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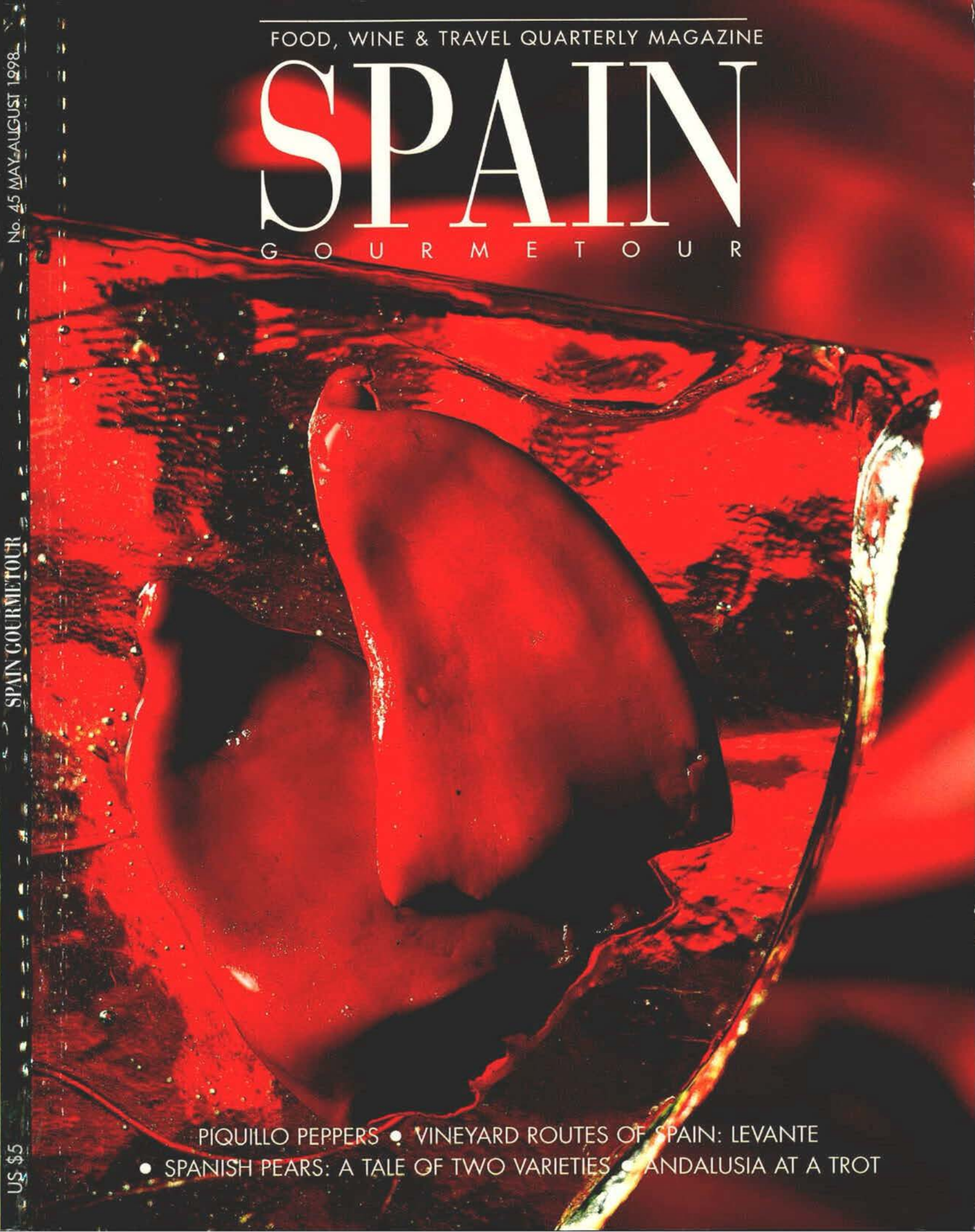

PIQUILLO PEPPERS • VINEYARD ROUTES OF SPAIN: LEVANTE
• SPANISH PEARS: A TALE OF TWO VARIETIES • ANDALUSIA AT A TROT

No. 45 MAY-AUGUST 1998

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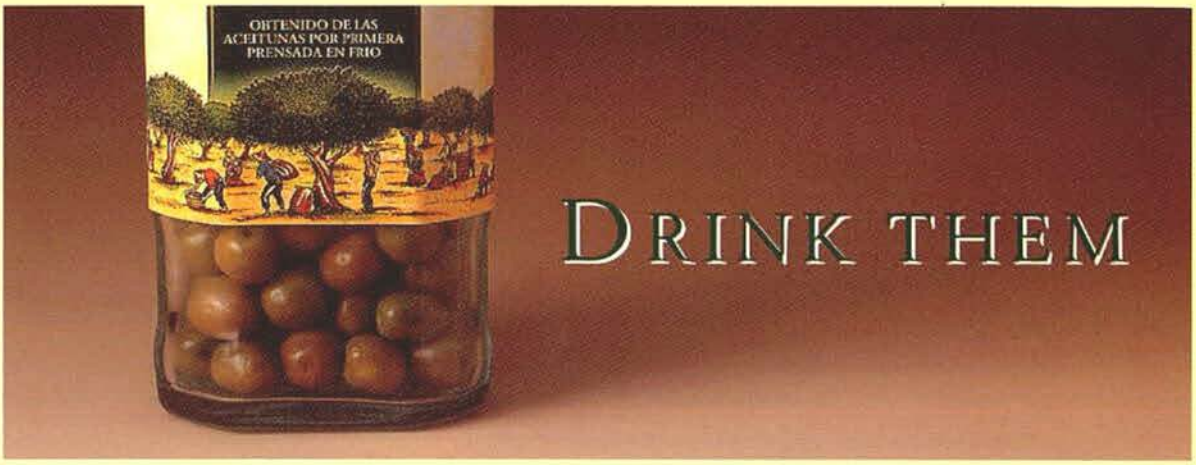

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May-August 1998

Information and subscription
Spain Gourmetour is a journal published by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the State Secretariat for Trade, Tourism, and Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Economy and Finance to promote Spain's food and wines, as well as its cuisine and culture. The magazine is issued three times a year in English, French, and German, and is distributed free of charge to professionals in the sector. If you want to subscribe to Spain Gourmetour, please contact the Spanish Embassy Commercial Offices (see list on page14).

Spanish Masterpieces

GONZALEZ BYASS

SHERRY & BRANDY

Dear readers,

In this edition we invite you to join us on our fifth vineyard route to the wineries of the Denominations of Origin Alicante, Valencia, Utiel-Requena, Yecla, Jumilla, and Bullas, which lie hidden in the hinterland of the endless beaches of the Levante region and usually remain undiscovered by the countless sun-seeking vacationers.

We shall then tempt you with the little red piquillo peppers that are attracting a great following in the highest spheres of international cuisine and being used in very original ways. Our selection of recipes from the United States, Australia, France, England and, of course, Spain should give you an idea of the versatility of the piquillos in terms of flavor, aroma, and wonderful color.

For horse-lovers, fans of Andalusia, and for those with a taste for adventure, we have leapt into the saddle to explore the south of Spain on horseback in search of "heaven on earth" which we found in the Alpujarras and in the Doñana natural reserve.

Anyone thirsty after such a journey can quench his thirst with an ice-cold Spanish beer. Six traditional companies from Europe's third largest beer producer (Spain— believe it or not!) have joined forces to promote their products in Great Britain.

From the wide range of Spanish produce, we also present you the Denomination of Origin for wine from Valdepeñas, pears from Lleida, wild mushrooms from the forests of the Basque Country and the mountains of Catalonia, the wide variety of *salazones*—the ancient tradition of transforming fresh fish into long-keeping salted fish—the ham producer Navidul and conclude our series on the olive trees in Spain with the second chapter.

A SECRET NOT TO BE KEPT

Only the VERDEJO variety, free, bared to the cold Castillan winds and the intense summer heat, has learned to brave the elements and the harshness of a land brimming with history to rob them of their secrets

PI & ERRE

A secret which, in Rueda, cannot go unveiled.

Junta de Castilla y León

CONSEJO REGULADOR DE LA DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN
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LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA

• This time there are so many new books to report on that my comments will have to be very brief. By way of an appetizer, we have a selection of four very attractive books, especially for fans of Basque cooking, all of which come from the same publishers, R&B. (For those not in the know, the Basque Country could be said to be the region of Spain in which cooking comes closest to an art form, so such an abundance of books is no surprise.) Firstly, **La joven cocina vasca** (Young Basque Cuisine) from the collection "Cuadernos de cocina" (Cookery Notebooks) by Martín Bersategui, one of the up-and-coming Basque cooks, and some of his team. This book has something for everyone because it is divided into four sections—"Traditional Cuisine," "Adapted Cuisine" which is basically an update of traditional cuisine, "Traveling Cuisine" with products from here and there and ideas from different places, and finally, "Basic Recipes." The collection of recipes and comments summarizes to perfection the style of this much-admired young cook. Now for the entrée which comes from the Andra Mari Restaurant to which **La cocina vasca en Bizkaia** (Basque Cooking in Vizcaya) is dedicated. This book reveals the secrets of a menu that combines ancestral recipes with new creations. But in addition to its very good recipes that are clearly explained and well illustrated, it also reflects the lifestyle of the Basque people, especially those from Vizcaya, focusing on their meals and festivals with very attractive photographs. As our main dish, we suggest an essential guide to what's going on in the most creative restaurants in the Basque Country—**Los mejores platos de la cocina vasca** (The Best Dishes of Basque Cuisine). Alongside a complete collection of recipes for the most significant and creative dishes of the year is an up-to-date analysis of the gastronomic scene for interested amateurs, gourmets, and professionals. As I have already said, in the Basque Country eating is serious business.
Our dessert is best left in the hands of the undebated figure of Spanish, or worldwide, imaginative cuisine—Ferrán Adrià. In **Los secretos de El Bulli** (The Secrets of El Bulli), this unique chef reveals his most important techniques and a little of his savoir faire. His reflections on gastronomy open new roads and confirm why the word "genius" is often used to describe him. Many recipes are included, some of which are very feasible.

• After so many books to whet your appetite, the time has come to go shopping. **Shopping for Food and Wine in Spain** will doubtless be of great help to visitors because it explains what products can be found in Spanish supermarkets and in the traditional markets which continue to be an important source of food buys. Many of these products are very characteristic and need a word of explanation for first-time buyers. This guide should help shoppers to make their decisions when faced by the enormous variety of fish on the fishmonger's stall or the multitude of sausage and pork products at the *charcuterie*, not to mention the cheeses and wines.

• Our next book deals with wines alone. **Wines of Spain** is the latest version of the great little guide to wines first published by Jan Read in 1983 and which last year earned him the gold medal of the United Kingdom Gastronomy Academy. It covers both the classic and the less well-known wine areas and in spite of its small and manageable size—it forms part of the Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guides—it contains full information on wines and wineries, with brief notes on the local gastronomy, restaurants, and hotels. You could hardly ask for more in such a small space. If your interest in Spanish wines is tempting you to visit La Rioja, the Regulating Council of the D.O. La Rioja has just published a new edition of its **Visitors' Guide to the Bodegas of Rioja.** It describes six wine routes including the wineries in the area as well as the most important places of interest for tourists in the area.

• Many travelers, especially city dwellers, prefer to spend their holidays or their time off in small family-run accommodations rather than in macro-hotels which, however good, inevitably remind us of work. **Special Places To Stay. Spain & Portugal** and **Pequeños hoteles con encanto** (Small Hotels with Charm) are the sort of guides that year by year suggest more and more delightful places to stay. The former gives a total of 280 hotels and the latter almost 300—both with an illustration for each establishment. They also both include maps showing the location of the hotels which should help when planning your holiday with a difference.

• Another appealing possibility for accommodation, of course, are the Paradors. For readers not familiar with them, the network of Paradors is a state-owned chain of hotels throughout Spain, most of them in historical buildings such as castles, monasteries, manor homes, etc. With their strategic locations and high standards of service, the Paradors are favorites with those traveling in Spain in search of its monumental and cultural treasures. In **Paradores históricos**, the novelist and historian Juan Eslava Catalán acts as guide all round Spain visiting the most beautiful of the Paradors. The excellent photographs and a bilingual text in Spanish and English make this a most enticing travel book. **Conocer España por la ruta de los Paradores** (Get to Know Spain by Traveling the Route of the Paradors) is another option but is more of a practical guide. It covers every one of the Paradors, both those in historical buildings and the more modern ones, and offers many recommendations for excursions or visits to local places of interest as well as gastronomic suggestions.

• **Arqueoguía de Cataluña y Baleares** (Archaeological Guide to Catalonia and the Balearic Islands). This book is subtitled "A Practical Guide to the Past." It lists over 200 archaeological sites from prehistory to the Visigothic period, with practical data on visits, detailed maps, and photos of each of them. Many of them are in remote places that are not always well signposted but, with this guide to help you, you should be able to find an Iberian town, discover a dolmen in the Pyrenees or enter a Punic hypogeum. It is not only for those with an active interest in archaeology but should also be inspiring for tourists who are keen to see for themselves something of the history of these two Mediterranean regions.

• Finally, a note for the 1998 **Guía Campsa** that we were unable to include in "Lasting Impressions" in our last edition. This time, in addition to its recommendations for hotels and restaurants, it has a supplement on Leisure Activities with a variety of suggestions for spending your free time, from province to province.

•Los cuadernos de cocina, Martín Berasategui; **La cocina vasca en Bizkaia,** Roberto Asúa and **Los mejores platos de la cocina vasca**, J.L. Barrena, R & B Ediciones; Ediciones Oria S.L.; Larraitz, 6; 20260 Alegia (Guipúzcoa); Tel: (34) 943 653 544; Fax: (34) 943 652 773 **•Los secretos de El Bulli**, Ferran Adrià, Ediciones Altaya, S.A.; Musitu, 15; 08023 Barcelona; Tel: (34) 934 186 405; Fax: (34) 932 120 406 **•Shopping for Food and Wine in Spain,** Janet Mendel and Tony Hammond, Ediciones Santana; Apartado 422, 29640 Fuengirola (Málaga); Tel: (34) 952 485 838; Fax: (34) 952 485 367 **•Visitors' Guide to the Bodegas of Rioja**, Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Calificada Rioja; Estambrera,-52; 26006 Logroño; Tel: (34) 941 500 400; Fax: (34) 941 500 672 **• Wines of Spain,** Jan Read; Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guides; Reed consumer Books Limited, 25 Victoria Street, London SW1H OEX **•Special Places to Stay. Spain & Portugal**, Guy Hunter-Watts; Alastair Sawday Publishing Co. Ltd; 44 Ambra Vale East, Bristol BS8 4RE, U.K. **•Guía de Pequeños Hoteles con Encanto. España 1998**, Fernando Gallardo; El Pais-Aguilar; Torrelaguna, 60; 28043 Madrid; Tel: (34) 917 449 060; Fax: (34) 917 449 093 **•Paradores Históricos**, Lunwerg Editores; Beethoven, 12; 08021 Barcelona; Tel: (34) 932 015 933; Fax: (34) 932 011 587; Sagasta 27; 28004 Madrid; Tel: (34) 915 930 058; Fax: (34) 915 930 070 **•Conocer España por la Ruta de los Paradores**, Ediciones Gaesa; Guías Azules de España, S.A.; Marqués de Monteagudo, 29; 28028 Madrid; Tel/Fax: (34) 913 612 559 **•Arqueoguía de Cataluña y Baleares**, Carlos Garrido, Editorial Planeta, S.A.; Córcega, 273-279; 08008 Barcelona; Tel: (34) 934 152 211; Fax: (34) 934 161 167 **•Guía Campsa España 1998**, Salvat Editores S.A.; Mallorca, 45; 08029 Barcelona; Tel: (34) 934 955 700; Fax: (34) 934 955 779

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INFORMATION

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If you would like to consult the brochures via Internet, please connect to:
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Martín Berasategui

PIQUILLO PEPPERS:

Hand-picked, Slow Roasted, Sweet Tasting, Easy Traveling, Small, Tender, and Ready to Go.

Some of the best ingredients take time to come to light. The piquillo, a descendant of the first Spanish bell peppers grown from seeds brought back by Columbus, appeared early this century in Navarre. Small and triangular with an identifying quiff at the base, ripening from green to a rich ruby red, thin-skinned, and fine-fleshed, the piquillo was grown by locals in small patches for preserving at home. But it was not until the 1970s, when young Basque chefs showed the piquillo's potential, that it made its leap to culinary fame as a key ingredient in modern Spanish cooking—and, from there, began its travels around the world's professional kitchens.

When you open a jar of piquillo peppers, a rich smoky-sweet aroma floats up to your nostrils. That tell-tale whiff captures the piquillo's special character, combining the piquant sweetness of its ruby-red flesh and the smokiness added by slow-roasting the peppers before preserving them in their own juices.

"They are put over the embers, and they are turned until soft," explained Francisco Javier Arraiza in the first collection of Navarrese recipes, published in 1930. "Once removed, they are wrapped in a cloth and left for ten minutes. The skin is lifted off and the seeds taken out."

Text: **Vicky Hayward**
Photos: **A. de Benito/ICEX**
Still lifes: **Menchu Artime**

Peter Gordon: Sugar Club

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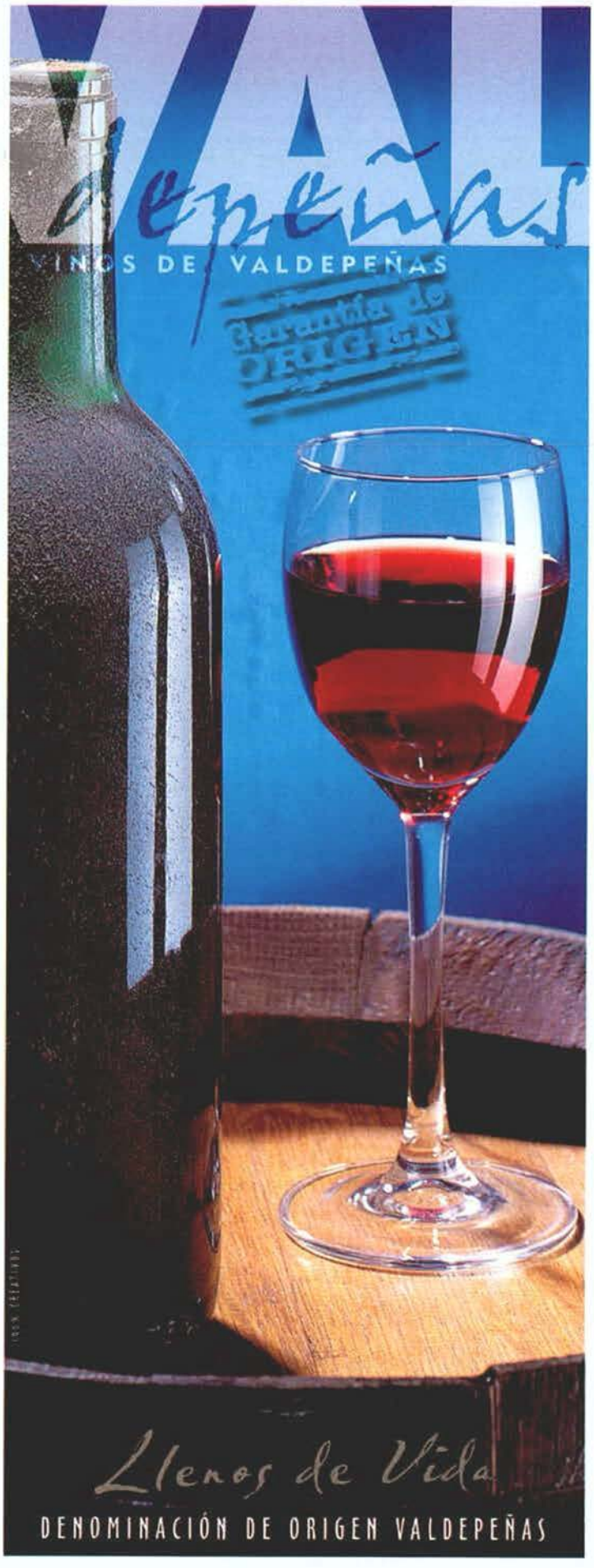

What all Navarrese cooks would have taken for granted, but he did not bother to mention, is that peppers should never be allowed to sweat or be rinsed as they cool before bottling or jarring—thus the flecks of black charred skin left on the flesh, which Spaniards look for as the hallmark of the best jarred piquillos.

Hand-picked, Slow-roasted

As late as 1965 just 7 hectares (17.3 acres) of piquillos grew in the small Navarrese town of Lodosa where they were first planted. Today, less than fifty years later, an estimated 705 hectares (1,742 acres) are planted in the fertile market-gardens of the River Ebro where it sweeps through Navarre and Aragon, giving an annual crop of 11,000 tons of peppers.

But the dramatic change of scale to meet demand has not altered the essential points of growing or preserving. Sown at the end of winter, planted out in May and harvested in September to October, the peppers are hand-picked daily from each plant to ensure they are sweet, firm and ready for preserving.

Nearly all the crop is now handled by specialist preserving companies, who roast the peppers in giant wood-fired roasting drums for the six weeks during the harvest. Fast-burning Pyrenean beechwood is used to throw off plenty of flames and give smoke with the right sweet woody flavor.

Once cooled, the skin is flaked off and the seeds removed before the peppers are packed into cans or jars, where they exude their natural juices. During roasting, each pepper loses some 60 percent of its weight in liquid, leaving the flesh with its intensity of flavor.

Finally, before being given the Seal of Authenticity, piquillos are spot-sampled in laboratories to check they are the true variety, additive-free, and perfectly ripe. As a simple mechanism for steady improvement, seeds are reserved from the best of the year's crop and handed back to growers to plant the next year.

Sweet Tasting, Small, and Tender

Why, then, has the scale of growing expanded so enormously in just thirty-five years? The answer lies in Basque chefs' discovery in the 1970s of how much you could do with a piquillo.

The first restaurant to put them on the menu was Casa Julián in Tolosa, where they have been served in the same way since the 1950s: slowly sautéed until golden on both sides, removed from the pan and bathed in their own juices to be served as a garnish for the prime local beef. As simple as it may sound, it has to be said that it is hard to beat piquillos cooked this way.

Then, in the late 1970s, young Basque chef Ramon Roteta began to experiment with stuffed whole piquillos. Finally, he hit upon a magic combination: a sautéed crab

THE PIQUILLO'S FLAVOR COMBINES THE PIQUANT SWEETNESS OF ITS RIPE RED FLESH AND THE SMOKINESS OF WOOD-ROASTING.

stuffing, light batter covering, and crab stock sauce. Other combinations followed. Bilbao chef Jesús Santos stuffed his peppers with squid and laid them on a black squid-ink sauce—a brilliantly bold plateful.

What was really astonishing about the stuffed piquillo phenomenon as it became a Spanish restaurant classic—and sometimes cliché—in the 1980s was how many different flavor-matches you could make with it. What else could you set against salt cod, hake mousse, foie gras, fresh whole prawns, green garlic, preserved tuna, sea-urchin eggs, minced lamb and pork, or oyster mushrooms—the list could go on—and somehow never end up with a clash on your taste-buds?

EASY TRAVELING...

Now, twenty years later, the piquillo's easy-going adaptability is taking it around the world in a new generation of dishes. As fusion styles based on bold matches of flavors have come to the forefront, so the piquillo's sweet intensity has been grafted on to the entire spectrum of Mediterranean, oriental, or western flavors. Perhaps the biggest surprise of the recipes which follow—created by young chefs from New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, and Sydney as well as back home in the Basque Country—is the range of possibilities and universal draw of its flavor.

Of course, the piquillo's other great advantage in a pressurized professional kitchen is its ease of use and consistent quality. There can be few other packaged foods which capture so well, and naturally, both the flavors of the original ingredient and its slow artisanal cooking process. Yet it takes only two minutes to open a jar and pour the contents on to the plate.

...AND READY TO GO

In the end, though, it is worth remembering that piquillos began life as simple country preserves kept on hand and ready-to-go from the larder. Sautéed and sprinkled with a little sherry or balsamic vinegar and drizzled with a fruity olive oil, a plate of piquillos makes a great first course. Serve them alongside salted anchovies sprinkled with chopped garlic and with sheep's milk cheese, and you have *tapas* worthy of any good wine.

Another simple but superb local way of cooking piquillos is to bake them in a dish generously rubbed with olive oil, sprinkling each piquillo with a pinch of salt and sugar, for 20 minutes until the oil darkens. These are good draped over toasted bread.

Then, of course, there are ideas from other cuisines. Piquillos can be torn into strips to lay on pizzas or tossed with hot pasta, sautéed with tomatoes and anchovies for flan fillings, or added to a salad of cooked dressed lentils, red onion rings, and fresh basil. Pureed, they boost the sweetness of fresh cooked tomato soups and sauces, or work well as the basis of a sauce with sweet pumpkin, or zucchini (courgette); finely diced, they make a great vinaigrette for a fish salad; whole, juices and all, they turn a lamb casserole into a great improvised *chilindrón*. And so the list could go on. However, the most memorable piquillos I have ever eaten were a simple village version of the ubiquitious stuffed pepper. They came as a tapa in a roadside bar in Navarre one chilly winter morning. Each blazing red pepper was filled with a spoonful of scrambled egg made with sautéed onion and parsley, and was lying on a small slice of bread which caught the juices. They made one of the best breakfasts I have ever eaten—and a reminder that many of the best things in life have humble origins.

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.*

For Main Exporters, see page 130.

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INTERNATIONAL RECIPES

FROM SPAIN

Layered Fresh Anchovy and Piquillo Lasagna with Basque *Gazpacho* Sauce

Martín Berasategui, aged 37, has won a worldwide reputation for his traditional and creative Basque cuisine at his restaurant in Lasarte, near San Sebastián. His most recent award has been the 1998 Grand Prix Internationale for the world's most promising chef. Dishes range from monkfish roasted on a griddle served with a stew of clams and Swiss chard stems to salt cod served with fresh tomato gelee and whipped creamed potato. "I have been using piquillos since I started as a chef when I was 14, but the recipes for them have evolved enormously," he comments. "They are a wonderful product for their texture, fineness, and complexity of flavor."

SERVES 6:
FOR THE LASAGNA:
2-3 dozen fresh anchovies, depending on size
Approximately 500 gr (1 lb) salt
Approximately 400 ml (12 fl oz) cider vinegar
2 onions, skinned and diced
2 red bell peppers, trimmed and diced
5 green bell peppers, trimmed and diced
1 leek, trimmed
5 fat cloves of garlic, skinned
2 zucchini (courgettes)
2 eggplants (aubergines)
2-3 tbsp tomato concentrate, fresh if possible
5 piquillo peppers, drained and opened flat

FOR THE GAZPACHO SAUCE:
2 spring onions or scallions, trimmed
6 ripe tomatoes, skinned
1 pickled gherkin
100 ml (3 1/2 fl oz) sherry vinegar
Salt
550 ml (18 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
8 piquillo peppers, drained

First prepare the marinated anchovies. Strip out the backbones from head to tail, open the anchovies flat and layer them skin side down in a shallow-sided dish or tray. Cover each layer with salt and vinegar, and ensure the top layer is well covered with both when you have finished. Marinate for 3-5 1/2 hours, drain and pat dry with a paper towel.
Dice the onions and bell peppers, leek, garlic, zucchini, and eggplant and sauté them in that order until they are *al dente*. Bind with the tomato concentrate, season, and leave to cool.
To make the sauce, put the spring onions, tomatoes, and gherkin in a termomix (or blender) and puree until well pounded. Add the piquillos, 400 ml (13 fl oz) olive oil, and the vinegar, blend well and finally whisk in the last 150 ml (5 fl oz) oil until well emulsified.
To make up the lasagna, layer the piquillos, vegetables, and anchovies in that order, repeating those layers twice and finishing with piquillos on the top. You can make individual lasagnas or a large one, surrounding them with the gazpacho sauce.

Recommended wine: A cask-fermented Viura varietal Rioja. While it is always difficult to choose a wine to go with strong fish like anchovies, a powerful, semi-sweet, smooth wine, whether aged or not, will always be a good match, allowing both personalities to stand in their own right.

Vegetable Millefeuilles of Piquillos, Prawns, and Oyster Mushrooms

Ramón Roteta, the young Basque chef whose crab-stuffed piquillos launched a thousand variations back in the 1970s, now runs his own restaurant in the small Basque town of Fuenterrabía, close to the French border. His recipes for piquillos have moved on with the times, but he always starts by sautéeing them with a pinch of sugar and salt in the traditional Navarrese way.

SERVES 4:
Extra virgin olive oil, for frying
8 piquillo peppers, drained
Pinch of salt and sugar
400 gr (13 oz) zucchinis (courgettes), cut into slices
300 gr (10 oz) oyster or wild mushrooms in season
8 fresh jumbo or Dublin Bay prawns
For the vinaigrette:
Large pinch of salt
Juice of 2 lemons
8 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Finely chopped fresh parsley

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan. Cut the peppers down one side, open them flat and sauté them with a pinch of sugar and salt. Next sauté the slices of zucchini slowly in the same oil, remove to one side, and lightly fry the oyster or wild mushrooms.
Shell the prawns, reserving the heads and shells, and sauté them in the same oil.
Pound the prawn heads and shells and squeeze out the juice. Make the vinaigrette. Dissolve the salt in the lemon juice and stir in the oil and parsley. Finally, stir in the prawn juice and heat through gently till just warm.
To assemble the dish, build eight vegetable millefeuilles: lay the peppers, evenly spaced, on a flat serving dish, cover each with overlapping zucchini slices and then with the oyster mushrooms. Top each with a fried prawn and dress with the warm vinaigrette.

Recommended wine: A dry white Rueda made from Sauvignon Blanc, so that the vegetable, mushroom and smokey aromas of this variety can support the same sensations in the food, and so that the well-balanced acidity that is characteristic of the Rueda wines can stimulate the lemon vinaigrette which in turn is balanced by the oil and the shrimp juices.

FROM ENGLAND

Piquillo Harissa

Peter Gordon's eclectic fusion cooking has made Sugar Club one of London's most original 1990s restaurants. His style—loosely called Pacific Rim—fuses the flavors and textures of East and West into a glorious mix. "We may use piquillos

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INTERNATIONAL RECIPES

pureed into an aioli on grilled fish, or sliced and mixed into a salad with wild asparagus, Manchego cheese, and truffle oil. I love them thrown on top of a squid risotto. This is a simple harissa, utilizing the smokiness of the peppers as a background flavor."

MAKES 600 ML (20 FL OZ):
3 limes
2 tsp roasted cumin seeds
1 tsp roasted fennel seeds
1 tsp roasted coriander seeds
1 cinnamon quill, roasted until light brown
2 star anise, roasted until dark brown
300 gr (10 oz) piquillo peppers, drained
2 tbsp dried mint
3 cloves of garlic, skinned
2 moderately hot, fresh red chili peppers, sliced
1 small handful fresh coriander
250 ml (5 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tsp sea salt

Grate the zest from the limes and juice them. Grind the seeds, cinnamon, and star anise to a fine powder in a spice mill. Place with the piquillo peppers and remaining ingredients into a food processor. Blend to a paste and taste for seasoning. The flavors will develop as the harissa sits. If you like, you can thin this down with more oil or lime juice to suit the dish with which you are serving it. It will keep covered in the fridge for a week. Peter suggests stirring this into soups and stews, spreading it on toast with roast vegetables, and serving it alongside roast meats and grilled fish.

Recommended wine: A Monastrell varietal D.O. Yecla. This is a powerful wine that will go well with vegetables or fish served in a sauce that would generally be difficult to partner. The Monastrell grapes grown in this region give intense fruit and flower aromas that will allow the wine to stand up to such a strong sauce.

FROM THE U.S.A.

Piquillo Pepper, Caper, and Basil Salad

Californian chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger use piquillos in all kinds of ways at Los Angeles' Border Grill: stirred into bread doughs, mixed into breadcrumb stuffings for fish and pureed with red onion, olive oil, and a few drops of vinegar to serve over angel-hair pasta. "The slightly piquant flavor makes these hand-picked, slow-roasted beauties the perfect ingredient in all kinds of dishes."

SERVES 6:
20 piquillo peppers, drained and cut into rings (1,400 gr/13 3/4 oz can)
1 very small red onion, peeled and cut into rings
1 can anchovy fillets (60-gr/2 oz), soaked in cold water for 10 minutes, patted dry and cut into thin strips
1 garlic clove, skinned and pounded to a pulp
2 tbsp sherry wine vinegar
75 ml (2 1/2 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp capers, rinsed of vinegar
20-25 fresh basil leaves, julienned
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
Toss all the ingredients together and leave to marinate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 days. At the Border Grill this is served with grilled country bread.

Recommended wine: A fine wine from the D.O. Montilla-Moriles and made mostly from Pedro Ximénez grapes. The fragrance of these grapes will allow the wine to dominate the strong, salty flavors of the salad. A Palomino manzanilla D.O. Jerez, with its characteristic saline and dried fruit aromas, would also be a good partner.

Rare Coriander and Almond Crusted Tuna with Piquillo Vinaigrette

This recipe from Matthew Kenney, independent chef-proprietor of New York's Eastside restaurant, Matthew's—as well as Monzú and Mezze—reflects his modern American style blending oriental and North African influences with Mediterranean accents. He likes the piquillos for their rich intensity of flavor as well as their consistency of quality and even shape.

SERVES 8:
For the tuna and its crust:
250 ml (8 fl oz) Japanese or dried breadcrumbs
120 ml (4 fl oz) sliced blanched almonds, lightly crushed
120 ml (4 fl oz) measure sesame seeds, untoasted
60 ml (2 fl oz) coriander seeds, husked, toasted, and lightly crushed
2 kg (4 lb) sashimi quality fresh tuna, cut into 8 rectangular logs, at room temperature
Salt and freshly ground pepper
60 ml (2 fl oz) canola or extra virgin olive oil

FOR THE SAUCE:
1 can (540 gr/18-oz) piquillo peppers, drained
2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
1 tbsp honey
2 shallots
Salt and pepper to taste

FOR THE GARNISH:
1 bunch spring onions or scallions, green part only.
Combine all the ingredients for the tuna and its crust in a flat dish. Season the fish with salt and pepper and press the crust well in on all four sides.
To make the sauce, puree all the ingredients in a blender, seasoning to taste.
To make the garnish, julienne the spring onion greens and place them in iced water to curl.
Heat the oil in a large, flat-bottomed sauté pan until hot but not smoking. Sear the fish on one side until the almonds are deep golden brown. Turn and repeat on the other three sides. Remove and slice against the grain into medallions.
Place a pool of sauce on each serving plate, top with tuna medallions, and garnish with the spring onion curls.

Recommended wine: A red D.O. Penedés of average body in which the Tempranillo grapes are combined with a certain proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon. This gives a wine that is strong enough to counter to some extent the power of the


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sweet-sour sauce with raw shallots, honey, and wine vinegar, while not overpowering the flavor of the fish.

FROM AUSTRALIA

Spaghetti Tossed with Crab, Piquillo Peppers, and Basil

Christine Mansfield's kitchen at the Paramount restaurant in Sydney has been described as volcanically creative. Her inventive dishes are based on an unerring palate for flavor matches: chili-salt squid with sweet grilled eel, black ink noodles, and oven-dried tomatoes and pimientos; pepper-crusted yellow fin tuna with an eggplant, roasted bell pepper, and piquillo roulade; and grilled eggplant stuffed with fresh goat's cheese, roasted bell peppers and piquillo with pesto. She uses piquillos for "a real flavor boost with a smooth, silky texture." Here she has given a less complex dish, commenting "I often use this when cooking at home."

SERVES 6:
500 gr (16 oz) durum wheat spaghetti
40 ml (1 1/2 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
1 small red onion, skinned and finely diced
6 garlic cloves, skinned and finely chopped
2 fresh red chili peppers, finely chopped
2 fresh tomatoes, peeled and diced
75 gr (2 1/2 oz) piquillo pepper strips, drained
500 gr (16 oz) fresh cooked crab meat
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tbsp fresh basil leaves, torn into pieces

TO SERVE:
50 gr (2 oz) Reggiano Parmesan cheese, grated
25 ml (3/4 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil

Cook the spaghetti in a large pot of lightly salted boiling water. Heat the olive oil in a heavy-based frying pan and sauté the onion, garlic, and chili peppers until softened and starting to color. Add the diced fresh tomato, piquillo strips, and crab meat and toss to heat through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the basil leaves.
Strain the cooked pasta and toss it with the Parmesan cheese and olive oil to coat. Add the crab sauce and stir to combine.
Ladle the pasta into bowls and serve with crusty bread.

Recommended wine: A D.O. Navarra rosé. The fresh fruit aromas of the Garnacha grape tone down the strength of the hot pepper or fresh chili. The spiciness of this dish, together with the garlic and basil it includes, make this a difficult dish to partner with a wine but a very good quality rosé will bring out its virtues.

FROM FRANCE

Oven-Roast Turbot, Braised Mediterranean Squid and Piquillos, and Tomato Confit with Basil and Olive Oil

This Mediterranean-inspired fish dish, with a sweet edge added to its flavor by oven-roast tomatoes, comes from Michel del Burgo, the chef of the prestigious Parisian hotel Le Bristol (and formerly of La Barbacane in Carcassonne). He points to piquillos' versatility in hot and cold dishes and "their inimitable flavor with a touch of piquancy in their sweetness" to explain his fondness for them. Recent dishes have included a chilled piquillo mousse with marinated sardines, whole peppers stuffed with confit of shoulder of lamb, and a piquillo vinaigrette served with grilled baby squid.

SERVES 4:
FOR THE FISH:
1 turbot weighing 1.5 kg (3 lb)
Flour for coating
Butter for frying

FOR THE BRAISED SQUID AND PEPPERS:
400 gr (13 oz) baby cuttlefish or squid
1 onion, skinned
100 gr (3 1/2 oz) piquillo peppers, drained
Fresh basil, flat parsley or chervil
300 ml (10 fl oz) *jus basquaise*

FOR THE TOMATO CONFIT:
4 tomatoes
Olive oil, sugar, salt, and pepper

For the confit, blanch the tomatoes briefly, skin them and dry them in the oven on sulphurized paper with olive oil, sugar, salt, and pepper for 2 hours at 90°C (200°F). This may be done the day before you are cooking the dish.
Wash and skin the turbot and put to one side. Clean the squid or cuttlefish, drying them carefully with a cloth. (If you are using squid, cut it crosswise into rings). Slice the onion into very fine rings and deep-fry at 140°C (285°F) till lightly golden. Keep to one side. Roughly chop the piquillos and confit tomatoes.
Choose a large, heavy-bottomed lidded casserole in which the whole fish fits, and cook the turbot *a la meuniere*. Lightly whisk 20 gr of the butter into the jus basquaise in a small pan. Remove from the heat and stir in the piquillo peppers, tomato confit, and baby squid or cuttlefish. Add whole leaves of flat parsley and finely chopped basil. Shake the pan lightly; season. To serve, spoon the braised squid, peppers, and confit on the bottom of the plate, taking care to drain them well. Place the turbot on top and sprinkle with the jus basquaise. Place the fried onions and chervil sprigs on top of the fish.

Recommended wine: A white, 100 percent Albariño from the D.O. Rías Baixas so that the intense fresh aromas of the Albariño with its hints of vegetables, bay leaf, fresh fruit pulp, and even milk can enhance the flavor of the turbot in spite of the butter in the meunière sauce. These aromas will also accentuate the tasty ratatouille made of piquillo peppers and tomatoes with basil.

SPANISH PEARS

A Tale of Two Varieties

Text: **Vicky Hayward**
Photos: **I. Iglesias/ICEX**

The arrival of spring and the blossoming of the many fruit trees in the region transform the countryside of Lleida into a landscape blanketed in white, as in these pear orchards.

Pear trees have flourished in the valley of the River Ebro and on the slopes of its Aragonese and Catalan tributaries—the Jalón, Cinca, Segre, Jiloca, and Gállego—for at least two thousand years. In the first century, Martial wrote about the crops grown here, Jalón was famed for the quality of its pears in the Muslim centuries, and Jiloca gave its name to a native variety still grown today. The switch to intensive commercial growing began in the 1950s, hand in hand with irrigated farming. As small plots were combined and large new fields spread into Catalonia's southwestern province, Lleida, so Spain became the European Union's second largest producer. Today the national crop averages 500 million kilos a year and growers are setting their own agenda for raising quality by shortening commercial seasons and switching to integrated production using a minimum of chemical products.

Pear-growing in Spain may be very old indeed since the fruit's few European names without a Latin root include *udare, urderi, madari,* and *txermena,* all from the Basque Country. But it was probably the Romans, who took pears right around their empire, who planted the pear orchards of the eastern Ebro valley. Here, in the narrow valleys of the Mediterranean hinterland, the combination of cold winter temperatures and hot spring sunshine, well-drained fertile soils, and mid-level altitudes made for ideal pear-growing country.

By the beginning of this century, fresh pears from the Jalón valley were reaching markets right around Spain. One local variety, the Pera de Roma, could be kept for up to four or five months in cool airy barns, turned by hand as it ripened, before being sent off by horse and cart or train to reach the markets just before they reached their peak. But pear growing itself often remained haphazard, with trees planted along roadsides and the borders of fields.

