

FOOD WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN

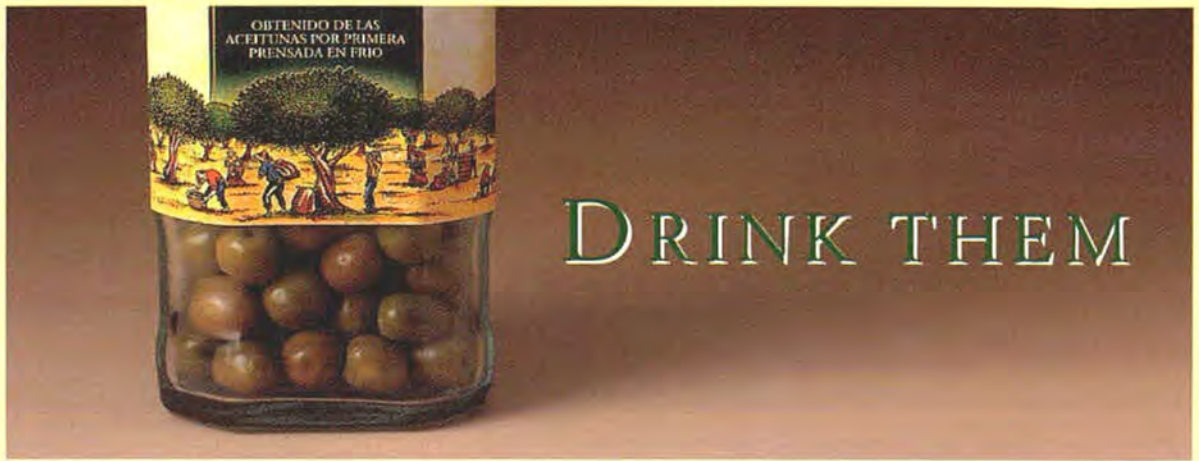
G O U R M E T O U R

No. 42 MAY-AUGUST, 1997

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

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SPAIN IN FOCUS: BULLFIGHTING • VINEYARD ROUTES OF SPAIN: CATALONIA
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Information and Subscription

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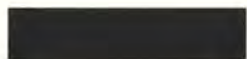
The series we started earlier this year continues in this issue, and some new ones start up too. Our "Vineyard Routes" this time take us to Catalonia where, in a fairly limited geographical area, there is a large number of Denominations of Origin and a wide variety of wines—from the very characteristic Priorato to the internationally famous *cava*. And we show how this variety is reflected too in the local landscapes and monuments.

The "Thirty Something" article covers three protagonists of the world of wine, each with a "wine-drenched" background. We also describe a visit to Navarre, a small region sometimes compared with California, where there has been something of a wine revolution over the past decade. Now that things have settled down, it is rediscovering the virtues of some native varieties that had long lain forgotten.

"Spain in Focus," which we are featuring on our cover page throughout 1997, this time focuses on bullfighting. A controversial subject, but our aim is not to take sides, just to illustrate an age-old tradition that many Spaniards, and foreigners too, show a keen interest in and that has penetrated many aspects of Spanish culture. Then on to what is undoubtedly an aspect of culture—our eating habits and food. One of the stars of the Spanish culinary firmament is on a lucky streak. The Iberian Pork Products Consortium has just been set up to promote the products of the Iberian pig abroad, especially the wonderful ham that international gastronomists describe in such glowing terms.

Other Spanish products that are much-praised the world over are our oils and vinegars. In a constant search to improve their standards of excellence, some mills are now bottling single-variety extra virgin oils to offer alongside their top-class blends. Vinegar producers are following suit and gourmet varieties of vinegar are multiplying fast to join the classic sherry vinegar.

And, finally, a couple of subjects taking us northwards. Firstly, the opening chapter of a short series on the less well-known vegetables grown in Spain, this time in the north, including amongst other areas, the Basque Country. Whilst there we shall take a privileged look at that strange world of the Gastronomic Associations where Basque men of all sorts and conditions traditionally enjoy getting together around a loaded table.



Text: Bettina Krücken
Photos: Jesús Jaunsar/ICEX

The Rioja Sous Chef Bursary: And the Winner Is...

A young Englishman wins a prize and is invited to Spain for a week. It is the first time that he travels to Spain—what awaits him?

Flamenco, heat, paella, sangría...? As the plane arrives, something already does not seem to be right, since the mountain landscape below him is wonderfully green and dotted with cows—will he not be touching down in Ireland, or even in Switzerland? Even the language of the local people does not sound at all like Spanish and the road signs indicate two names for one single place: Hondarribia-Fuenterrabía, Iruña-Pamplona, Donostia and finally San Sebastián—it therefore, seems correct.

A short summary: Our astonished main protagonist, Denzil Newton, is Senior Sous Chef at London's "Butlers Wharf Chef School," where he has taught for just under one year. He has won the Sous Chef Bursary announced by The Rioja Wine Exporters (*Grupo de*

Criadores y Exportadores de Vinos de Rioja), which

includes several days work in conjunction with Star Chef Pedro Subijana in the Akelare Restaurant in San Sebastián and several *bodega* visits in the Rioja region. Since 1994, the promotional activities of the export group, supported by Wines of Spain, the marketing department of the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) in London, have been directed towards the British hotel, restaurant and catering sector, in order to provide information about the quality of Rioja wines via tastings, sponsoring of "Master Chefs of Great Britain" and the "Restaurant Association of Great Britain," and other activities. A total of 22 chefs took part in the competition, with a menu developed by each respective participant, accompanied by one red and one white Rioja wine. The finals, for which six chefs qualified, took place in London with an interesting "cook-off" and led Denzil Newton to victory.

After landing in San Sebastián, our prize-holder is greeted by Thomas Perry, the Manager of Rioja Wine Exporters and introduced to Pedro Subijana, his Spanish colleague and instructor for four days. Subijana's Akelare Restaurant is located high above the city with a captivating view over the Bay of Biscay.

Linguistic comprehension over the following days proves itself to be slightly difficult, yet cooperation over pots and pans appears to be less complicated among professionals and Denzil gains a new insight into the secrets of the sauces and preparations of Basque cooking from Pedro Subijana.

There is, of course, enough time left over to have a look around San Sebastián's colorful nightlife and call in on the countless *pincho*-bars with their typical small morsels of food. On the last day in San Sebastián on which I meet Denzil and Pedro, two sample menus, each with six courses, are served in the Akelare to bid us farewell. Since Denzil and I therefore find different delicacies on our plates, we revel in descriptions of the tender texture, the scent and the exquisite flavor of the confections before us, artichoke and scallop salad with allium oil and fresh cheese cream, or the chestnut soup with candled duck, foie-gras and fried chayote, or baked sea-bass and its juice with piquillo pepper, ajoblanco and coconut sauce... To accompany these, we naturally drink Rioja wines: a cask-fermented white, full of character, and a red '89 reserva (see Glossary on page 146).





The second stage of our stay in Spain begins in gorgeous weather with a car tour from San Sebastián via Pamplona to Logroño in the Rioja, where we will visit the Bodegas AGE, Faustino Martínez, Marqués del Puerto and Muga. On our way through the Spring green landscape of the north of Spain, we pause in Puente la Reina in Navarre and arrive precisely in time to take part in the Palm Sunday procession. Half the village is already assembled in the small church of San Pedro, to carry a figure of Christ decorated with palm branches through the locality and into the 12th century church of Saint Santiago. In Puente la Reina, the different routes over the Pyrenees from France unite in the Spanish St. James' Way (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 30), which



leads to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. The Roman bridge, the *Puente de los Peregrinos* (pilgrims' bridge), allowed the pilgrims which flooded by from the 10th century onwards to cross the River Arga and continue their laborious way on foot or horseback to the tomb of St. James. We pursue our journey by more modern means towards Logroño and pass the count-

less vineyards, which are already in bud.

On the next day, Tom Perry waits for us in the hotel foyer to visit the first of the day's three scheduled bodegas. In really cool and windy weather, we reach Bodegas AGE in Fuenmayor, one of the classic wineries in the Rioja. Our visiting circuit leads us to all the stages of wine production: from the delivery of the grapes, the destalking machines, the massive steel tanks for temperature-controlled fermentation and finally the endless rows of casks and bottle racks used for the long aging of the wine. Interesting also is the so-called "cemetery" where the oldest vintages lie, although they are now only to be admired by visitors. We can, finally, not only admire but also taste with much pleasure, some of the best wines from Bodegas AGE. The next visit concerns Bodegas Faustino Martínez, a family business in Oyón, the wines which Denzil had selected for his menu. Here, after visiting the recently extended production facilities, we taste a wonderfully fruity rosé wine from Tempranillo grapes with an impressive floral nose. José Félix Álvarez, the Export Manager, invites us to partake of a meal in a comfortable rustic assembly room, accompanied of course by the excellent wines of our host.

The last visit of the day, to Bodegas Marqués del Puerto back in Fuenmayor, leads us to a company which was founded in 1968 by a group of winegrowers and now belongs to the Marie Bizard group.

For me, it now means traveling swiftly back to Madrid, while Denzil still has a visit to Bodegas Muga ahead of him on the following day, before returning to London full of new impressions, knowledge and above all, ideas for English cooking.

Bettina Krücken is a translator and coordinator of *Spain Gourmetour* since 1994.

Spanish Masterpieces



GONZALEZ BYASS
SHERRY & BRANDY

Text: Bettina Krücken
Photos: Tayo Acuña/ Grupo Gourmets

Gourmets in Madrid: All Spain's Delicacies Under One Roof

A visit to the international Gourmet exhibition, the *Salón Internacional del Club de Gourmets*, which this year took place for the eleventh time, in Madrid, seems like a journey to a gourmet's paradise. Between the 25th and 28th of April, some 35,000 specialist visitors to the glass pavilion at the exhibition center had the opportunity of feeling as though they were in that legendary land of milk and honey.

This specialist exhibition emerged in 1987 in response to the wish and the necessity to provide the delicatessen sector in Spain with a suitable framework to display the quality and variety of the gourmet products in their best light and to attract initially chefs, restaurant owners, wine merchants, lovers of good

cooking, wine enthusiasts and the specialist press. In the first year, 73 Spanish exhibitors and some 8,000 visitors gathered together at the conference center on the edge of Madrid. These numbers have increased over the past 10 years with a fine regularity to

502 exhibitors and approximately 35,000 visitors and the figures speak for them-

selves. Over the years, the parallel program has also become more extensive and interesting with finals of national cooking, ham slicer and wine waiter championships, conferences with varying current themes, organization of a "wine tunnel" for acquaintance with the variety-specific aromas of Spanish vine types in monovarietal wines and finally as the latest innovation, a competition for a "Dish-teller."

Championships and Round Tables

You will now presumably be wondering what on earth a "Dish-teller" is? This totally new professional branch was presented to the public on the Sunday of the exhibition in a highly entertaining, successful show, with a typically Spanish liveliness. You have surely already had the experience of asking the waiter in a restaurant for a recommendation on what to order and of receiving the laconic reply "in our restaurant, everything is good!" Unfortunately, you are then still no more knowledgeable than before and when the meal is finally served, the information is rounded off by the well-meaning comment "careful, the plate is hot!" A "Dish-teller," as you may now already imagine, is the companion to the wine waiter: a well-trained waiter, who not only knows what he is about in the hall of the restaurant, but also, as oc-

curred at the exhibition, is capable of reporting highly imaginatively on preparation of the dishes or on the fresh ingredients, thereby offering advice to his guest and whetting his appetite.

The finals of a competition, sponsored by the Denomination of Origin Dehesa de Extremadura for Ibérico ham, have been the object of particular interest each year since 1994: the professional ham slicers each transform a complete ham by hand into beautifully wafer-thin delicate slices, served with artistry on a plate. During this, the jury judges the finalists' rapidity and style, size and fineness of the slices, elegance of the presentation and other criteria. Subsequently, the spectators have the privilege and the enjoyment of assessing the quality and flavor of the product themselves.

For the fifth time, the wine forum this year took place under the title "The wine trade—an X-ray image of marketing" and provided much fuel for the discussions. An oenologist, a marketing director, a wine waiter, an owner of a delicatessen-shop, a wine merchant from a chain of merchants and a representative of a wine club examined such important topics as the expiry date on wine bottles or the significance of transport and warehousing conditions for the trade.

Visits from Overseas and the Far East

In 1992, exhibitors from other, mainly European,



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another
in an
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countries took part in the exhibition for the first time and since then, the exhibition bears the additional title "international." This is a trend which has been increasing up to now—this year, for the first time, the U.S.A. had a collective stand with the most diverse products. In general, admittedly, Spanish specialties are involved, such as wine and spirits from all the country's regions, goats', cows' or sheep's milk cheeses, cured Serrano and Ibérico ham, exquisite vegetable preserves and fresh products, natural quince puree and many more, which constantly provide further incentive for importers and distributors from all over the world seeking something special for their range of Spanish products.

Since 1992, the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) has constantly invited exhibition importers and journalists from all four corners of the earth and prepares a specially tailored program for professionals. In this manner, in 1997, a total of 33 individuals from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, and Slovenia

came to discover new things or to gain an impression of the extensive range of delicacies which Spain has to offer. As an extension of

the exhibition program, special tastings of cheese, Ibérico ham or olive oil and visits to producers in different Spanish regions were included. The Japanese delegation in particular, expressed its astonishment at the unbelievable variety of products, above all the numerous varieties of cheeses, with which they became acquainted and which they tasted during their stay.

Importers, who have returned to the exhibition year after year, are on the lookout for smaller bodegas and manufacturers—often family businesses—which would be swamped among the large exhibitors at the Alimentaria, ANUGA or SIAL exhibitions and therefore prefer the *Salón de Gourmets* in order to offer their yet undisclosed treasures. This special character of the exhibition provides the small, yet fine importers of choice delicatessen products with an overview of the collective stands of the autonomous regions in which the manufacturers group themselves together, and puts them in contact with representatives of the medium-sized and large brands. The *Salón Internacional del Club de Gourmets* is up to now the only delicatessen exhibition of its kind in Europe.

On the last day of the exhibition, the visitors were able to take part in a special tasting and have first-hand confirmation of the

culinary advantages of the combination of the different varieties of cheese with quince paste (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41). The event was chaired by several cheese experts and star chef Juan Mari Arzak (see page 142) and received a unanimously positive judgement.

One of the permanent institutions of the *Salón de Gourmets* is the exhibition of new brands or completely new products in a kind of display window gallery, which provides the visitor with a rapid overview of the most interesting features. Precise information is then sought from the relevant stand, for example concerning "Baskaviar," a trademark of the Transproalsa company in San Sebastián: tiny black pearls, which are manufactured using modern patented technology from the flesh of mackerel caught in the Bay of Biscay and colored with cuttlefish ink. This is a delicacy with special culinary characteristics, which met with great interest during the exhibition, even though the product will be launched on the market only from September onwards; by far the exhibition's newest innovation.

Bettina Krücken is a translator and coordinator of Spain Gourmetour since 1994.



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LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA

• In a previous issue, coinciding with the beginning of the year, we reviewed some of the principal gastronomic guides and travel books which are published annually in Spain. Here, we look at some titles which appeared later in the year and which we feel are worth noting. Such is the case with the **Guía Campsa** (The Campsa Guide), whose previous editions we have reviewed in the past. It features a complete road map for the Iberian peninsula, in addition to a listing—more comprehensive with each subsequent edition—of Spanish cities, towns and villages, with tips on what to see and where to eat in each destination.

• Another guide which has become an annual classic, and an indispensable companion for any wine aficionado, is **La Guía de Oro de los Vinos de España 1997** (Golden Guide to the Wines of Spain), now in its third edition. To research this entertaining, original and informative guide, author Andrés Proensa has tasted a total of 2,000 wines, of which he has made a final selection of the 572 labels he considers to be the best wines in Spain, each of which he describes in this book. Wines are classified according to the regions where they are produced. In addition, there is a chapter with up-to-date information on each of Spain's 50-odd *denominación de origen* wine growing districts.

• From wine, we go on to good food with the next title. This is not a new guide, but it is the first time we have reviewed it: the **Guía Gastronómica y Cultural del País Vasco** (Gastronomic and Cultural Guide to the Basque Country). Spain's Basque Country is synonymous with good food. In city and village alike, Basques are devoted to good food, and the raw materials tend to be of extraordinary quality. If on your next visit to the region you allow yourself to be guided by this book, produced by the Gastronomic Academy of the Basque Country, you can't go wrong. Every Basque town, as well as those in neighboring provinces, that has a restaurant of note appears here along with information on worthwhile sights, and of course a detailed description of the restaurants: from the traditional, folksy *asadores*, specializing in superb grilled meat and fish, to the most sophisticated, top-rated dining spots.

• Still on the subject of food, do you want to know where to find the best Valencia rice dishes, or do you fancy following a route taking in the best places to eat roast lamb in Castile? Are you interested in finding out which are the best Spanish wines and *cavas*, the tastiest cured Iberian ham, the most prized tinned asparagus, or the most famous quince preserve? All this, and more, is to be found in another guide also reviewed here for the first time. **Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía Española** (The Best of Spanish Gastronomy),



my), by the food writer Ángel García Santos and now in its third edition. This book also distinguishes those professional chefs who, by dint of hard work, perfectionism and innovation, are at the forefront of Spanish cuisine. Ratings are based solely on the quality of the food, a criterion the author considers much more important than the decor or the surroundings. Due to the high standards to be met (the minimum score to qualify is 7 out of 10 points) the selection of restaurants is relatively small, but on the other hand the reader will appreciate the information provided on each establishment, more detailed than one tends to find in this type of guide. It is perhaps in the section devoted to specialties that this guide comes into its own: aside from featuring the information listed in the first lines of this review, there are numerous other tips, such as where to sample the best *pinchos* (tavern snacks) in the Basque Country, or the best *tapas* (tasty bar tidbits) in Andalusia, or the choicest Spanish produce. All of this, obviously, is from the author's point of view, but while not all the noteworthy dining spots in Spain are listed, you can be sure that all those which do appear are well worth a visit.

• In the travel department, **Madrid, Blue Guide** is small in size but large in scope. Its author, Annie Bennet, has compiled exhaustive information on the Spanish capital and has delivered it in a readable and entertaining manner. First there is a large section on Practical Information, followed by ten recommended walks that take in practically the entire city, from the oldest parts to the newest sections. Itineraries are enlivened with plenty of anecdotes and are backed up with all the facts to satisfy the traveler seeking more than the average guide book provides. A small section is devoted to side trips to interesting places near Madrid, and to the historical background of the city. A complete index, glossary and guide to recommended further reading complete the 288 pages of this book

which reflect the author's profound knowledge and, I would add, love for this city. You couldn't ask for more in so little space.

• Switching to wine, the Spanish publishing scene devoted to the world of wine is increasingly active. If in the previous issues we reported the launch of the wine magazines *Vinos de España* (Wines of Spain) and *Mi Vino* (My Wine), on this occasion we refer to the new Spanish edition of the prestigious publication, **Vinum**. It will have basically the same content as *Vinum*'s editions in French and German, but with special emphasis on Spanish wine, as well as wine from South America. The Spanish edition, headed by Carlos Delgado, an expert in wine reportage, has the same design and frequency as its sister publications.

• If you wish to introduce a taste of Spain into your kitchen, and even if you are not an expert cook, **The Best Spanish Dishes** (subtitled "Traditional Easy-To-Do Recipes") is perhaps the book you are looking for. It is a selection of recipes for some of Spain best-known dishes, with an introduction explaining the basic characteristics of Spanish cuisine. From *tapas* and sauces to desserts, through rice dishes or game dishes, there are more than 80 recipes, simply explained and rated according to level of difficulty, a high percentage of the recipes being classified as "easy." The same publishing house, Everest, has reprinted its **Cocina Vasca** (Basque Cuisine), part of its series of books on "Cocina Regional Española" (Spanish Regional Cuisine). Co-authors of this complete compendium of recipes are Jesús Llona Larrauri—winner of the National Gastronomy Award who reports on the Basque culinary world in the press and radio—and Garbiñe Badiola, a Basque housewife and fellow radio commentator. Of special interest is the information on the nutritional value of the ingredients used, and the complete and curious details which accompany many of the recipes, on their his-

tory and origin, etc. and above all the introductory chapter titled "Allegory of Things Typical," which surveys some of rich Basque culinary legacy's crowning achievements: codfish recipes, *pil-pil* (oil-and-garlic) and *vizcaina* (onion, tomato, dried pepper and ham) sauces, Idiazábal cheese, etc.

• Finally, we look at three new additions to the "De *tapas por...*" (Tapas crawl around...) series published as part of the *Guías con Encanto* collection of guides from El País-Aguilar. These new titles cover Pamplona, in the north of Spain; Salamanca, in the center, and Granada in the south, three different cities with one thing in common: a devotion to *tapas*, albeit with different flavors in each city. The Sacromonte omelet of Granada, the spicy *chistorra* sausage of Pamplona, or the *Patatas "meneas"* of Salamanca are but three examples of the great variety to be found in the world of Spanish *tapas*. And from *tapas* to hotels: the same series includes a guide to **Pequeños Hoteles con Encanto** (Charming Small Hotels), whose latest edition has just appeared. As we have noted in past editions, this book fulfills exactly what its title promises: it features a selection of the best hotels on a "human scale"—both in terms of size and the warm welcome they provide. In total, 500 hotels are listed, with photographs and useful information. An indispensable guide for a truly "charming" journey.

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Erratum:

The information about the C.R.D.O. of Tetilla cheese, published on page 11 of the last issue, was wrong. The correct one is as follows:

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Since its first days, LAN has owned a 70 hectare vineyard surrounded by the Ebro river, the main artery of the Rioja wine region, and located

close to the boundaries of the Rioja Alavesa. Its name, Viña Lanciano, is also the name of one of the winery's top wines, and the finest example of LAN's new-style Rioja.

The wines which are distributed under the LAN label are made from grapes bought-in from local growers after careful control and supervision of growing conditions, ripening and harvesting. "At LAN we are proud to say that we have the best 1996 vintage. Stocks are five times greater than sales, which is rare in Rioja. This enables us to make strict selections and maintain consistently high quality", states Leiva.



By using the typical grape varieties of the Rioja, we continue to make wines which have all the character and personality of the region. Red wines are made mostly with Tempranillo, with a small percentage of Mazuelo and, in some cases, Garnacha. The white wines

are made exclusively with Viura, a variety which ages particularly well in barrel. Every six months, a racking is carried out to help the wine settle naturally and to encourage maturation.

Regular analyses of the wine are performed throughout the diffe-

rent stages of its development in order to guarantee quality. Periodically, samples are tasted to check the wine's development and to determine when it should go into bottle. It is in bottle that the wine begins its natural process of reduction. LAN has bottle ageing cellars containing two million bottles and one of the highest rates of bottles laid down compared to sales turnover in Rioja.

LAN is constantly innovating: A recent acquisition is a new barrel-rinsing belt, which washes the barrels more thoroughly and evenly. New barrels have been purchased. "This is essential for our new style of Rioja. In two years time, the 13,000 barrels we have in our cellars (mostly in American oak, but also in French oak) will be totally renewed, so as to have the highest percentage of new oak barrels in Rioja", states LAN's technical director.

Innovative presentation is also in evidence with new back labels for the bottles, giving useful information to

consumers, "the only people who direct us in our daily activity". Practical tips on how to store wine as well as its ageing potential are to be found on all bottles distributed by LAN.



Viña Lanciano, a 70 hectare vineyard in the best wine-producing area of the Rioja.

Of the total production of the LAN winery, two million bottles, around 70% is sold on the domestic market, and the remaining 30% is exported, mostly in Europe. LAN is currently moving into markets in the USA and some Asian countries.

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are made exclusively with Viura, a variety which ages particularly well in barrel.

Maximum care is taken throughout the entire wine-making process: only whole, undamaged berries are accepted, followed by temperature control during fermentation, extended maceration periods, and immersion of the cap of skins in the must to extract tannin, colour and aromas from the grapes —essential characteristics in LAN's new-style Rioja.

This careful attention to detail continues during the ageing process. Racking, a natural system of clarification without disturbing the sediment, where the brightness and clarity of the wine is checked by candlelight as it runs off its sediment, is carried out at regular intervals. 10 to 12 months after the harvest the decision is made as to which wines qualify for crianza, reserva or gran reserva status. The wines then go into Bordeaux barriques, where they rest peacefully at 12 to 15 °C in the controlled humi-



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Spain in Focus (II)

A few years ago, we featured a series of articles under the title "Spain Through Foreign Eyes" written by foreign visitors to Spain—some historical, some modern—recording their impressions of the experience. On many of them, certain quintessential Spanish expressions of folk culture had left a profound impression of one sort or another. Bullfights, flamenco singing and dancing, holy week processions, all spring to mind as particular to Spain. This particularity is not something that should be underplayed, but nor should it be exaggerated as it often has been, forging a caricature image of Spain as the land of castanets and high tragedy. That said, although in many respects contemporary Spain is radically different from what it was just a few decades ago, those "typically Spanish" happenings are still very much alive. Even on the threshold of the 21st century, their continuing hold is unquestionable. This is why we are devoting this series to them, knowing that they are not to everyone's taste, nor properly understood by everyone. We started our series with the holy week and in this issue we present you one of the most controversial aspects of Spanish traditions.

Photos: **Carlos Navajas/ICEX**







Of Bulls and Men Primer

Text: Spain Gourmetour

Translation: Mark Little

It was between 1760 and 1830 that the bullfight evolved into the spectacle we know today, but its roots can be traced back to the very dawn of mankind. Its formal rules may have changed over the centuries, but its essence remains unaltered, born of an ancient relationship between man and beast.

In the beginning... Numerous prehistoric cave paintings show that primitive man not only hunted the bull with spears fifteen-thousand years ago, but that for ancient man the animal was an object of special fear, admiration and respect. It is interesting to note that cave paintings depict considerably more bulls than, say, deer, boar, ibex, or even horses. This does not mean that these animals were less important or less present in primitive man's everyday life. Rather, it indicates the unique significance of the bull, which justified enshrining it as a subject of the cave paintings, in the same way that Renaissance painters would sooner depict an eagle or a dove, but never a chicken, even though these last were

obviously a more common component of day-to-day life.

Should we conclude that the bull was adored as some sort of deity in Paleolithic times? Perhaps not, but there is no doubt that the animal was the embodiment, both in the eyes of the artists who painted it and the viewers who contemplated the results, of all those qualities men considered admirable or awe-inspiring: strength, power, courage.

It is not a contradiction that man also hunted the bull for food. The primitives believed that in eating the flesh of a felled animal, one acquired some of that animal's spirit and virtues. It is little wonder that prehistoric man deemed the bull, the most terrifying yet noble of his opponents, worthy of a place of honor in the art that adorned the walls of the caves where the earliest humans sought shelter.

This is an especially Mediterranean phenomenon, to judge by the distribution of caves with taurine images, and the similarity of the word for bull in so many of Indo-European languages, from Sanskrit to the Celtic of lower Brittany, through Greek and all the Romance languages. (The odd one out here is the English word "bull," which comes from the Old Norse.)

The prestige of the bull did not die out with the dawning of the Neolithic Age, the birth of agriculture and of a sedentary lifestyle. Eighteen centuries before the Christian era, the bull appeared in Crete on the frescos in the palaces of Knossos and Phaistos, and on engraved stones, cups and painted vases. There are images of youths who are shown baiting, pole-vaulting over and wrestling with bulls. From Knossos, too, comes the famous legend of the Minotaur, the half-human, half-taurine monster which lived on human flesh before being ultimately killed by Theseus, the invincible hero of Greek mythology.

In his *Natural History*, Pliny The Elder incorrectly attributes the invention of combats between men and bulls to the Thessalians, perhaps because the spectacle was introduced to Rome by Julius Caesar following a campaign in Thessaly. Later Gaius Suetonius, secretary in the court of the Iberian-born Emperor Hadrian spoke of *taurarii*, specialized fighters who were the predecessors of today's toreros. The Greeks, known as "Captors of bulls," already practiced a bullfight of sorts, probably in public, at the moment when the captured beasts were released prior to their ritual sacrifice.

Here again the link between bullfighting, the sacred and the religious is obvious. The theme would be picked up by the followers of Mithra and Attis, the companion of Cybeles. Originating in Persia, the cult to Mithra was widespread within the Roman world up to the fourth century A.D. In France alone there are remains of dozens of stone altars, lightly hollowed out and pierced with holes, on which the sacrificial bull's throat was cut. Underneath the stone there was a trench where those who wished could expunge their past life by allowing themselves to be drenched in the bull's blood. Thus the bull, a symbol of force, bravery, and without doubt, fertility in life, signified redemption through its death. Needless to say the Mithraic mysteries were not viewed favorably by the growing Christian church and, judged as heresy, they died out around the fifth century.

A Sport of Kings

It is important to note that originally the bull was hunted and fought on foot. The horseman didn't make his appearance until much later, in Greece and in Asia Minor, where the tradition of bull baiting died out with the arrival of Christianity. But in the west men continued to confront bulls, on foot, wherever it lived in herds, namely at the mouths of the Guadalquivir and Rhone rivers, in the marshes of Les Landes and in the Pyrenean foothills. The Christian church adapted the tradition to its rites, by associating bull festivals with various ceremonies and feast days: the summer solstice (Christianized as the Feast of Saint John), the solar feast, marriages... In the 9th century, youths would "run" the bull

on their way to court their fiancées. In the 11th century, an anonymous Spanish chronicle describes a *corrida de toros*—meaning, literally, running of the bulls—held with the occasion of a wedding.

The custom of fighting the bull on horseback eventually made its appearance in the western Mediterranean—in particular under the Visigoth rulers of Spain from King Euric (5th century) to King Roderick (8th century)—though it did not displace the tradition of men facing bulls on foot. Noble horsemen baited the bull with lances for honor, though this form had more to do with hunting—a similar technique was used to hunt wild boar, for example—than with the ritual of bullfighting.

In the Middle Ages, many Spanish, Portuguese, and Moorish royals stood out in these combats, including Sancho I, Sebastian of Portugal, King Youssouf of Morocco, the knights of Sultan Mahomet V, and many princes of the Abencerrage and Sufrite dynasties. Pérez de Hita, in his *History of the Civil Wars in Granada* (1544?-1619) recounts the incredible exploits of Malique the Abencerrage, who would—literally—take the bull by the horns, wrestle it to the ground and strangle it.

Those members of the lower classes, the *mata-toros*, who made a profession of killing bulls were not held in high regard. Until the 16th century prestige was attached only to those who fought the bull from horseback with a lance and later, the javelin (the predecessor of the *rejón* used in horseback bullfighting today), largely due to the influence of the newly constituted Maestranzas, or master schools of horsemanship, such as the one in Ronda, established in the 16th century, or in Seville, estab-

lished during the following century. These incorporated the maneuvers and girations of dressage to the bullfight. This combination made for a more refined spectacle, but it was less popular among the common classes, and in the end bullfighting on foot won the day. It triumphed above all because the role of the cavalry in war no longer corresponded to the teachings of the Maestranzas, and because the aristocracy preferred less violent pastimes. In particular the Bourbon kings who succeeded the Habsburgs on the Spanish throne were not especially fond of *corridos*.

It was then that the first true artists of the modern bullfight emerged: professional bullfighters, from Pedro Romero Costillares (creator of the *Verónica* pass), Pepe Illo, apparent author of *La Tauromaquia* (1796), Francisco Montes, author of a *Tauromaquia Completa* (1836, re-edited by Sánchez López Pelegrín) and Guerrita to El Gallo, from Joselito and Belmonte to Manolete, just to name some of the better known bullfighters, and without forgetting the horseback bullfighters known from then on as *rejoneadores*. All practiced the *Arte del toro*, the Art of the Bullfight.

The Art of Bullfighting

Yes, you say, but is it art? At best it is a folkloric spectacle, at worst, a bloody butchery... this is what the bullfight's critics feel. But they are confusing the brave bull with the male version of a cow. In fact, the *toro bravo* is a different animal altogether. It originally was a cross between the aurochs and the wild bull. It is a savage beast, one that knows no fear for any living creature. The jungle and savannah are full of



compromises: neither the lion nor the tiger attack the elephant. The hippopotamus and the rhinoceros have few enemies. It appears that each species is governed by some wise instinct which prevents it from attempting the impossible. The brave bull, on the other hand, knows nothing of this instinct. It will attack everything that intrudes on what it considers its territory, regardless of size. Face to face with a lion, a tiger, or a bear, it will kill its opponent quickly. It will even inflict serious damage on an elephant. What chance does a man, a fragile creature in the eye of a bull, have against half a ton of muscle and killer instinct?

This is where Art with a big "A" comes into it. Bullfighting establishes between man and bull a unique rapport which only can exist between them. Outside the arena, man may hunt animals for food or for sport. He may domesticate a wild beast, conditioning it to live docilely among humans. He may train it to work for him or to perform circus tricks.

None of this happens in bullfighting. There is no hunt involved, the bull is certainly not domesticated, nor has it had any training other than its own instinct. The bull will not even obey the bullfighter's cape or the *muleta* indefinitely. Fighting bulls simply do not obey anything.

The art of bullfighting has certain similarities with the so-called martial arts, in that the adversary's very strength is used against him. Likewise, the bullfighter uses against the bull that blind courage which impels the animal to charge anything that threatens its territory, but while the bull is driven by blind courage, it is not stupid. After a more or less short period, a few minutes in any case, the bull begins to understand that its

true enemy is not the cape it has been charging, but the man holding it. The bull must be killed before it becomes too wise. Formally, the *corrida* is a true classical tragedy, in three acts (*tercios*) governed by the three dramatic unities of place, time and action: the place is the bullring, the time is the 15 to 20 minutes between the entry by the bull into the ring and its death, the action is a combat between a frail human and a powerful, indomitable beast which will continue to charge repeatedly until it is killed. Death is the inevitable outcome of this drama and this can include, on occasion, the death of the bullfighter.

Taurine Inspiration

Bullfighting is practiced in Portugal (although there the bull is not killed in the bullring) and throughout southern France, as well as in the majority of South and Central American countries, where the fighting stock is descended from breeds imported from Spain. But Spain remains the home par excellence of the bullfight. It is here where its roots run deepest and where its influence is the most extensive. Indeed, the influence of bullfighting is felt in all the arts. For generations, poets have celebrated the bull and the bullfight. Witness Lope de Vega (16th-17th century), Villamediana (16th-17th century), Moratín (18th century), the Duke of Rivas (18th-19th century) and more contemporaneously, Manuel Machado, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rafael Alberti, Fernando Villalón and, in one of the best known examples, Federico García Lorca with his *Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*. The Frenchmen Frédéric Mistral and the Marquis of Baroncelli-Javon sang praises of the bull, as the novelists Blasco Ibáñez, Monther-

lant and Hemingway honored in text the men who fought it.

Goya and, later, Picasso were fascinated by the brave bull, which they drew, engraved or painted in all its movements, with much of the same passion of those prehistoric cave painters. The *corrida* was the inspiration for a famous scene and an aria in Bizet's opera, *Carmen*. Film-makers also have drawn on the theme of bullfighting or have portrayed the romantic lives of famous bullfighters, although it must be said that cinema has yet to give us a masterpiece in this respect, certain documentaries aside. Even architecture has its connection to the taurine world, as numerous bullrings were constructed when it was no longer feasible to hold bullfights in the cities' large public squares, as before (a custom which nevertheless survives in some smaller villages of Spain). The bullrings of Ronda (one of the oldest) and Seville are famous, but José María de Cossío, the great historian of the bullfight, cites 27 *plazas de toros* built between 1947 and 1958, among them those of Palma de Mallorca and León.

The stage is set for the *corrida*, a deep-rooted tragedy that will take place in a purpose-built theater, the bullring, just as the afternoon sun begins its slow decline. It will follow an exacting ritual ceremony, accompanied by the appropriate music, and with a discerning public acting as a Greek chorus.

Dramatic image follows dramatic image as the bull charges, comes to a halt, charges again. Against the brute force of the bull and its lethal horns, the bullfighter must use the only weapons at his disposal: elegance, grace, harmony in his movements.

