FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN
GOURMETOUR

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SPAIN GOURMETOUR

SPANISH MINERAL WATERS: CRYSTALLINE PURITY • VINEYARD ROUTES OF SPAIN: CASTILE-LEÓN • IN THE HEART OF THE PYRENEES

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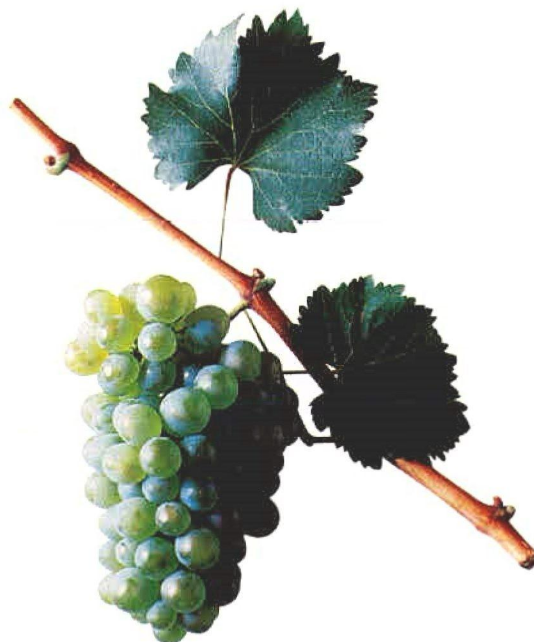
A SECRET NOT TO BE KEPT



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PI & ERRE

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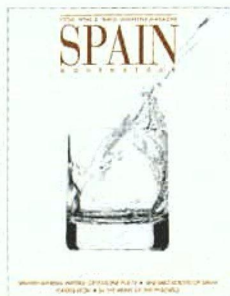

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The Enigma Of Enigmas.

A woman's enigmatic
smile has been able to convert
a small canvas painted
by Leonardo da Vinci
into an object
of universal admiration.

The Brandy Of Brandies.

LORENTE GRUPO DE COMUNICACION

Dear readers,

The cover page of this edition illustrates a clear and refreshing image of Spain that may surprise some of our readers. With the exception of the "green" provinces of the north, many people may think of Spain as a dry or arid land. Yet surprisingly Spain has one of the most plentiful subterranean water supplies in the world with over 2000 springs scattered across the entire landscape. With such a bounty there is a crystalline mineral water of absolute purity to suit every palate or health requirement.

From water, we move on to wine. On this occasion, our journey will take us to four different Denominations of Origin in the autonomous region of Castile-Leon: Ribera del Duero, Cigales, Toro, and Rueda, whose vineyards lie on the banks of the River Duero. The meteoric rise in fame of wines from D.O. Ribera del Duero and the excellent successes achieved by Rueda wines in the last few years clearly illustrate the potential of this huge region.

Spain's noblest red grape variety, the Tempranillo, is the foundation on which the reputation—particularly of Rioja and Ribera del Duero wines—has been built, although it is also grown in 21 other Spanish Denominations of Origin and blended with autochthonous and foreign grape varieties to exquisite effect. The diverse results of this production are discussed according to region and cuvée in the article Tempranillo and Company.

This edition's special flavor is smoked *pimentón* from Extremadura, which in 1998 received its own Denomination of Origin. The extra finely-ground, deep red pimentón has always been an important ingredient in Spanish cuisine.

A breath of fresh mountain air is the characteristic note of our tourism feature in this edition, which focuses on the Pyrenees. The mountain range which forms Spain's border with France, and which cuts across the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, harbors a wealth of possibilities in its innumerable valleys and communities. Given the vast expanse covered by the Pyrenean mountains, we have chosen to concentrate on the central region, where many examples of Romanesque architecture can be found in a virtually unspoiled landscape and where both mountain sports fanatics and ordinary tourists enjoy splendid holidays.

Finally, we invite you to celebrate in "sparkling company" as the year draws to its close and offer you some truffles, pralines, and Catalan *catánies,* accompanied by some of Spain's most select *cavas*: a sweet temptation to ring out the old year and a bubbling welcome to bring in the new.

FORUM

Text and Photos: Dara Gumbs

A Taste of Spain

For the third consecutive year, Foods from Spain, the food marketing department of the Commercial Office of Spain in New York, sponsored a recipe contest for future chefs. The contest seeks to introduce Spanish ingredients, culture, and cuisine to the young chefs of America, and to give students an opportunity to showcase their talents in the kitchen. The judges were Gigi Manasse, Divine Bar, New York City; and from the print media Tanya Steel, Bon Apétit; Diana Sturgis, Food & Wine; Shelley Thomas, Restaurant Business, and Beth Sherman, Cheers.

Students from eleven select schools were asked to explore the flavors of Spain by incorporating some of the Spanish ingredients currently available in the United States into their recipes. Dara Gumbs from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, was awarded the Grand Prize. Her recipe (see page 120) earned high marks from the judges for its taste, appearance, originality, and ease of preparation. Dara traveled to Spain in the spring of '98 and shares the experience of her stay in Spain with us.

Dara Gumbs with her colleagues at Barcelona's Can Gaig.

As an admirer of Spanish food and culture, I was thrilled to be informed that I had won the Grand Prize in the Taste of Spain recipe contest with my entry Roasted Vegetable Towers with sherry vinaigrette and manchego-piquillo crostini. The prize was a three-week culinary course in Spain and a five-day stay at one of Spain's luxurious Paradores de Turismo, as well as airfare and spending money. The prize was fantastic and the timing could not have been better. I learned that I was the winner one week before my wedding, and two weeks before I graduated from the Culinary Institute of America. Thanks to the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade (ICEX), I was off on a culinary honeymoon.

In order to concentrate on my study of Spanish gastronomy, I embarked on the first weeks of my culinary odyssey alone. My new husband bid me *buen viaje* as I boarded an Iberia DC-10 bound for Barcelona. I would be cooking in Catalonia, a region of Spain which has an incredible culinary history and is also on the forefront of modern Spanish cookery.

My culinary adventure began at La Sala, a country restaurant housed in a 100-year-old farmhouse in Sallent, a small town in the province of Barcelona on the route to the Pyrenees. According to Spanish custom, I worked each day from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon, enjoyed a four-hour break, and returned for dinner service from eight o'clock until eleven. My position in the kitchen was at the cold station, preparing appetizers and salads. However, because my high school Spanish was a bit rusty (to say the least), I spent most of my time learning the names for food items, cooking techniques, and kitchen equipment in Spanish, and then again in Catalan.

A terrific array of seafood, meats, game, and vegetables passed through La Sala's kitchen. I prepared items such as fava bean salad with mint vinaigrette, pounded raw shrimp, and Catalan roasted vegetables. From my vantage point, I saw hake, monkfish, and veal chops being grilled to perfection in the *parrilla*, an enclosed wood-fired grill. Kid shoulder, pig's trotters, and duck confit emerged sizzling from the oven. Chef Ramón worked feverishly, sautéeing salt cod with eggplant and foie gras with a sweet wine (Pedro Ximénez) reduction. Towards the end of service, plumes of smoke would rise from the salamander used to caramelize the crisp sugar crust on the *crema catalana*.

A Student Again

My week at La Sala came to a close all too quickly and I was on to Escola Joviat, one of Spain's premier culinary and hotel trade schools, located in Manresa, just north of Barcelona. Joviat is a vocational high school which trains aspiring chefs in all aspects of the culinary arts. These young students carry themselves proudly in starched white uniforms decorated with brightly colored epaulets that denote their progress through the school. I was impressed

Dara with Carles Gaig, one of the foremost chefs in Catalonia.

with Joviat's ultramodern facilities. The kitchens were equipped with the latest technology including induction cooking surfaces and futuristic multi-function convection ovens. The instructors, who work under the supervision of Chef Manolo Zarzoso, were first rate. At Joviat, I was able to explore Spanish food in depth.

I learned a great deal as I rotated through each of the courses in the program. I spent a day in each kitchen at the school: catering, bakery, butcher shop, and the restaurant kitchen. Each course covered not only recipes and techniques, but also the history and origins of many dishes. In catering, we prepared lunch for the entire student body: about one thousand meals a day. I can attest that the students eat very well. Their cafeteria does not serve hamburgers and hot dogs like in the U.S. Joviat students dine on roasted lamb, *fideos* (a seafood and noodle casserole), and monkfish with garlic sauce.

The bakery produces all of the bread and pastries for the school as well as petit fours and plated desserts for the restaurant. I learned about many traditional sweets, which are associated with religious holidays and Saints' Days. The highlight of my experience was the butcher shop. Spain is famed for its cold cuts and I had the rare opportunity to prepare *chorizo* and *butifarra negra* (blood sausage) from scratch. I also got to sample several varieties of ham, the pride of each region in Spain. Finally, I enjoyed a day in Joviat's restaurant kitchen. The restaurant serves an extraordinary eight course tasting menu which the chef creates anew each week. Always inventive and always delicious—Catalan nouvelle cuisine.

Cooking in Barcelona

After my intensive introduction to the food of Spain, I felt prepared for my next assignment, a week at Can Gaig, a Barcelona restaurant which has earned a one star rating from the auspicious Michelin Guide. My husband joined me in Barcelona, but he did his sightseeing alone as I continued my culinary quest. As my husband marveled at Gaudi's architecture, I witnessed the inner workings of a world class restaurant. Under the hand of chef Carles Gaig, whose family has owned this establishment for 100 years, Catalan cuisine reaches new heights. My husband and I had the good fortune to dine at Gaig on my last day at the restaurant. We sampled the specialties offered in a fabulous eight-course tasting menu. Our favorite dishes were a salad of seared scallops and stuffed pig's trotters with a vinaigrette of *cepes*, squid ink *risotto* topped with sautéed sea cucumbers, and, of course, dessert, a dense chocolate truffle cake. The honeymoon had begun at last.