The use of intensive planting, modern pruning techniques, mechanized field care, irrigation, and chilled storage helped to raise yields but kept costs low from the 1960s onwards. New orchards were planted in the Rioja, Valencian region, and Guadiana valley in southern Extremadura, but the northeastern valleys of the Ebro remained the main focus of the country's orchards, which today cover a total of 40,000 hectares (99,000 acres).

Alongside this, picking and processing remains extremely traditional because of the fruit's delicacy. The entire crop is still handpicked to avoid bruising or other damage and travels in the same pallets from the orchards to the chillers. No waxing or other treatments are used except for a short-life antifungal treatment for fruit to be stored for more than four months.

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Pear-shaped: A Question of Variety

Just-down the road from Lleida's pear orchards, the old apothecary in the lovely Cistercian convent of Santa María de Vallbona keeps the molds in which cough lozenges were made in the 16th century. Five designs carry pear-shaped silhouettes: round and flattened, conical, long and slim, pyriform with a clear waist, and a gently curving ovoid. Those silhouettes, presumably drawn from local varieties by a nun or craftsman, reflect the very varied shapes of different pear varieties. It was the Romans who first set to work improving the small acidic wild fruit of the European eating pear, *Pyrus communis L.*, which is the one now grown in the United States and Europe. They were clearly successful: Columela, in the first century, mentions 17 pear varieties by name, Pliny, in the same century could identify 38, and three centuries later Paladio referred to over 60 different types.

Today, though, by comparison with other fruits there is comparatively little varietal renovation in pear-growing. The tree's slow growth and resistance to improvement, as well as the difficulty of launching new varieties on the market, have discouraged researchers whose main work in recent years has been aimed at disease-free pears. In Spain, where the orchards have so far remained largely virus-clean thanks in large part to natural protection from the dry climate, most varieties date back to the 19th century.

Nevertheless, the eating qualities of pears range widely from juicy, buttery, melting fruit with a balance of acids and sugars, to crisp, sugar-sweet fruit with fine aromatic flesh. Oriental pears such as the Nashi, also grown in Europe today, often have a granular texture from small stone cells scattered through the flesh. Generally speaking, thanks to the Mediterranean climate, Spanish pears fall at the sweeter end of the range and have thin, almost delicate skins.

Native Diversity

As with so many other fruits and vegetables, native varieties adapted to local growing conditions have been disappearing in recent years in favor of others better known on the international market. The Aragonese Pera de Roma, for example, famed for its flavor but nicknamed "ugly face" for its roughed-up appearance, has almost disappeared from the Jalón valley. Meanwhile Conference is being widely planted and now makes up ten percent of Spanish production.

Nonetheless, some native varieties keep their place in the orchards. The Jiloca pear, with its highly perfumed and aromatic frost-sensitive flesh, is still grown in just 500 hectares (1,235 acres) in Aragon. Likewise, baby Castell or San Juan pears appear briefly in Spanish markets in late June; the trees are valued as pollinators as well as for their fruit. Another Lleida variety, the Flor de Invierno, may even be due for something of a comeback because of the appeal of its large fruit in the expanding Eastern European market.

Since 1994 varietal diversity and selection has also been underpinned by the research orchards of the Catalan IRTA (Institute for Food and Agricultural Research) at Mollerussa near Lleida, where six of each of 55 different varieties of pear are planted. Some are imported; others have been produced by cloning or in vitro fertilization from native varieties to provide virus-free stock for local planting. The center is already a source of disease-free plants sold under license by commercial nurseries to growers, but the full results of the research program will take some years to come through because of the pear's slow-growing nature and the time lapse before young trees bear their first fruit.

lanquilla de Aranjuez

Two native varieties—whether by origin or adoption—hold sway in the Spanish orchards.

One is the Blanquilla de Aranjuez, also known as the Pera de Agua or water pear. A thin-skinned green summer pear, which begins to appear from the end of July, it has a very distinct character: crisp and white-fleshed with an almost melon-like texture, refreshingly watery, it ripens into a highly aromatic and meltingly soft fruit, a reddish blush to its skin. It is usually eaten fresh, but also makes a good cooking pear since it absorbs flavors well, but remains firm after a long dunking in liquid, whether in a wine syrup or Catalan casserole (see page 117).

The Blanquilla's origins are unknown but clearly Mediterranean. Its name suggests that it may have originated—or arrived in Spain—via the defunct botanical gardens of Aranjuez, near Madrid. Certainly it has been widely grown and appreciated in Spain for centuries. Juan de la Mata, pastry cook to Philip V, commented in 1747 that it was "highly esteemed" and recommended it for drying,

confits, or preserving in syrup. It grows elsewhere under other names such as the Kristalli in Greece and the Spadona or Estiva de Salerno in Italy, but today Spain is its main producer, with some 14,000 hectares (34,600 acres) of orchards accounting for 35 percent of pear production.

Today it seems hard to believe that the Blanquilla nearly disappeared in the 1960s because sensitivity to frosts had made it a high-risk variety for large-scale commercial growing. Three factors helped in its comeback in the 1980s: the use of natural hormones to help fruit set on the tree if flowering failed, varietal selection at the Aula Dei research station near Zaragoza, and excellent adaptation to chilled storage. While most of the Blanquilla crop is still consumed at home—it is Spain's most popular pear—strong export markets have begun to open up around the Mediterranean countries from Portugal, Italy, and Greece to Israel. It makes up some 75 percent of Spanish pear exports in the E.U. (over 70,000 TM in the 1996/97 season) and growers are now looking to markets further afield where the Blanquilla is still unknown.

imonera

A second key Spanish variety is the Limonera which originated as the Jules Guyot in France in the 1870s, and began to be planted in large numbers in Lleida and the bordering area of Aragon from the end of the Civil War in 1939. Large, juicy, and melting, with a wide curving base, the Limonera is at its best just as it begins to turn its characteristic lemony yellow, indicating that the sugars and natural malic acids reach their balanced full flavor.

As early as the 1940s, the Limonera was primarily an export crop, valued by continental northern markets—especially Germany—as the very first of the summer pears. Picking starts at the beginning of July, some twenty days before those grown in the south of France. With export demand keeping prices stable it also became the first intensively grown crop in Lleida in the 1950s and 1960s, with over a thousand trees grown in each hectare (2.471 acres).

In the 1990s, however, the outlook for Limoneras—and of other early varieties such as the Ercolini and Morettini—is beginning to shift. The arrival of winter pears from Chile and New Zealand has destroyed the value of early-season fruit and production has fallen to 11 percent of the national crop. At the same time the practical demands of export markets mean the pears are often picked young and eaten by the consumer while they are still green, before they are at their best. Growers are now responding in various ways. IRTA's researchers have been working on varietal improvement and produced two virus-free types—the Cosel 6098, by cloning and the the IGE-2002 by in vitro propagation, both derived from local trees. Producers and wholesalers—both private and cooperative—have also been joining together in innovative schemes designed to raise quality and consumers' understanding of the fruit they buy. These include rigorous selection by ripeness and size at the picking and packing stages and improved presentation tailored to international markets' requirements.

PEAR EXPORTS (Tons)

Countries	Total Campaign 93-94	Total Campaign 94-95	Total Campaign 95-96	Total Campaign 96-97
Germany	8,891	14,916	13,403	16,021
Italy	14,525	26,048	21,452	15,576
Netherlands	764	4,107	1,524	14,256
Greece	0	2,933	9,605	9,463
France	12,897	8,616	5,830	6,815
Portugal	1,690	2,083	2,477	4,756
Belgium/Luxembourg	147	489	949	3,126
United Kingdom	1,035	1,607	1,486	2,246
Sweden	329	195	453	810
Austria	1,330	1,922	849	808
Denmark	307	413	301	184
Finland	212	173	125	102
Ireland	0	0	10	21
Total E.U.	**42,127**	**63,502**	**58,464**	**74,184**
Russia	5	1,263	409	1,522
Rest of Europe	147	581	582	1,876
Switzerland	520	686	635	477
Norway	35	0	94	100
Total Europe	**42,834**	**66,032**	**60,184**	**78,159**
Rest of world	52	4,213	1,091	4,748
Total	**42,886**	**70,245**	**61,275**	**82,907**

* The total E.U. includes data from Austria, Sweden, and Finland, although their incorporation was in the 94-95 campaign.

Source: CATICE (Centro Asistencia Tecnica de Inspección de Comercio Exterior) of Zaragoza—Secretaría de Estado de Comercio, Turismo y Pymes.

New Quality Directions: Healthy Orchards, Shorter Seasons

In particular, producers are focusing on natural advantages to try and raise both the eating qualities and the health value of pears when they reach the customer.

In the orchards, growing techniques respond constantly to new research. While older trees are large, bushy, and free-standing, new planting is closely spaced with long rows of trees trained on espaliers, the top height kept low for easier picking. Pruning may shape the trees into flat walls or allow them to grow outwards around a central axis designed for maximum light exposure. After the fruit has set, any surplus is picked off to ensure mature pears grow to their full size. Tree irrigation is used to keep frosts away during the flowering season and continues through the summer to keep the leaves damp; at the same time water and nutrients—nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium—are generally drip-fed to the main roots. Thanks to the climate the Spanish orchards have always been almost disease-free, particularly of the "fire blight" which has devastated orchards elsewhere. As a result growers are now able to move rapidly sideways into integrated growing methods based on the minimum use of chemical treatments. Since 1996 these have been defined by law for pears grown in Catalonia; in Aragon they are controlled by a growers' organization. Methods include spot chemical treatments only when necessary, as opposed to the regular use of systemic pesticides, the use of natural predators to contain insect plagues, and restricted use of artificial fertilizers and hormones.

Researchers at IRTA are also testing a natural yeast to replace the use of anti-fungal agents on fruit kept in long-term chilled storage. It will be the final step in the long chain from grower to customer, ensuring that Spanish pears reach the table exactly as they left the tree.

Finally, growers are also pushing for shorter commercial seasons to keep the period spent by fruit in chilled storage down to a minimum. Because pears are naturally slow ripeners—even Columela, back in Roman times, recommended early picking and ripening at home—they adapted superbly to chilled storage when it arrived from the 1960s onwards. But extended keeping, of up to nine months in the case of Blanquillas, meant the fruit needed earlier picking than was ideal for optimum ripening. The difference is only a week or two, but the growers say it makes a world of difference.

The aim now is to return to natural keeping times, moving on the entire Blanquilla crop within four or five months (August to December) and the Limonera within just two (July to August) to ensure that the fruit is at its peak when it reaches the shops.

The results, for those who have not yet tasted a pear straight from the tree, may be a revelation.

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Statistics have been drawn from *Fruticultura, Situación y Evolución de las Producciones y de las Técnicas de Producción de la Unión Europea* by Dr. Ignacio Iglesias Castellarnau, presented to the First International AGRO-LATINO Symposium held in Argentina in May 1998.

For Recipes, see page 116 and for Main Exporters, see page 130.

THE PRESENCE OF THE OLIVE IN ANCIENT WRITINGS AND IN THE POPULAR TRADITIONS OF THE OLIVE-GROWING AREAS REFLECTS ITS ENDURING IMPORTANCE BOTH FOR THE ECONOMY AND AS AN ELEMENT OF LOCAL CULTURE. MANY SPANISH AND MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNITIES ARE STILL LARGELY DEPENDENT ON THE OLIVE AND THEIR CULTURES HAVE EVOLVED AROUND IT OVER THE CENTURIES.

OLIVE GROWING :
THE SPANISH VARIETIES (II)

THE OLIVES OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA ARE ROBUST AND WITHSTAND A LARGE VARIETY OF WEATHER AND GEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS, GROWING ALONGSIDE OTHER NATIVE CROPS SUCH AS GRAPES, ALMONDS, AND THE OCCASIONAL FIG. THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN CAN BE SAID TO BE THE OLIVE'S NATURAL ECOSYSTEM WHERE IT GROWS FREELY AND EXTENSIVELY. IN SPAIN ALONE, OLIVE ORCHARDS COVER 2.17 MILLION HECTARES (5.36 MILLION ACRES) AND MOST OF THE CROP GOES TO OIL PRODUCTION, WITH 75 PERCENT OF SPANISH OLIVE OIL COMING FROM THE COMMUNITY OF ANDALUSIA. OLIVES GROW WELL IN THE REST OF SPAIN BUT IN LESS PROFUSION AND WITHOUT BEING SO PREDOMINANT OVER OTHER PLANT CROPS. DIFFERENCES IN THE CLIMATE, SOIL, RAINFALL, AND LATITUDE OF THE VARIOUS AREAS GIVE THE OILS OF THE NORTHEAST OF SPAIN DIFFERENT QUALITIES TO THOSE OF THE SOUTH, AND THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP CONSUMERS IN THE SOUTH OF SPAIN HAVE WITH THE OLIVE CAN BE SEEN EVEN ON THE BREAKFAST TABLE WHERE VIRGIN OLIVE OIL IS TRICKLED OVER SLICES OF CRUSTY BREAD. ALTHOUGH TODAY'S CULTIVATION AND IRRIGATION METHODS HAVE OUSTED SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES, SOME STEPS IN THE PRODUCTION OF OLIVE OIL HAVE REMAINED UNCHANGED OVER THE CENTURIES. HARVESTING IS STILL MOSTLY CARRIED OUT BY HAND IN SPITE OF EXPERIMENTATION WITH MECHANICAL METHODS. THE PICKING TEAMS BEAT THE BRANCHES WITH LONG STICKS TO LOOSEN THE RIPE FRUIT WHICH FALLS ONTO LARGE CANVAS OR RAFIA SHEETS LAID ON THE GROUND. THE "MILKING" SYSTEM OF ACTUALLY PICKING THE FRUITS OFF THE BRANCHES IS USED TO OBTAIN PERFECTLY RIPE FRUITS FOR ESPECIALLY HIGH-QUALITY OILS.

Text: Jerónimo Díaz Rivas
Gastronomic Notes: Alicia Ríos
Translation: Jenny McDonald
Still lifes: Menchu Artime
Photos: A. de Benito/ICEX

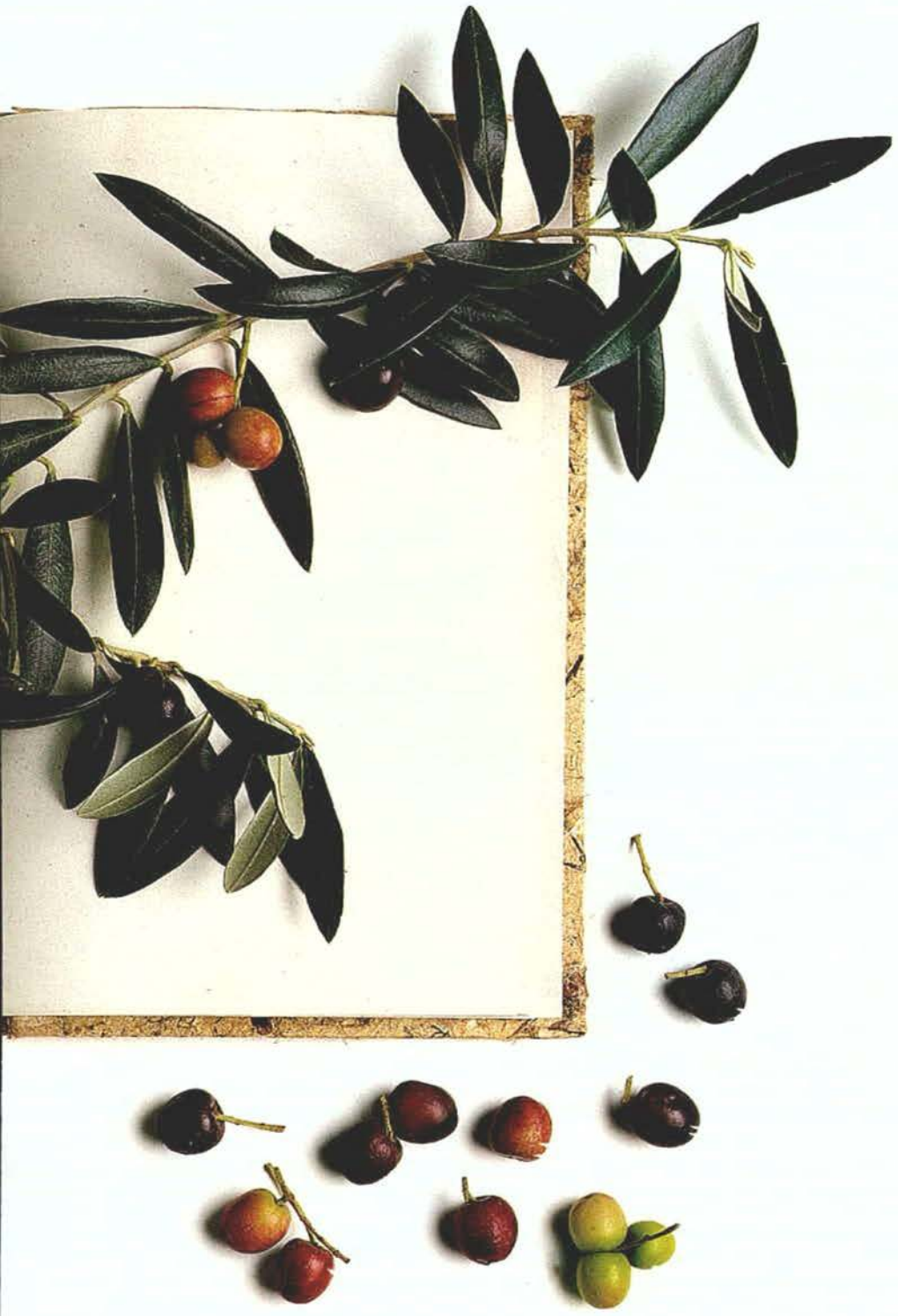
ARBEQUINA Originally from Arbeca (Lleida), it now also grows in the provinces of Tarragona, Zaragoza, and Huesca. The Catalan oil production areas have been awarded two Denominations of Origin—Les Garrigues, covering about 35,000 hectares (86,485 acres) in the province of Lleida, and Siurana, for an area of about 10,000 hectares (24,710 acres) stretching through the province of Tarragona as far as the Mediterranean coast.

The tree. Not being a very vigorous tree, this variety can be grown in intensive orchards. It has long shoots with little ramification and the young wood is a dark green color so the tree ends up looking rather like a broom bush. The Arbequina has an average flowering period in the first half of May.

The leaf. The leaf has a lengthwise groove with thin edges and is widest at the apex. The color is ocher-green on the top and yellowish or greenish gray on the underside.

The fruit. The fruit is short and oval-shaped and has a low flesh-to-stone ratio. Because of its small size—it weighs about 1.9 grams—it is difficult to harvest mechanically. However the variety is much appreciated because it starts producing early, between the second week of December and the second week of January, gives large quantities of fruit and has one of the highest oil yields (20.5 percent).

The oil. This is an excellent oil with an aroma reminiscent of orchard fruits and perhaps exotic fruits. The fresh apple aroma with the smoothness and sweetness that characterize this brand leaves an aftertaste of green almond. Virgin Arbequina oils are dense and fluid, with a slightly opalescent appearance soon after crushing. Unpredictable factors such as the weather give these oils different flavors from one area to another or within a single area from one year to the next. The oil from the D.O. Les Garrigues, for example, is extracted from olives that have not normally been exposed to frost and are harvested between early November and late January. The early olives are very green and generally do not reach full maturity. This oil has very balanced attributes, the flavors being more green, bitter, and pungent at the start of the harvest and sweeter later on. After rainy periods, oils tend to be less bitter and pungent because of the effect of "washing" the olives. If the olives are exposed to frost, the plant tissues break down and the flesh turns brown. This gives sweet, yellow oils, without the green, bitter, and pungent attrib-



UTES. ARBEQUINA OIL IS A VERY FRESH, YOUNG OIL WHICH SHOULD BE CONSUMED EARLY BECAUSE ITS LINOLEIC ACID CONTENT IS HIGH—ABOUT NINE PERCENT. THIS HIGH PROPORTION OF POLYUNSATURATED FATTY ACIDS MAKES IT PRONE TO OXIDATION AND, IN COMBINATION WITH ITS LOW POLYPHENOL CONTENT, MEANS THAT IT NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN A COOL, DARK PLACE. MUCH LIKED OUTSIDE SPAIN FOR ITS QUALITY, THIS OIL HAS TRADITIONALLY TAKEN PRIDE OF PLACE IN ITALY. HOWEVER, SERIOUS FLUCTUATIONS IN PRODUCTION OF ARBEQUINA OIL MAY OCCUR IF THE TREES ARE AFFECTED AT CRUCIAL PERIODS BY LACK OF RAINFALL.

GASTRONOMIC NOTES: THIS IS A VERY FRESH, 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 PREFERABLY BE USED UNCOOKED AS ITS AROMATIC SUBSTANCES ARE VERY VOLATILE AND SENSITIVE TO HEAT AND LIGHT.

CORNICABRA The Cornicabra variety is the second Spanish variety in growing area but the third in production, accounting for 12 percent. It originated in a town called Mora near Toledo and is currently grown in the provinces of Toledo and Ciudad Real in the center and west of the Castile-La Mancha Community, occupying 14.2 percent of the community's surface area. The Montes de Toledo Denomination of Origin is currently in the pipeline. Cornicabra also appears under other local names—Cornezuelo, Corniche, Osnal, all of which refer to the horn-shaped fruit.

The tree. The Cornicabra olive is an ancient stock, probably a population variety, with a large number of local ecotypes that have become well adapted to their environment. The variety is of average vigor with medium-length branches and a low number of shoots. The young wood is light gray with a slight ocher tint.

The leaf. The leaf is long, lanceolate, and symmetrical. It is light green on the top and greenish-gray on the underside.

THE FRUIT. THE ELONGATED DRUPE IS SLIGHTLY CURVED AND ASYMMETRICAL, ROUNDED ON ONE SIDE AND FLAT ON THE OTHER, FORMING A HORN SHAPE. IT IS OF AVERAGE SIZE AND WEIGHT (THREE GRAMS) BUT IT HAS A HIGH OIL YIELD (ABOUT 19 PERCENT) AND A HIGH FLESH-TO-STONE RATIO (FIVE PERCENT). THE OIL HAS EXCELLENT ORGANOLEPTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND HIGH STABILITY BECAUSE OF THE HIGH MONOUNSATURATED FATTY ACID CONTENT (77 PERCENT OLEIC ACID). THE RIPENING PERIOD IS LATE, USUALLY BEGINNING IN THE LAST WEEK OF OCTOBER AND ENDING IN EARLY JANUARY. THE HIGH RESISTANCE TO PICKING MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO HARVEST MECHANICALLY.

THE OIL. A GOLDEN YELLOW COLOR WITH SLIGHT GREENISH TINTS HINTING AT THE FRUITY ATTRIBUTE. WHEN OBTAINED FROM MATURE FRUIT PICKED TOWARDS THE END OF THE HARVESTING PERIOD, IT MAY PRESENT FLAVORS AND TEXTURES OF TROPICAL FRUITS SUCH AS THE AVOCADO PEAR. CORNICABRA OILS ARE FRUITY AND WELL-BALANCED—THE INITIAL SWEETNESS IS FOLLOWED BY THE BITTER TASTE OF GREEN LEAVES AND SOME DEGREE OF PUNGENCY, AND THE TEXTURE IS FLUID AND VELVETY. THEY ARE STABLE OILS WITH A LOW LINOLEIC ACID CONTENT—ABOUT FIVE PERCENT. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CORNICABRA OIL—THE BALANCED COMPOSITION OF ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS, THE HIGH OLEIC ACID CONTENT, AND THE MINOR COMPONENTS GIVING EXCELLENT AROMAS AND FLAVORS, MAKE IT IDEAL AS PART OF THE DIET. ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS ARE THOSE THAT ARE VITAL FOR THE HUMAN METABOLISM AND INCLUDE THE LINOLEIC AND LINOLENIC ACIDS WHICH HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO REDUCE BLOOD CHOLESTEROL AND GO TO MAKE UP MANY OF THE IMPORTANT CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS THAT ARE PRODUCED BY THE BODY, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIVER. THEY ARE ALSO ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF PHYSIOLOGICALLY ACTIVE SUBSTANCES THAT REGULATE THE FUNCTIONS OF PERIPHERAL CIRCULATION, HEMOSTASIS, AND ALLERGIC REACTIONS. A DEFICIENCY IN THESE ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS MAY LEAD TO PROBLEMS OF DRY SKIN, POOR HAIR AND NAIL GROWTH, AND NERVOUS INSTABILITY. SO FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW, VIRGIN OLIVE OIL CAN BE SAID TO BE AN ESSENTIAL PRODUCT.

GASTRONOMIC NOTES: VERY SUITABLE FOR DRESSING WARM SALADS, ROASTED AND STEWED VEGETABLES, UNCOOKED IN SAUCES SUCH AS MAYONNAISE, AND FOR MARINADES AND GAME DISHES.

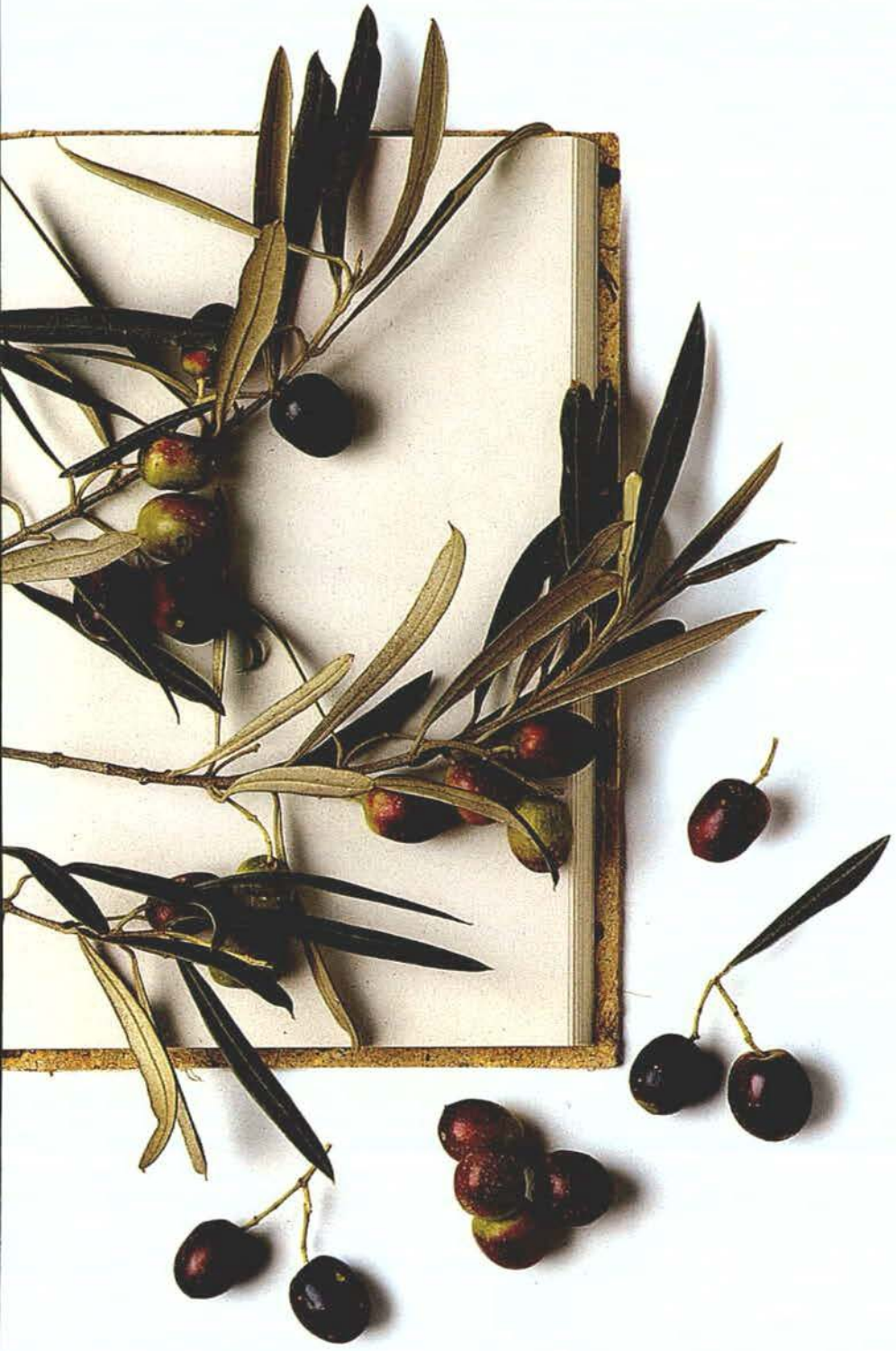
VERDIAL The name Verdial is given to a number of local varieties growing in areas of the south and southeast of Spain, and is often followed by a toponym to indicate the place of origin. One of the characteristics of Verdial oil is its high content of campesterol, and sometimes of erythrodiol and uvaol, especially in oil made from Verdial de Badajoz. This feature that is common to all Verdial oils, even when they come from such different areas, is apparently caused by the thick skin of the fruit which raises the proportion of triterpenic alcohols in the virgin oil.

I. Verdial de Vélez-Málaga

This is the variety that is typical in the Axarquia district in the southeast of the province of Málaga.
The fruit. This fruit is larger than other oil olives but the fat content is not very high.
The oil. Verdial oils are very fruity with a very sweet, pleasant flavor, with no bitterness or pungency. The linoleic acid content is high at about ten percent and this, together with the medium-low polyphenol content, means that these oils need to be carefully protected against heat, light, and air. Verdial virgin oil is generally bottled in its pure state in Málaga although elsewhere it is often combined with Hojiblanca oils giving a perfect blend from the organoleptic and stability points of view.

II. Verdial de Badajoz

This local variety is mostly established in the province of Badajoz and parts of Portugal and is given various names depending on the actual locality. These include Basta, Pico Limon, and Verdial in Spain, and Conserva de Elvas in Portugal.
The tree. Considered a drought-resistant variety, it is used as a rootstock for other cultivars. Flowering takes place during the first half of May.



The fruit. Of large size, with an average weight of 5.7 grams, it is much appreciated as a dual-purpose variety. Its high fat content, at 22 percent, and high flesh-to-stone ratio at 7:2, make it excellent for oil, and its large size and ease of handling make it ideal as a table olive. The ripening period lasts from the end of November until almost the end of the year. Mechanical harvesting is complicated because it ripens late and is resistant to picking.

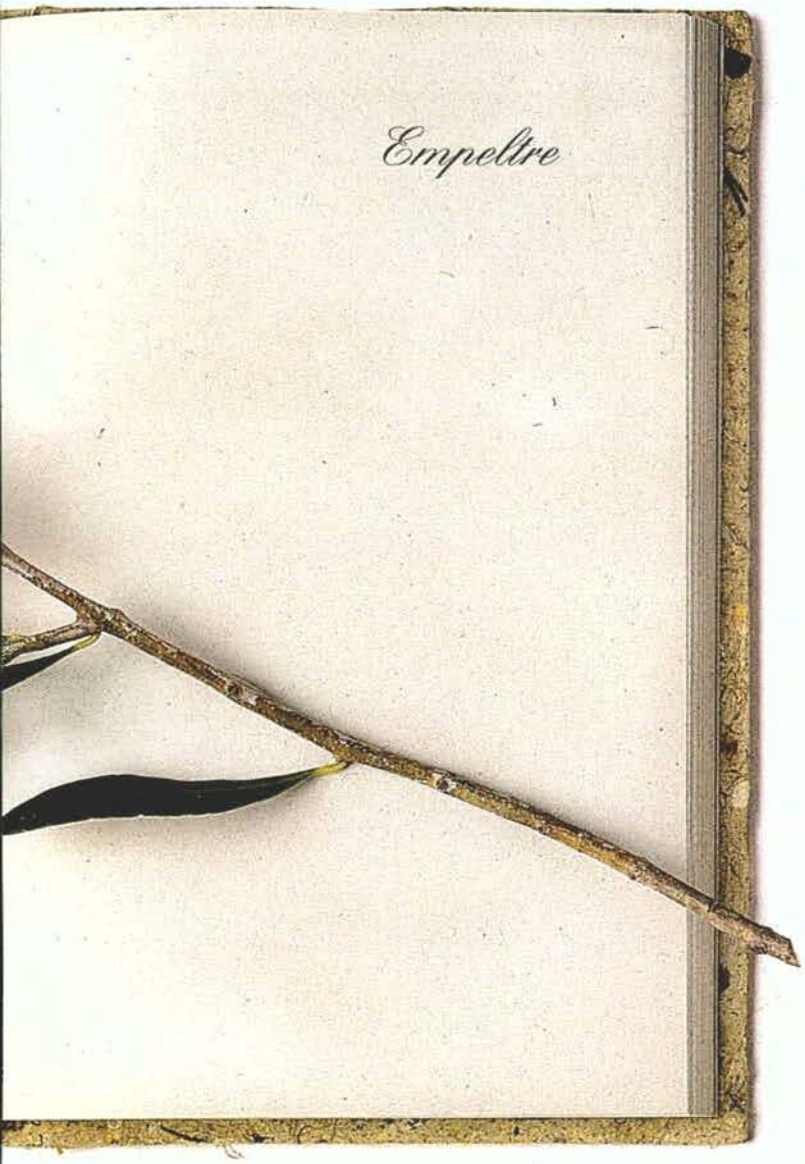
Gastronomic Notes: This is an early oil because the olives it comes from grow in especially sunny areas with plenty of night-time dew. It is ideal as a dressing for both salads and steamed foods and in *gazpachos*.

EMPELTRE The origin of this variety is the Zaragoza town of Pedrola and it now grows extensively from the provinces of Logroño, Teruel, along the Ebro valley to the province of Tarragona and even as far as the Balearic Islands. It is also known as Aragonesa, Injerto, and Mallorquina.

The tree. The cultivar is very vigorous with straight, upright branches, long internodes and canopies that tend to be vertical. Flowering is in early May.

The leaf. The leaf is widest in the middle and some leaves have a warped shape. The top is dark green and the silver underside is marked by a prominent, greenish vein.

The fruit. This variety has an elongated fruit that is asymmetrical and slightly bulging on the back. It is of average size (2.7 grams), it has a flesh-to-stone ratio of 5:3 and an acceptable oil content of 18.3 percent. The fruit ripening period is early—from the first week of November to the first week of December. Its low resistance to falling and the upright



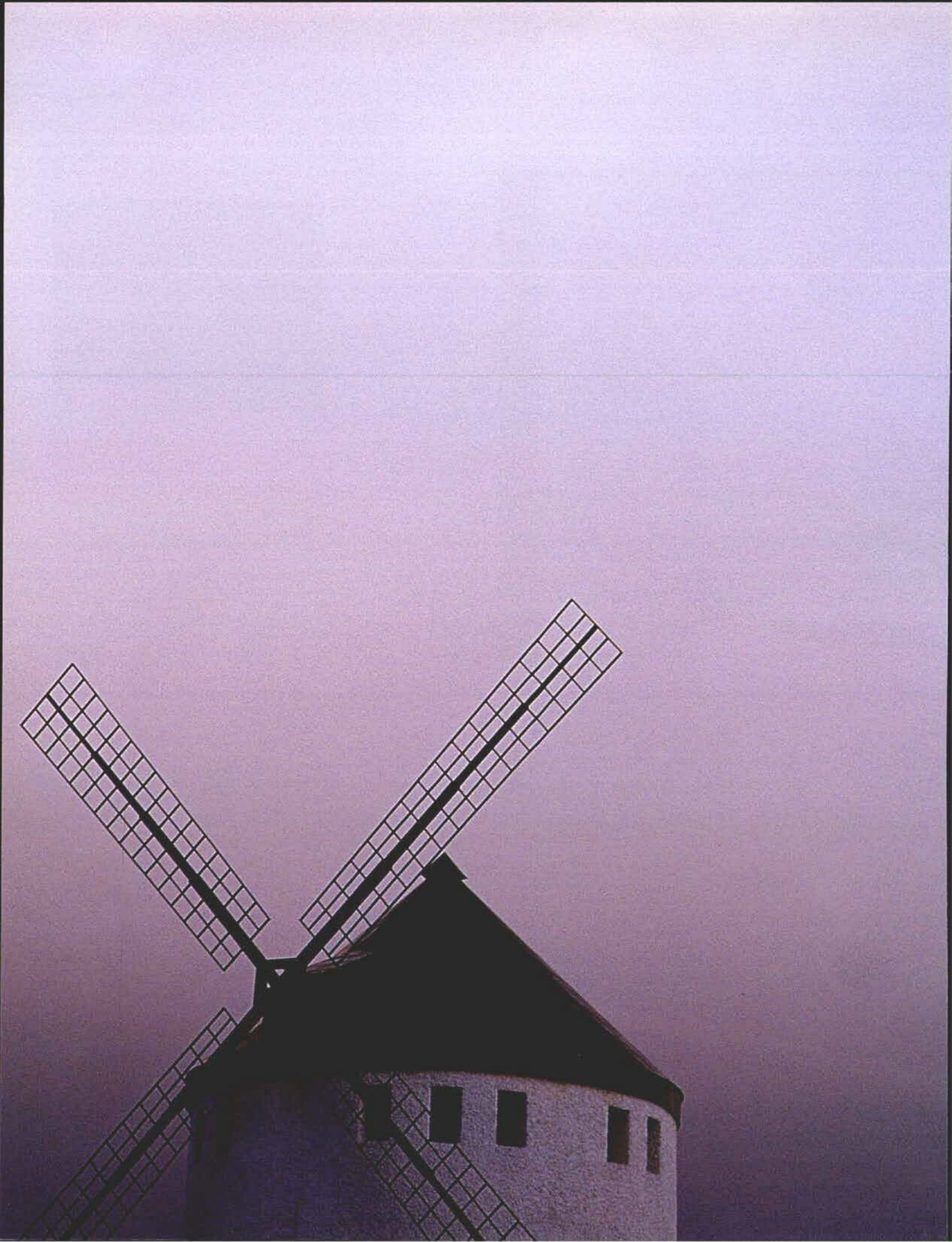
BRANCHES MAKE IT IDEAL FOR MECHANIZED HARVESTING. BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH FRUIT SET AND THE FRUIT IS PRONE TO FROST DAMAGE. THE EMPELTRE VARIETY IS MUCH APPRECIATED BECAUSE OF ITS PRODUCTIVITY AND THE EXCELLENT QUALITY OF ITS OIL.

THE OIL. THIS VARIETY MOSTLY GIVES PALE YELLOW OILS ALTHOUGH IN THIS CASE THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HARVESTING AFTER THE MATURATION PERIOD. THE OILS TEND TO HAVE A SLIGHT, FRUITY AROMA WHICH IS VERY PLEASANT ON THE PALATE. THEY ARE VERY SWEET, WITH NO BITTERNESS OR PUNGENCY AND OFTEN LEAVE AN ALMOND AFTERTASTE. THEY SHOULD BE CONSUMED SOON AFTER EXTRACTION BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY UNSTABLE OILS THAT OXIDIZE READILY. THIS SPOILS THEIR ORGANOLEPTIC QUALITIES AND LEADS IN THE NOT VERY LONG TERM TO THE APPEARANCE OF A RANCID TASTE. THE LOW CONTENT OF NATURAL ANTIOXIDANTS SUCH AS TOCOPHEROL AND POLYPHENOLS MEANS THAT EMPELTRE OIL NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN A COOL, DARK PLACE IF ITS PROPERTIES ARE TO BE PROTECTED.

IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT VIRGIN OILS SHOULD NOT BE USED TO MAKE MAYONNAISE BECAUSE THEIR FLAVOR IS TOO STRONG BUT MAYONNAISE MADE WITH EMPELTRE OIL IS DELICIOUS. ITS SMOOTHNESS MAKES IT IDEAL FOR BLENDING WITH THE VIRGIN OILS OF OTHER VARIETIES AS IT REDUCES THE AGGRESSIVE ATTRIBUTES OF PUNGENCY AND BITTERNESS THAT TEND TO BE DISLIKED OUTSIDE SPAIN, ESPECIALLY IN JAPAN. THIS VARIETY HAS SO FAR STOOD UP TO THE CHALLENGE POSED BY OTHER MORE VIGOROUS VARIETIES WITH GREATER STABILITY AND BETTER ORGANOLEPTIC CHARACTERISTICS BECAUSE THE LOCAL PRODUCERS ARE KEEN TO CONTINUE GROWING IT.

GASTRONOMIC NOTES: THIS IS AN OIL WITH A GREAT PERSONALITY. IT IS VERY VERSATILE, BEING SUITABLE FOR USE UNCOOKED IN DRESSINGS, MARINADES, MAYONNAISE, AND VINAIGRETTE SAUCES AS WELL AS FOR ADDING THAT SPECIAL TOUCH TO BOILED, STEAMED, OR STEWED DISHES.

JERONIMO DIAZ RIVAS *IS A CHEMIST SPECIALIZING IN OLIVE OIL. HE IS TECHNICAL ADVISER TO ASOLIVA (SPANISH ASSOCIATION OF OLIVE OIL EXPORTERS) AND COLLABORATES ON SEVERAL RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH THE HIGHER COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND IN THE PROMOTION OF OLIVE OIL WITH ICEX (SPANISH INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN TRADE) AND IOOC (INTERNATIONAL OLIVE OIL COUNCIL) IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS AUSTRALIA, CANADA, DENMARK, JAPAN, TAIWAN, THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES, ETC.*
THE AGRONOMIC DATA ARE PARTIALLY BASED ON PUBLICATIONS BY MR. DIEGO BARRANCO, A SPECIALIST IN AGRONOMY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CÓRDOBA.



