a daily cookery program on Spanish TV), Juan José Castillo (of Casa Nicolasa restaurant; one star in the 1996 Michelin Guide), María Jesús Fombellida (of one star Michelin Guide Panier Fleuri restaurant

and one of a family of cooks), and Pedro Subijana (of Akelare restaurant and two stars in the 1996 Michelin Guide) - a star lineup of the best of Basque cuisine. But he also mentions discussing with one of the fish-stall holders the difference between scad from the north and scad caught in the waters around Tarifa, in the Straits of Gibraltar. What Juan Mari Arzak loves most about La Brecha is its artisan character: all the products are fresh that day, they are local, and they are there in small quantities, especially the fish, and the fruits and vegetables brought in by countrywomen. The traditional cuisine of a region, which he maintains reflects the character of its people, is made with local produce, seasonal and home-grown. For this famous chef, doing the

shopping is the most difficult of all the activities involved in running a restaurant. This is not just because making choices is difficult, but also because it is such a time-consuming business. Many of Juan Mari Arzak's suppliers go directly to his restaurant to offer him a couple of line-caught sea bass or some wild mushrooms picked in the countryside the evening before. Often these are not people who make their living as suppliers, but amateurs, or people bringing things in as a friendly gesture. In these circumstances, one doesn't just pay for the merchandise and say goodbye; there is conversation about sea conditions that day, or how hard it is to find mushrooms. This is an integral part a close relationship whose importance Juan Mari Arzak appreciates.



all in a Clove

Garlic is to Spanish cooking what the guitar is to its music and, like the guitar, it has acquired a particular character and history in Spanish hands. For over two thousand years “the stinking rose,” as the Greeks called it, has grown around the peninsula, flavoring regional cooking and lending its medicinal powers to numerous folk-remedies. In the last forty years, it has also become a major commercial crop. Today Spain is Europe’s leading producer, its garlic fields covering an area larger than any Spanish city.

Exactly when and how garlic arrived in Spain is not known. It may have been grown by the native Celtiberians. Certainly, it was highly rated by the Phoenicians and Greeks who traded with them, while the Roman colonizers enshrined it in two dishes that remain classics of Spanish Mediterranean cooking. One is *alioli*, a thick glossy emulsion of pounded garlic and olive oil, which is said to have been dreamed up by the Emperor Nero. The other is *ajo blanco*, Andalusia’s milky-white chilled *gazpacho* made with almonds, garlic, vinegar, bread, salt, and water.

Medicine, Myth and Magic

In the centuries since then, Iberian garlic-eating has continued to be intertwined with its medicinal powers. In his first-century *Historia Natural*, Pliny listed 61 uses for it. Believed to hold magical powers, it was hung in the porches of Roman houses to keep evil spirits away.

The Andalusís, or Spanish Muslims, viewed it more warily but regarded it as the best cure for snake bites and poisons. On the road to Santiago, Christian pilgrims ate it to protect themselves against drinking infected water. It was highly considered in medieval medical treatises, prescribed for toothache, constipation and colds. “Of garlic, all medicine with universal experience proclaims it to heat and relax the stomach,” wrote historian Friar Juan of Pineda in the late 16th century. He continued in a down-to-earth vein, “and what it most does in our service is to be a strong wall and defense

against the *pólvara* of wine.” Literally, *pólvara* means gunpowder or fireworks.

Folk-wisdom, stored in Spain’s vast repertoire of proverbs, emphasizes its powers to build up the body’s resistance. “*En tiempo nevado, un ajo vale lo que un caballo*,” runs one saying. “In snowy weather, garlic is worth as much as a horse.” More remarkable is another saying, “*ajo hervido, ajo perdido*,” or “garlic boiled, garlic lost,” which anticipates what medical researchers now consider true of its active elements. And it seems that this popular wisdom did not end in well-meaning words: Englishman John Minsheu wrote after a trip to Spain in 1627, “the common sort do live by it, so that it is the poor man’s Physicke and Food.”

In a deeply religious world, these medicinal powers were seen to extend seamlessly into magical ones, such as shielding the garlic carrier, or wearer, against wild animals and evil spirits. Shepherds rubbed garlic on themselves and their flocks to discourage foxes, wolves, and snakes; bullfighters carry cloves as a charm against the bull charging them; Galician country women still wear it in their hats or bags to fend off the evil eye.

As a curious epilogue, in the centuries after Columbus took garlic to the New World via the Dominican Republic, Spaniards transplanted many of these customs there. In his splendid *The Book of Garlic*, Lloyd J. Harris lists just a few of the garlic remedies in American southwestern folk-medicine, from the Santa Fe and Rio Grande area, to cure ailing horses, dogs, and humans.

Since Louis Pasteur first recognized garlic as an antiseptic in 1858, scientific research has suggested

Spanish garlic-eating has always been closely intertwined with its medicinal powers.

that we still don't know the full extent of its powers. Garlic's oil - around 10% of its content - contains some 14 substances, notably two sulphur compounds called allicin (released by an enzyme when the clove is opened) and ajoene. They help to make it anti-fungal, antiseptic, anti-coagulant and anti-oxidant, plus effective in treating viruses resistant to laboratory antibiotics, lowering blood pressure, and dilating arteries. One survey of 25 clinical studies on cardiovascular disease, by Professor Andrew Neil of Oxford University (International Congress of Garlic, Berlin, 1991), suggests that regular garlic eating can lower cholesterol levels by 10% and cut the risk of cardiac failure by 25%. All this in a clove - and many of garlic's properties have yet to be researched.

Garlic Gastronomy

Contrary to the idea that Spaniards are a race of rabid garlic cooks and eaters, a myth largely put about by English travel-writers such as Richard Ford, its gastronomic worth has been the subject of debate in Spain as much as elsewhere.

Perhaps this was the inheritance of the Andalusian Muslims who used it sparingly in their aromatic scented cooking, usually alongside lemon juice and almond milk. They recommended it shouldn't be eaten raw, especially before going to mosque. Their contemporary Alfonso XI, king of Castile and Leon, founded a knight's order in 1368 which forbade garlic-eating at pain of banishment from court for a month. The order was finally dissolved by French-born Philip V in the 18th century. Isabel of Castile is also said to have refused to

eat garlic, and courtly cook-books from the 14th to 17th century, such as the *Libre de Sent Sovi* and *Libro del Arte de Cozina* are noticeably light-handed with it, using it for certain specific dishes and sauces, but not indiscriminately as foreign travelers were later to find in highway *posada*, or tavern cooking.

One reason for abstinence, as in classical Rome, was that garlic was seen as the food of the poor. Cervantes put his finger on the matter in Don Quixote's advice to Sancho when he was going to rule the Isla Barataria: "Do not eat garlic and onions, for their smell will reveal that you are a peasant." Even in the late 19th century, novelist and food-writer Emilia Pardo Bazán warned ladies away from being found with a "reasonable plebeian clove." Abstaining from garlic, which was almost universal to shepherds' and gypsies' dishes, was a way of spelling out social position. The overuse of garlic in the poverty-stricken years after the Civil War produced another backlash against it. "Spanish cooking is full of garlic and religious concerns," complained writer Julio Camba. He accused cooks of cauterizing people's tastebuds to cover up for lack of other ingredients. Today, though, the return to well-stocked larders and the revival of regional cooking has redressed that balance and ensured garlic a subtle place in kitchens of the highest caliber. A few Spaniards may abstain, but most eat an average of some 1.42 kilos (3.3 pounds) of garlic a year.

The Shifting Garlic Map

Today most Spaniards buy, rather than grow their garlic

as they once did. To supply that demand, commercial production has quadrupled since 1950. Even so, of some 200,000 tons now grown every year, only a fifth is surplus produce for export.

That spectacular rise in production has been possible through the steady expansion of growing area to cover over 30,000 hectares (over 75,000 acres). A first jump came in the mid 1950s in the dry, wide plains of Castile-La Mancha - Don Quixote country - long famed for its intensely flavored, small-bulbed *ajo morado*, or purple garlic. The small town of Pedroñeras, its growing and commercial capital, handles some 70,000 tons of garlic a year and the whiff hangs potently in the air, especially at planting and harvesting time. Twenty years later came a second major boom, this time in Andalusia to produce Europe's earliest garlic in mid-May. Growing continues to spread steadily into different provinces - Cordova, Jaen, Granada and Malaga - with a mix of La Mancha purple, imported white and early varieties. Most recently, Extremadura has joined the new producing regions with plantations in irrigated areas around Badajoz and Cáceres.

At the other end of the season, Castile-Leon's growers harvest late purple and white garlic from June to July. One splendid reminder of earlier times here, is the garlic fair in Zamora, on St. Peter's day, (the 28th of June) when the main square fills up with small growers sitting behind huge piles of decoratively plaited garlic. Garlands of garlic are also worn by those who join the procession to the church. The shifting garlic map has also been marked by the arrival of new garlic fiestas, such as those in Chinchón and Pedroñeras, notable as much for their wine as garlic consumption.

Cultivation: From Bulb to Crop

Garlic growing itself has changed little in the change of scale from vegetable garden to commercial plantation. The seed, a skinned clove of garlic, is planted in rows, apex-up, just under the soil's surface. Today, over three-quarters of Spanish garlic is still hand-planted, although mechanization is creeping in.

Although it isn't a demanding crop, certain conditions bring out the best of garlic's qualities. Fertile, loose, well-drained soil, a chilly start to life but plenty of sunlight and warmth later as it matures, are needed to give finished bulbs with large, even cloves. Planting, then, falls between October and mid-January. Garlic is not a thirsty crop - dryness makes for a potent aroma and flavor - but light spring rains are crucial and most commercial Spanish production uses irrigation as back-up insurance. By March to April the garlic fields are green with the shoots. At this stage they can be pulled up and cooked, a Spanish delicacy called *ajos tiernos*. A month later the bulb begins to fatten and divide.

Harvesting comes before the plant throws out its white star-like flower. Most of the national crop is still hand-pulled from the earth and dried traditionally for ten to twelve days in a dry sunny place. But times are changing: mechanical harvesters and hot-air dryers are coming into use in larger commercial plantations since rain during harvesting can blight the crop.

Since garlic exhausts the soil, which in turn leads to bulb degeneration, it is usually grown in a two to three year cycle, rotated with cereals.

The garlic season runs from May, when Andalusia produces Europe's earliest crop, to July in northern Castile-Leon.

Varieties: Quality and Quantity

Since 1990, the emphasis has switched away from planting towards new varieties and seed improvement of native types as a means of raising production.

So far, white and early garlic varieties have been on the up. Traditional to the north - especially Galicia, the Ebro valley, and Asturias - white garlic spread south as a response to export demand for large, competitively priced bulbs. Early-season garlic with its large, flattish, veined bulbs and asymmetrical fat cloves is also popular, especially in Andalusia. Initially it was grown from imported seed to raise yields, but today growers mainly use locally improved stock developed through research schemes by distributors and exporters. Seed is grown from new cells taken from the apex of cloves in the laboratory, then in the third and fourth year these are planted out to provide seed-banks. Thanks to such schemes, yields have risen to over 15 kilos (33 pounds) per hectare (2.471 acres) for white garlic.

In the next few years, however, native purple garlic - still the most prized by Spanish gourmets and chefs, like its French cousin, the pink Rose de Lautrec - is expected to reach the same yields. The first crop of improved purple garlic will be harvested in La Mancha this year and its bulb-size is expected to rise by 40% within a few seasons. At the same time, researchers are developing a classification system so that Spanish purple will soon be a registered variety. It may go on from there to become a Denomination of Origin.

Another new development since 1990 has been organic garlic growing for overseas markets. In fact, much Span-

ish garlic has always been chemical-free since pests are few. But organic growers, registered both in Spain and abroad, are increasing. With large reserves of virgin land, the only limit to production is customers' willingness to pay the added cost of small-scale, registered organic production which translates into higher crop prices. Fresh green garlic cultivation is also on the up in Levante and Andalusia, but as yet little is exported.

From Field to Warehouse: Selection and Storage

Just as important to final quality is the handling of garlic after harvesting. Long gone are the days of roaming garlic-sellers who hawked bulbs loose from sacks or plaits. Today's middlemen, whether cooperatives or private companies, group the produce of hundreds of growers and operate from giant warehouses, where the bulbs are cleaned, graded, stored, and packed for their various markets.

"In the garlic trade today," comments Andrés Ballester of Ajos Imperial, specialist exporters, "we sell service, quality and then garlic, in that order."

Chilled storage, allowing half the crop to be held back for sale during the second half of the year, has made the wrinkly, dusty cloves of late winter months a thing of the past. The only side-effect of mild chilling (at -2 to -4° C/-28.4 to -24.8°F) is slight water-loss, so intensifying the flavor. Beforehand, bulbs go through an initial cleaning and selection process to ensure that they are well-formed, without blemishes, and tightly closed, with unbroken skins to help them keep well.

Final quality control comes immediately before sale. The five grades - ranging from Extraflor, with a diameter up to 6 cm/2.3 inches, down to small Segunda, half the size - depend on size, but some large exporters also now register precise weight, too. Rejects, called *destríos* - which make up 40% of the garlic for export - go to specialist Spanish companies that make liquid and dried garlic powders and granules. Recently, they have also begun to move into the health market with garlic pearls. This market is likely to grow in the future.

From Warehouse to Market: The Packing Revolution

Traditionally, garlic was exported loose in octagonal slatted crates designed to keep the contents well-aired for long sea journeys to markets such as Brazil and Puerto Rico. That trade still exists - Brazil buys some 12,000 tons a year - and garlic is also exported by plane to other distant markets, such as Canada and the Middle East.

But since the mid-1980s, the market has regeared towards Europe, especially its northern countries where growing interest in garlic's medicinal value, the cosmopolitan eating habits of multiracial societies, as well as the taste for all things Mediterranean, are steadily pushing up consumption. In some of these markets, such as Britain, consumption is rising by around 10% per year.

Flexibility, or adapting to the garlic-eating habits of each country, is the name of the game. The Irish like white garlic, the Belgians prefer red or purple; the French like to buy bulbs loose off traditional plaits, while the British like theirs

mildly flavored and firmly controlled in nets and baby boxes. The Swedes and Swiss will pay the premium for organically grown bulbs, and the Germans use some of their imports for pharmaceutical purposes.

"What we do notice," comments Joaquín Hidalgo, of Coopaman, a leading Manchegan exporter, "is that customers learn to pick out the quality of Spanish garlic in the flavor given by its high oil content."

In response to those different tastes, exporters have developed new packing and presentation ranging from traditional plaits (*trenzas*) and conical bouquets (*racimos*) to nets, boxes, molded trays or shrink-wrapped baskets containing anywhere from a couple of heads to a kilo of garlic. Labels are printed up to order in different languages and are firmly stapled on before the garlic is packed into lorries to reach customers in the shops within a week. The packing is not just decorative; despite appearances, garlic is fragile, with bruising appearing three to four months after handling. And the old-fashioned plaits are one of the best ways of locking in garlic's flavor and aroma.

Vicky Hayward: *is a freelance features journalist, travel writer and editor who lives in Madrid. She has written two guidebooks and published numerous articles on Spanish food, culture and society in newspapers and magazines.*

See Main Exporters on page 15 and Recipes on page 109.

LA MANCHA

Tierra de vinos



Garlic in a Jar

In the last few years, Spanish garlic has begun to find its way into jars. Until the 1990s, you would have needed to travel to Andalusia's *bodegas* to try pickled garlic in olive oil, but now it is being sent around the world. Whole cloves are lightly blanched or steamed, to remove the aftertaste but not the texture, then bottled in a plain light brine or in olive oil with vinegar, spices or herbs.

Serpis (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 32) and Agrucapers sell thousands of kilos to Middle Eastern, Caribbean, Asian and American, as well as northern European markets.