We were off to some of the most romantic settings in Spain, the Paradores de Turismo. Our time was divided between the parador in Fuenterrabía in the País Vasco and the parador in Santo Domingo de la Calzada in La Rioja. The parador in Fuenterrabía is housed in a sixteenth century castle on a hill overlooking the Bay of Biscay. The castle is refurbished in grand style. Giant papier mâché figures in traditional Basque costumes decorate the breathtaking courtyard where original walls rise fifty feet in the air. The heraldic tapestries, antique furniture, and ancient weapons decorating the public spaces transport the visitor back in time. I truly felt like a queen as I looked down on my subjects in the charming town square below. And Basque cooking, with its emphasis on the freshest seafood, is certainly fit for a king.

The parador at Santo Domingo de la Calzada is located along the route to Santiago de Compostela. It occupies a pilgrim's hospital founded by Santo Domingo himself. The parador is also, fortunately, located in the wine country of Rioja. We were able to visit several *bodegas* and sample a wonderful range of Rioja wines. We also enjoyed local dishes such as baby lamb roasted over vine shoots.

Having sampled the broad range of Spanish food and wines across the country, it was time to return to the United States. I never dreamed that I would discover so much in a month. The cuisine of Spain is remarkable for its celebration of fresh ingredients in both traditional dishes and exciting nouvelle cuisine. Such a thorough exploration of Spanish gastronomy has been a unique and rewarding experience, not to mention a perfect *luna de miel.*

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LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA

Again a big stack of books so my comments will be very brief. Starting with tourism, we have the **Oxford Archaeological Guide of Spain**. This interesting book takes us round 130 places of archaeological interest dating from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages - palaces, towns, fortresses, churches, etc. - mostly of Roman, Visigothic or Arabic origin. Roger Collins, Fellow of the University of Edinburgh and author of several other books on Spain, has arranged the sites in alphabetical order and accompanies them with maps, diagrams and photos, with a star system to classify them for interest. The introduction gives a brief but thorough résumé of the different historical periods. A map of Spain shows the location of the sites and these are also listed by archaeological period. Of very special interest to travellers keen to gain some understanding of the cultural context of such sites.

* **Todo Andalucía Rural** (All of rural Andalusia) is a guide to the magnificent possibilities for rural tourism in this region. In two sections, the first on nature reserves and villages describes the landscapes and the fauna and flora of the nature reserves in each of the provinces. This is followed by an alphabetical list of the main towns close to the reserves as well as some others, with historical and tourist information, including comments on the local gastronomy, handcrafts and traditional festivals. The second section on active tourism suggests a series of itineraries - 24 for trekking in the protected areas, 15 for cycling and several for horse-riding - together with information on other sports such as windsurfing. Then come details on the main accommodation available and a list of organizations that can be approached for further information. This book on the more secluded parts of Andalusia should be quite a discovery for people who think of it as being just sun, beaches and flamenco, and the next one offers yet another aspect of Andalusia - **Ventas: 55 Great Places to Eat in the Country Within a Short Drive of the Costa del Sol.** A *venta* is basically a roadside restaurant, originally a stopping-place for horse-drawn carriages. They exist in other parts of Spain but are especially typical of Andalusia. Usually unpretentious family establishments, they offer good food at very reasonable prices and the staff is generally friendly and unsophisticated. These were the characteristics that appealed to Bob Carrick, a long-time resident in southern Spain, and led him to put together this small but complete guide. The selection only covers one corner of Andalusia and for each restaurant there is a photo with a description of the premises, the atmosphere, the service and, of course, the food. The specialties of each of the *ventas* and the author's favourite dishes are listed, and there is a glossary of useful Spanish words. Well worth a try!

* A few years ago, César Justel, one of our *Spain Gourmetour* writers and a specialist in the villages and traditional festivals of Spain, published a practical guide called **Excursiones en torno a Madrid. Escapadas de fin de semana** (Excursions around Madrid. Weekend breaks). This has now been completely updated and published in a new format, with color photographs. 48 excursions are proposed - none in excess of 250 kms - to tempt harassed city-dwellers to get away from it all, not just occasionally but every weekend. Each one is planned for a specific month of the year to fit in with the weather and for each there is a map of the local area and the usual information on tourist sites, gastronomy, festivals, etc. However, if you like the idea of travelling but without moving too far from your armchair, then the next book might suit you better. **España** is the ideal gift book with wonderful photographs by some of the best Spanish photographers - landscapes for all tastes, people, traditions, monuments, crafts. The bilingual text in English and Spanish by the Spanish novelist and poet, Caballero Bonald, aims to capture the essence of Spain and the Spaniards - a difficult task, but the results are excellent.

* The **Parque Natural del Delta del Ebro** (the Natural Park of the Ebro Delta) is one of the collection that GeoPlaneta has recently started publishing under the name of "Maximiniguides" to suggest that, though small, the amount of information offered is great. Specializing in the most beautiful of the natural areas of Spain, they give background information on the local history, inhabitants, etc. as well as very specific information on the fauna and flora, and itineraries to be covered on foot or otherwise, but always with the emphasis on nature. Our last tourist book is a practical, trilingual guide (Spanish-English-German) called **Golf Courses and Accommodation 98**. It gives basic information on about 200 golf courses in Spain (number of holes, par, a diagram of the course, nearest accommodation, prices, etc.).

* Turning now to gastronomy, **The Basque Table** although hot from the press, has already been awarded for its quality by the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy. Its author, Teresa Barrenechea, is the owner and chef of the two successful Marichu restaurants in New York. True to Basque tradition, her "culinary science" was learnt at home from her mother and subsequently enhanced by her natural talent and professional experience. But this is by no means a technical book. What Teresa transmits is her love of the gastronomy of her homeland where food is truly important. The 130 recipes or so begin with *pinchos*, then go on to first and main courses, desserts and what she calls Basque basics, and each one is introduced by comments or explanations enlightening readers on the traditions and customs of the Basque Table.

* While fast food is making its mark on Spanish eating habits, at the same time there is keen concern that we should recover the gastronomic products and habits of our ancestors. Here we have three books written along these lines. **Alimentos de Aragón: Un patrimonio cultural** (The food of Aragon: a cultural legacy) is a collection of all the food products from Aragon, both fresh and processed, including the strangest of charcuterie products or practically unknown desserts that perhaps were only made in a single village. The authors have done their work thoroughly, basing it on historical research, yet this is a pleasing book, as is usual with this Aragonese publisher. The second is not a book but a new collection, **Guía de productos de la tierra** being published on the products of the land of the different Autonomous Communities of Spain. Five have come out so far - Asturias, Navarre, Extremadura, Valencia and Madrid. Each of them covers the traditional agricultural and food products of the area, according to the European classification, with a selection of addresses where they can be bought, a number of tourist routes and a list of restaurants and hotels. The latest, **La cocina tradicional segoviana** (The traditional cooking of Segovia), is the result of a recipe competition convened by a Foundation that aimed to recover traditional recipes. Its three sections - dishes based on grain, pulses and vegetables - offer many recipes that would be hard to find in the usual recipe book.

* Finally, two wine books. **The Guide to Ribera del Duero and its Wines**, which is the English edition of a book first published in 1996 (see *Spain Gourmetour* no.40). It gives information on 67 wineries that are open to visitors with a background to their history and details on how to get there, opening times, production, etc. The **Guía Peñín de los vinos de España 1999** is the very prompt edition of the annual guide by José Peñín, one of the most veteran of Spain's wine writers. Of the 6,500 wines mentioned, 2,600 are classified and there is a long chapter explaining just about everything one should know about wine.

• **Oxford Archaeological Guide of Spain**, Roger Collins, Oxford University Press; Great Clarendon Street; 198 Madison Avenue; New York, N.Y. 10016; Tel: (212) 726 6032; Fax: (212) 726 647 • **Toda Andalucía rural**, Grupo Anaya, S.A.; Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena, 15; 28027 Madrid; Tel: (34) 913 938 800; Fax: (34) 917 426 631 • **Ventas**, Bob Carrick, Ediciones Santana, S.L.; Apartado 422, 29640 Fuengirola (Málaga); Tel: (34) 952 485 838; Fax: (34) 952 485 367 • **Excursiones en torno a Madrid. Escapadas de fin de semana,** César Justel; El País-Aguilar; Torrelaguna, 60; 28043 Madrid; Tel: (34) 917 449 060 Fax: (34) 917 449 093 • **España**, 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 • **Campos y alojamientos de golf 98. España**, Inverscard; Oviedo, 8; 28020 Madrid; Tel: (34) 915 531 731; Fax: (34) 915 542 098 • **El parque natural del Delta del Ebro**, Enric Balasch y Yolanda Ruiz; Editorial Planeta, S.A.; Córcega, 273-279; 08008 Barcelona; Tel: (34) 934 152 211 ; Fax: (34) 934 161 167 • **The Basque Table**, Teresa Barrenechea; The Harvard Common Press; 535 Albany Street; Boston; Massachusetts 02118 ; Tel: (617) 423 5803; Fax: (617) 695 9794 • **Alimentos de Aragón**; Ediciones La Val de Onsera; Artes gráficas, s/n; 22006 Huesca; Tel: (34) 974 22 98 00; Fax: (34) 974 24 05 36 • **Guía de productos de la tierra. Extremadura**, Juan Gabriel Pallarés; Editorial Edaf, S.A.; Jorge Juan, 30; 28001 Madrid; Tel: (34) 914 358 260; Fax: (34) 914 315 281 • **La cocina tradicional segoviana**, Caja Segovia, Obra Social y Cultural; Plaza San Facundo, 3; 40001 Segovia; Tel: (34) 921 443 623/629/652 Fax: (34) 921 443 607 • **The Guide to Ribera del Duero and its Wines**, Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero; Hospital, 6; 09300 Roa (Burgos); Tel: (34) 947 541 221; Fax: (34) 947 541 116 • **Guia Peñin de los vinos de España 1999**, José Peñin; Pi & Erre Ediciones; Pilar Andrade, 11-chalet 8; 28023 El Plantío (Madrid); Tel: (34) 913 077 890; Fax: (34) 913 076 701