Wide Awake in Valdepeñas

The wine growing area of Valdepeñas, right in the heart of Spain, is emerging from a long bout of Sleeping Beauty Syndrome. Just when everything was going beautifully in the 19th century, along came phylloxera, whose curse plunged it into a coma that was to last nearly a hundred years. A decade ago it began to show new signs of life at last, and today it is producing wines whose quality recalls the fine reputation of its heyday, but whose image is thoroughly modern.

Juan Sánchez Moreno, technical director of Bodegas Los Llanos, knows only too well that at the end of the 19th century the town of Valdepeñas had more inhabitants than it does now. He subscribes to the school of thought that believes you need to know your history to prevent it repeating itself. This is his gripe against a wine growing industry that once had a firm grip on success—at a time when three train-loads of wine a day left Valdepeñas for Madrid and *bodega* owners lived in *Modernista* mansions—but proved incapable of rising above the disastrous aftermath of phylloxera early this century, or another devastating blight in the form of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) which effectively decimated Valdepeñas' wine growing bourgeoisie.

Our interviewee, who gave up an academic career years ago for full-time winemaking, believes that Valdepeñas' poor reputation in recent years has been thoroughly deserved, engendered by an industry content to stay within its routine of supplying bulk and demijohn wines and disinclined to upset the status quo by doing anything oenologically adventurous, and sustained by a regulatory council prepared to extend a welcome to any sort of wine—good and not so good. In the meantime, during the Seventies and Eighties, most of Spain's wine growing areas were embracing modernity as fast as they could and laying the foundations for active participation in the quality wine markets.

Mistakes have to be paid for, and Valdepeñas has had to pay a high price, in the form of a brutal restructuring of the sector, which has left many wineries as casualties. Juan Sánchez finds the past painful to think about, but the worst thing for him is the fact that no one seems to realize the huge efforts that have been made over the last ten years in Valdepeñas to both clear its name and grasp what may be its very last chance to embrace modernity.

Text: **José Ramón Martínez/Sobremesa** Translation: **Hawys Pritchard** Photos: **Germán Gallego/Sobremesa**

Traditional methods in the vineyards of Valdepeñas...

Sleeping Beauty Wakes Up

And it's true—they have achieved a lot. A mere two or three years ago Valdepeñas was a veritable *clarete* lake, a source of cheap, everyday wine (claretes are lightweight reds, made by mixing large quantities of white Airén grapes with lesser quantities of red Cencibel). Today, discerning wine drinkers can find well-made whites and, especially, varietal reds, which offer unbeatable value for money. These are young and matured wines, saved by modern wine technology the tendency to oxidization that typifies an unforgiving continental climate where summer temperatures can soar to over 40°C (104°F).

The trigger for change was the Cencibel grape, known as Tempranillo in La Rioja, and tinto fino in Ribera del Duero. This variety gives full-bodied wines with a fruity palate and warm, velvety texture—all qualities that, in a well-made wine, respond beautifully to aging in oak.

The drawback of Cencibel is that there isn't that much of it in Valdepeñas. Eighty percent of the 30,000 hectares (74,130 acres) covered by the Denomination of Origin is given over to white Airén, of which no one expects anything other than *vins ordinaires*, though it has to be said that even these are being increasingly well-made. Currently, most of the money spent in Valdepeñas' vineyards is being used to replace old plantations of Airén with Cencibel. Some claim that if the last drought had carried on for another year, Valdepeñas could have effected a major conversion of its vineyards quite cheaply. But with rainfall in the last two years reaching levels hitherto unknown in this area, vast areas of Airén which had been given up for lost have sprung back to life.

The dynamism that characterizes Valdepeñas today is demonstrated by the wineries' policy on grape supply. Just ten years ago, for a winery to run its own vineyard with prices as low as they were then was simply not economically justifiable. Today, with Cencibel fetching US$ 0.50 a kilo, winemakers are rediscovering the

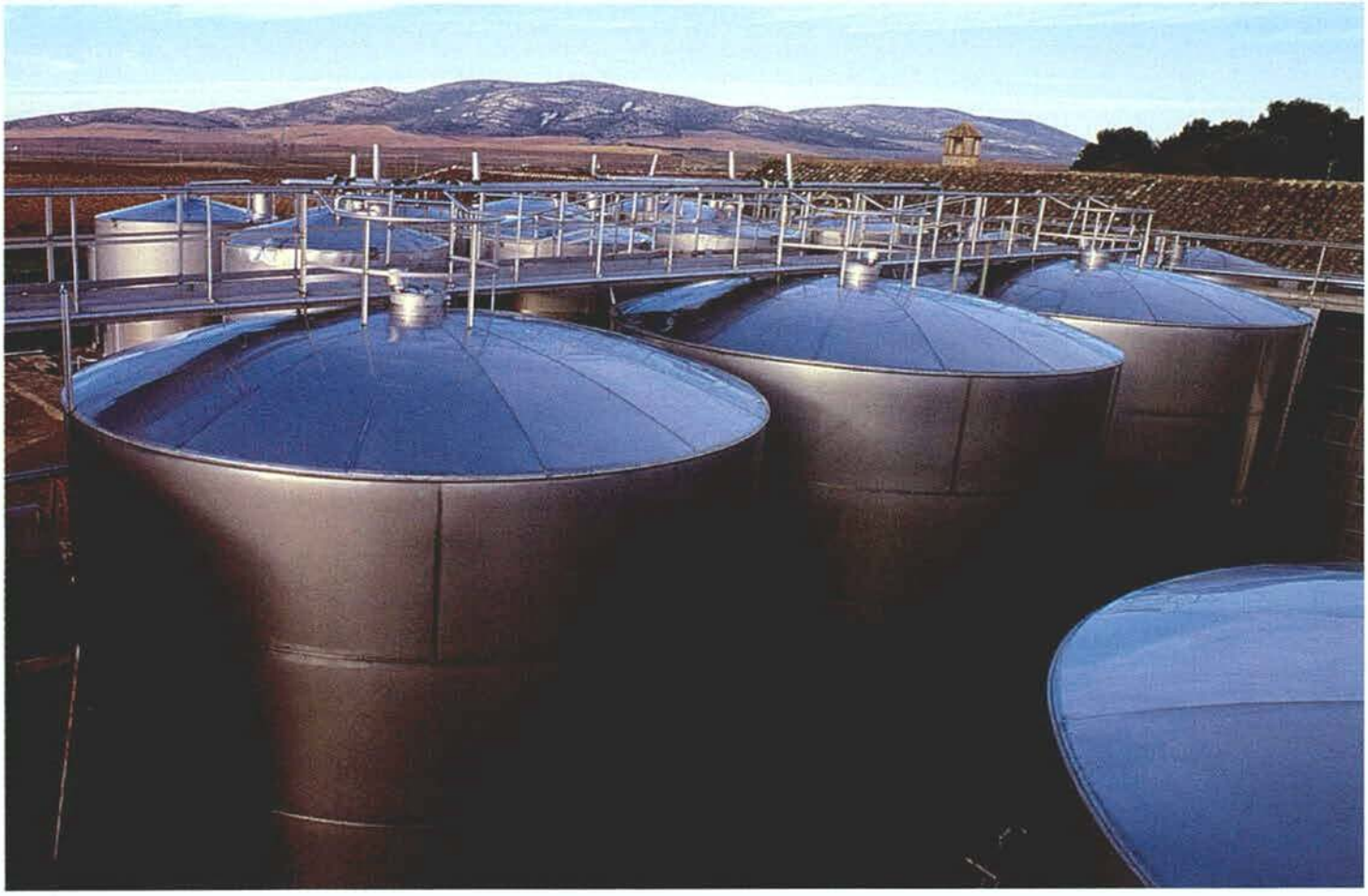
cost effectiveness of keeping their own vineyards: this not only provides an obvious protection against undesirable price shifts, but also guarantees the quality of the grapes to be used for each winery's top of the range wines. Even the Regulatory Council is now allowing plantations of varieties such as red Cabernet Sauvignon and white Macabeo, albeit with the usual proviso that they are being grown "on an experimental basis."

New Wave

At Casa de la Viña, owned by the powerful Bodegas y Bebidas Group, they have had very clear objectives from the start. Cencibel occupies the vast majority of its 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) under vine: running these vineyards was the company's main activity before a drop in prices nudged them into setting up a winery. Theirs is the largest winery-owned plantation of Cencibel, but it's not the only one. Bodegas los Llanos y Félix Solís also own several hundred hectares of vineyards, mostly planted with Cencibel. On a smaller scale, wineries such as Espinosa and Miguel Calatayud have about 100 hectares (247 acres) each, while other examples include Bodegas Real, established in 1989, which has just replanted 350 hectares (865 acres) around a splendid 17th-century farmstead alongside the road between Valdepeñas and Villanueva de los Infantes.

Though in some wineries you can still find the occasional traditional earthenware *tinaja*, it would be true to say that modern technology has now been definitively absorbed into the wine growing fabric of Valdepeñas. Controlled temperature fermentation is now standard practice, as are state-of-the-art approaches to winemaking with a view to producing fresher, more aromatic and longer-lived wines. It took a while, but stainless steel is here at last. The degree of commitment shown by Valdepeñas' winemakers in acquiring vineyards and adopting new technology is equally evident in their creation of cellars for aging wines in

... are complemented by modern technology in the wineries.



In the 19th century, Valdepeñas sent three train-loads of wine a day to Madrid, and its winemakers lived in *Modernista* mansions.

wood. In mid-December last year, the president of Castile-La Mancha (the administrative area or autonomous community to which Valdepeñas belongs) inaugurated a new maturation cellar at Los Llanos which doubled the winery's existing aging capacity, bringing the total to 25,000 Bordelais casks, most of them American oak, but with a few hundred of Limousin oak for the most select wines. This winery is now firmly established as a pioneer in the field of aging in wood, and, if the several hundred trophies and diplomas won by its Señorío de los Llanos and Pata Negra lines are anything to go by, its investment has paid off.

Oak's OK

Solís' Viña Albalí embodies the creativity of this winery, and provides living proof that bottling tens of millions of liters of wine need not be incompatible with creating a range of select wines designed to hold their own alongside the great reds of Spain.

The Calatayud family, a.k.a. Bodegas Miguel Calatayud, are also aging wine in wood to good effect. Their special Vegaval Plata range of *crianza* and *reserva* wines have taken top awards several years in a row at the *Vinos de Castilla-La Mancha Concurso de Calidad* (Wines of Castile-La Mancha Quality Competition), and done equally well in other competitive events all over Spain. "For us, though, the best prize is the fact that our wines are served in many of Germany's top restaurants," says winery manager José María Calatayud. Founded around 1950 by a Valencia businessman, this winery has grown and grown until today it occupies almost an entire block of Valdepeñas' town center. It is particularly proud of having last year bottled Valdepeñas' first varietal Macabeo white and, in only four years, achieving export figures which now amount to 40 percent of its output.

At Casa de la Viña, they are experimenting with tiny plantations of Cabernet Sauvignon and other French varieties such as Pinot Noir. This winery is particularly strong on young wines: good vintages, equipped by nature with sound structural qualities, can last two to three years. Cask-aged wines account for a relatively small percentage of production, of which 50 percent is exported. Gonzalo García Rebolleda, who heads the winery, works on designing new wines from local raw grapes. He is after wines with the fruitiness of youth but the complexity and other attributes that oak can contribute. He is also trying out longer maceration with a view to raising the tannic profile.

Most of Valdepeñas' winemakers believe that their area's oenological potential is far from exhausted. Aging in oak is too recent an innovation to provide any firm conclusions, and the same is true of experiments with foreign varieties, principally Cabernet Sauvignon. It is common to find two parallel lines of wine coexisting within the same winery, the difference between them being oenological approach. Bodegas Los Llanos features traditional characteristics in its Señorío de los Llanos range, while the Pata Negra label designates reds that are more concentrated and fruity and have been cask aged for periods that com-

VALDEPEÑAS WINE EXPORTS (TONS)

	1995	1996	1997
GERMANY	746	576	640
DENMARK	636	678	1,167
NETHERLANDS	2,046	2,313	2,680
GREAT BRITAIN	890	770	1,282
SWEDEN	1,421	1,022	1,475
TOTAL	**5,739**	**5,359**	**7,244**

Source: Regulatory Council of the Denomination of Origin.

ply more closely with the minimum stipulated for their category by D.O. regulations. That said, though, its Cabernet Sauvignon, bottled under the Loma de la Gloria label, has been nowhere near wood nor, for the moment, is it going to: "for a combination of oenological and commercial reasons," according to the winery's technical director.

Similarly, it's also quite usual for a winery to release same-vintage reserva and gran reserva reds simultaneously: Miguel Calatayud's '89 Vegaval Plata range is one example. This is the advantage of having outlet routes in the form of second and third labels: the best vintages can be kept for wines at the top of the range. Bodegas Espinosa are doing something along these lines with their '93 Concejal and Cencipeñas, both brands readily associated with Valdepeñas, alongside which Señorío de Valdeñas, a Cabernet Sauvignon reserva of the same vintage, and equally redolent of Valdepeñas, coexists very happily.

The most daring venture of the moment is Bodegas Real's little plantation of Chardonnay in their Marisánchez vineyard, tucked away at the end of several kilometers of dirt track. In addition to Chardonnay, this beautiful vineyard is also planted with Cencibel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Airén, and Macabeo, constituting a cutting-edge wine growing project launched recently by Madrid businessman Sergio Barroso, an enthusiast of wine and hunting in equal measures. His first crianza wines will be on the market within a few months—brand yet to be announced. Meanwhile, his non-wood '93 Vega Ibor, the winery's best-known brand, is still thriving in the bottle and earning plaudits at home and abroad. There is also talk of plans for cask-fermenting Chardonnay.

Valdepeñas Gets Moving

Varietal whites ferment at low temperatures and present hitherto unfamiliar aromatic profiles. Many winemakers are banking on this to predict a great future for this type of wine, so far something of a sub-category hereabouts. Much the same applies to rosés, though they lend themselves less to oenological wizardry. And the reds have still got plenty to say for themselves; it remains to be seen if the promising results shown so far by experimental varieties such as Cabernet and Merlot are confirmed. Their future may lie in enriching Cencibel reds rather than as varietal wines.

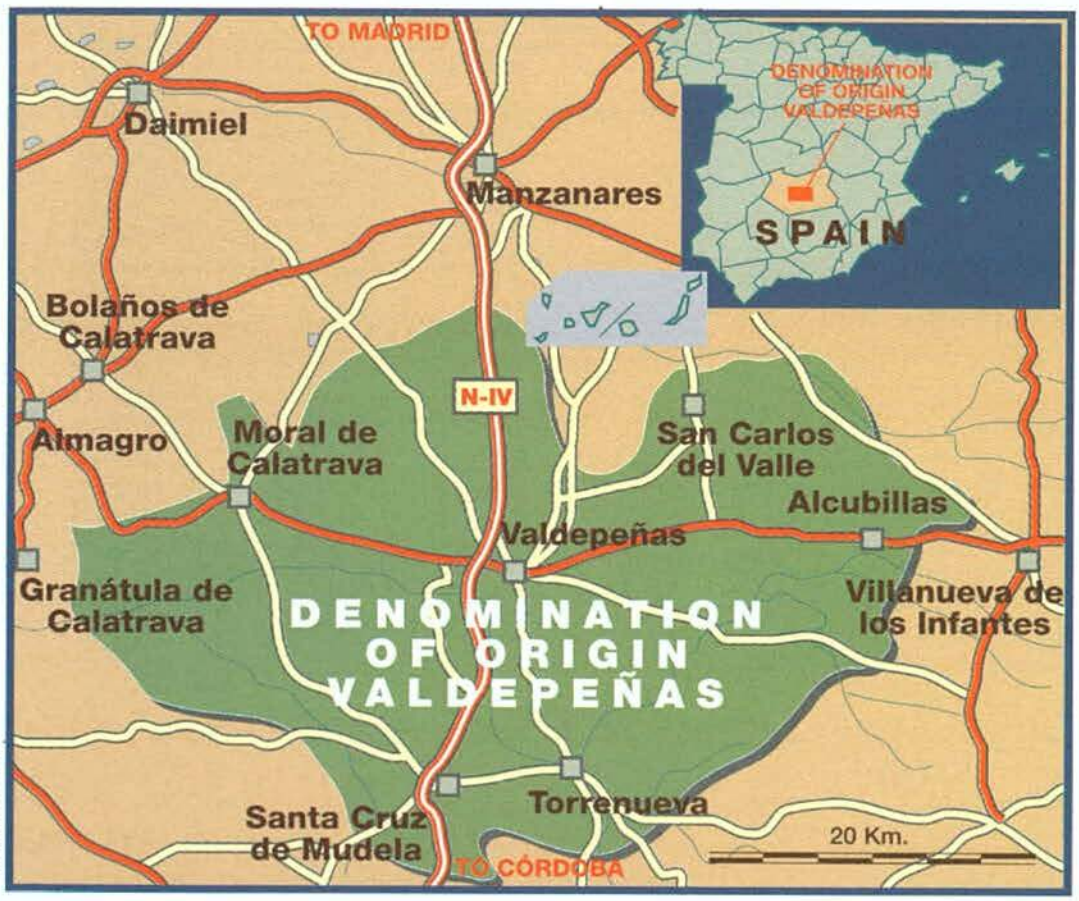
This leaves the big issue of Valdepeñas' claretes—traditional light blends of red

The Tempranillo grape, known as Cencibel in Valdepeñas, gives full bodied wines perfectly suited to aging in oak.

and white grapes. Theories about what to do with them in the future range right across the board, from banishment, at least from D.O. coverage, to maintaining them for casual, aperitif drinking or perhaps as a useful stepping-stone—"well-made, but not serious, like *Beaujolais nouveau*," to quote one winemaker—leading novices towards "proper" wine.

The surplus of Airén within the D.O. area remains a fundamental problem, and is a source of friction among the various factions that make up wine-producing Valdepeñas. There is an ongoing temptation to solve it by political means which are often at odds with the commercial thinking that, according to informed local opinion, is what ought to be steering the modernization process. For the moment, they have succeeded in setting up an "intersectorial" board, with the explicit agreement that the industrial sector will buy all surplus grapes in coming years. Meanwhile, the board takes on many of the functions previously carried out by the Regulatory Council.

While Valdepeñas is dealing with domestic and image problems, success on foreign markets is proving at present to be one of its firmest assets. "Foreign buyers taste first and only then ask where it's from," explains a traditional winemaker: "They're clever—they keep an open mind." Valdepeñas has what it takes to earn a place well up among Spain's quality wines. Climate, soil, grapes, and tradition—the human factor: all the necessary ingredients to win back the prestige so damaged by its Big Sleep (nearly 90 years). It remains to be seen how far these wines can go, and what note of individuality they can contribute to Spanish wines. For the moment, Valdepeñas has winemakers rearing to go, and noteworthy wines at unbeatable prices. All it needs now is for the word to get around.



JAVIER BELLOSO

José Ramón Martínez *is a journalist and has been head of* Sobremesa, *the Spanish food and wine magazine, since 1990.*

For Main Exporters, see page 130.

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Love 'em or Ignore 'em, But Mushrooms Abound in Spain

Text: **Víctor de la Serna** Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX** Still life: **Menchu Artime**

MUSHROOMS IN SPAIN, MUSHROOMS AND THE SPANIARDS. IT'S BLACK OR WHITE. ALL OR NOTHING. LOVE OR HATE (OR PERHAPS, LESS DRAMATICALLY, YOU CAN CALL IT LOVE OR IGNORANCE). TRADITIONALLY, THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN SPLIT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE ON THE SUBJECT: MUSHROOM PASSION IN CATALONIA AND THE BASQUE COUNTRY, MUSHROOM INDIFFERENCE OR FEAR MOST EVERYWHERE ELSE. JUST A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO THIS BEGAN TO CHANGE—SLOWLY—AS YOUNGER GENERATIONS OF ANDALUSIANS AND GALICIANS BEGAN VANQUISHING OLD PREJUDICES ABOUT "DEADLY" TOADSTOOLS. HOWEVER, ONE CONSTANT REMAINS, AND IT WILL SURPRISE SOME PEOPLE WHO SEE SPAIN AS A STEREOTYPE: AS ONE IMMENSE, SUN-PARCHED, SANDY BEACH. THIS COUNTRY ENJOYS A FABULOUS MYCOLOGICAL WEALTH AND ACTUALLY SENDS TONS OF PORCINI TO ITALY, TRUFFLES TO FRANCE, CHANTERELLES TO DENMARK EVERY YEAR. HOWEVER, THIS REMAINS, INTERNATIONALLY, A LITTLE-KNOWN SECRET. IT'S TIME TO UNVEIL IT.

Crisscrossed by mountain ranges, Spain is Europe's second most mountainous country after Switzerland. Its *cordilleras* are a precious forestry and water reserve in a territory whose vast plateaus were depleted of most of their tree cover many centuries ago. The mountain environment can be either Atlantic-influenced, with chestnut, beech, and oak trees, or Mediterranean with holm oaks, cork trees, and pines, and even alpine, in the Pyrenees, with their tall spruce. This means many different environments for fungus varieties, which mostly thrive as parasites of specific plants.

With all types of toadstools, from those common in northern Europe to many from North Africa, large tracts of Spanish mountainsides are true paradises for mycologists and plain mushroom devourers.

WITH ALL TYPES OF COLD-CLIMATE OR WARM-CLIMATE MUSHROOMS, LARGE TRACTS OF SPANISH MOUNTAINSIDES ARE TRUE PARADISES FOR MYCOLOGISTS AND PLAIN MUSHROOM DEVOURERS.

Even the apparently barren plateaus hold their mycological treasures in the springtime and fall. But popular attitudes will vary widely, so that you'll see veritable hordes of fanatics combing every square inch in some areas, while others remain largely ignored—or, in some cases, only attract the attention of masses of pickers who are strictly interested in one kind of fungus, the milky agaric (*Lactarius deliciosus*), ignoring or sometimes destroying all others.

With their own ancient traditions and also their close relationship with France, the Basques and Catalans are mushroom devotees, in the field and the kitchen. At the other end of the scale, the Galicians, possibly due to a mycophobic Celtic heritage in verdant northwestern Spain, have given fungi such popular names as *pan da morte, pan do sapo,* or *pan do demo* (deadly bread, toad's bread, devil's bread) and thoroughly avoided them. Elsewhere, a couple of varieties are usually keenly sought—usually the milky agaric in the pine woods and the *seta de cardo (Pleurotus eryngii)* on the plains—and the rest ignored.

So while mushroom lovers literally step on each other's toes in revered Catalan growing areas such as the Montseny hills northwest of Barcelona, or in Basque shrines like the Etxalar woods, mycophiles usually have it much easier elsewhere. Unless busloads of Catalan or Basque enthusiasts invade new, virgin areas, as has often happened in recent years!

In central Spain near Madrid, the two past seasons (fall 1997, spring 1998) have particularly benefitted from unusually strong and persistent rains, courtesy of El Niño. Add vastly improved road access to the Sistema Central mountains, and fungus lovers in the region have it positively easy.

DIARY OF AN URBAN MYCOPHILE

Here's how a typical, individual foray from Madrid, in this writer's experience, works out. It usually starts at 6:00 a.m. on a Saturday or Sunday. The goal: Las Navas del Marqués, 80 kilometers (50 miles) northwest of Madrid in the Sierra de Guadarrama mountains, 1,300 meters (4,000 feet) high. Despite two mountain passes, it's a fast, 50-minute drive including 45 kilometers (28 miles) of deserted highway. There's often snow on the highest peaks, more than 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) up. But, beneath the peaks, the temperature is balmier, it's been raining for several days and conditions are perfect for a quick mushroom hunt in the thick underbrush of the largest pine tree (the *Pinus pinaster* variety) forest of central Spain.

It's daybreak when you get there. You go about it efficiently, as you know the spots where the mycelia lie awaiting the picker. There is of course the popular choice in central Spain, the *níscalo* or milky agaric. Indeed, it's also very big in Catalonia as *rovelló*. Mostly, it's the spectacularly orange *Lactarius deliciosus* (or the rarer, more highly prized, wine-colored *Lactarius sanguifluus*).

It's a southerly (albeit found as far north as Poland in Europe) fungus with compact meat that breaks neatly. Not very refined, only loved in Spain and Sardinia as far as it's known, but solid, meaty. In Catalonia, small "button" ones are often grilled upside down, stems removed, with a mix of mashed garlic, parsley, and olive oil in the center. In Castile, it will be used in a hearty soup with potatoes and some vegetables, or sautéed with *serrano* ham—a potent mix.

However, being more of a mycophile, you know and appreciate many other types as much or better. So you collect for one or two hours in well-known spots (no competition at all: the lack of love for mushrooms can be a boon to the lone enthusiast!) before driving back to the second mountain pass, where large meadows covered with poor grass and a southerly thistle, the *cardo corredor (Eryngium campestris)* promise a good chance of finding that other central Spanish mycological treasure, the seta de cardo, which grows on rotten thistle roots. It's a small, wild, incredibly refined cousin of the coarse and boring oyster mushroom *(Pleurotus ostreatus)* which is often cultivated and can be found in every store.

So you do find a bare couple of dozen, but also, as a bonus, six large, fresh, still closed field mushrooms *(Agaricus campestris)* and as many delicious, but painfully tiny, fairy ring champignons *(Marasmius oreades)* as you care to pick. From the forest you are already carrying a good catch of milky agarics and a bevy of other good ones: many gray agarics *(Tricholoma terreum)*; a southern European boletus, the *Boletus bellinii*, that's very good if you remove the viscous upper skin (it's more compact and flavorful than its cousin, the well-known yellow and brown boletus, or *Boletus luteus*); a deliciously delicate russula—the devilish-looking greenish russula *(Russula virescens)*; a nice, young, still-closed parasol *(Macrolepiota procera)*; perhaps even, if it's been really humid and warm, some precious, snowy white-maned agarics *(Coprinus comatus)*, a sheer delicacy that you'll have to eat in a couple of hours, before it turns into a black inky mess...

Time to leave. If it's fall (from late October to December in this part of Spain), chances are high

MARCOS EGUIZABAL

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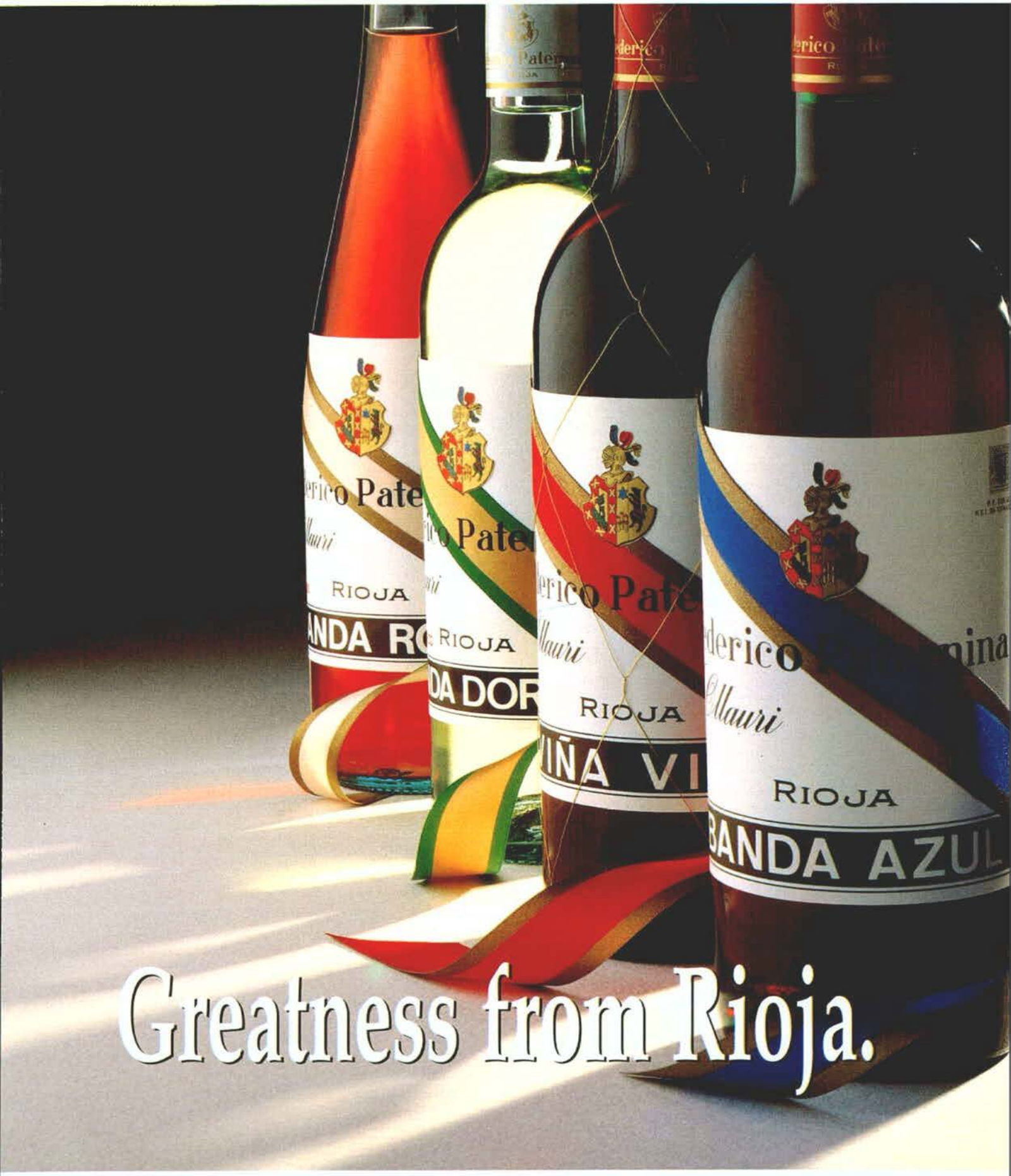

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A CENTRAL SPANISH MYCOLOGICAL TREASURE, THE *SETA DE CARDO*, WHICH GROWS ON ROTTEN THISTLE ROOTS, IS A SMALL, WILD, REFINED COUSIN OF THE COARSE AND BORING OYSTER MUSHROOM.

that the *niscaleros* are now arriving from the city. Experienced fungus pickers fear these plastic bag-toting interlopers who'll rake the soil under the pine trees to find as many milky agarics as possible, sometimes destroying the mycelia that ensure the fungi's reproduction, and sometimes kicking or trampling a precious cep mushroom *(Boletus edulis)*. That's the other side of the coin after your luxuriously lonely foray: such behavior would be unthinkable in more mushroom-savvy parts of the country.

All in all, when you get back to Madrid by 10:30 a.m. or so and change clothes, you find yourself with a sizable catch of seven or eight different varieties—in addition to the inevitable milky agarics. The whole catch is highly representative of a Mediterranean habitat, and quite appetizing! You can have a late breakfast (nothing better in the world than scrambled eggs with some delicately flavored, silky-textured maned agarics) or brunch with sparkling fresh mushrooms. A true privilege for anyone living near the Guadarrama mountains and with a basic knowledge of fungi. There are few deadly varieties around, but the feared *Amanita phalloides* is not uncommon.

SPANISH "STATELESS" MUSHROOMS

Yet, in other parts of Spain the scene will be different: dozens of inhabitants of isolated mountain villages in Extremadura or Huelva will methodically scour the hills in search of mushrooms they don't crave at all themselves, such as ceps, or the fabled Caesar's agarics *(Amanita caesarea)*, or chanterelles *(Cantharellus cibarius)*. At the foot of the hill, a savvy merchant will pay them a good price, and the fungi will be immediately loaded onto a well-conditioned lorry that immediately hits the road towards a faraway destination: Barcelona, or Milan, or Copenhagen. Upon arrival, the price of the catch will be multiplied, sometimes twentyfold.

Many purportedly "Périgord" truffles sold in France actually come from Guadalajara, Teruel, and Catalonia, the privileged swath of land in eastern Spain where, under holm oaks, this almost mythical fungus will thrive in humid years (see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 8 and 28).

But increasingly the catch will remain in Spain. Under the guidance of several mycological societies (mainly the Societat Micològica Catalana, the Sociedad Micológica de Madrid, and the mycological section of San Sebastián's Sociedad de Ciencias Aranzadi), the appreciation of fungi has grown steadily. Chefs have been using them increasingly, leading restaurant customers try their hand at them when cooking at home, too. Wild mushrooms increasingly appear in markets. And cultivated mushrooms have become a major industry in such regions as Castile-La Mancha: button mushrooms, oyster mushrooms and, increasingly, shiitakes *(Lentinus edodes)*.

The varying environment and traditions pushes some varieties to the forefront in the various regions. Catalans crave a sticky, mucilaginous variety, the *llenega* (actually, several types of Hygrophorus), whose unique texture gives a dish a very definite personality. It is little known anywhere else in the world. In Extremadura, "summer truffles" or *criadillas de tierra* of the *Terfezia* family are often used as potatoes. They are quite abundant, too. And the Basques will pay untold sums of money every spring for the privilege of sampling the first specimens of the refined, compact, tiny, snow-white *perretxiko*, known in English as St. George's mushroom *(Calocybe gambosa)*.

MUSHROOMS WITH A REGIONAL ACCENT

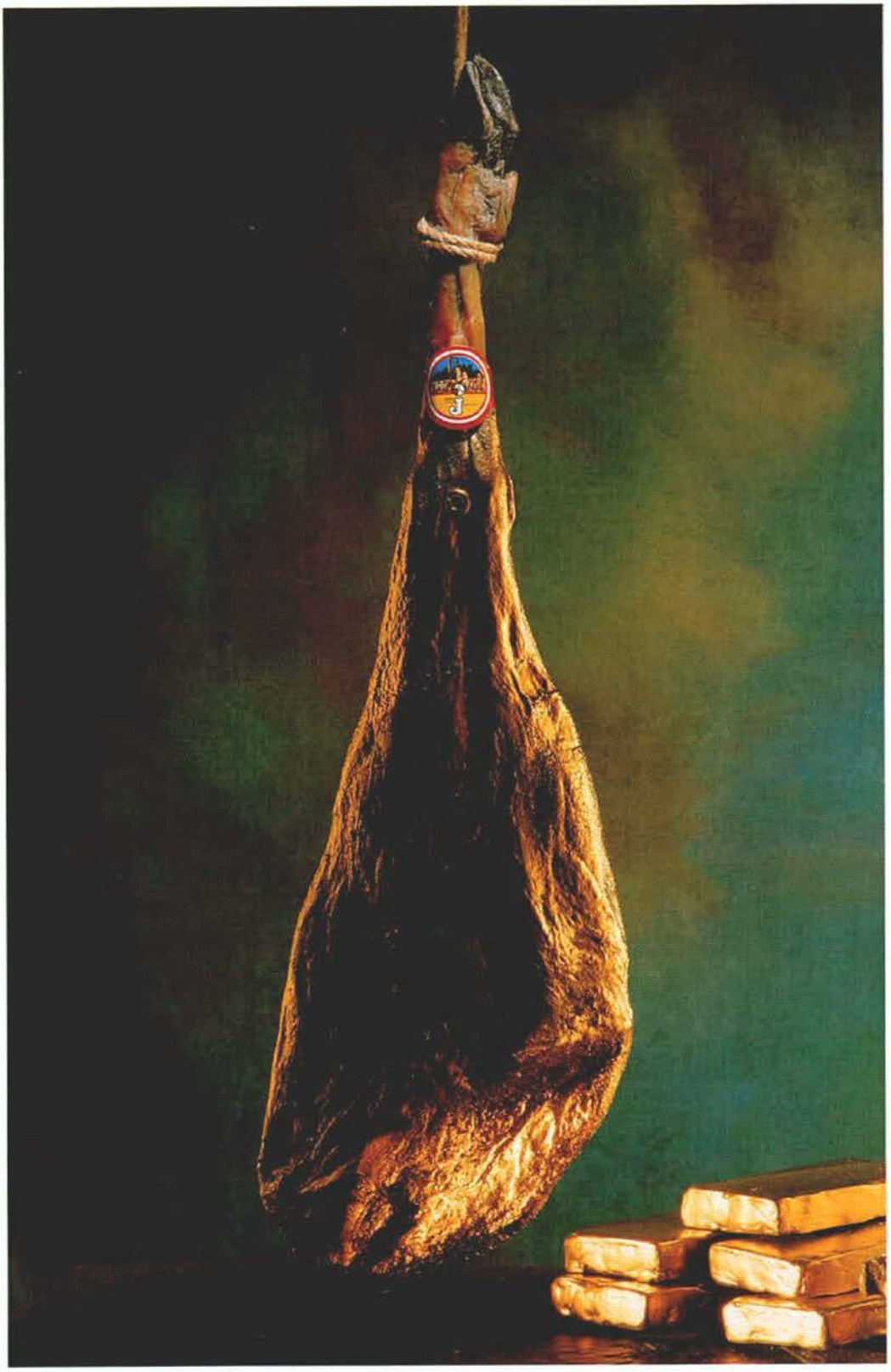
As could be expected, it's in Basque and Catalan cooking that fungi play the largest role. The *onddo* or cep is unquestionably the king of all fungi in Basque recipes. They are abundant in the woods of Navarre and Guipúzcoa. Often simply sautéed in a mixture of butter and olive oil, or scrambled with eggs. But the hedgehog mushroom *(Hydnum repandum)* is popular in Vizcaya, where it's used in hearty soups. *Gibelurdiñ* is a general term for members of the *Russula* family, fragile fungi much appreciated in Guipúzcoa (simply baked in a tin pan), as are the chanterelles, locally known as *ziza-ori*.

Catalans will go for more elaborate renderings of the highly prized kinds of mushrooms, in addition to their grilled milky agarics: llenegas in a hearty quiche, or fairy ring champignons (locally known as *moixernons de tardor* or *cama-secs*) with veal shank in Catalonia's national veal stew, the *fricandó de vedella*. (Dried and rehydrated mushrooms work best—the fairy ring champignon actually becomes more flavorful after drying, and it can be kept for very long periods of time.) Ceps are almost as revered in Catalonia as they are in the Basque Country, and *ous de reig* (*Amanita caesarea*) are a subject for as much devotion as in Italy, where they attract a quasi-religious following.

But, by and large, mushrooms are best when simply prepared, and not overly cooked, so that their perfume and flavor are best preserved. The Spanish devotion for *revueltos*, i.e. scrambled eggs with all sorts of fillings, works wonders with many fungi, and that's how you will find them all over the country.

For mushroom lovers who haven't (yet) become mush-

PURE GOLD.



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AS COULD BE EXPECTED, IT'S IN BASQUE AND CATALAN COOKING THAT FUNGI PLAY THE LARGEST ROLE. TIME TO LEARN ABOUT *ONDDO*, *GIBELURDIÑ*, *ZIZA-ORI*, *LLENEGA* AND *MOIXERNO DE TARDOR*.

room pickers, the best source in this country, and perhaps anywhere in Europe, is Barcelona's colorful, ancient Boquería market, right on the Ramblas (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38). In season, the array of wild mushrooms in its manicured stands is absolutely mind-boggling. Madrid's Mercado de Chamartín comes in a distant second. But temporary, open air food markets in smaller towns situated in fungus country—in northern Catalonia's Empordà, for instance—can be even more rewarding. There is also a fast-developing canning industry that not only works with cultivated mushrooms, but also with wild ones. This industry, which is mainly centered in Catalonia, La Rioja, and Navarre, furnishes very good quality ceps, milky agarics, llenegas, truffles, and other varieties throughout the year. This is a boon to local mycophiles, who can now enjoy their favorites throughout the year. It has also brought Spanish mushrooms to the attention of foreign consumers. So much for the sun-and-sand cliché.

***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.*

For Recipes, see page 120 and for Main Exporters see page 130.

FUNGAL CUISINE—SOME RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

(Remember that the wild mushroom offer will be strongest in the fall and spring, but may disappear altogether in summer.)