Meanwhile, back in garlic-capital Pedroñeras, a young company called Suárez Monadero has launched a range of half-a-dozen bottled garlicky sauces and marinades, plus the garlic vinegar

with which they are made, under the brand name Don Ajo (Mr. Garlic). All are made with local purple garlic. The sauces are designed for those who like authentic Spanish flavors - there are two Canarian *mojos* (spicy sauce), for example - and keep a natural pulpiness. They are already exported to the Caribbean, Latin America and to northern Europe.

A final Spanish delicacy, still

largely undiscovered abroad, are the preserved tender shoots of young, green garlic. Picked within one to two weeks in springtime as the garlic is sprouting, they are simply cleaned, chopped and put into a very light brine for using in sauces, all kinds of egg dishes and rices. Their nutty, delicate flavor appeals even to those who say they dislike garlic.

From Subtler to Strong: Turning Garlic's Flavor

Spanish cooking's reputation for uncontrolled blasts of garlic is a black legend of the past. In these days of greater wealth and variety, it is used in a range of ways to give different effects, some so subtle you hardly notice them.

"The flavor of garlic should be suggested or insinuated," comments Manuel de la Osa Moya, a garlic specialist and chef-proprietor of Las Rejas restaurant in Pedroñeras. His light modern cooking based on regional flavors has won many awards and loyal customers. "It never needs to dominate a dish or come back after eating." Three of the recipes on pages 109-115 come from Las Rejas.

BUYING, STORING AND PREPARING GARLIC

When buying garlic, press to check it is crisp and hard; the green sprout can always be removed. Store in a cool, dark, dry place. Don't be tempted to use old, dried garlic; its rancid flavor will carry through to the final dish. One basic rule to avoid the flavor of garlic overpowering other ingredients is to pull out the green germ you may find at the heart of the clove; it contains the most vicious flavor. A second rule, according to Manuel, is to cut garlic only just before use. "Oxidized garlic has a really unpleasant taste. Cutting it open in advance is a mistake." For any dish, it is almost the last ingredient he prepares, often chopping it finely in his hand before adding it straight into the pan. Equally,

he crushes garlic with olive oil to stop it from oxidizing.

On the other hand, he is an advocate of breaking and bruising rather than cutting garlic to bring out the best of its flavor for oils, frying, stews, etc. (if crushed whole, the clove can be removed too). Similarly, he chops cloves with the back of a knife.

CUTTING AND COOKING FOR DIFFERENT EFFECTS

The strength of flavor from garlic depends not so much on the quantity you use as the way you cut it open and cook it; the substances that produce a harsh aroma and flavor form as the cells are broken in contact with oxygen. Long, slow cooking in its skin, for example, leaves garlic nuttily sweet. At the other end of the gamut, crushed raw garlic has an abrasive kick from rapid oxidization.

Here are some of the different effects used in Spanish cooking:

- *A lick of garlic*: toast rubbed over with a halved clove of garlic and dribbled with olive oil is an Andalusian staple, for breakfast or snack, with or without salt. Rubbing the inside of a dish before cooking in it leaves a subtle hint; in a salad bowl, it's stronger.

- *Roasted whole garlic*: gives a sweet, pulpy flesh, good in salads, mashed for sauces and purées, or eaten on its own. Rub the cloves over with olive oil and wrap in aluminium foil if you wish. Loose cloves take 15 minutes; a large head needs 1 hour at 200° C, 400° F, gas mark 6.

- *Deep-fried garlic*: close to

baked garlic's flavor are cloves deep-fried in their skins, called by the president of Spain's Garlic Club, Santiago Rosado, Extremeño Oysters.

- *Whole garlic baked in rice*: traditional rices cooked either in a *paella* or casserole are flavored by placing the whole sautéed head of garlic, with its skin on, in the middle of the rice when you're adding the water. Help yourselves to the cooked cloves.

- *Oil flavored with fried garlic*: heat the garlic, whole cloves or sliced, in olive oil until golden, not browned, then remove the garlic and use the warm flavored oil straight away. The cloves can be put on the top of the dish for decoration. Use 12 garlic cloves for 18 tbsp olive oil.

- *Quick-frying with garlic*: for cooking prawns, mushrooms or other quick-cooking ingredients *al ajillo* (with garlic), thin crossways or lengthways slices of the garlic are used, allowing 1-2 cloves per person. If the main ingredient needs more than a few minutes cooking time, fry it first, drain, then re-fry briefly with the garlic.

- *Refrito of garlic*: chopped garlic is fried and poured over the fish, meat and vegetables, or into bean stews. Try 4 cloves of chopped garlic fried in 6 tbsp olive oil for 1.5 kg vegetables.

- *Finely diced raw garlic*: good scattered over strong-flavored ingredients such as salted or pickled anchovies, roasted peppers and so on. Also, a few addicts like to sprinkle it over the yolk of a fried egg with a few drops of vinegar.

- *Preserved raw garlic*: halved heads go straight into *escabeches* and other vinegar-based preserves. The cloves can be eaten from the jar; they are powerfully garlicky.

- *Pounded or crushed raw garlic*: gives the strongest flavor of all. It is used for marinades and *adobos*, as the base of sauces such as *alioli*, for flavoring oils, salads, stews and so on.

TAKING GARLIC MEDICINALLY

Generally speaking, garlic taken for medicinal purposes - whether against flu or colds, to cleanse your system or for heart purposes (see page 78) - is supposed to be taken raw, although it is thought to be as effective cooked for cardiovascular disease. In his excellent small book *Virtudes Curativas del Ajo* Jorge Sintés Pro suggests crushing two cloves of garlic with parsley and olive oil for spreading on bread. For maximum effect, this should be eaten on an empty stomach at breakfast time.

LOSING THE SMELL AND TASTE

Parsley, mint and cardamom are effective garlic neutralizers, as are a slice of apple or a chlorophyll tablet. Cumin seed and caraway are also used traditionally in Castile-La Mancha, where you'll find them, like parsley, in many garlicked dishes. So is a slug of *anis* or a drink of lemon water.

To wash the smell off your hands, rinse them first in cold water before washing with soap and hot water.

Text: **Víctor Rodríguez**

Photos: **Félix Lorrio/ICEX**

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**



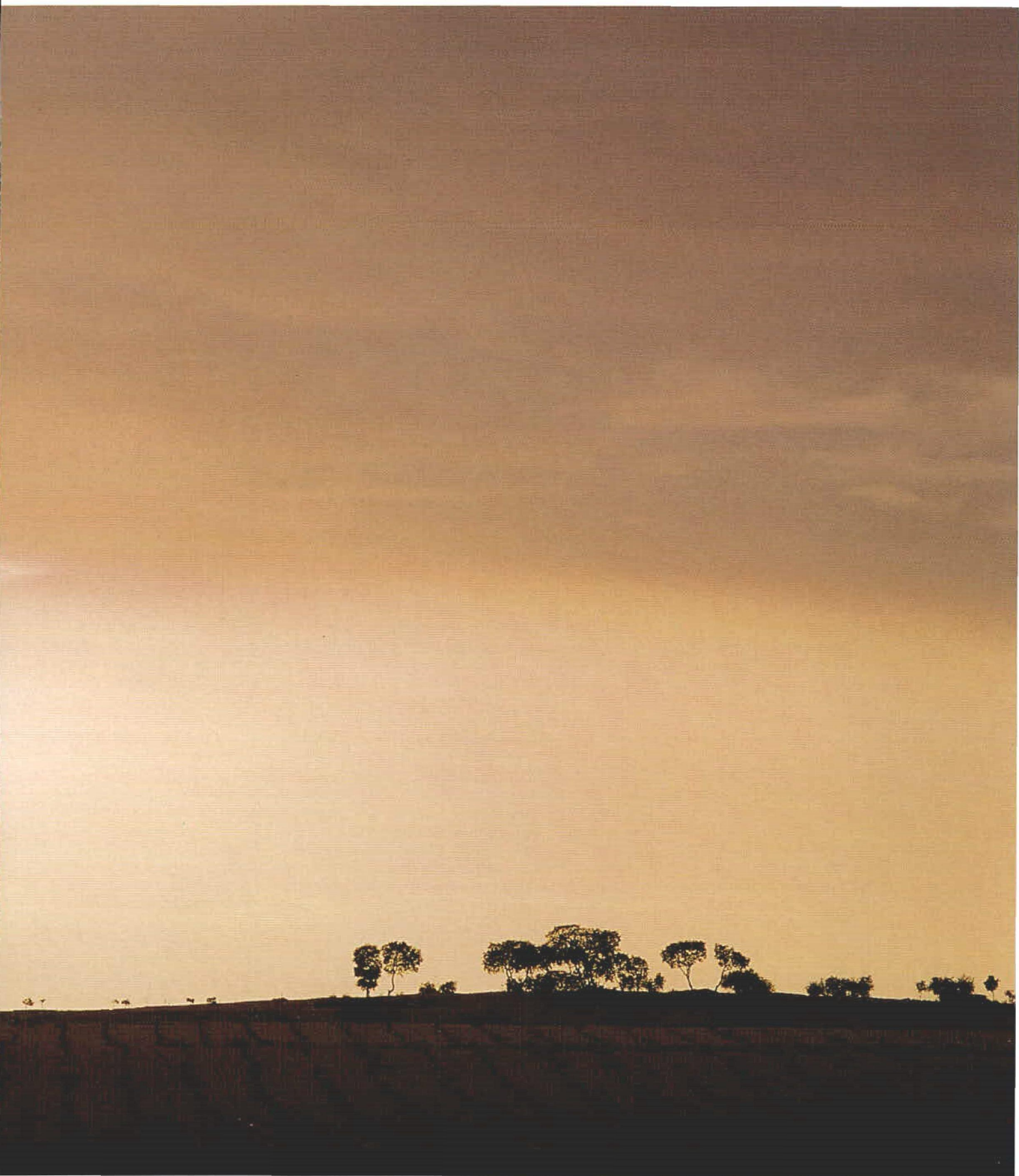
For the winegrowers of La Mancha, the key to the future is quality. The vineyards of this region of central Spain are threatened with pull-ups on a massive scale, and this fact has wonderfully concentrated the minds of certain forward-looking winemakers. Alerted to the need for a change of tactic, they are proceeding confidently in the right direction, meanwhile providing a much-needed example for the remaining growers in this seriously beleaguered winegrowing area.

According to the EU experts who compiled the MCO (Markets Common Organization) report, there is a surplus of 800,000 hectares (nearly 2 million acres) of vineyards in the fifteen countries of the European Union, of which around 50% lies in some part of La Mancha, Valencia, Aragon or Extremadura. The problems currently afflicting the world's biggest vineyard are the consequence of policies of past decades during which viticulture was allowed to spread uncontrolledly through this part of Spain, with the cooperatives at the helm. To give some indication of just how colossal the scale of viticulture is in the autonomous community of

Castile-La Mancha, the region of La Mancha is the source of one half of Spain's total wine-production, its viticultural activity being concentrated in the four provinces of Toledo, Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Albacete. Attempts to get rid of Europe's wine lake could result in parts of this region being reduced to desert since, for reasons of climate, it could not readily support any crop other than vines. Authorities within Spain's wine sector believe that there are alternative measures which would make this sacrifice unnecessary. One could say that enlightened consumers, both Spanish and foreign, of quality wines are also providing evi-



Wines of La Mancha: **ONWARD** and **UPWARD**



dence in favor of the case for biodiversity in winegrowing. For this is the only way of guaranteeing a future for winegrowing areas considered also-rans in the fame and prestige stakes.

While in the Middle Ages La Mancha's vineyards occupied no more than the outskirts of its towns, they later began to spread into the countryside, blocking the path of the placid flocks of Merino sheep which had until then enjoyed dominion of the vast Castilian plain. From that time on, white Airén exerted a virtual varietal monopoly. Airén, a high yield, disease-resistant variety, was planted with lunatic fervor, taking over from other established noble varieties such as Mantúo, Jaén and Brujidera.

By the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Airén accounted for some 30% of La Mancha's total area under vine, a percentage which rose gradually to an unbridled 95%. No responsible authority of the Franco period saw fit to control this phenomenon, which eventually threw the delicate balance of Spain's viticulture out of true. Despite all the adverse criticism, however, there is a lot to be said in favor of Airén grapes. The problem with this variety is over-familiarity, for it undoubtedly has many attributes, giving usefully neutral must, while the skins impart a distinct fruity character. In the hot areas where it is habitually grown, Airén retains its neutrality and transmits no intrusive tastes or smells to wines made from it. In short, Airén is a perfectly worthy grape with qualities which remain stable from year to year.

The question of what to do with such a disproportionately huge production of white grapes in a country like Spain - traditionally a nation of red wine drinkers - has been quite a different matter. La Mancha's wineries opted early for the solution of imitating the *clarete*

which was so successful for Valdepeñas (an area which also falls administratively within Castile-La Mancha). *Clarete* is a lightweight wine, said to be "red to look at, but white at heart," which uses a red variety - Garnacha or Cencibel - in very small proportion just to provide the color in wine which is 90% white Airén. *Clarete* itself is not traditional to the area, to judge by the observations of some famous Romantic travelers, such as Richard Ford and Alexandre Dumas, who mention drinking rich alcoholic reds from the *tinajas* of Valdepeñas. Davillier, art historian and collector, went so far as to compare the wine of Valdepeñas with the rounded Châteauneuf du Pape for its dense red color. But Valdepeñas' winemakers needed more than these literary accolades. Those among them who were regular visitors to the capital brought home the idea which was to translate into a huge success story: they had recognized the market for an *aloque*, or *clarete*. This type of wine is a "decaffeinated" young red, orange-hued, pleasant to drink with its touch of sweetness, and it became the standard drink among *habitués* of the taverns of Madrid. From 1895 on, a daily train of 25 wagons, each loaded with 100 wine-skins, left Valdepeñas for Madrid, a 200 kilometer (125 mile) trip from *bodega* to *taberna*. The news spread rapidly to other winegrowing towns in Castile-La Mancha, such as Noblejas and Herencia, and they adapted to the demand for Valdepeñas-style *clarete*. Eventually, however, demand waned in parallel with a sharp decline in the consumption of tavern wine. Something had to be done to curb the spread of the omnipresent Airén, whose commercial potential was now distinctly limited. The authorities then promoted the rehabilitation of other varieties which had been on the

point of disappearing from La Mancha's vineyards, specifically red Cencibel, a close relation of Rioja's Tempranillo.

NEW TIMES, NEW TRENDS

Some *bodegas* have achieved very satisfactory results with young, and not-so-young, reds based on Cencibel and other varieties, such as the ubiquitous Cabernet. Currently, there is a closer focus on the region's viticultural base, while at the same time its *bodegas* are updating their technology and improving their technical and administrative management. This positive approach has produced some quality wines which are doing well commercially both at home - the range of D.O. La Mancha wines on the Spanish market is wide and varied - and abroad, where various export markets are making the most of very attractive prices.

Fifty years ago, Villarrobledo in Albacete Province was the sort of town where, at harvest-time, the air smelled of grapes, there was must underfoot in the streets and a party atmosphere reigned. Local land is held in large estates by a few owners, and this fact meant that vines were frequently ripped out if there was money to be made by putting the land to other use. But there have been happier initiatives in Villarrobledo, too. The family-owned Torres Filoso Bodega is a case in point: it retains the artisan approach to winemaking while keeping up with the times. Its reds are considered among the region's best. Arboles de Castillejo, its principal brand, is Cencibel and Cabernet Sauvignon-based, and after fermentation is given a brief aging period of 4 - 5 months in new American oak casks and a further year in the bottle before being released onto the market. Torres Filoso sets itself a modest ceiling at 150,000 bottles. As proprietor José Luis Torres says: "For a wine to taste good, and for one to feel

pleased with every bottle one handles, production has to be kept small. This is the philosophy behind the way we make wine, bottle and pack it by hand, and even put on sealing wax or a ribbon if need be."