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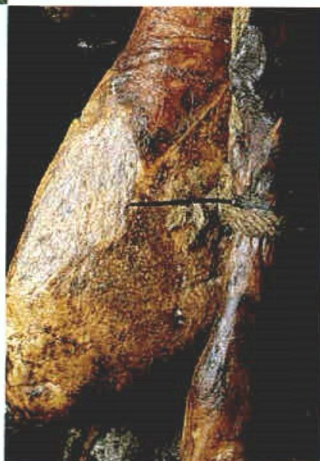

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Erratum:

* *The address of the Consejo Regulator de las Denominaciones Específicas Jijona y Turrón de Alicante published in the last issue of* Spain Gourmetour *changed at the time the magazine was published. The new one is: Font del Moratell, s/n. 03100 Jijona (Alicante). Tel: (34) 965 612 446. Fax: (34) 965 612 427. E-mail: postmaster@jijona.com*

* *In our former issue we didn't mention that Andrés Madrigal and his team, from Alborada restaurant in Madrid, prepared all the recipes with Piquillo peppers.*

Spanish Mineral Waters: Crystalline Purity

Text: **Ana Westley**
Still life: **Menchu Artime**
Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

Spain's varied geology offers a grand diversity of bottled natural mineral waters for health conscious consumers who are looking for something more than mere water. Each mineral spring is as different from another as a listing of wines on a menu. Besides the obvious division between carbonated or sparkling waters and noncarbonated mineral water, the discriminating consumer can discern the subtle differences in taste due to each water's characteristic mineral composition. In Nature's underground laboratory, mineralization takes place drop by drop, year after year, for decades, centuries, and millenniums, guaranteeing a stable mineral composition and absolute purity.

For thousands of years, man has distinguished between surface freshwater and the pure crystal clear water that almost magically emerges up from the depths of the earth in the form of natural springs. Since ancient times Mediterranean civilizations believed that the purity of natural mineral springs had something more than just the ability to satisfy thirst.

Beneficial Health Properties

The ancient Greeks and Romans, and later the Arabs were quick to attribute therapeutic and health virtues to water that mysteriously bubbled up from deep within the earth itself. Roman emperors were convinced of the restorative and curative qualities of underground spring waters not only as a rehabilitating beverage but also as a

Spain is one of the richest countries in subterranean waters, which since Roman times to the present, have been valued for their purity, quality, and diversity.

bathing therapy. They founded innumerable thermal baths at mineral spring sites across the entire Empire where battle weary legionnaires could recover from wounds or diseases. These springs, especially the hot springs, were to become not only the first health centers but also meeting places for rest and relaxation, for exchanging ideas and obtaining cultural enrichment and learning.

The crystal clear thermal waters were thought to have curative powers for a number of diseases from arthritis and rheumatism to stomach ailments, skin diseases, and infertility. Many emperors tried to drink only water that came from mineral springs. At a time when environmental pollution was practically unknown and when surface waters from rivers and fresh water lakes were practically pure, underground spring water was considered to have almost supernatural qualities: a gift from the gods from the depths of the earth.

Today, some of the mystique of natural mineral water still survives. Spanish and European food and drink legislation specifically restricts bottlers of natural mineral water from claiming pharmaceutical or medicinal benefits for treatment for specific ailments as drinking water is not licensed to be sold or marketed as a pharmaceutical product. However, the bacteriological purity and mineralization obtained from subterranean water that has filtered through layers of rock sediments, in some cases for centuries, is allowed to be recognized as having general properties that are beneficial for health. Natural mineral waters are thought to aid digestion and tend to act as a diuretic, cleansing the body of toxins. As a mild diuretic, natural mineral waters are useful for dieters and for people suffering from kidney stones and kidney ailments. The generally low content in sodium makes mineral water an ideal beverage for hypertension and restricted sodium diets.

A Miracle of Nature

Although Spain does not have an abundance of surface water, except in the green northern provinces, there are close to two thousand natural springs in Spain, according to ANEABE, Spain's industry association of bottled mineral waters. This makes Spain one of the richest in the world in subterranean waters, which since Roman times to the present, have been valued for their purity, quality, and diversity.

For drinking purposes, the difference between surface and subsoil waters (lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and superficial wells) and subterranean waters is very clear as explained by ANEABE: Deep underground waters maintain their original purity thanks to the protection of layers upon layers of the earth's surface where bacteriological and environmental contamination cannot penetrate. In fact, the waters only emerge to the surface through a miracle of nature itself in the form of natural springs, a natural discharge point of subterranean water at ground surface.

This happens only when underground water is confined between impermeable rock layers such as clay or shale. When these layers become tilted or folded due to shifting of the earth's crust or geological upheavals such as the formation of mountains, water in the lower parts be-

PRODUCTION (1997) OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF WATER (LITERS)

TYPES	NATURAL WATERS	MINERAL WATERS	SPRING TREATED	TOTAL WATERS
NONCARBONATED	2,351,384,403	268,431,330	75,266,750	2,695,082,483
CARBONATED	123,607,090	58,228,177		181,835,267
TOTAL	**2,474,991,493**	**326,659,507**	**75,266,750**	**2,876,917,750**
PERCENTAGE	85.92%	11.48%	2.60%	100%

Source: ANEABE (Spain's Industry Association of Bottled Mineral Waters)

Natural mineral waters aid digestion and tend to act as a diuretic, cleansing the body of toxins. A gift from the gods from the depths of the earth.

comes trapped or stored under pressure. It will rise to the surface only through a natural fissure or crevice known as a spring. It will also shoot up without pumping if a well can break through the capping clay or shale layer that erosion may have left exposed near the surface. This is what is known as an artesian well.
Rainwater which may have soaked the soil centuries ago slowly percolates down through soil and underlying rocks at the rate of just a few centimeters per day. During this slow filtration, minerals become dissolved in the water in the form of salts and carbonates which give each mineral water its individual characteristics and palatable taste. As the water seeps deeper and deeper through rocks, harmful bacteria is also filtered out in this naturally pure underground laboratory. Some mineral beds, usually limestone or granite, are quite porous or permeable. Here the filtered and mineralized water actually circulates in deep underground currents in what is known as aquifers, much like water from one sponge will pass over to another that is touching it. The porous mineral beds are natural sponges absorbing and storing water for centuries. In limestone aquifers, rainwater sinks through holes or other openings and drains through underground passageways and currents. If the aquifer becomes trapped between two impermeable rock layers such as sandy loams and clays, the subterranean water is confined until it emerges under pressure at an opening in the surface where it may drain into a river or stream. Sometimes the underground water is heated by proximity to volcanic hot spots. But some mineral waters unrelated to volcanic activity spring to the surface warm or quite hot for reasons that are still not entirely explained. They may come from depths so deep that they are naturally heated by the earth's temperature gradient. When the underground currents are heated to high temperatures the water may become carbonated or bubbly, what in Spain is known as water with gas.
Filtration, mineralization and bacteriological purity are what distinguish underground waters from superficial waters. In Spain drinking waters are classified as:

• Natural mineral waters: underground water that is bacteriologically wholesome and contains a stable composition of minerals and other components which give it beneficial health properties. (Some natural mineral waters are declared "mineral-medicinal" or were declared so when they were first bottled and marketed. These waters may have certain medicinal and therapeutic qualities but are governed by specific legislation. All natural mineral waters were at one time declared mineral-medicinal and maintain this classification for external therapeutic treatments in spas (baths) where they are thought to have habilitating value for rheumatism, arthritis, some endocrinological disorders, and stress.

• Spring waters: potable water of subterranean origin that is also bacteriologically wholesome but without special health properties. The mineral composition is not stable.

• Treated waters: water from any source which has undergone physical and chemical treatments to fulfill sanitary and health requirements for human consumption.
Both natural mineral water and spring water are natural products that are delivered to the consumer as they emerge at their source, a spokeswoman from ANEABE explained. They cannot be subjected to any treatment that would change their original composition other than physical processes (filters for solid impurities) or the removal of naturally unstable elements such as iron, sulphur, etc. Technology is used only for bottling and for preserving the original qualities, purity, and personality of the water by obtaining the subterranean water with as little air contact as possible.
Treated waters, on the other hand, suffer a reverse process. They must be processed and chemically altered to make them safe for drinking. Tap water obtained from rivers, reservoirs, and wells may also be mineralized but this composition may vary. All waters destined for human consumption, including natural mineral and spring waters, must be monitored for pathogenic microorganisms and bacteria as well as other harmful contaminants.