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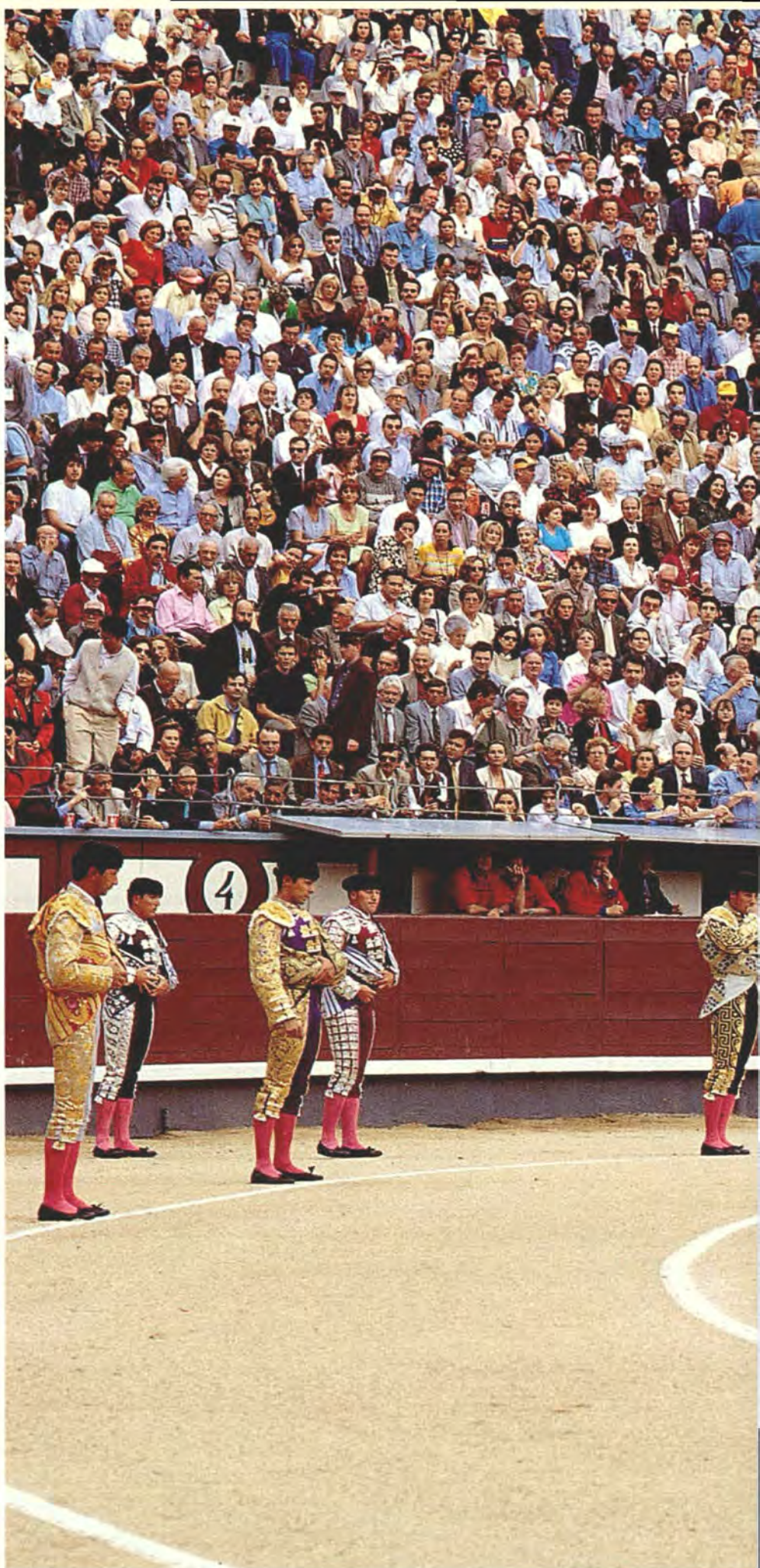


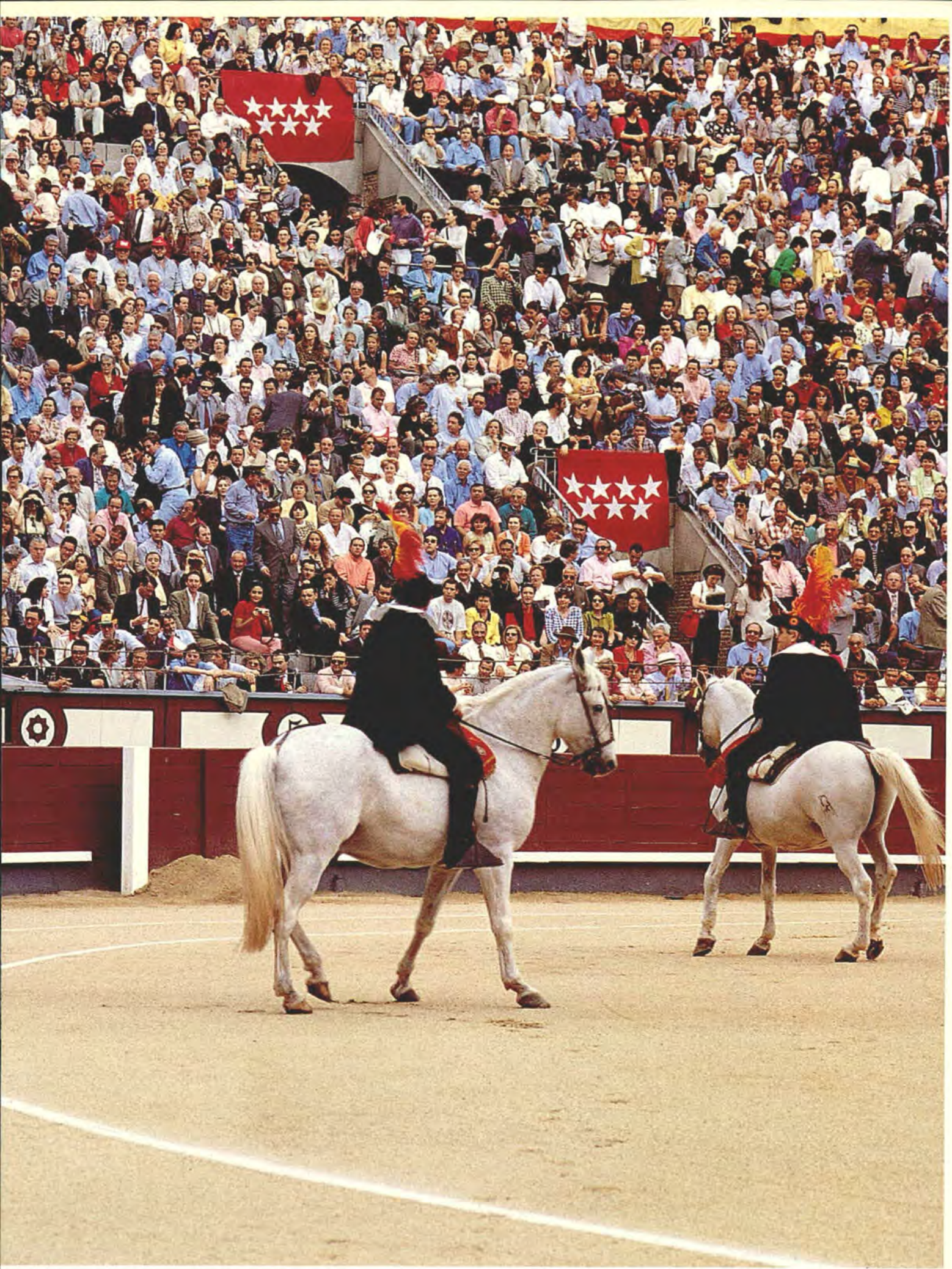
An Ancient Fiesta of Art and Bravery

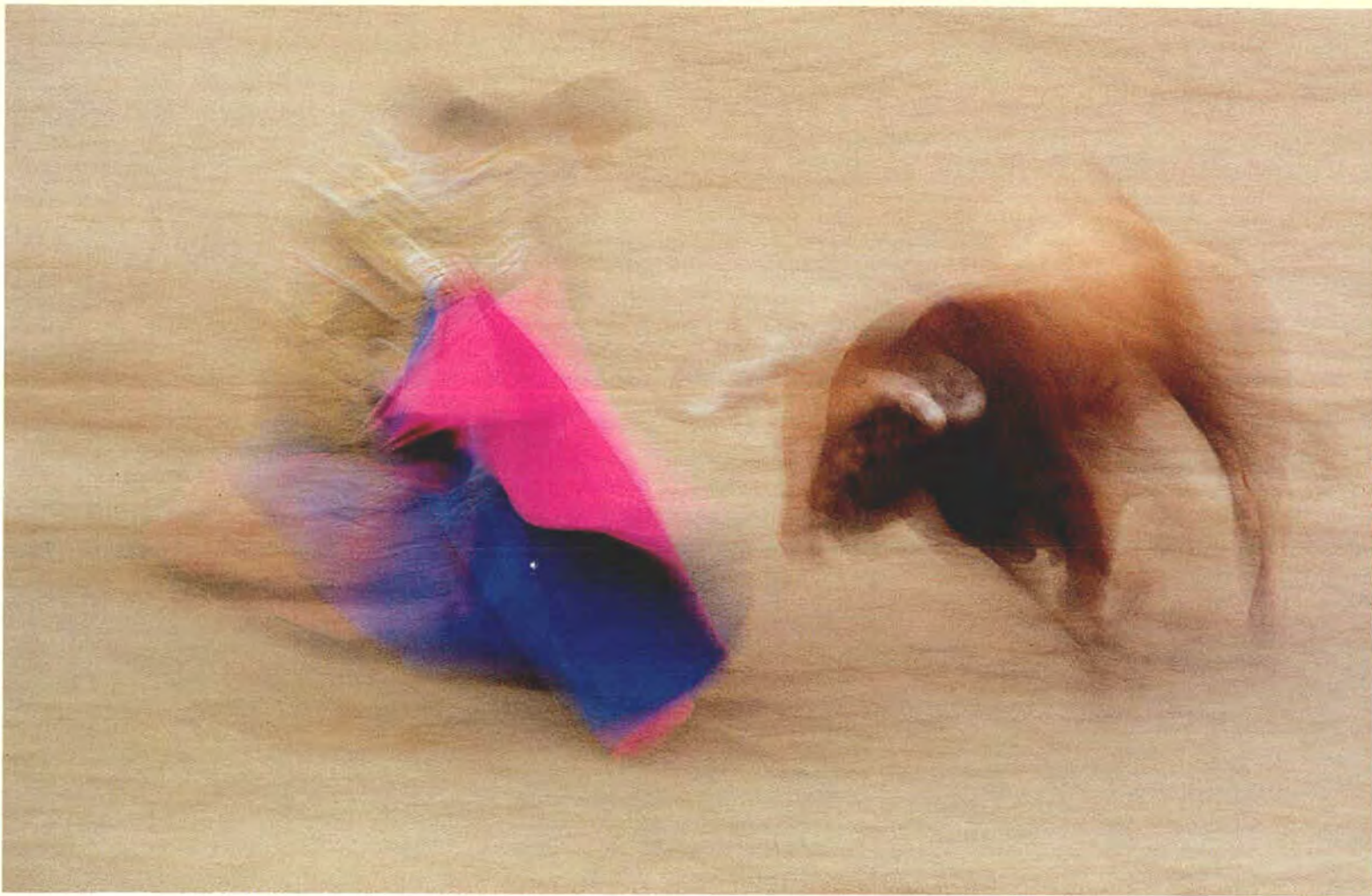
Text: Joaquín Vidal

Translation: Hawys Pritchard

There are no half measures in opinions about bullfighting: you either love it or loathe it. Few are indifferent. To add to the difficulty, the spectacle of bullfighting is not one that is easily understood by the uninitiated. A first visit to the bullring is always more than a little mysterious and confusing. What are the rules of the bullring? Why do the picadors do what they do? What is the purpose of the *banderillas*? Where does the bull get its bravura from...? While recognizing the virtual impossibility of condensing a centuries-old phenomenon into a few pages, we asked one of the most respected and knowledgeable bullfighting critics to give his personal account of this fiesta of art and bravery.







Six bulls will die. Six bulls will certainly die, stabbed, stuck with beribboned darts, then fatally wounded by a sword-thrust between the shoulder blades. That's the *fiesta de los toros*, the bullfight, exclusive heritage of the Spanish people.

But bullfighting is not just that, nor is it all like that. Bullfighting does not consist of stabbing, sticking, and sword-slaying bulls. All these maneuvers, known as *suertes*, form part of the *lidia*, the process of fighting one bull, but they do not constitute the whole. Nor are they arbitrary acts whose sole aim is to kill bulls. The Spanish people do not enjoy the killing of bulls, but the celebration of art and bravery.

The bull was already present in Iberia, early Spain. The bull, whose zoological designation is *bos taurus primigenium*, once inhabited the grasslands of the entire peninsula, which was then fertile and wooded, and its only link with human beings was the respect it commanded from them. In short, human beings were afraid of bulls. Bulls were, and still are today, dangerous wild animals. Bulls would attack any living thing that dared to enter the confines of their territory, and attack to kill. They killed with their sharp, well-developed, diamond-hard horns.

What constitutes a bull's territory is a far from trivial concept, and this fact was taken very much into consideration when the canons of bullfighting were laid down. The bull's territory is the area within which it dictates its sovereignty. The bull's great resources—speed combined with strength—made it advisable to approach only mounted on a horse. The horse, also strong and agile, can dodge the fury of its charge. This explains why man's first encounters with the bull were carried out on horseback. The Arabs used this method during their occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. The immensely rich culture they left behind them included the art of running and spearing bulls. Bull spearing proved to be an important discovery, not as an aspect of the art of putting bulls to death, but as a means of selecting for, and then of stirring up, their bravery, or bravura. This discovery was made not by noblemen but by their serfs. It is stating the obvious to say that the art of spearing bulls was practiced by men who had horses, that is to say the privileged landown-

ing courtiers. Their valor and skill increased, and by the end of the Middle Ages bull-spearing had become a public spectacle. Key festivals were celebrated with the spearing of bulls bred beside the River Jarama (Madrid) or in Navarre, events during which horsemen performed thrilling stunts for the entertainment of the court and the common people.

The suerte, or set move, did not yet exist, though the stuff of suertes did: trotting to meet the bull, wounding it, galloping away from danger, dodging when, as often happened, the bull galloped after the horse. Accidents sometimes happened; deaths did, too. Though the bull usually died from the spear-wound, if merely wounded a surge of fury could impel it to catch up with the horseman and gore him viciously.

Feet on the Ground

The nobles arranged that men on foot equipped with capes should be at the ready to draw the bull away at these times of danger. Sturdy commoners with a spirit of adventure accepted the job readily. They often exceeded their task with tantalizing displays of flamboyance, making light of the crowd-pulling bull's charges with jaunty swerves of the body and swirls of the cape.

The spectacle changed rapidly from then on: riders gave way to men on foot, known as *chulos*. Court and populace alike preferred watching these feet-on-the-ground displays, finding a greater thrill in the constant risks run by the chulo and the beauty of his maneuvers. In the 17th century, it was foreseeable that the future of bullfighting lay with toreros on foot, and by the 18th century they had become the norm. By then, too, purpose-built bullrings, and bullfighting celebrities had come into being. Toreros from Ronda (in the Andalusian province of Málaga) stood out from hundreds of others for their fine technique. Northern toreros, particularly from Navarre, were famous for outstanding feats of bravery. Local audiences thrilled to displays of audacity such as jumping over the bull, or facing its attack unarmed to dodge at the last minute, especially if the jump was made just behind the horns, or the attack was faced by a torero wearing shackles, or wrapped in his student's cape, or sitting in a chair.

In the south, they went in for cape maneuvers. A Ronda torero named Romero invented the *muleta* cape—its cloth smaller than the standard cape and attached along one edge to a wooden rod or *estoquillador*—with which he contrived to engage the bull's attack, to force it to charge again, and finally to lower its head, at which moment he delivered the sword-thrust between the shoulder blades.

What is a toro bravo?

The *fiesta de toros* was already synonymous with grand spectacle, and it called for a supply of bulls. Just any old bull would not do: only those whose very appearance commanded respect, and whose bravura would ensure fine performances all-round, qualified for the bullring. But how could this bravura be achieved? The bull's responses to spearing provided the key. A brave bull, a *toro bravo*, always responded to punishment by attacking; a submissive bull, a *toro manso*, would shy away from pain.

In the course of over two hundred years of bullfighting, breeders of fighting bulls have carried out countless tests to select for bravura, and except for trial by punishment, all have proved useless. This test has come to be used on cows, which are not used in bullfighting. The tests, which are held in testing corrals, are conducted by a picador on horseback, equipped not with a spear but with a lance. The lance, or *puya*, is a wooden pole to the end of which is attached a sharp pointed instrument a few centimeters long and fitted with a stop to prevent its penetrating deeply.

The cow, the mounted picador, and the torero who will conduct the maneuvers, assemble in a quiet testing corral, with the breeder on hand to note the cow's reaction to the lance. If she becomes spirited, it is a sign of bravura, and she is moved on to the enclosure; if she runs away, it is a sign of submissiveness, and she will be sent to the abattoir.

At breeding time, the selected cows will submit to the stud, a bull also selected for its exceptional bravura, and their bull calves will be the fighting bulls of the future. Though not immediately, of course. Bulls may not be fought in the ring until they are three years old, when

they can appear in *novilladas* (a lesser category of bullfight for *novillos*, or young bulls). They must be four years old to appear in the full event known as the *corrida de toros*.

In the meantime, the bulls will be growing and dozing freely around the breeder's estate. Theirs is a quiet life, protected from any sort of interference. With bullfighting now structured as a spectacle governed by rules, with the *corrida de toros* now a business, and livestock breeding an economic activity, some breeding and raising procedures have become established in the light of accumulated experience. Calves are branded with their own distinctive mark, an identification number, and their year of birth. According to the time of year and which part of the country they are in, veterinarians vaccinate them against diseases endemic to the countryside. The farm managers will decide on the most suitable diet, which varies with the age of the bulls and local climatic conditions.

Entering the Ring

When six bulls have been selected for the *corrida*, each is led into a cage, then loaded onto a truck and transported to the bullring. This is an elaborate operation and very exciting to watch. Cowhands and several trained steers, or *cabestros*, are needed to separate the six chosen bulls from the herd and lead them to the stud-farms' runways and the pen from which they will be loaded onto the truck.

Once at the bullring, the animals are unloaded into pens where they are examined by official veterinarians who, in conjunction with the authorities presiding over the *corrida*, will declare whether their characteristics meet requirements: statutory age (three or four years, according to the type of event), build and appearance suitable for the event; healthy physique, including the horns.

At 12 noon on the day of the *corrida*, the bulls are allocated by drawing lots and sorted out accordingly. There are three named matadores, whose supporting teams, or *cuadrillas*, designate three pairs of bulls, matching the biggest with the smallest, the most aggressive with the most compliant, so as to obtain three balanced pairs. The pairs having been designated, lots are

drawn, a pair is allocated to each matador, and the order of appearance is decided.

One by one, the bulls are closed in the *chiqueros*. These are dark compartments where they are kept until it is their turn to bound into the ring. The traditional time for the start of the *corrida* is 5 p.m., though this has gradually been eroded by modern timetable habits so that at the height of the season it is now more usually 7 p.m.

On the dot of starting time—some say that the start of the *corrida* is the only thing that Spaniards are punctual about!—the president in his official box raises a handkerchief as the signal for bugles and kettledrums to announce that the *corrida* is starting.

Officials known as *alguaciles* then perform the *despejo*. This tradition dates back to the time when the public was allowed into the ring before the *corrida* began, and officials on horseback had to ride in and clear it of people, threatening dawdlers with their whips.

The *alguaciles* are followed into the ring by the bullfighting teams, the *cuadrillas*. These are led by the three matadores, each of them followed by a line of three *banderilleros*, then the six picadors on horseback, then *monosabios* (grooms) and *areneros* (whose job is to even out the sand after each event), with the team of mules which will drag out the dead bull bringing up the rear of the procession.

This arrangement makes clear to which *cuadrilla* each torero belongs and his position in the program. It should be understood that they are all toreros. Some spectators think that only the matadores are toreros, or even that only *matadores de alternativa* (apprentice matadors being ceremonially invested as full matadors) are toreros. This is an error.

All those members of the bullfighting team who pit themselves against the bull in some way or other are toreros: the matador *de alternativa* is a torero, as indeed is the novillero, or fighter of young bulls; the team member who takes part in the routine fight moves is a torero, as is the one who inserts the beribboned *banderillas* into the nape of the bull's neck; the picador is a mounted torero. The point is that they are all, unquestionably, practicing the art of *torear*, or bullfighting.

The Corrida: Art and Bravura

Torear involves performing the quintessence of the art through the medium of moves charged with representational significance; torear is astutely wielding the cape to control an angry charge; it is contriving to place a pair of *banderillas* in the manner known as *de poder a poder*, pivoting on them past the horn; it is performing the picador's maneuver known as *varas en regla*, which involves engaging the bull's attention while keeping the horse still, implanting the spear at the very moment of juncture, checking the bull's charge, and sending the bull away by angling the horse diagonally.

The whole dynamic of the *lidia*, all the set moves, or *suertes*, considered both compositely and individually, is structured by the daring, skill and aesthetic sense of the torero on the one side and the bravura of the bull on the other. The bullfight is a demonstration of art and bravery. That is exactly how the progenitors of *taumachy* conceived it and it could be said, waxing literary, that its essence was to match all the bull's attacking maneuvers with all the defensive and exhibitionist moves of the torero.

The bull has been selected for pedigree by crossing the cow and the stud bull, it has been raised with the utmost care to ensure its inexperience and cultivate its power; but what those little calves finally become as four year old bulls will always be an unknown quantity. Their future, and that of their line, is therefore always in suspense. Breeders have to consider whether to continue with the same combination of cows and studs or to renew the female stock and change the sires.

The answer is revealed by the way the bulls behave in the ring. This is why the *lidia* to some extent repeats the moves used in the testing corral. Trial by lance—testing the bull's reaction to punishment—is the basic test. Some claim that the torero can do what he likes with "his" bull to put up a better show, but this is not so. For a start, the bull is not "his." The bull belongs to the *fiesta*. The bull has to be put through the lance test within the parts of the ring and over distances that permit the best assessment of its degree of bravura. The picador has to carry out his moves accurately and the punishment must be measured, lasting not a second



more than the bull's bravura and strength require. Not one move or gesture is allowed to undermine these objectives.

The recommended number of lance thrusts to assess the bull's bravura sufficiently, is three. There are bulls which reveal themselves as bravos in the first two encounters with the horse, but "chicken out" in the third, turning cowardly and fleeing to the part of the ring where its mild nature feels safest. They tend to seek the area close to the chiqueros, the compartments in which they were enclosed before entering the ring, as if they might find new reserves of strength there.

The bull's animal intuition causes it to respond in a particular way to the bullfighting approach applied to it. The same lidia conducted by different exponents would certainly produce a different response. The picadors' phase of the fight also influences this response, and the long runs the bull made when it entered the ring become short and possibly sluggish after this *tercio*, as each "act" or "third," of the lidia is called.

The Second Tercio

The way to reawaken the bull's urge to charge once the picadores had performed their *tercio* was another important discovery by the founding fathers of tauromachy. Those rustic, illiterate 18th century toreros must have been endowed with extraordinary gifts of intelligence and powers of observation, as well as a love of everything to do with the bullfight. This is what gave them the status of maestros. Using as their point of departure the combative instinct of the bull, which reacts aggressively to punishment, they hit on the notion of "calling" the bull from far off and administering the punishment with as little damage as possible.

When its memory of punishment is triggered, the bull instinctively rises to the challenge of being called again, from a distance. This explains the reasoning behind the invention of *banderillas*. The *banderillas* are pairs of darts which are stuck into the back of the bull's neck, just about skin deep; it stirs up its temper without causing serious damage to its body. Given that these darts were going to be inserted, artistic ways of doing so were invented. Experts have come up with several

variations—*al quiebro* (without lifting either foot and merely inclining the body to one side to avoid the horn); *de poder a poder* (timing the insertion so that the darts go in when the bull lowers its head, and pivoting on them past the horn); *por los terrenos de dentro* (near the ring center); *a topa-carnero* (calling the bull and standing waiting for it, taking avoiding action at the very last moment and inserting the darts while doing so) and many more—all of them involving facing the charge unarmed, so that the bull, by this stage making long runs again, can fix its target accurately.

After this second "act," the *tercio de banderillas*, the bull enters the third and fatal act, the *tercio de muerte*. By this stage the animal has been broken in, no longer charging at a gallop but still eagerly following the lure of the muleta. Now is the time for the torero to adopt a gentler, more relaxed technique, more orchestrated and imaginative, using a sequence of passes with the cape which follow on from each other in such a way that the bull is made to muster its forces and charge in a discontinuous way which leads it nowhere. The *natural*, a pass with the left hand, is the finest display of skill in this *tercio*, and art requires that each sequence of this sort of pass be rounded off by a *pase de pecho*, in which the torero draws the bull past his chest and sends him on with a forward sweep of the muleta. The repertory of muleta moves is vast: *redondo* (a sequence of passes during which man and bull trace a complete circle); *trinchera* (a pass given with the man out of reach of the bull); *molinete* (a pass in which the torero turns a complete circle and lets the muleta wind round his body); *cambio de mano* (changing the muleta from one hand to the other in mid-move); *afarolado* (the torero wields the muleta above his head); *ayudado* (a pass involving both hands); *cambio a muleta plegada o extendida* (a pass used to change the bull's direction with a movement of the muleta, furled or unfurled).

Bullfighters have invented many other muleta maneuvers, and creativity in this area is still going strong. The muleta phase of a bullfight, however, does not go on indefinitely, nor is it advisable to prolong it for as long as the bull continues to respond to passes. At some point in this phase, the bull will "ask to die."

Experienced toreros and aficionados recognize this point immediately: the bull has "asked to die." It happens when, having been led through the sequence of moves by the torero, the bull squares up and stands still in the ideal position for the killing *suerte*. This is the moment when the torero raises the sword, turns so that he is sideways on to the bull, with a forward movement of the furled muleta in his left hand guides the bull to lower its head, and at that moment leans—literally—right onto the bull's neck, as he plunges the sword between its shoulder blades. The founders of bullfighting established the rules of this *suerte suprema*, the death move, obeying the criteria they applied for the fight as a whole: the torero executes it combining maximum exposure (giving the bull the advantage) and maximum safety (his technique should keep him away from the horns). And there should be no additional suffering for the bull: the wound between the shoulders means sudden death.

Two hundred years of bullfighting have produced a rich history of tauromachy, its livestock lineage and breeders, its schools of bullfighting—the classic ones are the Ronda and Seville schools; bullfighters' biographies—their characters and adventures, their artistic achievements, particular highlights, and never-forgotten tragedies, for hundreds of toreros have died on the bull's horns.

But the bullfight goes on. Every year, new young bullfighters are ceremonially initiated and, along with the not-so-young, attract capacity crowds of spectators. And the long-term future? There seems to be no lack of devotees. Whether the toros bravos of generations to come still maintain the necessary standards of bravura is perhaps less predictable.

Joaquín Vidal has been bullfighting critic of the Spanish national daily newspaper El País since its foundation.



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VEGETABLES

WITH

PERSONALITY (I)

This "vegetables with personality" quest is going to take us on a geographical tour of Spain. The stops we make on the way will not be where fancy takes us, nor will they be dictated by festivals, medieval buildings or wineries, but rather by the countryside, vegetable plantations and river banks where genuine secrets of the world of wild herbs and cultivated produce are still to be found. The main characters are cardoons and star-thistle, Padrón peppers, exotic borage, chickweed, *calçots* (the Catalan name for a type of large spring onion), the tender young beans from Navarre and La Rioja known as *pochas*, dandelion, and Catalan chicory. In villages, homes and farmhouses we'll be collecting the traditional ways of preparing and cooking these vegetables in family kitchens and local restaurants, constituting a significant chapter of Spanish gastronomy. This first article

Sergeant Pepper's Northern Band

Text: **María José Sevilla**

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

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

explores the north of the Iberian Peninsula: Galicia, the Basque Country, Navarre, and La Rioja. The next will deal with wild and cultivated vegetables from Catalonia and the Levante, Murcia and Andalusia.



A visit to any local market or supermarket is enough to demonstrate the range and quality of vegetables in Spain and how much the Spaniards enjoy them.

I have lost count of how often I have been asked in my travels if vegetables, and particularly vegetarian dishes, are an important feature of Spanish cuisine. A visit to any local market or supermarket, however large or small, is enough to demonstrate the range and quality of vegetables in Spain and how much the Spaniards enjoy them. I admit that not many restaurant menus in Spain make a specific feature of the vast range of produce that has been cultivated or gathered in Spain since time immemorial. I also admit that, in our culinary tradition, vegetables which can sometimes be a little insipid are often perked up with olive oil, garlic and little chunks of cured ham or *chorizo* (paprika sausage), with the result that many of the traditional ways of serving vegetables are not really vegetarian. As a general rule, when Spanish people eat out, they choose dishes that they would not usually eat every day at home, and the fact is that in Spain the best vegetable and pulse dishes have always been, and still are, the standard fare of family cooking. As to genuinely vegetarian dishes, the list is not a long one but the ones that do exist are delicious. I recommend skeptics to take a look at collections of Lenten recipes, such as Ignacio Doménech and F. Martí's *Ayunos y abstinencia* (Fasts and Abstinence) published by Editorial Altafulla and at the many salads using interesting leaves, flavors and colors which play such an important part in the contemporary Spanish food scene.

A Bit of Background

As a Mediterranean country, Spain has received and

learned to cultivate a whole series of edible plants since the earliest times. Down the centuries, the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans and, especially, the Arabs, introduced vegetables from many different sources into the Iberian Peninsula. "Initiated widely in the economic ambit of imperial Antiquity (Rome), the emigration of plants was to continue and even increase with the Omayyad (Damascus) and Abbasid (Baghdad) dynasties," states Lucie Bolens in her interesting book *La cocina andaluza, un arte de vivir, Siglos XI-XIII* (Andalusian Cuisine: An Art of Living, 11th-13th centuries), adding that "the truly spectacular migration of plants in the Islamic world was preceded by that of the long list which already included taro, asparagus spears, edible thistles, escarole and beans, which could be eaten either shelled or in their pods, as well as desert truffles brought in from Lybia." We also know that by the 12th century, artichokes were already a perfectly integrated feature of Andalusian gardens and cuisine, as were turnips, which were often included in meat dishes. Chard, onion and eggplants were also known. In her book *The Original Mediterranean Cuisine*, Barbara Santich, referring to the Middle Ages says: "Many of the vegetables used in the Mediterranean—cabbage, lettuce, spinach, leafy beets, leeks, onions, and parsnips—were common to the whole of Europe. Others, including asparagus, artichokes, squash, melons, and eggplants, had come from links with Arab culture, and were peculiar to Mediterranean regions, at least until the sixteenth century."

From 1492 on, the arrival of marvelous gifts from the gods of the Mayas, Incas and Aztecs—potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cacao, phaseolus and so much else—was to revolutionize the gastronomic panorama of the known world. Many of the vegetables which today grow seasonally in Spain's fields and vegetable gardens are as regional as Spain's various cuisines. This is especially true of produce which, for many different reasons, has not ventured beyond local or national frontiers, or has done so only tentatively through some exporters, as is happening with the historical *al-kharsuf* (artichoke) and many varieties of flat green bean. But let's start our green tour of Spain in Galicia, in the northeastern corner of the Peninsula, on the trail of an unpredictable delicacy—tiny green peppers, introduced by the Franciscans and conquistadors.

Pimientos de Padrón

Unlike the tomato, which was initially a victim of prejudice and unfair reputation, the capsicum or pepper—another member of the honorable Solanaceae family introduced from the Americas—was accepted and enjoyed from the first. Even so, the Galician type known as *pimientos de Padrón* (Padrón peppers) was completely unknown in the rest of the Peninsula until a few years ago. I first encountered the minute *pimientos de Padrón* 15 years ago in the vegetable market of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 39). The market, a serious building in the heart of the town, still has a village feel to it in spite of this uni-

versity city's important past. These were the smallest green peppers I had seen in Spain and I thought that they must be hot peppers like the Mexican Jalapeño or Fresno, but on tasting them I realized that this was not the case. *Pimientos de Padrón* (*Capsicum annuum* L.), grown around Herbón, in Galicia, have become a true specialty and feature today in *tapas* bars and restaurants all over Spain. They are a herbaceous annual plant belonging to the extensive Solanaceae family, genus *solanum*, whose stem grows to a height of some 50-60 cm (23 in), with small, deep green leaves. The little fruit, which is only sold green, is slightly wrinkled or furrowed, and does not exceed 2-3 cm (1 in) in width and 4.5 cm (1.7 in) in length. It is popularly believed that it was introduced to Herbón by Franciscan monks, but I have been unable to find the necessary historical references to be able to state this for a fact. What is a fact is that the cultivation of *pimientos de Padrón* provides the livelihood for almost two hundred families most of whom live in the little village of Herbón, a couple of kilometers from Padrón (La Coruña Province). They have kept this pepper going, selecting seeds from the best plants, succeeding in eliminating the strains, types or subtypes in which the effects of capsaicin are accentuated, albeit remembering that in some regions piquancy is readily accepted. I call these peppers "Russian roulette peppers." They can be either sweet or terribly hot, depending often on the time of year and the selection of the plants. But they are unpredictable, too; with-

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Many of the vegetables which today grow seasonally in Spain's fields and vegetable gardens are as regional as Spain's various cuisines.

in a batch some will be hot but not others, which makes them fascinating, tantalizing and always creates a compulsion to eat more and more. The village women in Santiago sell them by the hundreds, but today they are available in main supermarkets all over the country. I think the best Padrón peppers I have ever eaten were cooked one spring day in "La Escuela," a bar in Bayona in southern Galicia, near the Portuguese border. In Galicia and the rest of Spain, they are always cooked in just one way—deep fried in olive oil for less than a minute and served piping hot seasoned with coarse sea salt—but I often prepare them stuffed with fish or shellfish and deep fried.

Turnip Greens

Ask any *gallego* what his favorite vegetable is, and you can be almost sure that he'll go for *grellos*, or *nabizas* (turnip greens), which are the leafy tops of the turnip plant. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that they are rich in vitamins and minerals, the strong and often bitter taste of *Brassica rapa* is not much appreciated elsewhere in Spain. Nabizas are the first leaves to appear and they are very tender, while *grellos* are the fully-grown leaves. The secret is to cook this vegetable freshly picked and bright green, with no yellowing leaves. Boiled with potatoes and tossed in a traditional *ajada* dressing of olive oil, garlic and sweet *pimentón* or *paprika*, they are a source of pleasure to many a discerning palate, *gallego* or otherwise. I have also tasted really young, tender leaves simply cooked very gently in oil

with garlic, no water: perfect! Accompanied by a good slice of *lacón*—salted and smoked pork hock—a couple of Galician *chorizo* sausages and a few good potatoes, they become the famous regional dish *lacón con grelos*, a truly substantial meal, especially in the inland villages where they make it best. Turnip greens or green cabbage are often an appetizing addition to another comforting dish traditional to Galicia—*caldo gallego* (Galician soup)—made of potatoes, beans, fat pork and chorizo.

In Galicia, cooks always taste raw turnip greens before adding them to a stew or boiling to check that they are not going to be too bitter. Looking for more information, I found that in 1824 the American Mary Randolph in her book *The Virginia Housewife* wrote the following: "To prevent bitterness turnip tops should be boiled in plenty of water," adding: "They are still better boiled with bacon in the Virginia style." Virginia style or Galician style? I wonder if a few enthusiastic Gallegos took the turnip tops including the hock with them all the way to the Americas. Probably not.

Cardoons

The cardoon, or *cardo* in the Castilian language, is an edible thistle of the *Cynara* family, the same family as the artichoke, and a native of the Mediterranean world. The Greeks and Romans adored them, and Pliny mentions them several times, describing them as a luxury vegetable reserved for the powerful elite of his times. The Romans used to eat all parts of the plant, while today car-

doons are cultivated for their leafstalks. In northeast Spain, as in Italy and France, large white cardoons are synonymous with winter, and particularly with the Christmas festivities. In Andalusia, small wild *cardillos* and *tagarninas* (star-thistle), both first cousins of the cultivated large *blancos*, are highly appreciated.

Traveling along the roads that traverse the pleasant and ever-beautiful northeast of Spain, I have often stopped to admire these giant-sized cardoons, standing like immobile soldiers, wrapped in stiff cardboard coverings so that they blanch and remain upright. In Spain, they are grown mainly in La Rioja, Navarre, Catalonia, and Levante, the first two of these regions being where they are most appreciated from the gastronomic point of view. Seeds are planted in April, and transplanting occurs in June. In October, the plants are tied up with raffia and wrapped in paper or banked up with soil. In Spain, the best cardoons are considered to be not the ones blanched in paper but those which, once well advanced, expert growers cover with soil at just the right moment. Loose soil is built up gradually around the plant to form a sort of pyramid which protects it from the sun and wind and prevents the leaves from becoming tough at the same time as blanching them. Six or seven medium-sized varieties, with jagged leaves and thick wide prickle-free ribs, are grown in Spain, notably the types known as *Lleno Inerme* and *Lleno blanco mejorado*.

These are the cardoons that during the long winter provide the basis for delicate dishes of a vegetable which

is certainly exceptional but whose popularity has waned somewhat in recent decades. Despite being easy to cook, the fact that cleaning cardoons takes time puts them at a disadvantage in our modern world. In Spain, they are basically eaten boiled and are usually served with a light bechamel sauce incorporating onion and finely diced cured ham, to which almonds or walnuts can also be added. Early in the season, and using only the smallest, tenderest leaves, they are used in various salads dressed with vinegar and olive oil. In La Rioja, cardoons are one of the ingredients in the countless vegetable medleys known as *menestras* typical of these parts, and they are also delicious in meat stews and in creamed vegetables and light soups to which they give a distinctive and attractive flavor.

Pochas

Victor Manuel Sarope Pueyo, in his delightful book *La cocina popular navarre* (The Popular Cuisine of Navarre) writes: "With the *sanfermines* (the festival of San Fermín, patron saint of Navarre, celebrated on 7 July) we begin on the grand cycle of summer fiestas, patronal festivals which coincide with harvest time." One of the harvests which plays an important role in these fiestas is the *pocha* harvest. Pochas are a variety of early kidney bean, another New World immigrant (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.), eaten young and without the pod. The name derives from the Castilian word *pocho*, meaning "wan," or "pale," and refers to the color of the bean in its pod at the time it is harvested.



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As a Mediterranean country, Spain has received and learned to cultivate a whole series of edible plants since the earliest times.