José Luis Torres' grandfather had a ready-made team in the form of his thirteen children to help in the wine and spirit *bodega* he established around 1921. Its current second brand, Juan José, is a limited edition wine dedicated to his memory. This wine spends two months longer in the cask and a year longer in the bottle than Arboles de Castillejo. Torres Filoso is presently engaged in creating a matured Sauvignon Blanc.

FERMIN AYUSO: THE ESTOLA STORY

Our next quality producer is also in Villarrobledo. Fermín Ayuso is another family business, founded in 1947. Commercial director José Cano mentioned the significant increase around Villarrobledo of plantations of red Cencibel: "A few years ago, growers used to mix Cencibel in with Garnacha and sell the grapes at the same price. But when Cencibel started fetching higher prices, things changed - around Villarrobledo, all the available Cencibel used to come to Fermín Ayuso, which paid the best prices." Ayuso used aging in American oak casks to highlight its best characteristics. And so began the success story of Estola, a brand with a glowing reputation among its many enthusiasts, not only for its maderized typology - it is aged for four years in the cask - but also for the amazing longevity of the 1982 vintage, still on the market until it is replaced by the Estola'85, a Cencibel varietal red with fresh red fruit aromas and a peppery nose. Recent years have seen small but quality vintages, so that Estola fans have

something to look forward to, unlike the vintages for '83, '84, '86, '88 and '89. Fermín Ayuso is now looking into adding to its range with a quality red involving Cencibel and Cabernet Sauvignon, more in tune with current tastes, with a shorter time in wood and an earlier appearance on the market.

We now leave Villarrobledo for Tomelloso, in the Campo de San Juan, a town which has grown in pace with the development of the wine industry. One recent example of this development has been the creation of Bodegas Centro-Españolas. This venture, which would have been inconceivable ten years ago, is the brainchild of fourteen partners, and it is managed on their behalf by Miguel Angel Valentín, former technical director of Rioja's Bodegas Faustino.

Bodegas Centro-Españolas' business strategy is based in part on the fact that it owns some 60% of the vineyards that it needs for its grape supply. Nearly a million bottles of Alloza 1991, a *crianza* red (see Glossary, page 117) aged for 10 months in the cask,

constitute the company's main assets at present. The aim is to bring this up to 200,000 cases a year of consistent quality *crianza* and *reserva* reds. These standards are matched in La Mancha by only two other *bodegas*, Fermín Ayuso and Vinícola de Castilla. Miguel Angel Valentín explains: "Side-stepping the fixation on Rioja that characterizes the domestic market, we have opted for aiming 75% of our production at foreign markets." Bodegas Centro-Españolas aims to complete its ambitions by producing and marketing a line of select brandies. Tomelloso is, after all, the world's biggest spirit producer and is the traditional source of supply for the brandy makers of Jerez, who use these distilled liquors for subsequent aging in their typically Andalusian oak casks.

Manzanares, next port of call on this Manchegan wine route, is the home of Vinícola de Castilla, a go-getting company which exemplifies the principle of harnessing technology to achieve quality. This *bodega's* young wines have a very high success rate, and its *reservas*

have also scored on occasion. It has also done extremely well with its marketing of Castillo de Manzanares, Castillo de Alhambra and Señorío de Guadianeja, the three labels that Vinícola de Castilla uses for complete ranges of whites, pinks and reds, both young and *crianza* wines.

BETTER VARIETIES FOR BETTER WINES

Alfonso Monsalve, longtime manager of the company explained: "Vinícola de Castilla forged ahead of its neighbors in many respects; one of these was planting higher quality varieties, such as Cencibel and Cabernet Sauvignon, of which we currently own 30 hectares (74 acres)."

Another spectacular wine-growing venture has been similarly far-sighted. Cueva del Granero, a winery surrounded by a 1000 hectare (2471 acre) estate lying alongside the road from Mota del Cuervo to Quintanar de la Orden. An area of 450 hectares (1112 acres) at an altitude of 850 meters (2788 feet) is planted with vines, while the rest is scrubland. Carlos Tinajero,

leading light at Cueva del Granero, is gradually transforming what was once - despite its chateau-like setting - an *ordinaire bodega* into a quality wine producer. "What we want to do is to keep the Airén plantations - some 60,000 vines - whose output at this altitude is genuinely excellent, alongside Cencibel and Cabernet." Cueva del Granero is preparing for the launch this year of an attractive Cabernet Sauvignon *reserva*.

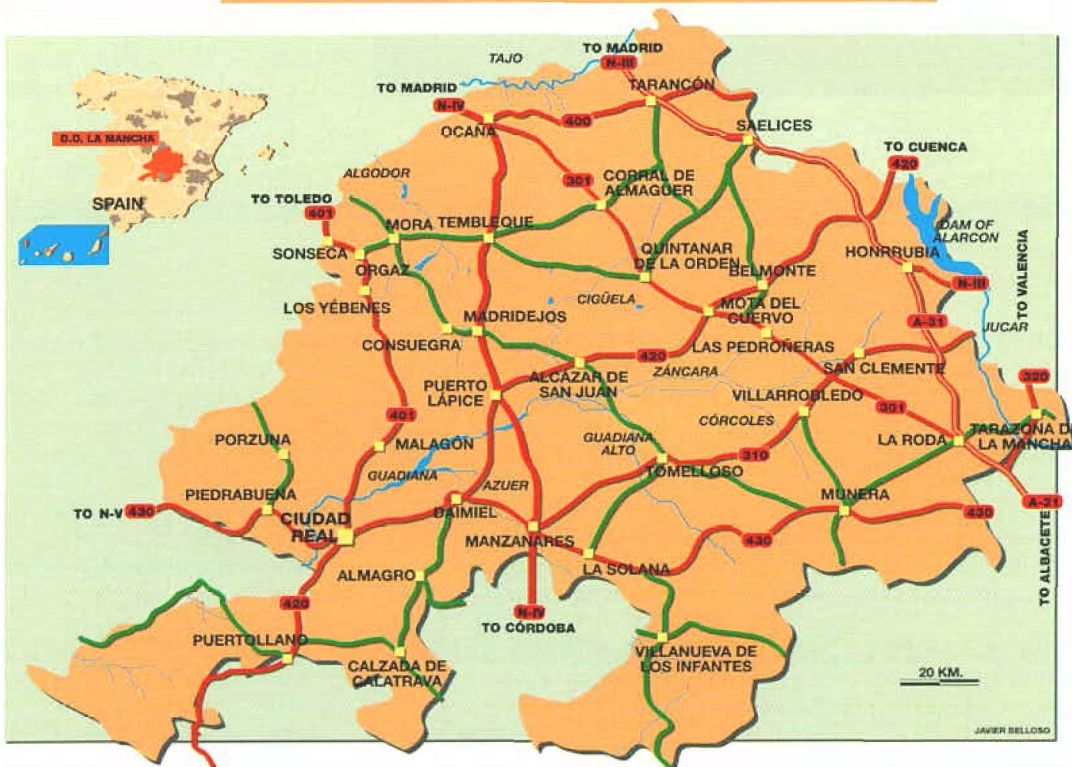
The Cueva del Granero situation is familiar to the Morales brothers of Noblejas. They, too, are fighting to slough off a past reputation for *ordinaire* wine while focusing on an oenologically ambitious present. The Morales' struggle is perhaps a tougher one, since Noblejas was one of the towns which used to produce anonymous wine for bulk tavern sales. Their grandfather used to transport his wine to Aranjuez by mule, back in the days of wineskins and demijohns. Now, Noblejas' future lies with Gran Creacin, a *crianza* red with six months in the cask and six in the bottle, of which the Morales' company, Boherosa, has so far sold 100,000 bottles. Fructuoso López, the house oenologist, is also its supplier of red Cencibel grapes, which he brings in from his farm in Alcázar de San Juan, since this noble variety is scarce in Noblejas.

Mention should be made, too, of Julián Santos, Rodríguez & Berger, Vinícola de Tomelloso and Cooperativa Jesús del Perdón who are just some of the other La Mancha *bodegas* and viculturalists committed to saving their landscape and a long and noble tradition by seeking out viable alternatives to the sad ripping out of their region's vineyards.

Victor Rodríguez is a journalist who specializes in food and wine. A regular contributor to the Spanish press and radio, he is also a former editor of Restauradores magazine.

See Main Exporters on page 15.

DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN LA MANCHA WINE



TWO SINGULAR BODEGAS

There are two interesting winegrowers who, although operating within its geographical area, have both opted to stay outside the regulatory framework of the D.O. La Mancha.

The first of these is Manuel Manzanque, well-known in Spain as a veteran theatrical producer, who has made a career shift and become a winemaker, establishing himself in the heart of the mountains of the Sierra de Alcaraz in Albacete Province. His estate, Finca Elez, falls within the municipality of Altos del Bonillo. The microclimate and the specific response of the vines at this altitude (around 1,000 meters, or 3,000 feet) produce wines whose characteristics qualify them, for the moment, as *vinos de la tierra*, the official *Instituto Nacional de Denominaciones de Origen*, INDO (National Institute of Denominations of Origin) designation. The estate is a veritable *domaine*, with its 35 hectares (86 acres) of vineyard, for the exclusive use of Manuel Manzanque's company. The vine varieties grown are of French origin - literally, since the plants of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot and Chardonnay were brought from Bordeaux and Burgundy, as were oak casks, on the instructions of its oenologist, Frenchman Michel Poudu.

This winery made its public debut with the launching of its first vintage, in 1992; this amounted to just 2,000 bottles of white Chardonnay and 20,000 of red Cabernet Sauvignon.

Making wine is not, after all, so different from staging a play. Both involve a lot of hard work behind the scenes, and it is by no means over on the first night, or when your first vintage reaches the marketplace. Manzanque's story is a sort of back-to-front version of the myth in which the drunken

songs of Dionysus' followers are turned by the passage of time into dramatic poetry.

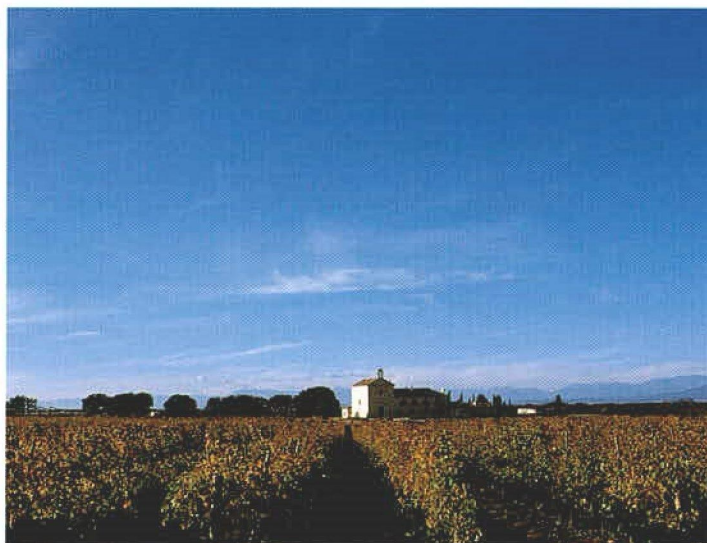
The second of these "special" winegrowers is Carlos Falcó, Marqués de Griñón, agronomist and man of action (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 22) who believes that an innovative entrepreneur works better unhindered by regulations. Falcó cites the example of Italy, which has over 120 Denominations of Origin, none of which cover its best wines.

He considers himself a com-

mitted liberal and thinks that good wines can't be legislated into being. Associated for some time now with the Berberana wine group, the Marqués de Griñón makes wine in Rioja, Rueda, Ribera del Duero and Malpica de Tajo, all of them non-D.O. Revelling in his freedom of movement, he is now thinking of crossing the border into Portugal to look into a couple of wines there.

On his Toledo estate Casa de Vacas, in Malpica de Tajo, Falcó cherishes his Cabernet vines (the '92 vintage Dominio de Valdepusa was excellent) planted over 20 years ago, and his younger Syrah ones, which are just starting to fulfill their promise.

After much deliberation, the Marqués opted for vinifying the Chardonnay on his estate, too, harvesting by hand and at night. He also had a traditional wine-press built: Prince Felipe, heir to the Spanish throne, trod some grapes there last year.



V.R.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The regulations for the Denomination of Origin La Mancha were passed by Ministerial Decree on 2 June 1976, and modified by Decree of the Consejería de Agricultura on 13 December 1991. Its territory encompasses a total of 182 municipal areas, 12 in Albacete Province, 58 in Ciudad Real, 66 in Cuenca and 46 in Toledo: the complete list is so complicated that the Regulations cite only the municipalities which form the perimeter.

VARIETIES: The grape varieties authorized within the D.O. territory are the white Airén, Macabeo, Pardilla and Verdoncho, and the red Cencibel, Garnacha, Moravia and Cabernet-Sauvignon. White Airén and red Cencibel and Garnacha are designated principal varieties.

TYPES OF WINE: The regulations cover whites, pinks and reds, which can be dry, semi-dry, semi-sweet and sweet.

CLIMATE: The climate is semi-arid continental, with cold winters and hot summers. It is characterized by year-round lack of water caused by the mountainous barriers which surround the region and obstruct the entry of moist winds from the sea. Despite its enormous size, the climate in the D.O. La Mancha is fairly uniform throughout the area.

SOILS: Orographically, the area is fairly flat, with the occasional isolated low hill. The soils are brown or brown-red, originating from miocene sediments (chalk, loam, sand). They are quite calcareous, and there are sometimes chalky crusts which have to be broken to allow the plant roots to advance.

LA MANCHA THE FUTURE: BUILDING ON THE PAST



ANGELA MUIR

La Mancha hasn't yet produced wines to its true quality potential - not by a very long way. However, in the last few years it has begun to show really strong signs of a new self-confidence, an eagerness to move forward and a belief that it has a real role beyond simply that of a commodity producer of musts, concentrates, distillation wine and basic, simple everyday whites and a very few reds. Already, white wines qualifying for the D.O. are routinely fresh, clean and sometimes distinctly fruity, often with a charming citrusy overtone which comes from the Airén grape and the soil. No cellar manager trying to make quality would dream of not cleaning up the must and cooling down the fermentation to a strict level of control. Such wines were the tip of the iceberg at the beginning of the eighties and often greeted with misunderstanding and suspicion as if they didn't reflect the land of their birth, which they do.

The region is lucky in its leaders. The new headquarters of the Consejo Regulador in Alcázar de San Juan is a model of its kind: welcoming and user-friendly for trade and press visitors wanting to taste as well as for the producers to meet and discuss how best to promote and develop their region. These men are commercially realistic enough to be

tackling head-on their real problem: How do they grow production and sales of wines good enough to win a premium position on both the Spanish and the world marketplace? Two million hectoliters is a lot of wine and, already, sales of D.O. La Mancha wines have topped this figure in a year. However, it's tiny compared with the eighteen million which the region can produce in an abundant year and even these sales figures have been heavily price dependent. Far too many grapes have had to be processed and sold for their commodity value alone.

The region is lucky also to produce healthy ripe grapes from excellent soils for viticulture. It is unlucky in the fact that so much of its production has been centered on the heat resistant Airén, not because Airén is a relatively neutral grape type but because the region lacked diversity. This is changing. Since 1990, vineyards due for replanting have been largely turned over to red grapes, often Cencibel (name for Tempranillo in La Mancha) and occasionally Cabernet Sauvignon, which seems able to make itself at home as much here as elsewhere on earth.

The next piece of "luck" is being made by the better producers themselves. When they started to equip their wineries to vinify these red grapes, they put in good, solid chilling equipment and stainless steel fermenters. As a result, they are finding it easy to produce coolly fruity young reds with a soft cherry and blackberry style that goes down well on the export market.