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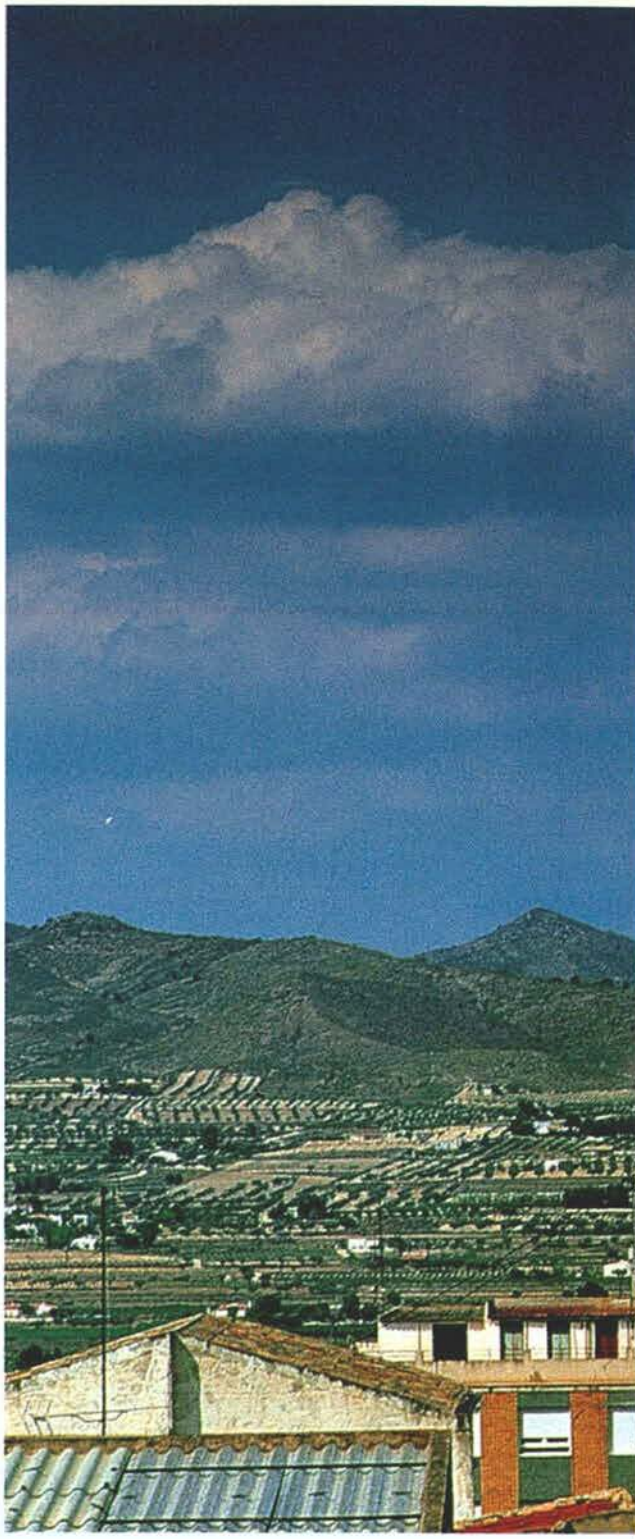
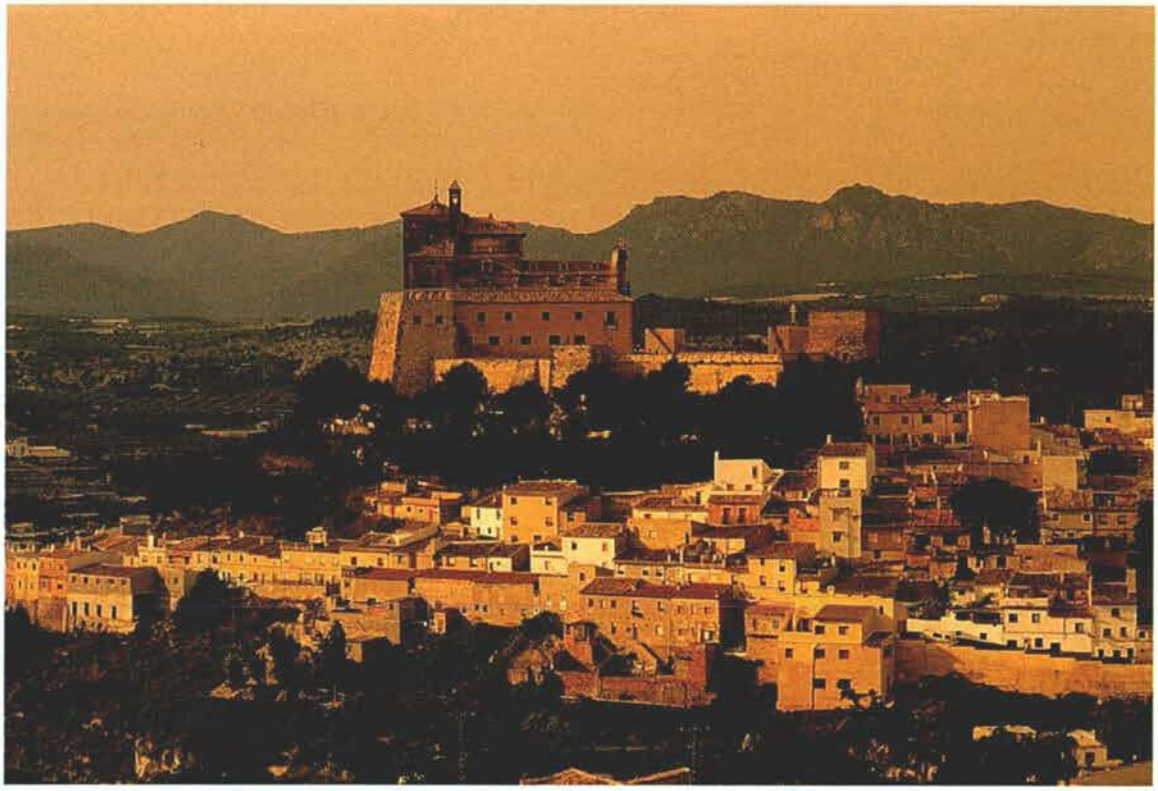


A visit to the wine regions of Levante reveals a transformation in winemaking practices that is creating a new generation of mainly red wines that are receiving worldwide acclaim. This revelation is all the more remarkable for taking place in such an arid environment, and confirms the potential of many of these lesser recognized Denominations of Origin (D.O.) in Valencia—Alicante, Valencia, and Utiel-Requena—and in Murcia—Bullas, Jumilla, and Yecla.

LEVANTE

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

A graceful example of typical Levante architecture.



Caravaca de la Cruz, in the province of Murcia.

The Bodegas Agapito Rico vineyards in Jumilla.

Driving down the Mediterranean highway through the province of Castellón, on a sunny day in February, the shimmering blanket of almond blossoms is one of those memorable experiences in life. It reflects the color and warmth of the people, where south meets north in Levante. This is the southeast of Spain, embracing the provinces of Castellón, Valencia, and Alicante and the Autonomous Region of Murcia. To holiday makers it is the Costa Blanca, yet, it is two distinct regions. There is the flat coastal strip, or *pla*, with a wealth of agricultural produce like citrus, rice, fruit, and vegetables, and the inland range of mountains, supporting little more than chalk quarries, almonds, and vines. The Pla, is not the best environment for vines, if only because of the land prices paid by citrus growers, at which even property developers blanch.

Valencia—City of Culture and Fun

I arrived in Valencia and stayed in the old quarter, near the Torres Serrano part of the City wall, at the curiously named Hotel Ad-Hoc, situated near the Turia river's old course, which carries only a narrow stream since the flash flood of 1957 and the diversion was built to the south of the city. From any one of the attractive bridges you can enjoy the view of the landscaped gardens and reflect on the imaginative way the city is being transformed. Once rather claustrophobic, Valencia is rediscovering its character and culture with a new concert hall, congress center, art galleries, and the restoration of buildings such as the cathedral, and the Regional Government Palace. In the year 2000 Valencia aims to be the cultural capital of Europe, and justifiably so.

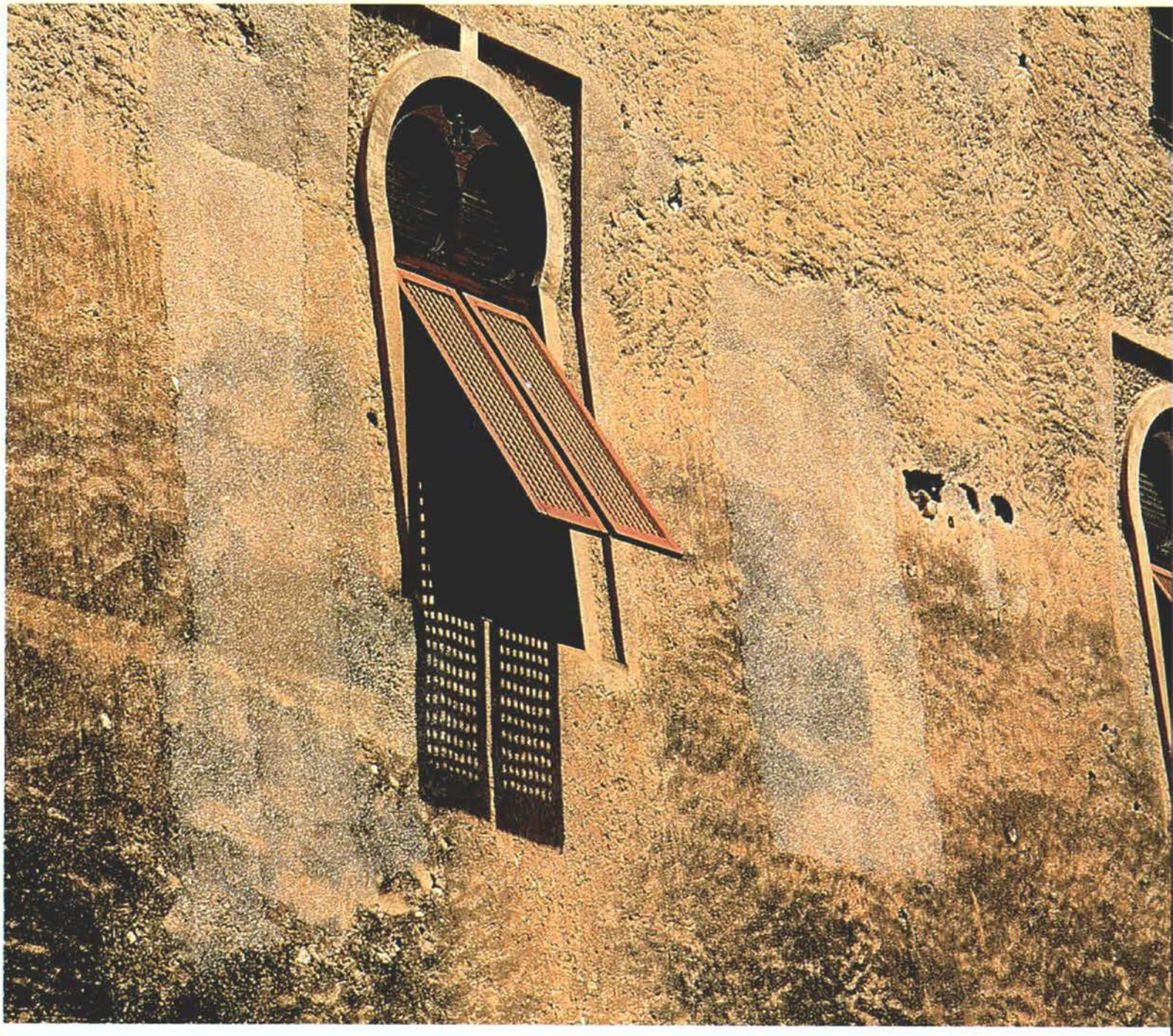
Any mention of Valencia cannot omit reference to the *Fallas*, the hedonistic week-long festival ending on March 19th with the burning of huge effigies, built of wood and paper pulp, and an incredible firework display. Each area of the city commissions the design and construction of satirical, often lewd, life-size structures of personalities, which are professionally built and painted. One needs great

stamina and a very strong head and liver, to survive the seven days of this fiesta! There is a multitude of restaurants and *tapas* bars in the city, not least in the streets around the Plaza de Ayuntamiento. *Paella* is the regional dish of Valencia and is probably the most abused one in all Spanish cooking, yet it is a gastronomic icon, and so you will find it, if you eat at one of the many restaurants of the Plaza Neptuno facing the beach, just north of the port. The ubiquitous Rioja dominates the wine lists here as it does all over Spain, but it is possible to find a D.O.Valencia wine like the Marqués de Caro from Cherubino Valsangiacomo.

The Wine Revolution has Come to Levante

The impressive bodegas of Vicente Gandía Pla at Chiva, 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) inland in the D.O. Valencia, were my first visit the next day. They were built in stages between 1986 and 1992, and have the capacity to bottle 2.5 million cases of D.O. Valencia and D.O. Utiel-Requena wines annually, with ninety percent going for export, primarily to Great Britain, Holland, and Sweden. Gandía Pla is a family controlled business, and the investment and energy that José María Gandía and his children have put into this winery for the 21st century, is one of the exciting stories of the wine revolution in Spain over the past twenty years.

Though Gandía is best known for the hugely successful brand, Castillo de Liria, I chose to concentrate on the varietal range from the 150 hectare (370.6 acres) Hoya de Cadena estate near Utiel. Sylvia Gandía, responsible for quality control and public relations, and Luis García, the oenologist, took me through fourteen wines, which I marked highly, with the unoaked Chardonnay 1996, Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon 1991, and Tempranillo 1992 being the best. The Valencia vineyards are located in a mixed agricultural and light industrial surroundings on the eastern slopes of the sierras. However, those of Utiel-Requena are either directly or indirectly, the sole source of in-



come for the inhabitants of the region and the countryside is totally covered by vines. Traditionally, Valencia and Utiel-Requena wines were shipped in bulk to Eastern Europe and West Africa, but this trade has almost disappeared, and the industry now focuses on bottled wines for the European, American, and Far East markets.

These two D.O.s have to be thought of in tandem, and, after seventy years in the port area of Valencia, this is what Bodegas Schenk have done by establishing a new, state-of-the-art winery in Requena. The move has revolutionized their export business for bottled wines and they are justifiably proud that customers now include names such as Marks and Spencer. Their philosophy is to sell bottled wines, developing a wider range of oak aged ones, for which purpose they are now adding American oak to their 350 casks of Limousin.

Michel Grin, managing director, and Andreas Kubach, commercial director, are enthusiastic about the future for the D.O. of Utiel-Requena, and are encouraged that many smaller producers are making better quality wines. At the tasting, again I found myself scoring highly, including, remarkably, a Macabeo white 1997—Las Falleras, and a 1994 Monastrell Red—Los Monteros. The Murviedro Red 1996 blend of Bobal, Monastrell, and Tempranillo, and the Las Lomas Tempranillo also scored well, yet again proving the nobility of this grape, and the underrated potential of Monastrell.

The old part of Requena is of narrow streets of white washed houses, and we lunched at the Meson del Vino, a typical restaurant run by Luis Serrano in the market building, and a very popular meeting point. The following weekend was to be the annual Fiesta of *Embutidos* (sausage meats), a selection of which we tried as tapas.

The Bodega of Torre Oria, a short distance south of Requena at Derramador, is notable for the minaret on its roof and the ceramic tile lined interior walls. It is better known for being the only cava producer in Levante,

The way to keep cool in Elche (Alicante) ...

... and in the Vicente Gandía Pla winery in Chiva (Valencia).

and jolly good it is, too. The bodega owns eighty hectares (197.7 acres) of vineyards and has annual sales of half a million bottles, with exports accounting for 70 percent of sales, chiefly to Denmark, Germany, and Holland.

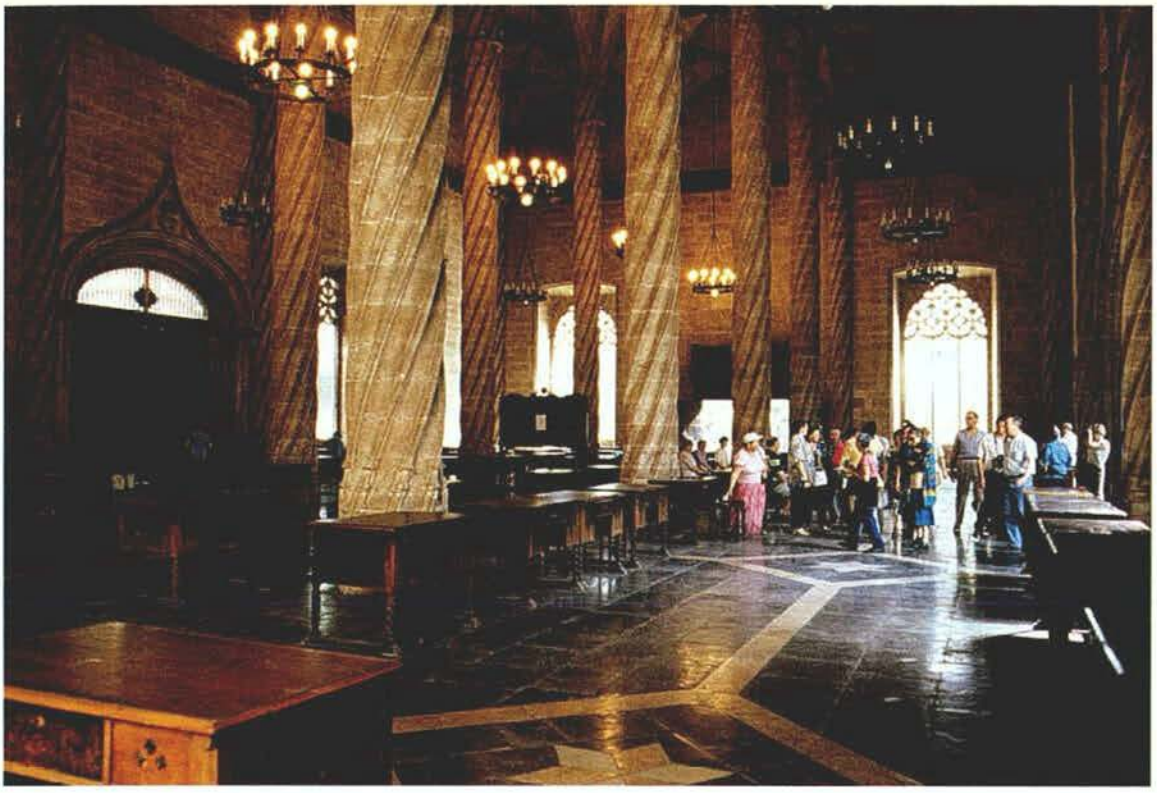
Maite Herrero and Pedro Morales were my guides and explained that the company was founded one hundred years ago by the Oria de Rueda family from Asturias on the north coast, but is now controlled by business interests in Valencia. They showed me three wines, first a 1996 white—Señorío de Requena—80 percent Chardonnay and 20 percent Macabeo, fermented and aged in oak for six months, which was quite good, but reaffirmed my belief that there is too much preoccupation in Spain with fermenting white wines in oak, especially Chardonnay, while the vines are too young.

The red Marqués de Requena 1993 is Garnacha and Tempranillo with a lovely color and classic flavors enhanced by the American oak. The cava is 100 percent Macabeo grape with three years (Gran Reserva for cava) on the lees, and produces lovely medium size bubbles, good fruit, structure, and length.

Fondillón and Doble Pasta

The next day the weather was foul, and I dreaded the long drive ahead. First I visited the well organized offices and Bodega Redonda of the Regulatory Council in Utiel, where I was warmly welcomed by Julio Salón, one of the inspectors of the council. Without doubt things are moving forward fast, both in the vineyards, with subsidies available for training vines on wires and drip irrigation, and the bodegas, where the council is encouraging investment in stainless steel equipment and new casks.

Before leaving, I determined to find the Casa del Pinar belonging to old friends and owners of a tapas bar in London, Philip and Ana Diment. They have restored a derelict farm into a delightful, small, rustic hotel, each room being individually designed, with a three bedroom house for rent, and a swimming pool. It is in very peaceful surroundings at Los Cojos, twenty kilometers (12.4 miles) south of Requena off the road to Albacete, and, knowing the Diments, you are guaranteed a wonderful welcome.



La Lonja, the old merchants' exchange in Valencia, has as many visitors...

... as there are bottles in its aging racks at the Vicente Gandía Pla winery.

Nearby is the Reserva Nacional de la Muela de Cortes, which is a delightful forested and mountainous nature reserve by the River Júcar, along the left side of the road towards Almansa, and good for hiking. I pressed on to Bodega Nuestra Señora de las Virtudes, in Villena, aiming to learn about Fondillón, a traditional high strength wine made to fortify the people through the cold winters on the high plateau and mountains. The oenologist explained that it is a red wine of the Monastrell grape with a natural alcoholic strength of around 16° to 18°, is aged for many years (10 to 20) in oak casks, and can be dry to medium sweet. Their Tesoro de Villena 1976 had spent twelve years in cask, was the color of oloroso sherry, rich and full bodied, with a trace of sweetness. The body warming effects made it quite clear why this wine used to be so popular.

My instructor also explained the Alicante wine called doble pasta, and it is exactly what the name implies. *Rosado* wines are made from red grapes that are pressed under their own weight, and macerated for as little as four to six hours before the juice is drawn off the remaining pulp (pasta). Instead of then mechanically pressing the pulp, more red grapes are added to make a deep colored, heavy, high strength red wine which is intended primarily for blending. Thus two pastas or doble pasta! The wine is made either for blending, or for those long, cold winter days in the vineyards and fields.

Murcia and the Monastrell Grape

I turned towards Murcia, and, while still in Alicante, passed some beautiful vineyards about which I was to learn more later. Vineyards stretch as far as the eye can see, and even the locals admit there is nothing for the casual visitor here, and that the image of the towns and their wines is very poor, but the latter is changing.

The Monastrell grape is king in Jumilla and Yecla—two Denominations of Origin which only produce around 14 hectoliters per hectare (2.471 acres), (compare with Rioja or Bordeaux at around 60). Such low production levels were little motivation

to invest in producing good wines. However, training on wires and drip irrigation are playing their part here also, and, together with new plantings of Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Merlot, the resulting wines show what great potential there is.

Founded in 1989 by two friends and wine enthusiasts, Bodegas Agapito Rico own one hundred hectares (247.1 acres) of vines planted with all these varieties in the D.O. Jumilla. Marcial Martínez, the oenologist, and his boss, Juan Martínez (no relation) were my hosts. Agapito Martínez, also no relation, is the other partner.

Apparently when they planted the "foreign" varietals everyone else thought they were mad, but, first the grapes, by the roadside disappeared, then some vines were removed. No prizes for guessing what is happening in other vineyards now!

Their philosophy was to concentrate on oak aged wines, but interest and sales in the U.S.A. of their young wine—Carchelo Tinto—has meant their having to rethink their original ideas, and one can see why! The 1997 is 75 percent Monastrell and 25 percent Merlot, with superb color, a soft attractive nose, and delightful fruit. The 1991 Cabernet Sauvignon (75 percent) from young vines, with Monastrell, and aged in oak for 12 months, shows good color, complexity, and soft, ripe fruit. It is probably past its best, and the 1992 is showing better, while the 1997 is already rated as extraordinary by several experts.

Previously I had visited Señorío del Condestable, also in Jumilla and one of several companies in Bodegas y Bebidas, Spain's largest wine producing group, and was shown round by the general manager Alberto Pérez. They sell 5.5 million bottles annually, and 10 percent go for export. The installations are large, and for the first time in my life I came across the fermentation system called Ducellier Isman, which was designed for winemaking in Algeria and aims to extract maximum color and tannins in short fermentation periods, resulting in more intense fruitiness in the wine.

The star of the tasting—Vi-

vala 1997—is a blend of Monastrell and Tempranillo, and won a Bronze Medal at Vinexpo. The Condestable Reserva 1994 is very well made, shows excellent fruit and also earned high marks. Like their near neighbor, García Carrión, Condestable's D.O. business conflicts with a huge table wine business, but both bodegas are increasing their resources for the D.O. wines.

García Carrión is the largest wine company in Jumilla, and one of the largest in Spain. Their table wine brand, Don Simón, is seen everywhere. However, they have already received acclaim for their young Mayoral D.O. wine, which is an embodiment of the enormous potential of Monastrell. Bodegas Castaño in the D.O. Yecla have been making good progress for several years, and their persistence is paying off, with 70 percent of sales being exports, especially to Germany, Holland, and Belgium. Castaño has been using imported varieties for blending with 70 percent or more of Monastrell and I enjoyed the Dominio Espinal 1996 with 10 percent each of Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon. The single estate Pozuelo Reserva 1992, with two years in cask, has good structure and hints of chocolate, while Hecula 1996, a blend of individually fermented grapes and oaked wines of Tempranillo, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon is excellent. But the new single varietals are now the focus of his attention, and the Monastrell 1997 and Cabernet Sauvignon 1997 were the best. The Spanish, Castaño among them, have at last discovered Syrah—several call it Shiraz, and the results are proving them right; it likes a continental climate, and its development here is long overdue.

JAVIER BELLOSO

More Monastrell, Melons, and Moscatel

That night, Wednesday, I stayed in Murcia, a bustling city, on the River Segura, founded by the Moors in 831 A.D. under the rule of the Caliphate of Córdoba, and was an independent Moorish kingdom (Taifa) for a brief time in the 11th century before being reconquered by Castile in 1243. However, the Moors instigated a sophisticated irrigation system which has been modified across the centuries, seeking to harness what little rain there is, and which so often arrives as torrential storms.

One of the most attractive aspects of the town is the splendid baroque architecture of its many churches, monasteries, palaces, and mansions.

Francisco Salzillo was born here in 1707, and many of his sculptures can be found in the cathedral and many churches, and are displayed in the series of processions during the famous *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) celebrations.

A drive from Murcia city through the apricot orchards and vineyards of Bullas brings you to the charming town of Caravaca de la Cruz—literally and irreverently—Cow's Face of the Cross! where the Moors and Christians festival during the first week of May celebrates the conversion of a Moorish king to Christianity, and the heroics of the local male population in resisting the Moorish infidels when protecting their women and children. It is an often violent and bibulous enactment that is repeated with great gusto in many parts of Spain at different times of the year.

The bad weather did not relent, but my visit, next day, to Ignacio Pidal at Finca Carrascalejo was a definite ray of sunshine. In the bodega, under an aging but lovely manorial house built in 1850, he is making thirty thousand cases a year of three qualities: a Monastrell rosado 1996 with a lovely, cherry fruit flavor; a Monastrell red 1996 with ripe fruit, firmness and good structure; and, finally, a tinto Crianza 1991, with 20 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and one year in American oak, which shows great balance of fruit and tannins, clean aromas, good depth and length.

Although the vineyards (100 hectares/247.1 acres) and the bodega are registered in the Denomination of Origin of Bullas, he chooses to market his wines without D.O. for the moment. Monastrell dominates here also, and, again, the potential is excellent. Señor Pidal has a shop on the opposite side of the road, so if you are in the area, call and buy some of his lovely and reasonably priced wines.

The next stop is the small town of Elche where I pass a plantation of 100,000 date palms up to 30 meters (100 feet) high. While the fruit is commercially important, the trees are also the source of the palm fronds that are seen all over Spain during Easter week. The famous Iberian sculpture known as *La Dama de Elche* is reput-

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ed to have been found at nearby L'Alcúdia, and is now housed at the Archeological Museum in Madrid.

Leaving Elche with its palm trees, melons, and vast vineyards of Moscatel eating grapes, I headed off for Alicante and lunch at the Delfín by the famous palm tree lined Paseo Esplanada de España on the sea front. Alicante has a romantic, slightly decadent air about it, and there is clearly a greater laissez faire attitude than further north. It is the center of the Costa Blanca, which, when you visit it, explains why Spain has the unavoidable reputation for sun, sea, and sand. Alicante is said to have the most benign climate in the western Mediterranean, winter and summer, and the golden, sandy beaches stretch for miles before the shimmering, luminescence of the sea, not least at Playa San Juan where I stayed.

There is a lovely train journey along the coast from Alicante to Denia, but I had to take the tortuous coast road, for my penultimate visit was to meet the enthusiastic José Mendoza of Bodegas Enrique Mendoza at Alfaz del Pi in the north of the Alicante D.O. José and his father, who founded the bodega twenty-five years ago, are heavily influenced by Miguel Torres, and obsessed with the need to produce the very best grapes. It was their vineyards I had passed outside Villena, where they have planted sixty-five hectares (160.6 acres) of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Shiraz (there it is again!), Chardonnay, and Parellada. At six hundred meters, it is a far better place to grow grapes than a few kilometers along the coast from Benidorm, where the newly made wine is received in thermostatic road tankers. The bodega is air conditioned throughout and they bottle at least eleven different types of wines.

My favorites were 1996 Shiraz, with nine months in oak. It has a lovely fruit on the nose and great length, but needs more time in bottle, which it will get. The Pinot Noir is outstanding, the Selección Reserva (60 percent Cabernet and 20 percent each of Merlot and Pinot Noir) excellent, and the Cabernet Sauvignon 1994, with twelve months in American and French oak, a gold medalist at the 1997 Bacchus competition in Madrid.

Finally to Gutiérrez de la Vega in the charming village of Parcent at the head of the Benissa valley to meet Felipe Gutiérrez, a Madrileño and ex-naval officer, who has all the youthful enthusiasm of someone half his age. He concentrates on the Garnacha and Monastrell grapes for red wines, and is committed to both the Romano and Alexandria varieties of Moscatel. He produces forty thousand bottles each year, including a little Cabernet and Merlot. The bodega is small and beautifully equipped with stainless steel equipment, but he owns no vineyards and buys grapes under contract locally, or up in the mountains behind, at Alcoy.

Felipe has a dry Muscat from grapes picked in mid-August from terraces facing east to the sea's cool breezes, a rosado 1997, and 1994 Crianza red with 75 percent Garnacha and 25 percent Merlot. The Ulises 1993 aged in French oak for 12 months, though a bit cold, showed good fruit and balance, but was short. This wine, and others on my trip, make me think that Spanish varietals and French oak are not natural partners.

The sky was brightening and I enjoyed a gentle drive across the fertile plain to the Parador El Saler, just south of Valencia, and had time to reflect on the contrasts between the patchwork of citrus groves and paddy fields, and the enormous changes in the little known vineyard regions of the rugged mountains beyond.

BOTTLED WINE EXPORTS (HL)

	1995	1996	1997
D.O. ALICANTE			
WHITE	419.3	85,501.0	242.4
ROSÉ	388.5	51,030.0	271.1
RED	13,362.5	1,768,794.0	18,826.6
D.O. JUMILLA			
WHITE	1,932.7	2,077.8	3,860.9
ROSÉ	-	-	10.0
RED	6,284.5	10,181.0	8,425.9
D.O. UTIEL-REQUENA			
WHITE	562.2	1,352.4	3,047.9
ROSÉ	314.5	783.3	1,574.1
RED	25,979.4	40,791.6	62,486.7
D.O. VALENCIA			
WHITE	38,338.0	28,439.0	52,809.0
ROSÉ	4,658.0	5,441.0	6,494.0
RED	50,870.0	67,134.0	72,712.0
D.O. YECLA			
WHITE	62.0	46.0	336.0
ROSÉ	93.0	69.0	504.0
RED	465.0	345.0	2,520.0

Source: Regulatory Councils of the Denominations of Origin

Jeremy Watson *was Director of ICEX's Spanish Wine Department in London for thirteen years until 1995, but now lives in Mallorca, and works and travels in Spain as a wine marketing consultant and wine writer.*

For Recipes, see page 122 and for Main Exporters, see page 130.

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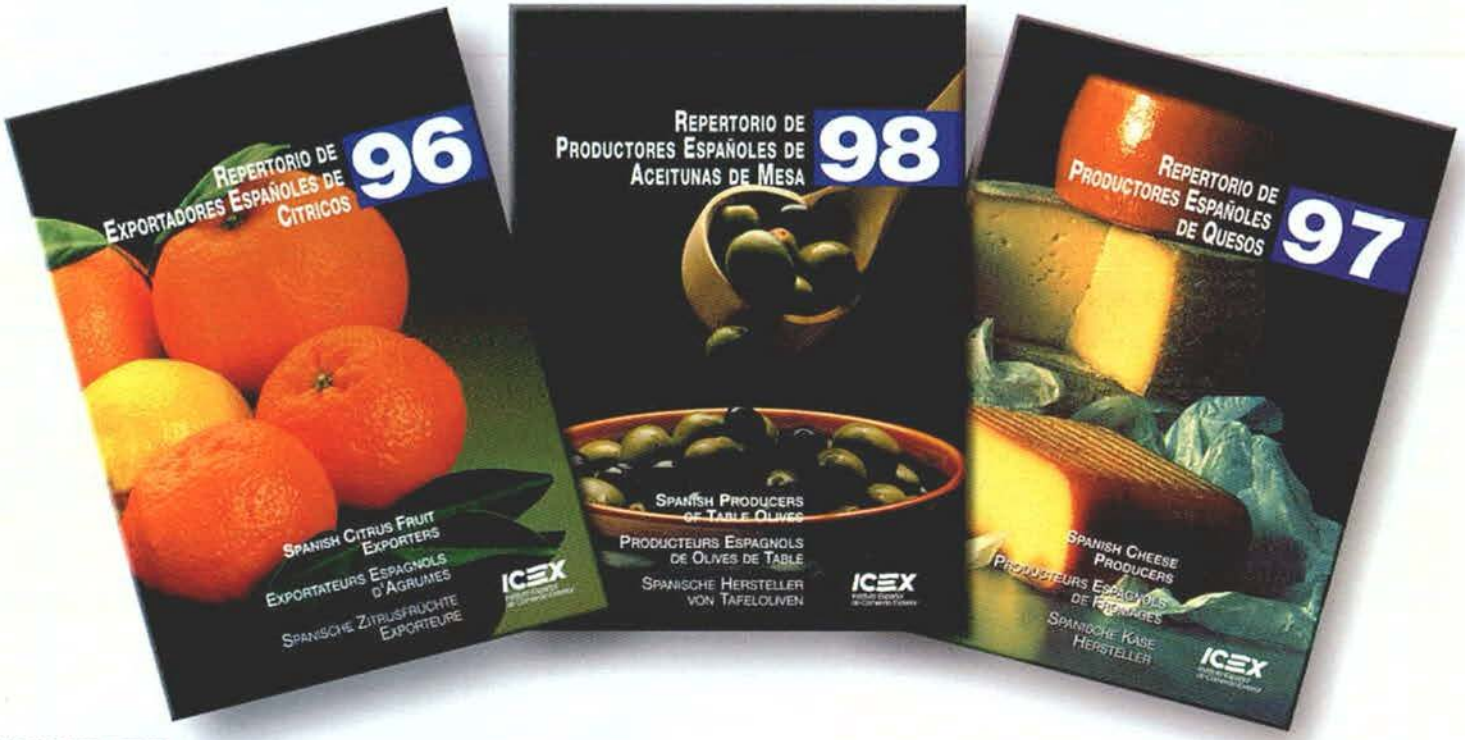

PUBLISHED TITLES

- **Spanish Producers of Table Olives (1998).**
- **Spanish Cheese Producers (1997).**
- **Spanish Citrus Fruit Exporters (1996).**
- **Spanish Manufacturers of Preserved and Semi-preserved Fish (1996).**
- **Spanish Manufacturers of Preserved Vegetables (1996).**
- **Spanish Juices Manufacturers (1996).**
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Rice fields in Calasparra (Murcia).

THE MARKET GARDENS OF THE PLA DE LEVANTE

Across the totally flat landscape of the Pla de Levante right to the foot of the mountains, there is a wealth of market garden (*huerta*) produce and major crops of almonds, citrus fruits, rice, melons, eating grapes, and apricots. It is one of life's great conundrums that crops like citrus and rice which require large amounts of water, should thrive in the driest region of Spain. But stocks are carefully controlled through an irrigation system introduced by the Moors and the Water Council (see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 28, 18) that has met for centuries on an almost weekly basis to examine resources and receive representations concerning usage. The vast expanse of citrus groves dominate the plain of Levante from Castellón through Valencia to Alicante. The air is perfumed with the scent of blossoms in spring, the scene radiant with the colors of the fruit in winter, and the deep green foliage gives an unlikely, fresh, verdance to the landscape. The economic value of this crop is of enormous importance to the region, where over 2.5 million tons of fruit are picked between November and June.

The resurgence of the gastronomy has given a boost to the rice business here, that has been further stimulated by growing exports. The Moors introduced it to Valencia, and the Albufera fresh water lake south of the city irrigates the 16,000 hectares (39,500 acres) of paddy fields.

The great sweetmeat of Spain is *turrón* (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 34) and some 20,000 tons are produced annually in Jijona (the undisputed center of production). They are made from nothing more than almonds, honey—both produced locally, sugar, and egg whites. They are as traditional to a Spanish Christmas as mince pies are for the British.

There are three crops of melons, the Tendral from the Campo de Elche, and the Galia and Canteloupe varieties from Torrevieja, all in southern Alicante. Also in Elche are the 100,000 date palms which yield huge crops of deep orange, sugary dates (*dátiles*), and supply palm fronds for the many Easter celebrations all over Spain.

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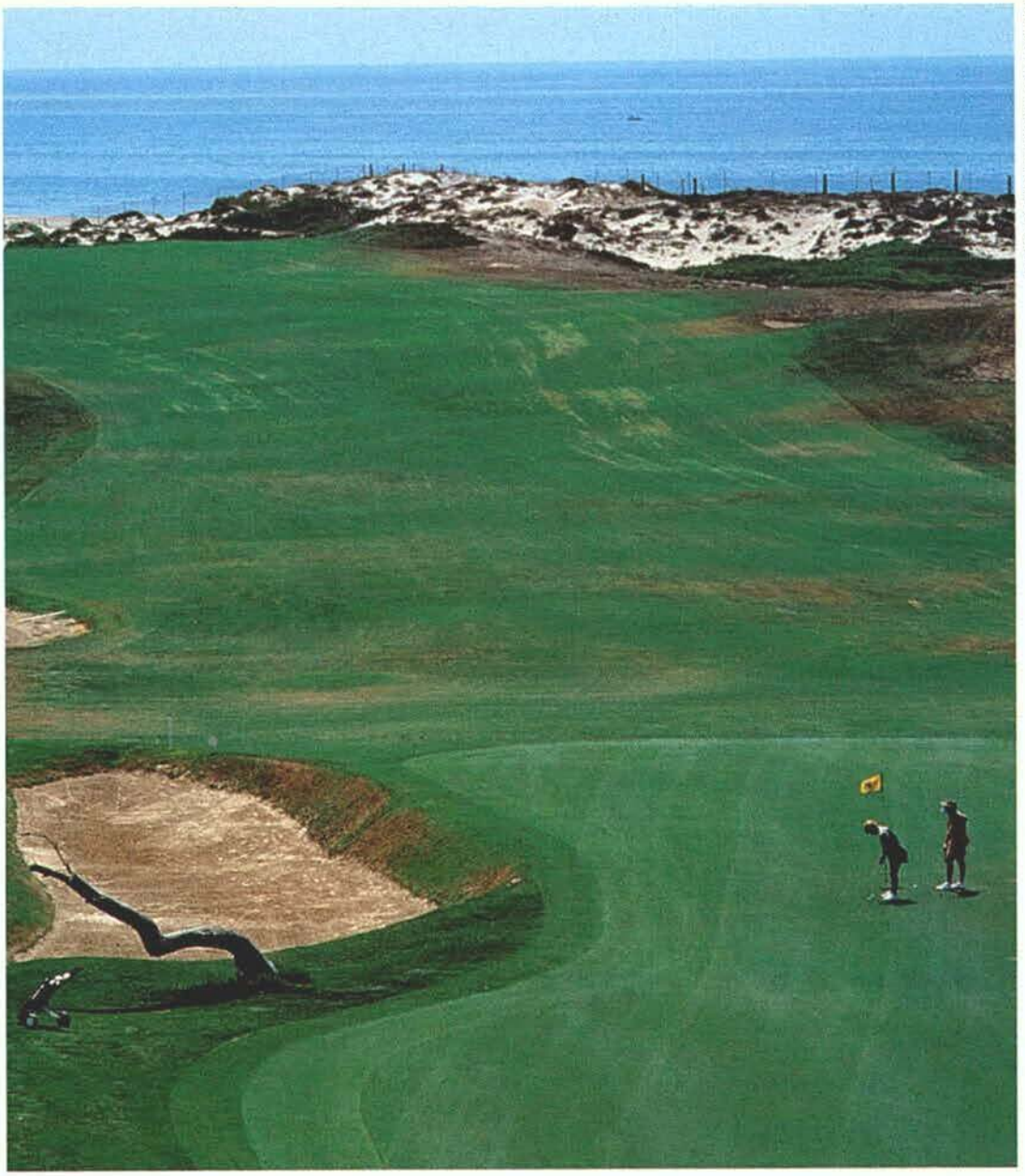

PHOTO: PARADORES DE TURISMO

PARADORES

EL SALER PARADOR AND GOLF

I spent my last night here between the Albufera fresh water lagoon and the sea, just 12 kilometers south of Valencia. This is a modern parador in a magnificent setting, with a championship standard 6,485 meters (7,000 yards), 18 hole—par 72—links golf course with several holes amongst pine trees, and completed in 1968. The Spanish Open was held here in 1989 and won by Bernard Langer in a record ten under par. The back nine are tough with two par 5s over 500 meters long, and two par 3s over 180 meters each. The course is maintained to a high standard with excellent greens, and green fees are modest, especially for those staying in the parador. The "golfing widows" and non-golfers have alternative attractions such as tennis, a swimming pool, and a vast deserted beach, let alone shopping in Valencia!

The hotel is well appointed with large, comfortable rooms, many overlooking the sea, with a spacious bathroom en suite, minibar, television, all centrally heated and air conditioned. There is a good restaurant where you can enjoy a varied menu including regional dishes with wines from the local denominations and other parts of Spain.

To start, I chose an Esgarraet, which is a cold salad of red peppers dressed in shredded salt cod, black olives and olive oil. The contrast of sweetness of the peppers and salt of the cod were an excellent preprandial to a suquet of swordfish, hake, sea bass, mussels, and large prawns, which I enjoyed and thoroughly recommend, served with a bottle of Garnacha rosado. The wine was right for this dish, though I am not averse to a Tempranillo red with such a lovely rich sauce. I finished with oranges, walnuts and honey, and the citrus and nuts cut the delicious sweetness really well. An alternative might have been pinenut pie or a superb looking ice cream cup.

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A shop selling paella pans, for the region's famous rice dish.