Though pochas have been known from the time of their arrival in the Iberian Peninsula in the 16th century, they were being grown in relatively small quantities at the start of the last century, and mainly in northwestern area of Navarre. Until well into the second half of the 19th century, *pocha* beans were thought of basically as a garden plant. Currently, in addition to Navarre, they are grown in La Rioja and the Autonomous Community of Valencia. *Pochas* do not make good eating in the pod or dried, and their season is a short one, from July to September. There are four well-known varieties of *pocha*. The *arriñonada*, or “kidney” type native to Navarre is considered the best but it is a low-yield variety so growers prefer the round *bolo* type which is much more commercially viable. These two

varieties are produced in the areas of Tudela, Puente la Reina, Tafalla and Pamplona. The others come from Vera de Bidasoa, in the north of the province, where they are grown low and give a smaller bean, and in the Lumbier area where the plants are staked and have a wider pod. They are also grown in La Rioja, some parts of the Basque Country, and in Valencia. In northern Spain it is the custom to plant them on Good Friday, and it is believed that areas whose soil is low in chalk and that are not prone to mist produce finer-skinned beans. Fertilizer added to the plants must be exclusively of animal origin. Of all the *pochas* I have tasted, I have to say that the best were cooked by Rosario in the *sidrería* (cider bar) of the same name in Astigarraga (Guipúzcoa Province), gathered just a few hours

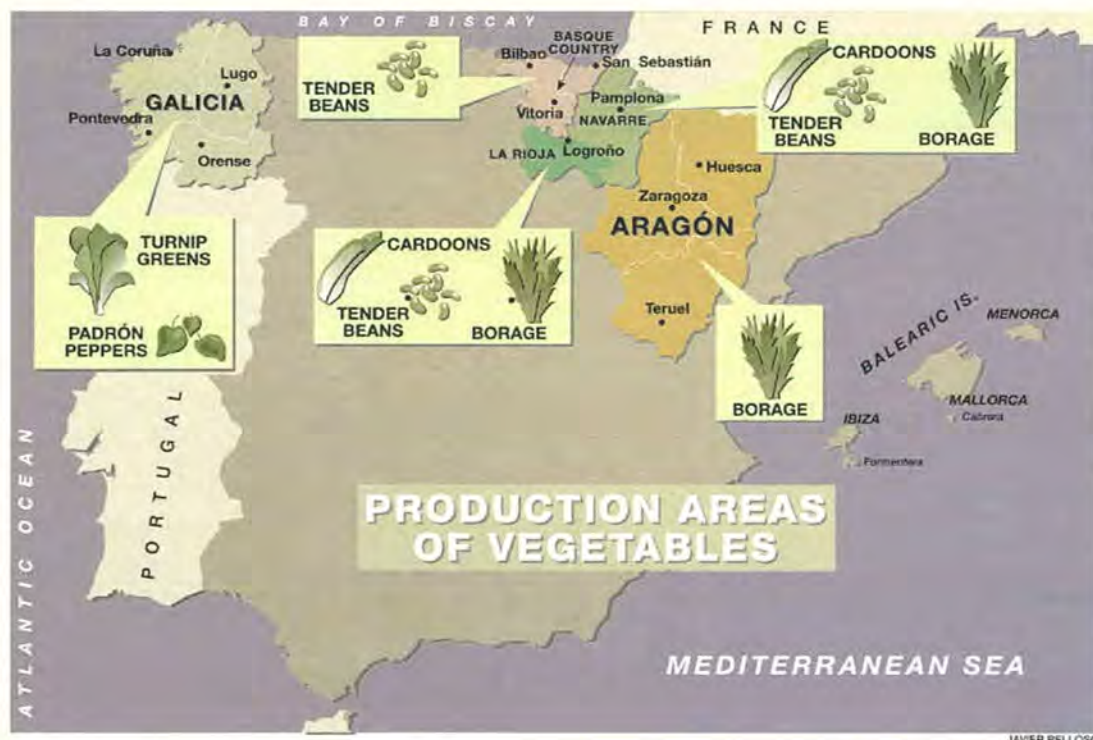
before cooking to the traditional Navarrese recipe: boiled and with a little tomato and green pepper of the sort known as “*de cristal*” because they are used mainly to be preserved in glass jars.

Borage

Borage, a plant of Mediterranean origin, has been known from time immemorial for its flavor and medicinal and health-giving properties. In Spain, it is only really appreciated in Navarre and Aragon, unlike chard and artichokes which are enjoyed in practically all the regional cuisines. Of all the vegetables I know, borage is the most elegant and delicate, though I must admit that cleaning the stalks—the part that is normally eaten—is a tedious job.

Borago officinalis L., a member of the family Bor-

aginaceae, is a 30-60 cm (12-24 in) plant, with a thick, cylindrical stem, many-branched, and with oval leaves covered in stiff hairs, and with attractive bright blue or white flowers. When borage is used as a vegetable, the tender stems have to be gathered before flowering. According to the *navarros*, they should be planted from 15 June on, and transplanted in mid-September. When the plant has developed sufficiently, it is staked. In Navarre and Aragon, borage can be found in any local shop or market since it is a very popular feature of family cooking in the rural areas where it is grown. In the rest of Spain you can find it between September and December, but only in very specialized shops. Up in the north, the traditional way of cooking borage is to boil it with potatoes and dress it with olive oil in which a few cloves of garlic have been fried. It is also added to some pulse dishes, such as dried kidney beans, pinto beans, or chick peas, especially “abstinence” dishes eaten on non-meat days. What follows is a transcription of a rather more complicated Navarre recipe. It is taken from Antonio Salsete’s late 17th century book *El cocinero religioso* (The Religious Cook): “Serve not only the leaves, but also the stems. The difference is that the stems are cooked and cut up, and the leaves are just drained after washing. Make then a batter of milk or water, flour, eggs and salt, and dipping the pieces of borage into it, fry them. If the batter is too runny, add more flour. If it is too thick, add more egg and then it will be smoother.” In her beautiful book *Rece-*



tas con ángel (Recipes with Charm) Caty Juan del Corral celebrates all the good things grown in the Balearic Islands. It seems that the islanders appreciate the delicate flavor of this plant, too, and she includes various salads made with baby bor-

age—the first two leaves and the root are used, and the contrast of flavors and textures of these two parts of the plant is sensational. Apart from borage, the Balearic salad includes groundsel, the tenderest chicory, ripe seeds of wild

pepper plant and a dressing of white wine, a few drops of lemon juice, olive oil, and salt.

Author and broadcaster María José Sevilla is a specialist in food and wine and teaches at the Culinary Institute of America, in the Napa

Valley. She is responsible for gastronomy and food promotion at the Commercial Office in the Spanish Embassy in the U.K.

See Main Exporters on page 21 and Recipes on page 134.

HINTS ON PREPARING PARTICULAR VEGETABLES

All vegetables should be thoroughly washed before using. In the case of *pimientos de Padrón*, be sure to dry them very carefully before putting them into the hot oil, to avoid splashing.

Excessive bitterness in turnip greens can be avoided by changing the water once or twice during boiling.

When cleaning cardoons, borage, and artichokes, it is advisable always to wear rubber gloves since it is very

difficult to remove the stains they leave on one's hands, especially the nails.

To prepare cardoons, cut off the base and separate the leaves. Use a knife to strip off the fine skin and stringy parts, much as you would prepare celery, and rub with lemon to stop them darkening. Cut into pieces about 5-7 cm long, and put them into a bowl of water with lemon juice added. All you need to do then is decide how you

are going to cook them.

To preserve the light color of cardoons and artichokes and prevent them darkening, you will need to make *agua blanca*, or "white water." This is very similar to what the French call *blanc à légumes* but simpler, since the Spanish version contains no fat. Put some water on to boil and add to it a spoonful of flour previously mixed in a little water, a slice of lemon, and salt. As the veg-

etables cook, the flour will remain on the surface and take up the dark particles. The flour can easily be skimmed off bit by bit with a wooden spoon.

To make a cardoon salad, make several longitudinal incisions at either end of each piece, then some lateral ones. Add the cleaned and cut cardoon to water containing ice cubes and a few drops of lemon juice and leave to curl. It is then ready for dressing.



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Thirty something: A new generation of Spanish wine people

Text: John Reeder

This second batch of thirty-somethings is made up of winemakers and directors of *bodegas* from three of Spain's most prestigious wine export Denominations of Origin: Rioja, Navarre, and Rías Baixas. Here you will meet the men

Juan Vázquez



Miguel Ángel de Gregorio



Alicia Eyaralar



Photos: Pablo Neustadt/ICEX

and women responsible for some of Spain's finest wines, original white Albariño varietals from Galicia, cask-aged classic red wines from the Rioja, and a splendid range of new wines from Navarre. Just a few of the vast range of fine wines made in Spain.



Juan Vázquez: Efficiency and Vision

He is the prototype of the younger, new men in charge of Spain's new wineries: economist, with a Masters in Business Administration, eight years experience in marketing and management in one of the world's leading food products multinationals, Conagra, then six more years working as financial director at one of Sanders, the French agricultural products multinational companies in Spain. Exactly the right pedigree and the necessary curriculum to run a technologically advanced market leader such as Bodegas Vilariño Cambados, maker of one of the finest of Spain's new fresh white varietal wines, Martín Codax.

We had come to the old fishing port of Cambados to talk to Vázquez about his bodega and his wine. The surrounding countryside had that soft, lush greenness typical of an Atlantic spring, for Cambados is in Galicia, that northwestern Celtic corner of Spain which juts out into the Atlantic. From the winery set on a small hill above the village we could see out across the bay, where, it being low tide, hundreds of men and women were collecting clams.

An Unusual Winery

Bodegas Vilariño Cambados is by far the largest winery in the relatively recently designated (1986) Rías Baixas Denomination of Origin (Denominación de Origen, D.O.). Unusually, the winery owes its origins in part to public financing from the regional autonomous government, the Xunta de Galicia, and in part to a cooperative of nearly three hundred local grape growers. The area is famous for its highly individual white varietal wine made from the indigenous

Albariño grape (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36), a fresh fruity distinctive wine with a pleasing touch of Atlantic acidity. Try some. It makes an interesting change from the sea of Chardonnay washing around out there.

Anyway, as Juan Vázquez told us, prior to the setting up of the D.O., wine production in the area was a haphazard affair in the hands of small grape growers, owners of tiny, half-acre vineyards, undercapitalized *minifundia*, obviously unable to invest in the latest winemaking technology necessary to make a high quality wine. The raw material was there, a thoroughbred grape variety, the Albariño, as was a suitable microclimate and the human input, the skills of the grape growers. What was needed was an injection of capital. The Xunta supplied this and prompted the local grape growers to organize themselves into a cooperative. Thus, one of the most up-to-date wineries in Spain came into being with the very latest in controlled fermentation technology at its disposal. Juan Vázquez has the challenging task of running this strange hybrid, where a cooperative of grape growers are partners to a private wine-making company (the holdings of the local government were privatized), but do not exercise any control over the wine-making side of the business which is kept completely separate. Under Vázquez's management, the winery has carried out an educational role in improving what were archaic viticultural practices. The fact that Vázquez is himself a Galician has meant that this labor of transformation has been carried out with tact and sensitivity.

This, then, is not just another story of a high-tech company steamrolling local tra-

ditions. The winery and its wine are very much part of the local community, and indeed, are its pride and joy. Intelligently, Vázquez has made sure that these roots are not lost. Since taking over as managing director in 1994 he has ploughed back some of the bodega's profits into Galician culture. The name of the bodega's flagship white varietal wine is Martín Codax, a 13th century Galician troubadour, and the bodega helps to finance one of Spain's foremost medieval and renaissance music groups, which has taken the name of the troubadour as its own, by paying for the construction of authentic period instruments and helping with the costs of recording. The Galicians are Celts and proud of it, and the bodega is one of the principal sponsors of the leading Celtic folk music group, Milla-doiro, and of an annual festival of Celtic music which brings together folk musicians from Galicia, Ireland, Brittany, and Wales.

A Tight Ship

Let no one be deceived into thinking that this is just a folksy, local show, however. Vázquez runs a very tight ship, a highly efficient modern winery, rapidly expanding in both production and export sales. "We're currently running at about a million and a half bottles a year," Vázquez told us, "and I hope within a few years, when more of our vines reach maturity, to reach two to three million bottles. You must remember that many of our vines are still only seven or eight years old. We have also adopted a policy of diversification in our marketing. You've got to export these days. Overdependence on the domestic mar-

ket is suicide. Previously, local producers used to say why bother about export when the local market in Galicia absorbs all our production. In the last few years, above all since Spain became a member of the European Economic Community, you find more and more wines from other Spanish regions and imported European wines in the local Spanish markets. This has meant that those wineries which did not make medium-term investments in building up export markets are now facing real difficulties. Only 27 percent of Bodegas Vilariño-Cambados' production is sold on the Spanish domestic market, and our fastest growing markets are in the U.S.A., Germany, Switzerland, and Japan. You must diversify your markets to survive in these increasingly competitive days and not fall into the trap of putting all your eggs in one basket, however tempting in the short term that might be."

And what of Vázquez's wines? I particularly liked the Martín Codax '95 white Albariño varietal, a lovely, pale, straw-yellow color with a subtle floral, appley, newly-cut-grass nose, fresh, clean, and distinctive on the palate with just that touch of acidity to lend elegance. And his latest offering Organistrum—the name, appropriately enough, of a medieval musical instrument, a sort of hurdy-gurdy clavichord—another Albariño white varietal, whose second malolactic fermentation takes place in new French oak. Three months in the cask means that the varietal character of the wine is retained and its complexity enhanced by a touch of oak. Only 13,000 numbered bottles of this gem are produced each year, however, so you'll have to be quick.

Miguel Ángel de Gregorio: The Personification of Care

Wine families. It is curious how many people in the wine business—makers, grape growers, merchants, coopers, importers, sales people—come from generations of wine families. How from childhood they have unconsciously breathed in the culture of wine by being born into a family connected with the world of wine. This an economist would call the accumulation of human capital, a body of knowledge, traditions, practices, assimilated without being consciously taught, simply by growing up in a specific environment, in this case, the world of wine. This, in later life, makes the progression of wine people into a career in wine almost inevitable, the logical extension of a learning process. One such is Miguel Ángel de Gregorio, the managing director of one of the Rioja's newest high prestige wineries, Bodegas Bretón of Logroño. Son of the Director of Vineyards at Marqués de Murrieta, one of the legendary founder bodegas of the Rioja, grandson of a family of small grape growers and wine producers in La Mancha, the great wine reservoir of central Spain, a region with the greatest surface area under vine in the whole of Europe, de Gregorio grew up in and around the wineries of the Rioja. As he says, "There are certain things about grape growing and winemaking that I seem always to have known. I can't remember any precise moment when I learned them. They seem to be part of me. In the same way, I can't recall making a con-

scious decision to go into the wine business. I seem to have always known I would go into wine."

Science and Tradition

A degree in Agricultural Engineering at Madrid University, then a Masters in Oenology and Viticulture plus the obligatory MBA, all this perhaps developed his scientific and business skills and left him better equipped when he, inevitably, returned to the Rioja to run a bodega. But, as we shall see, de Gregorio carries his learning lightly and remains profoundly skeptical about overvaluing science and technology. Originally attracted by the prospect of research—de Gregorio still lectures in oenology part-time at the University of La Rioja—he found his time more and more absorbed by the running of the bodega and the business side of winemaking. Occupied in the day to day business of making and selling wine, de Gregorio says that despite being a scientist by training he finds himself more and more appreciative of the value of the wine-making traditions and practices of his forebears. As he explains, "I think I believe less and less in technology and more and more in the theories—intuitions?—of my forefathers. In winemaking and grape growing science allows us to understand with greater precision why our grandfathers did certain things, enables us to rationalize their institutions, and to exercise greater control over certain processes, but not

much more. Several hundred years of winemaking and grape growing are what lies behind a good wine. Take viticulture. The thoroughbred noble grape varieties used today in winemaking have survived thanks to decisions taken by our grandfathers and great-grandfathers who were farmers cum grape growers cum winemakers. They selected varieties not simply on the basis of higher yields, but in terms of quality. As winemakers as well as grape growers, their selection was made on the basis of searching for the finest raw material available for their wine, the finished product was what was important."

Enthusiasm and Quality

On returning to the Rioja, de Gregorio was offered the job of running a new quality winery, of helping set it up virtually from scratch, of picking his own team. De Gregorio is a man overflowing with an infectious enthusiasm for wine and naturally the way he ran the bodega would have to reflect this. "It's always easier to start something new than to try and change something that is already there. What I wanted was a winery where everyone was involved in everything, where there was as little separation of functions as possible. So we at Bodegas Bretón have trained oenologists involved in sales and export, and salespeople who work in the wine-making department. What's important is that everyone in the bodega has to have that special sensibility, that special feeling for

the wine. Wine is a special product—I don't even like to use the word 'product' in this case. I don't believe in sales people, office staff, or anyone else in the bodega who don't share this belief." De Gregorio's wines are, naturally, of a piece with the man. His enthusiasm and attention to detail overflows into the house style of Bodegas Bretón: carefully made, quality wines. Let me especially recommend their Dominio de Conté 1991, an estate-bottled, cask-aged classic red Rioja *reserva* (see Glossary on page 146), a *nerveux*, slightly tannic, finely balanced, and elegantly structured wine still retaining that pleasing touch of acidity characteristic of a fine wine with many years of life before it. A wine, however, you will not find everywhere, only in carefully selected restaurants and vintners. De Gregorio insists that this is not snobbery but respect and care for his wine: "We take a great deal of care over the making and the presentation of our wine, therefore, we expect our customers to understand this. I prefer not to sell my wine to certain shops and restaurants where the wine is treated badly, where, for example, the wine is incorrectly stored, or left on display for days on end in a shop window in the sun, or where the bottle arrives at the table with a torn, grubby label because of lack of care. The loss of prestige for our wine that these malpractices involve, far outweighs any possible profit we might obtain from selling our wine to this kind of customer."





PALACIO
DE LA VEGA

Alicia Eyaralar: Taking Over the Palace

Not an hour's drive cross-country south from Pamplona, the capital city of Navarre, renowned for its bull-running, lies the hilltop wine village of Dicastillo.

Coming up from the valley below, a hallucination awaits, perched oddly on the side of the hill is a huge English neo-Gothic folly of a castle, with a couple of Florentine towers on either side thrown in for good measure, something halfway between a monumental Victorian railway station and one of Universal's haunted houses. It appears that in the 1890s, a local aristocratic lady, the Countess of la Vega, returning from a trip to London, was so smitten with the new fashions in English architecture, that she had the Palacio de la Vega built. A strange massive pile in a remote village of scarcely a thousand inhabitants in the middle of northern Spain.

Today, this curious house is the setting for one of Navarre's most successful newer wineries, Bodegas Palacio de la Vega, home to one of Spain's new generation of wine people, Alicia Eyaralar. A diminutive, determined woman still only in her mid-thirties, Eyaralar is a northerner, from the Atlantic region of Asturias, an area more famous for its cider than for its wines. Having studied biology at her home university of Oviedo, she went on to do a Masters in Viticulture and Oenology in Barcelona. Her first job was as oenologist and overseer of vineyards in a small family bodega in another northern Spanish wine producing area, El Bierzo.

Alicia in Navarre

More than two years as Jill-of-all-trades at the bodega, even to the extent of becoming a member of the

Regulatory Council of the new Bierzo Denomination of Origin, were to be a useful apprenticeship for the next stage in her career, taking over as winemaker at a new winery in Navarre, Palacio de la Vega.

Palacio de la Vega was set up in 1991 in the wake of the enthusiasm generated by the boom in the wines of Navarre which took place in the late 1980s, a boom inspired by the example of such leading bodegas as Chivite, Sarriá or Guelbenzu (see page 73). Navarre, traditionally associated with fruity rosés, started to expand their range into fine cask-aged reservas, and an additional bonus, the area was found to be a perfect habitat for imported noble French grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot. A group of eighteen local investors decided to put up the cash for a new, high-technology winery, and Eyaralar was brought in to make the wines. Four years later the unthinkable happened and the bodega was found to be on the verge of bankruptcy. Inadequate commercialization, cash flow problems, and perhaps a little entrepreneurial and financial inexperience, all conspired to undermine the success of the wines, because the wines made by Eyaralar had been a great success, recognized throughout the sector as some of the finest made in Navarre.

Let Alicia Eyaralar take up the story at this point. "When the company was near to closing down I was distraught. So much time, work, and effort invested, four years working round the clock and, it seemed, all for nothing. The worst of all really was that the wines themselves had an excellent reputation and were completely sold out. Just when we were beginning to establish our-

selves as makers of quality wine this had to happen."

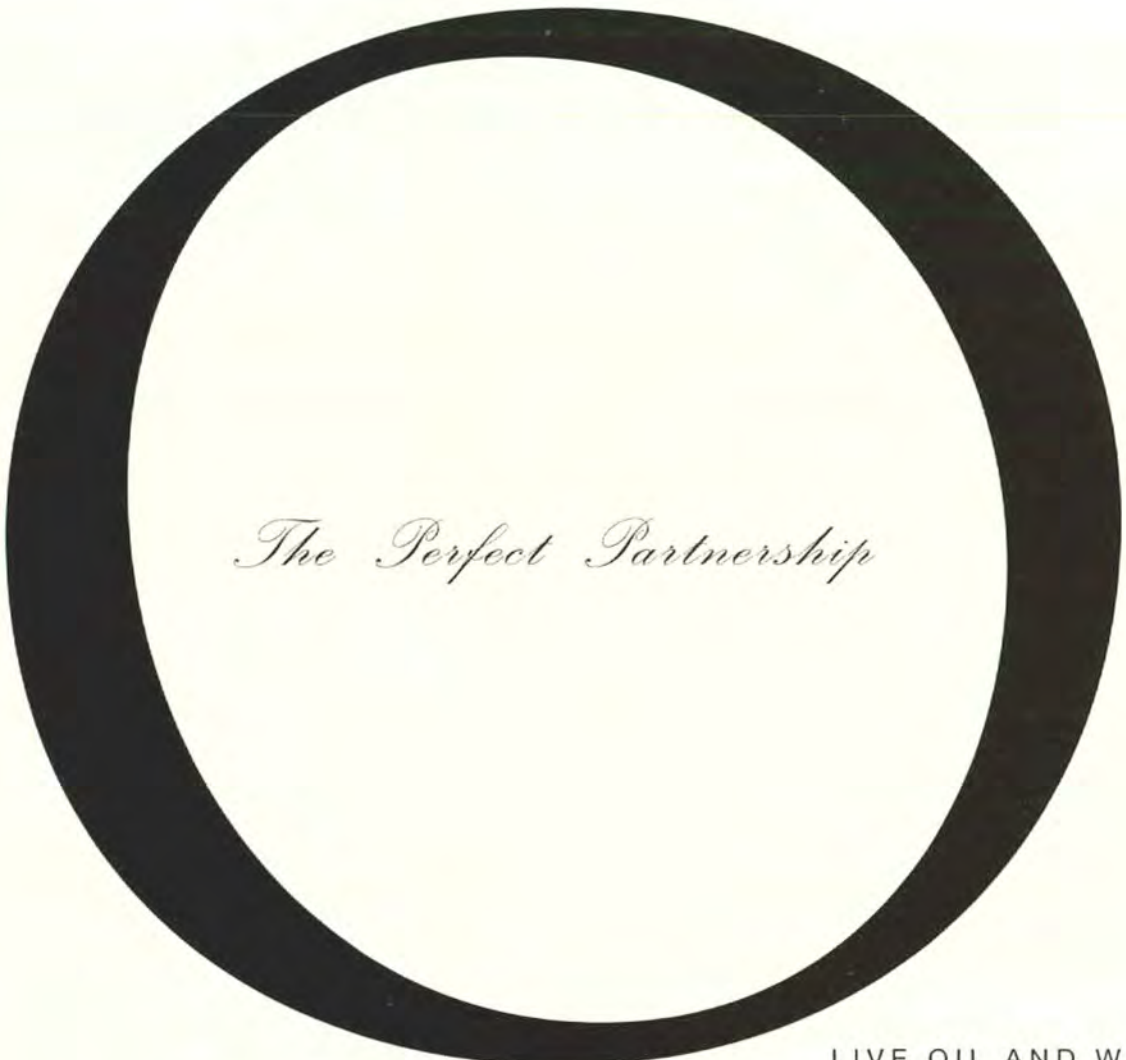
Second Chance

Enter a knight in shining armor, French, to boot. At the last hour, the Pernod-Ricard beverage conglomerate decided that despite its problems, Palacio de la Vega was a going prospect and bought the bodega. They recapitalized the company, and on the land below the castle set up a warehouse facility for the distribution of their own products, transferring there the distillation plant for their newly acquired brand Zoco, the market leader in Spain of the other beverage specialty of Navarre, the popular liqueur *Patxarán*.

Obviously impressed with Eyaralar's skill as a winemaker, and commitment and determination as a manager, after a period of observation and scrutiny—"they waited for some months, sent down their people to taste the wines and study the setup"—she was confirmed in her position. Continuity, a large measure of autonomy as regards the production process and the inestimable advantages of the backing of a large and powerful group with all its capital resources were what Pernod-Ricard offered. The result? Reveling in a newfound stability and a highly professional distribution network, a couple of years further on down the road Eyaralar has come up with a fine and varied portfolio of wines, from local specialties such as the overwhelmingly fruity Palacio de la Vega 1995 *rosado*, to more experimental French varietal reds—I was particularly impressed with an elegant '93 Merlot varietal, with its vanilla and coffee nose—a portfolio which enjoys an

increasingly high reputation both on the Spanish domestic and overseas export markets. How has Eyaralar got it right? What is her formula for success? Clearly the newly found financial stability offered by the umbrella of the Pernod-Ricard group has played its part, together with the confidence they placed in her, and the independence they have granted her. Once again, we find in Eyaralar what we saw in de Gregorio, an almost obsessive attention to detail, her command over every phase of the production of her wines, from grape to bottle, from the minutely detailed ampelographic map she has drawn up of the areas which describes every vineyard according to soil type, grape variety, age of vine, etc., through the newest wine-making technology in the vinification plant where, in her white laboratory coat, she seems to be constantly pacing up and down, to the best French oak barrels in the naves where the wine lies maturing, nothing seems to escape her control. Testing the Merlot varietal I was impressed with the sophisticated design and the muted colors of the label. Ten out of ten for elegance in presentation I said to her. You can see the influence of the French *savoir faire* here. She was indignant. "What do you mean? We design our own labels here at the bodega and we reckon that they're the best in the whole Pernod-Ricard group!"

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



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Varietal Extra Virgin Olive Oils

The climate of the Iberian Peninsula, with its marked contrasts between the plateau and the coast, make food preservation an important consideration. And perfect examples of dishes that last well are the various types of *gazpacho* and the *escabeches*, a type of marinated casserole. The former are chilled, refreshing soups, full of vitamins and minerals, not to mention flavor, and the latter are often inspired and practical ways of dealing in the high season with surplus game or fish.

Inherited know-how has taken over from the former homespun methods and now aspires to perfection thanks to the large investments being made in applied research and technology in Spain, mostly by producers, with support from officialdom. The most promising botanical varieties of vines and olives are being selected, giving priority to those that adapt well to local conditions but that are also resistant to adversity. Production today is so painstaking and specialized that the zeal to anticipate demand means that consumers are now being offered olive oils, wines and vinegars made from grapes or olives from a single variety.

This is made possible by Spain's contrasting geography whereby each terrain and climate can produce specific, very clearly distinguishable varieties of olive and vine. And the juice from their fruits—olives and grapes—can be used to obtain the so-called varietal, or single-variety, extra virgin

olive oils, wines and vinegars. This helps to explain the *raison d'être* and the utility of the increasing number of varietal oils and vinegars that are now on display in shops and in restaurants where diners can make their selection from a trolley, according to preference or just to satisfy their curiosity.

Our palates should learn to distinguish the subtle differences of flavor between one variety and another. If, with our eyes closed, it is perfectly easy for us to recognize the characteristics of table and wine grapes and to distinguish between *Sevillana* and *Arbequina* olives, then it should be just as easy to learn to recognize the juice of their fruits—the wine, the vinegar, and the olive oil from each vine and each olive tree.

We can then use our sense of taste to its full potential. Producers are busy recreating the half-forgotten pleasures of varietal oils and vinegars while suppliers are encouraging the proliferation of new inventive dishes and the recovery of outstanding dishes of the past. We are all used to preparing blends of olive oil, wine vinegar, aromatic herbs, seasoning, coloring and garlic but now producers are assisting us by selecting the best saffron, the most delicately-perfumed tarragon and, after careful maceration, offering them on the market in attractive and useful combinations in such wonderful products as saffron and tarragon vinegar.

Below is a selection of six

varietal extra virgin olive oils, each with a marked personality. Their marriage with the ideal vinegar will bring out the best of both and the aromas, flavors, and textures of the dish they are gracing.

The superiority of virgin olive oil over any other edible oil lies in the fact that it is the only one that is a natural, fresh fruit juice obtained simply by pressing. In ancient times it was obtained by hand and filtered through a cloth. Now producers of extra virgin olive oil place all the emphasis on harvesting and crushing the olives on the same day, squeezing out the juice while the aroma and flavor are still intact. Tradition decrees that a piece of bread should be dipped into the first oil of the season to assess its sensory qualities and perceive the flavor of each varietal oil.

Consumers, on recommendations from dietitians and traditional and modern cooks, are increasingly pressing for an extra virgin olive oil made from a single olive variety or from blends of 2 or 3 varieties. The market offers attractively-designed bottles with numbered labels showing the year of production, the place of origin, the degree of acidity and, most importantly at present, the variety of olive from which the oil was pressed. Some of these presentations are fairly pricey and the current trend is towards single-variety oils linked to the name of a producer and a specific region.

This is because such oils offer unique features resulting from the method of obtention and tied to the specific uses given to the product in each area, and these features have come to be associated with the flavor and organoleptic qualities of the products supplied to the market. So varietal oils are much in demand because of their marked personality.

The obtention of an extra virgin oil is a matter of controlling hygiene throughout the production process and applying the extraction techniques with absolute care. Healthy olives picked on the same day, preferably by hand (this is known as milking), washed and processed within 24 hours, lead to the obtention of excellent extra virgin olive oils with absolutely no defects. Although the labels stipulate the degree of acidity, usually between 0.2 and 1 degree of free oleic acid, the acidity has nothing to do with the flavor. Low acidity does not mean a mild flavor or high acidity a more intense flavor. The degree of acidity is a chemical parameter that is not organoleptically relevant. If we concentrate on the perception of the specific organoleptic qualities of each variety, we will be able to discover its individual personality and interpret not only its sensory profile but also the range of possible culinary uses for it.

Verdial

Olive oil made from the Verdial olive of Vélez-Málaga is

grown in the Málaga district of Axarquía. This variety—Verdial comes from *verde*, or green—gives an oil with the most delicate of sensory attributes, as delicate as the care given by producers in the many small cooperatives scattered over the sea-facing mountain slopes. The small quantities produced used to be sold only direct from the mill but this oil is now beginning to be found in shops and restaurants where it is much appreciated for its smoothness. Its fruitiness, with a touch of almond, and its greenish gold color point to olives picked at just the right degree of ripeness. This is an early oil because the olives it comes from grow in especially sunny areas with plenty of night-time dew. It is ideal as a dressing for both salads and steamed foods and in gazpachos.

Arbequina

The trees of the much-prized Arbequina olive variety are relatively small and not especially vigorous, but they produce large amounts of small olives that even when fully ripe never turn completely black. The fruits are small, ocher yellow and full of a characteristically fruity, orchard taste. They make an oil with an exquisite flavor—the aroma is reminiscent of fresh artichokes, and the taste of freshly-picked tomatoes and vegetables. It is a very fresh and young oil that should be consumed at the start of the season, when it first arrives on the market in early spring;

it combines to perfection with tender, spring vegetables, either cooked or in salads, and with grilled fish. This oil should always be used uncooked as its aromatic substances are very volatile and sensitive to heat and light.

Hojiblanca

The stately Andalusian areas of Antequera, Archidona, Estepa, Lucena, etc., in the provinces of Málaga, Córdoba and the east of Seville, produce exceptional harvests of olives from the Hojiblanca variety. This oil has an elegant and flavorsome balance between bitter and sweet with unexpected, cheerful notes of fresh grass, flowers and camomile flowers, yet with slight bitterness and a pleasant aftertaste. The initial pungency quickly disappears, this being one of its virtues and the key to its equilibrium. Its color varies from intense green in Málaga and Seville to gold in Córdoba.

It brings out the flavor of fried foods such as chips, squid rings, and fish and enhances the qualities of sautés and casseroles. Ideal for pastries and baking, it gives exceptionally workable and light doughs.

Cornicabra

Grown in the Montes de Toledo at the heart of the Castilian plateau, the Cornicabra trees are highly sensitive to cold and so receive much pampering, resulting in oil of outstanding quality.

The pleasant gold color of the oil has a greenish luster that hints at its fruitiness. When obtained from more mature fruits, towards the end of the harvest, it offers surprisingly eloquent flavors and textures reminiscent of ripe avocado with a remarkable balance between sweet, bitter and pungent. The texture is fluid but velvety.

Very suitable for dressing warm salads, roasted and stewed vegetables, uncooked in sauces such as mayonnaise, and for marinades and game dishes.

Empeltre

The Empeltre olive variety grows evenly over the hills and countryside of Lower Aragon, in the provinces of Teruel and Zaragoza. This area was once densely covered in leafy olive orchards with oil mills everywhere, but over the years, climate and technical considerations have led to less intense cultivation. However, the oil being produced continues to be one of the most exquisite, with the purest of sensory attributes.

The oil is a bright, pale gold color, sometimes with hints of old gold. The texture is silky and fluid but with body. The aromas present a balanced combination of the fruity fragrance of fresh fruit with the sweetness of ripe olives; they suggest country air, rosemary and thyme, combined with sweet almond blossom—almonds are frequently the orchard partners of olives in this area. In the mouth the taste

is complex, going from sweet to bitter with a slight touch of pungency. This is an oil with a great personality. It is very versatile, as suitable for use uncooked in dressings, marinades, mayonnaise and vinaigrette sauces, as for adding that special touch to boiled, steamed, or stewed dishes.

Picual

The large geographical area dominated almost exclusively by Picual olives covers the Andalusian districts of Sierra de Segura and Sierra Morena in the province of Jaén. Olive orchards stand out against the varied relief that goes from craggy, rough terrain with dense pine forests to fertile open countryside along the banks of the Guadalquivir. The hardy Picual variety adapts to such contrasts yet its oil is unexpectedly homogeneous with very clear characteristics. Its bright gold color has pretty saffron touches to it, its aroma of green olives is pleasantly fruity with grassy overtones, cheerful and fresh on the nose. Its fruitiness is characterized by pungency in the mouth and a slight bitterness, with a fresh fragrance reminiscent of leaves and apples. Altogether the characteristic flavors of the Picual are well-balanced and give an oil with personality and body. Very suitable and traditionally used for frying, for meat dishes and for stews, all of which accept its vitality well, but equally good for salads and gazpachos.

Varietal Vinegars

Fascination for the use of vinegar stems from the complexity of its production process. Good vinegars are obtained from quality wines which pass on their virtues. If the wines are from a single variety, then the vinegars have the characteristics of the grapes they are made from as well as their sensory qualities, and the same happens with *cava* vinegars (see Glossary on page 146). So it is now possible to find outstanding vinegars on the market made from excellent wines and cavas. Another of the reasons for the appeal of such vinegars is their impact on the ingredients and other condiments in dishes.

The *Regimen Sanitatis* of the Salerno School (the oldest medical school in western Europe, dated around the 9th century) proclaimed the five virtues of good wines: *fortia, formosa, fragantia, frigida* and *frisca*. These attributes are perfect too for describing top-quality vinegars—they can be classified according to their strength, beauty, fragrance, freshness, and pleasant taste. And these are precisely the qualities that vinegars pass on to food. Their strength is such that if a little vinegar is added to water it checks the alkalinity, keeping vegetable fibers firm. This is why it is so important in gazpachos and salads. It excels as a food preservative because it inactivates bacteria. And it has what is known as a competitive and compensatory action: it conceals sweetness, unlike lemon juice which only reduces it slightly.

Its presence will either enhance or smother the aromas and flavors of other substances so it has to be used subtly and sparingly.

As with wine, the beauty of vinegar is seen by holding it against the light so that its gleam and coloring can be properly appreciated. And its aroma, on reaching the olfactory organs in the mouth and pharynx during exhalation and swallowing, causes a cool, lively impact whatever the real temperature of the dish it accompanies. This can be noted with cold dishes such as gazpacho or salads and in mayonnaise and with hot dishes, either in sauces such as Béarnaise based on vinegar and tarragon, or in the final touches added to hearty soups to lighten them and add sparkle.

Tarragon

That vinegar was widely used in ancient times is clear from certain biblical stories or the books of the Roman physicians who recommended a mixture of water and vinegar to quench thirst. In the cookery book *De Re coquinaria* by the Roman Apicius (14-37 A.D.), who lived at the time of Tiberius, vinegar is used in practically all the recipes.

The parts of the tarragon plant, *Artemisa Dranunculus L.*, that can be consumed are the small green leaves and the young inflorescences. Introduced into the Iberian Peninsula by the Arabs and known by them as *tbarkoum*, it comes into its own in tarragon vinegar,

giving a slightly aniseed, grassy flavor with a sweet, aromatic, and spicy touch and a hint of fennel. It is one of the essential aromatic components of the classical *fines herbes*, gives the ideal finishing touch for thick soups and salads, and is perfect in dressings for asparagus, crab, and poultry. Essential for tartare and Béarnaise sauces and for flavoring gherkins, tomato preserves, and soft cheeses.

Cava

From the Penedés and Conca areas of Catalonia that are perfumed by the flowers of the verbena and other scrubland plants, come the Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada grape varieties. These have traditionally been used for making the prestigious cavas from which excellent vinegars are obtained. Aged in barrels, they have a golden color, a cool, subtle bouquet and a salty aftertaste. Cavas are currently also produced from the Chardonnay variety and the vinegars from these are sweet yet sour, ideal for fish and shellfish dishes.