The only serious drawback the region has ever had is in its water supply. Anywhere in the new world, vineyards such as these would have automatically been installed with drip irrigation. But Spanish law was very strict about vine irrigation. Until two years ago, there was no shortage of artesian water and profligate canon sprays could be seen all

over La Mancha, falling on such crops as maize, sunflowers, alfalfa, and melons but never legitimately on vines. During all this time, lack of water held the vines back to a yield level so low that it actually diminished quality and cruelly limited the choice of vines to plant. Grape growing in these conditions is uneconomic with today's minimum wage levels. It is also very difficult to mechanize cultivation and harvesting in the way that can be done in an irrigated, appropriately trellised vineyard.

The good news is that the Spanish government has lifted the ban partially on irrigation in D.O. vineyards and left the final say with each local Regulatory Council. It is a certainty that all Spain has learned a lot about water management in the last two wicked years of drought. Vines are an appropriate crop for this part of the world as they are not as water-greedy as most annual crops have been. As long as producers use irrigation in a quality-conscious way, La Mancha may just have had the final stroke of luck that it needs to awaken it to its true destiny as a major force in the world production of a wide range of delicious and fair value for money wines.

The next debate will center around what to plant. There is a natural reluctance to hand over the traditions of a region to a world market of Chardonnay, Cabernet, Sauvignon, and Merlot, excellent and much loved though these grapes are. However, the economics of freedom of supply and demand suggest that it would be prudent to diversify significantly. The Denomination system in Spain enshrines tradition to a very marked degree, as do the A.O.C. systems of France and the D.O.C. systems of Italy. It is right that D.O. legislation should only be altered slowly and deliberately after much debate and testing of any new varieties and methods. Tradition and history are too valuable an asset to waste.

Alongside it, the Vino de la Tierra system allows experimentation with a whole list of other grapes, some Spanish and some not. This is the natural vehicle for diversification. The two systems are designed to co-exist and where the latter has been successfully exploited, prices for good wines whatever they are made from are every bit as interesting as they are for D.O., A.O.C. or D.O.C. wines.

Again, the region has invested wisely in its future. At Tomelloso there is a school and research station which has a massive collection of different vine types and a backlog of information on their likely performance under Manchegan conditions. It has shared results with the pioneering vineyard of Cueva del Granero. This resource guarantees that the choice goes far beyond just the three classics mentioned above even if they are not to be wholly dismissed.

Now all that remains is for the producers of La Mancha to look outwards from their high, wide lands, see what grapes, viticultural and winemaking techniques the modern world has to offer, and use their imaginations to create new styles and traditions. In twenty years' time they should really be shaking the world.

Angela Muir is a Master of Wine and a member of the Gran Orden de Caballeros del Vino (an Order which recognizes the professional work-carried out on behalf of Spanish wines) and has been visiting La Mancha regularly since the beginning of the 1980's when she bought wines for Grants of St. James and Victoria Wine in the U.K. Over the years, she has come to love the region for many things including the brilliance, clarity and cleanliness of its light and air, the breadth and sweep of its landscape, the open realism and sense of humor of its people and the charm of the best of its traditional architecture.

Spain's gourmet preserves come from a tradition of canning and bottling, unshaken by the arrival of domestic and supermarket deep-freezes. These fast-foods with slow-cooked flavors, based on prime vegetables, meats, and fish, are now enjoying a revival with home-cooks who like to eat well but have little time in the kitchen. Navarre's old-fashioned *pistos*, or braised Mediterranean vegetables, and La Mancha's *escabeches* of cold marinated game, make perfect instant food alongside a range of newer gourmet cooked dishes designed for the 1990s. The secrets of these products' success - high culinary standards, carefully sourced produce, and additive-light recipes - are beginning to show results in overseas sales too.

In the last fifty years, Spain's gourmet preserves have switched from being a thriving craft to a mechanized industry. But the possibilities of ready-cooked dishes began to be explored later than elsewhere, about ten years ago, when the new generation of working housewives with increasingly adventurous tastes created a local market for high quality convenience foods. Tapping old and modern cooking, as well as the char-



acter of the Spanish regions, this second generation of gourmet preserves has now developed enormously in range and variety.

FROM THE NORTHERN MARKET GARDENS

Spain's home-preserving tradition *par excellence* is found in the River Ebro's fertile valley, a vegetable grower's paradise, which

cuts through the northern regions of Navarre and the Rioja. Here, spring asparagus, broad beans, artichokes and cardoon, summer peaches and figs, and autumn *pimientos* are all preserved by country families for use during the winter months. Banks of jars glow green, orange and red in the cool cellars of village homes. A handful of traditional cooked conserves have always been made by the pre-



Text: Vicky Hayward

Photos: Félix Lorrío/ICEX



PRESERVING GOURMET



...serving companies dotted among the market gardens: *tomate frito* - a thick, reduced tomato purée - plus three braised vegetable dishes, *fritada*, *pisto* and *piperrada*. They are eaten warm or chilled, plain or mixed with tuna or softly scrambled eggs. But in the mid-1980s, the kitchen teams of these companies went back to their stoves to widen the range of cooked products. On the one hand they developed products based on traditional dishes from the excellent regional cooking: *menestra* (braised mixed baby spring vegetables), cardoon in almond sauce, and green vegetables, such as Swiss chard, green beans or borage, sautéed with garlic in olive oil and braised in stock. Other regional specialities which sell well are squid in its ink and *ajo-arriero*, filleted or flaked salt-cod cooked in a tomato and pepper *pisto*.

Equally successful have been the canned versions of restaurant dishes from Basque *nueva cocina*. Local artichokes, peppers, asparagus and other vegetables are still the stars, but now more elaborately cooked with contrasting ingredients and sauces. Among them, stuffed *piquillo* peppers (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37) have proved to be a runaway bestseller. The wood-roasted, skinned, peppery-sweet *pimientos* now come with a multitude of stuffings and sauces. From

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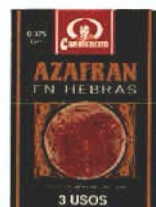
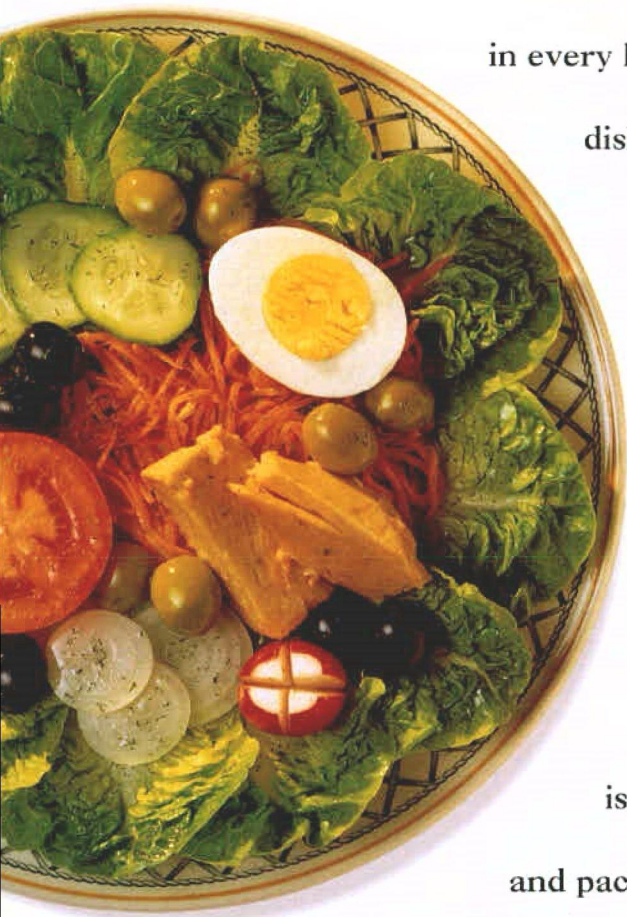
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meat, salt-cod, fish and shellfish stuffings matched with pepper and tomato sauces, flavors have moved on to show the more daring combinations: tuna with partridge sauce, squid in its ink, oyster mushrooms, sea urchin's eggs and braised ox-tail are examples. And undoubtedly, there are many more to come from the inspiration of the region's chefs.

The superb local artichokes, cropped while still young, are the base for another group of dishes: they are braised with cured ham, or stuffed with fish, meat or shellfish, or - another *nueva cocina* favorite - braised with clams. Spaniards generally prefer to eat asparagus plain, but now it is also being canned *au gratin* and puréed for a cream of asparagus soup. Another prized local crop, new season's beans, called *pochas*, are cooked while still fresh, with duck, clams or spicy *chorizo* sausage.

Not just the range, but also the style of products varies widely. In larger companies, mechanization has been used to increase production without loss of quality. Mamía, a Navarrese brand, for example, makes some three million stuffed peppers a year using custom-made stuffing, dicing, and sieving machinery, together with handmade sauces and fillings. Other companies, such as Rosara, prefer to keep to strictly artisanal methods. Their artichokes, for example, are hand-peeled in order to keep the sweet, tender upper stalk, and are then individually stuffed.

Each brand has its own specialities. Gutarra has been exporting traditional *pisto* and *piperrada* to France for twenty years while Mamía's lead products are seven variations of stuffed *piquillo* peppers. Riojan-based brand Mi Conserva's speciality is artichoke hearts in olive oil, with clams or Iberian cured ham, sold largely to top-flight restaurants. Rosara, meanwhile, offers top-of-the-

range quality through denomination of origin or grown-to-order vegetables. Recently, it has also pioneered gourmet soups, such as cream of green pea with prawn, and sauces. Packing and design vary from streamlined lightweight aluminium cans with easy-opening pull-tags, to traditional home-preserving glass jars.

Yet, for all the variety, manufacturers share the attitude that quality is essential to sustained success. Flavors true to fresh ingredients are essential for products to sell well in the local market. Ingredients are sourced with care, using virgin olive oils, fish, and cured ham bought from around Spain. Recipes are created, tested and adapted in restaurant-style kitchens. One important change is the speed at which sauces and fillings are cooled to avoid the risk of fermentation. And presentation standards are high.

Up to half of the peppers stuffed are discarded simply for their rips or tears. There are few or no additives; some brands even resist adding citric acid to artichokes, preferring to sell them naturally darkened.

Equally, consistency and quality are guaranteed by manufacturing standards. Sterilization at 120°C/240°F, the length of time varying in relation to acidity, is measured and confirmed by computer printouts. The manufacturing environment, labeling of cans and their contents here, as in other regions, meet the European Union 1994 regulations.

HUNTSMEN'S DISHES FROM THE MESETA

Further south, Castile-La Mancha's smaller conserves industry has its roots in the region's tradition of cooking and conserving game in *escabeches*, or vinegared marinades (see page 113). Once made in *orzas*, vast earthenware storage jars, the recipes transferred perfectly

to canning when it came here early this century.

Companies here are closely tied to family tradition. Félix Soto, set up in 1927 and named after its founder, was revived sixty years later by his grandson, Félix Toledano Soto. Today their products include partridge, quail, rabbit, turkey and chicken in *escabeche* as well as an *estofado*, or casserole, of partridge. The family recipe is still used and although the local supply of game ran out long ago, produce is carefully selected: free-range birds from Catalonia and France, *Manzanilla* vinegar from Andalusia, local virgin olive oils. Products are still available packed in the original modernist green and gold cans or in glass catering jars. Soto has found a particularly strong restaurant market (50% of sales) helped by Basque chef Luis Irizar, who developed half a dozen ideas for serving it in new ways. With retail sales rising steadily in Spain, they have also had specific overseas orders for gastronomic and cultural events.

Another family company, Polgri, began production when cook Pascual Polo Sánchez began selling *escabeches* from his restaurant in the 1950s. Now, over forty years later, he can still be found in the kitchens experimenting with poultry, game, and cooked meat dishes. Chicken *pepitoria* with almond sauce, snails or braised rabbit in tomato, are local dishes which are part of the range.

Cooking methods are carefully adapted: flavorings like onions and garlic are pulped before being added to ensure quantity control, the water is softened for cooking beans, and sauces are slightly thickened with cornstarch to balance the liquifying effect of sterilization.

The key to Polgri's success has been to remain small and agile. Although its factory has a production capacity of over 7 million cans a year, it is designed as a large

kitchen with storeroom, burners and electrically heated cooking pots leading to a canning, bottling and packing line. Here products are made-to-measure for clients: *tortilla* in sauce for the 1992 Olympic village, salt-free snails for the Japanese, stuffed chicken in mixed goose fat and olive oil for French clients. A special range is manufactured for sale in the Spanish royal heritage shops, such as those in the Royal Palace in Madrid or similar historical buildings.

They are also now launching double-product packs for complete dishes or meals. Initially, there are two Spanish classics: *paella*, to be made from a canned stock and dry rice, and shepherds' *gazpachos*, a game stew made with flatbread.

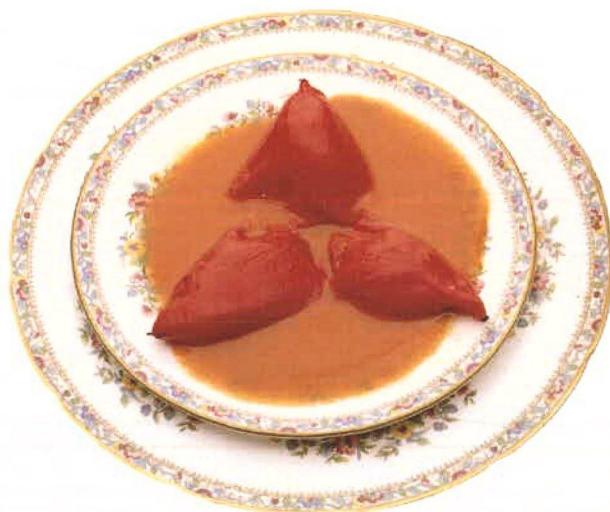
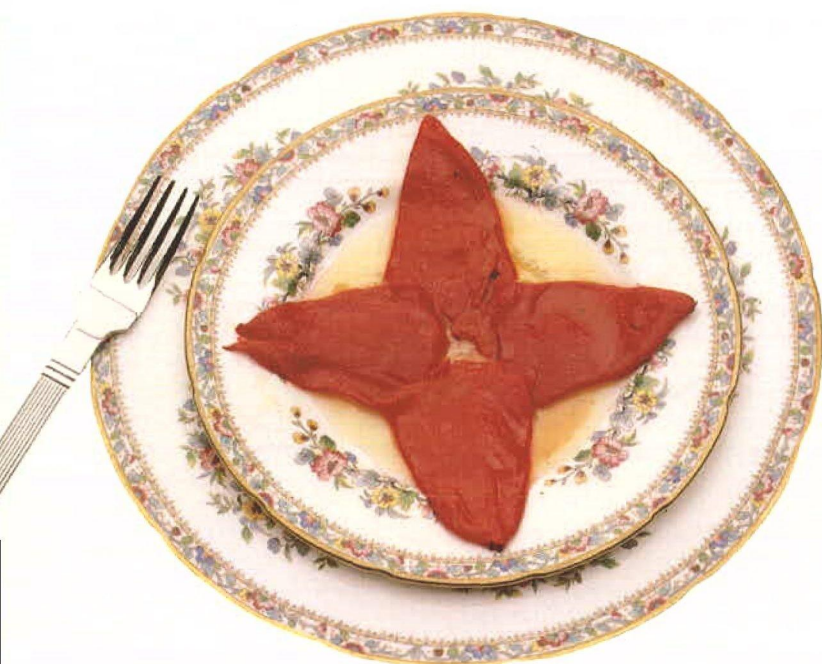
Again, each company has its speciality products. Huertas, a family-based conserver, for example, began its range thirty-five years ago with two local vegetable dishes, *pisto* and *asadillo*, and from there branched out into bean stews. Today, although the range of products has broadened, those remain its bestsellers.