Natural and Carbonated Mineral Waters

Some natural mineral and spring waters literally bubble up to the surface in a naturally carbonated state. They contain carbon dioxide (CO_2) and can be bottled as such. They can be further carbonated with more gas from the same spring or they can simply have more CO_2 incorporated.
Preferences for carbonated or noncarbonated mineral water—what restaurants term with or without gas—

The hot springs were to become not only the first health centers but also meeting places for rest and relaxation, for exchanging ideas, and obtaining cultural enrichment and learning.

vary within the European Union. German consumers practically only consume carbonated mineral water while Spaniards overwhelmingly prefer noncarbonated mineral water. (See box on page 14.) In Spain there are over a hundred different brand names of bottled mineral and spring waters. Each brand corresponds to a unique source that is clearly identified on the bottle. Each has its own personality with a characteristic composition determined by its geographical source and its type of aquifer. Spain's widely varied geological diversity offers an equally wide variety of bottled water. For example, ANEABE points out that water springing up from the great limestone aquifers of Asturias, Cantabria, or the Cordillera Ibérica, such as Fuensanta of Asturias or Solares of Cantabria, contain calcium carbonates while the underground waters from the granite aquifers of Catalonia (Vichy Catalan of Gerona), Galicia, or the Cordillera Central tend to be rich in silica in addition to containing varying amounts of calcium carbonates.

The Perfect Light Drink

Although most of Spain's production of bottled water is consumed domestically, exports show great promise. According to ANEABE, Spanish mineral water is currently exported mainly to Latin America, European Union countries, and to some East European nations. In Spain, production has grown from 1,423 million liters in 1988 to reach a total of 2,877 million liters in 1997. An all time high of 2,989 million liters was reached in 1995, which was followed by a slight decrease in 1996, an especially rainy year in which municipal water rationing was not necessary in many normally arid and drought-plagued areas.

EVOLUTION OF PRODUCTION (MILLIONS OF LITERS)				
1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
2,414	2,534	2,589	2,699	2,877

Source: ANEABE (Spain's Industry Association of Bottled Mineral Waters)

Bottled water consumption is still highest in Spain's dry coastal climates that have either unpalatable tap water or see their population double in summer, straining the local water supplies. Demand in restaurants in coastal tourist locations skyrockets in the summer holidays. Both Spaniards and foreign tourists are more and more likely to order a refreshing bottle of ice cold mineral water to quench their thirst on a hot summer day and in restaurants, customers expect a diversity of mineral waters from which to choose. ANEABE hopes to see the day when restaurants will in fact offer a listing of waters similar to a wine menu. Spain offers an ample choice of waters to please the most discriminating palates and diners should be able to select a healthy and delicious accompaniment to their meal from a diversity of types of waters, an ANEABE spokeswoman insisted.

In total production, Spain ranks behind Italy, Germany, and France while in per capita consumption, Spain ranks behind Italy, Belgium, Germany, France, and Austria. Yet Spanish per capita consumption is growing fast, due in part to rising standards of living and the tendency throughout Western Europe to prefer healthy natural products. Marketing and advertising have increased awareness of the goodness of natural mineral water, especially as a dietary aid to keep one's weight in check. Water, obviously, contains no calories, and natural mineral waters tend to have a mild diuretic effect making them welcome in any weight reduction diet. It's the perfect light drink, especially if it substitutes heavily sugared soft drinks or alcoholic beverages.

***Ana Westley** has been a foreign correspondent in Spain for over 20 years where she has worked for various American publications. She was the correspondent for the* Wall Street Journal, *and later* The New York Times *in the mid 1990s. Currently she is the managing director of M.W. Research, a communication and research consulting service based in Madrid. She continues to do occasional freelance writing.*

See Main Exporters on page 122.

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Solán de Cabras: An Enchanting Spa To Soothe Your Troubles Away

The Romans were probably the first to relax at the numerous natural mineral springs that are located in some of the most beautiful hideaways scattered throughout Spain's tremendously varied mountains, valleys, plains, and even deserts. It is not surprising to discover that even today the ancient sites of rest, relaxation, and rehabilitation continue to be a refuge from the stresses of daily life and a complementary therapy for age old ailments such as arthritis, rheumatism, and digestive problems. Although the scientific mechanisms are not yet understood, the experience of centuries and the testimony of thousands attribute to the therapeutic and restorative value of some of the natural spring waters in one of nature's natural retreats. This in itself has some positive therapeutic value in addition to any possible medicinal effect.

One of these retreats lies tucked away in the mountains Serranía de Cuenca, 240 kilometers (150 miles) southeast of Madrid. Legend has it that a shepherd first discovered the spring in this remote mountain valley some 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the capital city of Cuenca. He noticed that the spring waters draining into the Cuervo River healed his goats. The name, Solán de Cabras or Solán of the Goats is thought to have its origin in this legend. But centuries earlier in Roman Spain, Tiberius Gracus claimed to be cured of his arthritis in 180 B.C. with these waters.

As with other mineral medicinal springs, there are historical references through the centuries but the first documented chemical analysis dates to the 18th century when spas began to be in fashion among aristocrats. By the 18th century, in the days of King Charles III, the waters of Solán de Cabras were acknowledged as mineral and medicinal. In 1790, in the reign of Charles IV, the spa was declared a royal residence. In the 19th century, when the spas were in vogue among the newly emerging wealthy middle classes, King Ferdinand VII took his third wife Amalia of Saxen to the spa in the hope that the spring waters would be able to help remedy her infertility. The royal guest quarters at the spa are now a residence with every 20th century comfort where overstressed executives and weary travelers can relax like royalty and those suffering arthritis, rheumatism, and other ailments can find relief in the hot baths and outdoor swimming pool of Solán de Cabras mineral water.

At 950 meters (3,116 ft) above sea level, and tucked into a canyon gorge carved out by the River Cuervo, the spa is a seductive little paradise with its own lush green microclimate, surrounded by forest and aromatic plants. Eagles and buzzards soar peacefully above and between the rounded limestone cliffs. There are well-marked trails on either side of the crystal clear rapids of the River Cuervo that are suitable for all guests, varying from 5 to 10 minute excursions for children and seniors to several hours hikes and day trips for the more seasoned hikers and nature trekkers. In fact, the most assiduous guests at the spa tend to be families and young adults who are fascinated by the natural beauty of the location and the numerous day trips and walking excursions that can be made from the secluded picturesque setting. There is something about the water that makes it hard even for adults to get out of the pool which is filled with running mineral water. You cannot help but promise yourself to return again.

The Bottled Water: Purified for Half a Millennium

The water bottled by Solán de Cabras fell as raindrops some 500 years ago. Spain had just reconquered the Peninsula from the Moors and Christopher Columbus had only recently made his historic voyage over the ocean to the New World. That's how long it takes a drop of water to seep down from the surface to the aquifer thousands of meters underground. One of Spain's most expensive mineral waters, Carbon 14 tests and geological studies date it back as far as five centuries.

In Solán de Cabras mineral water there are no traces of acid rain or of tritium, a radioactive substance that is present throughout the earth after atomic testing began in the 1950s. Subterranean water less than 40 years old will show traces of tritium while acid rain began to appear with the industrial revolution in Europe in the 19th century. The water's slow absorption of minerals ensures an unchanging quality when the spring water finally emerges at the surface at a temperature of 21°C (40°F) and at a steady flow of 5,410 liters per minute, or about 8 million liters of water a day. Less than 20 percent of the output is actually bottled or used in the spa. The overflow is released to the River Cuervo that runs through this enchanting wooded valley carved out of the mountains. Geological studies confirm that the aquifer seems to be limitless.

The mineral composition of the water has remained practically unchanged since the first analysis in the 18th century. It contains calcium bicarbonate and is considered oligometallic (low in metallic minerals) and weakly mineralized.

Today the third and fourth generations of the first bottling plant founder, Valdomero Sanz, operate an impeccable and modern bottling plant which was incorporated as Solán de Cabras S.A. in 1972. The original fountain built by Charles IV has been main-

tained but the spring water is channeled directly from its source inside the mountain through an underground pipeline to the nearby modern bottling factory where even the empty bottles are washed and sterilized with Solán de Cabras mineral water.

Solán de Cabras mineral water is bottled as it springs out of the mountain in various sizes and types of containers from returnable glass bottles and jugs to paper carton pure-pack containers and recyclable plastic PET bottles. The company also produces a new noncarbonated high energy refreshment drink known as Bio-Solán which is quickly gaining market acceptance and constitutes a major share of Solán de Cabras exports. The drink is made from concentrated natural fruit juices, fiber, and vitamin additives and is rehydrated with Solán de Cabras mineral water. It is marketed as a highly nutritious, low calorie refreshment for today's more health conscious consumers. Advertising stresses the four different refreshments as ideal for athletes, active children and babies, or anyone with extra nutritional needs, from hard-studying students to pregnant women and nursing mothers to stressed out executives.

The four varieties are:

• Bio-Solán High Sport, an isotonic drink that helps maintain a constant level of mineral salts in the body which are consumed at a higher rate during sports. It also contains the addition of vitamins B_1, B_2 and C, which the body uses to protect itself against oxidation caused by pollution, tobacco, alcohol, inadequate diets, or prolonged physical exertion. Athletes need a rapid intake of mineral salts and vitamins to perform well and maintain muscular tone, something that Bio-Solán High Sport helps achieve.