PHOTO: VERÓNICA JANSSEN/ICEX

THE GASTRONOMY OF LEVANTE

The gastronomy of Levante is best known for rice dishes, though these are by no means all that are particular to the region.

Paella is the pan in which rice dishes of Levante are prepared. The classical *paella* is that called *valenciana de la huerta*, for which a recipe is shown on page 122.

This is also served as *paella al ciego*—literally blind paella, when the meat is off the bone, and the shellfish out of their shells, so they can be eaten without looking! Another version is *arroz a banda*, especially in Alicante and Castellón, in which only the rice cooked in the stock of fish is served. There are also soup-like rice dishes called *cazuelas de arroces* such as *arroz brut* which use fish with the meats, but paellas of just shellfish or fish or meat are not traditional.

Apart from the cooking of it, critical to a good paella is the rice of the Valencia region, and good quality raw materials. This is not the occasion to use up left overs as do many restaurants in tourist areas; the meat, seafood, and vegetables must be fresh and good quality, believe me, it makes all the difference. It is when they are not that paella becomes the most abused dish in Spain.

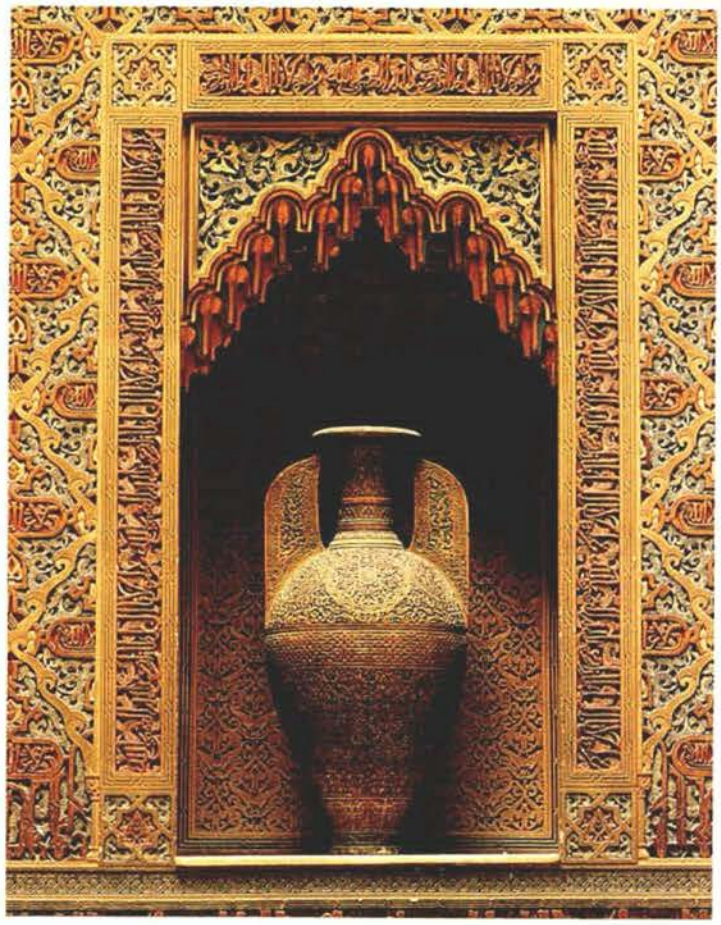
Another dish closely associated with Levante, is *dorada a la sal*—a whole sea bream, cooked in a brick of sea salt, thereby retaining all the succulent juices of the fish. Unfortunately the Mediterranean is no longer a prolific source for shellfish, which now has to be brought in from the Atlantic coast.

Rabbit, partridge, and boar of the hunting grounds (*caza*) inland and the many vegetables and salads of the huerta—market garden—feature widely in the markets and on menus.

Of course fruit is popular in desserts, especially those based on oranges, almonds, and honey, but *turrones* and marzipans are also high on the list. Ice creams are especially good here, along with crushed ice drinks like *granizados* and *horchatas* (made of tiger nuts).

TRAVEL INFORMATION

An example of the Moorish legacy in the Murcia Casino.



VISITING WINE REGIONS AND BODEGAS

Clearly it is not difficult to visit the various wine areas, but visiting the *bodegas* is more tricky. In these regions, with very few exceptions, they are not geared up for visitors, and certainly not without a phone call first. There is often somebody who has a little English, but some French or German is less likely.

DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN OFFICES

Alicante D.O.
Profesor Manuel Sala 2, 03003
Alicante, Tel: (34) 965 900 613, Fax: (34) 965 900 688
There are 13,160 hectares (32,518 acres) of vineyards, which in a good year produce 32 million liters of mainly Monastrell, Alicante, Moscatel plus a little Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Tempranillo.

Bullas D.O.
Avda. de Murcia 4
30180 Bullas (Murcia)
Tel/Fax: (34) 968 652 601
About 3,000 hectares (7,413 acres) in a good year produce 2.5 million liters of mainly Monastrell red wine, and a little Cabernet Sauvignon.

Jumilla D.O.
San Roque 15, 30520 Jumilla (Murcia), Tel: (34) 968 781 761
Fax: (34) 968 781 900
42,000 hectares (103,782 acres) of vineyards produce 49 million liters in a good year of mainly Monastrell red wine, though Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo have been introduced recently.

Utiel-Requena D.O.
Sevilla 12, 46300
Utiel (Valencia)
Tel (34) 962 171 062
Fax: (34) 962 172 185
A total of 38,000 hectares (93,898 acres) produce about 140 million liters in a good year of mainly Bobal, Garnacha, and Tempranillo, though Chardonnay, Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot are being introduced.

Valencia D.O.
Quart 22
46001 Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 910 096
Fax: (34) 963 910 029
Just 16,500 hectares (40,771 acres) of vines produce 62.5 million liters, on average, of mainly white wines from the Meseguera and Macabeo varieties, with some red from Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Monastrell.

Yecla D.O.
Corredera 14
30510 Yecla (Murcia)
Tel/Fax: (34) 968 792 352
7,000 hectares (17,297 acres) produce an average of 8 million liters of mainly Monastrell red grapes, though Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Tempranillo have also been planted lately.

FEATURED BODEGAS

D.O. Alicante
Bodegas Enrique Mendoza
Madrid, 2
03580 Alfaz del Pi (Alicante)
Tel/Fax: (34) 965 888 639

Bodegas Gutiérrez de la Vega
Canalejas, 4
03792 Parcent (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 966 405 266
Fax: (34) 966 405 257
Bodegas Ntra. Sra. de las Virtudes
Ctra. de Yecla, 9
03400 Villena (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 802 187
Fax: (34) 965 813 387
D.O. Jumilla
Bodegas y Viñedos Agapito Rico
Doctor Fleming, 2 Entlo
30520 Jumilla (Murcia)
Tel/Fax: (34) 968 757 172
Bodegas Señorio de Condestable (B&B)
Av Reyes Católicos s/n
30520 Jumilla (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 781 011
Fax: (34) 968 781 100
D.O. Utiel Requena
Bodegas Torre Oria
Ctra. Pontón-Utiel (km 3)
46390 Derramador-Requena (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 962 320 289
Fax: (34) 962 320 311
D.O. Valencia and Utiel Requena
Vicente Gandía Pla
Ctra. Cheste a Godelleta s/n
46370 Chiva (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 96 252 2443
Fax: (34) 96 252 0567
Bodegas Schenk
Poligono El Romeral (km 285)
46340 Requena (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 962 329 003
Fax: (34) 962 329 002
D.O. Yecla
Bodegas Castaño
Ctra de Fuenteálamo, 3
30510 Yecla (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 791 115
Fax: (34) 968 791 900
Presently Non D.O.
Bodegas Carrascalejo
Finca Carrascalejo
30180 Bullas (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 652 003–no fax

WINE FESTIVALS

Jumilla D.O.: During the last fortnight of August.
Utiel-Requena D.O.: Takes place during the last week of August and first week September.
Valencia D.O.: the *Fiesta de la Vendimia* is on the second Sunday of September at Tintaguas high in the hills. At Cheste on the 16th of October, the first wines are blessed.
Yecla D.O.: The bodegas offer the new wines on the day of Immaculate Conception, December 8th.
No events are known for **Bullas D.O.** and **Alicante D.O.** They are all parochial events, but it is a good opportunity to taste a lot of different wines.

PRINCIPAL SIGHTS & VISITS

As in all Mediterranean countries, Spain is rich with historical sites and artifacts, cathedrals, monasteries, and palaces. Moorish influence is widespread, but that of the Romans is also very important, and in Levante, also that of the Cartheginians.

VISITING MUSEUMS

Hours can vary from winter to summer, and with national and local festivals they can be confusing. Normally all public museums are closed on Mondays, with mornings only on Sundays, otherwise open roughly between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

MURCIA PROVINCE

Cartagena: The nearest point in Spain to Carthage was the first landing point for Hannibal's brother in 223 B.C., but also where St. James is reputed to have first brought the Gospel to Iberia around 36-40 A.D. Much of the wealth was founded on the facilities it provided to the mining industries inland. Today it is a naval port and services oil exploration off the coast, and a major oil refinery at Escombreras.
Mar Menor (Lesser Sea): Just to the north of Cartagena is this almost totally enclosed sea where the water is a few degrees warmer and much saltier than the main Mediterranean, so it is ideal for all forms of water sports. The outer bar with long sandy beaches on both sides, is a popular holiday resort called La Manga, which also features one of Spain's loveliest golf courses at Los Belones.
Murcia: The city is the center of the fertile market garden environment of this province, and is a bustling city with pedestrian precincts, excellent shops and pavement cafés, tapas bars and restaurants. The Archeological Museum and Fine Arts Museum are both worth a visit, as is the beautiful cathedral, parts of which date back to the 14th century and is notable for the magnificent baroque west front, and the Renaissance style of some of the interior. The tower has a ramp to the top whence there are splendid views of the city and surrounding countryside. Both here and in **Lorca**, on the road to Almería, they hold colorful, yet very solemn religious festivals during *Semana Santa*—the week before Easter, unlike those celebrated during the week that follows. Then, throughout the countryside of Murcia, there are many light hearted processions, flower battles, music, fireworks, and entertaining events to celebrate the end of Lent.
Caravaca de la Cruz: The Moors and Christians festival (*Moros y Cristianos*) during the first week of May celebrates the conversion of a Moorish king to Christianity.
Huerta Museum: At Alcantarilla will enlighten those interested in the horticulture of the region with background information, and there is the opportunity to see *barracas*—the farmers' overnight dwelling houses and a large water wheel.

ALICANTE PROVINCE

Elche: Has a plantation of 100,000 date palms which are the source of the palm fronds that are seen all over Spain during Easter week. Apart from *La Dama de Elche* many other artifacts, sculptures and ceramics of the same period from the same excavations are displayed at the Elche archeological museum. Elche is also the center of production of footwear in Spain.
Alicante—certainly a captivating memory of this city is the *Esplanada de España* with its tall palm trees and thousands of colored, curved, ceramic tiles arranged to give an effect of rolling waves. There are graceful avenues of shops, bars, and restaurants dominated by the Castillo de Santa Bárbara (16th century).
Jijona: It is the home of *turrón* production and the factories can be visited during working hours. El Museo de Turrón is open from Monday to Saturday, just ring (34) 965 610 225. At Jijona are also the Canalobre Caves 700 meters up a mountainside overlooking the town.
Guadalest: A fortress town which has been constructed into the side of the rock of the Sierra de Aitana, whence there are wonderful views. You can reach it from Altea or Benidorm through Polop and Callosa d'en Sarrià.

VALENCIA PROVINCE

Calpe–Moraira–Cabo de la Nao–Jávea–Denia
There is a lovely drive from the Peñon de Ifach—a mini Gibraltar rock like promontory—at Calpe, along the coast road past the golf course at Moraira, to the eastern outpost of the *Cordillera Baetica* at the Cabo de la Nao, and on to busy Javea with its parador by the beach and then to Denia where the shallow sea is ideal for children. This route is a center for holiday villas and apartments, and a large ex-patriot community of British, French, and Germans.
Gandía: A seaside resort and port for the export of citrus from the surrounding *huerta*. The Duchy of Gandía was given to Rodrigo Borgia (formerly Borja of Campo de Borja in west Aragon) in 1485, who was to become Pope Alexander VI, but better remembered for his notorious private life and daughter Lu-

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Mousses

Using top quality raw material with no additives or preservatives, ROSARA creates innovative products to delight the plate, and adapts them to modern cuisine.

- *Asparagus Mousse*
- *Seafood Mousse*
- *"Piquillo" Red Pepper Mousse*
- *Mushrooms from Navarra Pyrenees*

cretia. The Palacio Ducal is now a Jesuit College and has been considerably modified since its gothic beginnings. A tour to see the richly decorated apartments is well worthwhile.
Cullera: At the mouth of the River Júcar, with a lovely long beach, it is one of several small ports which are worth a visit in late afternoon, when the fishing boats bring in their rather meager catches.
Valencia: A tour around the city center is estimated to take about two hours without actually visiting any of the wonderful buildings on the way—the new and lovely Palau de Musica, the new glass fronted Palacio de Congresos, and next to the Royal Gardens the Museu de Belles Artes with works of El Greco, Goya, Murillo, and Velázquez, the Institute of Modern Art with works by Tápies, Saura, and Chillida, the Ceramics Museum, the Torres de Serrano, the Torres de Quart, the Plaza de la Virgen with the Regional Government Palace, Cathedral and Miguelete tower, the Lonja and the Central Market, not to forget the station, bull ring, and Plaza de Ayuntamiento reveal Valencia for what a splendid city it is. A visit to the refurbished port area with its new leisure environment is also recommended.
Fallas Festival: Takes place in Valencia during the week immediately preceding March 19th—the feast of St. Joseph. It is most noted for the huge *fallas* which are built in every quarter of the city with life size, satirical, sometimes lewd effigies, the evolution and construction of which can be seen at the Museu Faller. The effigies, thought too good to burn, are preserved here with posters and other artifacts.
Embutidos Festival: *Embutido* is the generic name for the many kinds of different sausage meats they make in Spain, not least in Levante, and in **Requena**, around February 14th, there is a festival at which you can taste a wide variety.

CASTELLÓN PROVINCE

Costa de Azahar: This is the Orange Blossom Coast of Valencia and Castellón, where the mountains descend close to the sea at Benicarló with its modern parador by the beach, Peñiscola and Benicasím also with lovely beaches.
Sagunto: Formerly a small port, it is now surrounded by the silted up huerta, dominated by the ruins of the citadel of the "Acropolis" built by Iberians, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, and Moors.

RESTAURANTS

VALENCIA PROVINCE

Restaurante La Pepica
Paseo Neptuno
46011 Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 710 366
Excellent rice dishes and seafood. It is thought to be one of the best of a group of about twenty similar establishments by the beach, where you can sit outside in warm weather. Valencia features an abundance of good places to eat to suit all pockets.
Mesón del Vino
Avda. Arrabal
46340 Requena
Tel: (34) 962 300 001
One of the two best restaurants in Requena providing a lovely ambience, a great range of regional dishes, and the opportunity to try the wines of the region.
Restaurante Galbis
Avda. Antonio Almela, 15
46250 L'Alcúdia de Carlet
Owned by one of the city's leading restaurateurs who has decamped to the huerta and continues to be acclaimed for his regional and international cooking. Do not confuse with Alcúdia de Crespins.

MURCIA PROVINCE

Restaurante Monasterio
Avda. Ntra. Sra. de la Asunción
30520 Jumilla
Tel: (34) 968 782 092
Good basic fare, not particularly regional, and good selection of wines.
Señorío de Jomelsu Tapas Bar
Calle Isidoro de la Cierva, 3
30001 Murcia
Tel: (34) 968 212 133
Lovely atmosphere and excellent and some unusual tapas.
El Rincón de Pepe
Calle Apóstoles, 34
30001 Murcia
Tel: (34) 968 212 239
An excellent international style restaurant which is highly rated by the food guides.

ALICANTE PROVINCE

Restaurante Delfín
Esplanada de España, 12
03001 Alicante
Tel: (34) 965 214 911
A first class restaurant with three Michelin knives and forks that specializes in seafood dishes. Next door, the sister restaurant (*Arrocería*) prepares a wide range of rice dishes, including the Alicante style of *paella—arroz a banda.*
Nou Manolin
Villegas, 3
03001 Alicante
Tel: (34) 965 200 368
This is an award winning restaurant that has stood the test of time and remains one of the most highly rated in these parts. There is an excellent cellar.

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATION

VALENCIA PROVINCE

Hotel Ad Hoc
Calle Boix, 4
46003 Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 919 140
Fax: (34) 963 913 667
Comfortable central hotel near the Torres Serrano and Turia river gardens.
Casar del Pinar
Los Cojos
46345 Requena
Tel/Fax: (34) 962 139 008
Beautiful, rustic, peaceful farmhouse surrounded by vineyards with a recommended restaurant. Not always open, so book well in advance, it will be worth it.
Parador El Saler
Avda. de los Pinares, 151
46012 El Saler (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 961 611 186
Fax: (34) 961 627 016

MURCIA PROVINCE

Hotel Monreal
Dr. Fleming, 8
30520 Jumilla
Tel/Fax: (34) 968 781 816
The only hotel in town, quite modern and functional, with a restaurant.
Hotel Arco de San Juan
Plaza de Ceballos, 10
30003 Murcia
Tel: (34) 968 210 455
Fax: (34) 968 220 809
Very nice, stylish 4 star hotel with very comfortable and well equipped accommodations and highly rated restaurant.

ALICANTE PROVINCE

Hotel Almirante
Avda. de Niza, 38
03450 Playa de San Juan
Tel: (34) 965 650 112
Fax: (34) 965 657 169
Comfortable hotel set back from the beach with good basic facilities and a reasonable restaurant. More suited to holidays than business.

TOURIST OFFICES

Alicante Province:
Esplanada de España 2
Alicante
Tel: (34) 965 212 285
Castellón Province:
Plaza Maria Agustina 5
Castellón
Tel: (34) 964 227 703
Murcia Province:
Alejandro Sequier 4
Murcia
Tel: (34) 968 213 716
Valencia Province:
La Paz 46
Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 510 417

GRUPO NAVIDUL

GRUPO NAVIDUL

Navidul is quite simply Spain's number one producer of cured *serrano* hams and charcuterie products. It is also a pioneer in opening up new markets abroad—and is the only Spanish company allowed to export ham to the U.S. The secret of its success lies in a commitment to being the best at what it does, a commitment spelled out in the company's name: Na (natural) Vi (viejo, or matured), and Dul (dulce, or sweet). Navidul.

A Serious Business, This Serrano Ham

Text: **Nick Lyne** Photos: **Navidul/ICEX**

NOW, WITH AN ANNUAL TURNOVER OF 37.5 BILLION PESETAS, AND A WORKFORCE OF 1,100, THE COMPANY IS SPAIN'S NUMBER TWO MEAT GROUP, AND A MARKET LEADER IN HAMS, WITH A SHARE OF 12 PERCENT, AND ALSO OF CHORIZO, GARNERING 15 PERCENT.

Navidul is one of those peculiarly Spanish success stories which manages to combine tradition and the latest technology. Back in the central city of Toledo in the early 1950s, when the country finally began to leave behind the austerity of the post Civil War years, Manuel Díaz Ruíz set up a family business preparing and selling cured pork products such as *chorizo* and *salchichón* sausages, and of course ham.

Spain's charcuterie industry is, to say the least, fragmented, and more than 60 percent of the market is still made up of more than fifteen hundred small companies with local distribution, who altogether make up most of the 30 million hams produced each year.

The challenge that the Díaz Ruíz family set itself was to establish a business with a nationwide network without compromising quality. Despite always having had a wide range of products—and which now includes cooked meats and even cheeses—Navidul has become known fundamentally for the high quality of its serrano hams.

The decision to become a market leader in serrano ham was taken back in the mid 1970s, when the company opened the largest ham curing plant in Spain, and adopted the name Navidul. The 1980s saw a series of investments which constantly pushed the company forward as a major producer of cured hams, breaking the three million hams a year mark. Now the company has eight plants for curing ham and preparing a variety of charcuterie products. Navidul currently produces some 3.5 million hams a year.

Unprecedented Expansion

The nineties have seen unprecedented expansion by Navidul, which has secured the company's place as a market leader. In 1991, the until-then solidly family-run company allowed in outside investors, ceding a minority percentage of the value of the firm to some groups who bet on the project (the families that own Larios S.A. and Paribas). In 1995, the company bought the Revilla Group, one of Spain's top meat products companies, from Unilever. In the process the family briefly lost its majority shareholding, although this has since been recovered. The last two years have been taken up with the absorption of Revilla into the group. When Navidul took over the firm, it planned a three-year process to integrate Revilla and modernize its plants in Soria, in northern Spain.

Earlier this year, Navidul signed an agreement with France's Fleury Michon and Italy's Beretta, which will give Navidul the distribution network it needs in European markets through the Italian and French partners.

At the beginning of the year, the company announced that it was to consolidate its ham business with the setting up of a new subsidiary, Navidul Extremadura.

Navidul plans to increase the capital of the subsidiary by allowing in regional institutional investors CEX and SOFIEX, who are to take 30 percent each in the new division, leaving Navidul with a 40 percent stake. Navidul Extremadura is currently building a 4.7 billion peseta plant in Trujillo, in the western region of Extremadura, which is due to produce some 1.5 million serrano and *ibérico* hams a year from 1999.

Navidul plans a launch on the Spanish stock exchange over the next two years. Despite the changes, and the entry of outside capital, Navidul is still 51 percent controlled by the Díaz family. Now, with an annual turnover of 37.5 billion pesetas, and a workforce of 1,100, the company is Spain's number two meat group, and a market leader in hams, with a share of 12 percent, and also of chorizo, garnering 15 percent.

The Secret Is in the Curing

A visit to Navidul's newest plant at Olías del Rey in Toledo is to see cutting-edge technology applied to maintaining the taste and quality which comes from centuries-old traditions and skills. The plant's modern exterior hides an operation which produces one million hams a year. At any one time, some 650,000 hams are undergoing curing.

At this point, some explanation is necessary. Spanish ham can sometimes seem a complicated business, with many categories and terms related to geographical zones, preparation time and what the animal has been fed on (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 44). Far and away the bulk of Navidul's hams are serrano, which comes from the ordinary, "white" pig, which is fodder fed. Navidul also produces ibérico ham, which is made from Spain's ibérico pig left to forage in meadows, and fattened to varying degrees with acorns.

The process begins at the Olías del Rey plant when pork legs and shoulders arrive and are sorted according to weight. After cleaning they are then laid in salt vats for up to 12 days. Then begins the process of curing.

In much of rural Spain, smallholdings still slaughter one or two pigs a year. From Saint Martin's day, November 11, on to January. The overall curing process lasts up to 14 months. Curing plants such as Navidul's, explains José María del Río, recreate the exact conditions that a ham, hanging in the loft of a peasant house in one of Spain's mountain regions would encounter. Thus, hams in the Olías del Rey plant enter large, sealed chambers where computers reproduce the different temperature and humidity cycles of the year that a typical ham would go through. The first phases recreate winter, with temperatures as low as 3°C (41°F), and passing on to the summer months, when the weather might reach up to 35°C (95°F) or more. This gradual heating up and then cooling is fundamental if the fat on the outside of the ham is to gradually penetrate the meat. The whole process, with its emphasis on time

PCYC

SOLERA GRAN RESERVA

CARDENAL MENDOZA

Brandy de Jerez

SANCHEZ ROMATE HNOS. JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

A VISIT TO NAVIDUL'S NEWEST PLANT AT OLIAS DEL REY IN TOLEDO IS TO SEE CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY APPLIED TO MAINTAINING THE TASTE AND QUALITY WHICH COMES FROM CENTURIES-OLD TRADITIONS AND SKILLS.

and natural process, and master craftsmen gauging the evolution of the ham throughout the curing, is comparable to the preparation of wine.

Export Strategy

For Navidul, 1998 is the year the firm really goes international. "As a matured market, the ham sector in Spain has reached a stable level of growth," recognizes José María del Río, Navidul's International Department director. The solution has been to internationalize the company. But Spain's ham and sausage manufacturers have faced a ban on pork products dating back to the early 1960s because of recurrent swine fever. But in 1990, the European Union and the United States lifted their bans on serrano ham, or ham from white pigs.

As early as 1985, explains del Río, the company realized that it had to find markets abroad. For this reason, Navidul bought a curing plant in the French city of Taninges in 1986, and using French pork, it has thus been able to establish a valuable presence outside Spain which it has built on. France is Navidul's main export market, taking 30 percent of exports. Britain, Germany, and the Benelux countries make up 40 percent together, and the remaining 30 percent goes to Portugal, Italy, Argentina, and most significantly, the U.S. Although exports currently make up only 5.5 percent of sales, the company is pushing for up to 12 percent by the year 2001. Del Río points out that 1997 has been the watershed year, with exports up 45 percent on 1996. In 1996, Navidul was the first Spanish company to win U.S. approval to export meat products there. "Navidul is the only Spanish company to have fulfilled all the U.S. requirements, which has already given us a commercial advantage in such an important market," comments del Río.

Navidul's aim is to establish a steady market in the U.S., where, by the end of the century, it hopes export some 150,000 hams each year. Distribution, which began in November of last year, is organized from New Jersey, and the ham is sold in specialist food shops and restaurants along the east coast, Florida, California, and the Chicago area.

Navidul is proud of the quality of its serrano hams, and feels that it can win overseas markets with this product. Abroad, the company's products are marketed by their own distribution companies and local distributors, and its brand name is still little known. The United States market is still to be developed, and Navidul, although proud it is the only Spanish ham producer to have met the stringent requirements of the Americans, sees a lot of hard work in opening up the market there. José María del Río points out only half-jokingly that having the market to themselves isn't necessarily such a good thing. Serrano ham, like other Spanish gourmet products such as *cava*, or olive oil, still suffers from lack of exposure abroad, particularly in the United States.

Selling Ham Abroad

Spain's ham sector is very fragmented, with literally hundreds of producers of varying degrees of quality. Although serrano ham for export uses Spanish pigs, domestic production imports pork. This means that, for producers like Navidul, a regulating council to define the conditions and characteristics of serrano ham has been vital in establishing overseas markets.

The Consorcio del Jamón Serrano, or Serrano Ham Consortium was set up in the early 1990s to define joint policies among the major producers in the sector. Since its inception, Navidul, keen to see strict standards of quality control, has been an active member of the consortium. After rigorously overseeing the production process of its members, the consortium literally gives its seal of approval, giving customers at home and abroad a basis on which to judge their ham.

Although barely 20 companies are members of the consortium, they make up 50 percent of serrano ham production. The consortium also helps its members to market ham at home and abroad. Little known in much of Europe and the United States, José María del Río says a large part of the consortium's job is in promoting awareness of Spanish ham.

In Spain, serrano ham is still largely sold cut from the complete ham either by machine or by hand. The visitor to Spain will have noticed shops, market stalls, and supermarket delicatessens with a row of hams hanging behind the counter. Del Río notes that while sales of precut ham are gradually taking off, consumers still expect things to be done in the time honored way.

Del Río is confident that Spanish serrano ham will carve out an overseas market, and that it can easily compete with its only serious rival, Italian prosciutto ham. Navidul's export policy is simple, and based in large part on its national success. The company has a quality product, and has created the right distribution networks and strategic alliances. The rest is a question of time.

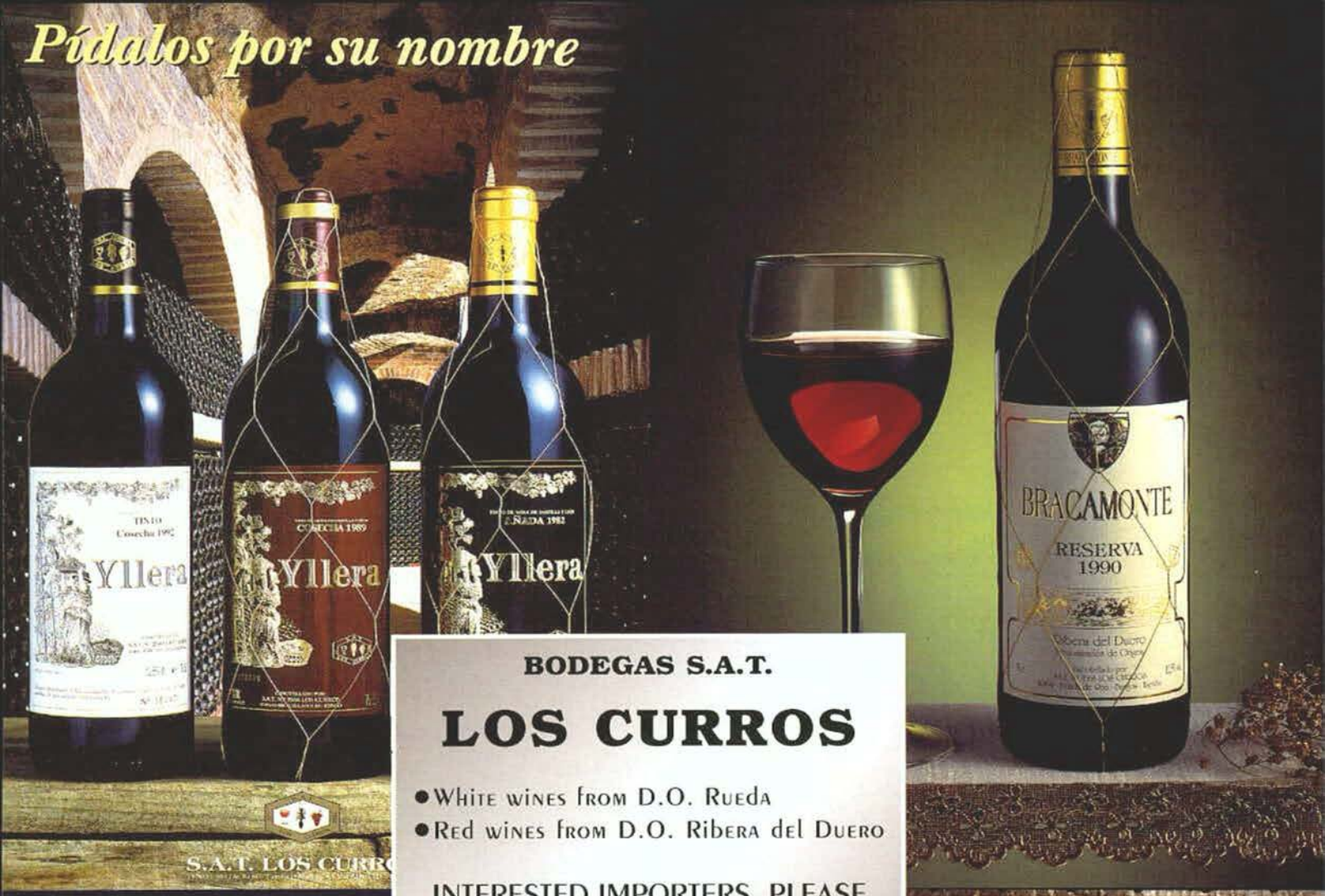
NAVIDUL EXPORTS

Year	Mill. ptas.
1994	880
1995	1,080
1996	1,350
1997	2,000

Source: Navidul

Nick Lyne *is a full-time journalist who has lived in Spain for more than seven years. He has edited a number of guides on the capital, Madrid, and is finally getting on with that novel he came here to write.*

Pídalos por su nombre



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)

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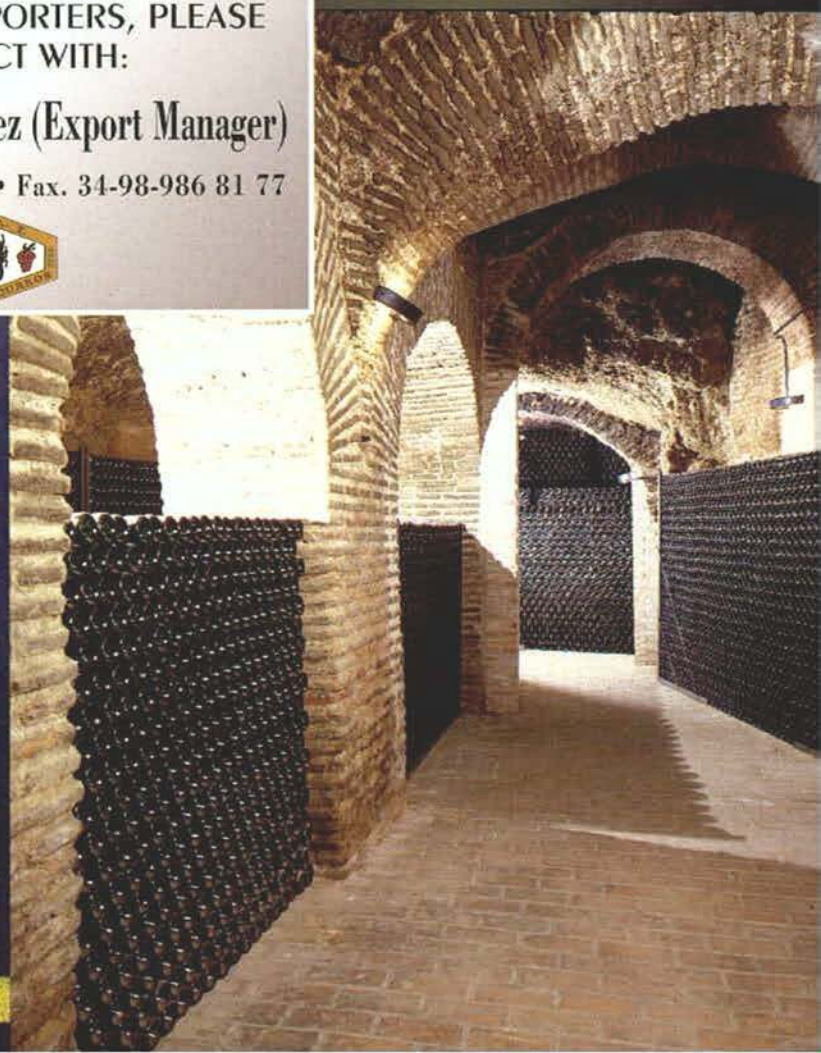

Text: **María José Sevilla**
Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**
Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**
Still life: **Menchu Artime**

SALINE SOLUTIONS

Spanish Ways with Salted Fish

If I were asked to name a few of the ingredients we Spaniards most like to eat, and most typical of my country's cuisine, or rather cuisines, I'd start my list with olive oil, going on to mention onion, garlic and parsley, *pimentón* and saffron, and that's only the beginning. In the fish section, salted fish would have to be among the first mentioned, since fish treated this way—salted to an almost fossil-like appearance—has formed part of our diet for over 2000 years.

Salted fish products, known in the Iberian Peninsula since time immemorial, constitute a significant and defining chapter in the cuisines of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Levante, and Andalusia, and feature, to varying degrees, in the culinary traditions of every town and village of both coastal and inland Spain. Many factors have contributed to the Spaniards' affinity for a category of foodstuffs often looked down upon by other cultures and peoples. The fact is that in a country relatively poor in freshwater fish and lacking in pasture lands, our taste for everything that comes from the sea is equaled only by our passionate relationship with our native town or region of Spain. Since ancient times, in their pursuit of the king of the deep, Spanish fishermen have crossed seas and oceans, finding adventure, new worlds and new tradable products as they went.

The need to preserve food which would enable them to travel still further afield honed their ingenuity, and Spain's tough terrain and climate combined with the dietary strictures of the Catholic Church provided an additional boost to the popularity of salted fish. Humble but flavorful sardines, tiny anchovies, intrepid tuna, deep cold water fish such as cod, fish both "white" and "blue," from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean... The list of fish that the Spanish like to salt is as long as man's perennial need to preserve the survival food he needs in an edible state: roe of meager, cod, ling, and hake, *mojama* from Alicante and Huelva (see below), anchovies from Cantabria and La Escala in Gerona, bonito, mackerel, opened-out or closed ... these salted products that were once poor man's food are now eaten by the well-to-do and connoisseurs of good food.

The Background Story

In earliest times, man fished the rivers and later the sea. He soon realized that when fish was cleaned and left to dry in the wind and sun, or smoked in the heat of the fire, it could be transported over long distances and would remain edible for weeks or even months. Then he discovered salt, and this discovery opened an important new chapter in the annals of human nutrition, since salt preserved the qualities that were virtually lost in the process of drying in the open air, and contributed to making certain foods last longer. In Spain, on the threshold of the new millennium, we are still using the same methods for salting fish that the Phoenicians introduced into the sea salt rich Iberian Peninsula. But the traditional methods that have survived intact to the present day are now under threat from the crisis in the fishing industry and the high cost of artisan processing.

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Pera • Birnen • Poire						●	●	●	●			
Manzana • Apfel • Pommes								●	●	●		
Cereza • Kirschen • Cerise					●	●						
Ciruela • Pflaumen • Prunes							●	●				
Albaricoque • Aprikosen • Apricot						●	●					
Higos • Feige • Figue								●	●	●		
Nectarina • Nectarine					●	●	●	●	●			

FECHAS DE COMERCIALIZACION

	E	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Melocotón • Pfirsiche • Péche					●	●	●	●	●	●		
Pera • Birnen • Poire	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Manzana • Apfel • Pommes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cereza • Kirschen • Cerise					●	●						
Ciruela • Pflaumen • Prunes							●	●				
Albaricoque • Aprikosen • Apricot						●	●					
Higos • Feige • Figue								●	●	●		
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In Spain, on the threshold of the new millennium, we are still using the same methods for salting fish that the Phoenicians introduced into the sea salt rich Iberian Peninsula.

Spanish historian Manuel Martínez Llopis, a specialist in the history of food and gastronomy, describes how the Greeks and Romans established important salting factories along the Spanish coast, especially in Andalusia and Levante, both areas famous for all sorts of delicacies considered luxury foods by the Ancients. The range of salt products produced during the imperial period was wide. The favorites were derived from the tuna, especially those made of the meatier, least oily cuts, and also the famous *garum*, a sauce made with mackerel intestine macerated with salt and exposed to the sun until completely decomposed. Garum was a basic ingredient of the cuisine of Ancient Rome. Other, less important, salted fish products were made by submerging fish, either whole or cut into large pieces, in a concentrated solution of sea salt (known in Spanish as *salmuera*), and these were transported as far as Rome in earthenware pots. *Atún de ijada*, belly or *ventresca* tuna, is still made by this method in the part of Spain's east coast known as Levante. The second part of this background story dates back to the 10th century, and has the Basque fisherman and the cod as its protagonists. Of these, more later.

Tuna Traps

While opinions differ about what motivated peoples like the Phoenicians to venture across the Mediterranean, trade and metals are generally accepted as the primary reasons. César Aguilera, however, in his *Historia de la Alimentación Mediterránea* (History of Mediterranean Food), suggests that westward exploration was very possibly closely linked to a quest to trace the tuna's point of departure. Professor Aguilera focuses on the conundrum of why these explorers always established their settlements close to salt beds and traditional tuna-fishing locations. The pointers seem to indicate multiple reasons. Maritime control of the Straits between Africa and Iberia was tantamount to enjoying direct access to one of the richest Western territories in metallurgical terms, as well as total control over the influx of tuna into the Mediterranean. Aguilera points out that certain eastern Mediterranean peoples suffered from both serious food shortages and overpopulation. The tuna was monarch of the sea and the table for the early sailors of the Mediterranean and, much like the Iberian pig, no part of it was allowed to go to waste.

The instinctive urge which impels the tuna to head for the warmer waters of the Mediterranean to spawn each year, causes tuna from all points of the Atlantic to converge, in schools of many hundreds, on the area of the Straits of Gibraltar in the months of May and June. These are the "outward bound" tuna. In late August, now "homeward bound," they double back and redistribute themselves throughout the Atlantic. The fine quality of the big fish that have responded to the instinctive urge to follow this route since the beginning of time explains why those early fishermen installed their factories where they did and created the system of pound nets, known there as *las almadrabas*, whose use in Spain dates back to before the Roman occupation. The word almadraba derives from Arabic, and refers to a fishing method which uses a system of fixed nets, the largest employed in the fishing industry, aimed specifically at catching tuna. This pound net is composed of a sort of net maze, whose many compartments lead into a rectangular central enclosure (or "pound") from which the tuna cannot escape, and from which they are extracted by men working in coordination from boats. The almadrabas still occupy the same positions today as they did over three thousand years ago. Unlike the situation in Levante, where towns such as Benidorm, once an important focus of almadraba fishing, now live by tourism, little has changed in the lives of the fishermen of Barbate and Zahara de los Atunes (whose very name—Zahara of the Tuna—reveals its identification with the industry) in the Andalusian province of Cádiz. Their fishermen are ready and waiting for the arrival of the tuna in the Straits each summer. However, although the tuna is no longer fished in Levante, it still has its own little salted fish industry which still uses the old traditional artisan methods.

The Salted Fish of Andalusia and Levante

The salted fish of southern Spain and Levante deserve a book to themselves, and in a brief article one can not hope to do them justice. However, I have divided the most important salted fish products of these areas into five categories: roe products; specific cuts of fish such as mojama (tuna back); salted tuna products made by the *empipado* method (described below); whole salted fish, such as bonito; and lastly fish salted in salmuera (concentrated brine), which include sardines and anchovies, though these last are much more important in Cantabria and Catalonia. Fish caught in the almadrabas and by other methods are landed at the ports and sold at quayside auctions (the method used at these auctions is to bid downwards from a high starting price). They are then transported to the salting factories where they are processed according to requirements. Salted fish products are also made out of season using frozen fish, and also lesser known fish which, depending on expertise of handling, can fetch good prices both at home and abroad.