SEAFOOD FROM THE ATLANTIC

For the Galician and Basque companies who have been packing top-quality Atlantic tuna, anchovies, sardines, squid, and other seafood for over a century, it was a small step to start manufacturing prepared dishes. They had been making sardines, tuna, mackerel, and mussels in *escabeche*, or hake roe in vinaigrette for some time when in the 1980s they began to extend the range.

Today products include soups such as tuna, tomato, pepper and potato *marmitako*, salt-cod, leek and potato *porrusalda* and a mixed fish *bouillabaisse*. One company, Ortiz, cans top-quality tuna medallions cooked with a tomato and *piquillo* pepper sauce, a Spanish tomato sauce or

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vegetables. Asturian company Remo makes onions stuffed with tuna and a shellfish version of butter-bean *fabada* with squid and clams. For those who like salt-cod, different manufacturers offer half a dozen dishes in different sauces, plus old-fashioned Lenten salt-cod fishballs. One enterprising fish-farm in Asturias makes whole trout in *escabeche* as a top-quality delicatessen product.

Meanwhile, seafood is also beginning to get the gourmet treatment. Squid in its ink is an old favorite, but squid, mussels or scallops are now being canned in white wine, garlic or spicy tomato sauces for light heating to serve with pasta or rice, or to make excellent fillings for pies.

FROM THE STEWPOT

Then there is another family of products, little known abroad but perhaps the most traditional and popular in Spain and Latin America. These are the regional stews made with beans, lentils and chickpeas, plus meats to flavor them - for example, the *meseta's* lima or navy beans with *chorizo* sausage, quail or partridge; Madrid's chickpea *cocido* and Asturias' butter-bean *fabada*; or lentils with *chorizo*, almost a national dish, and chickpeas or beans with hand of pork. Like *es-*

cabeches, they are perfectly adapted to canning and, with the use of water softeners and huge cooking vats, are easier to make well in large rather than small quantities.

Newer products include, on the one hand very regional dishes, such as *caldo gallego* from Galicia, and on the other, new ideas like white beans with shellfish - a popular restaurant dish of the last decade - with duck or even with oxtail. Navarrese companies are also beginning to enter the market, not only with the new-season *pochas* typical of the region, but also with local Denomination of Origin Tolosa beans and Rosara imports of top-quality Mexican chickpeas for its stews.

MADE-TO-MEASURE EXPORTS

Export markets, as varied as the products themselves, depend on customers' familiarity with the dishes and flavors. France, for example, buys *pisto* and *piperrada* - similar to its *ratatouille* - while Latin American countries, led by Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina, import large quantities of classic Spanish dishes, ranging from regional bean stews to stuffed peppers. The Japanese, on the other hand, are importers of *paella* and snails.

The most rapidly expanding markets, however, are those of Europe, where products sell on the one hand, in delicatessen shops or departments - increasingly appreciative of Mediterranean ingredients and flavors - and on the other, to restaurants and *tapas* bars in search of authentic flavors. A longer-standing but smaller third market is the substantial Spanish community, as in Switzerland or London. With many European countries unused to the idea of finding high-quality food in a tin, manufacturers find that initially small orders begin to rise as soon as customers have begun to try products. Alongside this, there is growing understanding that the old idea of canned products having a lower nutritional value than fresh ones is false. Very often, the long storage of fresh produce in warehouses and shops means that by the time it reaches the table its vitamin content is no higher than its equivalent, canned directly after harvesting or fishing. The emphasis for the future is on flexibility and products made-to-measure for, or developed in partnership with, clients. Mamía developed its rice with salt-cod for the Mexican market; Rosara first made its *escalivada* - roast vegetables in olive oil - and chickpea stewpot for Catalonia; Polgri has begun to work

with goose fat in response to French clients' requests. Hand-in-hand with this goes tailor-made design and packaging. There is one move towards cardboard or other recycled materials as outer wrappings to replace plastic for export to countries such as Germany which are introducing "green" taxes on consumer products. But there is another move back towards tradition. With the overseas market identifying quality with old-fashioned glass preserving jars, they have become increasingly popular for all kinds of products from vegetables and game to fruit and soups.

Vicky Hayward: is a freelance features journalist, travel writer and editor who lives in Madrid. She has written two guidebooks and published numerous articles on Spanish food, culture and society in newspapers and magazines.

See Main Exporters on page 17.

PAELLA TO GO

Paella presents a challenge to the most expert chef. And even more so to those trying to pack its subtle seafood flavors and loose, dry rice into a can or other easy-going travel pack. Such is the difficulty of the problem, but also the size of the market, that everybody takes a bite at it. Frozen food companies sell shortcut packs of mixed,

prepared shellfish while fish-canning companies offer concentrated stocks for those who have access to fresh fish but want more flavor. However, the ready-to-eat manufacturers have taken it one step further. Polgri reckons the best answer is a twin pack, with a can of the *sofrito* fish base and, separately, the measured dry rice

to cook with it. Mamía, using a rotating sterilizing drum for tighter control of timing and temperatures, have managed to can the complete cooked dish, using long-grain rice which remains firm during final heating. And Gemi have come up with a microwave formula using genuine *paella* rice and two flavors - poultry

and seafood - in individual packs with portion control. Meanwhile, for the real aficionado, Gutarra has the ultimate solution: a jar with the three varieties of local bean - one green and two white - that you need to add to the rice with rabbit and snails, to make an authentic Valencian *paella* out of the fresh bean season.

SPAIN

A PARADISE FOR ACTIVE OUTDOORS TOURISM

Spain is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the European country with the most varied geography: since it separates the Atlantic from the Mediterranean and the rest of Europe from Africa, it shares some characteristics of all four of these regions. This circumstance makes it the ideal setting for the most adventuresome tourist activities, in which at every step surprise and excitement bring home to us our condition as living sensitive beings immersed in a world that is natural, wild and beautiful. In this article, we give a brief overview of what Spain has to offer in the field of "active tourism", which is becoming more and more popular throughout the world.

Text: **Almudena Muyo**

Translation: **Bill Myers**



A.G.E. FOTOSTOCK



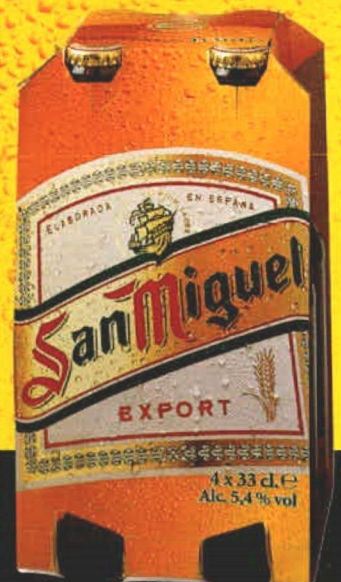
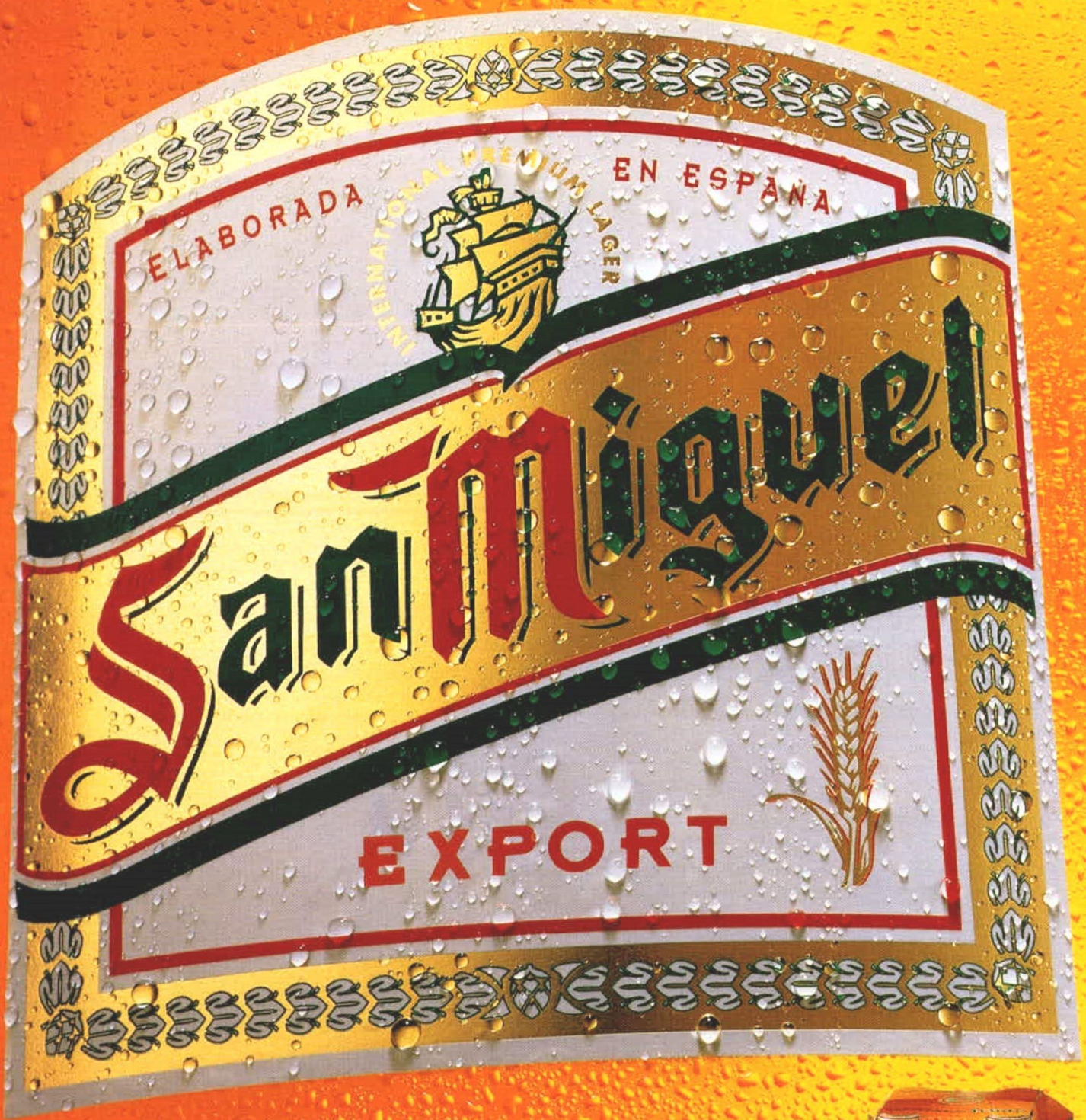


A.G.E. FOTOSTOCK

SPAIN'S GREAT
ADVANTAGE IS ITS
CLIMATIC AND
GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY,
WHICH ALLOWS ONE
SPORT OR ANOTHER
TO BE PRACTISED ALL
YEAR ROUND.

ACTIVE,
OUTDOORS TOURISM IS
CENTERED ON THE
NATIONAL AND NATURAL
PARKS WHERE THE
POSSIBILITIES FOR
MOUNTAIN BIKING OR
HORSEBACK RIDING ARE
ENDLESS ON THE WELL
KEPT-UP TRAILS





The beer from Spain

The social and cultural changes that took place in the 1960s and 70s brought forth a kind of tourism previously unknown in Spain, active and adventure tourism involving sports activities in natural surroundings and close contact with the environment.

Spain boasts many natural settings throughout the country, where peace and tranquillity for some, contact with living beauty for others, provide an escape from the cities, once holiday-time and the good weather roll around. The hectic pace of urban life is emotionally wearing, so human beings search for new sensations to make them feel alive and thus forget the tedium of their daily routine.

Active, outdoors tourism in Spain is centered on the National and Natural Parks, and the Protected Areas, whose size makes Spain the most important natural preserve in Europe. The possibilities are endless, from

hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding along the *Cañadas Reales* - the paths followed in the past by the flocks going to and from summer pastures - and the well kept-up trails in the Cazorla or Segura mountain ranges in Andalusia, to white water descents through the ravines and canyons of the Cantabrian or Pyrenees ranges during most of the year.

In the same way, the devilish Spanish topography - due to which, on a given day, Seville can bake under an intense heat while at the same time a heavy snowfall buries Viella (in the Catalan Pyrenees), or a hailstorm pummels the first sprouts of the fruit trees in the Jerte valley in Cáceres (in the extreme west of the country) - lends itself to endless outdoor activities that can be merely thrilling or downright risky.

One of the pillars of this approach to leisure is the network of rural tourist accommodations, which not only makes the visitor feel part of

the area but are also within anyone's means. In these farmers' cottages, country inns, or manor houses such as the Galician *pazos*, one can enjoy regional culinary delights, prepared by a local cook using recipes handed down through generations.

DIVERSITY AND HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Another of the axes around which outdoor sports tourism revolves, is the national chain of lodges, the Paradores Nacionales, which are usually old palaces, convents, or castles that have been rehabilitated to preserve all their exterior splendor of days of yore, while inside they offer all the modern conveniences that their original inhabitants had to do without. Spain has 83 Paradores, sprinkled throughout the country. They are located in key sites for viewing and enjoying natural beauty and offer wide-ranging programs of adventure, cultural, and sporting activities. One example is the Puebla de Sana-

bria (in Zamora Province) which provides opportunities for exploring the Sanabria Lake Natural Park through hiking, mountain biking, hang-gliding or parachuting, flying ultra-light aircraft, rafting, and white water canoeing or kayaking.

The many firms that specialize in outdoors tourism have as their goal "taking advantage of the possibilities that each of Spain's regions has to offer, without affecting the ecological balance nor the architectural setting" states Juanjo Pujiula, the head of the tour operator Gente Viajera. All such companies provide their clients with the proper equipment and user guides for the activities they want to pursue. At present, the St. James pilgrimage route, Camino de Santiago, running from France to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, in the northwest corner of Spain, (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 30) provides a system of excellent routes for hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding.

In 1987, the wealth of historic architecture and the diversity of the artwork to be seen, moved the Council of Europe to declare the St. James Road the "First European Cultural Itinerary."

Spain's other great cultural routes are the Ruta de la Plata or Silver Road and the Al-Andalus Legacy route. The former - so called because it was used by the Romans to transport Iberia's mineral wealth - passes through Andalusia, Extremadura, and Castile as it runs across Spain from south to north: it begins in Seville and ends in Astorga (Leon). The latter is made up of ten venerable itineraries, which, making use of the ancient routes which connected the Kingdom of Granada with the rest of Andalusia, show us the arts, science, handicrafts, farm produce, cuisine, and



traditional lifestyle of "Al-Andalus", the Muslim Spain of the 8th to 15th centuries. These itineraries, used at one moment in history or another by illustrious travelers, were recently improved in preparation for the World Alpine Ski Championships held near Granada.

WHITE WATER, GUARANTEED THRILLS

Descending the wildest stretches of high mountain rivers with just a bathing suit and life vest or in some kind of craft - kayak, canoe, white water raft (an inflated boat with several oarsmen), "hot dog" (a long inflated tube with several passengers riding astride), or "hydrospeed" (a floating platform shaped like a sled) - is one of the most exciting sports activities. The sharp drops and sudden narrows in Noguera Pallaresa, in the Catalan province of Lérida, make this river an ideal setting for rafting. The 14 kilometers (9 miles) between Llavorsí and Rialp, and the 20 kilometers (12 1/2 miles) from Baró to the canyons of Congost de Collegats are loaded with rapids and small drop-offs, where the momentum of the current and the force of the whirlpools propel the craft along with unexpected twists and turns. Between these two stretches, it has become the custom to stop off to sample the traditional drink of the region, *ratatfia*, which is made with aromatic herbs and which the locals promise will help you catch your breath.

The proximity of the Aigües Tortes National Park and San Mauricio Lake allow the less daring to enjoy the richness of the Aran Valley while those who like to burn adrenaline can take on a white water descent or go for a spin on board a hydrospeed.