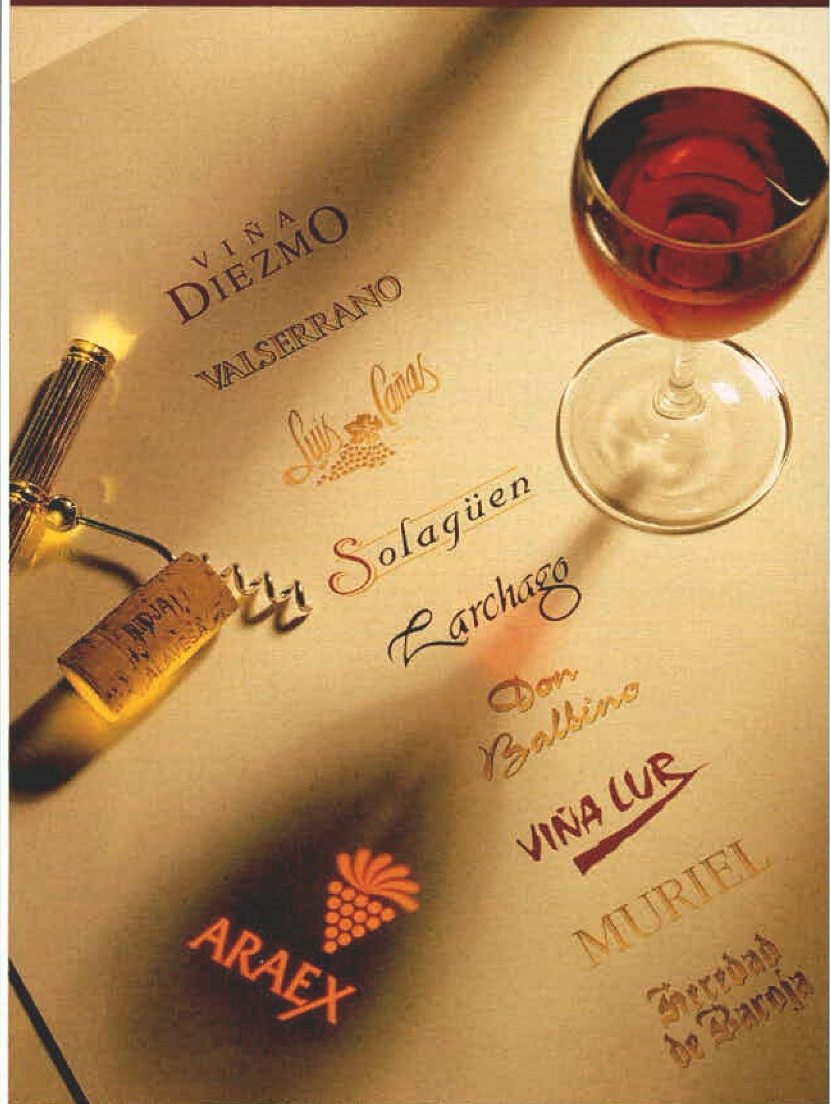
• Bio-Solán Fiber, marketed for the generation that leads a healthy life. The fruit, fiber, and carrot juice drink contains antioxidants, vitamins A, C, and E (the ACE combination) that help combat free radicals, particles that damage our cells.

• Bio-Solán Citron, a drink with a refreshing lemon taste and high percentage of citric fruit juices with added vitamins B, C, and Coenzyme Q_{12} which fortify natural defenses and protect cells against damaging free radicals.

• Bio-Solán Multifruta (multi-fruit), a lively fruity refreshment that also contains the addition of the ACE vitamin combination to protect our body system against the ravages of free radicals and daily stress.

ARAEX

9 outstanding brands of Rioja Alavesa united by a common expertise



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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The Ordesa valley, with its impressive canyon, is one of the most spectacular landscapes in the Pyrenees.

IN THE HEART OF THE PYRENEES

Text: **Sonia Ortega**
Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**
Photos: **P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX**

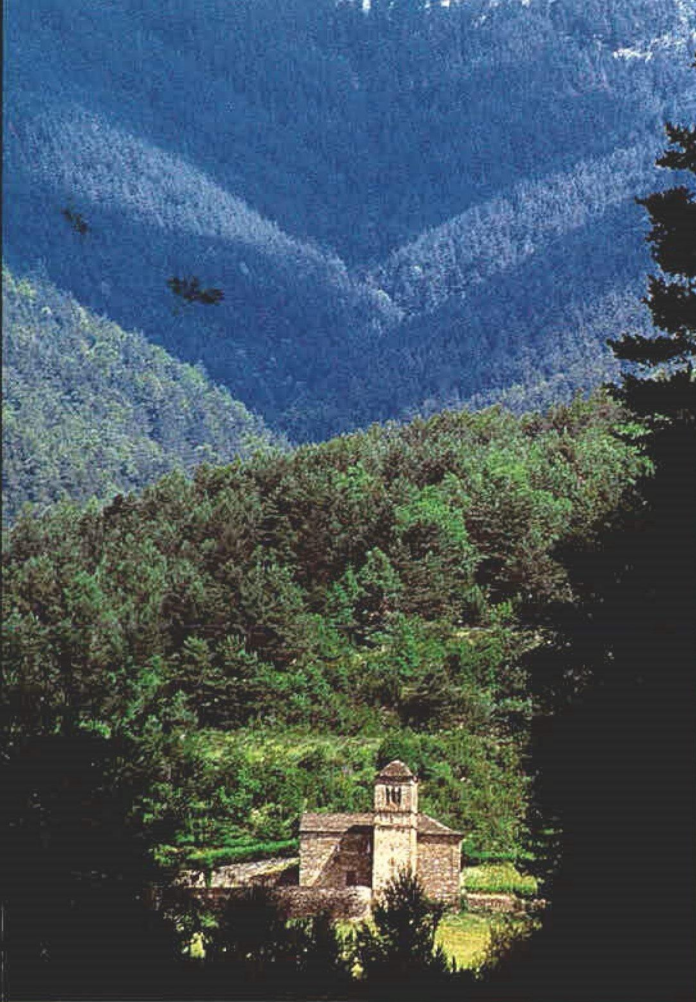
The Panticosa spa is rich in colorful corners and permeated with an atmosphere that recalls times gone by.

Slate and stone form the basis of Pyrenees architecture. With these simple materials, combined according to local custom, each valley has achieved its own distinctive style.

The Pyrenees, some of whose peaks tower over 3,000 meters high (10,000 feet), have for centuries formed a great natural frontier—both link and barrier—between Spain and the rest of continental Europe. Meanwhile, the isolation of the Pyrenean valleys made little microcosms of them all, each with its own architecture, traditions, and even language. Today, the Pyrenees' reserves of natural beauty are more accessible, yet retain much of their character. What follows is an account of a trip through the central part of this vast mountain range—the heart of the Pyrenees.

A detail of the San Juan de la Peña monastery, nestling at the foot of an enormous rock, the final resting place of the Aragonese monarchs.

On the shores of the reservoir which at one time had condemned it to oblivion, the village of Lanuza is coming back to life and each summer hosts a festival of ethnic music.



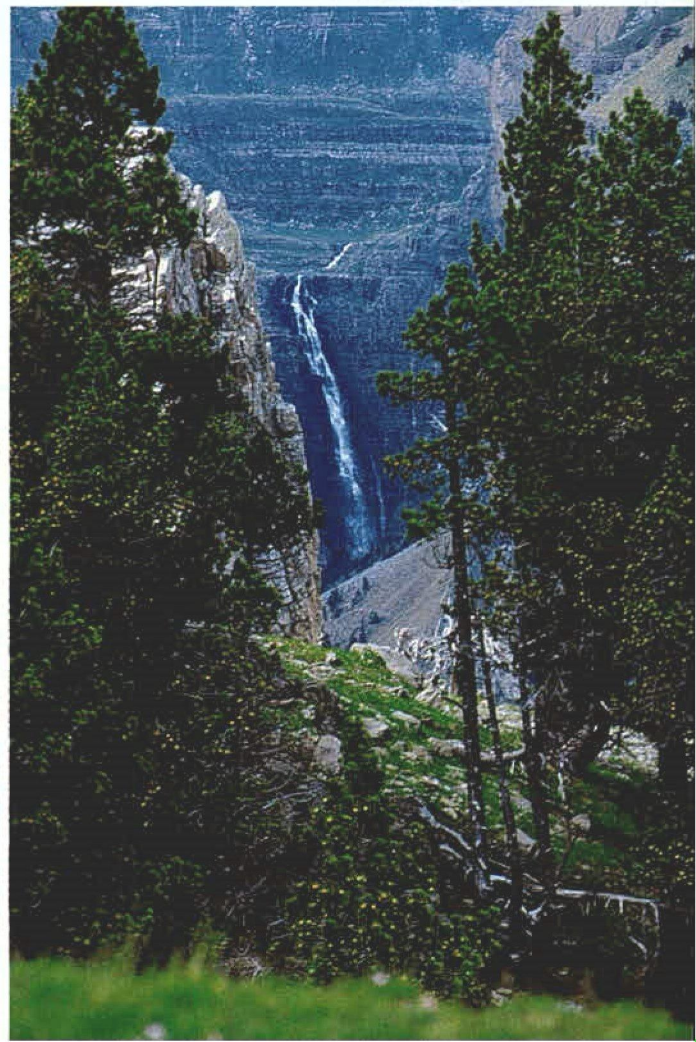
Near Ordesa, the hermitage of San Bartolomé is one of the finest examples of the Romanesque in the area.