Top of the Range

Roes, mojamas, entrails (specifically the air bladder) and belly cuts, especially of tuna, but also of other species such as meager and gray mullet, are processed separately using exclusive artisan techniques that have

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Mojama is the name given to salted, cured back cuts of tuna. Top quality ones are a glossy, dark color and can be up to a meter long.

been practiced over the centuries and passed down by word of mouth. They are segregated immediately from the other cuts, both for their delicacy status and for the prices they fetch: almadraba tuna roes, two per female, are among the most costly foodstuffs in the world, comparable only with caviar and acorn-fed *ibérico* ham. These fine quality, delicious tasting roes are not to be confused with salted frozen roes which are also to be found on the market and which are processed in a slightly different way from the artisan almadraba roe.

The experts prepare roes as follows: they are washed and placed in salt for 24 hours, ensuring that they are under no pressure to avoid splitting. They are then washed again, the salt is changed and they are placed in a press. Over the next few days—the exact period varies from a week to twelve days—the salt is changed daily and the pressure is slightly increased, which is what gives them their characteristic flat shape. Then, after a thorough washing, they move on to the drying phase, entailing exposure to moderate amounts of wind and sun for between 24 and 48 hours, followed by another 24 hours in a more protected part of the drying chamber. These roes fetch very high prices—around 10,000 pesetas a kilo (US$67)—which reflect the labor intensive process that their fragility demands, and the fact that only female roes are used (male roes are poor in quality and texture), representing only 50 percent of the tuna which pass through the Straits each year between May and June. Almadraba tuna roes are processed both in Andalusia and in Levante. Roes of ling and meager are even more expensive, with prices reaching up to (US$100) a kilo.

Mojama—salted, cured back cuts of tuna—also belongs in this top of the range bracket. Top quality pieces of mojama are a glossy, dark color and can be up to a meter long and seven to eight centimeters wide and thick. It is made as follows: after salting for 24 hours, the pieces of fish are washed and placed in a dampened "bag" for a further 48 hour cleansing period. They are then submerged in large sinks of water to get rid of any remaining salt, then thoroughly washed in four or five changes of water. Then, suspended from one end, they are hung out to dry in the open air. If the original cut is kept intact, and the quality is impeccably high, a piece of mojama can fetch up to 8,000 pesetas a kilo (US$53). Both roes and mojama are served cut into wafer thin slices, either alone, drizzled with a little virgin olive oil, as an aperitif nibble or *tapa*, or in salad, accompanied by tomatoes, onion, beetroot, and a Mediterranean pickle or two.

One important thing to remember about salted fish products from southern Spain and Levante is that each cut and species of fish calls for its own specific degree of salting, of pressure when applicable, of airing and drying in the sea breeze... all of which calls for lots of expert attention.

Salt to Taste

The method used for salting other parts of the tuna is, in broad terms, the following: first, the tuna are scaled, gutted and cut into the appropriate pieces on large tables. They are then scalded, washed, and "presalted" with coarse salt, then later placed in wooden casks with more salt (medium-grain this time) for maceration to take place. These casks have different names according to their capacity, ranging from the *pipa* (400 kg), through the *media pipa* (200 kg), to the *cuarterola* (100 kg). The highly complicated maceration process incorporates a basically simple pressing process which consists of placing a weight on top of the cask lid so that superfluous liquid oil is expressed from the salt fish. This process is known in the trade as the empipado. Whole fish, such as bonito, mako (a type of shark), mackerel, and blue whiting, opened out and "butterflied" (these are known as *"capellanets"* in Levante) are also popular, though they are neither as prestigious nor as pricy as mojamas and roes. Salted cured bonito is prepared as follows: the fish are opened, gutted and slashed lengthwise in several places, avoiding cutting the skin, so that they will lie flat—in some cases, this is achieved by threading in two horizontal strips. Later, they are placed in wooden boxes and salted, a process that can last from one to six days depending on what the customer wants. They are then placed in dryers until "done."

Salted sardines, the humblest and perhaps the most valuable ally in the battle against hunger in times of hardship, are prepared in brine using a method very similar to, though even simpler than, the method used for the belly cuts of tuna known as ijada or ventresca. The fish are cleaned, immersed in brine for a few hours, washed again, lightly dried, and then placed in the barrels from which they are sold in markets all over Spain.

Salted Fish Up North

For any Spaniard, the words *anchoa* (anchovy) and *bacalao* (cod) are synonymous with the Cantabrian coast and northern Spain. While for me, personally, salted anchovies mean the ports of Laredo, Castro Urdiales, and Santoña, salt cod means my home patch of Navarre and the Basque Country and then Catalonia, another region that has succumbed over time to the gastronomic charm and versatility of one of the supposedly less attractive products of the deep—dried salt cod, which is really the only form in which we know cod, or bacalao, in Spain. The history of the codfish and its relation to Spanish gastronomy is a story of adventure, love, and even duty. It is a story that can be told in a thousand ways, depending on the teller and even on the time of year. "Cod, the Spaniard, and Lent" might well be the title of one of the

In schools of many hundreds, tuna from all points of the Atlantic converge on the Straits of Gibraltar in May and June of each year.

least popular chapters, if only because Lent represents a prohibition on doing what we like most, eating what we want. The Catholic Church used to forbid eating meat on practically half the days of the year, among them every Friday, the forty days of Lent, and many more for one reason and another. These were known simply as "bacalao days." Other important chapters of the story would mention the earthenware dishes of bacalao that the cooks of northern Spain manipulate with such caressing skill, and the famous tin cans known as *llaunas* in which the Catalans cook one of their favorite bacalao dishes. Potatoes, chick peas and spinach, pimentón and dried chili, garlic and olive oil are just some of the ingredients that accompany salted fish in most of their culinary appearances.

In my book *Life and Food in the Basque Country*, I wrote: "The Basques' particular fame for salted cod dishes can also be ascribed to their long history as adventurous fishermen through vocation and necessity. They have always gone much further afield than other fleets, venturing into the oceans as far back as the 10th century looking for fish and the whale, and then by the 15th century fishing for cod in the cold waters of North America." Now, Mark Kurlansky in his amazing book *Cod, A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* goes much further, claiming that Basque fishermen were very familiar with the rich waters around North America, and were fishing them long before the explorer Columbus discovered the capsicum pepper rather than the spice pepper he had set out to find, in 1492. Kurlansky believes that, for centuries, the Basques kept one of the greatest secrets ever, and that their reason for doing so was their determination to safeguard their exclusive fishing rights. Unlike the Vikings, who also preserved fish by drying it, in their case in the open air on hillsides beside the fjords, and ate it dry in chunks, the method of salting and drying used by the Basque fishermen made it last much longer. Furthermore, reconstituting the fish by soaking it made it much more palatable, and even cookable. Kurlansky observes: "When you discover the imagination and dedication the Basques have devoted to the culinary use of this disarmingly plain looking fish, you understand that the two are synonymous."

Types of Bacalao

The bacalao that is such a favorite with the Basque gastronomic fraternities and in the home cooking of Andalusia, the Canary Islands, and Catalonia, is the variety known as Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*). Its natural habitat is in cold climate zones associated with warm marine currents, of which these fast swimmers take advantage during their migrations. They inhabit the coastal waters of North America, Greenland, Iceland, and Scandinavia. Depending on where they are fished, cod are caught from February until late summer. Once caught, they are opened, cleaned, and salted immediately, still on the high seas, to preserve their whiteness and texture. The quality of the product and the price it fetches depends on fishing methods and the degree of care with which it is handled, salted and packed in wooden boxes. Back in port, the fish is washed and placed on platforms where it both airs and dries. New technology in the form of a warm-air drying-tunnel introduced in 1940, revolutionized and speeded up production of a still unrivaled fish product.

In Spain, apart from significant recent price rises and an increase in the range of products available in specialist shops, little has changed in the last 30 years as far as salted fish is concerned. That said, though, the precarious state of the fishing industry and the market for cod has brought about dramatic changes. In consequence of a shortage of fish and of no longer having access to waters they have fished traditionally for centuries, Basque fishermen have given up crossing the Atlantic, and the vast handling and drying factories of Pasajes and Bilbao are gradually closing down. Even so, bacalao can still be bought all over Spain which, in the face of these blows, has simply become a bacalao importing country. Supplied in varying degrees of dryness and saltiness (for climatic reasons the Andalusians have always bought extra salted bacalao, while the Catalans and Basques prefer it milder), bacalao is transported by boat from the Scandinavian countries to Rotterdam, and from there by road to Spain.

All that said, the range of bacalao available in Spain today has never been more attractive. As well as the sort of bacalao we have always known—the salted dried sort that my parents and grandparents used to eat, and that I still buy in London's Portuguese and Spanish shops—Spaniards' changing tastes are reflected in the increasing popularity of less salted and even uncured bacalao. The sort of bacalao I am referring to is known as *verde* (green) or *semifresco* (semi-fresh)—salt cod that has undergone neither "tunnel" nor open air drying. It is an ideal type of bacalao for professional and domestic cooks with little time to spare. Quality-wise, bacalao verde can be exceptionally good, and its versatility and ease of use may well reinstate many old recipes fallen into disuse. Other products such as salt-injected, vacuum packed fresh cod are becoming equally popular.

How Do You Cook A Fossil?

In his book *Lo que hemos comido* (Things We Have Eaten), the great Catalan writer Josep Pla complained that Barcelona's fishmongers had lost the skill of desalting bacalao. A walk today around the fish section of the city's Boquería or San Antoni de la Ciudad markets is enough to

convince any bacalao enthusiast that Pla was wrong. Spain's specialist shops still sell superb salted fish of all sorts and provenances. Bacalao is available salted and dried, en verde (see above), or totally or partially soaked (sold from marble sinks). An added bonus is the professional approach of the saleswomen (for they are always women) who, if you tell them what dish you are buying for, and when you are going to cook it, will choose or cut the most suitable piece. As they prepare and cut the fillets, or wrap up the bacalao crumbs sold especially for making fish puffs, they will tell you how long to soak it for—this varies according to source and thickness—and even the best way to cook it. You can even buy it bone-free.

This is the traditional way of desalting bacalao: first, hold it under the tap to clean it and get rid of the top layer of salt. Then place the separated pieces in a bowl, skin up, and cover with cold water. Put the bowl in the fridge (this is essential), and leave to soak for about 36 hours, changing the water three or four times during that period. This routine can vary slightly, depending on how thick the pieces of fish are. Experts can tell when it has desalted enough just by smelling it—I find I need to taste it. If you desalt it too much, it loses all its character. Before starting to cook, leave it to rest for a while at room temperature, and remove any bones and scales.

As you take your first forkful of a well-prepared bacalao dish, it's almost impossible to believe that what just a few hours ago looked like a bit of old fossil could be turned into something so delicious.

***María José Sevilla**, author and broadcaster, 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 Spanish Embassy in the U.K.*

For Recipes, see page 124 and for Main Exporters, see page 130.

THE AIM OF OUR JOURNEY WAS JUST TO TRAVEL DIFFERENTLY THROUGH ANDALUSIA, GET TO KNOW ITS UNSPOILED OR LESS READILY ACCESSIBLE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE INTERIOR OF THE REGION, AND ON HORSEBACK, FORM A PART OF IT. FOR EXPERIENCED ADVENTURERS AND HORSE FANS, WE FOUND A COUPLE OF PLACES WHERE YOU REALLY CAN SPUR THE CITY DWELLER IN YOU AND GIVE A FREE REIN TO YOUR THOUGHTS IN MOUNTAINS OR VALLEYS, DESERTS OR RIVERS, BROAD PLAINS OR FORESTS, AND ON DUNES OR BEACHES.

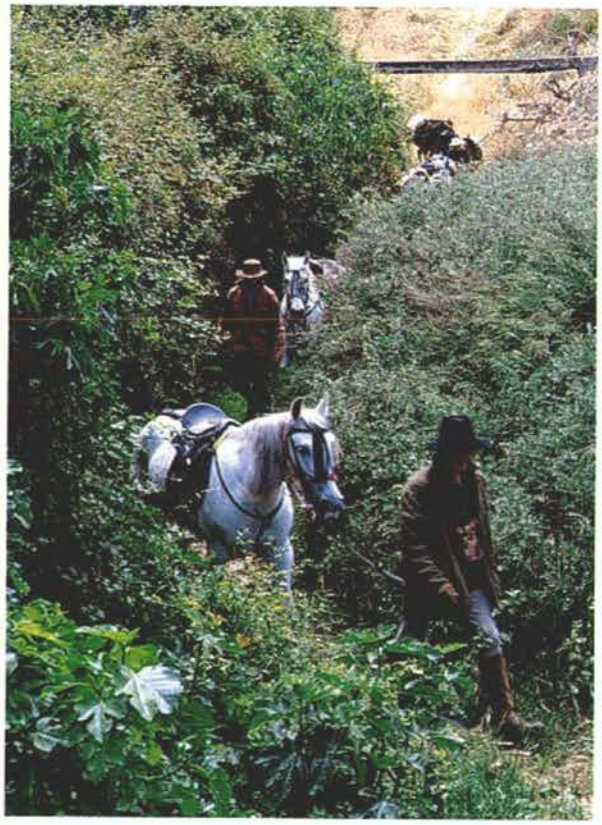
ANDALUSIA AT A TROT

Our first encounter with the horses was still to be delayed somewhat. We had arrived in Almería, in the south of Spain, by car and had spent the night in a small inn in Canjáyar, in the middle of the Alpujarras, the border land between the provinces of Granada and Almería, in order to join up early the next morning with the group of horsemen around Rafael Belmonte. At the beginning of May, it is still somewhat cool up here at a height of some 600 meters (2,000 feet).

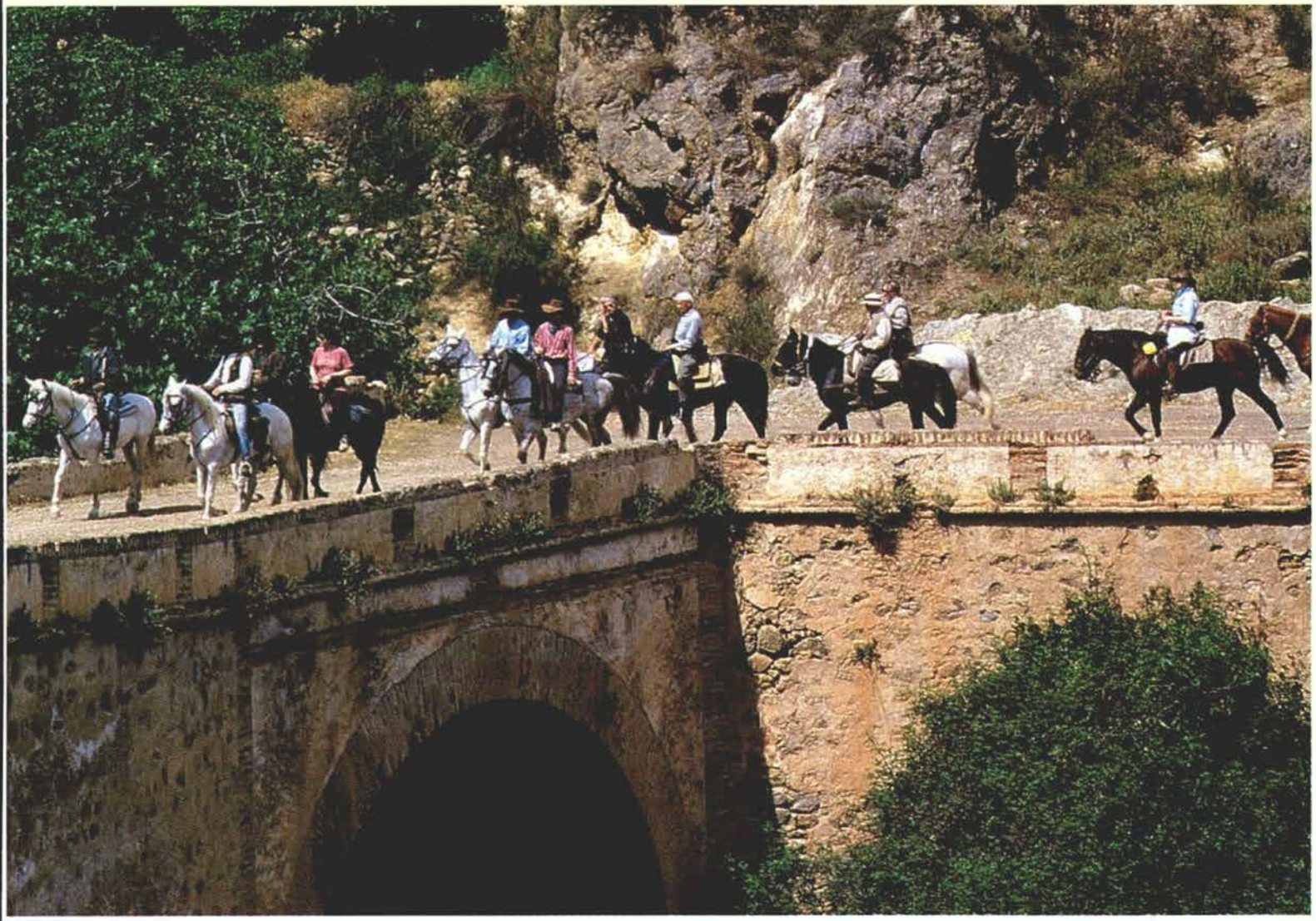
Our first task consisted in locating the group which had passed the night somewhere in the midst of the mountains. Three days previously, twelve riders and horses had set out from Bubión armed with rain capes and sun protection, water flasks and warm pullovers, since the route covers 250 km (115 miles) in nine days from a height of more than 1,200 meters (4,000 feet) above sea level along the slopes of the Sierra Nevada southwest of Granada, through chestnut and pine forests, olive and almond groves, dry or water-bearing river valleys, over broad plains, across the Tabernas desert in the province of Almería and finally down to the beach of Aguamarga on the Mediterranean. In doing so, it will cross the mountain ranges of the Sierra de la Contraviesa, Sierra de Gádor, Sierra de Alhamilla, and several nature conservation areas with unique wildlife and flowers.

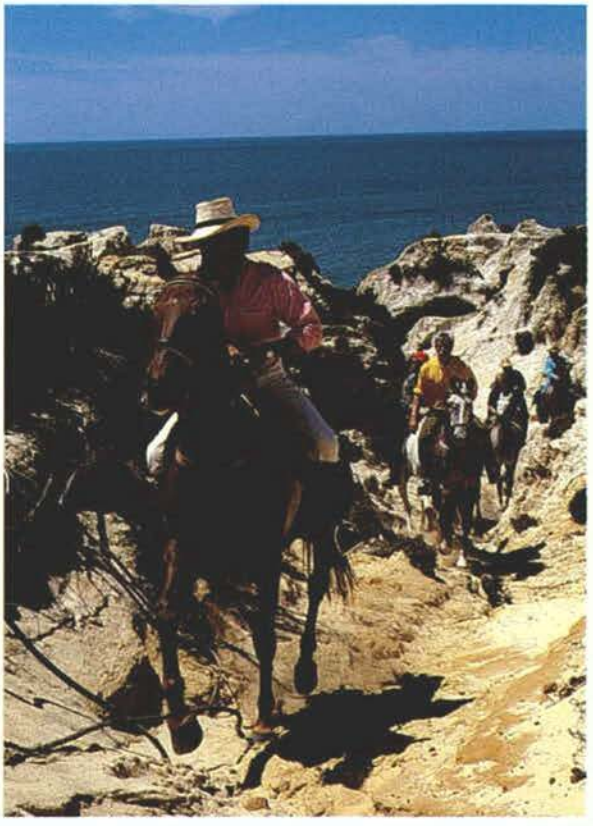
The Alpujarras of Granada with their tiny villages, the houses and narrow streets of which still reflect their distinctly Arab origin, form the starting point of this genuinely adventurous route. In the poorly accessible mountain landscape, where the last *moriscos* held out until 1570, many of the traditions which determined the character of the everyday life of the Moors converted to Christianity have been maintained. Agriculture is still practiced today on the terraced fields which they laid out and you can find *terraos* (flat, house roofs which can be walked on, serving as terrasses for the higher placed houses) and *tinaos* (covering roofs for the narrow streets to protect the animals and to bridge between differences in level) in the typical villages. A constant, soft burbling

Text: **Bettina Krücken** Translation: **Word Works** Photos: **P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX**



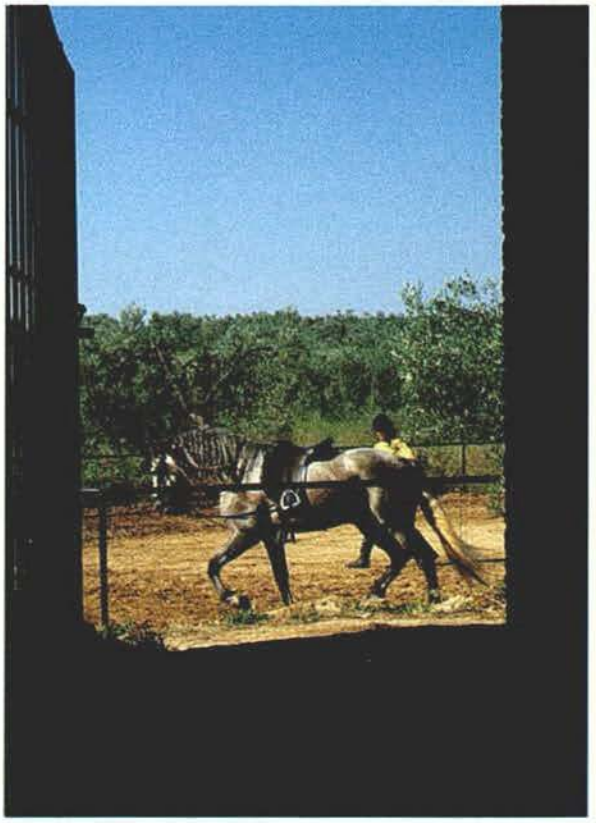
HORSES ARE A DEFINITE PART OF THE ANDALUSIAN COUNTRYSIDE AND ALLOW THE TRAVELER TO DISCOVER UNSPOILED NATURE.





ANDALUSIA'S VARIED LANDSCAPE AND FAIR WEATHER ALLOW FOR GREAT HORSE TREKKING ALL YEAR ROUND.

DISCOVERING ANDALUSIA ON HORSEBACK REPRESENTS THE IDEAL COMBINATION OF ECOT TOURISM AND SPORTING HOLIDAYS.



THE POWER AND INTELLIGENCE OF THE ANDALUSIAN HORSES ARE EXCELLENT PRECONDITIONS FOR BOTH DRESSAGE AND LONG-DISTANCE RIDING.

THE VIEW FROM A CAR WINDOW CAN NEVER EQUAL THE BOUNDLESS VISTA A HORSE RIDER ENJOYS FROM THE SADDLE.

of water can be heard here, since today's inhabitants still use the Moors' cleverly designed water channel system to irrigate the fields and feed the springs in the villages with the water from the Sierra Nevada.
In Fondón, we finally pick up the horsemen's trail. When asking whether a group of riders has been sighted this morning, we are shown a small sand track which leads through a magnificently rugged valley and, as we are forced to admit, is passable only halfway by car owing to heavy rainfall in the last few days. Therefore, about face—for the horses, this was no problem—even a four-wheel-drive vehicle is inferior to the nimble four-legged creature here. In La Barriada de Alcora, a tiny nest hidden between mountains and valleys, we see horses resting in the shade tied to trees and fences, while the riders disappear in a small, whitewashed inn for something to eat or drink. It is 11:30 and the cavalry has already two hours riding behind it. A tall, slim, very audacious looking man comes out to meet us and introduces himself as Rafael Belmonte. This likeable man from Madrid with an authentic cowboy look and three- to four-day-old beard is the leader and organizer of the route. After finishing his studies of political science in Madrid, he retreated some 15 years ago to Bubión in the Alpujarras and since then, has lived practically on horseback. The remainder of the group also has a bit of a wild west appearance—large hats to protect against the sun, legs clad in leather leggings, relaxed suntanned faces and the typical rider's gait. In reality, however, it is a group of French people who are not on this tour for the first time. Some of the riders have already been there for the second or third time, like Cécile, for example, who has just been on a tour in Mongolia and is already planning her next riding journey in Columbia. This group prefers to camp in the open or in tents. Anyone, however, who after four to six hours' riding per day, would like to sleep in a proper bed can also spend the night in one of the small hotels in the villages. What is fascinating about this route is the wide variety of challenges presented by the constantly changing countryside in the eastern part of Andalusia. The steep slopes make it necessary sometimes for the riders to dismount and lead their horses by the reins. Hanna, a young German girl, who has been working with Rafael for almost a year and specially looks after the horses, explains to us proudly that the mares climb up and down the slopes as sure-footedly as mountain goats. Rosa, and Pepe the gypsy, are also part of the team and accompany the group with a cross country vehicle and a second car and above all take on the tasks of transporting the luggage, the tents, the replacement bridles and saddles, guaranteeing shopping and catering for the group and preparing the resting place for the night. Pedro provides the atmosphere around the campfire in the evenings with his Spanish guitar and two dogs for safety at night and naturally the guarding instinct of the horses.

Adventure in the Alpujarras

After the short snack, we all set off together, with the vehicles progressing somewhat more rapidly in front and the horses at walking pace bringing up the rear. The passion for riding has a hold on me already. I envy those who ride peacefully down the bumpy sand track in a ravine, whilst I am shaken around in the car without feeling the delicately thyme and flower-scented wind directly in my face. We cross a bridge and plunge into a pine forest; other smells again, and filtered light. The riders behind us form a part of the countryside in the same way as the trees, the bridge, the mountain peaks towering high in the distance; the clomping of the hooves and the panting of the horses is mingled with the singing of the birds and the chirping of the crickets. Behind a curve in the track, a small road crosses our path—we wait for the horses to catch up, since we do not know how to go on. They emerge up there on top of the hill and suddenly disappear. What happened? Have they turned round? We drive back up the hill, but it is as if the horses have disappeared from the face of the Earth. We have not seen any other way and it seems practically impossible that they have turned off. Suddenly, however, comes a whinny from far below; through the trees, we can make out movement and voices at the end of a slope covered with dense vegetation. The "mountain goats" have taken this shortcut and are already at lunch. When we finally arrive with the car, the horses stand dozing in the shade with loosened saddle straps and attached only with their halters, whilst the riders gather around the tables set up under the trees, laden with fresh salad, bread, ham, cheese, fruit, wine, and biscuits. Most of them then withdraw somewhat for coffee, some meditate or sleep a little, others chat in groups of two or three, others still enjoy the view or talk alone with their horses. Just under two hours' rest and then the last leg of the day's journey begins. Another steep descent, during which the horses must be lead by the reins down a narrow winding track through the lushest vegetation, then the journey continues along the banks of the river Andarax. We go our own ways again here, since we have to drive on the road with the car. The ride leads across the Rambla de Guadix in the direction of Alboloduy, where the

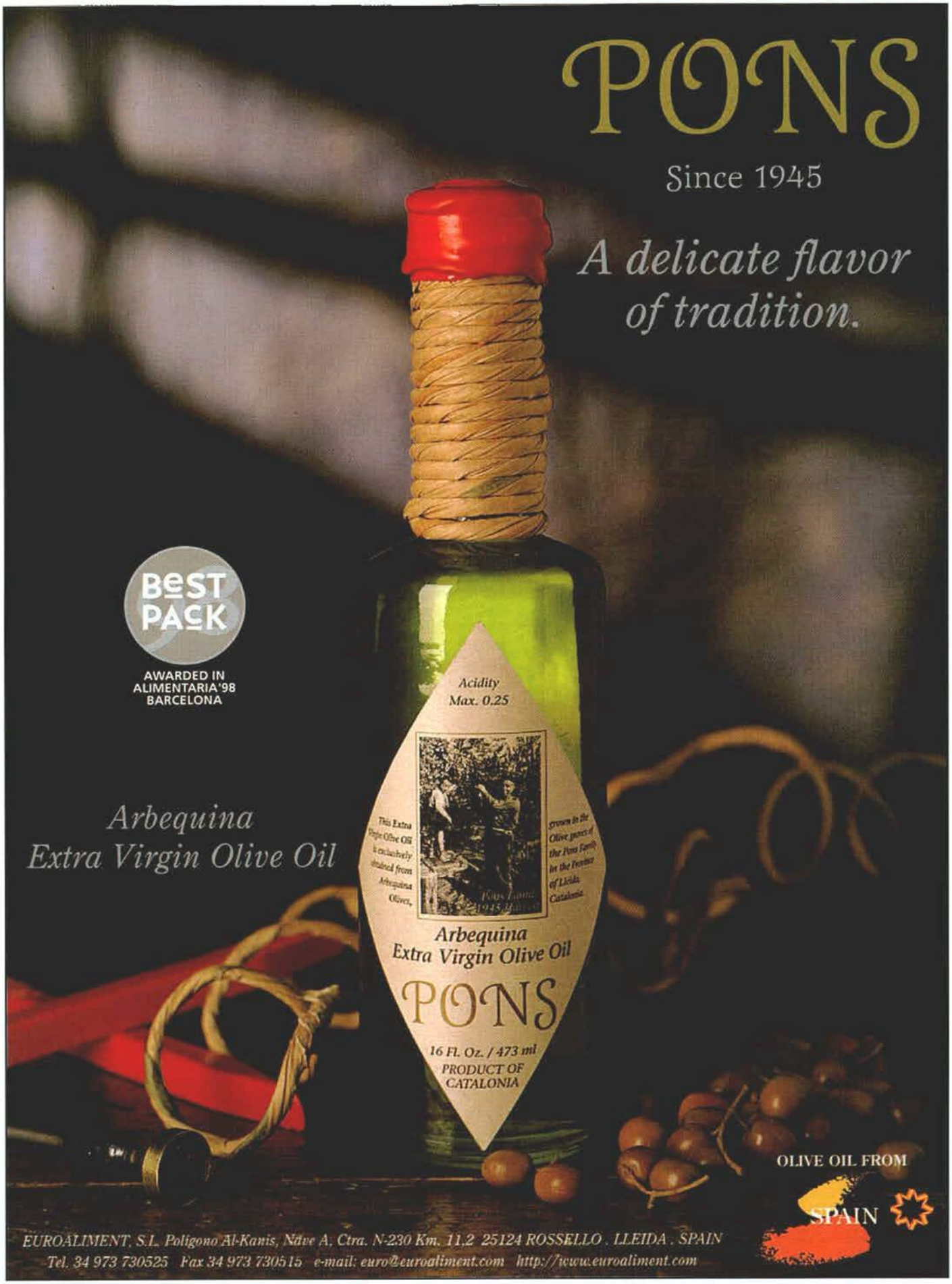
Consumed
With
Passion

RIDERS MUST BE IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION TO BE ABLE TO FULLY ENJOY THE ADVENTURE OF SEVERAL DAYS IN THE SADDLE.

camp for the night is to be set up. We join up with the group in the presently dried out river bed of the Río Nacimiento, where it appears tiny at the bottom of a canyon. It is sometime compared to the Grand Canyon in the U.S.A. owing to its fantastic shapes and colors—on a somewhat smaller scale, of course. We accompany the horsemen on the last section leading to the camp on the river bank near Alboloduy and watch how the horses are unsaddled and so they can quench their thirst in the river after this long day. The strain does not seem to matter too much to them, however. They are strong and now they expect a load of oats and concentrated feed for them to carry their riders through the Tabernas desert, where Sergio Leone has filmed quite a number of westerns, the Sierra de Alhamilla and down to the beach of Aguamarga, where the journey ends. While the horses eat and the riders put up the tents, we must travel on to Aznalcázar near Seville, where we are expected in Hacienda Dos Olivos.

Pure Dressage

We arrive very late, but the great curved gate which separates Hacienda Dos Olivos from the outside world is still open. Johanna comes out to meet us in the yard and invites us to sit down on the sofas before the fireplace. Country hospitality. The wine and a light supper meal are brought immediately to the table. We make our plans for the following day. Johanna Beattie Batista, a former rider at the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art in Jerez de la Frontera, has a collection of nine thoroughbred Andalusian horses at this very beautifully restored property with four double rooms and a guest suite, located in the middle of olive groves, and gives first-class dressage lessons. Decidido and Habanero Blue are already fully trained horses, the ideal instructors for beginners and advanced learners, since they are particularly sensitive to weight, leg, and rein aids. During one of my first riding lessons with Johanna and Eclipse, a five-year-old stallion, I note to my great astonishment that I can bring my horse without reins from a gallop to a trot and make it walk and stand still simply by the correct weight aids. After more than ten years of riding lessons, I learn more here about the fundamentals of the art of riding in one lesson than in all the previous years. In the splendidly beautiful, well-kept stables, we meet Caroline from New Zealand, who is just saddling Farruco and has much fun with this particularly playful and trustful five-year-old. Caroline has released herself from her job at home and is spending a few months here in order to learn with Johanna how to train young horses, since she has her own animals in New Zealand. Alethea also,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DURING A HORSE TREK THERE IS TIME FOR EVERYTHING: A REST IN THE SHADE OF A TREE OR A CHAT, BUT ABOVE ALL THE CHANCE TO FORGET EVERYDAY CHORES.

a young physiotherapist and acupuncturist from England has been here for a few months already, thoroughly improving her riding, learning Spanish on the side and enjoying Andalusian country life. At the Hacienda Dos Olivos, the day's program is determined by the rhythm of the horses: in the morning, the horses will have a lunge lesson and will be ridden under the direction of Johanna or Chema, the assistant. After riding, one is tempted by a refreshing, relaxing bath in the swimming pool or by simply sunbathing in the garden. In the afternoon, when the sun goes down, it is possible to go for a little hack in the neighborhood, before going out in the evening in nearby Seville or in the villages of the surrounding area, or also just simply sitting before the fireplace and talking shop with one's host.

On the way towards El Rocío, our next destination, we cross the Guadiamar river and see the soil flooded with black mud, which must be cleared away before autumn, when the heavy rainfalls increase the water level, in order to save the nearby national park of Coto de Doñana from an environmental catastrophe. Since the end of April this year, when the dam of the massive collection basin with poisonous sludge from the Swedish company Boliden-Apirsa burst, every measure is being taken in order to prevent the loss of one of the most important bird and nature conservation areas in Europe. Up to now, the heart of Doñana has remained unscathed via the construction of dams and by diverting the poisonous water and sludge. However, agriculture and the direct surroundings of the park are disturbed for a long time to come.

THE THRILL OF FLYING ACROSS THE BEACH AT A GALLOP TO THE SOUND OF POUNDING OF HOOFS ON THE SAND AND HEAVY BREATHING OF THE HORSE IS UNFORGETTABLE.

Doñana Against All Odds

We make our way to the province of Huelva, in the western part of the nature conservation park, where the catastrophe becomes imperceptible. On arrival, we pass El Rocío, the place of pilgrimage which transforms itself each year at Whitsuntide into the center of attraction for some one million pilgrims. They arrive from all over Spain, on horseback, with ox-drawn carts, and on foot and come singing and dancing to honor the Virgin of El Rocío.

The place has got something magical, particularly at sundown, when the sun casts its warm light on the pilgrim church. In front of the church stretches green, flooded marshlands on which the horses graze. The church is reflected in the water and the whole scene has an almost mirage-like effect. A few kilometers further on, we turn off the road to the Cortijo de los Mimbrales.

An agricultural enterprise, the former workers' houses of which have been converted into highly comfortable and tasteful guesthouses with their own gardens; this is joined by the *casa chica*, the "small house," in which a comfortable living room with a fireplace and seven double rooms are to be found. A marvelous establishment located directly on the edge of the Doñana national park. Absolute calm reigns here. First of all, we hop into the swimming pool in the garden, since the organizer of our next tour, María Elena Dendaluce, is not yet back with her group from the day's ride.

The Cortijo de los Mimbrales is the starting point for the day outings to the Doñana national park and its surroundings which María Elena and her partner Alfonso Gonzalo de Bustos organize. Whereas the horses remain in the evening at the final point of the ride, the riders return to the Cortijo to spend the night here. At half past eight, we meet the other guests to partake of an excellent dinner in nearby Almonte in the restaurant El Tamborilero. We have the opportunity here of meeting the members of the group: Jack and Ann, a couple from Massachusetts, Harry from Málaga, Carlos and Isabel from Madrid, and David, an ornithologist from Kent, who explained to us two days later in Doñana National Park, all the species of birds to be seen there. Jack reports with unbelievable charm and wit on the behavior and play of the ears of his horse and how each is to be interpreted. The atmosphere is outstanding, but tiredness makes itself felt after the long ride and we just have a coffee on the village plaza, which offers a wonderful and typical Andalusian picture with its church and nighttime illumination.

We enjoy a substantial breakfast in the "large house," the *casa grande* and then drive to Abalario, where the horses have spent the night. When we arrive, they are already saddled and ready to set off. We allow them to drink some water again so that they can withstand the warm day well. My five-year-old chestnut mare, Beca, is Anglo-Arab with Hanoverian blood and very lively; the other horses are also Anglo or Hispano-Arab crossbreeds and, owing to their endurance and intelligence, are particularly well-suited to the demands of a day tour like this. Our route leads us across the Doñana park with pine and eucalyptus forests, by concealed lagoons, over broad plains with such a varied vegetation that I cannot name them all, down to the Atlantic which, after two hours, suddenly opens up endlessly far before us as we ride down a narrow path from the dunes. The time for being comfortably carried along is now gone. David and Harry are unstoppable and gallop off and away. David had explained to me on the way that my mare was not particularly quick and preferred to stay at the back of the group. Beca was not prepared to stand for this—or perhaps I was not either—and we set off after both of them at full gallop. We fly over the beach, the damp sand splashes up and my hat falls backwards (how fortunate that I sewed a chin strap on), Beca catches up rapidly with her long legs and we gallop on for a while abreast with David and Harry. Those are moments of blissful happiness, when the wind blows in your face and you can feel and fully unleash for a few instants the unchecked power of the horse beneath you. We ride a short way back to meet up with the others again, who have been a little more sensible and have enjoyed the beach ride in a collected canter. It is now a matter of climbing back on to the dunes. We take a winding path which was certainly washed out by the water and drive the horses hard so that they do not stop at the steepest points. Up on the dunes, we have a majestic view over the beach and sea on this cloudless, crystal clear day. Half an hour further on inland over the dunes, a well-cooled aperitif awaits us amidst the pines. María Elena and Enrique, who looks after the horses, have come with the Landrover and serve us with ham and cheese, water, wine, or Coca Cola. Refreshed after this short snack, we move on further until an hour later, at a lagoon where the horses can quench their thirst, we are served a delicious lunch with a salad of shrimps and *paella*. The horses are tied up next to each other and graze for as far as they can get with their cord. Here, there is the opportunity of pausing for a nap and loosening up the back muscles. The only noises come from the grazing horses and the insects buzzing around them.

We start our way back to the Cortijo de los Mimbrales at around half past four and enjoy long stretches galloping over wide plains adorned with flowers of all colors, past other horses grazing here and to which my mare, with her head held high, whinnies over a greeting. The horses know the way and know that the stable is no longer far away. The pace now also becomes faster as we reach the orange grove of los Mimbrales. First of all comes a drink; the horses deserve to be served first. The hot riders, beaming with joy, also however receive something to drink immediately here. The horses are showered down from top to bottom and brushed with shampoo. Isabel explains enthusiastically "that would also do me good!" No sooner said than done. María Elena reaches for the mobile telephone and calls the masseur, who is on hand half an hour later for a relaxing massage. One cannot actually be better spoiled. There is dinner with Andalusian specialties in El Rocío, where all streets are sand tracks and each house has its own stable for the horses. For the next morning, before breakfast, María Elena has organized something special: an outing with the Landrover to the national park, to watch the countless species of birds, some of which are to be found here only. David, our ornithologist, is enthusiastic of course and shows us the most interesting species with his professional binoculars.
After the late breakfast, a ride to El Rocío is on the program, which unfortunately we can not take part in. We take leave of our hosts, the members of the group, and above all from our noble traveling companions, the Andalusian horses.

Bettina Krücken *has been a coordinator of* Spain Gourmetour *since 1994, an enthusiastic horsewoman for many years, and an unconditional fan of thoroughbred Andalusian horses.*

Selected Addresses in Andalusia for Horse Lovers

For further information, consult the AETEA (Asociación de Empresas de Turismo Ecuestre de Andalucía–Association of Equestrian Tourist Companies in Andalusia) or the tourist offices in your country (see page 9).

AETEA
Centro de Servicios Empresariales de Andalucía
Isla de la Cartuja s/n
41092 Seville
Tel: (34) 954 488 900
Fax: (34) 954 488 911

Cabalgar, Rutas Alternativas
Rafael Belmonte Gracias
18412 Bubión (Granada)
Tel: (34) 958 763 135 or 958 764 146
Fax: (34) 958 763 136
(see article)

Club Hípico Joaquín Vázquez
Urb. Novo Sancti Petri
Chiclana (Cádiz)
Tel: (34) 908 857 399
Fax: (34) 956 405 743
Joaquín Vazquez is one of the riders of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art in Jerez and has set up a wonderfully arranged horse riding business with thoroughbred Spanish horses (currently from the Royal School in Jerez), where he gives dressage and horse jumping lessons and organizes rides on the beach and through the pine forest.