Rioja Wine

Connoisseurs and cookery experts place Rioja wine vinegar in the same orbit as the wines of the Rioja region—if it can produce such superb wines then obviously its vinegars will be of similar quality.

The shine and rich red tones hint at the aroma and taste. The slightly astringent and viscous texture, the dryish

but silky body, and the mark left by the fermentation process and, in some cases, the aging and final oxidation in barrel and bottle make it into a real jewel as a culinary ingredient. It is obtained from varieties of white grape such as the Viura or white Garnacha or red grapes such as the Tempranillo, considered to be the native Rioja stock, the Mazuelo and the Graciano. With their wealth of vanilla and cinnamon aromas with floral tones on the nose, and a touch of caramel on the palate, these vinegars are perfect in nourishing dishes such as warm salads, lentil soups, and meat or poultry dishes. They are also just right with autumn fruit compotes of apples, prunes, and quinces.

Saffron

This comes from La Mancha, at the heart of the Castilian plateau, and is made from carefully selected white wine produced from the local Airen variety—a white, rustic, and fertile vinestock. The wines are smooth and fairly fruity with an aroma of bananas, a pale color, and low acidity. After the double fermentation process and aromatization with stigmas of saffron, also from La Mancha and undoubtedly the world's leading saffron, the vinegar ends up with the most surprising sensory qualities. Its rounded flavor lines the mouth cavity like a transparent golden-orange bubble with the iridescence and shine of the essential saffron oil that also gives it a slightly oily texture.

The intense floral aroma and the tart, slightly bitter note enrich and enhance consommés and bouillons, fish and shellfish soups, rice dishes, *paella*, chicken and other white poultry casseroles, stews, ragouts, especially if made with veal and lamb, and also desserts—puddings, sponges, saffron and tea ice cream and compotes made of fresh and dried fruits.

Cabernet Sauvignon Wine

The passion for Cabernet Sauvignon has brought with it an increasing inclination towards varietal vinegars. This grape variety was brought to Spain in the nineteenth century by the French, and there are *bodegas* over a century old that preserve this historical memory in their wines. It is now once again highly valued in Spain and indeed is being planted in the five con-

tinents, a sign that the fruitiness of its wine is appreciated the world over. Both traditional and innovative *bodegas* are now offering experimental vinegars obtained by acid seeding of Cabernet-Sauvignon wines, the best of them being aged in oak barrels for twelve months.

This variety is grown in several Denominations of Origin in Spain. The vinegars offer a complex fragrance with aromas of wood and red berry fruits and in the mouth the flavors are toasted and dense on a very balsamic, refreshing and pleasant licorice base. Very suitable for warm salads, patés, stuffed roast meat, cold meats, for macerating game and for experimenting with compotes and berry sorbets. A bittersweet Cabernet-Sauvignon vinegar is used by Ferrán Adrià, of the famous El Bulli Restaurant—three stars in the Michelin Guide (see *Spain Gourme-*

tour No.36)—as an original filling for his chocolates.

Sherry

Of the good Spanish vinegars, this is undoubtedly the best known. The sherry vinegars are made within the sherry-producing area of the *Marco de Jerez* from must or wine aged in barrels that previously contained *Fino*, *Oloroso* or *Amontillado* sherry (see Glossary on page 146). Although vinegar has been produced in this area since ancient times, it has only recently become anything but marginal. The business lay in making wine or brandy and some of the winemakers even considered it disreputable to make vinegar. Others who had faith in their product started production a few decades ago and the prestige and standing of their vinegar is now completely separate from sherry, to the extent

that it is increasingly becoming essential on the most refined of tables.

Top-class vinegars on the market include two types of Sherry vinegar: Sherry vinegar in which aging takes six months, and Sherry vinegar Reserva with an aging process of two years. These are very forthright, even aggressive vinegars in the mouth—the taste is strong, sharp, refreshing, with intense aromas of old wood or even of coffee and reminiscent of the Oloroso barrel.

A few drops added to a jug of drinking water give the impression that the water is iced. This vinegar is magnificent as a basis for vinaigrette salad dressings but is strong so use it sparingly, and also for cooking meat and poultry dishes. Also excellent for poultry and Iberian pork patés.



Alicia Ríos has degrees in philosophy and psychology and has worked as chef and culinary consultant for restaurants and the media. An expert on oil and olives and head of a tasting panel, she is the joint author with Lourdes March of *El libro del aceite de oliva y de la aceituna* and *The Heritage of Spanish Cooking*. She also takes part in theatrical activities related to the world of food such as the recent Fair of the Five Senses, part of the International Theatre Festival held in London in June.

See Main Exporters on page 16.

Recipes

Recipes selected by Alicia Ríos

Wines selected by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano*

Gazpacho with herbs

Tarragon vinegar
Verdial extra virgin olive oil

This recipe takes its inspiration from the *gazpacho* traditionally made in Periana, in the Upper Axarquía area of Málaga (Andalusia), where the native Verdial olive variety is grown with care. It is very much an improvised dish that combines common wild herbs with the most refined herbs of world-class cuisine. The Verdial oil and the tarragon vinegar act as the golden bond between all the other ingredients.

SERVES 6:

3 lettuces of different varieties
1 bunch of each of the following fresh herbs: tarragon, dill, coriander, mint, spearmint, parsley and wild fennel (the tender feathery leaves of the fennel bulb)
4 tbsp Verdial olive oil
4 tbsp tarragon vinegar
1 pinch salt per person
2 liters iced water
6 sun-dried tomatoes as garnish (optional)

Wash, drain and finely slice the lettuces (enough to fill about 6 cups). Pull the leaves from the stems of the fresh herbs, wash and drain. Place all these vegetables in a bowl with the iced water. Mix the tarragon vinegar with the salt, add the Verdial olive oil and beat well. Pour this dressing over the herb gazpacho. Decorate with strips of sun-dried tomatoes, previously soaked in Verdial oil

and tarragon vinegar. In Andalusia this cold soup is served with anchovies, either in vinegar or fried, and with slices of toast rubbed with garlic and generously drizzled with Verdial olive oil.

Recommended wine: Amontillado sherry from the D.O. Jerez. A generous sherry is the only sort of wine that can stand up to the strength of the garlic and vinegar in the gazpacho.

Guacamole salad

Cava vinegar
Arbequina extra virgin olive oil

With a little imagination, this exuberant combination of things Mediterranean and Caribbean can carry us to the tropics, thanks to its interesting blend of Arbequina oil and the lively cava vinegar. The Arbequina olives have the aroma of tomatoes and artichokes as if the variety had been pollinated from the adjacent solanaceous plants and composites. The cava vinegar undoubtedly gives an elegant touch. High on energy, this is a meal in itself that could well be followed by an orange sorbet flavored with sherry vinegar.

SERVES 6:

1 kg fresh pineapple cut into small triangles
4 ripe mangos
4 ripe avocado pears
4 tbsp Arbequina olive oil
4 tbsp cava vinegar
1 pinch salt per person
1 tropical lime
1 lemon
Dice the fruits and place in a

salad bowl. In a separate bowl, mix the salt and vinegar, add the oil and beat well. Pour this dressing over the pineapple and mangos. Carefully add the cubes of avocado pear so that they do not break up. This dish should be eaten very cold and may be served with fine corn tortillas and dwarf corn cobs to give a contrasting crunchy texture. Decorate with segments of tropical lime and Mediterranean lemon.

Recommended wine: Finding a suitable partner for this salad is difficult not just because of the aroma of the cava vinegar but also because the Arbequina oil offers reminiscences of artichokes, another of the impossible matches for wine. And the orange sorbet suggested as a follow-up makes things even worse because no fruits go well with wine. At the risk of going beyond the pale, try serving an orange liqueur.

Marinated tuna fillets

Rioja wine vinegar
Hojiblanca extra virgin olive oil

The firm texture and rich taste of the tuna fish make it very suitable for the *escabeche*, or marinade technique, an age-old cooking procedure. The robust, perfumed Rioja wine vinegar and bright Hojiblanca extra virgin olive oil are the ideal partners. The capers give a modern touch and their sharp and earthy taste give added potential for combination and presentation.

SERVES 6:

6 belly tuna fillets, 2 to 3 cm thick
250 ml Rioja wine vinegar
250 ml white wine
250 ml Hojiblanca olive oil
1 whole bulb of garlic
1 lemon
100 gr capers in vinegar
Bay leaves
20 black pepper grains
2 tbsp salt

Wash and dry the tuna fillets. Pour a little of the oil into a frying pan and lightly brown the fish on both sides then place in a deep earthenware dish. Add the Rioja wine vinegar, the white wine and the rest of the Hojiblanca oil. Place the bulb of garlic in the center and sprinkle with the capers and the pepper grains. Finally, season and decorate with a few bay leaves and slices of lemon. Cover and allow to simmer for 7 or 8 minutes but no longer otherwise the tuna fish will become dry. Leave all the ingredients to rest in the dish where they were cooked for at least a couple of days in a cool, dark place before eating. The dish should be eaten at room temperature and may be accompanied with steamed potatoes and leeks dressed with Rioja wine vinegar and a generous trickle of Hojiblanca extra virgin olive oil.

Recommended wine: White fortified *crianza* D.O. Rioja. In spite of the strength of the Rioja wine vinegar, the smoothness of the tuna fil-

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lets and the presence of oil suggest that a slightly raisin-flavored, fortified crianza (see Glossary on page 146) Rioja white wine would bring out the flavor of the fish. Take care not to link too closely the flavors of the marinade sauce with the wine and put the emphasis on the taste of the fresh tuna.

Marinated partridge

Saffron vinegar

Cornicabra extra virgin olive oil

The partridges that nest in the Toledo mountains and come down to cool off along the banks of the Tagus have a flavor when cooked that conjures up the aromatic herbs that grow so profusely in the Toledo area. The *escabeche*, a marinade technique dating from the high Middle Ages, is the ideal method of cooking and preservation, acting as a melting-pot to bring out all the flavor and color potential of the Cornicabra extra virgin olive oil and the saffron-flavored white wine vinegar.

SERVES 6:

6 partridges
6 medium-sized carrots
12 small onions
250 ml Cornicabra olive oil
250 ml saffron-flavored white wine vinegar
250 ml white wine
1 sprig of fresh thyme
2 whole bulbs of garlic
30 black pepper grains
4 bay leaves
2 tsp salt
12 cloves

Truss the partridges to give them a compact shape. Heat up a little Cornicabra olive oil in an earthenware or metal dish and brown the partridges all over for 5 minutes. Then cover with the saffron vinegar and the white wine, thyme and pepper grains. Stick the cloves into the small onions and arrange them decoratively with the carrots in the dish. Place the whole garlic bulbs in the center so that their flavor

will spread evenly outwards. Add the thyme and bay leaves and sprinkle the pepper grains on the top. Cover and cook for 1 to 1½ hours. The cooking time will depend on whether the partridges were game or farmed birds. The dish should be eaten after four or five days once the gelatin has formed so that maximum pleasure can be gained from its texture. But if kept in a tightly-sealed glass or earthenware container in a cool, dark place, it will keep for up to two months.

Recommended wine: Manzanilla sherry from the D.O. Manzanilla de Sanlúcar
These sherries go well with sharp or spicy dishes, even with asparagus, so the aromas should adapt well to those of the marinated partridge in spite of the vinegar and saffron.

Veal carpaccio with Mahón cheese

Cabernet-Sauvignon wine vinegar

Empeltre extra virgin olive oil

Originally from the Piemonte area of Italy, *carpaccio* is now known the world over. The delicacy of the very fresh veal finds the perfect partner in the subtle flavors of the cured Mahón cows' milk cheese from the Balearic islands and the other ingredients, and the combination is enhanced still further by the unique flavor and aroma of the bittersweet Cabernet-Sauvignon wine vinegar and the extra virgin Empeltre oil.

SERVES 6:

250 gr veal rump steak, in almost transparent slices
60 gr cured Mahón cheese (in one piece)
1 hard-boiled egg
1 stick of white celery with the leaves
2 tbsp Cabernet-Sauvignon wine vinegar
125 ml Empeltre olive oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground pepper
1 tbsp lemon peel

Shell and finely chop the hard-boiled egg. Slice the Mahón cheese very finely. Chop the celery with its leaves and cut the lemon peel into very fine strips. Mix the vinegar with the salt and pepper and beat with the oil. Arrange the slices of meat on a serving dish and trickle the dressing over the top in circular movements. Cover the meat with the slices of cheese and sprinkle with the chopped celery, egg and lemon rind. Serve immediately. The dish can also be served with an *escalivada*—a salad made of strips of roast peppers, tomatoes and eggplants—dressed with Empeltre extra virgin olive oil and a few drops of Cabernet-Sauvignon vinegar.

Recommended wine: White crianza from the D.O. Binissalem

A white crianza with a golden tone to it and a slight raisin flavor should be able to stand alongside the fresh flavors of the raw meat, the cured cheese and the dressing.

Macedonia of oranges and black olives

Sherry vinegar

Picual extra virgin olive oil

This colorful, sunny dish is a perfect reflection of the Andalusian character of exuberance against a stark background—exuberant like the orchards on the Andalusian estates when topped with a layer of white orange blossoms and sunny with the energy offered by the Picual oil. And yet it reminds us of the wealth of culture stored over generations in the cool, quiet cellars of Jerez.

SERVES 6:

6 table oranges
2 grapefruits
200 gr black olives, pitted and sliced
150 gr toasted almond flakes
2 tbsp sherry vinegar
2 tbsp Picual olive oil
4 tbsp orange-blossom honey

Carefully peel the oranges and grapefruits. Slice into fairly thin rounds then, if desired, into quarters. Arrange in a bowl alternating the orange slices with the grapefruit. Sprinkle the sliced olives over the top. In a separate bowl, mix the sherry vinegar with the honey then beat with the Picual oil and pour this sauce over. Leave to rest for a couple of hours in a cool place to allow all the juices to blend. Just before serving, sprinkle over the almonds to provide a crisp topping.

Recommended wine: Palo Cortado sherry from the D.O. Jerez

A daring option offering contrast would be a semi-sweet Oloroso sherry. Its generous aromas, full body and hint of raisins should bring out the flavor of the almonds and olives and absorb that of the oranges without being too dominant.

* About wine and vinegar

Generally speaking, unless balanced out with plenty of oil, the presence of vinegar kills off any possibility of happily marrying a dish with a wine. *Gazpachos, salads and marinades are undoubtedly best with water. A devilish invention, vinegar descends from wine itself and, as in sibling rivalry, it does its best to spoil things for its brothers and sisters. One way of mitigating the strong flavors so that there is no interference between them is to drink water then eat a piece of bread after each mouthful before drinking any wine. We have, nevertheless, ventured to make a few suggestions. See what you think.*

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S p a i n ' s

THE COMPARISONS BETWEEN NAVARRE AND CALIFORNIA AS WINE-PRODUCING REGIONS, WHICH SOME CONSIDER HACKNEYED, TAKE ON MORE AND MORE WEIGHT AS TIME GOES BY. THEY WERE BASED, IN THE EARLY 1990s, ON A PERCEPTION OF NAVARRE'S UNINHIBITED ATTITUDE TO FOREIGN GRAPE VARIETIES, FROM RIOJA'S TEMPRANILLO TO BURGUNDY'S CHARDONNAY—THEY WERE GLEEFULLY ADOPTED BY THE NAVARRESE, IN A HIGHLY LIBERAL REGULATORY

California: Navarre

FRAMEWORK WHICH CONTRASTED WITH THE STRAITJACKET WORN BY OTHER SPANISH REGIONS. BUT NOW THE REDISCOVERY AND RE-LAUNCH OF NAVARRE'S GLORIOUS BUT LONG NEGLECTED NATIVE VARIETIES, THE RED GARNACHO (A.K.A. GARNACHA ELSEWHERE IN SPAIN, AND GRENACHE INTERNATIONALLY) AND THE WHITE MOSCATEL DE GRANO MENUDO (A.K.A. MUSCAT BLANC À PETITS GRAINS IN FRANCE) COMES TO ADD A NEW "CALIFORNIAN" ELEMENT.

g o e s n a t i v e

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Navarre was in some danger of becoming just another “New World” area without identifiable roots, but here come Garnacho and Moscatel to the rescue.

Just like California needed to go back to its two “native” grapes, Zinfandel and Petite Sirah (obviously of European descent, but to this day of uncertain origins), to find a uniqueness that would add a touch of personality and roots to a wine scene largely dominated by French varieties, Navarre was in some danger of becoming just another “New World” area without identifiable roots. Not to worry. Here come Garnacho and Moscatel to the rescue. Exactly the finishing touches that the region needed to round off an exciting leap into the 21st century. But of course the rediscovery of local tradition cannot be considered separately from the other elements—the prior and much needed modernization—that are part of the intriguing puzzle into which the Navarre wine-producing *denominación de origen* (D.O.) or controlled appellation has developed.

One of the major elements in the puzzle is this: Navarre is the only high-quality wine region in Spain that has been discovered by foreigners, particularly Britons, long before Spaniards even began to take notice of the fact that it had, indeed, become a high-quality wine region. Spanish wine consumers tend to be traditionalists, and it took a long time for the cliché of Navarre—that of a producer of heavy reds and fresh but rather in-

consequential rosés haphazardly made by stodgy cooperatives—to wane on the national market.

But such prejudice did not exist among international consumers who didn't know much about Navarre to begin with, and just judged the contents of a bottle on its merits. They obviously liked what they found, and Navarrese wine exports have boomed over the past decade. By the mid-1990s Spanish consumers had joined the bandwagon.

What were the keys to such a Navarre boom? In chronological order, the demise of the cooperative-dominated bulk production system, the pioneering research work of the wine station EVENA (Estación de Viticultura y Enología de Navarra), the successful introduction of new grape varieties (led by Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay), and lately the recovery of the native grapes, now vinified in entirely new styles.

Copycats No Longer

These developments are united by a common thread: the liberation of Navarre from its status as a second-rate, unglamorous appendix of the powerful, world-renowned Rioja, its southern neighbor just across the long, wide Ebro river. (Indeed, eight *municipios* or counties in the southeastern

corner of the Navarre autonomous community are entitled to the Rioja D.O., in the Rioja Baja subregion.) For years the Navarre producers had been striving to shed that second-rate image. That obsession goes a long way to explaining why they were willing to legalize foreign grape varieties which Rioja has steadfastly kept at bay to protect its own varieties and traditions. In a few words—the Navarrese didn't feel they had all that much to defend or to lose and might as well take the plunge into a brave new world.

Phylloxera and the Catholic church had decisively shaped the Navarre wine scene over the past century. Before the vine disease struck, there had been many varieties planted in the region—a gateway into Spain since ancient times through the mountain passes at the western end of the Pyrenees, and particularly through the Way of St. James in the Middle Ages. But after phylloxera, the high-yielding, hardy Garnacho replaced all but a handful of the old vines. Then, by the 1950s, the Catholic church, ever active and influential in the Basque Country and Navarre, had convinced most farmers to stop going their separate ways and to form co-ops to mass produce inexpensive wine, mostly sold in bulk.

It was a sound idea when jug wine was a daily staple in southern Europe and

wine consumption was at its maximum levels in Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal. Quality was a secondary consideration left to a few select regions. And indeed the quality of Garnacho-based red wines falls precipitously when, for instance, yields are out of control. Or when fermentation occurs in huge deposits at very high temperatures, which are frequent in Navarre at harvest time. The ill-equipped co-ops largely resorted to such primitive techniques. Thus the heavy, coarse, short-lived bulk wines from the region became its unwelcome trademark. Then things improved—to a point—with the development of unpretentious rosés from the same variety.

Ricardo Guelbenzu of Bodegas Guelbenzu, a standard bearer of quality in an entirely different era, recalls that by the time the Navarra D.O. was set up in 1975, “there were some 80 cooperatives and only five private wineries in the region.” And of those five, only one—the Bordeaux-inspired Señorío de Sarriá estate—owned vineyards of any size and substance. The other four bought most of their grapes from farmers or co-ops.

Private Producers

Twenty-two years later, the scene is radically different. There remain only 40 co-

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The keys to the Navarre boom were the demise of the bulk-production system, the work of EVENA, the introduction of new and recovery of native grape varieties.

ops, either through mergers or sheer closings, while the number of private *bodegas* has grown to 40, in a region with less than half the vineyard surface of Rioja—about 18,000 hectares (44,478 acres). Some of these are wineries in the “boutique” mold, with tiny vineyards and a small production, such as Álvaro and Borja Marino’s Palacio de Muruzábal estate. The conditions for quality have thus immeasurably improved.

Early on in the process, the Navarre autonomous government and its much-lauded experimental wine station decided to do away for good with the “poor man’s Rioja” cliché by allowing some foreign varieties—essentially Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay—to be planted, by studying soils and climates in thorough fashion and by helping farmers with state-of-the-art vineyard management and winemaking advice in order to help them get on their way to independence from co-ops.

In some cases, the launch of a new winery actually was the rebirth of a family tradition going back a century or more. The Guelbenzu family thus recreated the Cascante Bodega that had thrived in the late 19th century.

Some early efforts with foreign varieties had opened eyes and set the tone for the highly personalized style of

new Navarre wines. But the fascination with Cabernet and Chardonnay led to the neglect of the familiar Garnacho (reduced to its role as the backbone of unpretentious rosés) and Moscatel.

Though the thin limestone soils are common throughout most of the region, Navarre has a more pronounced variety of climates than other, larger Spanish wine producing regions do. Indeed, many believe each of the D.O.’s five subregions should be promoted to full D.O. status.

The Ribera Alta and Ribera Baja are under a dry, continental influence, while the northern Valdizarbe (which extends into the suburbs of Pamplona, the regional capital) and Baja Montaña (on the Pyrenean foothills to the northeast) enjoy a cooler, more humid Atlantic influence. The western Tierra de Estella shares continental and Atlantic influences. There are subtler differences in mesoclimates like the Queiles river valley in the Ribera Baja, cooled by a 7,000-foot (2,133-meter) high mountain range. Throughout Navarre, day/night temperature differences—an essential quality factor—are quite high.

With such a varied set of terroirs, good vineyards and topnotch technology promoted by the administration, success had to come. The human factor, however, was the last deciding touch.

Three-and-a-half Centuries

The strongest moving force in the drive to higher quality has probably been that of Bodegas Julián Chivite, of Cintruénigo, at the southern tip of Navarre. Founded in 1647—it is one of Spain’s two oldest family-owned wineries—it was known for such good everyday wines as Gran Feudo, which became the benchmark for modern, Garnacho-based rosés in the region and throughout Spain. But patriarch Julián Chivite (who died in 1996) and his close-knit, enterprising family, were not content with their status as a leader in middle-class wines or as the largest (by far) of the Navarrese private wineries, with a cellar capacity for some two million liters of wine. They strove to enter the upper end of the quality range with some world-class wines.

Today, Chivite relies less and less on bought-in grapes, which is a fundamental prerequisite for any upmarket move. It has 100 hectares (247 acres) of vineyards under production and has planted another 300 hectares (741 acres), half of them at Aberín—with Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay—in the cooler Tierra de Estella subregion. There, its new Señorío de Arínzano subsidiary will be solely de-

voted to high-quality wines. The Colección 125 is at the top end of the current Chivite range, with a pure Tempranillo red (which may be an “imported” variety or not, depending on whom you listen to; after all, it is Rioja’s main grape) and the scarce white: a barrel fermented Chardonnay of immense elegance and a mineral, flintstone nose. The white 1995 and red 1992 Reserva are two wines of amazing purity and concentration—certainly the best to date from the Chivite family and two of the best wines overall anyone has put on the Spanish market over the past year.

Of course, Gran Feudo rosé has long been the winery’s cash cow. Together with the popular Las Campanas, made by another one of the old-time private wineries, Vinícola de Navarra, it paved the way for the dry (but fruity) Garnacho rosés from Navarre throughout Spain. They are made by the gentle, traditional *sangrado* method of extracting juice without crushing them, simply using the very weight of the mass of grapes. The rosé stereotype, however, may have hurt Navarre in two ways—by conveying the image of a picnic wine-producing region, and by sidetracking part of the Garnacho grape’s potential. But both dangers have now been averted. Chivite and a bunch of new competitors are changing the whole situation.

The Navarre government and its experimental wine station, EVENA, decided to do away, for good with the "poor man's Rioja" cliché.

Joint Quality Effort

The grouping of 11 small, private wineries known as Agrupación Vitivinícola Navarre, or AVN, merits special attention, for it represents most of the effort of innovation in the region aside from Chivite. They include Guelbenzu, Malumbres, and Camilo Castilla in the Ribera Baja; Castillo de Monjardín, Palacio de la Vega, Ochoa, Virgen Blanca, and Fernández de Arcaya in the Ribera Alta; Señorío de Otazu, Palacio de Muruzábal, and the Nekeas co-op in Valdizarbe. The member bodegas produce highly varied styles of wine and have pioneered the rediscovery of the native varieties. This is the very variety that sets modern Navarrese wines apart from the more homogeneous production in neighboring, traditionally-minded regions.

The Guelbenzu winery is a classic Navarre example of a family venture which was resuscitated, in 1980, by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of 19th-century growers. The estate now operates 36 hectares (89 acres) of Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo and Merlot in the Queiles valley near Cascante. Its concentrated and complex Cabernet-dominated cuvée, Evo, has won acclaim in Spain and its 1994 vintage places it among the country's best reds.

Javier Ochoa also returned

to his small family winery after several years as chief oenologist for EVENA, during which he pioneered the station's seminal work in the relaunch of Navarre wines. First it was his red wines, Tempranillo- and Cabernet Sauvignon-based, which attracted the most attention. Then Ochoa took the first major step in the rediscovery of traditional varieties. He took a long, hard look at the last large vineyard planted with Moscatel de Grano Menudo and realized this was an ideal grape to work with.

The 32-hectare (79 acres) vineyard, owned by the centenary Camilo Castilla winery, was used for the production of old-style, quite attractive dessert Muscats, partly aged under the sun in glass demijohns, much in the same style as some of the *vins doux naturels* of Maury and Banyuls in southern France. Its vineyard also became a precious source of clones for all those who, starting with Javier Ochoa in the early 1990s, have decided to experiment with the almost forgotten grape.

Ochoa's style is entirely different—he makes a fresh, delicate, modern sweet Muscat which has been an instant hit in Spain. The small-berried Moscatel de Grano Menudo makes more complex and subtle wines than Muscat of Alexandria, or Moscatel Romano, which is widespread on Spain's Mediterranean coast.

The first company to answer Javier Ochoa's Muscat challenge was Chivite. The family took a new look at the small Moscatel de Grano Menudo vineyard they had right in front of the cellar, with very old vines, producing concentrated musts, and decided to make something serious with it. Their 1995 Moscatel, released in very small quantities, was absolutely not a copy of the Ochoa, but a drier, more structured wine of great appeal. So variety and individuality have immediately extended into the new field of Navarre sweet wines.

Chardonnay Battle

Meanwhile, the friendly battle for leadership in the promising field of Chardonnay whites was heating up with new contestants all the time. At Palacio de Muruzábal, Álvaro and Borja Marino were producing what Robert Parker, the American critic, termed "the finest Chardonnays" he had ever tasted from Spain. But they are really in a dogfight with Chivite and with Castillo de Monjardín for local leadership in Navarre. All three make wines that are luscious and clean, and seem to get better—more Burgundian and complex, less upfront and in-your-face in New World fashion—as years go by. Their recently planted vineyards grow older and

this is obviously a factor in their improved quality.

Increasingly, the quality-minded Nekeas co-op in the cool Valdizarbe subregion (an example for the surviving cooperatives that want to thrive in the new, quality-driven environment) has become well known for its Chardonnays too. They are remarkable for their outstanding quality-price ratio. The co-op's Vega Sindoa line also includes some acclaimed Cabernet-Tempranillo reds.

Of the other forward-thinking co-ops, Bodegas Piedemonte at Olite, which has taken on the Roman name of the town *Oligitum* for its wine, has also discovered its very own niche—that of fruity but dense young reds from Tempranillo, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon (bottled separately or as assemblages), with just a very short stay in oak barrels to give them some weight. At their price range, they have proven unbeatable.

Yet another co-op, at Sada in the northern Baja Montaña sub-zone, was instrumental in the momentous relaunch of Garnacho reds. The initiative, this time, came from an outsider, Telmo Rodríguez, the talented winemaker for the Remelluri estate in Rioja Alavesa. In 1994 he made his first cuvée of unoaked, fruit-laden, remarkably concentrated Garnacho red at Sada. The wine was an instant hit on the

It soon becomes apparent that Navarre winemakers derive special pleasure from working with their own old, native vineyards.

British and American markets (under the names, respectively, of Baso and Alma). Unfortunately, Rodríguez's association with the Sada co-op was discontinued. But the challenge had already been met, with the Guelbenzu family, this time, taking the initiative with its luscious Jardín cuvée made (for the first time in 1995) from the fruit of the best, old Garnacho vineyards around Cascante. "The structure we get is phenomenal," points out Ricardo Guelbenzu. "Even though it's unoaked, this wine really hits its stride when one year old."

These efforts point to one more upcoming development—the return of the oaked Garnacho wines, a style that was forgotten decades ago but which new winemaking techniques, which avoid the variety's dreaded oxidization, make a much more attractive proposition today.

A Different Personality

As Telmo Rodríguez pointed out, "The Garnacho responds in a very definite way to the Navarre terroir, giving wines that are much

more fruit driven than elsewhere; in Priorato, for instance, their deep mineral quality makes them entirely different. We should be able to capture this Navarrese fruitiness and make a few quite interesting bottles." Likewise, Ricardo Guelbenzu is ecstatic about his new Garnacho red, stressing: "The structure we are getting is really unexpected. We'll start fiddling with some oak to see if we can take this one step further." On their part, the Chivite brothers and their sister, who have won so many recent accolades for their Chardonnay, beam, especially when a happy taster compliments them on the complexity and elegance of their new Moscatel.

They are all, in a sense, realizing the ultimate parallel between Navarre and California—after so many successful efforts to attract attention with well-made wines from international varieties, they are discovering that the same know-how and care, when applied to native grapes that were long neglected or underestimated just because they were there, can produce just as thrilling results. Or perhaps, to an international audience, even more thrilling because they are more original, more unusual wines. That's what Jancis Robinson was expressing in the *Financial Times* when she wrote that

she found the inexpensive, unpretentious Jardín from Guelbenzu more interesting than the ambitious, Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated Evo. Navarre winemakers may frown upon such distinctions. But talking to them, it soon becomes apparent that they too, deep down, derive a special pleasure from working with their own old, native, and quite genuine vineyards.



Víctor de la Serna, a deputy editor of the Madrid-based newspaper, *El Mundo*, writes about food and wine for several Spanish publications and London's *Decanter* magazine. A recipient of the National Gastronomy Award, he is a member of Spain's Academy of Gastronomy.

See list of selected exporters on page 18.

ALL AT THE SAME TABLE

Text: Vicky Hayward

Photos: Félix Lorrio/ICEX

At nine o'clock sharp on a Thursday evening twenty men are sitting down to have dinner in Tolosa, a small town inland from San Sebastián. Two men are laying the table, one is slicing bread, another is opening bottles of wine and cider, and three are serving out the first course of poached eggs with peas and potatoes. The cooks include an engineer, a machine mechanic, and a metalworker. The diners' ages range from 40 to 98. What draws them together? The answer is membership in an all-male gastronomic society, Gure Kaiola, where they meet at least once a week to cook, eat, talk, and sing. It sounds unlikely, but the Thursday night diners are far from being alone. Their society has seventy members, the town has two dozen societies, and the Basque country as a whole has over two thousand.



Members of Gure Kaiola, Tolosa's oldest gastronomic society, sit down for dinner.

"When I joined the society I didn't have a clue how to cook," explains José Luis Peciña, who prepares Gure Kaiola's Thursday evening dinners. "Now I spend three or four hours a week in the kitchen here, another hour or two shopping and I drop by most days for a glass of wine. They say fish is my specialty, but I've won competitions with other recipes. I don't cook at home, except for fiestas or special occasions. That's a different skill. The size of the pans and ovens is different. And in any case, my wife wouldn't want me in the kitchen."

Havens Against the Outside World

Today the *tripazai*, or gastronomic society cook, is such an everyday figure in the Basque Country that he is more or less taken for granted. But he is a relatively recent phenomenon, as are the gastronomic societies. Nobody is quite sure how or why they originated although the very first, La Fraternal, is well documented. It was founded in 1843 as a place for members "to eat and sing," but disbanded twenty years later after it was reduced to ashes by fire. One or two more societies took its place, most notably the Unión Artesana in 1870, but it was not until the turn of the century that societies could be found mushrooming in the old town. At that time the old ways of life centered on the port, castle, and cathedral were fast being engulfed by *fin de siècle* tourism and industrialization.

Against such a backdrop the societies became retreats—their Basque name *txoko* means a corner or haven—where the door could be shut for a few hours on the invasive outside world and its ever faster speed of life. Neighbors and friends gathered in them at the end of the day to share a simple dish or two, quaff a few glasses of cider, and relax over good conversation. For special occasions, such as the town's fiestas, full restaurant dinners were laid on. In 1932, the Unión Artesana ploughed its way through six courses: pea puree, elvers, lamb with spring vegetables, and roast chicken followed by ice cream, cheese, fruit, liqueurs, and a cigar. A typically laconic account of such an evening could stand for most of them. "The dinner finished as it always does: with singing."

By the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 there were 55 such societies in San Sebastián and another handful scattered through towns such as Tolosa. Each one started in a different, somewhat haphazard way. Gure Kaiola, for example, was set up by football fans who met for salt-cod and rice pudding in a local bar until they decided to save money and make their own dinners in 1927. Gaztelubide, now one of San Sebastián's most famous societies, formed in 1934 after splintering from another society whose committee was suspected of keeping the best ciders and wines for themselves. Au da Gure, a much small-



Three cooks set to work in Gaztelubide's kitchen.



A relaxed lunchtime aperitif of txacoli and anchovies at Au da Gure.



Adding the finishing touches to dinner for twenty at Gure Kaiola.



10 a.m. Gaztelubide cook Juan Mari Salas shops early in the day.



10:30 a.m. Fermina weighs the bake at the fishmongers.



7:15 p.m. Juan Mari serves himself from the store-cupboard.



7:30 p.m. In the early evening, several cooks share the stove.



8:45 p.m. Many hands help make the frying work light.



9:15 p.m. José Castillo and his cuadrilla enjoy their meal.



10:30 p.m. Once dinner is over, the singing starts.



11 p.m. Juan Mari takes his turn by the piano.



11 a.m. After shopping, Juan Mari returns to work.



7 p.m. Members begin to gather at the society.



8 p.m. Chef José Castillo prepares clams for bis cuadrilla.



8:30 p.m. After the soup is made, Juan Mari turns to the bake.



9:15 p.m. Juan Mari's cuadrilla sits down to dinner.



9:30 p.m. Wine and conversation flow with the meal.



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EACH MEMBER HAS HIS OWN DOOR KEY TO COME AND GO FREELY, PAYING FOR DRINKS AND FOOD AS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.

er society, was founded in 1925 by friends in need of a quiet place to drink good quality cider and *txacolí*, the local white wine.

Although the societies varied in size and style—from the earliest days their activities ranged from choral singing to *pelota* (jai-alai), mountain cycling and rowing, hunting and fishing, football and card games—their central structure was gastronomic. Each society had its own dining room, kitchen, larder and cellar, collectively managed and maintained out of members' dues. And each member had his own door key to come and go freely, paying for drinks or food as a matter of conscience. Au da Gure keeps its original wooden money box with separate lidded compartments for purchases from the larder, preserves, coffee, cider, liqueurs, wine, beer, and *txacolí*.

The societies also shared—and still respect—similar written rules and unspoken principles. One was mutual trust. Everyone was trusted to help themselves from the larder and cellar, simply leaving a note of what they had taken with the money owing. Another was tolerance. Members came from every social class and occupation, sat down at the table as equals and were expected to steer clear of politics, religion, and work, to avoid

tensions or arguments. Election of new members was by private vote. Sometimes this was done with white and black kidney beans. One dissenting vote—or black bean—meant the candidate was vetoed, a practice taken from San Sebastián's gentlemen's clubs' blackballing of unwanted members, like their English equivalents.

Most emblematic of all these rules was the societies' ban on women. The Unión Artesana set the precedent in adamant style: "Article 47: By which women are prohibited to enter the Salons, even though they may be foreigners." To all intents and purposes, the ban on female members still stands today.

A Long Tradition of Communal Eating

Where, then, did the societies acquire such a particular character? In part, no doubt, from the traditional ways of the Basque countryside and villages. Some historians suggest they started life as an urban counterpart to the country *sidrerías*, or farmstead cider presses, where men talked over local affairs and drank sparkling dry cider tapped straight from the barrel on winter and spring nights. The farmer's wife would bring in simple dishes such as an omelette,

sheep's-milk cheese, raw salt cod or grilled sardines, and the customers' bills would be chalked up on the barrels or a counter to be paid when they had money on them. Other historians have seen stronger links with the *cofradías de pescadores*, or fishermen's guilds, which since medieval times have regulated coastal fishing and celebrated together round a table on their patron saint St. Peter's day. Certainly fish dishes, especially those which started life on board the trawlers, remain the specialty of the society cooks.

But the spirit of the societies, or *txokos*, also reflects a much wider and more longstanding habit of communal cooking and eating running through every area of Basque life. Fishermen, shepherds, and charcoal makers have always eaten together, either at sea or in the open air. Shared tasks such as pig killing, hay making, or building a house still end with a meal laid on to thank those who have helped with the work. The same customs held true at all levels of society; Aymerich Picaud, the medieval French chronicler, was shocked at the local "custom whereby masters and servants do not eat separately, but at the same table." Fiestas, too, whether carnival revels or devout local pilgrimages, are

invariably celebrated by feasts with friends and neighbors. Early sepia photographs show entire villages gathered around trestle tables or open-air picnic cloths, the men and women in separate groups, staring out at the camera, forks held momentarily above plates of food. Such segregation was simply standard throughout much of Basque life, at home as well as in public—and not only the men welcomed it.