The Pyrenees stretch from one sea to another, like the spine of an enormous dinosaur whose tail trails in the Atlantic while its head rests gently on the Mediterranean-lapped Cabo de Creus. The mountain range extends almost 450 kilometers (280 miles), its southern, Spanish face claiming the highest peaks and embracing three different regions—Catalonia, Aragon, and Navarre. As one valley succeeds another, their aspect changes, from the gentle green terrain of Navarre, as in Salazar and Baztán... (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36), to the Mediterranean landscape of the Catalan end, through glaciated valleys

The impressive cliffs of Ordesa can be explored along paths such as the Faja de Pelay or Las Flores, veritable balconies from which to admire the depths of the valley.

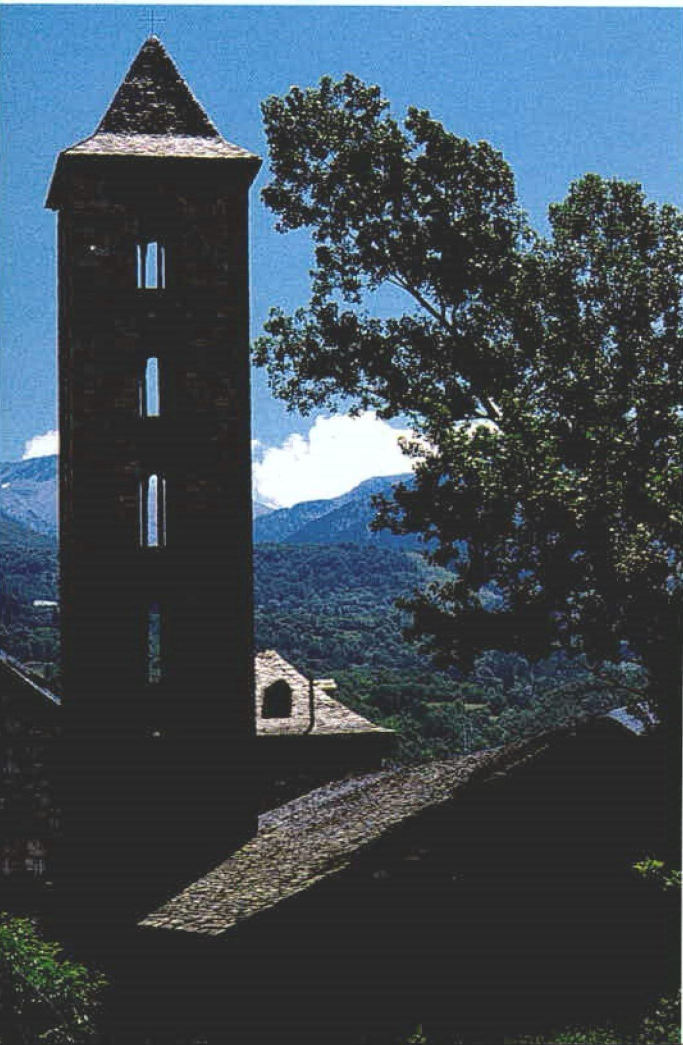
Dawn in the Circo de Pineta, hemmed in by the steep slopes of the Marboré, which tower more than 1,000 meters (3,300 ft).

and narrow canyons. Some of the valleys are barely inhabited, others more built-up, some are rich, others poor... The expanse of the Pyrenees is so enormous and so varied, that my traveling companion and I opted to leave the extremes for another trip and concentrate on the heart of the mountain range, from the foothills of the Valle de Tena as far as Cerdaña, taking in most of the Aragonese and Catalan sections of the Pyrenees. These two huge areas have in common not only a "highland" character but also the superb cultural heritage of their Romanesque art and architecture. For historical reasons, many churches were built there during



Spectacular waterfalls which plunge from great heights appear time and again throughout the Pyrenees.

Religious architecture in the Pyrenees is clearly linked to the Romanesque style, which has in this region some of its most outstanding examples.

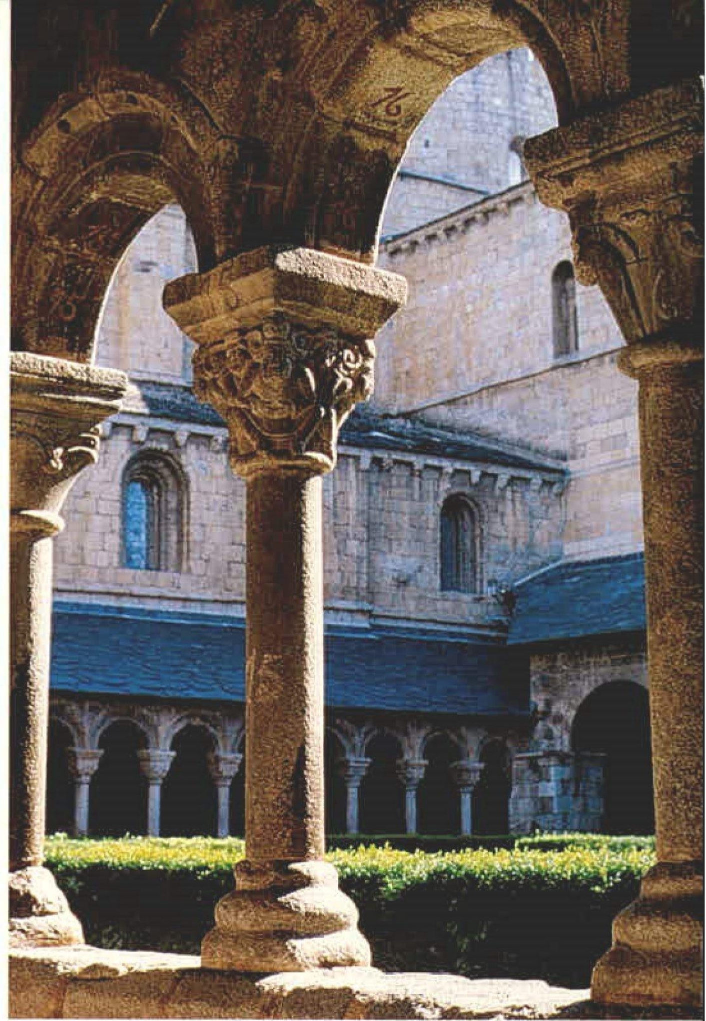


The Boí Valley harbors the best examples of Pyrenean Romanesque architecture. The slender church tower of San Clemente de Taül is a case in point.

the 11th century. Though expressions of the same style, there are certain very clearly differentiating features among them. Explorers of this section of the Pyrenees quickly realize that every single village, however small, has its own church or hermitage. Some are finer examples than others, but they always seem to harmonize perfectly with a landscape that might have been devised specifically to highlight the elegance of the round arch. This accumulated wealth of architecture did not happen by chance. As a natural isthmus of communication between Eurasia and Africa, well before the medieval period the Pyrenees had wit-

nessed the passage through their territories of invaders in both directions, among them Celts, Germans, Romans, Visigoths, and Muslims, all of whom left their mark to some degree. Many historic events took place there, some of which have moved into the realm of legend, like the crossing of the Pyrenees in 218 B.C. by the Carthaginian general Hannibal and his troops, accompanied by more than 30 elephants, en route to their Italian campaign. However, this area was not, for the most part, intensively "romanized," and a few remains of Roman roads and bridges are virtually the only material witnesses of that period. After the decline of Rome, and

The 13th century cloisters of La Seo de Urgell cathedral have 51 columns, no two of whose capitals are alike.



Hidden within the Valley of Arán are hamlets of harmonious and bucolic atmosphere such as the village of Unha.

Throughout the year, the snow and the peaks of the Pyrenees attract mountaineers from Spain and beyond.

settlement by the Visigoths, the Christianization of the Pyrenean region began. But the most significant event in the history of the Spanish Pyrenees was the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th century, despite the fact that the new conquerors never succeeded in occupying any of the high Pyrenean valleys effectively, but merely made their presence felt by means of occasional raids. The primary consequence of the invasion was a significant increase in the population, since many people of the pre-Pyrenean plain, where the Muslims were in occupation, sought refuge up in the mountains. Around the 10th and 11th centuries,

To protect this splendid natural landscape, two National Parks have been established in the Pyrenees: Ordesa y Monte Perdido and Aigües Tortes y Lago San Mauricio.

The central Pyrenees form an almost impenetrable barrier, its mountain passes barely lower than the neighboring peaks.

consolidation of their position against Muslims was reflected in a spate of building which produced large numbers of churches and monasteries, many still standing today.

Exodus

From the 12th century on, as the Christian reconquest pushed the frontier with Muslim territory southwards, the converse of this phenomenon occurred: the mountains lost their population to the recently reconquered territories, losing in the process the importance they had enjoyed for over three centuries. After this early heyday, the towns and inhabitants of the Pyrenees entered a centuries-long pe-

The canyon carved out of the rock by the river Añisclo is so narrow in some stretches that one could almost leap across the gorge. In some parts, the rock walls tower more than 1,000 meters (3,300 ft).