The Sierra de Guara, in Huesca Province, stands out as

an incomparable setting for white water descents through breathtaking canyons. The natural erosion of the limestone and the sunken caverns and vaults that riddled the subsoil of Guara, have created a spectacular landscape, full of narrows, canyons, chutes, and ravines. Worth noting are the bluffs carved out by the Vero and Fornacal rivers, especially in spring and summer. The massive flow of these rivers, along with the large falls where it's necessary to rappel down, add to the thrill of the first encounter with this area.

To give your muscles a rest after all that exercise, the best idea is to visit the Río Vero Cultural Park to take in the cave paintings in Barfaluy, Muriecho, and Labarta (between Lecina and Alquézar) or go up to the lookout point at D'Vicón de Alquézar to get a view of the depth of the ravine carved out by the waters of the Vero River.

Those who don't want to take any risks with nature's whims can paddle a kayak or sail a boat on one of the 1,000 reservoirs that dot the Iberian peninsula.

THE SECRETS OF THE DEPTHS

Since the end of the last century, when Edouard Alfred Martel consolidated the science of speleology, there are great opportunities for entering the fascinating world that exists right under our feet. One of the most complete experiences in this field is provided by the deep ravine with limestone walls that has been carved out by the waters of the Lobos River, in the municipality of Ucero in Soria Province. La Galiana, a long horizontal cave, has a network of interconnecting galleries and halls that run on for miles. The water and the dampness have not erased the tell-tale signs of extinct ani-

mal life and prehistoric man. The San Bartolomé Cave, which takes its name from the nearby Romanic-Templar chapel, extends through the 14 kilometers (9 miles) of the Lobos River canyon. One of its branches contains dry valleys where water once ran and where, as legend has it, the Carlist army hid when it was surrounded by Queen Isabel II's loyalist troops during the war of succession to the Spanish throne in the first half of the 19th century.

Those who prefer the vertigo of scaling natural walls using nothing but the strength of their own bodies and a rope for protection against falls, can find the challenge they're looking for in the Gredos mountain range in Avila Province. During the frigid winters, ice covers the old glacial basins, forming frozen waterfalls that lend themselves to all types of climbs.

The entire Central System of mountain ranges enjoys a well-deserved reputation among ice-climbing enthusiasts, especially in the Laguna Grande basin and in the area of the Cinco Lagunas.

The Sierra of Barco de Avila, set a little apart from the central massif and close to the Tornavacas pass, is no exception; down its walls run the largest and most difficult icefalls in the area.

The blocks of ice formed by the waters that run down toward the Nava lagoon, in the Corral del Diablo basin, have different levels of difficulty; some are easy, while others require a great deal of experience.

DISCOVER THE UNKNOWN

The experts in the field agree that Spain has tapped only a tenth of the natural area apt for adventure tourism.

"Spain's great advantage is its climatic and geographic di-

versity, which allows one sport or another to be practiced all year round," emphasizes Salvador Hernández, coordinator for the tour operator Sport Natura.

The "multi-adventure" programs, which combine various activities, are the most sought-after. They often include hang-gliding or parachuting from hilltops. These sports can be practiced wherever the wind currents are right, but the specialists often point out the area around Alpujarra, in Granada Province, because its proximity to the Sierra Nevada brings it gusts that make it possible to stay up in the air for long periods.

The popularity of Alpine skiing has opened up other types of skiing as well, which require instruction to learn, but are catching on fast. One example is mountain skiing, involving adventure excursions over the virgin snowfalls covering high mountain snowpacks or glaciers. Peña Prieta, in the Cantabrian chain, or the Lozoya valley, in the Madrid Sierra, are ideal places to lose oneself in search of nature and adventure during the months of December, January, and February.

There are many options open to people who decide to try out challenging experiences, experiences that have in many cases been forgotten due to the vain attempt to domesticate our natural surroundings. The active, outdoors tourism agencies offer outings with varying levels of difficulty, which are adaptable to any individual who opts to get into nature.

Almudena Muyo is a journalist with the Covarrubia Communications group who regularly contributes to the magazine Spain Travel & Business.

WHERE TO TURN?

Below is a list of companies and agencies in Spain, all of which have "multi-adventure" offerings.

ANDALUSIA

• **C.A.D. PINSAPAR**
Dolores Ibárruri, 4
29400 Ronda (Málaga)
Tel: 34-5-287 62 38
Fax: 34-5-287 29 68

• DIVERAMA

Lepanto, 3 - 3º
18009 Granada
Tel./Fax: 34-58-22 70 64

ARAGON

• **ABISMO AVENTURA**
Trovador, 20, 8ºD
50004 Zaragoza
Tel: 34-76-44 29 76
Fax: 34-76-49 63 82

• AGUA Y CUMBRES

Avda. Ordesa, 18
22330 Aínsa (Huesca)
Tel./Fax: 34-74-50 - 09 83

ASTURIAS

• **TURAVENTURA**
M. Caso de la Villa, 26
33560 Ribadesella (Asturias)
Tel./Fax: 34-8-586 02 67

BALEARIC ISLANDS

• **MALLORCA ACTIVA**
Plaza España, 4
07002 Palma de Mallorca
Tel: 34-71-77 13 70

BASQUE COUNTRY

• **K 2 AVENTOUR**
Bañeru Kalea, 1-3ºC
20800 Zarauz (Guipúzcoa)
Tel./Fax: 34-43-13 09 18

CANARY ISLANDS

• **ASOCIACION DE ACTIVIDADES MEDIOAMBIENTALES AIRE LIBRE**
Cnno. Real Barranquito Hondo, 4
38789 Puntagorda (La Palma)
Tel: 34-22-49 13 06

CANTABRIA

• **WENCES**
Independencia, 10
39570 Potes (Cantabria)
Tel: 34-42-73 21 61

CASTILE-LA MANCHA

• **ECODIVERSION**
Goya, 11-bajo
13500 Puertollano (Ciudad Real)
Tel: 34-26-41 31 92

CASTILE-LEON

• **OCIOTUR**
Sagunto, 4-1ºD
42001 Soria
Tel: 34-75-22 89 23

CATALONIA

• **YETI EMOTIONS**
Borda era e L'Alfons s/n
25595 Llavorsí (Lérida)
Tel: 34-73-62 22 01

• MELIC S.C.P.

Avda. Barcelona, 33-1º 1
08191 Rubí (Barcelona)
Tel: 34-3-588 02 50
Fax: 34-3-588 55 09

EXTREMADURA

• ALONA

Capitán Luna, 30
10858 Villabuena de Gata (Cáceres)
Tel: 34-27-67 30 03

GALICIA

• TURNAGUA

Avda. Ponteareas, 31, 3º
A Estrada (Pontevedra)
Tel./Fax: 34-86-57 16 04

MADRID

• GENTE VIAJERA

Santa Alicia, 19
28018 Madrid
Tel: 34-1-478 01 11
Fax: 34-1-478 58 35

• OPADE

Colmenares, 9-Bajo D
28004 Madrid
Tel: 34-1-521 57 66

MURCIA

• ANTARES

Avda. Primo de Rivera, 10
30008 Murcia
Tel: 34-68-24 53 94
Fax: 34-68-24 23 22

NAVARRA

• ERREKA

Estafeta, 60/62, 2º
31001 Pamplona
Tel: 34-84-22 15 06

LA RIOJA

• EXTRA TURISMO ACTIVO

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Tel: 34-41-20 58 66
Fax: 34-41-20 61 09

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Marqués de Cáceres

A quality white for every occasion!



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.



Never has a bodega in Rioja cared so much for its white wines!

Marqués de Cáceres

Superándonos en la Excelencia

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Wednesday is market day in the town of Olite, in Navarre. The women go out to do the shopping and return with their wicker baskets or cloth-covered carts brightened with red *chistorra* (a local paprika sausage), golden fairy cakes, and bright leafy vegetables grown along the Ebro River: cardoon, large and small artichokes, chicory for salads. In the market stalls they can also buy green beans, asparagus, baby peas and little broad beans.

After returning from a thrilling trip through Navarre, I can still recall in my memory and on my palate a vegetable dish that I enjoyed in Zanito, an excellent restaurant and small hotel on Olite's Mayor Street. Not just a *menestra* (vegetable stew) as the menu indicates, it's a veritable feast of colors and flavors. All shades of green were to be found on the plate: cardoon, borage, peas, and asparagus. As a final touch, two slices of Iberian cured ham top off the dish, whose secret lies in cooking each ingredient just enough. Aside from the "vegetable fiesta", as I called it, I recommend the Tudela lettuce hearts and the freshly picked white asparagus. For fish, the little monkfish (*rapitos*) baked in their own juices with refried garlic is certainly worth trying, and among the meat dishes the best of the best has to be the traditional lamb knuckles (*manicas*) stuffed with *chilidrón* stew (made from chopped red peppers and tomato) and the *jarrete de la casa* (chuck of lamb). When it comes time for dessert, who could resist the anise-flavored cream puffs or the *mamía* (junket) served in a tiny *katku* (the region's traditional wooden receptacle for milk - see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36)

and accompanied by a classic local delicacy, candied walnuts with boiled-down grape juice. **Casa Zanito Rua Mayor, 16 Olite (Navarre). Tel: (34-48) 740-002.**

But on this occasion what took me to the former kingdom of Navarre was not the fruits and vegetables, although they're among the best in the country; I was looking for the bread of yesteryear and the wine of today. I was in search of those loaves that are disappearing from our villages, as they disappeared ages ago from the cities, the ones that are baked in wood-burning ovens which give them flavor. And those Navarrese wines that are turning up in the shops from one day to the next, competitive in price and quality, and that have improved so much in recent years.

The Medieval town of Olite, to the south of the capital of Navarre, Pamplona, is set in the middle of a fertile plain, with a pleasant Mediterranean climate where grapevines, cereals and asparagus are the main agricultural assets. Since 1845, the Ochoa family has been making quality wines in Olite. Javier Ochoa, one of the figures behind the success of this wine region, puts out each year, on both the international and domestic markets, a fascinating range of red, white and pink wines, with and without *crianza* (see Glossary on page 117). A few years ago, this innovative and indefatigable man of vineyards and wines decided that, in addition to his prestigious *reservas*, of various coupages, the

moment had come to make single-variety wine based on his favorite clones from the Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. Since then, nothing can stop him and everything he touches turns into a delicacy for the palate of wine connoisseurs. His latest experience, already on the market and admired by many, is a sweet wine made from one of his favorite varieties, the *Moscatel de Grano Menudo* (from small grapes). This variety, which was about to disappear from these vineyards, is traditional in Olite and Corella and has always been used in making *mistelas*. But Javier Ochoa's moscatel bears little resemblance to the delicious *mistelas* that are a bit high in alcohol content for the modern palate. It's a light wine with only 11.5 per cent alcohol content, made from grapes picked late in the season when the sugar concentrations are high. It's a fresh wine with a delicious, persistent and complex fruity aroma, more in line with the wines produced in colder regions such as Alsace or Bordeaux than with its many Mediterranean cousins. A wine of great versatility that's ideal for accompanying all kinds of desserts, and, for my money, one of Spain's few sweet wines - together with Pedro Ximénez sherry - that can stand up to the blue cheeses of the Leon and Asturias mountains, such as Cabrales (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 20) or Picos blues. The following Ochoas can presently be found on the international and domestic markets: Varietales de Viura

(white) 1995, Rosado de Garnacha 1994 and 1995, Tempranillo (red) 1992 and 1993, Merlot 1992, Moscatel 1994. Among this wine cellar's *reservas*, from 1987 to 1990 and among the *gran reservas* those of 1986 and 1987. **Bodegas Ochoa, S.A. Carretera Zaragoza 21, Olite (Navarre). Tel: (34-48) 740-006. Fax: (34-48) 740-048.**

Speaking of cheeses, Swines and a whole series of gastronomic specialties, the **Vinoteca Algarra, Rua San Francisco, 21, Olite (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 712-279**, in the heart of this gorgeous town, offers its customers an unequalled selection of local products, many of them certified with Denominations of Origin (D.O.s). The D.O. guarantees the provenance and quality of certain products that merit it. In this shop are to be found sheep's milk cheeses such as Roncal and Idiazábal (which are both D.O.s - see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 21 and 18, respectively), as well as cured cottage cheese, *requesón*, from **Casa Larra, in Burgui (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 477-046**. Seated now in front of a boring computer, which makes me so hungry, I think of a nice piece of *requesón* covered with one of the Navarre honeys, especially the one from oaks that's made in the hives of **Isabel Tellería in Elso (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 306-619**. Rosemary honey is my favorite. Nor could I resist buying several *chistorras* to fry for hors d'oeuvres back home in London, a string of *chorizo* peppers (dried red peppers that are soaked to soften their flesh) to make Rioja-style potatoes and Biscay-style cod, as well as one kilo of beans from Sangüesa and another from Puente de la Reina, just so as to be able to compare them, in case some are better than others, which I doubt, since they're just different. In the area around Olite, olive and almond trees share their lives with the grapevines. The Vinoteca Algarra is also the exclusive outlet for an

In Navarre Lands

olive oil, but it's not one of those from around Olite, rather, it's from near Arróniz, another village in the region. It's pressed by the **Trujal Mendía Cooperative Arróniz (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 537-651**, from the Negral, Empeltre and Vidrial olive varieties. The Vidrial olives don't fully ripen on the tree, which gives their oil a very distinctive flavor. It's golden straw colored, with a hint of a greenish hue, a bit high in acidity (0.8 percent), but flavorful and should make fried eggs taste great.

From the windows of the Olite castle you can clearly make out the village of Ujué, in the mountains, and that's where I set out for, accompanied by Javier Ochoa, in search of an extraordinarily beautiful complex of historic architecture from the 11th to 14th centuries, a delicious bread that's about to disappear and a dish of "shepherd's crumbs". The day was clear and rather chilly and the panoramic view from the much admired Santa María de Ujué church, one of the favorites of the Kings and Queens of Navarre, made me feel free as a bird. In the distance, small plots of vegetables or Garnacha grapes, flocks of sheep and rich fields of wheat contrasted with the harsh stone of the houses. This village, set in tiers on a slope under the gaze of the Santa María church, sleeps in winter and awakens with the arrival in summer of some Anglo-Saxon visitor or another seeking refuge in this unique place, and, now and again, buying and restoring a house. However, many of the tourists, both local and from abroad, come to Ujué in search of good food and a good glass of Navarrese wine. In one of the great stone houses beside the esplanade that leads to the church, the **Mesón Las Torres, Santa María street, unnumbered, Ujué (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 738-105**, offers shelter, an impressive hearth where lamb is roasted, and a brief, but excellent menu. The "shepherd's crumbs" (*migas*

de pastor) are the house forte. The recipe for this dish couldn't be simpler. It comes down to lightly frying crumbs made from two- or three-day-old crusty bread, dampened with water and prepared in a special frying pan - rather deep and with two handles - along with a *sofrito* of sautéed tomato, garlic and cured ham or *longaniza* sausages, all cooked just enough. The secret is to bring the crumbs to the table steaming, spongy, and tasty. At Mesón Las Torres, the shepherd's crumbs start the cooking process on the iron stove in the kitchen but finish it at the diners' tables. When the chef gives the signal, the waiter places on each table a kind of brazier to set each frying pan on. The dish is eaten with a wooden spoon. What is beyond doubt is that the local Ujué bread makes for the best crumbs to be had in Spain. But the future is not rosy for these crumbs: the village baker, after a lifetime of making bread through the long winter nights and the short summer nights, will retire next November and no one will follow in

her footsteps, since the young people leave the village in search of "prosperity." The Ujué bread will disappear forever and our culinary culture will have lost an irreplaceable treasure. It's a white bread with a crunchy crust and fragrant crumbs made the old-fashioned way, with good wheat and little leavening. They've promised to give me the recipe, which I will include in the next issue. Meanwhile, here is a simple and delicious recipe for bread biscuits made with olive oil, which my children so enjoy. Makes 15-20 biscuits. Ingredients: 5 gr fresh yeast, 70 ml tepid milk, 35 ml tepid water, 70 ml olive oil, a little salt, 175 gr "00" flour". Method: Dissolve the yeast in a little milk, then add the rest of the milk and the water. Mix in the olive oil and salt, then start adding the flour a little at a time. When all the flour has been incorporated, the dough should be very elastic, coming cleanly away from your hands. Roll out the dough thinly on a floured surface and cut with a pastry cutter into small discs. Place

on a greased baking sheet and prick each biscuit in several places with a fork. Set aside to rise at room temperature for 30 minutes. Bake the biscuits in an oven preheated to 200-220°C/400-425°F/gas mark 6-7 for 12 to 15 minutes - they should have very little color. Allow to cool.