Modern Times, Unchanging Values

Since the Civil War, the societies have spread right around the Basque Country's three provinces—Guipúzcoa, Álava and Vizcaya—and spilled over into Navarre and French Basque-land. San Sebastián, however, remains the mecca, with nearly 250 societies up and running today. For many years during Franco's time they just ticked over quietly, forced to justify their existence as "recreational"—in the sense of sport or other activity—rather than gastronomic. Nevertheless, they were some of the only such institutions for meeting and talking that did survive those years. Then, come the 1970s, they hit boom years. Nearly 150 societies were set up in Guipúzcoa Province alone. The rising

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THE SPIRIT OF THE SOCIETIES REFLECTS A LONG-STANDING HABIT OF EATING TOGETHER IN EVERY AREA OF BASQUE LIFE.

standard of living, shorter working hours, and growing attraction of food as an expression of regional cultural identity all attracted younger members. So did the value for money, with prices of meals around a quarter to a third of those in a restaurant. In the last ten years new societies have occasionally made another generational leap. A Basque journalist wrote this cryptic account of his visit to one such society in San Sebastián in 1988, "Radical Basque rock music is blaring. There is a certain sense of disorder. And there are both male and female members."

But on the whole, the txokos remain remarkably unchanged. Only the ovens have been updated; these days most boast stainless steel professional stoves with double doors. By contrast the decoration remains deliberately plain. There are long wooden tables, cooled basins for cider bottles, simple chairs or benches, maybe a billiard table. Many societies refuse to have a clock. At Au da Gure, there is no television, telephone, or radio either. And the old ways of doing things also remain unchanged. *Cuadrillas*, or dining groups, like those who meet at Gure Kaiola every Thursday night, are often following a tradition several decades old. Conversa-

tion about politics is still banned. (Somebody mentioned jokingly that these days members' wives are also a taboo subject.) And mutual trust still rules the day. At Gure Kaiola, members still do not even put a receipt with their payments into the money box. They say the accounts have never been out. The formula certainly also works as a recipe for a healthy long life; many members live well into their eighties or nineties.

And finally, female membership remains firmly prohibited in the majority of societies. Women are generally allowed in as guests, but with limited access—usually for fiestas, during the daytime, at weekends, or to just one room of the society. Journalists like myself are warmly entertained with culinary conversation although not always allowed to dine. Nor is there any sign of attitudes changing. Last year in Tolosa, for example, a girl applied to join a society where her father and brother were members, but was almost unanimously refused. On the whole, though, society wives seem to agree with their husbands that the txokos are an invaluable safety valve for the everyday pressures of domestic life.

The tripazais' wary attitude to women, which sociologists put down to the region's matriarchal home life,

was explained this way by Basque gastronome Juan Mari Busca Isusi in a 1975 newspaper article. "It would be very agreeable if the first women's txokos formed and then we could finally see who cooks better, Adam or Eve. Eve began by peeling an apple and look at the row she started ..."

Men Take to the Stoves

Set against all that, the cooking in the societies has changed beyond all recognition. In the early days, few members really cooked. Instead they heated dishes made at home by their wives, which they would turn into a meal by adding a slice of cheese, a salad, or perhaps roasted chestnuts. At Gure Kaiola, for example, there were not even stoves until 1972, just a pot hanging over an open hearth. Alternatively, the better-off San Sebastián societies hired full-time female cooks. Their fame came to match that of the women cooks who ran the kitchens of legendary Basque eating houses such as El Amparo or Casa Nicolasa.

Elena Goyeneche, cook at Kañoyetan, a San Sebastián society for 35 years, explains how things worked. "Some men came with their food and a few cooked, but most sat down to a laid table. I

cooked everything, from game to fish, good dishes and stews, but always based on good fresh produce and care. They used to say salted cod was my specialty. And I did not complicate my life with any new inventions either."

It was only after the Civil War, but especially from the 1970s onwards, that the societies' members began to use their own ingenuity in the kitchens. In his classic book *Recipes of 200 Cooks from the Basque Societies* José Castillo includes curiosities such as rice with beetroot juice, smoked or jerked horse and a clutch of garlic soups, surely all dishes from the years of hunger. In those days puddings were invariably homely rice pudding, junket, or baked apples. Cider was drunk more than wine. But as the standards of living rose so did the gastronomic possibilities. Two Gaztelubide dinners to celebrate the town's fiestas measure the speed of change. In 1965 members ate chicken broth, elvers, roast chicken, and rice pudding—the latter bought from convent nuns—while by 1980 they could treat themselves to game consommé, shellfish vol-au-vent, beef sirloin steaks, and fresh cream flaky pastries.

At the same time, the society cooks' own culinary stan-

MANY SOCIETIES REFUSE TO HAVE A CLOCK; HERE PATIENCE IS REGARDED AS ONE OF THE GREATEST VIRTUES OF A COOK.

dards also went up. "Oh, there's no comparison between what's cooked today and twenty years ago," says Pepe Hilario, the 98-year-old member of Gure Kaiola. "It's 100% better today." He himself has never cooked. In fact, it is still often only a handful of members in each society who cook today, but always with willing helpers on hand and the challenge of satisfying critical palates.

"Of course you learn to cook by watching and listening," says Jose Mari Sargestegui, who cooks twice a week at Au da Gure, "but also by listening to the comments afterwards. Oh, they can be so critical!"

"Today the tri pazais' culinary knowledge and ability is higher than ever," comments José Castillo, who shares his legendary chef father's name and profession. "I'd say the style is unique. Like home cooking, it's very patient and generous, but at the same time it's fed a lot back into restaurant cuisine. Many of the fishermen's and other popular dishes, like *kokotxas* (hake's cheeks in a sauce of their own juices bound by gelatin) or *cogote* (hake's head served with garlicked oil), first became known through the societies."

What, then, is the particular cookery style of the tri pazais? "I would describe it as finding very high quality

raw materials and then treating them with care," says Luis Mokoroa, president of the Cofradía Vasca de Gastronomía. "Then, every so often there is someone who really surprises his colleagues with exceptional cooking and even new dishes."

Three Txokos, Three Tri pazais

Jose María Sargestegui is one such cook. Now retired after working all his life as a mechanic, he makes dinner twice a week for a group of friends at Au da Gure Txokoa. He has several different recipes up his sleeve for each species of fish, such as tuna and anchovies, that he buys in season direct from the boats. Spring anchovies, for example, may be sautéed with garlic, or floured and fried, or baked in layers with sweet onion. He learned dishes from his mother and grandmother, polished his technique at a cooking course with chef Luís Irizar (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41) and also dips into a small library of cookbooks at home. He's already invented his own dishes (see his recipe for Speedy Anchovies on page 136), but stresses that his first priority is buying the right produce. "What's the point in making junket if you don't have

fresh farmhouse milk?" is the way he puts it.

A second such cook is Juan Mari Salas, an architect by trade, who cooks supper for the Gaztelubide choir after their weekly practice on Monday nights. The result is a glorious mixture of song and food. When Juan Mari began to cook 18 years ago, he learned his first recipes from fishermen, perfecting them by experimenting in society kitchens and at competitions up and down the coast. His *marmitako* (see recipe on page 137), for example, has won him a clutch of prizes. Today, he says, he prefers simple—not necessarily easy—dishes. On the Monday we visited him, that meant a leek, onion, and potato puree followed by very fresh fried hake and peaches with brandy—followed by several hours of choral and solo singing around the piano.

And finally there is José Luis Peciña of Gure Kaiola. He describes his cooking as straightforward, with the emphasis on simply cooked local produce. Local kidney beans and cheeses come from farmsteads, meat or charcuterie from home-slaughtering butchers. José Luis never makes up the menu till he's seen what looks good in the shops or market and always tries to include one dish with sea-

sonal vegetables, such as spring peas or autumn wild mushrooms (see his recipe for Braised Farmyard Chicken with Ceps on page 138). There is one other detail which defines the cooking not only of these three tri pazai, but also of the txokos. Ask any of the men why they do it and they will all give the same reply: It is not for the cooking so much as the pleasure of sharing something of immeasurable value with their friends. As one tri pazai quoted in José Castillo's book explained, "In Guipúzcoa's gastronomic societies many cooks invent new stews. They do more for the world than those who discover a new star."

Vicky Hayward is a writer, journalist, and book editor whose articles about culture, the arts, society, and food are published internationally. She lives in Madrid.

See Recipes on page 136.



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State-of-the-art promotion for an age-old tradition



Text: **Santiago Botas**

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

Photos: **ICEX**

Following the example of the producers of Serrano ham, the Iberian ham producers have now also joined up to promote their products internationally. The new quality label, "Real Ibérico," guarantees strict compliance with the quality parameters set by the Consortium. Their hams, shoulders, loin sausages and other Iberian pork products, which are the star features of Spanish gastronomy, are aiming to take the place they deserve amongst the greatest of the world's gourmet products.



The presentation of the Consortium raised great interest.



Cutting Iberian ham in transparent slices is an artistic skill.

C O N S O R C I O D E L I B É R I C O

The ultimate objective of the Consortium is that Iberian pork products find their place amongst the world's great gourmet foods.

The Consorcio del Ibérico (Iberian Pork Products Consortium) brings together forty-eight companies representing approximately 70 percent of the Iberian pork processing industry. The economic strength of this sector which represents 11 percent of total cured meat production in Spain, the high added value of its products and their great image potential as the *pièce de résistance* of Spanish agroalimentary products, all helped to gain support from the Spanish Administration and the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia, Extremadura and Castile-Leon where the main producer zones are located.

The very well-attended official presentation of the Consortium on 4 March in the Casino de Madrid was a clear indication that Iberian ham is held in high regard in Spain. According to the director of the Consortium, Jesús García, a young man with a wealth of experience in the international food trade, "Our ultimate objective is that Iberian pork products should find their place amongst the world's great gourmet foods."

The Consortium management is planning to focus promotion initially on hams and shoulders and will subsequently turn its attention to the rest of the range—loin sausages, *chorizo*, *morcón* and *salchichón*.

"Iberian ham is in a class of its own, different from any other ham, including the excellent Spanish Serrano ham," states Jesús García. "Its exceptional organoleptic quality, the lengthy artisan

production process, the special characteristics of the Iberian breed of pigs that provide the raw material and also the price, make it a delicacy that can only be appreciated by connoisseurs with a high income level.

France, Italy and Belgium, with their gastronomic tradition, high purchasing power and geographical proximity, are expected to be the first potential markets for Iberian ham. "In these countries," says Jesús García, "the product is already present in some important top-range establishments and has received warm praises from a select group of restaurateurs and food writers." The second phase of promotion is to cover Holland and Germany.

Strict Quality Controls

The Iberian pig descends from the breed that once inhabited both shores of the Mediterranean and is the last grazing pig in Europe. Its special physiological characteristics, free-range lifestyle and natural food are the reasons for the exceptional aroma and flavor of Iberian pork products, making them unique worldwide. (See *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 33 and 34.) A certain degree of confusion still exists because of the co-existence of various names—Jabugo, Salamanca, Guijuelo, Pata Negra. The first three are the names of the towns where Iberian pork has traditionally been produced and which now belong to the Denominations of Origin, and the last refers to the distinguishing feature of the Iber-

ian pig—its black hoof.

Jesús García considers that one of the main achievements of the Consortium so far are its strict production regulations guaranteeing the high quality of Iberian pork products. "The Consortium has taken into account the regulations currently being applied by the various existing Denominations of Origin for Iberian pork products (Dehesa de Extremadura, Guijuelo and Jamón de Huelva), and its technical staff is to ensure standardization of the quality controls carried out by the D.O.s on products from its member companies which at the same time are members of the D.O.s."

The habitat for Iberian pigs, as laid down by the regulations, is the *dehesa*—the woodland areas growing holm, cork and gall oaks in southwestern Spain—where pig breeding is traditional.

Mr. García explained, "The pigs must belong to the Iberian breed, although cross-breeds between the Iberian and the 'Duroc-Jersey' breeds are also allowed provided they have a minimum of 75 percent Iberian blood." "Iberian pigs are fed in one of two ways during the fattening stage, which under all cases takes place in the open country, giving rise to two types of product recognized by the Consortium: Iberian ham and Iberian *bellota* (acorn-fed) ham. For the latter, at least 50 percent of the weight must be gained from a diet of acorns, grasses and roots, whereas the former may be fed in the fields with the natural feeds allowed by the Consortium.

In both cases, the maximum average weight at the end of fattening should not exceed 180 kg (397 lbs). The Consortium technical staff is to monitor and inspect pig farms in close collaboration with the farms' own veterinary services."

The rules are also very strict about transport from the farm to the abattoir and guarantee that pigs are slaughtered and quartered legally and in compliance with general regulations and those of the Consortium. Slaughtering must not take place before the age of 12 months.

The Regulations Covering Production

Iberian pork products must be produced within the authorized production areas following the Consortium's regulations which basically respect the traditional methods. Jesús García summarized the regulations covering the production of hams and shoulders, the most select of the pork products. "The processing of the hams and shoulders is checked throughout the various phases of salting, washing, settling, drying and maturation. The Consortium's quality parameters determine the right temperature and relative humidity conditions for the various phases and set minimum times for each of them according to the weight of the cuts.

Drying and maturation should take place in natural drying-chambers and cellars. "The minimum time of preparation," according to Jesús García, "is twelve months for shoulders and

The lengthy artisan production process and the exceptional organoleptic quality of the Iberian ham make it a delicacy for connoisseurs.

fifteen for hams but it may be longer than twenty-four months with hams weighing over eleven kilograms."

The Consortium also has regulations on external appearance and shape, minimum and maximum authorized weights, color and appearance when cut, texture and organoleptic qualities. The hams and shoulders should have an elongated, slender shape. The meat should have a delicate flavor and pleasant aroma, the color should vary from pink to purplish red with a shine and characteristic white veining from the intramuscular fat. The Consor-

tium allows hams and shoulders to be sold either whole with the leg bone or boned and sliced.

Iberian Ham: A Healthy Delicacy

The Consortium management recognizes that one of the important concepts to be passed on to potential consumers is the healthy qualities of the fat content of Iberian products. Jesús García explained, "Iberian ham not only has excellent organoleptic qualities but also outstanding nutritional properties. It is a natural product

containing a high proportion of vitamin B1 and is also a good source of iron, zinc and magnesium. Its fatty acid content is well balanced as it has a high content of monounsaturated fats, similar to those in olive oil, which help to keep down blood cholesterol levels."

The Consortium plans to invest about two hundred million pesetas (1,379,310 US\$) in communication over the next three years and, although forecasting sales is a risky business, they hope within ten years to have exported about 200,000 hams and shoulders. The official presentation of

the Iberian Pork Products Consortium in the international market is to take place during the forthcoming ANUGA fair, the world's most important food fair, to be held in Cologne, Germany from 11 to 16 October this year.

Santiago Botas is an international marketing consultant specializing in food products.

See Main Exporters on page 16.



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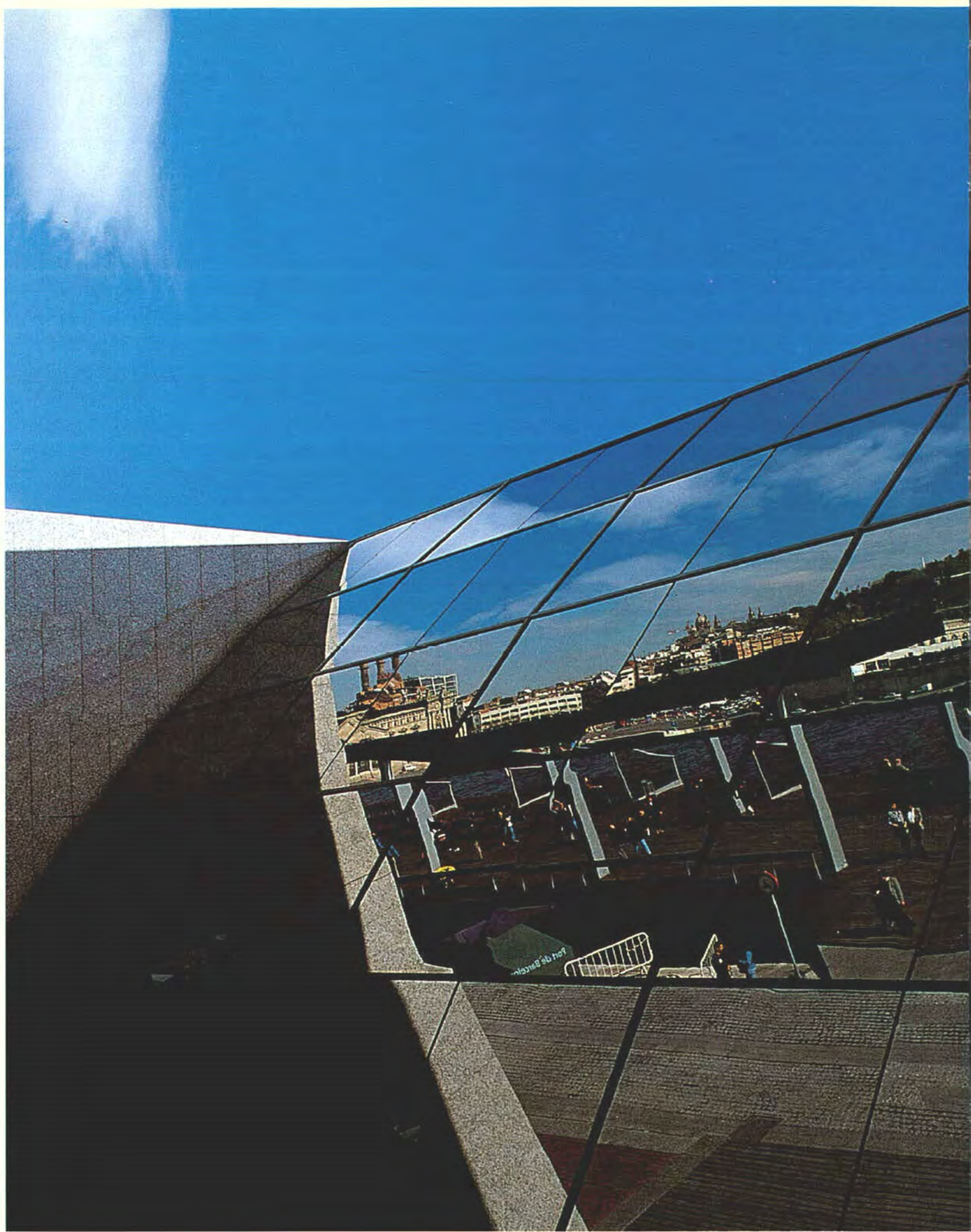
The mighty Catalan *cava* producers are at the forefront of Spanish wine exports. Still wines from the Penedés and Costers del Segre have achieved international recognition. Young winegrowers have revived Priorato and led it to fame. Ten protected Denominations of Origin have their home in Catalonia, more than in each of the other regions of Spain. In other gastronomic products, however, ranging from fruit and vegetables, including olive oil and shellfish to cheese and meat products, Catalonia also has much to say for itself. Its top-class restaurants form a whole constellation of Michelin stars and fill entire pages in the specialized gastronomic guides.

Tourism is first class, towns and villages, coasts and beaches are well cared for. In a nutshell, Catalonia is worth a gastronomic visit.

CATALONIA









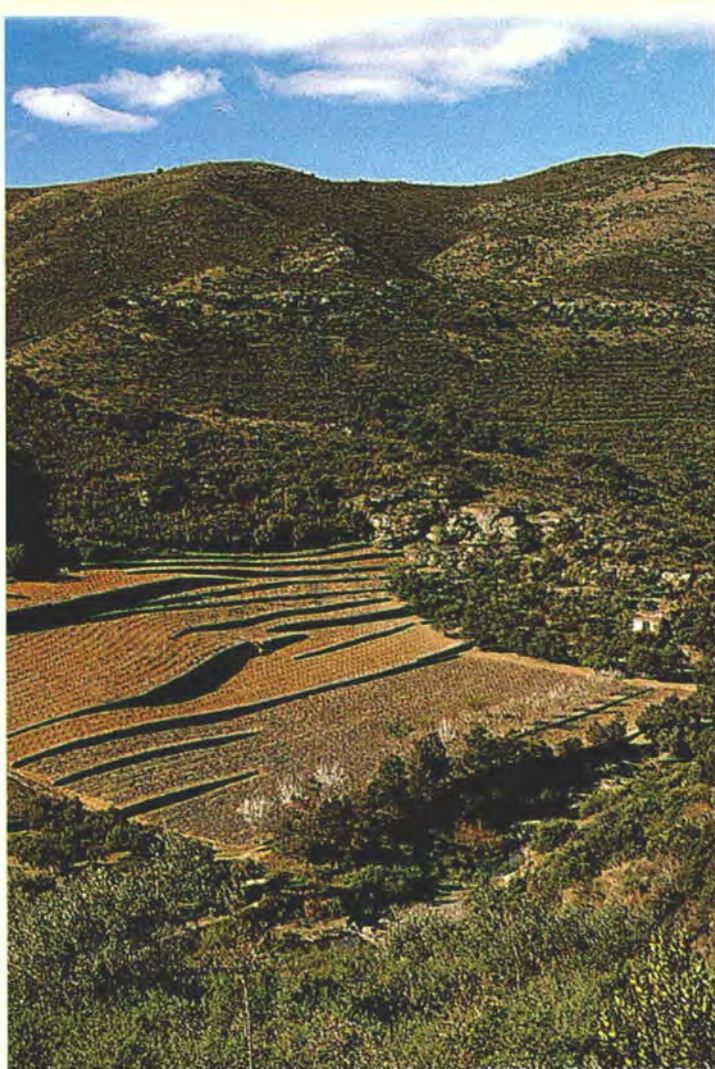
Left: The Maremagnum complex in Barcelona reflects the Rambla del Mar. Above: Vineyards of Codorniu near Ruidabella Castle.

The preconceived ideas about the inhabitants of Europe include German thoroughness, English punctuality, Italian creativity and of course Catalan *seny*. Each cliché has its respective element of truth. *Seny*, can be explained as meaning common sense, a serene cheerfulness and thoughtfulness. The Catalan likes to keep a cool head. His *universe* is shaped by climate, light and sea, in short, by a nature which predisposes to cheerfulness and *joie de vivre*.

With its own history, culture and language, Catalan, Catalonia has always been held to be the most European of all Spanish regions and one of the country's most significant economic centers. It is perhaps for this reason that those who envy them say that Catalans are close to their money and yet in the same breath also admit their

hard working nature and reliability, in addition of course to a liberal share of *seny*.

The Catalans have been hard workers for many centuries. This is readily obvious on arrival. Scarcely have we passed the sign *Catalunya* displayed on the A-2 highway when an intensively cultivated landscape opens up to us around Lérida. What a feast for the eyes to suddenly see the divine fruit and vegetable gardens after the somewhat rather bare *Meseta*. This was not, however, always so. The Raimat estate, 16 kilometers north of the province's capital city is a good example of this. In 1914, Don Manuel Raventós, owner of the Codorniu wine cellars, acquired over 3,000 hectares (7,413 acres) of fallow land around Raimat castle. The entire area was sown with lucerne and planted with more than one million shady pines to desalinate the soil.



Above: Vineyards of Ampurdán-Costa Brava D.O.
Right: Medieval bridge in Besalú.

The newly built canal from Aragon to Catalonia brought precious water from the mountains. Two decades later, the area was cleared of trees, extensively leveled and the terrain prepared for the cultivation of fruit and vines.

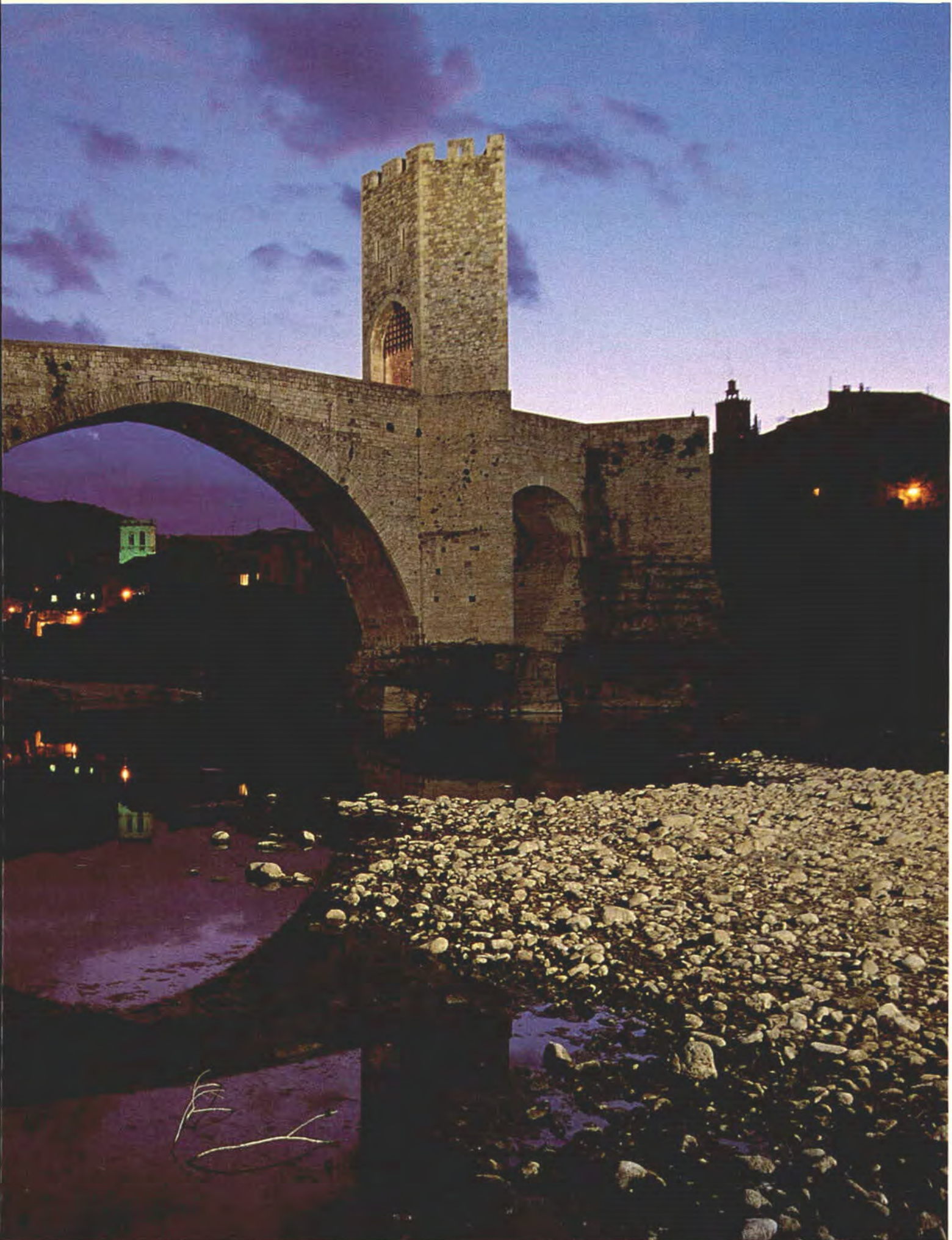
Raimat: International Success

At the beginning of the seventies, replanting of 1,400 hectares (3,459 acres) of vines was begun, including international varieties such as Cabernet (300 hectares/741 acres) and Chardonnay (450 hectares/1,111 acres) in addition to native varieties of grapes such as Parellada, Monastrell or Xarel-lo.

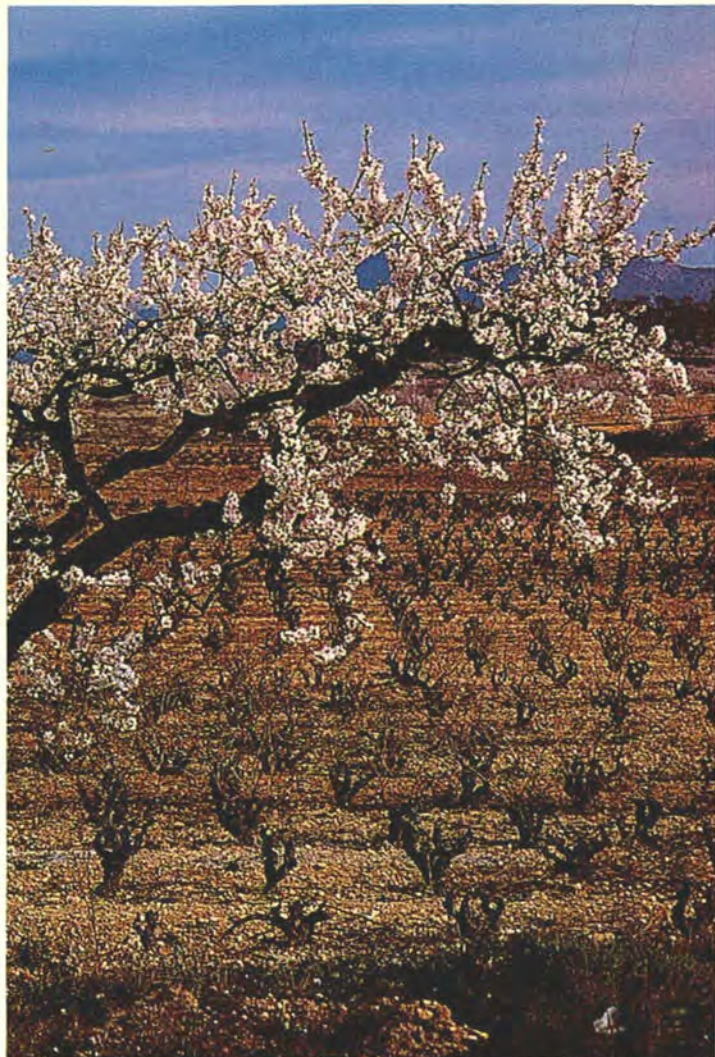
In 1986, the highly esteemed French gastronomic magazine *Gault-Millau* organized a kind of "Olympic Games" for wines based on Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grapes. Along-

side dozens of French wines, vintages from California, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and even a few Spanish ones took part. It was a major surprise when the jury composed of 32 experts from the whole world awarded the second prize to a Spanish wine, thereby laying the foundation stone of international fame for Raimat Cabernet Sauvignon. The 36 year old master vintner Xavier Farré is particularly proud of the Vallcorba vineyard, planted with Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, near a small pond: "We have splendid results: a wine full of character with a wide palette of aromas, in addition to a well-balanced acidity and noble tannin. We sample this in the new cellars where the wine is brought slowly to maturity in 13,000 American and 500 French oak barrels. The underground cellars are plant-





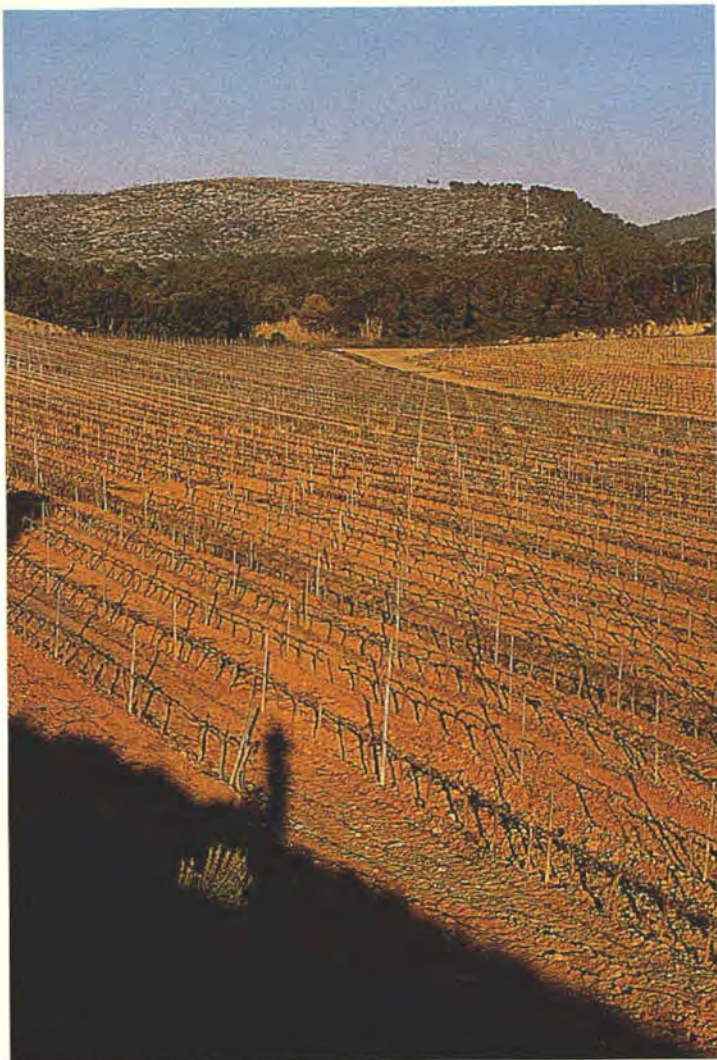




Left: Art Nouveau bodega of Raimat.
Above: Almond trees and vines in Terra Alta D.O.

ed over with a vineyard and enclosed behind a modern glass façade which reflects the old cellar, erected in the Art Nouveau architectural style in 1918 by a pupil of Gaudí. The N-240 links Catalonia's second most recent Denomination of Origin area (*Denominación de Origen, D.O.*), Costers del Segre (1988) with the most recent, Conca de Barberá (1989). However, after a short drive, a stop is already announced in Lérida, Catalonia's agricultural capital. The origins of the city can be traced back to before the Romans. This fact can no doubt be attributed to the ideal nature of the site. Several rivers from the Pyrenees converge here. The old town with its cathedral, the Seu Vella, is definitely worth a visit. The commercial high street, the Calle Mayor, runs alongside the Segre which flows through the middle of the

town. Together with its side streets, it forms the central point of the town's life. In the middle of the hustle and bustle stands the town hall, a majestic 13th century Gothic building. Conca de Barberá forms a hollow in the province of Tarragona, surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges. It is a less well-known wine region, yet supplies the grapes for a few very great wines. Was it not here behind the trees that Milmanda castle was to be seen, around which the Chardonnay grapes for the famous cask-matured wine of the same name from Torres grow? And yonder, Ruidabella castle, where Codorníu has leased on a long-term contract 60 hectares (148 acres) of Chardonnay and 50 hectares (124 acres) of Pinot Noir grapes. Milmanda, like Ruidabella, formerly belonged to the monastery of Poblet,



Above: *Vinya Canadà* of Torres in the Penedès D.O.
Right: Ancient wine cellars of the Poblet monastery.

which lies a short ten kilometers outside the little town of Esplug de Francolí.

The Cistercian Triangle

The 12th century, at a time when Catalonia consolidated its territorial expansion inland, was the heyday of the Cistercian order. Three of the movement's large monasteries have remained intact. Montblanc, one of the most beautiful of all among small Catalan towns is a perfect starting point for your visit. The medieval town center is subject to a preservation order. The town's walls, towers and gates have remained to a great extent intact. The little town (5,200 inhabitants) possesses such jewels as the churches of Santa Maria la Mayor, in the purest Catalan Gothic style, San Marçal, and San Francisco in addition to the Santa Magdalena almshouse. A walk

through the town's impressive narrow streets provides a lesson in Catalan artistic history. And now for the decision: Poblet, Vallbona de les Monges, Santes Creus or simply all three?

The most famous of the three, Poblet, is protected by UNESCO as part of the world's cultural heritage and numbers among the most important monastic buildings in the world. It was built between the 12th and 18th centuries close to a large forest and has numerous springs. The innermost enclosure of the monastery is entered through the impressive *Puerta Real*, which leads into the third courtyard with its two great towers and the high walls dating from the 14th century. The main cloister offers a splendid illustration of the transition from the Romantic to the Gothic period. The monumental wine cellars







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THE INTERNATIONAL QUALITY OF THE WINES FROM BODEGAS RAIMAT PROVIDED SUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW PROTECTED DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN.

were discovered during excavations underneath the refectory of the lay brothers. The monastery's present wine, Abadía de Poblet, is not vinified here however, but at Raimat. Father Tulla tends the 15 hectares (37 acres) of Pinot Noir grapes within the monastery walls under the supervision of the oenologists from Raimat. "The varieties are selected for historical reasons and owing to the soil conditions," he reports "the grapes are still somewhat young, but the *Vino de Crianza* (see Glossary on page 146) is already a hit as a souvenir from the monastery," he adds, smugly. During the journey through the Cistercian triangle, the visitor is well advised to read Umberto Eco's book *The Name of the Rose*. This enhances the visit and transforms it into an experience. The monastery of Santa María de Vallbona lies somewhat to the north of Montblanc. Although admittedly the convent sells no wine, the grandiose, magnificent edifice otherwise lacks nothing. Santes Creus, third in the trio of monasteries, lies on the river Gaia in the middle of a small valley, in an idyllic setting full of avenues of poplars, hazelnut groves, almond trees, and vineyards. Part of the old buildings have been transformed into private houses and form a small village center. The harmoniously proportioned design and the elegant architectural style of this convent make it well worth a visit.

Human Pyramids Need Seny

The small town of Valls, barely 20 kilometers away from Santes Creus, is the center of the famous Catalan *Castelletts*. These human pyramids are built on special public holidays at the end of July and the begin-

ning of October, sometimes reaching a breathtaking height of nine stories. A compact nucleus of men forms the base; each individual knows where support must be provided. The tiers are then built one after another. Increasingly light human pyramid builders clamber over their comrades' backs until a fanfare sounds to herald display of the final edifice. In the same manner as the *Sardana*, the solidaritarian, brotherly, community dance, the *Castells* represent an expression of the spirit and soul of the Catalan people. *Força, Equilibri, Valor i Seny*, i.e. strength, balance, courage, and thoughtfulness are part of the art of human pyramid building.