Cortijo El Morrito
Ctra. del Garrobo
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Gerena (Seville)
Tel: (34) 955 782 928
Fax: (34) 954 658 538
Organizes tours starting from the Cortijo, accommodation also in the Cortijo

Dallas Love
Bubión
Tel: (34) 958 763 038
Organizes horse tours in the Alpujarras

Equiberia
María Elena Dendaluce
05635 Navarredonda de Gredos (Ávila)
Tel: (34) 920 348 338
Fax: (34) 920 348 355
E-Mail: horseback@avi.servicom.es (see article)

Equitrail
Javier Lafuente
Héroes de Toledo, 30
41000 Seville
Tel: (34) 954 663 711 or 954 632 676
Fax: (34) 954 663 830
Organizes tours from Córdoba to Granada

Evento
Benito Pizarro
Plaza de la Estación
Bloque 1 - local 5 y 6
11406 Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz)
Tel/Fax: (34) 956 168 063 or 989 719 331
Organizes tours in the province of Cádiz: through the Sierra de Grazalema, cork oak forests, vineyards of Jerez, beach rides

Hacienda Dos Olivos
Johanna Beattie Batista
Aznalcázar (Seville)
Apto. de Correos 844
41080 Seville
Tel/Fax: (34) 955 750 562
(see article)

Hacienda La Buena Suerte
Claude Dysli
Cádiz
Tel: (34) 956 730 311
Fax: (34) 956 231 275
Organizes stays in the Hacienda and tours through the "white villages" of the province of Cádiz, beach rides, etc.

Turismo a Caballo Doñana
Miguel Campos
Boca del Lobo, 3
21750 El Rocío (Huelva)
Tel.: (34) 959 442 084
Fax: (34) 959 423 053
Organizes tours through the Coto de Doñana nature conservation park in autumn and winter; tours along the pilgrimage paths to El Rocío

Shows with Thoroughbred Spanish Horses
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Recreo de las Cadenas
Avda. Duque de Abrantes
11407 Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz)
Tel: (34) 956 311 111
Fax: (34) 956 180 757
Show Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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Crta. Medina-El Portal, km 6.5
Jerez de la Frontera
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Fax: (34) 956 XXXXXX
The cradle of the thoroughbred Spanish horse was here, when in the 15th century, the Carthusian monks began to breed thoroughbred Spanish horses, from which the famous "Cartujanos" originate, in their monastery, only five kilometers away from Jerez.
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Text: **Enrique Calduch**
Photos: **Félix Lorrio/ICEX**
Translation: **Mark Little**

Spanish Beer Groups Target the British Market

THE BLONDES FROM SPAIN

What these viewers, and the majority of Europeans, might not be aware of is that Spain is Europe's third largest beer producer, surpassed only by Germany and Great Britain. Or that the Spanish consumer's demand for quality in beer, added to a fierce competition on the domestic market, has given rise to premium brands capable of competing with the best beers in the world. Or that at a technological level Spanish beer-making is at the forefront and Spain is home to the most modern and advanced brewery in Europe. Or that Spanish beer has a history and tradition going back a century. Considering all the above, it only seems logical that six ma-

There is an advertisement on Spanish television which shows an English pub or a German beer garden in which the customers are happily enjoying a glass of Spanish beer. A somewhat far-fetched idea, some viewers might think: how can a Mediterranean country with a long winemaking tradition have the temerity of trying to take on the British market, for example, competing against the national drink, the traditional ales?

jor Spanish brewers—Alhambra, Cruzcampo, La Zaragozana, Mahou, Damm, and San Miguel—should have put their rivalry on the domestic market to one side and have joined forces to make their presence felt on the British market. The catalyst has been the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade (ICEX) and under the slogan "Spanish premium beer, brewed and bottled in Spain" these beer companies are launching a campaign in Great Britain to promote Spanish lager there. To conquer the British market, they are rolling out the heavy artillery, their best quality premium bottled beer. And they have a significant advantage thanks to tourism.

Spain is Europe's third largest beer producer, with a high level of quality to satisfy demanding customers.

Sun and Thirst

Spain is the travel destination of choice for millions of British vacationers. Here, in the sun and hot climate of the coastal resorts, these visitors consume Spanish beer by the gallon. And they enjoy it. They like the light, fresh tones, the straightforward aromas. Many regular visitors learn to distinguish between different brands and qualities and when they return home, if they find those same Spanish brands in their locals—the pub, the restaurant, the specialized shop—it is very likely that they will buy them, not just to bring back memories of happy holidays, but to enjoy their fine flavor. This consumer familiarity is one of the big advantages the Spanish beer companies have on the British market, and one of the reasons that the joint campaign is not aimed at supermarket chains, but rather at restaurants, bars, and specialized outlets.

They have their reasons to hope for success. In 1997, the Spanish brewing industry exported some 50 million liters of beer, and Portugal and the United Kingdom were at the top of the customer list, with 11 million liters each. These markets were followed by Italy with 10 million liters and France with five, and it is curious to note that last year Hong Kong imported more than two million liters of Spanish beer.

However, the initial question remains: why does a traditionally wine-loving country have such an enormous production, consumption and enthusiasm for beer? This would be a good subject for a sociological treatise, but for starters, two key factors have encouraged the rise of popularity of beer: the hot climate, and the tradition of the *tapeo*, going to bars to enjoy an appetizer or snack with a drink.

Spanish summers are hot, and naturally that is the season when most beer is consumed. Cold, bitter and therefore refreshing, it is drunk in small glasses of 20 cl in any of the countless bars which are to be found in any Spanish city or town. When a Spaniard feels hot he'll head for the first bar he comes across, order a *caña* as these small glasses are called, and will down it quickly, standing up at the bar. Thus refreshed, he is ready to continue on his way. When they travel abroad, many Spaniards are surprised to find that the standard measure is the pint, or the half-pint at the very least, a quantity which for him calls for sitting down and lingering over, unlike the caña quickly drunk on the run.

Tapa Companion

Another key reason for the popularity of beer is the traditional Spanish tapeo, thanks to which there are so many bars in Spain, all of them offering small portions of food, called *pinchos* or *tapas*. The bar is an important part of the social fabric in Spain. Friends will make an appointment to meet on Saturday or Sunday morning in a bar for an aperitif, or in the evening for a tapa crawl, usually visiting several establishments and sampling the house specialty in each one (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 11). Many of the most popular Spanish tapas are prepared in a marinade containing vinegar. Mussels, cockles, anchovies, pickles... they have a pleasant degree of acidity which nevertheless does not combine well with wine, but which is perfectly matched with the bitterness of a beer.

The big boom in Spanish beer started in the 1960s and 70s, when a generation of young people discovered lager, which having less alcohol than wine and being cheaper as well, allowed them to go out with their friends to more places and enjoy more drinks.

This increase in the demand for beer inspired local companies to compete with determination in order to secure a slice of this growing market. Ninety-three per cent of beer drunk in Spain is national and the continuing efforts of the various brewers to lure customers with better quality lagers has resulted in the high standard of beer made in Spain. Originally the breweries operated within very specific geographic areas where they were local market leaders. Thus, Alhambra's main beer market was basically in Granada, Cruzcampo's in Seville and elsewhere in Andalusia, La Zaragozana's in Aragon, Mahou's in Madrid, and Damm's and San Miguel's in Catalonia and along the Mediterranean coast. Today, however, these companies operate nationwide, although they continue to enjoy their greatest following and sales in their places of origin.

The Mahou Bar

In a small square in the center of Madrid there is a tiny but crowded bar called El Cangrejero (Crab Fisher). Next door to it, is an old building which now houses Madrid's regional archives, but which in 1890 became the first brewery of Mahou beer. The brewery, which delivered its wares in wood barrels loaded onto horse-drawn wagons, had a wood counter where customers could sample beer, but such was Spaniards' addiction to tapas, they found it inconceivable to drink the beer on its own. So they would first drop by the establishment next door, which at that time was more like a small shop than a bar, and buy a cornet containing cooked crabs which they would take to the brewery counter to munch on along with their drinks. In 1960, the old Mahou factory was replaced by a much more modern facility. The people in the neighborhood, regular patrons of the brewery counter, felt betrayed, but fortunately the proprietor of El Cangrejero had the bright idea of putting in a counter of his own and converting his establishment into a bar in which the only drinks available were Mahou beer or water, to accompany the crabs and other tapas on of-

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The hot climate and the tradition of tapas are two factors which contribute to Spaniards' enthusiasm for beer.

fer. When the first pressure barrels made their appearance, El Cangrejero steadfastly kept the old system of serving beer pumped from the barrel through a coiled pipe cooled by packed ice. Today this small establishment continues to be a much-loved institution for beer-loving Madrileños and, naturally, for the Mahou company as well.

Mahou was not a Spanish surname. It belonged to one Casimiro Mahou, a man who arrived in Madrid in the mid-19th century from the city of Metz, in Lorraine, a land with a great beer-making tradition. In the Spanish capital he was involved in a number of businesses, among them the brewery which would in time become one of the symbols of the city. From the modest facility next door to El Cangrejero, it has gone on to occupy the most technologically advanced brewery in Europe. Today, two thirds of the company are owned by the two branches of the family who inherited from the original Casimiro Mahou, and another third is owned by the Danone company. For the British campaign, they are promoting their best premium lager, Mahou Cinco Estrellas.

Damm, Born in Barcelona

While the founder of Mahou was from Lorraine, August Kuentzmann Damm came to Spain from Alsace. He was a brewery technician who left his homeland to escape the Franco-Prussian war, settling in Barcelona. He associated himself with a Catalan entrepreneur and in 1876 they started their brewery. The Barcelona of those days was bubbling with industrial activity, and small businesses were sprouting like mushrooms, a number of them devoted to the production of beer. As the Catalan consumers got to know this new drink, the competition between these small companies became fierce, and they all were aware that the time would come when one company would emerge as the market leader. That did not come about until 1910, with the merger of three different breweries, one of them promoted by the powerful Barcelona textile magnate, Ignasi Coll. Another of the participants was the brewery founded by Kuentzmann Damm, by now known simply as Damm. The new brewery was built in the centrally located Rosellón street, in the heart of the elegant Ensanche district of Barcelona, and it swept away the competition. Thus did Damm become the Catalan beer par excellence. In 1920 its "fleet" consisted of 50 horses to pull the wagons, and eight five-ton trucks. Today, its fleet would cause a traffic jam on the highway exits of Barcelona, for Damm has become a powerful company which for many years has also operated outside the Catalan orbit. Eighty percent of the company is Spanish-owned, while the remaining 20 percent is owned by the German company, Oetker. The old brewery on Calle Rosellón, a unique and typical Barcelona building, continues to house the central offices, a demonstration of the Catalan respect for tradition. The premium with which they are targeting the British market is the smooth, golden Estrella Damm.

The Sherry Makers and Cruz del Campo

If the founders of Mahou and Damm were of Central European origin and had beer in their blood, the founders of Cruzcampo came from a distinguished family of sherry producers. Roberto and Tomás Osborne were two Andalusian businessmen and landowners born in Puerto de Santa María in southwestern Andalusia. They wanted to start some type of enterprise that would provide an outlet for the produce from their farms. And they had the original idea of establishing a beer brewery. The two gentlemen caught a train to Seville and from there made the journey to Germany to study the production process. They returned convinced the venture would work, and in 1904 built a beer-brewing facility in Seville. The brewery caused quite a sensation in the city, for it was the first modern factory devoted to a commercial consumer item to be built in the Andalusian capital. The brewery was installed in a very popular area just outside the entrance to Seville, a place where the fun-loving Andalusians would gather to dance and party, and where all-night revelers would arrive in their horse-drawn carriages to have one last drink. The spot was presided by a shrine with a stone cross, known popularly as the "Cross of the Country," the Cruz del Campo, from which came the name of the brewery and its beer. With time, the company founded by the Osbornes not only became the leading brewer in Andalusia and a household name among tourists, but with a strategy of expansion and purchases has grown into the major beer company in Spain. Currently, the Guinness group is Cruzcampo's principal shareholder, followed by the Carlsberg company with a 10.5 percent share and another 1.5 percent held by small investors. It's main premium beer is Cruzcampo Lager.

The Monks of San Miguel

All these historical houses, founded at the end of the 19th century or beginning of the 20th, had as their main base of operations their immediate geographical area, and they were all thriving comfortably, but the alarm bells started ringing in 1946 when a new beer company appeared on the scene with the intention of marketing its products throughout Spain, without tying itself down to a specific location. The newcomer was San Miguel, whose origins curiously enough are in the Philippines (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37). There,

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In spite of their competition on the domestic market, the six brewers have joined forces to conquer the British market.

in Manila, in the district of San Miguel which would lend its name to the brand, Spanish monks made beer using traditional brewing methods. With few resources or capital to draw on, they eventually accepted new partners into the business who would expand the company. One of them was Andrés Soriano, whose family had emigrated from Spain to the Philippines in the mid 1900s and had made their fortune there.

Soriano was a colorful figure who had all sorts of adventures during World War II, when the Philippines were occupied by the Japanese. His daring feats earned him a post as colonel in the U.S. Army and he was a personal aide to General Douglas MacArthur. In spite of the distance, Soriano would spend his summers in Saint Jean de Luz, southern France, and there he commissioned a portrait of his wife from the famous Spanish painter, Ignacio Zuloaga. This led to an excellent relationship between Soriano and the Zuloaga family. Eventually Soriano, a connoisseur of the beer world thanks to his Philippines factory, proposed to the Zuloagas the establishment of a major beer company in Spain. The painter's son and son-in-law traveled to the Philippines with water samples from the river Segre, in Lleida (Catalonia), which were analyzed in Manila and pronounced ideal for making beer. In 1957 the first bottle of San Miguel from the Lleida brewery, located beside the river, was launched on the market. Later a second factory would be installed in Castile and another in Andalusia. When in the 1970s the consumption of beer in Spain took off, San Miguel was perfectly placed and the company grew as fast as the foam on a glass of draught lager. This success caught the attention of the big multinationals and in 1994, following four takeover bids, the Danone group bought out the company. Their star product is the refreshing and smooth lager, San Miguel Especial.

The Draft Horses of La Zaragozana

These four large companies—Mahou, Damm, Cruzcampo, and San Miguel—have always had an eye on the export market, and form the main thrust of the British campaign, but they are not alone in the venture. Two other brewers of fine beer, smaller but with historical roots that run just as deep, are accompanying them in the campaign. The oldest is La Zaragozana, founded in 1900, which makes, among others, the label Ambar. Its history is inextricably linked to the city of Zaragoza and the region of Aragon, where beer has always been popular. It was founded by a group of beer-loving businessmen and older Zaragozanos still remember its legendary stable of Percheron draft horses which drew the wagons loaded with beer barrels and bottles of blown glass. They were the pride of the brewery and it is said that they were so perfectly familiar with the delivery routes that a novice driver could let the horses lead the way unguided, stopping at the establishments where they knew the beer would be unloaded. When time rendered the old horses redundant, the company scored another first for Zaragoza with its three small delivery trucks, the first to ply the city streets. Today, in spite of the big beer giants, La Zaragozana continues to have a sizable market share in Aragon. Now the company, still entirely Spanish-owned, is making an effort to export, and among their assets are very modern and efficient facilities and products of magnificent quality, including their premium beer, Ambar, a lager with fine aromas.

The Crystal Clear Water of Alhambra

The sixth member of the expedition to Great Britain is Cervezas Alhambra. The name itself is a clear indication that this is a beer from Granada. The company was founded in 1925 and, like so many other breweries, its promoters were two non-Spaniards, Carlos Bouvard and Antonio Knörr, both expert brewers from Central Europe. After almost 75 years the company has consolidated its position as a local company with a loyal following in its home area and a reputation for a high level of quality. In 1995 the majority share was acquired by Iberian Brewing Investment Ltd., which continues to increase production, and they have in the Alhambra lager their main product.

The six companies are working together to promote their wares in the United Kingdom, presenting their finest products, the premium beers. All are backed by a long history and all are looking forward to a bright future. Separately or together, they control companies that process the hops and have close associations with the growers of this crop, so essential to fine beer. All can boast of ryes and malts of the highest quality, and they all draw on rivers with crystal clear waters.

That Spain is a wine country cannot be argued, but after learning about the history and getting to know the products of these companies, there is no doubt that Spain is a beer country as well. Now the time has come to let the rest of the world in on the secret.

Enrique Calduch *is a journalist specializing in food and wine. He is the wine critic for the* Expansión *newspaper and director of a television program about gastronomy, as well as a contributior to* Sobremesa, Vinum, Restauradores, Lookout *and* Viajar *magazines.*

For Main Exporters see page130.

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Spain's Regional Cuisines: A Great European Gastronomic Adventure (I)

Gerry Dawes' Traveling Gastronomer column is replacing "My Culinary Jottings," which written by María José Sevilla.
In these pages, he will be sharing his gastronomic discoveries in his frequent travels to Spain and reporting on new developments in Spanish cuisine in the United States.

I am excited about Spanish food. I believe you can eat as well in Spain as in anyplace in Europe these days. Even if you are used to eating the best American restaurants, you may return waxing poetic about the Spanish *nueva cocina* (nouvelle cuisine) restaurants that are so highly rated in the Michelin guide to Spain. But, even though many of Spain's star signature chef restaurants can compete with the best of France, I like to save them for special occasions and concentrate on the great regional restaurants of Spain, which are often out in the provinces, where not only is the food delicious, the surroundings are historic, romantic, and evocative. All the best reasons for going to Europe.

Over the past three decades I have been able to ferret out great regional restaurants which show the wealth of Spain's indigenous food products, but it sometimes took more searching than it does now. Just in the past decade Spain's regional cuisines have taken a quantum leap in quality. Time-honored dishes prepared by better trained chefs with a sophisticated outlook using upgraded and modernized equipment; top-notch ingredients brought to market on fast highways; a focus on Spain's great olive oils instead of ordinary bulk oils; and the affluence of modern Spain to pay for it all are bringing the greatness of traditional Spanish cooking into high relief. The result is neither nueva cocina, *alta cocina* (haute cuisine), nor fusion cuisine, it is a Spanish gastronomic Renaissance based on classical canons and the result is indeed some of the best food in Europe right now.

In recent years I have spoken to many American chefs who have traveled in Spain. Some of them were impressed with some of Spain's modern cuisine restaurants, as they would be with those of Milan, Paris, or New York, but most of those chefs can create such dishes themselves. They were most impressed with the unique regional dishes of Spain. The refrain I have heard from many of chefs goes like this: "The *pochas* (a cranberry bean-like dish) with quail in Navarre was fantastic; the *bacalao* dishes and squid-in-its-own ink in the Basque Country were superb; the *bomba* rice dishes in Barcelona were first-rate; and the plates of *jamón serrano* and *torta de Casar* cheese we had with fino sherry in Madrid was fabulous."

One can sample Spain's regional cooking in large cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, and Seville, but I find my greatest culinary memories come from restaurants in the countryside and in provincial cities, where the clientele usually do not support experimental cuisine for long. Many Spaniards will accept modern adaptations of familiar dishes, but they are most comfortable with well-prepared classics and will often drive many kilometers out-of-their-way to eat the finest *langostinos* (tiger prawns) along the shores of the Bay of Cádiz, the best roast suckling pig or lamb in the castle-crowned villages of Castile (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 44), grilled sardines at an outdoor cafe in a Basque fishing village, and paella along the canals of the Albufera, the fresh-water lake outside Valencia.

On a recent trip to the Ribera del Duero and into the area of Valladolid province just outside the boundaries of the Ribera del Duero D.O., while visiting the spectacular new Abadía Retuerta winery and vineyards near Sardón de Duero, I encountered a wonderful country restaurant, Mesón Molinero, in the small village of Traspinedo. I have long been a firm believer in tasting wines with food whenever possible, since that is how most of them will be consumed, so I was happy to get the opportunity to taste the tannic young wines of the Abadía with country food from the region.

Carlos Puertas García, the owner of Mesón Molinero, started us off with wedges of delicious gamey, artisan Churra sheep's cheese. He explained that the tiny holes (or *ojos*, eyes) throughout the cheese are air holes that denote a true country cheese. This cheese was just another in a long line of Spanish cheeses that America's top cheese expert Steve Jenkins, author of *The Cheese Primer* and buyer for New York City's important Fairway stores, thinks are the best artisan cheeses in Europe. The cheese at Mesón was accompanied by slices of ethereal *jamón ibérico* from Salamanca, one of the top areas for cured Spanish hams.

Next came a classic Spanish salad of lettuce, onion, and tomato dressed with Spanish extra virgin olive oil and a touch of wine vinegar (it is often sherry wine vinegar), which may sound simple, but can be sublime. Superb Churra lamb *pinchos*, or kebabs, grilled over grape vine clippings, helped tame the tannins of the young world-class reds of Abadía de Retuerta, allowing us a glimpse of what the wines might be like when they are mature. A *Tarta de nata y piñones*, a tart made with fresh cream and excellent Spanish pine nuts, was accompanied by a fine *aguardiente de orujo*, or marc, distilled by Viña Mayor, a Ribera del Duero winery. This fiery spirit was quite complex and smelled of fresh straw. Spanish *aguardientes*, often just called *orujo*, are the equivalent in style and quality of Italian grappa and are very popular after-dinner drinks in Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 44). **Mesón Molinero. Calle Mayor 2. 47330 Traspinedo (Valladolid). Tel: (34) 983 682 449.**

After a few stops in the Ribera del Duero to sample wines that evening and the next morning, my party drove on to Bilbao, where we visited the Guggenheim Museum and found that one of the greatest works in architect Frank Gehry's fantastic building is the Guggenheim Bilbao Jatetxea (Basque for restaurant), which is operated by Martín Berasategui, one of the Basque Country's and Spain's most brilliant young chefs (see page 17).

I had already eaten several exceptional meals at Bersategui's lovely, eponymously named restaurant just outside San Sebastián, the beautiful beach city located an hour east of Bilbao, which former *New York Times* restaurant critic Bryan Miller says only New York City can top for great restaurants per capita. Named Spain's Chef of the Year in

1996, Berasategui is one of the fasting rising culinary stars in Spain. He was also awarded his second Michelin star in 1996 and he will undoubtedly earn Michelin's ultimate third star, which has been awarded to just a handful of chef-driven restaurants in Spain.

Despite Berasategui's very modern style, the country flavors of his native region peek through many of his dishes. Among many outstanding Berasategui creations, *caldo de sopakos con chipirón guisado y salteado,* which intermingled two classic preparations, a stewed snowy white squid in its own ink and squid sautéed with onions in the style called Pelayo in the Basque fishing village of Guetaria— known for some of the best squid dishes in Spain— was exceptional.

A buttery, toasty Chivite Chardonnay (from nearby Navarre) was balanced by juicy, green apple flavors, which made it a good match for the squid. Roasted *lomo de bacalao,* or the "loin" of a large salt cod, so skillfully prepared that it could have been fresh, was served with *choricero* (dried, reconstituted) red peppers and a creamy, ethereal *ajo blanco,* or white *gazpacho* sauce.

Basques often drink red wines with many of their fish dishes, so the light Bodegas Campillo Crianza Tinto from the Basque Rioja Alavesa proved a good match for the fish.

Guggenheim Bilbao Jatetxea. Guggenheim Museum. 48001 Bilbao (Vizcaya). Tel: (34) 944 239 333.

Another wonderful new spot in booming Bilbao is Viandar de Sota (located on the Gran Vía, the city's main street), a showcase for regional products and wines. Colorful Viandar de Sota is a gastronomic complex with several tapas bars; a bar serving select, cured ibérico hams; a store specializing in Spanish and Basque gourmet products; a coffee bar and pastry shop; a wine shop; and a spectacular, lively, immensely entertaining, Basque *sidrería* (cider bar)/*asador* (roast house), which serves excellent *tapas* such as stuffed *pimientos de piquillo,* white Navarre asparagus, and superb cured anchovies from the Basque coast. Draughts of fresh Zapaín *sidra* , now stabilized by temperature-controlled methods, splash from the spigots of giant vats into large wide-mouth glasses held at a distance by waiters who hand them still fizzing to an interminably thirsty clientele. A typical meal here might consist of a few tapas washed down by cider, then some *chorizo* de Miano (Navarre), followed by the Basque delicacy *kokotxas* (hake glands) with fingerling potatoes, then a salad and a great grilled *chuletón,* or large steak, to share, this last accompanied by a fine red Rioja Alavesa wine such as Viñas de Gaín from Artadí. **Viandar de Sota. Gran Vía, 45. 48011 Bilbao. Tel: (34) 944 166 003.**

And, still on the subject, another excellent traditional *sidrería/asador* in Bilbao, La Gabarra, is across the Nervión River just a few hundred meters from the Guggenheim Museum. Here Antonio Lavandero serves *cogollos de Tudela con cebolleta* (Tudela, Navarre lettuce hearts with scallions in a vinaigrette); superb house-cured *anchoas* (anchovies cured in oil or vinegar can be bought to take home in many Spanish food shops); the legendary tinned *ventresca de bonito* (bonito tuna belly) from the nearby Basque fishing villages of Mundaka and Bermeo; *pimientos de piquillo* in a creamy olive oil and garlic sauce; and big charcoal-grilled steaks, all accompanied by good Bilbao bread and excellent Rioja wines such as Ramón Bilbao Reserva 1994. **La Gabarra. Ribera de Botica Vieja, 18. 48014 Deusto (Bilbao). Tel: 944 477 062.**

(Note: Now that Spanish cider— once primarily a seasonal wintertime product — is produced by cold stabilizing methods, the *sidrería / asador* concept is becoming quite popular in other areas of Spain. Several new *sidrerías* have opened in Madrid and Barcelona and the Viandar de Sota group is planning others around Spain.)

***Gerry Dawes** has been traveling the gastronomic and wine roads of Spain for 30 years. He has been to Spain 18 times in the past three years on extensive fact-finding trips for* Homage to Iberia, *a book he is writing. His articles and/or photographs have been published in* The New York Times, Food & Wine, The Wine News, The Wine Enthusiast, Santé, *and many others.*

RECIPES WITH PEARS

Recipes selected by Vicky Hayward
Wines recommended by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Braised veal with blanquilla pears

Josep María Morell i Bitría, author of *Els Fogons de Lleida* and chef-proprietor of Cal Morell restaurant in Balaguer, gives this version of a traditional Lleidan recipe for veal with pears. Adding a truffle slice to the pounded *picada* of almonds, parsley, and dried pepper gives a wonderful musky flavor to the sauce.

SERVES 4:
Around 75 ml (3 fl oz)
extra virgin olive oil, for frying
750 gr (3/4 kg) braising veal,
cut into chunks
1 onion, cut into small pieces
2 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 green garlic shoot,
skinned and chopped,
or clove of garlic
1 small ham bone
1/2 bell pepper,
cut into strips
1 small piece of dried
spicy-hot pepper
1 bay leaf
20 black peppercorns
1/2 glass of Spanish brandy
3 ripe tomatoes, grated
1/2 l mineral water
1/2 kg blanquilla pears,
washed but not peeled
and cut into chunks

FOR THE PICADA:
2 garlic cloves
10 toasted almonds
1 slice of truffle,
fresh or preserved
Leaves from 2 stalks
of parsley

Heat the oil gently in a large earthenware or other flameproof casserole with a lid and add the veal, tossing it as you sauté it. When the veal is golden brown add the onion, carrots, leek, ham bone, fresh and dried peppers, bay leaf, and peppercorns. Toss everything together well, making sure nothing sticks.
When the onion is soft but not fully cooked add the brandy and tomato to the casserole, cover and leave to cook for 10 minutes. Meanwhile make a picada by pounding the garlic cloves, almonds, truffle, and parsley. Wash out the mortar with the water, pouring the contents into the casserole. Add salt to taste and leave everything to simmer for 15 minutes over very slow heat. After this time add the pear chunks. Stir everything well until the pears are cooked.
Leave to rest for 30 minutes, but serve hot.
Recommended wine: A white Chardonnay varietal from the D.O. Costers del Segre would go well with this dish of tender veal in which the Lleida pears serve only to mellow the end result. The tropical fruit aromas of this variety, in combination with the roasted almond and vanilla notes gained from the wood, make this white wine the perfect foil to the veal in its pear sauce.

Rabbit with pears and turnips

The match of flavors in this country stew, with the turnips and pears absorbing the gamy rabbit cooking juices, is magical. It is easy to cook and often measured by eye but here is a version with measured ingredients from *El Gran Libro de la Cocina Catalana* by Josep Lladonosa i Giró, the chef of the Siete Puertas restaurant, in Barcelona. His magnificent book is a catch-all primer of Catalan cooking, with guidelines on techniques and recipes. He notes that some people add a picada of garlic and almonds to the stew before the final cooking.

SERVES 4:
300 ml (10 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
1.75 kg (3 1/2 lb) jointed rabbit pieces
1 onion, peeled and chopped
1 carrot, peeled and chopped
2 leeks, trimmed and chopped
1 small head of garlic,
skinned and separated into cloves
Handful of herbs: bay leaf,
thyme, oregano, marjoram
4 ripe tomatoes,
skinned and chopped
2 wine-glasses of dry white wine
A little flour,
for thickening
the casserole
and coating the vegetables
8 blanquilla or other
small firm pears,
skinned but left whole,
with the stalk left on
800 gr turnips,
peeled and cut into
3 x 2-cm pieces
Salt and pepper

Heat 150 ml (5 fl oz) oil in an earthenware or other flameproof casserole large enough to take the rabbit pieces and sauté them until golden all over. Remove to one side. Sauté the onion, carrot, and leeks in the same oil. Once golden add the garlic, herbs, and the chopped tomatoes; leave to reduce. Put the rabbit pieces back in the earthenware casserole, add the wine and leave to reduce. Sprinkle a little flour into the wine, leave to cook for 1-2 minutes and slowly stir in stock. Cover the casserole and leave to cook for 20-30 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the pears and turnips. Blanch and drain them separately but in the same water, for about 10 and 5 minutes each, until just tender. Flour the pieces lightly and fry them lightly until golden. Once the rabbit is cooked remove the pieces from the casserole and reduce the juices, skimming off the fat with a tablespoon. Then place the rabbit, pears and turnips back in the casserole. Leave to cook slowly for a further 20-30 minutes. Test for salt. If the sauce remains dry, add a little cooking water from the pears and the turnips.
Recommended wine: A red 1995 Priorato made from Garnacha. After a period of aging the tannins have become less obvious, and the aromas of red fruit and the balsamic and flower aromas gained from the wood both contribute to and gain from the flavors of the dish.

Pears filled with Catalan creme brûlée

Manuel Moreno of Cal Molí, a restaurant just outside Lleida, invented this modernized version of and old-fashioned recipe for baked or poached pears served with custard and a caramel syrup. Originally the pears were baked on a sugared sheet (and the sugar then used to make the caramel) or poached in the milk which was then used to make the custard. Manuel has subtly worked in other local flavors—cinnamon, anise, and orange—as well as the crunch of toasted pine kernels and caramel topping the custard.

SERVES 4:
1 l water
200 gr sugar
1 small glass of Spanish anise
Orange zest
1 cinnamon stick
8 blanquilla pears, skinned
Large knob of butter, for frying
50 gr (2 oz) seedless Corinth raisins
50 gr (2 oz) pine kernels

FOR THE CATALAN CREAM FILLING:
300 ml (10 fl oz)
full-cream milk
90 gr (3 oz) sugar
Lemon zest
Cinnamon stick
4 egg yolks
15 gr corn flour, optional
6 tsp sugar

Heat the water with the sugar, glass of anise, orange zest, and cinnamon stick, and boil gently until reduced to a light syrupy consistency. Meanwhile skin the pears, divide them in half, remove the seeds, and add to the syrup. Cook until tender then drain, reserving a little of the syrup, and cool. Melt the butter separately in a frying pan and sauté the seedless raisins and pine kernels. Add just a pinch of flour and enough reserved syrup to make a light cream.

Make the Catalan cream. Reserve one tablespoon of milk. Heat the rest of the milk, sugar, lemon zest, and cinnamon in a large pan and boil for two minutes. Whisk the egg yolks with the corn flour dissolved in the cool milk, pour the hot milk over the top—whisking all the time—and sieve the custard back into the milk pan. Heat slowly, whisking all the time while it thickens, and remove from the heat as soon as it comes to a boil.
Choose a large flat dish. Pour the syrup over the dish, arrange the pears on top—cut-half upwards—and fill the dip in the center with the Catalan cream. When cool, sprinkle a very thin layer of sugar over the cream in each pear and caramelize with a salamander, hot iron, or poker. (If this seems too complicated you can make the caramel separately, shatter it, and scatter the fragments over the top.) At Cal Molí they also fleck a little chocolate over the tips of the pears.
Recommended wine: A sweet red crianza Priorato made from a blend of Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sirah. This wine is fresh and fragrant on the nose, with sweet aromas of jam and toffee. Fruit is never easy to combine with wine and in the previous recipes the pears are just an accompaniment to round off the dish so the wine was chosen to combine with the main ingredient. But here the wine needs to have sufficient character to combine with the pears and caramelised custard, without being overcome by them.

Blanquilla pears preserved in Somontano wine

In Zaragoza's delicatessens there is usually a shelf dedicated to large jars of jewel-like peaches and pears preserved in red wine. Once the peaches were simply marinated in red wine for four days then eaten fresh, but things are more sophisticated these days. This recipe may look predictable, but the end result is not. After a few months swimming in the syrup, the blanquillas emerge still firm, but with bite, and full of Somontano's fruity red flavor as it has leached into the flesh. These are handy for an almost instant pudding served just as they are, chilled or at room temperature, or dressed up with crème fraîche and crispy almond biscuits.

MAKES 1 1/2 KG PRESERVES:
1 bottle of Somontano red wine
1 kg ripe but firm blanquilla pears, skinned but left whole and with the stalk on
1/2 kg sugar
1 cinnamon stick

Pour the wine into a stainless steel, glass, or ceramic bowl and leave the pears to marinate in it overnight in a cool place, turning the pears occasionally.
Bring the wine, pears, sugar, and cinnamon slowly to a boil in a large pan and simmer gently together for 20 minutes. Check the pears are tender in the center with a sharp knife or skewer. Remove from the heat and place the pears in sterilized preserving jars.
Boil the syrup to reduce its volume by half and pour over the pears, topping up with a little water if needed to cover the pears. Close the lid and either keep the pears in the fridge for eating in the near future or sterilize for longer keeping.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Somontano, the same wine as is used in the preparation, such as a Pinot Noir varietal crianza. These grapes give an attractive cherry color and flower aromas combined with sweet notes of jam and red fruits which the wine may pass on to the pear, just as the pear will pass its aroma to the wine.

Pear compote

Curiously, references to pears in Spanish cookbooks seem to be as much medicinal as culinary. The 12th century Andalusian Arabic *Treatise of Foods* (1162) recommended the pear for stomach problems and to cool the body's humors: it could be eaten before or after meals for different effects, the juice turned into vinegar for a general tonic, and

the flesh candied in a syrup against bile. (The pear is a diuretic, laxative, and is extremely rich in potassium.) This may be the origin of the medieval Spanish recipes for candied pears, such as that Juan de la Mata, royal pastry cook to Felipe V, gave in *Arte de la Repostería* (1747) from which this simpler compote is descended. The recipe comes from *Nou Manual de Cuina Amb Tota Perfecció*, published in 1830.

SERVES 4:
8-10 firm cooking pears,
such as blanquilla
100 gr (4 oz) sugar
100 ml (4 fl oz) water

Bring the pears—whole, with their skins on—to a boil in a large saucepan of water and simmer for 5-10 minutes until half-cooked. Remove and leave in a bowl of cold water. If you like, skin the pears (although this is not in the original recipe; much of the pears' goodness is in the skin).
Dissolve the sugar in the water over heat in a pan large enough to take the pears. Add them to the simmering water and cook very gently until tender. Remove them to a serving dish and reduce the cooking water to a light syrup. Pour over the pears.
Recommended wine: A sweet 1995 D.O. Navarra made of small Moscatel grapes which are harvested late in an area of Spain where the summers are not too hot. The typical aromas of this variety and the freshness of the grapes are thus maintained, and these characteristics can be noted on the nose and on the palate. The sweet smoothness of this wine will mellow the sharpness of the pear in compote.

RECIPES WITH MUSHROOMS

Recipes and wines selected by Víctor de la Serna

Milky agaric, potato and vegetable soup

SERVES 4:

500 gr milky agarics (*Lactarius deliciosus* or *L. Sanguifluus*), diced in 1 to 2-centimeter morsels
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 medium-sized yellow onion, finely chopped
1 medium-sized green bell pepper, seeded and cut into julienne strips
A handful fresh, wide string beans, cut into julienne strips
1 large purple-skinned potato, peeled and diced
1 large carrot, diced
Salt to taste
A mixture of garlic (1 clove), 1 tbsp fresh parsley and several saffron sprigs, all of them carefully mashed or pureed together.
1 liter or so plain water (this is best as a thick soup, but it can be made lighter with more liquid)

Prior to dicing the mushrooms, clean mushrooms carefully under a little running water. (Milky agarics are often covered with mud and pine needles.) Heat the oil in a large metal casserole. Briefly sauté the onion in it, then add the bell pepper strips. When they're all tender, add the diced mushrooms, which will soon start shedding some liquid, and stir the mixture together for a minute or so. Add the garlic mixture. Then add the vegetables, salt and water and bring to a boil. Finally add the diced potatoes. Let it boil again, reduce to low heat and cook covered until the potatoes are tender: check from time to time; about 30 minutes. Let it reduce a little, uncovered, if near the end it's too liquid. Correct salt and serve. This can be reheated (which is not the case of all mushroom dishes).
Recommended wine: A young Tempranillo red from the La Mancha D.O.

Sautéed Guadarrama mushrooms

This is a dish which will vary with the catch of the day, but which is best with a varied mix of the autumnal mushrooms that are typical of the continental-Mediterranean environment of the pine- and evergreen oak-covered slopes of the central Spanish mountains. Typical ingredients: *senderuelas* or fairy ring champignons *(Marasmius oreades); setas de pie azul* or amethyst agarics *(Lepista nuda); negrillas* or gray agarics *(Tricholoma terreum);* the southern European *Boletus bellinii* (fine if you remove the viscous upper skin); the *seta de cura* or greenish russula *(Russula virescens);* the younger, still-closed parasols *(Macrolepiota procera).* Cut off the stems of the fairy ring champignons, clean and dice the mushrooms as above.

SERVES 4-6:

2 kg of mixed mushrooms (which will be drastically reduced by cooking)
4 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
4 large shallots
1 tbsp fresh thyme sprigs
Pinch of nutmeg,
Salt,
Pepper
Lemon juice

In a large, deep saucepan, bring the oil to medium heat. Finely chop the shallots, sauté the shallots until translucid. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring from time to time, over medium-high heat. In seconds

they start shedding water. Add two good pinches of salt, grate black pepper over it, add the (washed) thyme leaves from several sprigs, and a pinch of nutmeg. Let it shed more and more water until suddenly it starts reducing very fast. Before it's entirely dry, take it off the fire: some of that creaminess (without any cream) should be preserved. Add a few drops of fresh lemon juice just before serving.
This is a perfect foil, as a side dish, for some roast Ávila veal *(ternera de Ávila asada)*.
Recommended wine: A Cigales D.O. or Navarra D.O. rosé, or a young carbonic maceration Tacoronte-Acentejo D.O. red.

Baked St. George's mushrooms

SERVES 4:
600 gr of fresh *Calocybe gambosa*, St. George's mushrooms
6 garlic cloves
3 tbsp, extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp grated bread crumbs
1 tbsp minced, fresh flat-leaf parsley
A half cup white wine
Salt to taste

Mash garlic, bread crumbs, and minced parsley together. Place two tbsp oil in flat-bottomed earthenware casserole on top of stove. Clean mushrooms; slice larger ones in two, but most will be bite-sized. Place in casserole, and start heating. When oil is hot, add garlic mix, some salt, and remaining oil. Move to a preheated (medium heat) oven for 8 minutes. Then add white wine, return to oven and keep cooking for another 15 minutes. Serve.
Recommended wine: A barrel-fermented Chardonnay from the Navarra D.O. or the Somontano D.O.

RECIPES FROM LEVANTE

Recipes and Wines Selected by Jeremy Watson

Orange and avocado salad

The hot Levante climate stimulates the creation of cold refreshing dishes like the following:

SERVES 6:
FOR THE SALAD:

Orange and avocado salad
3 oranges
3 avocados
1 tbsp chopped fresh mint or fresh tarragon

FOR THE DRESSING:

1/2 tbsp lemon juice
1 1/2 tbsp sherry or red wine vinegar
5 tbsp olive oil
3/4 tsp Dijon-style mustard
1/4 tsp salt
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Whisk together all the dressing ingredients ready to be sprinkled over the salad. Peel the oranges, remove the membrane, cut into half slices; peel the avocados just before serving and cut them into similar size slices. Arrange decoratively and alternately on individual plates and sprinkle mint or tarragon on top.

Recommended wine: The dressing will conflict with most wines, but, maybe a good *fino* sherry.

Paella from Valencia

The men cook the rice dishes on Sunday, a tradition that stems from this dish that they cooked themselves when working in the *huerta*. I am indebted to María José Sevilla in her book *Spain on a Plate* for this *paella valenciana de la huerta*. You will need a 40 cm (16 in) paella pan.