Well, to get back to the crumbs, if you don't have good bread on hand, or if you simply don't feel like cooking, **Cárnicas Floristán** has for some years now been marketing precooked shepherd's crumbs as prepared in the area around Las Bárdenas (Navarre), which have only to be heated for three minutes and eaten. They turn out rather well by themselves and even better with fried eggs. **Cárnicas Floristán, S.A., 31513 Arguedas (Navarre) Tel: (34-48) 830-156 Fax: (34-48) 830-490.**

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 Embassy Commercial Office located in the U.K.



However carefully and lovingly prepared, a meal is just a meal unless accompanied by a good wine. "Good wine" does not necessarily mean an expensive wine, just a wine that goes well with the food being served. Starting with this issue, we shall be recommending a Spanish wine to accompany all our recipes. Rather than naming specific labels, we shall be giving a type of wine - for example, a red *crianza* wine made from Tempranillo grapes from the D.O. Ca. Rioja - because wineries do not export all their brands and vintages every year to all countries and also because the names of some wines are changed depending on their destination. Ignacio Medina, a food and wine writer and expert on such matters - as well as the author of our leading article - will be taking on the job of finding the right partner for each recipe and we hope this initiative will open new doors for lovers of Spanish food and wine.

Warm Asparagus Salad

EBRO RIVER RECIPES

Recipes and wines selected by Ignacio Medina

The quality of the asparagus cultivated in the Navarre Ribera region has given rise to the D.O. Espárrago de Navarra. The recipe given below is very popular in the area and is one of the most delicious ways of eating asparagus. The secret lies in using fresh asparagus while still warm after cooking.

SERVES 6:
24 fresh white asparagus spears
Virgin olive oil
Sherry vinegar
Salt

Cut off the woody part of the asparagus and peel with a knife. Place in a vertical position with the tips upwards in a deep pan full of water with 10 grams of salt for every liter of water. Boil for 20 or 30 minutes, depending on the size of the spears.

When cooked, drain well and arrange on a serving dish. Dress with the virgin olive oil, sherry vinegar and salt. Serve while still warm.

Recommended wine: Fino sherry. D.O. Jerez.

The combination of the characteristic bitterness of the asparagus, which is accentuated when served warm, and the acidity of the vinegar require a wine with a good structure and plenty of character. The ideal choice is a Fino sherry. The flavors of the wine and food blend instantly giving rise to other more complex flavors and aromas while the most aggressive characteristics of both are toned down.

Cardoon with Almonds

Cardoon (a type of thistle) is the unrivaled star of the winter crops from the Ribera del Ebro market gardens, especially in La Rioja and Navarre. The delicacy and incomparable personality of this vegetable make it a traditional Christmas favorite with Rioja families.

SERVES 6:
1.5 kg of cardoon stalks
40 gr almonds
2 garlic cloves
3 lemons

Virgin olive oil
White pepper
Salt

The most laborious part of this recipe is the cleaning of the cardoon which must be tender and white. First, any leaves are removed, then the stalks are separated and trimmed. Before going any further, fill the sink or a basin with cold water and add to it the juice of 1 1/2 lemons. Cut the rest of the lemons into pieces and keep at hand.

Scrape each of the stalks inside and out with a small knife, removing any loose strings and rubbing each with a little lemon to prevent it from going black. As each piece is cleaned place it in the lemon-flavored water. Then cut the stalks into small pieces and boil in a covered pan in plenty of water with salt and a couple of pieces of lemon for about two hours.

Meanwhile, grind the almonds in a mortar.

When the thistle is practically done, remove almost all the cooking water leaving just a couple of inches and add the ground almonds blended in a little of the stock. Leave to simmer until the sauce has thickened.

Recommended wine: A white *crianza* from the D.O.Ca. Rioja.

The characteristic bitter flavor of the thistle practically disappears in combination with the slight sweetness of the almonds and the end result is a very delicate and smooth-tasting dish. To drink with it, we need a dry wine with a medium structure and not too acid. Our suggestion is a white *crianza* (see Glossary on page 117) Rioja made from Viura grapes and aged in oak for several months.

Fish Romesco

Romesco is originally a sauce from the area of Tarragona on the Mediterranean coast. The name comes from one of its ingredients - a small dry red pepper also known as a *ñora* - and it is also given to certain fish stews that use a similar sauce.

SERVES 6:

1.5 kg fish (at least 3 different types)	1 dry red chili pepper
150 gr prawns, shrimps or crayfish	1 slice fried bread
150 gr clams or mussels in their shells	1 sprig parsley, chopped
1/2 liter fish stock	125 ml dry white wine
1 head of garlic	Flour
12 peeled and roasted almonds	Olive oil
12 peeled and roasted hazelnuts	Pepper
1 <i>ñora</i> or <i>romesco</i>	Salt

Cut the fish into pieces about two inches thick, dust with flour and brown lightly in a little oil in an earthenware dish. Drain and set aside. In the same oil sauté the *ñora* and red chili pepper (first soaked for two hours then very finely chopped) together with half the peeled garlic cloves. Once the garlic has turned color, remove the ingredients from the oil using a *skimming* ladle. Crush them in a mortar, gradually adding the nuts, the remaining garlic cloves, the fried bread and the parsley and moistening the mixture with a few drops of white wine. Work the contents of the mortar until a fine, uniform paste is formed. Transfer to the dish and fry gently for 1 minute, adding more oil if necessary. Add one tablespoon of flour, stir in and fry for a further minute before adding the fish stock and remaining white wine. Cook gently for five minutes to thicken.

Add the fish and shellfish (they should be half-covered), season to taste with salt and pepper and cook uncovered for six or seven minutes. Serve immediately in the dish used for cooking.

Recommended wine: Red wine from the D.O. Tarragona

The full flavor of this fish dish requires well-structured wines with aromatic intensity and persistent flavors so the most obvious choice is a red wine. We favor one of the new reds being produced in Tarragona from Garnacha and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.

RECIPES

Chicken al chilindrón

A *chilindrón* is a type of stew that is characteristic of the central provinces bordering the Ebro River - Aragon, La Rioja and Navarre. Tomato, onion and peppers are the essentials, whereas the main ingredients can be lamb, beef, chicken, or rabbit. The dish can also include a variety of vegetables depending on seasonal and local availability.

SERVES 6:

1.5 kg chicken
100 gr salted streaked pork fat
6 red peppers
1 onion
2 tomatoes
3 garlic cloves

1 glass red wine
Parsley
Olive oil
Ground pepper
Salt

Cut the chicken into medium-sized pieces. Peel and finely chop the onion and garlic. Peel, seed and dice the tomatoes.

In a frying pan, gently fry in olive oil the onion, one of the garlic cloves and the parsley until the onion is soft. Add the tomatoes, season, and cook gently for about ten minutes. Cut the pork into small strips and fry in one tablespoon of olive oil in an earthenware dish. Then add the chicken and brown lightly. Add the finely-sliced peppers, the remaining garlic (finely chopped) and the tomato and onion mixture.

Season with salt and pepper, add the red wine, cover and cook gently until the chicken is tender (about one hour), stirring occasionally. If necessary, more wine can be added.

Taste for salt and serve in the same dish.

Recommended wine: A red *reserva* from the D.O. Navarra.

The tomato, pepper and wine bring out the flavor of the chicken, giving character and intensifying the taste of the dish. The wine chosen will depend on the number and amount of the ingredients used on each occasion. For this specific recipe we have found a magnificent match - a red *reserva* (see Glossary on page 117) wine from the D.O. Navarra made from Tempranillo grapes and submitted to long aging in oak. This wine gives distinction to the dish, enhancing its flavors.

Precooked Dishes



Traditional Navarran Cooking

Mussels in a Marinade Sauce

FRESH MUSSEL

Recipes and wines selected by Ignacio Medina

2.5 kg mussels
200 ml olive oil
200 ml wine vinegar
200 ml water
1 tbsp sweet paprika

1 tbsp hot paprika
2 bay leaves
Peppercorns
Salt

Clean and scrape the mussels and cook over a gentle heat in a pan with three glasses of water until they open up. Remove the mussels from their shells and leave to cool.

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan. Fry the mussels then drain and set aside. When the oil is cool, add the vinegar, water, paprika, salt, bay leaves and ten or twelve peppercorns. Return the pan to the heat and boil for ten or fifteen minutes.

Leave the sauce to cool before adding the mussels.

Recommended wine: White Albariño, D.O. Rías Baixas.

Here the choice of wine will depend on the type of vinegar used for the sauce. The sourer the dressing, the more structure, intensity and persistent the wine's aromas and flavors must have.

If a light vinegar with low acidity is used the sauce will be gentler and more delicate and, in this case, a good combination is a white Albariño from the D.O. Rías Baixas. Its acidity will complement that of the marinade sauce and the latter will go well with the fruitiness and aromatic intensity of the wine.

SERVES 6:

2 kg mussels
1 kg onions
2 tbsps olive oil
1 bay leaf

1 glass dry white wine
Saffron
Pepper
Salt

Peel and finely chop the onions. Fry gently in the olive oil until soft and transparent. Add the bay leaf, the glass of wine and two liters of water. Boil until the liquid has reduced to half.

Meanwhile, clean the mussels under the tap then steam to open. Strain the cooking water and add to the boiling onion stock.

When reduced, place in the blender to liquidize. This soup can be diluted, reduced or thickened to taste. Add a few strands of saffron and cook for a few minutes. Then add the mussels and boil for one minute more.

Serve hot. If wished, when adding the saffron, very finely diced cubes of carrot and zucchini can also be added.

Recommended wine: White Rueda Superior. D.O. Rueda.

This cream soup has a delicate, subtle flavor and elegant aromas. The attractive combination of the mussels with the fragrance of the saffron can be enhanced when partnered by one of the white wines produced according to the standards of the Rueda Denomination of Origin for wines classified as Rueda Superior.

These wines are made with a minimum of 85% of Verdejo grapes. These very aromatic, smooth and syrupy grapes give a wine with body that is an ideal partner for this cream soup.

Cream of Mussels With Saffron

Rice With Mussels

SERVES 6:

1.5 kg mussels
6 coffee cups of rice
100 gr peas
2 artichokes
1/2 onion
1 medium-sized green pepper

1 ripe tomato
1 garlic clove
Parsley
Olive oil
Saffron
Pepper

Clean and scrape the mussels. Place in a pan with three glasses of water. Cover and heat until the mussels open up.

Remove the mussels from their shells and set aside. Carefully strain the cooking water.

Finely chop the onion, garlic and a sprig of parsley. Fry gently in olive oil, preferably in an earthenware dish, until the onion is soft. Add the mussels, sauté for a few seconds then add the very finely chopped pepper and tomato. Season with pepper and a few strands of saffron, add the rice and heat gently for one minute.

Add 12 coffee cups of the cooking water made up with extra water. Turn up the heat and bring to a boil. Then turn down again, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Uncover the pan and add the peas and cooked artichokes cut in four. Keep a rolling boil for a further eight to ten minutes until the rice is cooked. Serve at once.

The water used for cooking the mussels will be quite salty so no salt needs to be added to the recipe.

Recommended wine: A young red wine such as a Rioja Alavesa from the D.O.Ca. Rioja. (The Rioja Alavesa belongs to the D.O.Ca. Rioja but is located within the Basque Country.)

The fragrance, amplitude, intense fruitiness and the touch of bitterness that characterize the young red wines produced in the Rioja Alavesa by the procedure known as *maceración carbónica** make them ideal partners for this recipe.

Especially in the first six months, this wine makes a very pleasing partner for a hearty and tasty dish such as this rice with mussels.

* Carbonic maceration is the method traditionally used for preparing young wines in the Rioja Alavesa. The grapes are not pressed but placed directly in a tank with a small opening at the base and left until the must ferments inside the grapes making them burst open. The must then drips through to another tank below.

Mussel Pie

SERVES 6:

2 kg mussels
4 medium-sized onions
2 medium-sized green peppers
3 garlic cloves
2 tbsps chopped parsley
1 glass olive oil
1 tbsp paprika
1 bay leaf
Saffron
Salt

PASTRY:

300 gr cornstarch
1 egg
1 cup olive oil
50 ml milk
20 gr fresh yeast
Salt

Clean and scrape the mussels and cook gently in a pan with three glasses of water until they open. Remove them from their shells and set aside. Gently fry the finely-chopped onions and peppers. Crush the parsley and garlic in a mortar and add together with the paprika and saffron (dissolved in two tbsps of the cooking water). Sauté for a few minutes before adding the mussels.

**Virgin Olive Oil Perfumed
With Crushed Garlic
and Fresh Rosemary**

**Garlic Soup With
Four-Way Garlic**

To make the pastry, take one third of the flour and make a well in the center. Dissolve the yeast in 3 tbsps of warm water and mix it into the flour. Knead the dough, place it in cold water and leave until it rises to the surface.

Mix the rest of the flour with the egg, oil and milk. Season and work until a fine pastry dough is obtained. Mix both doughs until well combined. Spread half the pastry over the base of a greased oven dish. Add the filling then cover with the rest of the pastry. Bake in a hot oven until the pastry is cooked and golden.

Recommended wine: Red D.O. Valdeorras.

The pastry here acts as a contrast to the intense flavor of some of the ingredients of the filling (such as the mussels, garlic, saffron and paprika), toning down any sharpness and rounding off the flavors.

To accompany this dish, there is no need to leave Galicia. The perfect partner can be found in a smooth, fruity and full red wine from the D.O. Valdeorras.

GARLIC

**Recipes selected by Vicky Hayward
Wines selected by Ignacio Medina**

Manuel de la Osa Moya of Las Rejas restaurant in Pedroñeras (Cuenca) uses this olive oil for marinating raw anchovies or meat before roasting, for flavoring stews and for dressing salads. Ideally it should be made only 24 hours before you use it. Quantities can be adjusted accordingly.

MAKES 1 LITER

200 gr fresh rosemary, preferably in flower
1 head of purple garlic
1 liter virgin olive oil

Put the rosemary into a large, clean glass jar, crush the garlic - about 8 cloves - and add to the jar, then pour over the oil. Stir and leave to macerate for 24 hours. To keep for up to a week, drain off the oil from its flavorings or use whole cloves in their skin which will not ferment.

Perhaps the best loved of Spanish garlic recipes are Castile's *sopas de ajo*, literally garlic sops, made with a slow-cooked garlic stock, country bread and a poached egg. In northern Castile they are made with lard; in the southern *mesetas* with olive oil. You also find them in Andalusia, often with so much bread added that there are more sops than liquid. In *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38 (page 106) you will find a recipe for a traditional garlic soup. Here is a quite different approach, from Manuel de la Osa Moya, using small quantities of garlic four ways - sautéed, boiled, raw and fried - to develop all the possibilities of flavor. The quality of the bread is vital.

He suggests drinking a Manchegan red *crianza* (see Glossary on page 117) with this, ideally a varietal wine made with the native Cencibel grape.

THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL GOURMET CLUB SHOW

Madrid, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th April 1997

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.



Products to be shown

Wines, spirits and liqueurs.
Sweets, chocolates and biscuits.
Condiments, spices, oils and vinegars.
Apéritifs and beers.

Cheeses.
Meat, fish and vegetable conserves.
Charcuterie.
Patés, foie-gras and duck and goose by-products.
Accessories for the table (china, glass, linen, etc.).
Various (kitchen utensils, books, specialized magazines, etc.).

Activities and conferences

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

the 458 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 31,000 professionals visited the show.

The result of the tenth Show

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

Forecast for the eleventh Show

Exhibitors: 500.
Professional visitors: 35,000.



For further information about the eleventh 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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SERVES 2:

400 ml chicken stock, made with 1 chicken carcass, 1 skinned onion, 1 head of garlic, 1 trimmed leek, 1 peeled carrot and 1 cured ham bone
100 ml olive oil
5 cloves of garlic
100 gr cured ham chunks

1/2 large, ripe red tomato, skinned and chopped
1 tsp sweet *pimentón* or paprika
2-3 very fine slices of unprocessed country bread
4 cumin seeds
8 saffron threads
1-2 eggs

Make the chicken stock, simmering it for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Put all the olive oil except 3-4 tablespoons into a frying pan. Slice two of the garlic cloves lengthways, sauté them till golden and keep on one side. Crush two more cloves with the back of a knife and sauté until golden. Add the cured ham and sauté it too. Add the tomato and *pimentón*, or paprika, fry and stir quickly, then add the chicken stock. Leave it to simmer for about 30 minutes to gather body and flavor. Meanwhile, toast the finely sliced bread, rub it with a halved clove of raw garlic and dribble the remaining olive oil over it. With a mortar and pestle, make a pounded mixture of the garlic, saffron and cumin seed. Stir this immediately into the soup, add the bread and, finally, break in the egg. Cook the soup until the egg is poached, but the yolk still soft. Locals like stirring the egg to ribbons in the soup and some people add a glass of red wine.

Potatoes in Garlic, Almond and Tomato Sauce

This Andalusian dish called *ajo-pollo* (garlic - chicken) is one of literally dozens of Spanish garlicky potato dishes and has many local variations with a bay leaf and cumin, lemon juice and saffron, or beaten eggs. The one ingredient it never contains, curiously, is chicken. The garlic is, typically for Andalusia, pounded in a *majado* with almonds and bread.

SERVES 4:

1.75 kg potatoes
100 ml olive oil
500 ml chicken stock
3 cloves of garlic, skinned

75 gr almonds
1 slice crusty bread
1/2 ripe tomato
Salt

Peel and cut up the potatoes, sauté them in an earthenware casserole with half the olive oil and bathe with the chicken stock.

Heat the remaining olive oil in a frying pan and fry the garlic cloves, almonds and bread. Add the skinned and grated tomato, mix and pound in a mortar or put into the blender. Work until you have a smooth paste and pour into the casserole with the potatoes. Check and correct the salt, add water if necessary and continue cooking until the potatoes are tender.

Recommended wine: Red *crianza* (see Glossary on page 117) from the D.O. Terra Alta.

The almonds and tomatoes are absolutely essential in this dish to balance out the ample presence of garlic, taming its sharpness and giving the dish a full but rounded flavor.

Even so, this is a hearty dish and its strong taste goes well with very structured wines with plenty of character and persistent, intense aromas and flavors. These characteristics are to be found in the wines made from Garnacha grapes and aged by oxidation in the D.O. Terra Alta.

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FINO QUINTA

La Quinta Esencia Del Fino

Extremeño Baked Garlic, Tomato and Pepper Salad

The cooking of westerly Extremadura is among the most garlicky in Spain and today the region is also a major producer of garlic. Whole heads of garlic are also baked in this way for use in sausage-making, so the meat doesn't ferment. But apart from that, it's a wonderful way to cook garlic because it gives such a soft, nutty flavor.

SERVES 4:

500 gr red peppers
500 gr green peppers
1 head of garlic
500 gr ripe tomatoes

Olive oil, to taste
Sherry vinegar
Hard-boiled eggs, optional
Salt

Wipe clean all the vegetables. Rub the peppers, the whole head of garlic and the tomatoes with olive oil, cut a cross in the tomatoes, and roast all together on a large baking sheet in the oven for 30-40 minutes. Put them into a dish, cover with a cloth and leave to cool for at least an hour. Peel (don't wash) and cut the pepper into strips, and put into a salad dish. Add the peeled garlic cloves and the skinned tomatoes. Dress with olive oil, sherry vinegar, salt and a spoonful of iced water. You can arrange hard-boiled eggs over the top. Serve at room temperature.

Recommended wine: Fino sherry. D.O. Jerez.

The character of this dish is marked by the acidity of the vinegar in contrast with the pungent flavor of the garlic and, to match it, a wine needs to have plenty of personality, structure, strength, intensity and persistence. These are the distinguishing characteristics of the Fino sherries produced in the Denomination of Origin Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda. To go with this dish, the only type of wine that could possibly compete with such sherries would be red wines aged in oak and recently bottled so they would be unfinished, harsh and slightly aggressive - no comparison with the elegance and delicacy of Fino.

Partridge Breast and Legs in Escabeche With Herbs and Garlic

Another Manchegan classic, in which raw garlic cloves are left macerating to give the game and its jellied stock a subtle tang.

In this version, Manuel de la Osa Moya uses halved garlic heads and cooks the breast and leg meat separately, so both meats emerge at their best. This needs to be made a day ahead or keeps well for up to 10 days in a hermetically sealed container. At Las Rejas, Manuel likes to serve this with a garnish of orange carrot-flavored olive oil and a light green thyme jelly.

SERVES 4:

2 partridges
100 ml olive oil
3 heads of garlic, skin on, cut across
in half, plus 1 skinned clove of garlic
1 onion, skinned and roughly sliced
1 carrot, peeled and sliced
1 wineglass (125-150 ml) of sherry vinegar
2 wineglasses (250-300 ml)

of dry Manchegan white wine
2 bay leaves
A few small sprigs of thyme
and rosemary
6-8 peppercorns
2 cloves
1 liter of chicken stock

Wipe clean the partridges and dry them. Use a sharp knife to cut off the legs, then slice the breasts away from the bone. Leave the skin on the legs, but remove it from the breasts.

Put half the olive oil into a large heavy-based pan and sauté the halved garlic heads, onion, and carrot slices. When they are softened, add the partridge legs and sauté until golden brown.

Add the sherry vinegar, white wine, bay leaves, thyme and rosemary sprigs, peppercorns, and cloves. Let sit to reduce slightly, then add the chicken stock and cook for about 25-30 minutes until the partridge legs

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Venison Sautéed With Garlic

are tender. When they are done, remove from the heat.

Meanwhile, lightly sauté the partridge breasts separately with the skinned garlic clove in the remaining olive oil. The partridge meat should be sealed and golden, but barely cooked inside. Transfer the partridge and garlic clove to the *escabeche*, off the heat, at a temperature around 60°C/140°F.

Put in a cool place, covered, for 24 hours and serve at room temperature with the halved garlic heads as a garnish or for garlic lovers to eat.

Recommended wine: Chardonnay fermented in oak from the D.O. Penedés.

It is mainly the garlic in this *escabeche* or marinade sauce that perfumes the partridge, resulting in a mild and delicate dish that is made special by its complex and elegant aromas.

The usual partners could be used: light *crianza* (see Glossary on page 117) red wines, aged briefly in oak, then for a longer period in the bottle (such as a Navarre red or one of the new La Mancha red wines).

But we can go further by selecting a wine to complement the aromatic complexity of the dish. Perfect for their acidity, fragrance and structure are the Chardonnay wines produced in the Penedés region. The combination gives a variety of surprising and pleasing flavors.

Much of the venison hunted in the rolling, forested hills of the Montes de Toledo is exported, but some is served in small village restaurants on the plain below, either braised with onion, garlic and wine vinegar or, more unusually, cooked this way, marinated then sautéed with garlic.

SERVES 4:

1 kilo lean venison, cut into 4 large chunks	1 tsp sweet <i>pimentón</i> or paprika
4 cloves of garlic, sliced	2 tsps oregano
100 ml olive oil	4 crushed white peppercorns
For the garlic marinade:	3 bay leaves
4 cloves of garlic, crushed in their skin	1 wineglass of white wine

Everything for the garlic marinade is pounded together. The venison, cut into large chunks, is tossed in and left to marinate for three to six days (I recommend only three) with occasional stirring. The meat is removed, cut with a large sharp knife into fine small pieces and quick-fried in a heavy pan or on a griddle with thin slices of garlic in very hot olive oil.

Recommended wine: Red *Gran Reserva* from the D.O.C. Rioja.

While the venison is the protagonist of this recipe with the *escabeche* or marinade sauce playing a secondary role, the latter has the important mission of giving the dish its character by toning down its robustness and giving elegance and richness to the flavors.

This hearty dish pairs well with a red D.O.Ca. Rioja that has undergone a long aging process, preferably a *Gran Reserva* (see Glossary page 117) that has been aged in the bottle for four or five years.



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Fax: 34/5/585.01.45 - Telex 72126

or:

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GLOSSARY

WINE AGING TERMS

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. (Note - in several regions the minimum time in cask is 12 months.)

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.

Notes:

1. Many Denominations insist that the oak casks must be no more than 225 liters, however, national legislation allows oak casks up to 1000 liters.
2. Wines are often kept in vats for a few months prior to aging in casks, so the arithmetic varies for each one.
3. Many *bodegas* age their wines for more than the stipulated minimum periods.

SHERRY

The aging system for sherry is the Solera System, which is made up of a number of stages through which the younger wines pass, acquiring the characteristics of the older wines, thus ensuring the continuity of style. The butts (oak casks of 500 liters each) in the earlier stages are known as *criaderas*, and the last and oldest butts in the system are the Solera stage from which the wine is taken for bottling. The Solera stage is topped up from the next oldest stage (the first and oldest *criadera*) and that in turn is topped up from the next oldest. There is no stipulated number of stages, but four to six would be the average. No more than thirty per cent of the wine may be removed from the Solera in any one year.

CAVA

This is the Denomination of Origin for sparkling wines produced by the traditional method, that is to say, that the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle in which it is sold. The *cava* demarcated region is in several zones, the most important of which is Catalonia. The others are Aragon, Navarre, La Rioja, Castile-Leon, Extremadura and Valencia. The Cava Denomination should not be confused with other denominations that might be associated with the provinces in which *cava* is produced.

The minimum aging period for *cava* wines is 9 months in the bottle, though many spend between 18 months and 3 years, and a few up to 5 years.

Fluid Measures

METRIC/ BRITISH STANDARD

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

Weight

METRIC/OUNCES & POUNDS

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

Fluid Measures

METRIC/U.S. STANDARD

10 milliliters = 2 teaspoons
 50 milliliters = 3 tablespoons
 100 milliliters = 3 1/2 ounces
 250 milliliters = 1 cup + 1 tablespoon
 500 milliliters = 1 pint + 2 tablespoons
 1 liter = 1 quart + 3 tablespoons
 1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters
 1 tablespoon = 15 milliliters
 1 ounce = 30 milliliters
 1 cup = 235 milliliters
 1 pint = 475 milliliters
 1 quart = 850 milliliters
 1 gallon = 3 3/4 liters

Oven Temperature

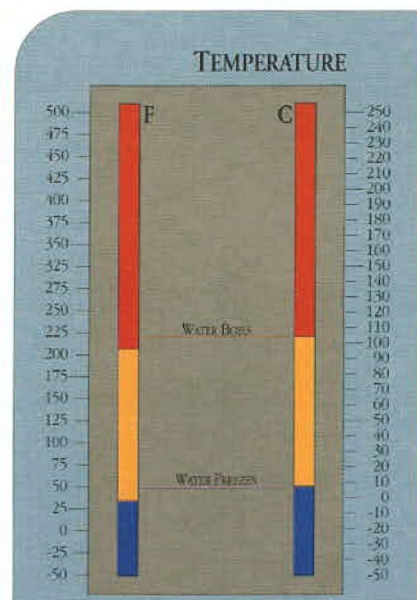
TEMPERATURE

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

DIAL NUMBER

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 (II) DANONE YOGURT

Yogurt goes back thousands of years, but its arrival in Western Europe is fairly recent. It all started at the end of the last century, when Russian biologist Ilija Metchnikoff of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, who was researching the cause of premature aging in humans, discovered that yogurt prevented the growth of bacteria harmful to the intestines and that this fact could explain the widespread longevity among the inhabitants of the Balkans, who had been making and eating yogurt for generations.

In 1919, these beneficial effects prompted Isaac Carasso to begin making yogurt in his laboratory in central Barcelona, close to the Ramblas, using the same ingredients as in the Balkans: fresh milk and lactic fermenting agents. When it came time to give a brand name to his product, Carasso thought of his son, Daniel, and came up with the trademark "Danone."

Doctors were the first to recommend this new product, in a break with the dietary habits of the times. At first sold in pharmacies, it soon became available in dairy stores and other shops as well.

Danone picked up its first international award in 1922 in Milan as the first company to market yogurt, not only in Spain but anywhere in Western Europe. That was just the beginning of a long series of national and international prizes given to Danone in well-deserved recognition of the quality of its product. Danone commenced production in France in 1929. In 1941, it set up operations in the USA, and at the end of World War II, the company returned to France before joining forces with Gervais in 1967.



But the novelty offered by Danone lay not just in putting yogurt on the market, but also in the concept of selling it in single-serving containers. Initially these were brown ceramic cups in a paper wrapper with the company logo. This first container was recyclable, as was its successor, introduced in 1941 and which also became a classic, made of transparent glass with a foil lid. At the end of the 1960s, modern technology and the trend toward disposables would bring the colored waxed cardboard cup, which later gave way to plastic in the 1970s. Since the 1980s, the single-serving containers have been grouped in clusters of eight, with the shape and design varying according to the product. At the same time, as a bow to the past, the classic glass container is still marketed, albeit with a more modern design that includes the name inscribed in relief.

The logotype, meanwhile, evolved along with the container, following the esthetic trends of the times although always conserving the

initial concept of using simple capital letters, later with triple underlining.

The taste for simplicity was to be found from the very first logotype, in which the unadorned, geometric shapes contrasted with the ornate styles of the period. The early logo, in white on brown, strove to imitate the white of the wrapper over the brown ceramic of the container. Following this, from the 1940s to the 1960s, highly stylized capital letters, painted on the glass jar in charmingly rounded and asymmetric shapes, were used to appeal to children, for whom yogurt is such an appropriate food. The present logo, consisting of classic capital sans serif letters, in white on a blue background and with triple underlining, is designed to appeal to all consumers.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the company has developed an effective public relations program, especially through television, which has led to its being viewed as the brand which best responds to the needs and wishes of all Spaniards. Among its many advertising campaigns - all focused on the health and physical well-being of the consumers as well as on sports activities and child development - one that stands out is the TV ad produced in 1993, "Learn from your children," which has come to be the Spanish commercial that has received the most awards around the world.

In 1991 Danone Spain joined the French group BSN, which in 1995 began calling itself the Danone Group, now number one worldwide in fresh dairy products.

José María Ortega Sanz
Translation: **Bill Myers**

Bodegas Bilbainas was established as a company in 1901, though its history goes back as far as 1859.

It owns an estate of 260 hectares of vineyards surrounding the bodega itself in Haro, the heart of Rioja Alta. The grape varieties grown include Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo.

The red wine VIÑA POMAL comes from an exceptional vineyard of 100 hectares on the state of Bodegas Bilbainas in Haro, Spain.

VIÑA POMAL RESERVA 1989 comprises 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha and the remaining 10% almost equal proportions of Graciano and Mazuelo grapes.



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