On the road back to Montblanc, we make our way towards the Priorato area. This area is one of the most surprising and dynamic of the Spanish D.O. regions. Since time immemorial, wine has been grown at the foot of the Sierra del Montsant. This may, at first sight, seem astonishing. It is an extremely obstinate terrain, with slopes which sweep steeply down to the river Siurana, and terraces with permeable slate soil, interspersed with mica and iron. This type of ground, known as *licorella* is, however, thoroughly ideal for winegrowing. Nature provides additional help, with a wide drop in temperature between day and night and between summer and winter. This forms an ideal location for the local varieties of grapes, the Garnacha and Cariñena. Their yield is minimal with scarcely more than one kilo of grapes per vine. Yet what a color and concentration!

Winegrowing began in the Carthusian monastery *Scala Dei* shortly after it was founded in the year 1163. "God's Staircase" flanked with angels and grapes is the symbol of the Denomination of Origin Priorato. Af-

ter the monks were obliged to leave the monastery in 1835, the Peyra family acquired the monastery cellars. However, the phylloxera plague in the 19th century put a premature end to winegrowing in the area. In 1973, the founder's great-grandfather, Manuel Peyra and his brothers set up the Cellers Scala Dei company, renovated the old installations and gradually planted their present property with 70 hectares (173 acres), including 56 hectares (138 acres) of Garnacha grapes. "Before, we harvested 250 grams per vine, today this figure is nevertheless around two kilos," explains Manuel Peyra. The cellars export 60 percent of the 300,000 bottles produced, principally to the United States and Japan. The Gran Reserva is matured for a maximum of three years in new oak barrels and experimentally, also in Bosnian oak. These are wines in the classical tradition of the Priorato, in contrast to those of the young newcomers. "Give my greetings to Álvaro Palacio. Thanks to him, we now make even better wine," jokes Manuel Peyra casually on taking leave of us.

Spain's Most Expensive Wine

It takes only a few minutes to reach Gratallops and Álvaro Palacios' premises. At the moment, he is poring over the plans for his new wine cellar with the architect Jesús Manzanares. The cellars in the form of a cut open barrel promise to turn out spectacularly. The bungalow is a small lake, through which the filtered light penetrates into the underground cellar. Gravity is used for vinification, to avoid any pumping of the must. Making good wine preceded by far the good architecture. Eighty years ago, Garnacha

grapes were planted at a height of 450 meters near the hermitage (*Ermita*) of Gratallops. This vineyard, which faces northwards, allowing good exposure to humidity from the sea, yields around 800 grams of late-ripening grapes per vine, well balanced, rich in tartaric acid and with around 14° alcohol. This rough diamond gains in elegance, harmony and finesse in the hands of Álvaro Palacios, becoming the most expensive that Spain's wine panorama has to offer. Only 5,000 bottles of L'Ermita, matured for 20 months in new 500 liter barrels, are marketed each year at a price of around 20,000 pesetas (138 US\$). The 1993 vintage was auctioned at an even higher price. Álvaro Palacios was the latest of a group of young people around René Barbier, Carles Pastrana and José Luis Pérez to make use of the special environmental conditions of the Priorato to produce more complex, full-bodied, powerful wines with long keeping qualities. In so doing, they have imparted an international dimension to the D.O. label. The road winds its way down to the N-420 and we cross the D.O. region of Tarragona on the way to Terra Alta. In both regions, Vinícola de la Ribera (formerly Pedro Rovira) has wineries and vineyards. The company head office is located in Mora la Nova, on the Ebro. Since the change of ownership, increasing emphasis has been placed on quality. The 7-8 million tons of grapes formerly processed have shrunk to 2.5 million, tetrapak filling has almost vanished and all the wines bear Denomination of Origin labeling; just under half is exported. Fifty hectares (124 acres) of their own grapes, principally traditional varieties such as Garnacha and Cariñena, in addition to Cabernet Sauvignon, are sup-

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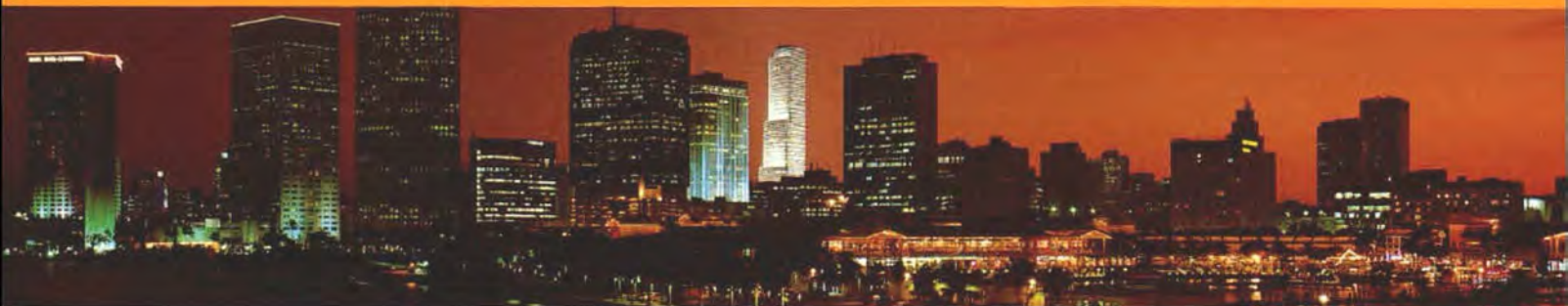
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FROM THE GRAPES OF THE STEEP SLATE SOILS.

plemented with purchases of grapes from a large number of local winegrowers. The flagship of the 26 different types of wine is the red Pedro Rovira Gran Reserva (18 months in American oak barrels and 36 months in the bottle), with a tempting nose of dried fruit. Fortified, sweet *rancio* wines were formerly the specialty of this cellar and the surrounding region. Today, they scarcely sell at all. "With all the *rancio* wine in our cellars, half of Spain could have a good night out," observes the oenologist José Luis Guerrero, frowning melancholically.

Art Nouveau Cellars in Terra Alta

On the left bank of the Ebro, the journey continues on the newly built C-230 in the direction of Tortosa. After a few kilometers, we are ferried across to the ruins of the Moorish castle of Miravet and drive on towards El Pinell de Brai. The local cooperative winery is a real feast for the eyes, both outside with pretty wine motifs on ceramic tiles and inside with its daring Art Nouveau roof construction (1919-1921). This is one of many cellars in the region built in the Spanish Art Nouveau style by pupils of Gaudí. Via Tortosa, dominated by La Zuda (see page 113), and Amposta, we reach the Ebro delta. The ecology museum in Deltebre provides a good, necessary introduction to a flat landscape which does not reveal itself openly. The Ebro delta is Spain's second wetlands area and one of the most important in the entire Mediterranean region. After irrigating the vineyards of the Rioja, Aragon and Catalonia, the Ebro flows out into the Mediterranean here, in an enormous tongue of land formed of fresh water marshes. Eels and oysters are raised in the delta. Fruit and vegetables are cultivated be-

tween the massive paddy fields. Broad sections of the delta system form a protected wildlife park, the home of ducks and long-legged water birds. The landscape is, however, dominated by the paddy fields. Rice from the Ebro delta is protected by the control commission of the Specific Denomination Arroz del Delta del Ebro."

Golden Sandy Beaches on the Costa Dorada

The delta lies in the southern part of the Costa Dorada, one of Catalonia's main tourist attractions. The name "Dorada" can be attributed to the gold color of the sand beaches, which stretch over wide areas of the coast and are ideal for bathing owing to their shallow coastal waters. The climate, which is mild even in winter, was the reason for the emergence of numerous large resorts, such as Salou and Cambrils. In addition to bathing and sailing, the coast has, however, much more to offer. In the ports, a daily event is the return of the fishing boats, when all try to acquire the most delicious spoils of the catch, first and foremost, the coveted red prawns. Not far from Salou is Port Aventura, Spain's largest leisure and amusement park and one of the most entertaining in Europe.

From Cambrils, the gastronomic capital of the Costa Dorada, our journey takes us on to Reus, a town which in the 18th century was Catalonia's second most important city after Barcelona. During its heyday, together with Paris and London, it fixed the international price for spirits and was a trading center for wine, oil and dried fruit. Reus is the capital of hazelnuts, which are protected by the Denomination of Origin Avellana de Reus and are of first-rate quality. Yearly production of hazelnuts amounts to 12,000 tons. The town's

wealthy past is also reflected in the numerous Art Nouveau-style houses. A visit to the dwelling houses Casa Navás, Casa Rull or those of Laboratorios Serra, with their glass windows, tiles and arcades with floral motifs provides a good insight into this typically Catalan style, which competes here with Renaissance and baroque buildings.

Cava and the Penedés

A visit to Tarragona should not be restricted to a visit of the Roman aqueduct Puente del Diablo (Devil's Bridge), even though this is reached so conveniently from a service area on the A-7 highway. The highway leads us rapidly to Vilafranca del Penedés, Catalonia's wine capital. First of all, we take the fork towards Sitges to enjoy a view over the entire Penedés from the archaeological excavations in Olérdola, a few kilometers outside Vilafranca. On a clear day, the view extends over Mount Montserrat to the Pyrenees beyond. On the vineyard areas of the Penedés, the grapes for cava, i.e. quality sparkling wines, and for the still wines with the Denomination of Origin Penedés are grown. Production of cava is allowed in a total of 159 bounded areas in eight Spanish provinces, yet its actual home is the Penedés. The region is a perfect example of the Catalans' hard-working nature and industriousness. Practically all available agricultural land is planted with vines. Over twenty different varieties of grapes are cultivated. The traditional white varieties for cava predominate: Macabeo (provides the basic fruit and acid note), Xarel·lo (provides body and strength), and the elegant Parellada. Among the red varieties, in addition to the traditional Tempranillo, known here as *Ull de Llebre*,

the great French varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Franc should also be mentioned.

A few cellars press grapes from both D.O.s. One of the most interesting examples is provided by Can Rafols dels Caus. The winery is housed in a traditional 18th century Catalan farmhouse, a *masía*. The estate in Avinyonet del Penedés stretches over 450 hectares (1,111 acres), of which 34 hectares (84 acres) are planted with vines. Carlos Esteva produces one of the most interesting red wines in the whole of Catalonia, the Gran Caus: its broad palette of aromas ranges from fruit, mineral notes to coffee. White wines from Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc and the traditional varieties, in addition to two cavas, complete the range. This winery will continue to make a name for itself. *Masia Vallformosa* in Vilobí del Penedés likewise produces cavas and still wines. This bodega has adopted the name of the "pretty valley" and that of the Romanesque pilgrim chapel St. Maria de Vallformosa, which stands near the bodega. The first documents go back to the year 977. More recent history begins after the phylloxera plague which destroyed all the vineyards in the Penedés in 1887. José Domènech Soler was one of the first to use uninfected, resistant American vines for replantation. King Alfonso XIII recognized this work by a visit to the estate in 1904. This is a fact mentioned not without pride by oenologist Oriol Domènech Vidal—he belongs to the fifth generation of vintners—during our round through the sparkling clean cellars.

Cava Dynasties

Miguel Torres is one of the truly major figures in the Catalan wine trade. His family bodega numbers among

WINERIES IN THE PENEDES STANDS A FAMILY DYNASTY.

the market leaders for still wines in the whole of Spain. Here also in Villafranca del Penedés, success is not accidental. The Torres family has operated as wine growers and merchants since the 17th century. In addition to 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) of their own vineyards in the Penedés, the dynasty owns a large winery in Chile (since 1977) and another one in California (since 1983). They produce with wisdom and seny a complete range of 17 wines, which appear on markets worldwide under 900 different labels. The wines of the medium to lower priced categories have an outstanding price-performance ratio. Torres however not only makes prêt-à-porter but also haute couture. The red display wine is the Gran Coronas Mas la Plana, an extremely full-bodied, strong, sturdy and harmonious wine. The white wine Fransola, from the 5-hectare (37 acres) vineyard of the same name is fruity with lingering aromas and multiple nuances. Mobile presses, "we bring the press to the grapes," reduce considerably the vinification time with the white wines. Torres always employs state-of-the-art technology. A dozen technicians are engaged in some 250 experiments every year. They are currently working on a new system, so that samples no longer require to be tapped from the stainless-steel tanks during fermentation. Sensors will record all the parameters within the individual tanks, to allow centralized control. This is still however a thing of the future. It is hardly surprising that the bodega in Pals, with its nocturnally illuminated futuristic entrance gate, looks like a medium-sized oil refinery.

In precisely the same way as the Torres family, the Raventós family in San

Sadurní de Noya is an institution. The family business, Codorníu, has been making wine in the Penedés since the 16th century. However the sector was revolutionized only in the mid-19th century, by José Raventós i Fatjó, who married the *Pu-billa* or sole heir according to Catalan law. In 1872, the first bottle of Spanish sparkling wine made according to the *Méthode Champenoise* appeared on the market and the 125th Jubilee was celebrated intensively this year. This manufacturing procedure, with the introduction of a second fermentation in thick-walled bottles, stored in deep cellars, launched Catalan cava, together with an industry set to become extremely powerful over the years. The outstanding, fruity local grapes and the bottle fermentation enjoyed a triumphant success. Anna de Codorníu, Jaume Codorníu and Cuvée Raventós became legendary cavas and in terms of quality and price, can measure up to the best sparkling wines in the world.

San Sadurní de Noya: Capital of Cava

The example of this family set a precedent. Production of cava in Catalonia developed into a powerful branch of industry. The Catalans not only drink their cava on festive occasions, but also with all conventional meals or as an aperitif. In 1921, Juvé y Camps began production in San Sadurní de Noya. In the course of 75 years of serious, patient work, this company has gained a name and a great reputation for itself on the market and is currently, one can never decide, the smallest of the biggest or the biggest of the smallest. The best recommendation of this company is the Brut and the Brut Nat-

ural, in addition to the 1993 vintage family reserve, fresh, balanced and elegant. Remuage of the 1.8 million bottles in the fermentation cellar is still performed by hand. A top-class cava is precisely the culmination of many small details.

Remuage is also performed by hand at Freixenet, yet still only in the display cellar for the tourists, with cobwebs and candlelight. "To make a good cava, time doesn't need to stand still," our host Jaime Domènech tells us philosophically. The technicians at Freixenet have constructed a new remuage pulpit which brings the bottles from the horizontal to the vertical position in only 90 minutes. After a 10-hour rest, approximately two centimeters of the bottle neck is frozen to remove the yeast lees and add the filling solution. When it comes to technical innovations, Freixenet has always been at the forefront. In this manner, temperature-controlled fermentation was used for vinification for the first time in 1976. Business sense and farsightedness are a further strong point of this family company. An offshoot was therefore set up very early on in New Jersey, U.S.A. Members of the group include Castellblanch, Segura Viudas, Dubois, Gloria Ferrer and Henri Abelé in France. The top-of-the-range product is the Brut Gran Reserva, with three years crianza in the bottle. The most popular products include Carta Nevada (the most widely sold cava on the Spanish market) and Cordón Negro (the leader on the U.S. market). The Head of Export, Bernd Hallbach beams with happiness: "Last year we increased turnover by 30 percent. Within the next two years, we will be investing 5 billion pesetas (35 million US \$)."

Panorama from Columbus' Column

Before we leave Villafranca and head in the direction of Barcelona, we glance briefly around the extremely worthwhile and edifying wine museum. A cross-sectional model of the Codorníu cellars places us in the underground gallery through which we rode in an electric train a few hours before. The highway brings us on to the Ronda Litoral directly in the center of Barcelona. Into the multi-story car park and out on to the *Ramblas*. The pedestrian boulevard exerts an almost magnetic attraction at every visit. The *Barrio Gótico*, the Gothic Quarter and the Boquería market (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38) must also not be missed during a short visit. Columbus' Column down at the harbor offers a fine panorama over the city. The view ranges from the heights of Montjuich, with the white flame of Calatrava and the Tibidabo to the high-rise buildings of the Olympic harbor. A few kilometers beyond lies our next destination: Alella.

Alella, with only three wineries and 380 hectares (939 acres) of vines under production, is the smallest, yet simultaneously one of the oldest Denominations of Origin in Spain. The area planted with vines is declining, since the terrain at the gates of Barcelona is in short supply and expensive. One hectare costs up to 25 million pesetas (174,413 US\$).

Individual houses and vineyards compete with each other for space. The Parxet company in Tiana is the most important producer, not only reputed for its cavas, produced since 1918, but also for still wines, which are marketed under the name of Marqués de Alella. The cava winery is housed in a majestic masía which was acquired in

FROM THE AMPURDAN, CATALONIA DRAWS ITS SPIRITUAL FORCES. WELL-TENDED VILLAGES, FERTILE FIELDS, FIRST-RATE GASTRONOMY, AND A LOT OF *SENY*.

1747 by the Sunyol family. In 1985, it was amalgamated with a winery in Santa María de Martorellas on the other side of the mountain. In addition to the best acclimatized Chardonnay grapes, the indigenous variety Pansá Blanca (very similar to the Xarel·lo) deserves mention. This variety is fermented at only 15°C, so that the fermentation lasts up to three months. The result is the Marqués de Alella Clásico, with its honey and caramel notes which are slightly on the sweet side, refreshed with good acidity. Parxet numbers among the first in Spain to have adopted cask fermentation (Marqués de Alella Allier).

While most tourists head for the sea, the Catalans and we too, in this occasion, prefer to remain inland. The N-152 leads us through Vic to Olot, in the middle of the volcanic region of Garrotxa. The medieval town of Besalú (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 31) with the Roman bridge over the Fluvía, has an all-embracing radiance. One of the most popular destinations is the crystal clear lake of Banyoles, the banks of which are populated on the weekend with deck chairs and picnic baskets. Rowing enthusiasts will remember that the races on the occasion of the 1992 Olympic Games took place here.

Dalí Triangle: Púbol, Figueras, Port Lligat

We are, all the same, interested in the place where the Olympic flame landed. Through Gerona and Púbol castle, where Dalí's wife Cala is buried, we arrive at the Mediterranean again in Ampurias. The Greek and Roman excavations are highly interesting, yet just not as spectacular as the next well-calculated cultural shock: Dalí's theater museum in Figueras. Magnificent staging of an artist who placed himself in the limelight even beyond death, he really does lie under the stone slabs of the museum. A totally un-Catalan ex-

travagance? Maybe. However, the brilliant Dalí was at the same time efficient and thrifty, as the tradition goes, just like any other good Catalan. Close to Figueras stands Perelada, the capital of the D.O. Ampurdán-Costa Brava. The monumental castle has been associated with a winery, Cavas del Castillo de Perelada, since 1923. Sparkling wines or *vinos de aguja* such as the famous Pescador are produced here. These form an ideal accompaniment to Mediterranean shellfish. The leading product is Gran Claustro, a wine which with its pronounced character and multiple nuances enjoys a wide following.

The final portion of the journey leads through Cadaqués and Port Lligat, where Dalí lived, to Port Bou, bordering with France. The Costa Brava is inviting with its wonderfully beautiful small sandy beaches, cliff-lined bays and pretty villages. Here and further south, generations of middle class inhabitants of Barcelona have spent their summer holidays. It is from this natural region that Catalonia draws its spiritual powers. The *Ampurdanés* is the most Catalan of all Catalans, recognizable by his lovingly tended villages, pretty masías in the middle of fertile fields, the outstanding gastronomy, love for his home, and precisely by his pronounced *seny*.



Heinz Hebeisen is a freelance photographer and journalist and has lived for 18 years in Spain. He is a correspondent for the German language wine magazine Vinum and also coordinator and pictorial editor to the newly published Spanish edition of Vinum.

See Main Exporters on page 17 and recipes on page 140.

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The Catalans are great connoisseurs and lovers of edible fungi. Mushrooms are prepared in most diverse styles.

CATALONIA'S GASTRONOMY

Together with Basque gastronomy, that of Catalonia numbers among the most refined and famous in the whole of Spain. Many of the best Spanish restaurants are located in Catalonia and it is not difficult to see why. Owing to the varied climate, outstanding pasture land is available for livestock rearing in the Pyrenees and a wide range of fruit and vegetables. The long stretches of coast also ensure a supply of fish. The economic development of Catalonia gave rise to good middle-class cuisine, which was able to develop more extensively and refinedly than in other Spanish re-

gions. Catalan cuisine is typical Mediterranean cooking. The outstanding olive oil forms the basis for all dishes. Among the vegetables, eggplants, peppers, and above all, tomatoes are represented in countless dishes and sauces. A typical dish is the *escalivada*, a kind of salad of precisely these vegetables, which are firstly braised in the oven and then dressed with a sauce. Even the bread in Catalonia is spread with tomatoes. Rice is prepared in a variety of different ways, in stock, black in cuttlefish ink, as rice dishes, with fish or shellfish and is a firm part of Catalan cuisine. The typical dishes include also *suquet*, a

dish which was originally prepared by seamen, taken up by the great Catalan cooks and now to be found on the most refined tables. Furthermore, the Catalans are the greatest connoisseurs and lovers of edible fungi in the whole of Spain. During the season, mushrooms appear in the most diverse preparations on the tables of almost all restaurants and many private houses. Mediterranean herbs, such as thyme, marjoram and sage, in addition to almonds, hazelnuts and pine kernels are represented in numerous stewed dishes and are part of the multifaceted palette of flavors in Mediterranean cooking.

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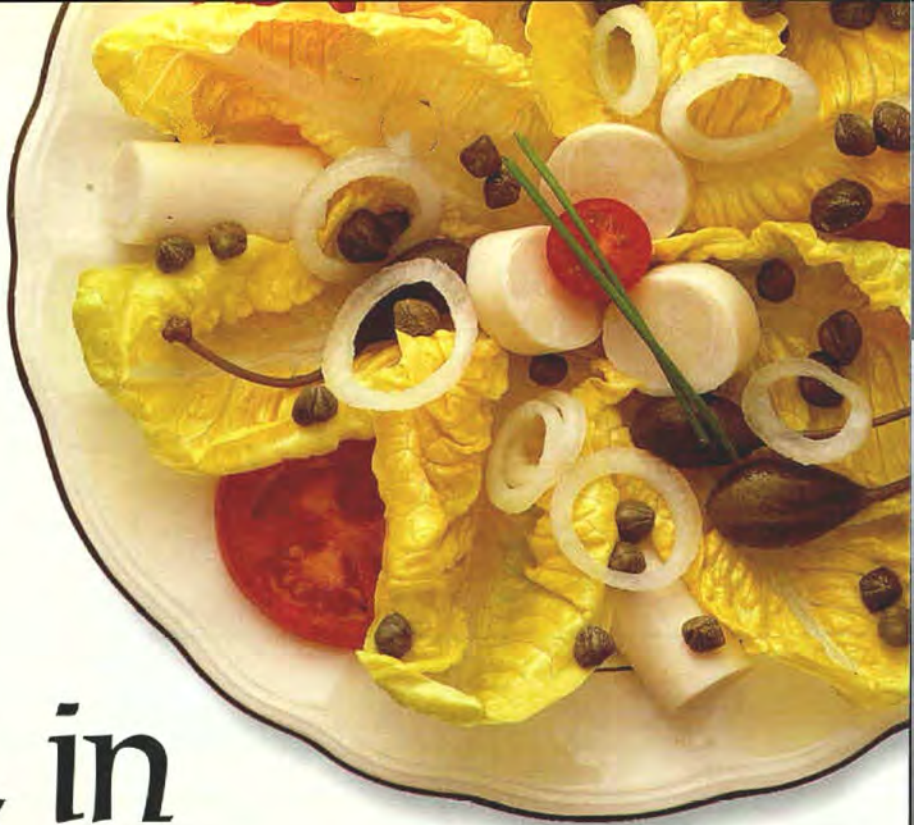
SPECIALTIES FROM CATALONIA

The wide variety of products finds its basis in the wide geographical variations. With its 31,930 square kilometers, Catalonia includes the high mountain chain of the Pyrenees, a long stretch of coast on the Mediterranean, a central lowland area, river valleys and the Ebro delta, each region with its own climate and specific products. These varying climatic conditions, a sturdy food industry and the exquisite attention lavished on natural products make Catalonia the region with the most Denominations of Origin and Quality in the whole of Spain. Pork products enjoy great popularity. In Catalonia, there is a wide variety of sausages and specialties,

such as the famous *butifarra* sausages. Long-keeping sausages such as *salchichón de Vic* or *fuet*. According to tradition, they were produced in the *masías* and are all of high quality. The delicious fish from the Mediterranean definitely include the anchovies from L'Escala on the Costa Brava. Filleted and boned, the *anchoas* are seasoned and placed in olive oil. There is a wide assortment of cheeses, the most famous of which originate from the Pyrenees regions of Alto Urgell and Cerdaña. In addition, there are Mató, Selva, Tupí, cheeses from the Arán valley, Garroxta, and Serrat. Edible fungi and truffles from Catalonia are highly prized. The hazelnuts

from Reus provide an important basis for chocolates and chocolate *turrón*. The rice from the Ebro delta, fruit from Lérida, Maresme and Llobregat, chickens and capons of the Prat breed, lamb of the Ripolles breed, olive oil from Borjas Blancas and the Siruana valley, cultivated mussels and prawns round off the range of products which are protected by their own quality labels. The traveler encounters this wide assortment of local products at every step. The best overview is provided by the Boquería market in the center of Barcelona. A walk through this impressive market hall, with its delicatessen shops, is a delight for any gourmet.

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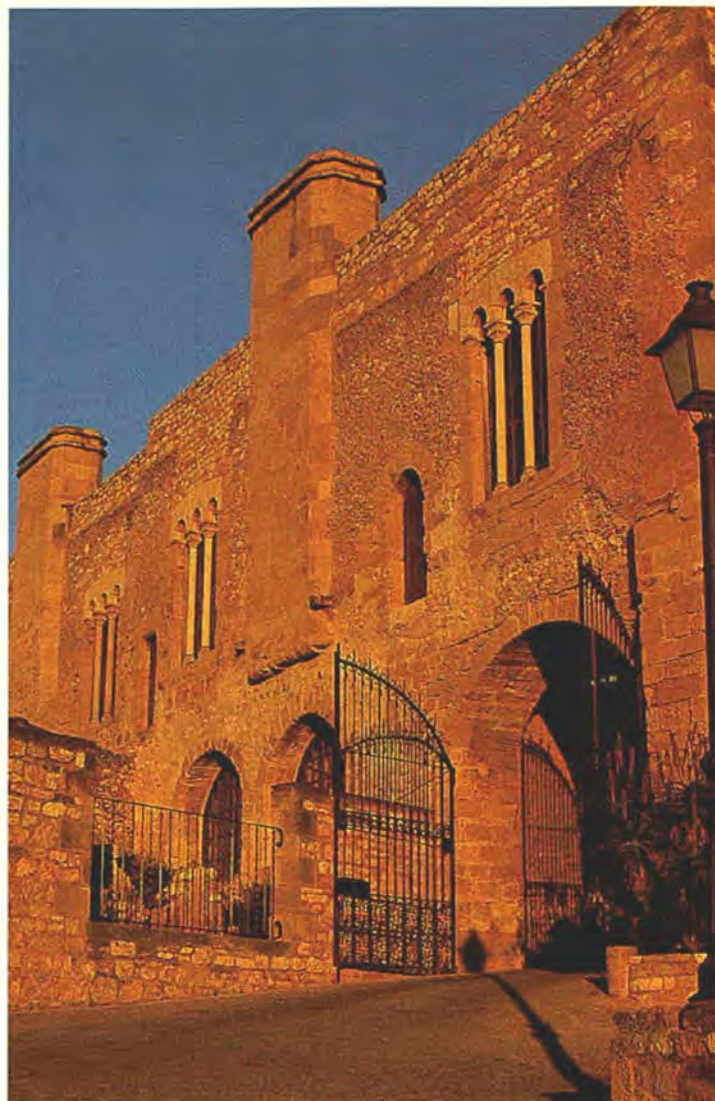
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The foundations of the first walls date from Roman times, but the first large castle was built in the year 944 under the rule of Abderramán III.



PARADORES

CASTILLO DE LA ZUDA, THE PARADOR OF TORTOSA

The Parador de la Zuda, 59 meters above the sea, dominates the little town of Tortosa. The visitor catches a first impression of the powerful fortress on arrival. It is at its most beautiful in the evening twilight: the illuminated castle is reflected in the Ebro which flows calmly by. Even more imposing is the view from above down to the Gothic cathedral and a river merging into the delta that juts far out into the Mediterranean. After a walk through the gardens, the visitor already feels himself transported back to the Middle Ages. The foundations of the first walls date from Roman times. The first large castle was, however, erected by the Arabs in the year 944 at the command of Abderramán III, who owned a *Zuda*, i.e. a large well here, which drew its waters from the river. The well can

still be visited today on the esplanade in front of the Parador. After reconquest by the Christians, the Templars transformed the castle into their residence. Three enormous fireplaces and four window arches in the purest Catalan Gothic style remain from this period. In 1294, the property was handed over to the Crown, the castle was extended and transformed into a royal palace. Almost one thousand years later, it was finally given over to its current function as a four-star Parador Nacional. In spite of its grandiose setting, the hotel has a warm and welcoming atmosphere for guests. The 82 rooms are very spacious and comfortable and peace and quiet are guaranteed. The noble dining room provides the ideal surroundings to sample the local gastronomy.

The products from the Ebro delta are skillfully prepared. Rice and eel in the widest varieties. The common mussels from San Carles de la Ràpita taste best *al natural*. Shellfish and fish from the Mediterranean in addition to lamb and game from inland complete the menu. A ten-minute walk in the red light of dawn down to the cathedral, through the awakening alleys to the Monastery of Santa Clara, a further magnificent 13th century Gothic building forms a kind of morning cultural gymnastics. It is in this way that a proper breakfast in the light-flooded dining room can be doubly enjoyed. The Parador de la Zuda is a fitting point of departure for day excursions along the Costa Dorada, through the Ebro delta and south to Peñíscola or inland to Morella.



VISITING BODEGAS

Although most bodegas allow impromptu visits, it is recommended to give prior notice (with the exception of Torres, Codorníu and Freixenet). The large wineries are very well signposted, the smaller ones are difficult to find. Here, a highly practical little book *Vinos de Cataluña* from El País Aguilar editions is of help. The journey to each cellar is described with a small map. The whole series includes 11 titles with a description of over 1,000 bodegas from all the regions of Spain.

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D.O. Penedés: Amalia Soler 27, 08720 Villafranca del Penedés (Barcelona).

Tel: (34-3) 890 48 11, Fax: (34-1) 890 47 54

D.O. Alella: Masía Museu Municipal Can Magarola, 08328 Alella (Barcelona).

Tel: (34-3) 540 02 16, Fax: (34-1) 540 03 28

D.O. Ampurdán-Costa Brava: Blanch 10-1º, 17600 Figueras (Gerona).

Tel: (34-72) 50 75 13, Fax: (34-72) 51 00 58

Cava: Avda. De Tarragona 24, 08720 Villafranca del Penedés (Barcelona).

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D.O. Costers del Segre: Raimat, Afueras s/n, 25222 Raimat (Lérida).

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Cellers Scala-Dei, Rambla de la Cartoixa s/n, 43379 Scala-Dei (Tarragona). Tel: (34-77) 82 70 27. Fax: (34-77) 82 70 44.

Visits by prior arrangement, spontaneous visitors are shown the cellars, if possible.

Álvaro Palacios S.L., Piró 1, 43737 Gratallops (Tarragona).

Tel: (34-77) 83 91 95, Fax: (34-77) 83 91 97. Only trade visits

Mon.-Thu. from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. only by prior arrangement.

D.O. Terra Alta and D.O. Tarragona:

Vinícola de la Ribera, S.L. (formerly Viñedos y Bodegas Pedro Rovira, Avda. Mosén Jacinto Verdaguier 41, 43770 Mora la Nova (Tarragona). Tel: (34-77) 40 03 50, Fax: (34-77) 40 30 76. Visits only by prior arrangement.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

D.O. Penedés and Cava:

Codorníu, Av. Jaume Codorníu s/n, 08770 San Sadurní de Noya (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 818 32 32, Fax: (34-3) 412 07 02. Visits without prior arrangement from Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 3-4:30 p.m. (Fri. mornings only). Sat. and Sun. From 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Price 200 pesetas; the sampling glass can be kept as a souvenir. Every year 200,000 visitors admire the Art Nouveau architecture of Puig i Cadafalch and are driven in an electric train through the underground galleries.

Freixenet, Joan Sala 2, 08770 San Sadurní de Noya, Tel: (34-3) 818 32 00, Fax: (34-3) 818 30 95. Visits without prior arrangement Mon.-Fri. at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. (Fri. mornings only). In November and December additionally on weekends from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Juvé & Camps, Sant Venat, s/n, 08770 San Sadurní de Noya, Tel: (34-3) 891 10 00, Fax: (34-3) 891 21 00. Visits by prior arrangement from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.

Masía Vallformosa, La Sala 45, 08735 Vilobí del Penedés (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 897 82 86, Fax: (34-3) 897 83 55. Visits from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-7 p.m. by prior arrangement. Bodegas Miguel Torres, Comercio 22, 08720 Villafranca del Penedés (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 817 74 00, Fax: (34-3) 817 74 44. Visits in Pacs del Penedés (signposted) in 14 languages. Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 3-7 p.m. Sat. and Sun. 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Can Rafols dels Caus, Can Rafols del Caus s/n, 08739 Avinyonet del Penedés (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 897 00 13, Fax: (34-3) 897 03 74.

Visits of the cellars by arrangement. The area surrounding the masía is, however, worth a visit.

D.O. Alella and Cava:

Parxet, Mas Parxet, 08391 Tiana (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 395 08 11, Fax: (34-3) 395 55 00. Trade visitors only by arrangement.

D.O. Ampurdán-Costa Brava:

Cavas del Castillo de Perelada, Pl. del Carmen 1, 17491 Perelada (Gerona), Tel: (34-72) 53 80 11, Fax: (34-72) 53 82 77. Visits daily at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 4 p.m., 5 p.m., 6 p.m., 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. (in winter, closed on Mondays). The guided tours include the castle, wine and glass museum, in addition to the Cava Gran Claustro cellars. One of the three Catalan casinos is housed in Perelada castle.

WINE FESTIVALS

Wine is the product at the center-point of several dozen festivals. The dates may vary slightly from year to year (make enquiries at the tourist offices). Included in the program of most of these festivals are: pressing and blessing of the first musts, crowning of the wine queen, wine tastings, processions, a limitless supply of wine, sport, folklore and cultural events.

PROVINCE OF LÉRIDA

Raimat winery wine festival (first weekend in September).

PROVINCE OF TARRAGONA

The D.O. Priorato wine festival takes place each year in a different village (November). Major wine festival in **Espluga de Francolí**, the center-point of which are wines from the D.O. Conca de Barberá.

PROVINCE OF BARCELONA

In mid-September, the festival queen wins her weight in wine in **Sitges**. Each year, the festival is dedicated to a different country. **San Sadurní de Noya**: from 6 to 9 September. Particularly original is the "Filoxera" procession on 8 September at 10 p.m., during which the fight against this vine plague is portrayed humoristically. Harvest thanksgiving in **Villafranca del Penedés**: first Sunday in October.

Cubelles: Mid-September. In **Pla del Penedés**, at the end of the grape harvest, the traditional new wine ball takes place (with free servings of muscatel). Wine harvest festival in **Alella**: 6 to 8 September before the gates of Barcelona. Since 1987, a wine harvest festival is always held in **Barcelona** on the last Sunday in September.

PROVINCE OF GERONA

Campany—during the second half of September. The wine harvest festival of **Pau** (variable dates) has a family character. The *Sardana* is danced on the edge of the vineyards.

PRINCIPAL SIGHTS AND VISITS

There may be wide variations in opening times between summer and winter. Information is to be obtained from tourist offices.

PROVINCE OF LÉRIDA

Lérida: The remains of the medieval *Seu Vella* (old cathedral, 12th-14th century) dominate the city (10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-7:30 p.m., closed Mondays) and can be reached by the lift.

PROVINCE OF TARRAGONA

Montblanc: Fortified medieval town with a beautiful bridge over the Ríu Francolí. Starting point for the *Ruta del Cister*: The three monasteries of Poblet (10 a.m.-12.30 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.), Santes Creus (10:30 a.m.-1.30 p.m. and 3-7 p.m.) and Vallbona de les Monges (10 a.m.-1.30 p.m. and 4:30 to 6:45 p.m.) form the Cistercian monastery triangle. The monastery of Poblet, founded in the 12th century by Ramón Berenguer IV, is part of the UNESCO world heritage.

Scala Dei: Carthusian monastery under restoration (10 a.m.-1.30 p.m. and 3-5:30 p.m., in summer 4-7:30 p.m.). Modernistic (Spanish Art Nouveau style) winery in **Falset, Gandesa** and **El Pinell de Brai**.

Tortosa: Castillo de la Zuda, an Arabian palace, now a parador (see page 115). View over the Ebro and the Gothic cathedral.

Deltebre: Ecology museum (Ulldecona s/n, 43580 Deltebre, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.) for an introduction to the wildlife park of the Ebro delta.

Costa Dorada: Harbor and fisherman's district in **Cambrils**. **Port Aventura** between Salou and Vilaseca (10 a.m.-8 p.m., in summer until midnite). Beautiful beaches.

Reus: Modernistic architecture, above all the house Cal Navás, built by the Architect Domènech i Montaner, head of the architectural technical college in Barcelona at the beginning of the century (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 29).