For historical reasons, many Romanesque churches were built in the Pyrenees during the 11th century. Though expressions of the same style, there are certain very clearly differentiating features among them.

riod of isolation, living by agriculture and, primarily, livestock. The tough climate and poor communications meant that, until little over fifty years ago, the Pyrenean culture—specific to each valley, and one of the richest mountain cultures in Europe—maintained its traditional customs, costumes, domestic and working equipment, festivals, and native sports all virtually intact. Its architecture remained equally unchanged. Though using the same materials—stone and wood—there is a surprising variety of styles within the architecture of the Pyrenees: from one valley to another, houses change the shape of their chimneys, the angle of their roofs and their use of slates or tiles, the color of the wood... and these countless telling details give each valley a specific character.

All this changed very rapidly when communication links were improved and even the most remote hamlets became accessible, telecommunications and tourism perpetrating their usual homogenizing effect on local ways of life. All this was exacerbated by an exodus from the countryside in favor of an easier life down on the plain, a phenomenon so dramatic that some parts have become virtually depopulated over the last few decades, though others are recovering thanks to the emergence of rural tourism and the establishment of ski resorts. I am perhaps being a little overpessimistic here, for change is inevitable, and the natural life of the Pyrenees is so abundant and their beauty so imposing that a visit there still constitutes a wonderful experience, and one that can be enjoyed at many levels, by day-trippers and escapees from city life as much as by serious mountaineers and skiers.

Around Jaca: Kings and Pilgrims

Our trip was to begin in the Valle de Tena, but we first paid a visit to the monastery of San Juan de la Peña. This is tucked in beneath a huge rocky cliff, and was originally a hermitage, later—in the 11th century—developed into a monastery under the protection of the king and queen of Aragon, who chose it as their burial place. As it is today, the building shows evidence of its accidented history: the original church, in the style known as *mozarabe* (built by Christians allowed to practice their own religion under Muslim rule), still survives, as do the "new," Romanesque, 11th century church, the pantheon for the royalty and heros of Aragon and—the finest part of the monastery—the cloister. This last, roofless but for the overhanging cliff and surrounded by lush vegetation, emanates some sort of magic through the juxtaposition of the "tamed" stone of its capitals and columns with the "wild" rock of its isolated location.

A little higher up, beside the Monasterio Nuevo (the new monastery built in the late 17th century after the old one was destroyed by fire), is the Balcón del Pirineo, a marvelous vantage point from which to gain one's first impressions of the Pyrenean range. From here one can see from Pic d'Anie to the west, on the French side of the border—the first peak to top the two thousand meter (6,600 feet) mark, and a legendary mountain in Basque shepherd lore—as far as the Monte Perdido massif to the east, in the Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido. Traveling downwards and westwards, the valleys of Ansó, Hecho, and Canfranc are behind us. The Valle de Canfranc is linked with France through the Somport Pass, whose name is derived from the Romans' *Summus Portus* (highest pass). The Roman road linking Gaul with Zaragoza passed through here, and it is also one of the entry points into Spain of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route, trodden for over a thousand years by pilgrims from all over Europe (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 30). More recent links are represented by Canfranc railway station, impressive both for its size and decorative features, which once served the only transpyrenean railway and now celebrating its 70th anniversary, though it has been in disuse for nearly twenty years. Nearby are the two most westerly ski resorts in the Pyrenees: Astún and Candanchú, the latter of these also being one of the oldest.

Behind us, too, lies Jaca, considered the capital of Pyrenean Aragon, with its magnificent Romanesque cathedral and an equally magnificent military fortress or citadel dating from the 16th century and still quite unspoiled. The area around this lively town is scattered with little churches dating from the earliest period of the Romanesque: Asieso, Banaguas, Guasillo, Abay, Ulle, Valle de La Garcipollera are just some of them. Jaca is a sweet-eater's delight, full of pastry shops which make local specialty cakes and biscuits called, for example, *condes, jaqueses, lazos de Jaca* which have become emblematic of the place. Since the early 1960s, Jaca has hosted the *Festival Folclórico del Pirineo* (Folklore Festival of the Pyrenees), held every other year (on "odd" years, as opposed to "evens"), which attracts folk groups from all over the world. Jaca's is the grand-dad of the many festivals, folk and pop alike, which have come into being over the years, and are held, particularly in summer, throughout the mountain range.

Valle de Tena

The next festival we heard about was to take place in the heart of the Valle de Tena, in the abandoned village of Lanuza beside the reservoir fed by the river Gállego. Crowned by the cirques of Piedrafita and, to the southeast, of Panticosa, this is where mountain peaks start consistently to exceed 3,000 meters (10,000 feet). Here lakes, or *ibones* as they are known in the Pyrenees, are a frequent feature, a natural element of the high mountain landscape. At the end of

Some are finer examples than others, but the Romanesque churchs or hermitages in the Pyrenees always seem to harmonize perfectly with a landscape that might have been devised specifically to highlight the elegance of the round arch.

the valley, beneath the slender peak of Foradada, stands the little town of Sallent de Gállego, just 5 kilometers away from Formigal ski resort. We chatted with someone who knows the area well—Mariano, proprietor of Sallent's Hotel Almud, where we were staying. The Almud is typical of a generation of small, charming hotels that have sprung up all over Spain in the last few years, and done very well. This particular example is welcoming and tastefully decorated, its eight bedrooms occupied by tourists in summer but even busier with skiers during the winter season. Mariano, who before running his own hotel was manager of Formigal's biggest hotel for many years, is a hot defender of ski resorts, which he sees as virtually the only way of providing a decent standard of living for the Pyrenean valleys. "The summer tourist season is very short," he explains, "and doesn't generate enough income for us to get ahead." He mentions the radical difference discernible between a valley that has a ski resort and one that has not. We countered that there was also a discernible difference in the degree of environmental damage, but he was none too ready to accept the point: "In Formigal," he protested, "they remove the ski lifts in summer to keep people off the mountainsides in any numbers. They paint the supports green and you can hardly see them. In winter, the surface of the mountain is protected by snow from any damage that skiers might do." As it was getting late, we did not insist on the wider issues like the big buildings that tend to go up in the ski resorts and that could never go unnoticed, even painted green. We did discuss the Lanuza Folk Music Festival, though. This is held annually in the second two weeks in July, and consistently attracts musicians from all over the world. This year's, the seventh in the series, was devoted to the Caribbean, and featured performances by the likes of Compay Segundo and Juan Fornell with Los Van Van, as well as dance and craft workshops. Imagine the sounds of the Caribbean in the setting of a village abandoned to make way for the reservoir, and towered over by mountains three thousand meters high.

Before leaving Sallent, base for many trips and climbs, and the Valle de Tena, we made an early morning visit to Lanuza and found, apart from the preparations for the festival, that although it had looked completely abandoned from a distance, on closer inspection this was not the case: its lovely houses are being reconstructed in the original architectural style of this mountain area. It looks as if life is returning to these parts.

The spa town of Balneario de Panticosa, on the other hand, seems almost frozen in time. Surrounded by mountains, it occupies a natural cirque with a lake at its center. Though rather rundown nowadays because no money has been spent on updating its facilities, not so many years ago this was a thriving resort with a long tradition behind it: its fountains are inscribed with the date 1883, some also very explicitly designated, along the lines of *Fuente del Estómago* (Stomach Fountain) and *Fuente del Hígado* (Liver Fountain). During the day, bathrobes and backpacks intermingle at the spa, while at night people congregate in the old Casino, the antique charm of whose interior is still intact, with two vast grand pianos, mirrors, billiard rooms, and an outside terrace overlooking a tree-lined boulevard, all guaranteed to transport one back to more gracious times. Back in the present, however, the real attraction is the prospect of putting on boots and climbing these mountains—Argualas, Picos del Infierno...—in turn, and going up to the lakes—Brazato, Bachimaña, Azules... making a thorough exploration of this fabulous cirque and finally taking a bracing swim in the lake at its center.

The villages in this part of the mountains are stone-built and slate-roofed, and the tall, conical chimneys topped with a sort of coolie's hat shaped device known locally as *espantabrujas*, or "witch-scarer," begin to make an appearance hereabouts.

Valle de Ordesa

We made out way to Ordesa by way of Búbal, which was an obligatory stopping place for me. I had been there last some 20 years ago, when it had been completely abandoned for the construction of a reservoir. I had peered through the windows of its tumbledown houses, some of which still contained all the paraphernalia of everyday life, and found it all terribly sad. This time, though, the scene was quite different: the village has been rebuilt by students on summer programs and it is now being used as a sort of farm-cum-study-center—for students from all over Spain. More signs of revitalization...

Approaching Torla, in the shadow of Peña Tendeñera, not far from Biescas, the hermitage of San Bartolomé stands near the roadside (its lovely tower, restored in the 1980s, is perhaps the finest example of the Romanesque in this Gállego region) and then, a little further, on the fortified church of Linás de Broto. Torla is a picturesque town perched on a rock, and seems to be posing for a photograph, splendidly framed from whatever angle you look at it, with the formidable slopes of the Mondarruego providing the backdrop. The picturesqueness survives closer inspection, too: it has an interesting folk museum (there are several of these throughout the Pyrenees) and fascinating streets and houses, some of them medieval. Torla is the gateway to the Parque Nacional Ordesa y Monte Perdido, one of the greatest treasures of the Pyrenees—some would say the greatest.

Many historic events took place there, some of which have moved into the realm of legend, like the crossing of the Pyrenees in 218 B.C. by the Carthaginian general Hannibal and his troops, accompanied by more than 30 elephants.