SERVES 4:

400 gr corn-fed chicken, cut into pieces
350 gr rabbit, cut into pieces
125 gr green beans, cut into pieces
100 gr finely chopped, skinned and seeded tomatoes
16 cleaned snails in their shells, if available, or a sprig of rosemary
100 gr lima beans
100 gr white butter beans
100 ml olive oil
Salt
2 strands of saffron
1 tbsp paprika
350 gr short-grain rice
1.75 l water

Soak the lima and butter beans overnight. Heat the oil in the pan with a little salt, add chicken and rabbit pieces, and fry slowly until brown. Add the green beans, fry for a further 5 minutes, then add tomatoes and fry for another 3 minutes.

Meantime, boil the snails for five minutes in a separate pan, and drain. Crush the saffron and dissolve in a little boiling water. Add the paprika to the paella pan and quickly add the water, bring to a boil, and add the soaked beans, then the snails or rosemary, and saffron, and simmer for 30 minutes. Sprinkle in the rice and boil over a high heat for 5 minutes, before gradually turning down the heat to simmer for a further ten minutes until the rice is cooked and the liquid evaporated.

Recommended wine: Utiel-Requena is well known for lovely dry *rosados*, from the Bobal, which are an excellent accompaniment to rice dishes. However, do not overlook the slightly more beefy Monastrell rosados from Valencia, Alicante, and Murcia.

Fish stew from the Mar Menor

María José Sevilla also gives the following recipe for a soupy rice dish from Murcia, in the same book. The chef at the Parador El Saler does a version of this without the rice, and serves the fish with shellfish in a light covering of the broth, and calls it *suquet de pescado*.

SERVES 6:

3 red mullet
1 monkfish tail
1 John Dory or *dorada* (optional), cleaned and gutted
1 Spanish onion, peeled and quartered
4 cloves garlic, peeled
1 bay leaf
500 gr potatoes, peeled and quartered
1 l water
Salt
3 whiting
500 gr grey mullet
1 tbs olive oil
2 chili peppers, seeded
350 gr short grain rice
300 ml *alioli* sauce

Place the red mullet, monkfish tail and John Dory or dorada, onion, one clove of garlic, the bay leaf and potatoes in a large saucepan with just enough water to cover. Add the salt, bring to a boil, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the whiting and grey mullet and cook for a further 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the oil and fry the chili peppers for two minutes and then crush with the remaining three cloves of garlic and add them to the pan. Remove the broth from the heat, take out the fish and potatoes, and after removing the skins and bones, arrange the fish and potatoes on a warm serving dish with a little broth to keep them warm. Strain the remaining broth, crush the pieces, rub them through a sieve and return them to the pan.

Bring the broth to a boil, sprinkle in the rice and add salt to taste. Cover and simmer for about 20 minutes until the rice is cooked. The result will be rather soupy, but serve the rice first as a starter with the alioli, followed by the fish and potatoes.

Recommended wine: These are dishes that would also sit well with a Monastrell rosado, but a lighter red from Jumilla would also be appropriate.

Chicken with almonds

SERVES 4:

1 corn-fed chicken jointed into small pieces
50 gr plain flour
4 tbs olive oil
1 finely chopped onion
50 gr serrano ham, chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
125 ml dry white wine
120 ml chicken stock
75 gr fresh almonds
chopped fresh basil and parsley
Salt and ground black pepper

Coat the chicken pieces in flour, heat the oil in a heavy based pan with lid and fry for four or five minutes until golden brown. Remove the chicken and add the onion, ham, and garlic to pan. Cook for two to three minutes until onion and garlic have softened, then put the chicken back into the pan and stir in the wine and stock. Add the fresh almonds, herbs, salt and a good twist of black pepper, put on the lid and simmer for 45 minutes.

Recommended wine: This dish is suited to one of the new generation of rich, fruity Tempranillo or Merlot wines from Alicante, Utiel-Requena or Yecla.

Apricot dreams

Desserts exclusive to Levante seem few and far between, but one very appropriate to Murcia is a recipe given to me by a friend in Alicante, and called *Sons'albercoc de Alperce.*

SERVES:

FOR THE BATTER:

225 gr flour
50 ml olive oil
1 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp water
2 eggs with yolks and whites separated
2 kg apricots, approx

Sift the flour into a large bowl and into the middle pour the olive oil, water, and sugar. Mix thoroughly until smooth, before stirring in the yolks. Leave for up to three hours and then fold in the already beaten and stiff egg whites.

Cut open the apricots and remove the stones before marinating them in brandy with a little sugar and zested lemon rind. Lightly coat them in batter and fry in hot olive oil before serving them with a dusting of powdered sugar.

Recommended wine: This seems a perfect opportunity to drink one of the more delicate sweet Moscatels of Alicante or Valencia.

RECIPES WITH SALTED FISH

Recipes selected by María José Sevilla and Spain Gourmetour
Wines recommended by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Most Spanish salted fish—*mojama*, or salted meager, tuna, or mullet roe—is usually eaten uncooked, as an appetizer, with a glass of wine or beer. Another common possibility is in salads or *cocas*. Salt cod, however, deserves a special mention, it being the ultimate in salted fish for more elaborate dishes. Practically every region of Spain has its recipes but the Basque Country and Catalonia are undoubtedly the experts in getting the greatest substance out of this driest of fish.

Endive and *mojama* slices

The simplest and most delicious way of serving mojama is in very thin slices, sprinkled with a little virgin olive oil. In restaurants in the fishing areas of Alicante and Murcia it is often served in salads with tomato, beetroot, and onion, or perhaps chicory as in this recipe from the collection published in the fascinating book, *La almadraba, salazón y cocina*.

SERVES 4:

6-8 endives
160 gr thin mojama slices
Rind of 1/2 lemon
2 medium ripe tomatoes
2 tsp fresh herbs, chopped
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp vinegar
Salt
Ground pepper
Carrots and celery hearts to taste

Cut the mojama in 1 mm slices. Chop two of them and add, with the grated lemon rind, to the olive oil and vinegar to make the vinaigrette. Slice the carrots and celery hearts into thin threads or into strips using a potato peeler. Make thin slits in the tomatoes and blanch in boiling salt water. Rinse with iced water and peel. With a sharp knife remove the core and cut the tomatoes into 5 mm strips, then dice. Pour over some of the vinaigrette and add the chopped fresh herbs.

Place the strips of mojama over the endive leaves and arrange on a serving dish. Chop the endive hearts and place in the middle of the serving dish, together with the julienne carrots and celery hearts. Pour the vinaigrette over all the ingredients, and finally top the center of the serving dish with the diced tomatoes.

Recommended wine: A white, Macabeo varietal D.O. Jumilla. Its ripe fruit and flower aromas can stand up to the slight bitterness of the endives and the flavorsome salted tuna. All that is needed is a simple, aromatic, and honestly-made wine.

RECIPES

Coca de San Juan de Alicante

A close relation of the pizza, the coca is made along the east coast of Spain, mostly in the Alicante area and the Balearic Islands. Vegetables are the usual topping but sometimes fish and meat are used. Sweet cocas topped with a variety of fruits are also very popular. In this case, however, the coca is more like a pie and is widely prepared in Alicante for the San Juan festival. Its local name is *coca amb tonina* as it is made with salted tuna. The recipe was provided by Mari Carmen Pomares, an inhabitant of Alicante who makes it faithfully every year.

SERVES 8-10:

For the stuffing:
1.5 kg onions
250 ml olive oil
1 level tbsp paprika
150 gr salted tuna
50 gr pine nuts
1 tbsp chopped parsley

FOR THE DOUGH:
1 kg flour
1 tsp paprika
250 ml olive oil
1/2 glass of water
250 ml dry anisette
Salt to taste
Egg for glazing

Leave the tuna to soak overnight. Next day, drain it, dry it, and break it up. Chop the onion but not too finely and fry gently in the oil. When almost done, add the tuna, pine nuts, and paprika. At the last minute, just before removing from the heat, add the parsley. Set aside.
For the dough, mix the flour with the paprika and salt. Heat the oil and the water separately and, when hot, pour over the flour to scald it and turn over the dough with a wooden spoon. When the mixture has cooled down, add the anisette and knead until smooth.
Roll out the dough thinly and form one large base or several small ones. Cover with a layer of filling then with another thin layer of dough. Seal the edges, prick the surface with a fork then brush with beaten egg. Bake in a medium oven for 15-20 minutes until golden.
Recommended wine: A young red wine from the D.O. Alicante made from 100% Shiraz grapes. The red fruit aromas and vegetable and spice flavors will provide a delicate, fresh contrast to the paprika and anisette-flavored dough, in preference to an aromatic white wine which might be too powerful.

Exqueixada (Shredded cod salad)

Perfectly de-salted and combined with fresh seasonal ingredients either as a salad or a *montado* (a tiny portion served atop a piece of bread), salt cod is one of the most traditional dishes of Catalan cooking.

SERVES 4:

450 gr dried salt cod, broken into pieces
2 spring onions
1 large fresh red chili, seeded
5-6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp sherry vinegar
1 tbsp peppercorns, crushed
2 beefsteak tomatoes, skinned
1 red pepper
1 green pepper
75 gr black olives

Soak the salt cod in water for 36 hours (renew water after 3 hours) to soften and remove salt. Drain and squeeze out excess moisture. Using fingers, scrape free and tear or shred the flesh of the salt cod, discarding skin, or slice the flesh diagonally off the skin, in slivers, discarding bones. Finely chop the onion and chili, mix with the oil, vinegar, and peppercorns. Pour this over the prepared fish on a shallow serving platter. Marinate for 15-20 minutes or longer. Meanwhile, seed the tomatoes and cut into segments or squares. Slice the prepared peppers into strips or rings. Just before serving, add the prepared vegetables and olives to the marinated fish. Toasted or crusty bread combines well with this dish.
Recommended wine: A young D.O. Penedés red made of Garnacha and Cariñena grapes has the tannin flavor of young wine and this contrasts well with the gelatinous cod and the onion and peppers. The olive oil dressing is characteristic of this simple dish from the Catalonian countryside.

Cod omelette

A number of recipes are particular to the range of cod dishes that is so much a feature of the Basque cider houses. Of them all, the cod and green pepper omelette is almost legendary.

SERVES 4:
200 gr flaked cod
8 eggs
2 green peppers
2 red onions
Salt and olive oil

Soak the cod in water for 12 hours. Change the water twice. Keep in a dry, cool place.
Sauté the red onions and the green peppers cut into rings. Add the cod and cook gently for five minutes. Put aside and keep warm. Beat the eggs in a bowl and then add the cod and vegetables. Mix thoroughly and season with salt.
In a non-stick pan, pour a drop of oil and heat until hot. Pour in the mixture. Reduce the heat and cook for three minutes. Turn over and cook on the other side until set. Serve hot.
Recommended wine: A warm and flavorsome red D.O. La Mancha, made from Cencibel and Garnacha, with its dried fruit and spice aromas, will bring out the flavors of this omelette. Although eggs do not generally combine well with wine so that a young red or cool white is usually chosen, in this case the strength of the cod with onion and pepper determines the choice. But a white Alella, Rueda, or Valdepeñas would also go well, if the weather calls for a refreshing wine.

Club Ranero salt cod

This is a variation of one of the most important recipes of the cuisine of the Basques, *bacalao al pil-pil*, salt cod cooked in a perfect emulsion of olive oil, garlic, and the gelatine from the fish prepared in an earthenware *cazuela*. Club Ranero is a bacalao al pil-pil enriched with a sauce of onions, tomato, and the paste of sweet dry red peppers, known as *pimientos choriceros* in the Castilian language.

SERVES 4:

FOR THE CLUB RANERO SAUCE:

2 medium-size onions, sliced
2 bell red peppers, sliced
1 large ripe tomato
2-3 cloves garlic, sliced
2 tbsp pulp of dried sweet red peppers, hydrated in warm water
Olive oil for frying

FOR THE SALT COD PIL-PIL

8 pieces of salt cod, weighing 125 gr each, desalted
300 ml olive oil, half extra virgin and half virgin
2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
1 small red chili, seeded and sliced

The fish, which should be fairly thick, will need to be desalted for 2 or 3 days. The first day, change the water once, and the second and third days twice.

To prepare the Club Ranero sauce, heat olive oil in a deep frying pan, add the onions, tomato, red bell peppers, and garlic, and fry until soft. Add the pepper pulp and cook for a few minutes more. Blend and strain. Set aside.

Place the olive oil in a large earthenware pot. When hot, add the garlic and the chili. Once the garlic starts turning a golden color, remove both ingredients from the oil and discard. Next, add the pieces of cod, first—and this is very important—with the skin downward (the skin contains the gelatine needed for the emulsion). Turn once. Set the fish aside and remove the cazuela from the heat to allow the oil to cool down slightly. Remove 1/2 of the oil to a different dish. Place the cazuela over a moderate heat. Return the fish to the pan and start shaking the cazuela at a constant rhythm, adding the reserved oil little by little. Soon the emulsion will form as more oil is poured in. By the end, the sauce will have a thick consistency and an attractive buttery color. When ready, spoon over a few spoonfuls of the pulp made from the vegetables and pimientos. Shake the pan for a while and serve.

Recommended wine: A red Tempranillo varietal D.O. Rioja crianza. The strength of the sauce with onion and red peppers, together with the extra-rich gelatine of the pil-pil sauce, means that the wine needs to be carefully chosen. Although it must be young with a certain degree of astringency to make up for the stickiness of the pil-pil sauce, the strong flavors of this dish call for dense aromas, preferably reminiscent of spices and a wine that is flavorsome, full, lively, and fresh.

Soldaditos de Pavía (Fried cod sticks)

This is Seville's classic *tapa*. Angel Muro's (19 th century) excellent book, *El Practicón*, gives this recommendation: "Take good long strips of salt cod, soaked, cleared of skin and scales, coated in batter colored with a touch of saffron, and fry in plenty of oil. They should be well-browned and crispy."

SERVES 4:

250 gr dried salt cod
Juice of 1 lemon
75 gr plain flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
A pinch of salt
3 strands saffron
50 ml water
50 ml milk
3 tbsp olive oil
Olive oil for frying

Soak the cod in water at room temperature for 24 to 36 hours, depending on the thickness of the pieces, changing the water at least 3 times. Drain the fish thoroughly and remove the membrane, skin, and bones. Cut the cod into strips 5 cm (2 in) long and 1.5 cm (1/2 in) wide, and sprinkle with lemon juice.

To make the batter, mix the flour, baking powder, and salt. Lightly roast the saffron for a few seconds in a dry pan over a moderate heat, then crush it and add to the flour. Stir in the water, milk, and oil and mix until smooth. Heat at least 1 cm (1/2 in) of oil in a frying-pan. Dip the cod pieces in the batter and fry until golden brown and crispy on both sides. Drain off the excess oil on kitchen paper and serve immediately.

Recommended wine: A white, D.O. Madrid, made from Malvar grapes. If the cod has been properly desalted and is of good quality, when its fried coating is opened up, it should break into large, creamy flakes. These combine perfectly with a balanced, fresh wine with a touch of banana and aniseed and a pleasant herby aftertaste.

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.

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

Fluid Measures
METRIC/U.S. STANDARD

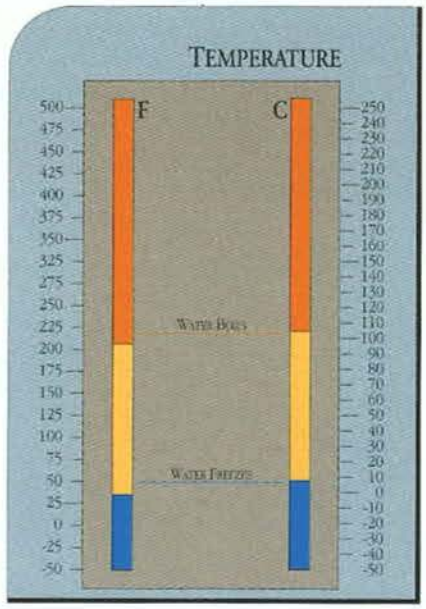
10 milliliters = 2 teaspoons
50 milliliters = 3 tablespoons
100 milliliters = 3 1/2 ounces
250 milliliters = 1 cup + 1 tablespoon
500 milliliters = 1 pint + 2 tablespoons
1 liter = 1 quart + 3 tablespoons
1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters
1 tablespoon = 15 milliliters
1 ounce = 30 milliliters
1 cup = 235 milliliters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

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



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Source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Valdepeñas Wines

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Tel: (34) 975 373 060/975 214 518 - Fax: (34) 975 373 060

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Mourence, 6 - 27800 VILLALBA (Lugo)
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CONSERVAS COLL, S.L.
Camí de Padrós, s/n - CASTELLTERÇOL (Barcelona)
Tel: (34) 938 668 228 - Fax: (34) 938 666 125

CONSERVES FERRER, S.A.
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08251 SANTPEDOR (Barcelona)
Tel: (34) 938 272 512 - Fax: (34) 938 272 127

CONSERVAS IBERIA, S.A.
Los Santeros, Nave 5 y 6 - 42004 SORIA
Tel: (34) 975 225 920 - Fax: (34) 975 212 562

CONSERVAS TORRES HNOS., S.A.
Ctra. Sagunto- Burgos - 42149 ABEJAR (Soria)
Tel: (34) 975 373 163 - Fax: (34) 975 373 065

FAUNDEZ RIVAS, MANUEL
Ctra. Alcañices, s/n
49519 RABANALES DE ALISTE (Zamora)
Tel: (34) 980 681 823 - Fax: (34) 980 681 841

FRIGAM, S.L. (Claudio Raul Pirola)
Ctra. N. 525, km. 257
32141 HERMIDA (Ourense)
Tel: (34) 988 282 230 - Fax: (34) 988 254 718

JULIÁN MARTIN POLAND
Camino de la Moheda - 10640 MORALEJA (Cáceres)
Tel: (34) 927 515 464 - Fax: (34) 927 515 725

RUFFOLO LUIGI
San Cristobal - 32611 RIOS (Ourense)
Tel: (34) 988 416 447

ALBERTO DE MIGUEL, S.A. (WILD FUNGHI, S.A).
Ctra. Arnedo, s/n - 26560 AUTOL (La Rioja)
Tel: (34) 941 390 072 - Fax: (34) 941 390 142

XANEIRO, J.S.L.
Av. Toques, 43
15800 MELIDE (A Coruña)
Tel: (34) 981 505 335 - Fax: (34) 981 505 335

Source: Inspection Center for Foreign Trade. SOIVRE, Zaragoza and ICEX

PEARS

ACTEL, S.C.L.
Ctra. Valle de Arán, km 3
25196 LLEIDA
Tel: (34) 973 700 809 - Fax: (34) 973 700 810

ARILFUIT
Apdo. de Correos 216
25080 LLEIDA
Tel: (34) 973 201 250 - Fax: (34) 973 201 996

CENTRAL AGRÍCOLA GIL
Ctra. Nacional II, km 272,3
50100 LA ALMUNIA Dª GODINA (Zaragoza)
Tel: (34) 976 812 013 - Fax: (34) 976 812 240

CHIQUINQUIRA H. GARCÍA MATEO
06107 - VILLAREAL DE OLIVENÇA (Badajoz)
Tel: (34) 924 490 040 - Fax: (34) 924 490 040

DOMINGO CATALA, S.A.
Carretera s/n
25134 LA PORTELLA (Lleida)
Tel: (34) 973 186 181 - Fax: (34) 973 186 479

MAIN EXPORTERS

FR. MALAVA, S.A.
Cº. Peitas, s/n
50300 CALATAYUD (Zaragoza)
Tel: (34) 976 881 456 - Fax. (34) 976 884 913

FRULESA
Ctra. comarcal 1313m km 11
25690 VILLANOVA DE LA BARCA (Lleida)
Tel: (34) 973 191 150 - Fax: (34) 973 191 151

FRUTALBA
Camino Giraba, s/n
22520 FRAGA (Huesca)
Tel: (34) 974 471 689 - Fax: (34) 974 473 278

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Ctra. Tauste, s/n
50360 ALAGÓN (Zaragoza)
Tel: (34) 976 610 071 - Fax: (34) 976 442 312

FRUTAS BEAN
Ctra. Madrid, km. 438 - 22520 FRAGA (Huesca)
Tel: (34) 974 470 870 - Fax: (34) 974 471 719

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Ctra. Vall d'Aran, km 3 - 25191 LLEIDA
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Tel: (34) 974 471 468 - Fax: (34) 974 473 113

RAMÓN DALFO
Afueras s/n
22004 ALBELDA BOLLABAR (Huesca)
Tel: (34) 973 760 018 - Fax: (34) 973760 523

TREECOOP FRUITES D.C.C.L.
Segre, 1 - 25173 SUDANELL (Lleida)
Tel: (34) 973 258 148 - Fax: (34) 973 258 200

Source: Inspection Center for Foreign Trade. SOIVRE, Zaragoza

PIQUILLO PEPPERS

An additional list of Spanish manufacturers is available as a brochure, on diskette, and via Internet. For more information see page 9.

With Denomination of Origin

CONSEJO REGULADOR D.O.
PIMIENTO DEL PIQUILLO DE LODOSA
Ctra. del Sadar, s/n. Edificio El Sario, 3
31006 PAMPLONA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 238 512 - Fax: (34) 948 232 070

COOPERATIVA DEL CAMPO DE LODOSA
El Ramal, 3 - 31580 LODOSA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 693 122 - Fax: (34) 948 693 034

EGACOOP-CEVENASA
Ctra. Peralta, s/n - 31340 MARCILLA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 713 970 - Fax: (34) 948 713 971

CONSERVAS ARTESANAS ROSARA, S.L.
Políg. Industrial, sector 1 , Parcela 3
31261 ANDOSILLA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 674 367 - Fax: (34) 948 690 301

CONSERVAS PEDRO LUIS
Pol. Industrial s/n - 31580 LODOSA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 693 631 - Fax: (34) 948 693 835

JOSÉ SALCEDO SORIA, S.L.
La Ribera, 31 - Apdo. Correos 98
31570 SAN ADRIÁN (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 670 261 - Fax: (34) 948 696 358

HUERTA DEL EBRO, S.L.
Camino del Arenal, s/n
31587 MENDAVIA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 695 390 - Fax: (34) 948 695 122

CONSERVAS EL CHAVAL, S.A.
Ctra. de Lodosa, s/n
31261 ANDOSILLA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 674 071 - Fax: (34) 948 674 025

Without Denomination of Origin

ASFOMEM, S.L., ANDRÉS BAIGORRI DE LUIS
Políg. Industrial, s/n
Apdo. Correos 14
31580 LODOSA (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 693 861 - Fax: (34) 948 693 861

BAJAMAR
Ctra. de Sangüesa, s/n
31310 CARCASTILLO (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 725 000 - Fax: (34) 948 725 257

CONSERVAS VITER
Vadillos, 1
26510 PRADEJÓN (La Rioja)
Tel: (34) 941 150 000 - Fax: (34) 941 141 110

CONSERVAS EL CIDACOS, S.A.
Ctra. de Calahorra, km. 1
26560 AUTOL (La Rioja)
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ALMANAQUE, S.L.
Camino del Campo, s/n
31261 ANDOSILLA (Navarra)
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ANKO, S.L.
Dávila, 20
31515 CADREITA (Navarra)
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Ctra. Zaragoza, s/n
31514 VALTIERRA (Navarra)
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CONSERVAS TABOADA, S.A.
Ctra. de Marcilla, km. 2
31360 FUNES (Navarra)
Tel: (34) 948 754 228 - Fax: (34) 948 754 397

Source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Pimiento del Piquillo de Lodosa and ICEX

PRODUCTS FROM LEVANTE

Almonds

An additional list of Spanish producers is available as a brochure, on diskette, and via Internet. For more information see page 9.

ALMENCOOP, A.E.I.
Partida Bacarot, 10 - 03114 ALICANTE
Tel: (34) 965 114 801 - Fax: (34) 965 281 448

ALMENDRAS LLOPÍS, S.A.
Ctra. S. Vicente-Agost, Km. 1,5
03690 SAN VICENTE (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 661 262 - Fax: (34) 965 666 432

ALONSO ALMENDRAS, S.A.
Partida Baya Alta, 2-218
03292 ELCHE (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 966 637 058 - Fax: (34) 966 637 443

COLEFRUSE, S.A.
Pza. Santa Faz, 1
03550 SAN JUAN (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 653 200 - Fax: (34) 965 653 252

SANCHIS MIRA, S.A.
Partida de Segorb, s/n
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 400 - Fax: (34) 965 610 783

SUC. LUIS CREMADES, S.A.
Mayor, 208
30820 ALCANTARILLA (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 800 416 - Fax: (34) 968 800 717

UTECO
Enmedio, 3 - 12001 CASTELLÓN
Tel: (34) 964 252 265 - Fax: (34) 964 331 400

ZARAGOZA ALMENDRAS, S.A.
Partida Carbonera, 1 - 03590 ALTEA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 840 200 - Fax: (34) 965 840 271

FRUTOS SECOS DE MAÑÁN
Pol. Ind. El Cabezo, 1; BA - 03650 PINOSO (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 478 420 - Fax: (34) 965 478 466

Source: ALMENDRAVE (Export Association for Almonds and Hazelnuts from Spain)

Citrus Fruit

An additional list of Spanish producers is available as a brochure, on diskette, and via Internet. For more information see page 9.

ANECOOP S. COOP.
Monforte, 1 - Entresuelo
46010 VALENCIA
Tel: (34) 963 938 500 - Fax: (34) 963 938 539

ANTONIO MUÑOZ Y CIA, S.A
Ctra. Madrid-Cartagena, km. 390
30100 ESPINARDO (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 272 201 - Fax: (34) 968 305 303

BAGÚ S.A.
Plaza El Plá, 3 - Apdo. Correos 12
12530 BURRIANA (Castellón)
Tel: (34) 964 512 500 - Fax: (34) 964 517 757

MAIN EXPORTERS

COOPERATIVA AGRICOLA S.C.J., COOP. V. (COPAL)
San José de Calasanz, 6
46680 ALGEMESI (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 962 480 500 - Fax: (34) 962 484 421

MARTINAVARRO S.A.
Ctra. Grao, 12
12550 ALMAZORA (Castellón)
Tel: (34) 964 562 252 - Fax: (34) 964 562 120

FONTESTAD S.A.
Ctra. de Barcelona, km. 12,3
46139 PUEBLA DE FARNALS (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 961 441 908 - Fax: (34) 961 443 607

GARCÍA BALLESTER S.L
Partida Vintems, s/n - Apdo. Correos 5
12530 BURRIANA (Castellón)
Tel: (34) 964 571 025 - Fax: (34) 964 516 809

NULEXPORT S. COOP. V.
Senda Olivereta, 9 - Apdo. Correos 117
12520 NULES (Castellón)
Tel: (34) 964 673 712 - Fax: (34) 964 674 021

PASCUAL HERMANOS S.A.
Cronista Carreres, 11
46003 VALENCIA
Tel: (34) 963 513 862 - Fax: (34) 963 518 075

S.A.T. FRUTSOL
Azorín, 1 - 46210 PICAÑA (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 961 552 262 - Fax: (34) 961 571 100

VICENTE GINER, S.A.
Ctra. Fuente Encarroz, s/n - 46722 BENIFLA (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 962 800 075 - Fax: (34) 962 801 321

Source: ICEX

Melons

FRUCA MARKETING, S.L.
Ctra. Fuente Alamo, km. 6
30332 BALSAPINTADA (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 820 162 - Fax: (34) 968 824 104

GREGAL, SDAD. COOP.
Los Pérez s/n
30700 TORREPACHECO (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 585 556 - Fax: (34) 968 585 606

GRUPO HORTOFRUTÍCOLA PALOMA, S.A.
Camino de los Rincones, s/n
30870 MAZARRÓN (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 590 018 - Fax: (34) 968 590 769

JOSÉ CÁNOVAS PARDO, S.L.
Ctra. de El Palmar, 57. Ap. 5
30570 BENIAJAN (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 820 137 - Fax: (34) 968 824 773

SOCIEDAD COOP. COTA-120
Los Rocas - El Jimenado
30700 TORREPACHECO (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 587 594 - Fax: (34) 968 587 645

Source: PROEXPORT, Murcia

Rice

With Denomination of Origin

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Av. Primero de Mayo, 13-1º
30420 CALASPARRA (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 720 614 - Fax: (34) 968 720 614

COOP. DEL CAMPO VIRGEN DE LA ESPERANZA
Av. Juan Ramón Jiménez, 141
30420 CALASPARRA (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 720 123 - Fax: (34) 968 720 123

JUAN HARO E HIJOS, C.B.
Ordónez, 9
30420 CALASPARRA (Murcia)
Tel: (34) 968 745 043 - Fax: (34) 968 745 043

Without Denomination of Origen

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Ctra. Nacional, 332, km. 216
46780 OLIVA (Valencia)
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Ctra. de Barcelona, km. 5
46132 ALMACERA (Valencia)
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PRODUCTOS LA FALLERA S.L.
Ctra. Almería-Valencia, km. 244
46460 SILLA (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 961 203 050 - Fax: (34) 961 201 408

SOS ARANA ALIMENTACIÓN S.A.
Ctra. A Valencia, km. 3 - Apdo. 1
46680 ALGEMESÍ (Valencia)
Tel: (34) 962 482 100 - Fax: (34) 962 484 008

Source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Calasparra and ICEX

Turrón

An additional list of Spanish producers is available as a brochure, on diskette, and via Internet. For more information see page 9.

CONSEJO REGULADOR DE LA DENOMINACIÓN ESPECÍFICA JIJONA
Alicante, 1
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 612 446 - Fax: (34) 965 612 427

COMHERTUR, S.L.
El Vall, 47 - Apdo. 62
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 612 351 - Fax: (34) 965 613 268

ENRIQUE GARRIGÓS MONERRIS, S.A.
Polig. Indus. Segorb - Apdo. 103
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 611 461 - Fax: (34) 965 613 092

HIJOS DE VICENTE ARQUES Y Cª, S.L.
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03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 179 - Fax: (34) 965 610 179

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Polig. Indus. Espartal
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03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
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JIJONA, S.A.
Partida de Alecua
Apdo. 67
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 081 - Fax: (34) 965 612 851

LA INDUSTRIAL TURRONERA, S.A.
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03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
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MIRA Y LLORENS, S.A.
Pol. Indus. Espartal - Apdo. 37
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 275 - Fax: (34) 965 610 851

PABLO GARRIGÓS IBÁÑEZ, S.L.
Marcelo Mira, 2 - Apdo. 20
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 612 811 - Fax: (34) 965 613 239

SANCHIS MIRA, S.A.
Pol. Indus. Segorb - Apdo. 11
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 400 - Fax: (34) 965 610 783

TURRONES COLOMA, S.A.
Pol. Ind. Segorb
Apdo. 27
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 267 - Fax: (34) 965 610 501

TURRONES EL ROMERO, S.A.
Pol. Ind. Segorb
Apdo. 14
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 272 - Fax: (34) 965 611 187

TURRONES JOSÉ GARRIGÓS, S.A.
Pol. Ind. Espartal - Apdo. 23
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 610 625 - Fax: (34) 965 610 810

TURRONES PAYFER, S.L.
Alicante, 28
Apdo. 58
03100 JIJONA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 612 351 - Fax: (34) 965 613 268

TURRONES PICÓ, S.A.
Pol. Ind. Espartal
Apdo. 16
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C.R.D.O. RUEDA
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47490 RUEDA (Valladolid)
Tel: (34) 983 868 248 - Fax: (34) 983 868 248
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C.R.D.O. UTIEL-REQUENA
Sevilla, 12 - 46300 UTIEL (Valencia)
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Oliver, 56 - 03800 ALCOY (Alicante)
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Víctor Hugo, 4
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Avda. Libertad, 42-44 - Pol.Ind. Salinetas
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28037 MADRID
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Pol. Ind. Sector 1 - nº 3
31261 ANDOSILLA (Navarra)
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31330 VILLAFRANCA (Navarra)
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INDUSTRIAL QUESERA CUQUERELLA, S.L.
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Paseo Imperial, 32-34 - 28005 MADRID
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Isaac Peral, 46 - 03660 NOVELDA (Alicante)
Tel: (34) 965 600 150 - Fax: (34) 965 604 796
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28529 RIVAS (Madrid)
Tel: (34) 916 667 875 - Fax: (34) 916 666 218
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11404 JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (Cádiz)
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Wineskins

Text: **César Justel**
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Photo: **Ulrich Hartmann/ICEX**

Many of us may think of wineskins as just tourist souvenirs. But there are plenty of people, especially country dwellers, for whom they are still very much a part of everyday life. In Spain, *botas*—as wineskins are called in Spanish—tend to be associated with the northern provinces but they are, in fact, traditional all over the country. The fact that they are still in use speaks for itself: wine drunk from a bota tastes good.

Traditional wine artifacts include various examples of little receptacles for carrying wine about, ranging from gourds, to horns, to animal skins. The most famous of all is probably the bota, which we tend to think of as typically Spanish though it also occurs in other Mediterranean countries. Delving into history, we find it first mentioned in *The Odyssey*, in which Ulysses gets Polyphemus drunk by plying him with little skins of wine. Spanish literature contains countless references, and El Cid—actually a historical figure, albeit endowed with legendary status—the 11th century hero of the Christian struggle to oust the Moorish invaders from Spain—is said always to have carried one with him. This comes as no surprise, given that El Cid's native Burgos, around which many of his exploits took place, is still a source of good wineskins.

The city of Burgos and the province of the same name still have many wineskin makers, or *boteros*. In the city itself, the best known are Félix Sebastián and the Botería Los Tres DDD (this latter, "The Three Ds," is so-called because three generations of the Domingo family have run it). Craftsmen in the province include Clemente García in Oña, Eleuterio Moneo in Covarrubias, and Eupsiquio Molinero in Huerta del Rey. Bilbao's boteros also originate from Burgos.

The province of Huesca is another

source of botas, with craftsmen such as Pedro Lafuente in the town of Huesca itself, and Blas Castán in Ayerbe. You can find others farther afield in Zaragoza (city and province), Valdepeñas (Ciudad Real), Haro and Calahorra (La Rioja), Cantalejo (Segovia) and Pamplona (Navarre). Pamplona is home to one of the most famous boterías of all: Las Tres Zetas—"The Three Zs." As in so many cases, a picturesque family story lies behind the name: the founder of this workshop, a native of Aragon, had triplet daughters, and in Aragonese dialect, little girls are called *zagalas*... The Tres Zetas sign he put up in their honor is still famous all over Spain today. The three-letter motif seems to be a recurring one among boteros: apart from the Ds of Burgos and the Zs of Pamplona, there used also to be a Tres Bes ("Three Bs") in Jaca (Huesca province), though in this case the Bs referred not to family members, but to the classic Spanish description of a bargain: "bueno, bonito y barato"—"good quality, good looks, good price."

How to Make a Wineskin

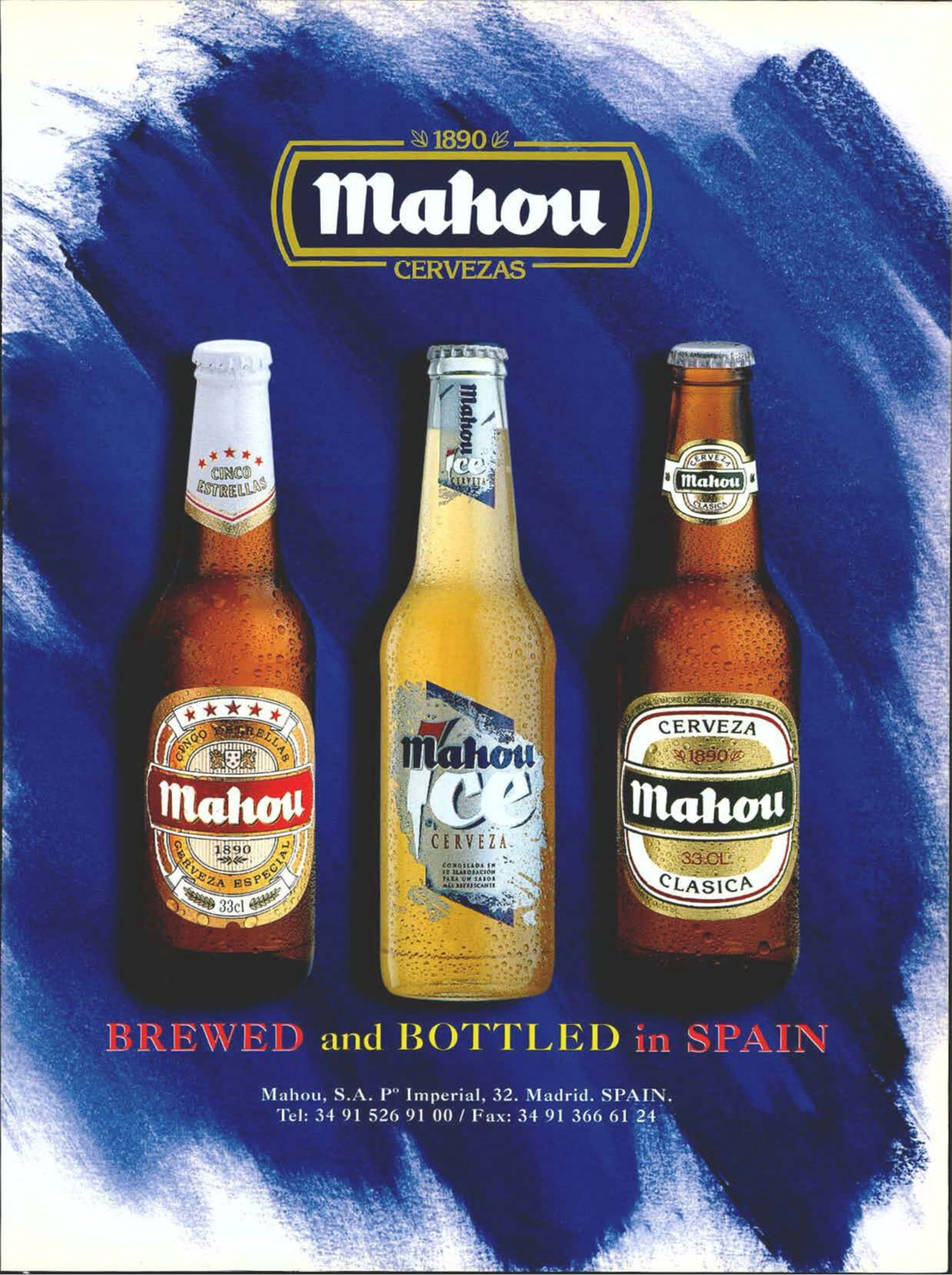
Wineskin making is one of the few crafts that have not been industrialized. The basic material is, and always has been, goatskin. Interestingly, the quality of the bota depends on how well fed a goat the skin comes from: the better fed the goat, the better the skin, so obviously some are sturdier than others. Even so, those in the know maintain that no two goatskins are ever of the same quality.

The process is as follows. First, the skin is inspected for cuts and imperfections, then tanned with the hair side in so that it will "take" the pitch and become thoroughly impermeable. Nowadays, it has to be said, many skins are chemically tanned in factories in Barcelona. After tanning, the skins are moistened, cut and sewn, then pitch—obtained from pine and silver fir resins—is spread thoroughly all over the interior: any areas of skin left unprotected would be susceptible to "burning" by wine. Lastly, the mouthpiece is attached—once made of bone, these are nowadays bakelite or hard plastic.

Wineskins can vary in capacity from a liter and a half (the most common size) up to six liters (this is the sort carried about by bands of young lads during local fiestas). If properly cared for, a wineskin can last 25 to 30 years. One vital thing to know is that you have to keep it permanently full and lay it on its side rather than hanging it up, so that the liquid is evenly spread and the whole interior kept moist. Contrary to popular belief, wineskins are not primed with alcohol but with wine—alcohol over 35° in strength could cause the skin to split.

These days, botas are exported to several countries. One surprising request came from a whaling company in Hawaii, which placed an order for 1,000. On delivery, the intrigued manufacturers inquired who, in that distant part of the world, had a use for so many. They were told that they were for the whaling crews: wine bottles were too dangerous in case fights broke out on board, and canteens made too much noise in heavy seas...

César Justel *is a writer and journalist who specializes in travel and traditions. He has been traveling around Spain researching its fiestas and crafts for the past 20 years.*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GLOSSARY

WINE AGING TERMS

Crianza. This term is reserved for wines aged in the wood and bottle for at least 2 years, 6 months of which must be in oak casks. (Note — in several regions the minimum time in cask is 12 months.)

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

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

Notes:

1. Many Denominations insist that the oak casks must be no more than 225 liters, however, national legislation allows oak casks up to 1,000 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 percent 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.

DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN (D.O.)

Denomination of Origin is an official designation covering products whose raw materials are produced and manufactured within a specific geographical area, and which have distinctive qualities and characteristics due, mainly, to the natural environment, manufacture, and aging methods.

DENOMINACIÓN ESPECÍFICA (D.E.)

The Specific Denomination covers products characterized by a relation to their geographical setting, with the use of certain raw materials, a determined method of production and/or manufacture, but differs from a D.O. in that these three factors do not necessarily have to coincide.

Each D.O. or D.E. is managed by a Consejo Regulador (C.R.) or regulatory council, which sees to the enforcement of the regulations

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.
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