Tarragona: Roman remains at every step. The aqueduct of Les Ferreres is 4 kilometers



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away in the direction of Valls. In the archaeological museum (Museo de la Romanitat, Pl. del Rey 5, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 4:30-8 p.m., closed Sun. afternoons and Mon.), alongside other important exhibits, the famous *Sarcófago de Hipólito* is on display.

PROVINCE OF BARCELONA
Villafranca del Penedés: The wine museum (*Museo del Vino*) (Plaça Jaume 1) is the best in the whole of Spain.

Sitges: A pretty, lively small town on the coast. Can Ferrat museum (10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m.), Catalan paintings, but also El Greco.

San Martín Sarroca: Castle and 12th century Romanesque church (10 a.m.-2 p.m. and 4-6 p.m.).

Olérdola: Archaeological excavations and museum with a wonderfully beautiful view (10 a.m.-2 p.m. and 4-8 p.m.).

San Sadurní de Noya: Chapel of Espiells (11th century) in addition to the vineyards of Juvé & Camps.

Barcelona: Gothic quarter, Olympic installations, *Ramblas*, modernistic architecture.

Alella: Church of San Feliú, beautiful mansions.

Vic: Plaza Mayor, cathedral, Ponte Querat (11th century Romanesque bridge).

PROVINCE OF GERONA
Besalú: Monumental village, curious, kinked Romanesque bridge.

Bañolas: Underground lake with underground water supply, forest of Can Ginebreda with 90 sculptures.

Ampurias: Greek and Roman ruins, archaeological museum (summer: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.).

Gerona: Jewish quarter (Call), Arabic baths, cathedral.

Puból: Castell Gala-Dalí (15 March to 30 June: 10.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m., closed Mon. July 1st to September 30th: 10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.). Grave of Gala, Dalí lived here for a couple of years after the death of his muse.

Figueras: Dalí's theater museum (9 a.m.-8 p.m.), one of the most frequently visited in the whole of Spain. Nearby stands the Galatea tower.

Peralada: Castillo de Peralada with various museums (11 a.m.-1 p.m., 4:30-6:30 p.m.), casino, well-preserved village center.

Cadaqués: Pretty fishing port, slightly north of Port Lligat with the house of Salvador Dalí.

Puerto de la Selva: Monastery of San Pere de Rodes (10 a.m.-11:30 p.m. and 3-5:30 p.m., June to September 10 a.m.-7 p.m., closed Mon.).

The most beautiful view is to be enjoyed from the Castell de Verdera.

RESTAURANTS AND SPECIALTIES

MARKETS

Lérida: San Miguel 25-29 September. September and October, gastronomic week.

Espluga de Francolí: Mon. and Fri. on the church square.

Montblanc: Tue. and Fri. in the Calle Font Major.

Tortosa: Mon. on the Paseo del Ebro.

Cambrils: Wed. in the old town.

Tarragona: Tue. and Thurs. on Corsini Square.

Barcelona: First Fri. of each month, Plaza Pi (*Artesanos de la Alimentación*, hand-made foodstuffs) and 2nd weekend of every month, Plaza Sagrada Família (natural products), Mercado San José (Boquería).

Vic: *Mercat de Ram* on the days before Palm Sunday.

Besalú: Tue. on the Plaza Libertad.

Figueras: Thurs. in the town center

RESTAURANTS

PROVINCE OF LÉRIDA

Lérida: El Forn de Nastasí, Salmerón 10, Tel: (34-73) 23 45 10. A restaurant with rustic elegance. Traditional and creative cooking. Good choice of wines from Raimat Bodega.

PROVINCE OF TARRAGONA

L'Espluga de Francolí: Masía del Cadet, Les Masías

de Poblet, Tel: (34-77) 87 08 69, Fax: (34-77) 87 04 96. Good regional cooking under the direction of Juan Corominas, for example *sipia am mandoguilles* or *conejo amb caracoles*.

Gratallops: El Piro (behind the Bodega of Álvaro Palacios).

Cambrils: Restaurant Can Gatell-Rodolfo, Miramar 27, 43850 Cambrils-Port, Tel: (34-1) 36 01 06, Fax: (34-77) 36 57 20.

PROVINCE OF BARCELONA

A short way outside **San Sadurní: Mirador de les Caves,** Els Casots (Subirats), Tel: (34-3) 899 31 78, Fax: (34-1) 899 33 88. A splendid view from San Sadurní de Noya to the Pyrenees accompanies combined *mar y montaña* (sea and mountain) cuisine.

Between San Sadurní and Villafranca: Restaurant **Sol i Vi,** Ctra. St. Sadurní a Villafranca, Km 4, Can Bas, 08379 Lavern (Subirats), Tel: (34-3) 899 32 04, Fax: (34-3) 899 34 35.

Alella: Restaurante 1789, Angel Guimerá 1, Tel: (34-3) 555 34 55.

PROVINCE OF GERONA

Figueras: Ampurdán, Antigua Ctra. Francia s/n, Tel: (34-72) 50 05 62.

Rosas: El Bulli, Cala Montjoi (6 km outside Rosas). Tel: (34-72) 15 04 57, one of the best restaurants in the whole of Spain, awarded 3 Michelin stars in 1997.

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATION

L'Espluga de Francolí: Masía del Cadet, Les Masías de Poblet, 43400 L'Espluga de Francolí Tel: (34-77) 87 08 69, Fax: (34-77) 87 04 96. Gourmet hotel with a family atmosphere close to the monastery of Poblet.

Tortosa: Parador de Tortosa, Castillo de la Zuda s/n, 43500 Tortosa, Tel: (34-77) 44 44 50, Fax: (34-1) 44 44 58, reservations center Tel: (34-1) 559 00 69, Fax: (34-1) 559 23 33 (see page 115).

PROVINCE OF BARCELONA

Subirats: Hotel Sol i Vi, Ctra. San Sadurní a Villafranca, km 4, Can Bas, 08379 Lavern (Subirats), Tel: (34-3) 899 32 04, Fax: (34-3) 899 34 35.

Vic: Parador de Turismo de Vic, 08500 Vic, Tel: (34-3) 812 23 23, Fax: (34-3) 812 23 68, reservations center Tel: (34-1) 559 00 69, Fax: (34-1) 559 23 33.

PROVINCE OF GERONA

Castelló d'Empúries: Hotel-Restaurant Allioli, Ctra. Figueras a Rosas, km 35, 17486 Castelló d'Empúries, Tel: (34-72) 25 03 20 Fax: (34-72) 25 03 00. A two-star hotel in an 18th century Catalan masia, with spartanly beautiful rooms.

TOURIST OFFICES

Lérida: Patronat Terres de Lleida, Tel: (34-73) 24 54 08, Fax: (34-73) 24 55 58.

L'Espluga de Francolí: Tel: (34-77) 87 04 56, Fax: (34-77) 87 09 25.

Montblanc: Tel: (34-77) 86 00 09, Fax: (34-77) 86 28 02.

Priorato: Patronat Comarcal de Turisme in Falset, Tel: (34-77) 83 10 23, Fax: (34-77) 83 05 64.

Tarragona: Patronat Municipal de Turisme, Tel: (34-77) 23 21 43, Fax: (34-77) 24 55 07.

Barcelona: Direcció General de Turisme, Passeig de Gràcia, 105, Tel: (34-3) 484 95 00, Fax: (34-3) 484 98 24.

Gerona: Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Gerona, Pujada Sant Martí 5, 17004 Gerona,

Tel: (34-72) 20 84 01, Fax: (34-72) 22 15 70. Cultural Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Tel: (34-3) 412 11 40, Fax: (34-3) 301 22 41.

Instituto Catalán de la Viña y del Vino (Catalan Wine Institute—INCAVI), Amalia Soler, 27-29, Villafranca del Penedés (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 890 00 78, Fax: (34-3) 890 03 54.

ORANGES FROM VALENCIA

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GRACIANO GRAPE

Graciano is a black grape variety, apparently native to La Rioja which, along with Tempranillo and Mazuelo, is one of the key varieties in the blend traditional to Rioja reds. Its particular contribution is its supremely rich aroma.

Text: **Pedro Benito**

Still Lifes: **Menchu Artime** Photos: **A. de Benito/ICEX** Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

For some wine writers, the origins of this variety are by no means clear. But Manso de Zúñiga (1855-1934), one of the first heads of the Haro Oenological Station (La Rioja), moving force in the post-phylloxera reconstruction of La Rioja's vineyards and outstanding figure of Riojan viticulture this century, locates it in La Rioja Alta and La Rioja Alavesa, two of this wine-growing area's subzones. Writing in 1904, he observed: "This very singular variety occurs in vary-

ing quantities, depending on conditions of soil, altitude, exposure, etc., and it is one of this region's old vines, there being no other precedents to orientate us as to its origin or provenance. But its normal growing pattern, within this Riojan region, argues for its being an indigenous variety. Graciano is grown in La Rioja Alta, on the right bank of the River Ebro, in the towns of, among others, Galbárrulu, Villalba, Haro, Gimileo, Ollauri, Briones, etc., and, on the left bank, in the towns of Briñas, Labastida, San Vicente de la Sonsierra, etc."

N^o 9



Veraison occurs towards the second half of August, ripening around the first half of October, and harvesting in the second half.

N^o 10



Budbreak begins from late April to mid-May, and flowering from mid-June to early July.

This variety's principal characteristics—fresh, pleasant palate and individual aroma—make it an appropriate one for inclusion in a proportion of 15 percent to the great wines of Rioja.

Though it is currently produced within only a very small area, by around 1790 it had become the most important variety in La Rioja Alta and Alavesa. Its characteristics made it a highly appreciated variety to the point that historically it was considered an essential component of good Rioja wines. What was particularly appealing about it was its wonderfully rich aroma, its deep red color, and its oxidizing capacity. For many years it was thought that the ideal combination of varieties to give a good Rioja wine should always include up to 15 percent Graciano. Manso de Zúñiga was to intervene again, revealing himself as a staunch defender of native varieties including, of course, Graciano which in 1911, with the post-phylloxera reconstruction of Rioja's vineyards in full swing, he believed to be an essential feature of the definitive type of Rioja wine: "In full awareness of the influence that cultivation and grape variety exercise over wine type, other conditions being equal we should improve vine cultivation in the sense of enhancing the advantages of genuinely

Riojan grapes or vines of proven worth with a view to not retrogressively but, where possible, progressively adapting the type of wine which the domestic and foreign markets find so acceptable. I propose this idea as a counterweight to the eagerness which seems to have developed among our growers when reestablishing the vineyards, to import vine varieties from other viticultural areas, vines of dubious merit and an unknown quantity insofar as the potential results of growing them in La Rioja are concerned. The composition of the blend of grapes for making a good wine should include 75 percent Tempranillo, 15 percent Graciano, and 10 percent Mazuelo; the quantities indicated for blends of black grapes apply to the elaboration of fine wines, whose qualities we must try to maximize in tune with the economic conditions of the market."

AMPELOGRAPHICAL AND VITICULTURAL DESCRIPTION

Graciano is a vine both suited and adapted to short go-

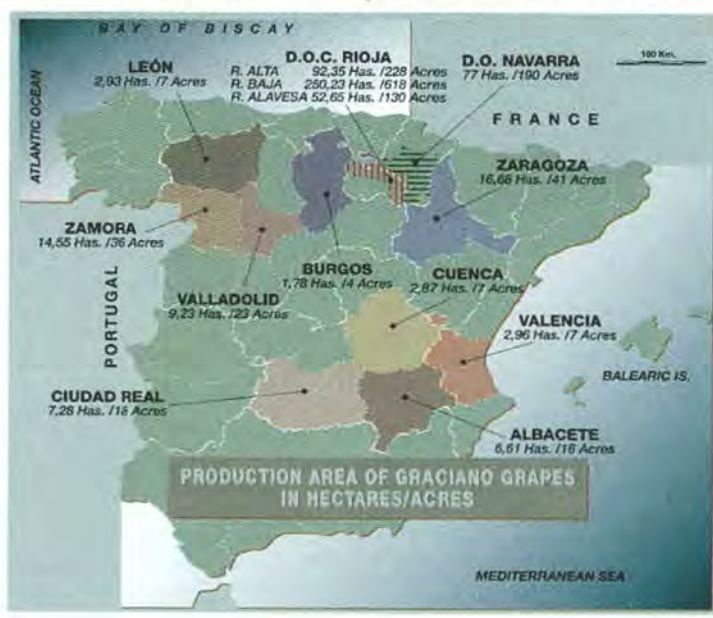
belet pruning, with a strong, vigorous trunk. Its growth cycle is long, its fruit medium to small, and its yield relatively low. The leaves are medium sized, embossed, smooth-surfaced with a downy underside. They are trilobal and pentagonal. The petiolar sinus is a narrowish V-shape and the serrations straight-sided.

Graciano produces medium-sized, cylindrical compact clusters. Its bunchstem is very short with medium to strong lignification. Its berries are spherical, medium to small in size and blue-black in color. The pedicel is short and the pulp colorless and juicy. Budbreak takes place later in Graciano than in Tempranillo, which makes it more resistant to spring frosts. Its phenological development is always later than Tempranillo's, varying according to the weather, and it is considerably less fertile, giving on average one single bunch per shoot. This is a later-maturing variety and its probable alcohol content is always lower, and its overall acidity higher, than Tempranillo at must weight measurement. It is usually harvested in the last week of October, about ten days later than Tempranillo.

Budbreak usually begins in late April to early May, and flowering from mid-June to early July. Veraison occurs around the second half of August, ripening in the first fortnight in October, and harvesting in the second fortnight.

As to cultivation, Graciano is not a problematic variety: it buds well, is not susceptible to mites, eutypa, mildew, or botrytis because of its open erect structure, short spurs, and its specific physiology.

It is best grown in cool, clayey-chalky soils and is fairly resistant to fungus-induced diseases. It prefers mild, moist climates and is



very sensitive to drought and strong summer heat. When vineyard replantings began early this century, Graciano continued to be grown, albeit grafted. Since then it has been grown less and less, giving rise to the current situation where its presence is virtually token in the overall area under vine in the D.O. Rioja.

SUITABILITY FOR VINIFICATION

As indicated above, this variety is suitable for inclusion, in a proportion of up to 15 percent, in the top Rioja wines, given its principal characteristics of fresh, pleasant palate and individual aroma. Graciano must be characterized by its bright red, and

unstable color, caused by its high tyrosinase content; high (due to low potassium content) but pleasant acidity. With its individual aroma, it is said to give Rioja wine its special appeal.

Wine made with 100 percent Graciano has a characteristically fresh and fruity aroma, not unlike licorice. It is the most aromatic of all the wines of Rioja, basically as a result of its higher concentration of linalol, a terpenic flavor compound with great aromatic potential. Significant, too, is the small amount of ethanol and ethyl acetate produced during fermentation, and the high amyl alcohol content, which promote wine's aromatic qualities.

When compared with Tempranillo, color D.O. (optical density) 620 mm (blue or vio-

let) is noticeably better in Tempranillo, which tallies with the visual assessment of the wines' color: bright red for Graciano and blue-toned red for Tempranillo. In consequence, and because of its aromatic characteristics, a Tempranillo wine with Graciano improves significantly in its organoleptic properties, particularly since just 15 percent of Graciano is enough to achieve this.

It would be possible to make a varietal wine exclusively of Graciano as long as it were grown in an area where it could reach an alcoholic strength of around 12.5°, thereby balancing itself out between this increase in alcohol and the consequently lower acidity. This would be best drunk young—given this variety's proclivity, it would oxidize too much during aging.

Though probably native to Rioja, Graciano is also grown elsewhere in Spain (see map). In the D.O. Navarra, it is also a permitted variety for the production of wines covered by the Regulatory Council. The trend in recent years towards reinstating native Spanish varieties has contributed to a slight increase in cultivating Graciano in certain areas, and some wineries are making monovarietal Graciano wines, or *crianza* wines, containing around 50 percent Graciano with very good results.

The Graciano monovarietal wine is pleasant with a deep red color and clean, fresh and fruity aroma.

In the mouth it is acidic, well structured, not overly complex, with tannic intensity around average.

ANALYTICAL PARAMETERS FOR GRACIANO

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST COMMON PARAMETERS SHOWS THAT:

- ALCOHOLIC STRENGTH IS MEDIUM/LOW, FROM 10.5 TO 12% VOL.
- TOTAL TARTARIC ACIDITY IS MEDIUM/LOW, AROUND 8.2 G/L.
- PH IS AROUND 3 TO 3.4
- TARTARIC ACID IS VERY HIGH, FROM AROUND 3 TO 6 G/L. AS THIS ACID IS THE ONE WHICH DETERMINES TOTAL ACIDITY, IT SHOWS HOW IMPORTANT THIS COMPONENT IS TO THE STABILITY AND KEEPING CAPACITY OF WINE
- GRACIANO IS VERY RICH IN ANTHOCYANS, WITH AN AVERAGE OF 2.3 MG/G

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER SIGNIFICANT VARIETIES IN THE MAIN GRACIANO GROWING AREAS SHOW THAT:

- GRACIANO DOES NOT HAVE MUCH POTASSIUM; IT GIVES WINES WITH LESS THAN THOSE MADE WITH GARNACHA AND FAR LESS THAN THOSE MADE WITH TEMPRANILLO
- ITS TOTAL DRY EXTRACT, UNDER EQUAL ELABORATION CONDITIONS, IS LOWER THAN THE OTHER VARIETIES'
- ITS TOTAL POLYPHENOLS ARE SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN IN TEMPRANILLO
- ITS TANNIN LEVEL IS SIMILAR TO GARNACHA'S AND MUCH LOWER THAN TEMPRANILLO'S

Agronomist Pedro Benito is Director of the Haro Oenological Station in La Rioja.

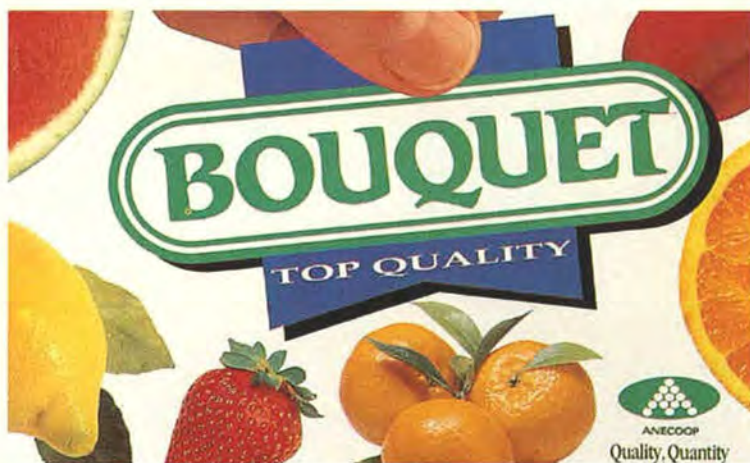


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MAY-AUGUST 97



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Text: Ana Westley Photos: Anecoop/ICEX

AS THE COOPERATIVE OF COOPERATIVES, ANECOOP NOT ONLY RATIONALIZES PRODUCTION WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FARMING CONCENTRATION, BUT ALSO ACTIVELY PROMOTES TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS TO DIVERSIFY PRODUCTS.

Spanish growers along Spain's Levante East Coast were already exporting to northern Europe for over 150 years and Valencia oranges were more available in Lon-

don than in Madrid by the turn of the century. Trains from Denia, Alicante, just south of Valencia, carried grapes and raisins to Europe a century ago. It is no sur-

prise then that the first large-scale farming cooperative would arise in this fertile and enterprising region.

Although the region's farmers had long been exporting cit-

rus fruits and other fresh produce to Europe, by the mid 1970s, demand began to outstrip the organizational capacity of individual farmers or small cooperatives. It was,

EXPORT VOLUME OF ANECOOP, 1994-1996 (IN TONS)

AREA	COUNTRY	CITRUS FRUITS		FRUITS		VEGETABLES & SALADS		TOTAL	
		94/95	95/96	94/95	95/96	94/95	95/96	94/95	95/96
E.U.	AUSTRIA	4,652	4,503	2,388	2,681	898	1,672	7,938	8,856
	BELGIUM	11,080	10,100	3,075	3,459	635	1,073	14,790	14,632
	DENMARK	9,303	5,120	3,485	2,140	2,777	2,490	15,565	9,750
	FINLAND	5,205	4,908	2,615	2,686	3,164	3,158	10,984	10,752
	FRANCE	49,206	41,687	15,810	19,642	11,079	22,527	76,095	83,856
	GERMANY	78,920	76,648	25,639	28,394	12,905	14,996	117,464	120,038
	IRELAND	-	0	-	111	-	0	-	111
	ITALY	4,444	3,799	2,841	3,540	69	40	7,354	7,379
	NETHERLANDS	26,760	16,749	3,873	4,687	1,461	1,719	32,094	23,155
	PORTUGAL	613	661	1,242	1,677	118	721	1,973	3,059
	SPAIN	10,786	20,211	16,737	22,276	5,093	8,595	32,616	51,082
	SWEDEN	2,869	3,336	1,885	4,632	2,468	3,390	7,222	11,358
	UNITED KINGDOM	7,379	5,901	2,120	1,566	1,279	311	10,778	7,778
		TOTAL E.U.	211,217	193,623	81,710	97,491	41,946	60,692	334,873
EFTA	NORWAY	2,224	2,294	2,134	2,551	469	144	4,827	4,989
	SWITZERLAND	5,623	5,010	3,878	4,079	82	102	9,583	9,191
	TOTAL EFTA	7,847	7,304	6,012	6,630	551	246	14,410	14,180
EASTERN EUROPE	CZECH REPUBLIC	7,376	9,672	27	248	1,215	339	8,618	10,259
	HUNGARY	5,847	4,025	248	20	40	0	6,135	4,045
	LATVIA	390	137	0	3	0	0	390	140
	LITHUANIA	603	921	0	0	0	0	603	921
	POLAND	11,405	12,158	3	52	0	0	11,408	12,210
	RUSSIA	933	1,005	0	0	0	0	933	1,005
	SLOVAKIA	8,236	7,289	244	136	285	0	8,765	7,425
	SLOVENIA	-	37	-	0	-	1	-	38
	OTHER COUNTRIES	95	-	0	-	0	-	95	-
	TOTAL EASTERN EUROPE	34,885	35,244	522	459	1,540	340	36,947	36,043
NORTH AMERICA	CANADA	4,414	2,012	68	88	1,647	1,303	6,129	3,403
	U.S.A.	1,440	998	39	56	60	608	1,539	1,662
	TOTAL NORTH AMERICA	5,854	3,010	107	144	1,707	1,911	7,668	5,065
	TOTAL	259,803	239,181	88,351	104,724	45,744	63,189	393,898	407,094
TURNOVER (Pts. x 1,000,000)		20,208	21,043	7,171	7,005	4,563	8,349	31,942	36,397

Source: Anecoop

LATE AND EARLY VARIETIES HAVE EXTENDED GROWING SEASONS IN SPAIN IN DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS. IN A STROLL THROUGH THE OPEN FIELDS OR GREEN HOUSES, ONE CAN FIND ALL SORTS OF FASCINATING NEW PRODUCTS: MELONS IN APRIL, OR APPLE-SIZED CAULIFLOWER.

in fact, the large centralized orders of Eastern Block countries that galvanized the region's citrus growers to band together to be able to meet these demands. No individual farmer or cooperative had the capacity to fulfill the huge centralized orders of these centrally directed Communist economies.

"The cooperatives could handle large European grocery chains, but just imagine the orders for oranges for a whole country!" recalled José María Planells, general manager of Anecoop. The umbrella organization founded in 1975—a cooperative of cooperatives—could not only handle these huge Eastern Block orders, but also effectively market production elsewhere as well. (With the fall of Communism in Eastern Block countries, total produce shipments there were soon outstripping former centralized orders through numerous smaller distribution channels as in the rest of Europe.)

Spain's Largest Produce Exporter

From 31 founding cooperatives of mostly citrus growers in Valencia and Castellón, to over 130 member cooperatives throughout Spain that grow all types of horticultural produce, it is not surprising that Anecoop has become the number one Spanish exporter and marketer of fresh produce around the world. As the cooperative of cooperatives, Anecoop not only rationalized production with strategic planning and farming concentration but also actively promoted tech-

nological innovation and quality improvement programs to diversify products. The development and introduction of new products, plus the addition of early and late season varieties produced in different geographical regions, extended the growing seasons to give customers fresh produce almost year round. By following Anecoop recommendations, farmers and cooperatives had a much better chance of effectively marketing their products at the best timing. In close contact with large foreign distributors, Anecoop managers are able to recommend the appropriate production plans to its member organizations. Sales teams are quick to suggest new presentations or packaging according to customer demand, as well as explain newly developed products or innovations to distributors such as the up scale brand name "Bouquet" for top quality products. Agility and adaptability to market whims have become second nature to Anecoop. Sales rose steadily from the beginning years in the late 1970s to increase sharply with membership in the then European Community in 1986. By 1988, Anecoop was Spain's leading fresh produce exporter. With the end of transition period tariffs in 1990, fresh horticultural exports from Spain began to rocket upwards. From the 1989/1990 season to last year's 1995/1996 season, Anecoop sales and production more than doubled. Sales rose from slightly over 10 billion pesetas in 1985/86

to almost 37 billion pesetas for 1995/96, while production volume increased from 180,000 metric tons a decade ago to 407,000 tons for last year's season. (Compared to the previous season, sales were up 12 percent while volume rose by four percent.) Exports have been so successful that Anecoop is the largest exporter of the Valencia region, after the Ford automobile manufacturing plant.

"The installation of coordinated and unified systems of quality control, careful market research followed by the latest marketing techniques, has helped assure customer loyalty whether for tried and true favorites or for the successful launching of a new product such as seedless watermelons," Planells explained.

Watermelon in December

José Miguel Borrás, Anecoop's chairman, insisted that Anecoop should not merely confine itself to just selling or marketing their farmers' products but also should take the lead in cutting costs both in the fields and in packaging and marketing operations to make their products ever more competitive.

Late and early varieties have extended growing seasons in Spain in different geographical areas. Now, however, Anecoop has gone one step further by adding operations in the Southern Hemisphere in South America. Currently Anecoop is preparing the production of seedless watermelons to be able to supply European customers a summer treat between De-

cember and March. Melon cultivation, still in the experimental phase, will soon follow. The relationship with farmers in the Southern Cone countries of South America not only guarantees off season products for European clients, but also opens the door for exporting some of Anecoop's products to Mercosur.

After the success of seedless watermelons, introduced several years ago by Anecoop in Europe (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33), research sponsored by Anecoop continues at the Experimental Grounds outside Valencia that is funded by the Caja Rural, a cooperative bank. New varieties are tested with carefully controlled environments in which only one variable is introduced. New consumer preferences are developed or improved, such as clustered tomatoes that are harvested attached to the vine. "We are quick to adapt to new trends or preferences," explained Carlos Baixauli, one of the scientists on the grounds.

After testing 150 new varieties of melons, only five were selected for the basis of a production campaign. In a stroll through the open fields or green houses, one can find all sorts of fascinating new products: melons in April, yellow seedless watermelons, sweet cucumbers, purple artichokes, or apple-sized cauliflower for today's smaller European families. Most of the experiments are not just for exotic products, but are designed to develop fruit and vegetables that are immune to various plagues or viruses, or that can withstand more extreme climate conditions, Baixauli noted.

EXPORTS HAVE BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL THAT ANECOOP IS THE LARGEST EXPORTER OF THE VALENCIA REGION, AFTER THE FORD AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURING PLANT.

Orange Juice with a Fresh Squeezed Taste

Five years ago Anecoop Group founded Agricons, an industrial outlet for produce which is already on sound financial and business footing despite initial production difficulties with citrus fruits. Surrounded by fertile orchards and orange groves of the Valencia region, the modern factory complex in Algemesi processes and cans fruits and vegetables for the leading national and international distributors using the most sophisticated technology. From field to can or juice

bottle, the entire process is quality controlled. Over 50 associated cooperatives scattered around Spain contribute their best produce for processing. The star products are satsuma mandarin oranges that are perfect for preserving in segments, peaches and pears, strawberries, sweet red pimientos, and artichokes. With sales increasing at over 15 percent a year Agricons is now embarking on a new non-concentrated frozen juice plant currently under construction next to the canning factory. The frozen, but not concentrated orange

juice, gives a distinctively fresh-squeezed taste that consumers now demand. The factory will begin operations before the end of the year, according to Planells. Anecoop is also on the lookout for new trends or varieties around the world, attending international fairs and conferences, while studying new market possibilities in other parts of the world. Early this year Spanish citrus fruits arrived in Japan in excellent conditions despite the long journey by boat. "Far from being in decline, farming in Spain is a profession with a great future,"

Borrás predicted in the annual report meeting.

Ana Westley is a freelance writer based in Madrid where she has lived for over 25 years. She was the Spain correspondent for The New York Times from 1992 to 1995 and previously was the correspondent for various American publications including The Wall Street Journal and Businessweek. She continues to be a regular contributor to Special Sections of the International Herald Tribune and The Wall Street Journal.

COMPANIES IN THE ANECOOP GROUP

COMPANY	CURRENCY	CAPITAL (Pts.x1000)	% SHARE	RESERVES (Pts.x1000)	NET PROFIT (Pts.x1000)	VOLUME (Tm.)	TURNOVER (Pts.x1000)
ANECOOP S. COOP.	PTS	660,566.00	100	592,503.00	140,286.00	415,968	37,615,215.87
ANECOOP FRANCE	FRF	1,000.00	95	985.19	1,284.81	52,997	270,720.07
	PTS	24,971.80		24,601.97	32,084.02		6,760,367.44
FESA UK LTD.	GBP	100.00	25	620.25	51.56	31,124	19,108.00
	PTS	22,300.00		138,315.75	11,497.88		4,261,084.00
FRUCHTPARTNER GMBH	DEM	100.00	59	300.99	68.40	50,198	63,223.50
	PTS	8,430.00		25,373.46	5,766.12		5,329,741.05
MERCATO GMBH	DEM	500.00	64	0.00	287.08	97,435	165,877.45
	PTS	42,150.00		0.00	24,200.84		13,983,469.04
IFTA GMBH	DEM	50.00	90	0.00	95.00	-	-
	PTS	4,215.00		0.00	8,008.50		
IFS	FRF	1,000.00	80	127.06	624.08	16,061	83,599.40
	PTS	24,971.80		3,172.92	15,584.40		2,087,630.00
AGRICONSA	PTS	1,750,000.00	20	-35,850.20	-48,562.96	50,650	3,214,500.00
TOTAL	PTS	2,537,604.60	-	748,116.90	295,225.72	714,433	73,252,007.40

Figures for final balance sheets closed and audited before 31/12/96.

Source: Anecoop

Pídalos por su nombre



S.A.T. LOS CURROS

BODEGAS S.A.T.

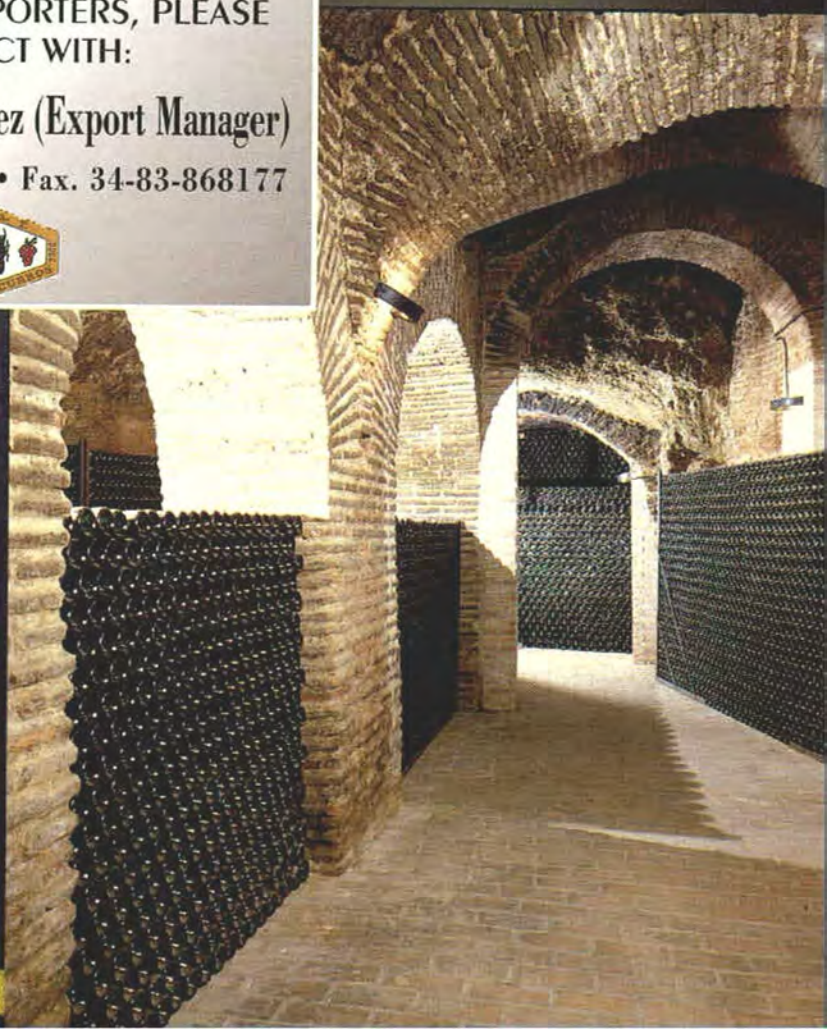
LOS CURROS

- White wines from D.O. Rueda
- Red wines from D.O. Ribera del Duero

INTERESTED IMPORTERS, PLEASE
CONTACT WITH:

Mr. Marcos González (Export Manager)

Tel. 34-83-868097 • Fax. 34-83-868177



During my springtime travels around Spain, I have been able to see that things are happening on the Spanish gastronomic scene in both the small towns and the large cities and have found out that every visit has something new to offer.

International recognition of the great efforts made over the last decade by the D.O. Navarre led me to return to this beautiful area, the birthplace of many of my forebears. First stop was the historical town of Olite. But this time it is not the delightful white, rosé or red Navarrese wines that I want to draw to your attention so much as an important ingredient of medieval cooking that was known by both Greeks and Romans but unfortunately has been long-forgotten, even by academics and experts. It is a sour condiment that, along with vinegar, orange and lemon, was much favored in the kitchens of Spanish monarchs, vassals and even monks. Known as verjuice or *agraz* in Spanish, it is an acid liquid obtained from unripe grapes and preferred in Spanish medieval cooking to vinegar. In ancient Greece and Rome, after fermentation and exposure to the sun, it was used as an efficient remedy for illnesses of the throat, often being taken with honey. But it is in the medieval texts where there is a clear gastronomic intention, the liquid being prepared differently. They simply fermented it after extraction from the grapes then bottled it without any sort of sun-drying procedure.

Prompted by several studies and an interesting document on this subject published recently by Juan Cruz Cruz and Alicia Bustos of the Navarrese Association for Gastronomic Studies, several oenologists linked to EVENA, the impressive Navarrese Vine-Growing and Wine Research Station in Olite, have started to produce a verjuice that I am now using in my cooking and that I hope will soon be freely available. On the nose, this verjuice has the pleasing aroma of fresh grapes. In the mouth it is sour, a little lighter than vinegar and with interesting notes that allow it to enhance the quality of certain sauces and fish, meat, or even vegetable dishes.

For more information on this fascinating subject, I recommend contacting EVENA, **Estación de Viticultura y Enología de Navarra, Valle de Orba 34, 31390 Olite (Navarra). Tel: (34-48) 74 00 54, Fax: (34-48) 71 20 92.**

After an inspiring session tasting top-quality white wines from the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc varieties that grow in the Navarrese sub-zone of Tierra Estella, I went on my way towards the Upper Aragon, an area sheltered by the Pyrenees, the Sierra de Guara and a most amazing rock formation called the Mallos de Riglos. The roads were bordered with chestnuts, poppies, and thyme and I spotted surprisingly beautiful birds. On arrival in Huesca I was tired and hungry, so I headed straight for "Doña Taberna" with its three or four tables and a great atmosphere. The bar was chock-a-block with earthenware dishes containing all the traditional local dishes or delicious fresh ingredients waiting to be grilled or cooked to order. Here there are no stars, no pretensions, just simple good food. They serve an excellent Iberian ham, grilled mushrooms, Padrón peppers fried in olive oil, and other hot or cold *tapas*. The tomato and spring onion salad was memorable. The usual drink is beer but a better choice would be a glass or two of a local Aragonese wine. **Doña Taberna, Avenida Juan XXIII 13, 22003 Huesca. Tel: (34-74) 21 30 67.**

A Mixed Bag

To continue with the subject of Aragonese wines, my next stop was Barbastró, a large town of Arab origins. I wanted to visit the Regulating Council for the D.O. Somontano and to find a black grape with great personality called Moristel which, among others, has been largely responsible for the interest now being shown in the wines from this area in Spain and beyond.

Until recently, Aragon wines were thick, rough, and alcoholic. In the mid-eighties, the red, white, and rosé wines from an area of Huesca, unknown even to Spaniards, were to put Somontano on the map. In the mid-nineties, it was to become fashionable as a wine-making area and its wines can now be found on the best racks and in the best restaurants.

The Moristel grape, not to be confused with the Monastrell from the east coast of Spain, is native to the Aragon area. It gives fresh red wines with a moderate alcohol content, strong color and an interesting and ripe fruity flavor, and these can be blended to excellent effect with wines made from the noble Tempranillo grape, whether or not aged in oak. Although other varieties (Riesling, Chenin Blanc, etc.) are also grown here in considerable quantities, it has been agreed that the varietal catalogue for the area should be restricted to twelve stocks. The white varieties include Alcañón (also a native), Chardonnay, Garnacha, Macabeo (called Viura in the Rioja) and Gewürztraminer, and the red varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot, Moristel, Pa-

rreleta (these two are both native stocks), Pinot Noir, and Tempranillo. I thoroughly recommend trying these wines because they are all top quality with a promising future and are helping the D.O. Somontano to forge the reputation it deserves. They can be easily found in any of the many specialist wine stores that are sprouting up all over Spain and that are the ideal starting point for a tour of Spanish wines. Here are three with a good selection:

Vinoteca Vila, Agullers 7, Barcelona. Tel: (34-3) 268 32 27; La Vinoteca, Carlos III 71, Pamplona. Tel: (34-48) 27 80 06; Bodegas Camilín, Hernani 13, Madrid. Tel: (34-1) 534 24 46.

From Barbastró, full speed ahead along the road to Barcelona. Here I was able to confirm yet again that the Barcelona people not only eat well but also sell well. All round the city there are specialist shops selling wines, charcuterie, cheeses, food preserves of all types, bread, cakes and pastries, chocolates, or olive oils, offering a tremendous display of Spain's food products. One of the largest and best selections of oils I know can be found in the Club de Gourmets in the **El Corte Inglés** department store, **Avenida Diagonal 471, 08036 Barcelona. Tel: (34-3) 419 20 20, Fax: (34-3) 430 15 40.**

From the Mediterranean city of Barcelona I set out for the capital city of Madrid, the last call on this trip. A noisy, disorganized, cheerful, and fascinating place and, like all large cities, rather overwhelming. I always discover something new here. A subject of long-standing (and often frustrating) research is that of monastic cookery—the stews, casseroles, confectionery, and jams that are produced so discreetly behind the walls of monasteries and convents. Food writers know only too well just how difficult it can be to obtain recipes or any type of information on what goes on in that secretive and fascinating world. But now a specialist shop has come to our rescue: **El Torno, Joaquín María López 28, 28015 Madrid. Tel: (34-1) 543 38 00.** Amongst the whole series

of delicacies to be found on the shelves of "El Torno," one that attracted my attention was a can of quince jelly with a simple but informative label. It was firm, soft and juicy and had an unmistakable dark orange color—the four distinguishing features of a good quince jelly and found here in a preparation made from a time-honored recipe by the Descalced Carmelite nuns in Madrid. The recipe I suggest is not their secret one but was given to me by another culinary artist, Lourdes March. To prepare a good quince jelly you will need 2 kg of quinces and 1 kg of sugar. First wash the quinces and, without peeling, rub with a cloth to remove the fuzziness from the skin. Place in a large pan with warm water to cover. Gradually bring to a boil, turning the quinces carefully. When the skins begin to burst, remove them from the pan and drain. They should be soft to the touch. This cooking process will last from 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the size of the fruit. They should then be peeled while still hot and cut into pieces, removing the hard center. Sieve and weigh the resulting puree and weigh out the same amount of sugar or a little less. Place the puree in a pan and gradually add the sugar while stirring. Place the pan over a gentle heat, preferably using a diffuser, and stir frequently with a long-handled wooden spoon, taking care to avoid burns as the mixture is likely to splash. Cook for about one and a half hours. The sign that the jelly is cooked is when the spoon begins to leave furrows as it is moved around. Pour the mixture into porcelain bowls or metal tins and leave to cool in a dry, well-ventilated place, loosely covered with a cloth. After a few days the surface should be completely dry and firm to the touch. It should not be covered too soon after cooking as this encourages the formation of mold. **From the book *Hecho en casa* by Lourdes March, Alianza Edi-**

torial S.A., Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena 15, 28027 Madrid. Tel: (34-1) 393 88 88, Fax (34-1) 320 74 80.

I met Lourdes March during a congress held annually in Saint Anthony's College in Oxford more years ago than either of us would like to confess. The paper she presented was on the *paella* or *patella*, a most important cooking utensil in the east of Spain. My paper was on the *kaiko*, the original wooden milk churn and one of the oldest cooking utensils used in Spain, originally from the north of Navarre. We have often met since, the excuse always being food and cooking, often amongst food books and in the company of lovers of good food, and in such unexpected places as Tokyo or Istanbul but also recently in Madrid during the XI Salón del Gourmet. Writer, lecturer, broadcaster and cook, Lourdes has recently been acting as culinary expert for a new restaurant called "Doña" offering traditional, truly Mediterranean food. It is an elegant but simple restaurant with an interesting wine list and an

approachable, expert chef, José Rodríguez Sánchez. The focus is on blue—with blue tablecloths, chairs, and walls. The inevitable starter in "Doña" is slices of bread drizzled with extra virgin oil. The night I was there it was Picual varietal oil but Lourdes told me they change every month—the following month the variety would be Hojiblanca and after that Arbequina, and so on around the Spanish olive oil map. Each table offered delicate little glass bottles on smooth olive wood platters. And the initial offering of exquisite olive oil was followed by an equally exquisite menu devised by Lourdes and José Luis for the enjoyment of their growing number of customers. The menu is neither short nor long, simple nor complex—just honest, tasteful and original. From the *Picoteos* or appetizers I chose *jamón de mar* (smoked, marinated tuna fish), and a small dish of *sepia* (cuttlefish) with onion, both cooked to just the right degree. From the salads on offer I was unable to resist the *exquisite de bacalao*: flaked cod (fresh and unsalted) with

tomatoes, onions and olives, dressed with Arbequina olive oil from Catalonia. The first course was a tiger prawn in a sauce of peppers and garlic (*all i pebre*) from the coastal area around Valencia. Then came the main dish, a *romesco* (a fish stew from Tarragona), followed by a dessert they called *Agua del Mediterráneo* that uses a secret formula including lemon juice to rejuvenate the palate which by then tends to be feeling a bit overworked. A *Fino* Sherry, a D.O. Rueda Superior wine made from at least 88 percent Verdejo grapes and a prestigious D.O. Navarre were the ideal complements for a style of cooking I could happily eat every day of the year. **Restaurante Doña, Zurbano 59, 28010 Madrid.**

Tel: (34-1) 319 25 51, Fax: (34-1) 310 50 81.

Author and broadcaster, María José Sevilla is a specialist in food and wine and teaches at the Culinary Institute of America, in the Napa Valley. She is responsible for gastronomy and food promotion at the Commercial Office of the Embassy of Spain in London.



Recipes with Vegetables

Recipes selected by María José Sevilla

Wines selected by María Jesús Gil de Antuño

Borage Pancakes with Clam Sauce

SERVES 4:

1 kg borage
Salt
Water
2 tbsp butter
3 large eggs
White pepper
2 heaped tbsp flour

1 glass milk
1 onion, chopped
Oil
250 gr small clams
Parsley, chopped
50 ml fish stock

Clean the borage. Remove the leaves and cut the stems into tiny pieces. Place in a saucepan with salted water and boil on high for 15 minutes. When tender, refresh with cold water and drain.

In a mixing bowl, combine the eggs, pepper, flour, milk, salt, and a handful of finely chopped borage. Whisk until well blended.

Place a drop of butter in a saucepan, pour in some of the borage batter. Allow to cook for a little while and then turn over and cook on the other side until a thin pancake is ready. Set aside in a warm dish.

Repeat this process until you have used all the batter, piling the pancakes on top of each other in order to keep them warm. Arrange cooked borage in the center of each pancake and roll over. Place in an oven dish.

Brown the chopped onion in olive oil, then add the clams, the chopped parsley, and the fish stock. Bring to a boil and cook for 3 minutes. Pour over the crêpes. Heat in the oven before serving.

Adapted from Angelita Alfaro's recipe published in Cocina Navarra, from Editorial Everest.

Recommended wine: Rosé from the D.O. Navarra

The mild taste of the borage accompanied by the very flavorsome clams would go well with a rosé wine from the D.O. Navarra where they are experts in this type of wine. The varietal rosé made from young Garnacha grapes, with its grassy and fruity aromas and slightly bitter aftertaste, would be the perfect partner for the tender locally-grown borage. Or for a special occasion, try a good Albariño aged for one year in the bottle from the D.O. Rías Baixas, the home of the clams.

Cardoon in Christmas Sauce

SERVES 4:

1 large cardoon
1 lemon, halved
1 l water
3 tbsp plain (all-purpose) flour
1 tbsp olive oil

Juice of 1/2 lemon
Salt
Grated cheese
Grated hazelnuts

FOR THE CHRISTMAS SAUCE:

3 tbsp butter
1 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp plain (all-purpose) flour

375 ml milk
500 ml vegetable stock
Grated nutmeg

Remove the strings from the cardoon in the same way you would from celery. Discard the green parts and rub with lemon to prevent discoloration. Cut each stalk into 5 or 6 equal pieces.

Bring the water to a bowl in a large saucepan, adding the flour, olive oil, lemon juice, and some salt. Add the cardoon and simmer until tender, which will take 1 to 1 1/2 hours depending on size. (This method of cooking keeps the cardoon white.) Once the vegetable is cooked, drain and set aside.

Prepare a bechamel using the butter, olive oil, flour, and stock. Add the nutmeg to taste while the sauce is cooking. The bechamel should be cooked for a minimum of 20 minutes to ensure that the flour is cooked thoroughly. Add the pieces of cardoon to the bechamel and mix well. Place in a flameproof serving dish and sprinkle with a mixture of grated cheese and hazelnuts. Place under the grill for a few minutes to melt the cheese and turn the topping golden in color.

From María José Sevilla's Mediterranean Flavours.

Recommended wine: Young, dry white wine from the D.O. Penedés. The recommendation here is for a Parellada varietal wine, clean and fresh on the nose and with fruity and floral aromas to enhance the mild flavor of the cardoon. Although it is the milk that predominates in this dish in the absence of any strong ingredients such as onion or garlic, the general effect is not too creamy. The inclusion of cheese and walnuts means that a white Chardonnay from the same D.O. would also be a good match as it would contribute its fruity aromas of banana or fig.

Stew of Tender Beans and Other Spring Vegetables

SERVES 4:

1.5 kg young beans, just separated from their pods

2 l water

1 onion, peeled and chopped

2 leeks, cut into pieces

2 carrots, peeled

and cut into pieces

2 green sweet peppers, seeded and chopped

2 garlic cloves

2 tbsp olive oil

Salt

Wash the beans and place in an earthenware *cazuela* or large saucepan. Add the water, onion, leeks, carrots, green peppers, garlic cloves, olive oil, and some salt. Cook slowly over a very low heat until the beans are meltingly tender.



RED SWEET PEPPERS "DEL PIQUILLO"

"DEL PIQUILLO peppers are sweet, slightly piquant red peppers. Short and shaped like a rounded triangle with a pronounced point, they are fine-textured and not over-fleshy"



The traditional serving way:

RED SWEET PEPPERS DEL PIQUILLO WITH GARLIC

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 PERSONS

* 1 can Piquillo Peppers * 1 whole garlic
* 200ml. olive oil * salt

Heat the oil in an earthenware dish. Cut the garlic cloves in two and fry gently in the oil. Before they begin to change colour, add the peppers with the liquid from the can. Season. Gently shake the dish until the sauce binds. Serve hot.



Packed by:
CEVENASA DANZA, S.A.
Ctra. Peralta s/n.
31340 Marcilla (Navarra)
SPAIN

Tel: 34 48713970 - Fax: 34 48713971

Pork with Turnip Greens

Before serving, stir the contents of the pot to blend the oil with the vegetable stock.

From María José Sevilla's Mediterranean Flavours.

Recommended wine: A young red wine from the D.O. Ca. Rioja. This vegetable stew would go well with a young red wine aged for one year in the bottle and based on the Tempranillo variety but including other native varieties such as the Garnacha, Mazuelo and Graciano. The red berry aromas of the red wine are enhanced by the more velvety aromas gained from the aging process. Since the dish has no extra flavoring apart from the vegetables, it could also be accompanied by a fresh Navarra rosé wine or by a white wine aged for a few months in oak. This would give more intense fruity aromas.

SERVES 8:

2.5 kg hock of pork	8 small chorizo sausages
10 potatoes, peeled	100 gr pork fat,
3 bunches of turnip greens (or spinach if not available)	cubed or 4 tbsp olive oil

Soak the pork in water for 24 hours to remove the salt, then drain and rinse. Place the pork in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 3 hours, then transfer the pork to a serving dish. Use the water to boil the potatoes, turnip greens, chorizos and pork fat or olive oil for about 20 to 30 minutes until tender. Serve the vegetables and ham piping hot.

From María José Sevilla's Spain on a Plate.

Recommended wine: A red D.O. Ribeiro, 1994

The slight bitterness of the turnip greens combined with the smoothness of the pork fat and the strong flavor of the Galician chorizos have made this dish a traditional favorite. A good wine here would be a red D.O. Ribeiro aged for a couple of years in the bottle. The strength of the Mencía grape should be strong enough to prevent its aroma from being overwhelmed by the paprika in the chorizo or the fat absorbed from the pork by the turnip greens. An equally apt choice would be a varietal red Mencía from the D.O. Valdeorras.

Speedy Anchovies

The Basque Gastronomic Societies

Recipes selected by Vicky Hayward

José María Sargestegui is a regular cook at Au da Gure Txokoa, a small gastronomic society in San Sebastián. He makes this dish with fresh spring anchovies, often buying them straight from the boats. The fish can be cleaned and left in the refrigerator a few hours before they are needed, but the fast, precise cooking is best left till everyone is ready to eat. I have given the recipe in José María's own words.

SERVES 4 AS A FIRST COURSE:

2-3 dozen fresh anchovies, about 15 cm long	2 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced across
Coarse sea salt	1-2 cayenne or birds' eye peppers
100 ml extra virgin olive oil	

"Open and wash the anchovies under a cold tap, snapping off the head and stripping out the bones as you go. Sometimes I leave them in brine for half an hour or so before drying them. Then, before the dinner I lay out the anchovies over the bottom of a grill pan and salt them. Don't begin to cook till everyone is seated. Preheat the grill and begin to warm through the olive oil with the garlic slices and cayenne peppers in a

small frying pan over a low flame. Grill the anchovies for a couple of minutes till the flesh is just cooked on the outside—no more. Turn up the heat under the oil so it is hot but not smoking and the garlic is fried golden brown by the time the anchovies are grilled. Pour over the oil in a flash, being careful not to splash yourself, and serve immediately with bread.” You may prefer to grill the anchovies in a heatproof serving dish.

Recommended wine: Cider or *txacoli* would be drunk locally with this, but you could also look to other regions. A Catalan *cava* or sparkling wine made with Chardonnay grapes, or a Galician Albariño from the Rías Baixas D.O. would make a good partner.

Marmitako (Fish Stew)

Juan Mari Salas, architect and member of Gaztelubide, one of San Sebastian’s best-known gastronomic societies, has won a string of prizes in Basque cooking competitions with his version of *marmitako*, a summer fish casserole made with fresh bonito or tuna, potatoes, and tomatoes. Juan Mari took a fisherman’s recipe as his starting point but then experimented in the kitchens of his gastronomic society, adding a *fumet* and sautéing the potatoes well to keep them from disintegrating. He emphasizes that since this is a summer dish, the sauce should be light and liquid.

SERVES 4:

Fish bones and skin
1 leek, trimmed and chopped
1 carrot, peeled and chopped
1.5 liters water
Coarse sea salt
100 ml extra virgin olive oil
2 sweet onions, skinned
and finely chopped
4 green peppers, trimmed
and finely chopped

2-3 medium ripe
cooking tomatoes
1 kg fresh bonito
(or tuna if unavailable)
2 kg waxy or new potatoes,
peeled and cut into 2-cm squares
2 cloves of garlic skinned
and very finely chopped

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Braised Farmyard Chicken with Ceps

Make a fumet by simmering the fish bones and skin, leek, and carrot in the salted water for 20-25 minutes. Clean the bonito, wiping it well and then patting it dry. Cut the fish into chunks about 2-cm square, salt them and leave to one side while you prepare the casserole's vegetable base. Choose a flameproof casserole. Traditionally it would be an earthenware one—large enough to fit the finished dish. Heat the olive oil in it and sweat the onion and green pepper until the onion is soft and transparent and the pepper is tender but not browned. Cut a cross in the skin of each tomato, spear it with a fork and scald in the simmering fumet for 2-3 minutes. When the tomatoes are cool enough to be handled, cut them into chunks and either pound them in a mortar or puree them. Add to the pan and continue to cook, stirring whenever it threatens to stick. Turn up the heat under the casserole, add the potato chunks, salt, and garlic, and sauté until they are well sealed but not colored. Skim the fumet and strain over the vegetables to cover them. Boil for 20-25 minutes, checking with a fork from time to time to see when the potatoes are tender. Add the bonito straight away, stirring it round with a large spoon once or twice so the fish is evenly sealed by the cooking juices. The casserole should not be allowed to come back to a boil. Remove from the heat, cover and leave for 10 minutes.

Recommended wine: The strength of flavors means this dish can stand up well to a young wood-aged Rioja Alavesa, from the northern part of the Rioja D.O.C., or you could also drink it with txacoli or cider.

José Luis Peciña, member of Gure Kaiola, the oldest of Tolosa's two dozen gastronomic societies, won first prize with this dish in the annual competition for the best recipe, organized by the overall Cofradía of gastronomic societies in 1995.

SERVES 8:

1 1/2 large farmhouse chickens, cleaned	peeled and sliced
Plain flour, for frying	1 stalk of parsley
1 fat head of garlic, skinned	1 bread stick
50 ml extra virgin olive oil	1 liqueur glass of cognac
4-5 onions, skinned and sliced lengthways	About 0.75 l chicken or meat stock, or water
4 medium carrots,	Coarse sea salt

FOR THE CEPES:

1 kg fresh ceps, wiped clean, or 1 kg fresh mushrooms and 30 gr dried wild mushrooms, soaked	3 cloves of garlic, sliced crossways
0.15 l extra virgin olive oil	Splash of brandy

Cut the chicken into serving pieces—chunks rather than joints—and dust with flour. Chop half the garlic cloves very finely. Heat the oil gently in a large flameproof casserole, ideally an earthenware one, in which all the ingredients can fit. Add the chicken and garlic and sauté together, turning the chicken so it fries evenly until golden on all sides. Then add the onion, carrot, remaining whole garlic cloves, parsley stalk, and bread torn into small pieces.

When the vegetables are lightly browned, add the cognac and toss for a few minutes so the flavor is absorbed, then add the stock for water to cover. Put to simmer over very gentle heat, or cover and cook in the oven, for 1 1/2-2 hours. About half an hour before the chicken is cooked through, sauté the ceps: heat the olive oil in a flameproof casserole or pan and fry the ceps, adding a little cognac and salt halfway through cooking.

Remove the chicken pieces to a large warmed serving dish, sieve the sauce and pour it over the top. Spoon the mushrooms around the chicken.

Recommended wine: José Luis suggests a *crianza* Rioja D.O.C. (see Glossary on page 146), with both fruity and oaky flavors, or you could try a young *vino del año*. If it's a special occasion, splurge on a *reserva*.

Pears Cooked in Red Wine

Chef José Castillo included just five recipes for sweet dishes in his collection of *Recipes From 200 Cooks in the Basque Societies*. Their simplicity stands out against the complexity of the other recipes. Often, in fact, meals end simply with a plate of local cheese such as sheep's-milk Idiazábal. This recipe was given to Castillo by a member of Euskal Billera, a San Sebastián society. He added this postscript to it. "Very appetizing the day after they are made." I have followed his quantities, but adjusted the method.

SERVES 6-8:

1 kg of sugar
2 l of good quality red wine
(e.g. Rioja or Ribera del Duero)
9 firm winter pears,

whole but skinned
1 stick of cinnamon
1 liqueur glass of brandy

Dissolve the sugar in the wine by heating them gently together in a large flameproof pan in which all the pears will fit. Leave to simmer gently and when the sugar is dissolved, turn up the heat and add the pears. Cook them until tender; the time required may vary from 20-45 minutes with the ripeness, variety, and size of the pears. Test with a knife. Remove the pears to a serving bowl or plate. If you want you can reduce the cooking juices further for a thick, syrupy sauce. Either way, pour the wine over the pears while still warm and leave to cool completely. Whether or not you can make these last till the next day is another question.

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Grilled Dish of Vegetables with Fresh Truffles and Ham

Recipes from Catalonia

A traditional Catalan recipe, presented here in the version by Ferran Adrià from the restaurant El Bulli, which received its third Michelin star in 1997.

SERVES 4:

4 small spring onions	1 small zucchini
4 small chicory	4 tbsp thick beans
4 cherry tomatoes	80 gr finely sliced Serrano ham
4 finger-thick eggplant slices	80 gr fresh truffles
4 artichokes	12 tbsp truffle butter
4 small heads of fennel	8 tbsp vinaigrette with truffles and dried fruit
16 green asparagus tips	
12 cloves of garlic	
4 small ceps	

FOR THE TRUFFLE BUTTER:

50 gr butter	(chervil, parsley, chives)
50 ml truffle juice	Salt and pepper
1 tbsp chopped herbs	

Melt the butter slowly and allow to become golden brown. Add the truffle juice immediately. Remove from the heat and season with salt, pepper, and the fresh herbs.

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

200 gr of shelled young hazelnuts	1 tbsp chopped fresh oregano
1 truffle (15 gr)	Salt and pepper
2 tbsp truffle juice	
1 tbsp sherry vinegar	

Blend all the ingredients to a vinaigrette with a puree-like consistency. Clean and halve the spring onions. Halve the chicories and cherry tomatoes. Remove the hearts of the artichokes with a very sharp knife and cut into fine slices just before grilling. Clean the fennel. Clean the ceps with a damp cloth, after cutting off the ends. Cut the zucchinis lengthways into four slices the thickness of a finger. Slice the truffle finely. Place half the ham in a pan over a low heat and fry until crisp on both sides. Grill all the vegetables on the grill until well browned and slightly crunchy. Arrange the vegetables in a fan shape on the plates. Pour over the truffle butter and place the fresh truffles and all the ham on the top. Serve the vinaigrette separately as an accompaniment.

Recommended wine: A full-flavored wine is best suited to this dish. The palate should be enlivened by mature tannin and a solid ground note. A red crianza from the D.O. Priorato should meet the requirements of this marriage perfectly.

Suquet of Monk Fish (Fish Stew)

A recipe by Carmen Riba Conte, the cook in the Mas Rabell guesthouse of Torres.

SERVES 4:

Olive oil	1 glass of white wine
4 potatoes	Fish stock
1 clove of garlic	1 monk fish
1 large tomato	8 cultivated mussels
Mild red Spanish pepper	8 small clams
Chopped parsley	Cooked white beans

Heat a small quantity of oil in a frying pan. Fry the sliced potatoes. As soon as they take color, add the chopped garlic and fry until golden brown. Add the peeled and seeded tomatoes and fry until soft. Add the mild red pepper and chopped parsley. Pour in the white wine, allow to simmer gently and add the fish stock. Cut the fish into medallions, season with salt and pepper. Add as soon as the sauce begins to bubble gently. Cook over a low heat for 4 to 5 minutes. At this point, add the mussels, clams, and cooked beans. Serve as soon as the mussels are open.

Catalan Caramel Custard

Recommended wine: The tannin and mild aroma of a Sauvignon-Blanc white wine from the Penedés, cask-matured for a few months, are in perfect harmony with the firm flesh of the monk fish.

A delicious custard with a burnt sugar crust, *crema catalana* is very often served in restaurants and also at home, especially on St. Joseph's day (March 19).

SERVES 6-8:

1-1½ tsp cornstarch
1 quart milk
Peel of 1 lemon
1 cinnamon stick

12 eggs
¾ cup sugar,
plus sugar for
caramelizing custard tops

In a small bowl, dissolve cornstarch in 2 tsp milk; set aside. In a medium saucepan, scald remaining milk with lemon peel and cinnamon; just before it comes to a boil, turn off heat, cover and set aside.

In a large, heavy saucepan, beat eggs, sugar, and cornstarch/milk mixture with a whisk. Remove lemon peel and slowly add milk to egg mixture, whisking constantly. Cook over low heat (with cinnamon stick), stirring constantly, just until mixture thickens, about 10 minutes. Remove cinnamon stick. Immediately strain through a fine sieve into a large pouring jar, then pour into individual earthenware *cassoles* or ovenproof ramekins (or onto a serving platter). Refrigerate until serving time.

TO BURN THE CUSTARD TOP:

Shortly before serving, heat a special iron plate or a metal spatula to red hot over a gas flame. Sprinkle about 1 tsp sugar over top of each custard and touch surface of sugar with the red-hot metal just long enough to caramelize it. (Or place serving dish under a preheated broiler for a few minutes to brown the sugar.)

From the book The Catalan Country Kitchen of Marimar Torres.

Recommended wine: According to tradition, cava is served as an accompaniment to dessert. A word of caution however, it must not be extra-Brut. A refreshing sparkling semi-seco is appropriate. The slight sweetness refreshes the palate and forms the ideal contrast to the caramelized cream. A Mistela (fortified wine) from the Terra Alta region, served at 16°, provides an alternative solution.

Precooked Dishes



Traditional Navarran Cooking



Juan Mari Arzak: Spain's Greatest Chef

Ask any Spaniard to name the greatest writer that ever put pen to paper and he/she will say Miguel de Cervantes. Ask him/her who creates art with pots and pans and the answer will almost certainly be Juan Mari Arzak. The longest-running holder in Spain of the three-star Michelin Award, Arzak is revered as a master of his craft by the global gastronomic community. He is also a folk hero well beyond the local neighborhood that he holds so dear in his native San Sebastián. Arzak is a media star and a national institution. He writes up his dauntingly sophisticated recipes for Sunday newspapers and then he disarmingly explains them as perfectly simple to create in radio and television shows. In the second of *Gourmetour's* series on Spain's "Philosophers in the kitchen," Tom Burns had one thought uppermost in his mind when he sat down to dine with the great man.

Text: Tom Burns
Photo: A. de Benito/Sobremesa

He wanted to pin down the secret of Arzak's success as an elite chef and the popularity he enjoys well beyond the confines of specialist critics. He discovered that, in Arzak's case at least, it is perfectly possible to run the most exclusive restaurant in the country, producing dishes that set new culinary standards, and yet remain a deeply humane and widely loved person; Arzak is totally rooted to what he calls the "taste" of his people in San Sebastián and nothing pleases him more than welcoming friends and neighbors into his restaurant. "You don't need the address," said the concierge of the hotel I was staying at in San Sebastián, when I wanted to double check where the restaurant was. "Just ask the taxi driver to take you to 'Arzak' and that is all he needs to know." And, of course, he was right. It crossed my mind that if I had hired the taxi in the nearby city of Bilbao or in Biarritz, the magic name of Arzak would also have been enough to take me to my destination. Arzak is a demigod as far as the global gourmet confraternity is concerned. But he is a household name in Spain and his restaurant is a cross-border landmark in the Basque Country. The night I dined there, people were speaking in French at several of the tables. For the record, the restaurant lies in a quiet neighborhood at the top of a hill called the Alto de

Miracruz, on what used to be the old road that leads from San Sebastián (see *Spain Gourmetour* No.16), the elegant and engaging turn-of-the-century coastal resort of Spain's well-to-do, to Hendaye and the French frontier. Juan Mari Arzak is firmly tied to the Basque Country in general and to San Sebastián in particular. "You would never see me as a chef in Madrid," he was to tell me that evening. "I need my sea, my coast, my country and my people." His strong San Sebastián roots and the love he declares for his hilltop roost on the outskirts of the city are understandable enough. The restaurant was launched 100 years ago by his grandfather and it was made famous in the vicinity by his mother who turned the business into the center for local celebrations, for first communion parties and for wedding receptions.

A Passion, Not a Profession

Arzak was nine years old when his father died and his mother, Francisca Arratibel, known to her friends as Paquita, was to be a formative influence. "From my mother I learned a philosophical truth: you have to love what you do," Arzak said. "Things have to be done with attention to detail, with care and with affection. If you don't approach what you do with that frame

of mind, whatever you are doing is worthless." But the restaurant that was Arzak's birthplace and training ground also points unerringly in the direction of France, the cradle of haute cuisine. As well as the love-what-you-do maxim, Arzak was to learn from his mother the classic Basque recipes such as *merluza en salsa verde* (hake in parsley sauce) which remain immovable features of his restaurant's otherwise ever-changing menu. Across the border, in France, he was to learn more about the techniques of his chosen profession/passion than he cares to remember. I was not surprised to learn from Arzak's *curriculum vitae* that he has been honored not just by San Sebastián (the city has presented him with its gold medal in recognition of "extraordinary services" rendered) but that the French Ministry of Culture had also elevated him to the ranks of knight commander of the Order of Letters and Arts. His C.V. reveals that he has picked up just about every gastronomic award in the culinary hall of fame. I suppose that the one Arzak most treasures is the first Michelin star which he gained at age 32 in 1974, the year he also won Spain's national gastronomy prize. He never looked back from then on. The second Michelin star arrived three years later and the

His San Sebastián roots are almost a religion to Arzak. It is precisely because he is true to these tenets that he is in a class of his own.



third came in 1989. What struck me was how the first Michelin accolade spurred Arzak on to acquire greater knowledge and skills in a rigorous, self-imposed program of continuing education. From the mid-1970s onwards he began to spend at least a month a year working with the great French chefs. He started on the path of self-improvement with Paul Bocuse in Lyon, the most influential among the nouvelle cuisine gurus who hit the headlines 20 years ago, and Bocuse

has remained one of Arzak's closest friends ever since. Having gained his place at the top culinary table, Arzak now has youngsters from all over the world who come to learn in his kitchens. "I try to make them understand that what we do here is not a profession," he said, echoing the lessons his mother taught him. "It is a passion." He also instills in his pupils the need to utterly respect clients. "The most important virtue that we have to have in this business is

humility, as my mother used to say." Arzak values very highly the opinion of his haute cuisine peers as well as those of the foremost gastronomic critics (in 1992 the European Gastronomic Academy named him top chef in Europe). He would be mad if he did not. But the extraordinary thing about Arzak is that he cares even more about what his local customers in San Sebastián's Alto de Miracruz say about the food he creates.

A Father-Daughter Relationship

"The final test that each of my new dishes has to pass is that people here in the neighborhood have to approve it. I have people, young kids, tradesmen, locals all of them, and people I've known all my life from the neighborhood, who save up to eat here. Invariably they ask me to serve up whatever I want to and it is then that the final testing takes place." Arzak works almost every morning on what he calls "research." Like a scientist in his laboratory he will investigate new cooking combinations in his kitchen. "I was experimenting with carrots and coconut the other day," Arzak said, "and the blend could have possibilities." In an extraordinary dish I tasted when I dined with him he had added vanilla to lamb that had been stewed with truffles. "Normally onion is used to sweeten a stew and vanilla takes it a stage further," he said.

"It was delicious," was all I could honestly reply. Lately Arzak has been helped in his investigations by his daughter Elena who, after training in top kitchens around the world, now works full time with him in the restaurant. She brings her own considerable skills to the different research projects—the vanilla idea was her's—and she is fast becoming a very distinguished chef in her own right. Arzak is pleased as punch to have his daughter alongside him. "Elena is new sap for the old oak," he said. "She comes up with ideas that would never have occurred to me." "What amazes me about my father, and it is not because he is my father," said Elena, "is his constant capacity to invent and to experiment." Father and daughter apparently engage in a perpetual culinary dialogue and the new swathe of dishes gracing the restaurant's menu is increasingly a synthesis of their joint creativity. But when both of them are sufficiently satisfied with a particular experiment, the dish must still pass the litmus test of local approval. "I try out these dishes on the neighborhood clients," Arzak explained. "If they say that it is 'different,' not necessarily that it is good or bad but that it is 'different,' then that dish, however good I, Elena, or others might think it is, is not good for the restaurant." I first savored Arzak's cuisine more than 15 years



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ago, have since been back to his restaurant whenever possible and have no doubts at all that he is one of the all time greats. But it was only on this last occasion, when I sat down at his table to eat whatever it took his fancy to serve up, that I began to realize what Arzak is all about; it was only at this dinner, when he told me about how he tested his new dishes on his neighbors, that I began to understand the secret of his genius.

What sets Arzak apart from other chefs, who are also highly skilled, experienced, imaginative, and innovative, is that deep down in the heart of each and everyone of his complex and sophisticated dishes there is a something that is authentically native to San Sebastián. I'm not sure my taste buds are up to isolating and identifying this local, ethnic, core to Arzak's cuisine but he and his daughter know fully well what it is and so do the neighbors who savor the new dishes in their final testing phase.

The Local Taste

Arzak's determination to remain close to his roots fascinated me. "What I seek," he said over coffee, "is our particular taste in the Basque Country. I travel all over the world and I know the tastes of other people but what I always come back to is to our taste, our taste here in San Sebastián. I think in Basque and I am convinced that each people has its own taste."

The taste that Arzak insists on reproducing has to do with softness and subtlety. "Take *merluza* (hake), the king fish for any Basque," he said. "It is not a tasty fish in the conventional sense but people here adore it because of its texture."

Arzak shrinks from over-

statement in all his dishes and he is, in any case far too much a Basque to tamper with *merluza*. What he succeeds in doing is to tease out the best that every product has to offer to the palate. He does this with hake just as he does it with other fish, the meat, poultry and game, and with vegetables. Arzak's trademark is that flavors emerge slowly and gently and, on occasions, unexpectedly. You savor as you eat.

He had steamed the hake I had on this occasion to the point of perfection so that the layers of the fish came away easily but with all their texture intact. He had also used the juices of the steaming process for a black sauce made from squid's ink and from a local mollusk called *lapa*. The sauce, delicate and light, enhanced, rather than smothered, the elusive hake flavor. "My father says that hake must be left pretty much alone, and he's absolutely right," Elena said. In order to emphasize the soft texture of the hake, Arzak served up to accompany the fish a crunchy mix of different vegetables cut into julienne strips, dipped in batter and fried together so that they clung to each other forming a sort of bird's nest and also a crackly red pepper biscuit that was wafer thin, orange, and translucent like the leaf of a birch tree in late autumn.

The dish represents a radically different way of cooking hake but it does not distort the essential attributes of this "king fish." On the contrary, it triumphantly respects them. It was very clear to me why the locals had given the thumbs up to Arzak's "*lomo de merluza con salsa de lapa, con verduritas fritas y galleta de pimiento choricero*," to give this remarkable dish its full name. The Basque "taste" that exalts hake is

very much present and is wholly authentic.

As Arzak served up his dishes it became obvious to me how he enjoys setting flavors and textures side by side in a cocktail of contrasts that, combined together, creates an original wholeness. "Contrasts, that's what it is all about," I said to him as I savored his stewed lamb and pondered on the hint of vanilla that came with it. The dish also included crunchy, almost caramelized chick peas which was yet another surprise. Arzak shook with laughter. "So you like it. That's all that's important."

One virtuoso dish I tasted was actually called *contraste* and it consisted of lobster arranged around and inside a potato hollowed out into a perfect cylinder and resting on a yellow sauce (light potato mash) and a green one (herbs, principally parsley and angelica) that were both speckled with red blots (fried bacon).

The Client Comes First

The potato was firm but smooth, its sauce was earthy, the lobster was meaty, the bacon was crisp, the herbs had flavors that remained as an after-taste. The dish, which was absolutely appealing to the eye, countered textures and flavors in a very, very clever fashion. Ultimately what was improved was the lobster. And no doubt the taste of this innovative *bogatante*, so daringly presented, remained true to the taste of San Sebastián and of the locals of the Alto de Miracruz.

I think that this deep water anchorage that Arzak has in the Basque Country is part of the key to his success. "I dislike international cooking on principle," he said. "Anyway I find that it all tastes the same." His San Sebastián roots are almost a religion

to him. It is precisely because he is true to these tenets that he is in a class of his own and has been showered with honors by the high priests of the fine food faith.

Another part of his success (once you have taken into account his superlative imagination and skills) is the fact that he is a paradigm of what all chef-restaurant owners should be. He says he puts his customers first, that he wants them to be happy and satisfied, and he really means it. As usually happens when people are genuine and mean what they say, a great time is had by all. Arzak wanders around making sure that all are happy and satisfied (Elena also does the rounds) and he beams away as he discovers, saluting old friends at one table, making new ones at the next, that everything is as it should be.

"I have an enormous respect for everyone who comes to eat here," he said. The respect is certainly mutual and out of this respectful relationship between the chef creator and the client diner a wonderfully warm, relaxing and friendly atmosphere takes hold of Arzak's restaurant. You are not out of place if you wear jeans to dine with Arzak, and nobody objects if you wear a tie and tie pin.

You also discover, when the fateful bill comes, that you have received value for money. "I reckon that I am the cheapest three-star restaurant in the world," said Arzak. He's right; he undercuts his competition by a wide margin.

Tom Burns, a former correspondent for the Washington Post and Newsweek, lives in Madrid and writes for the Financial Times. He is the author of *Conversaciones sobre el Socialismo*, 1996 and *Conversaciones sobre el Rey*, 1995.

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

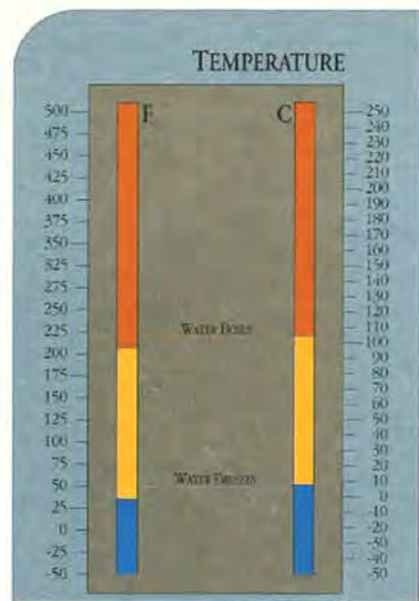
TEMPERATURE

DIAL NUMBER

- 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

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.



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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