Ordesa National Park was created in 1918, thanks largely to the efforts of French Pyrenean expert, explorer, and enthusiast Lucien Briet. In 1982, permission was granted for its ambit to be extended, since which time it has been known as the Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido: it now covers 15,608 hectares (38,570 acres), seven times its original size. It now encompasses virtually the whole Spanish face of the Monte Perdido massif, also known as Las Tres Sorores (the eponymous "Three Sisters" being Cilindro, Monte Perdido, and Soum de Ramond), 3,355 meters (11,000 feets) at its highest point, and with impressive canyons—the Añisclo canyon, the Escuaín gorges, and the head of the Valle de Pineta—hollowed out of the limestone by glaciers and rivers making their way down from the heights.

The Valle de Ordesa, though commonly called a valley, is more of a canyon 12 kilometers long, with almost vertical walls, excavated by glaciers and flanked to the north, south, and east by impressive peaks. But the effect of these somewhat overwhelming geomorphological features is softened by vegetation in the form of extensive woodlands of beech, red and black pine, and fir, and a very varied undergrowth which includes box and juniper among its many species. The valley is also home to an abundance of rare wildlife—Pyrenean mountain goats, chamois, wild boars, and golden eagles. Our guide around Ordesa told us that a recent count in Ordesa and Pineta had registered around 8,000 *sarrios* (Pyrenean mountain goats), and with the aid of binoculars we were actually able to observe several groups of them grazing. Our guide around this marvelous park is Javier, member of a dynasty of forest rangers. Now 26 years old, he was brought up here and his ambition is to remain in this mountain environment where he declares himself completely happy. Nothing in his surroundings escapes him: he sees animals no matter how far off they are, knows the names of all the plants and all the mountain peaks, and has trodden each and every path. In summer, he drives one of three four-wheel drive vehicles authorized for use on the Ordesa trails. Since our time was limited, we had to travel by car rather than on foot as we would have liked. As we drove up through the Sierra de Las Cutas, Javier stopped at various lookout points along the length of the canyon so that we could take photographs from above. The view is fantastic, like being on a balcony jutting out into space, especially from the Mirador del Gobernador which, being about halfway along provides views of nearly the full length of this curved canyon, with the exit from the valley at one extreme, the Cola de Caballo waterfall at the other, and the Cotatuero cirque, La Faja de Pelay, La Faja de Las Flores, and La Brecha de Roland and many other peaks in between. At one end of the mighty balcony formed by the Sierra de Las Cutas, the last Pyrenean shepherd to practice transhumance, grazes his flock. His name is Garcés, and every summer, he and his *ojinegra* sheep set off on the week-long, 200 kilometer (125 miles) walk from his village in Zaragoza to these greener pastures. During his stay here, he lives in a cave, which mountaineers now know as Cueva Garcés.

We drove back down to the sound of a tape of La Ronda de Boltaña, an Aragonese folk group whose lyrics are about villages abandoned or submerged beneath reservoirs. Javier talks about La Solana, an area near here whose 14 villages were abandoned by their inhabitants who went off to work on the hydroelectric schemes and never came home again. This raises again the issue of the survival and conservation of the environment. Javier agrees with Mariano that the local economy can not survive on summer tourism alone, but even so he is against increasing the number of ski resorts and is delighted that some of the plans put forward for schemes of this sort have been rejected as unsuitable for the area: "That means that fifty years hence our valley will still be a marvelous place, but some other places..."

In the course of the days we spent here, and during the rest of our trip, we met many foreign mountaineers and tourists—French, Dutch, German—rather more foreigners than Spaniards, in fact. It was early July, and in many places we were told that Spanish tourists tend to come after July 7th, Hemingway's favorite festival, for which nearby Pamplona is famous. That said, at the height of summer, and particularly in the first half of August, it is best to avoid the more "classic" destinations in the Pyrenees in favor of the less famous places: there are still plenty of these, and they are quiet at all times of year. Many people favor autumn: our guide recommended an autumn visit to the nearby Valle de Bujaruelo.

Valle de Pineta

Autumn is also the favorite season of Emilio Montolío, longtime manager of the Parador de Turismo de Monte Perdido in the Valle de Pineta—one of the national parador chains. Most paradors are installed in historic buildings—castles, monasteries, palaces... but in this case it is the natural setting that is significant: the magnificent backdrop of the sheer walls of El Marboré, with drops of over 1,000 meters (3,300 feet), down which waterfalls tumble into the River Cinca. Towering over all this are the summits of the Monte Perdido massif: El Marboré, El Astazú, El Pineta, Tucaroya, and Pic Blanc. Deciding where to start exploring was the problem here, and it was reassuring that excellent food awaited us on our return (see Gastronomy and Festivals box).

The tough climate and poor communications meant that, until little over fifty years ago, the Pyrenean culture maintained its traditional customs, costumes, domestic and working equipment, festivals, and native sports all virtually intact.

We reached Pineta via the Valle de Vió, a lovely, tranquil valley of tiny hamlets, each with its own Romanesque church, of course, and with some particularly attractive examples of rural architecture such as the Casa de Ruda in Fanlo. This valley leads into another important feature of Pyrenean Aragon: the Valle de Añisclo, an imposing rock-walled canyon hewn out by the River Vellos. The river twists and turns, and though it is barely two meters (6 feet) wide in places, the cliffs are up to 1,200 meters (4,000 feet) high, edged in places by dense vegetation.

Further down the valley, the Vellos joins the Cinca, the big river of Pyrenean Aragon. En route for the parent Ebro, the Cinca flows through the town of Aínsa, dividing it in two: on one side are its new neighborhoods and on the other, up on a raised plateau, its historic quarter. Designated a site of historic and artistic interest, this has been completely restored, and though as tends to happen in these cases it can sometimes look a little artificial, it is well worth visiting for some of its façades and doorways, its collegiate church, and its *plaza mayor*. When this area was under Muslim domination, Aínsa had only a little frontier castle. In the 16th century, Philip II turned this into a fortress as a defensive measure against possible incursion by French Protestants. The fact that this was once Muslim territory is recalled by a local biennial festival known as *La Morisma*, a collective term meaning "The Moors" (see Gastronomy andFestivals box).

In Ainsa, or L'Ainsa as it is called in Aragonese, the local dialect (attempts are being made to reinstate it), we saw on some house doors not only interesting old door-knockers whose significance it was difficult to guess at but also our first examples of the sprigs of box traditionally used to ward off evil spirits. We were to see these in many other villages. Another Pyrenean phenomenon we first sighted in Aínsa was Pyre-

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Though using the same materials—stone and wood—there is a surprising variety of styles within the architecture of the Pyrenees: from one valley to another, houses change the shape of their chimneys, the angle of their roofs and their use of slates or tiles, the color of the wood...

nean rafting, though the "capital" of this spectacular sport is a little further east in the Noguera Pallaresa river, in the Catalan Pyrenees.

The Gistaín and Benasque Valleys

To reach the Valle de Benasque, we left the main road and approached it via the Valle de Gistaín, or Valle de Xistau as it is called in the local dialect, *chistavino*. Among the many dialects spoken in the Pyrenees are *patués*, spoken in Benasque, *belsetán*, spoken in Bielsa, and *aranés*, which we were later to hear in the Valle de Arán. These are thought to be variants of *patois commingeois*, a Gascon dialect of southeastern France: remember that before the modern roads were built, many of the valleys in the Spanish Pyrenees had readier access to their French neighbors than they did to Spain.

Though Gistaín is a quiet, virtually unspoiled valley, it became famous throughout Spain in the 1980s when the unmarried men of the village of San Juan de Plan, frustrated by the scarcity of marriageable women there, advertised nationally for women willing to marry them and live in their beloved valley—an idea poached from the plot of the William Wellman's western movie. *Westward the Women*. The story was heavily publicized in the media at the time, and though many women responded, long-term results proved disappointing.

Our route took us through splendid scenery, along a rather winding road with vertiginous ascents and descents. The Valle de Benasque is the largest of all the Pyrenean valleys, and the peaks of its Llosas and Montes Malditos massifs are also the highest in the Pyrenees. It is also the valley that attracts the most mountaineers, drawn to the challenge of the "king" of the Pyrenees, El Aneto (3,404 meters) (11,000 feets). The town of Benasque is a mixture of picturesque corners with fine old noble houses such as Casa Faure, Casa Juste, and the Palacio de los Condes de Ribagorza, and modern buildings in dubious taste. In summer, there are organized tours of the best houses, and other tours explore the tradition of witchcraft which apparently once thrived in these parts. Above Benasque is the town of Cerler and the ski resort of the same name, and just a couple of kilometers away is the medieval village of Anciles, much of it still virtually intact, and again with a fine array of escutcheoned houses.

Little villages of stone-built slate-roofed houses lie alongside the road through the valley. We are already getting very close to the Catalan Pyrenees, but first we pass through the area of Ribagorza whose "capital," Castejón de Sos, is an important center of aero-sports such as hang-gliding: the world championship was held there in the summer of 1997. In this area, the architecture seems to change at a stroke, taking on a more urban look, with slate yielding to tiles and houses being built in a lighter colored stone.

The Boí and Arán Valleys

On arriving in the Catalan Pyrenees, our first destination is the Valle de Boí. This is not just another Pyrenean valley: it is set apart from the rest by its unique collection of architectural gems. The churches in Boí, Taüll, Eril-la-Vall, Durro, Barruera, and Cardet are all superb examples of the Lombardic Romanesque style, with Eril-la Vall and Taüll particularly outstanding. Pictures of Taüll's San Clemente are often used to illustrate the quintessence of Catalan Romanesque. We had already seen a lot of Romanesque architecture during this trip, but the Boí valley made us wonder exactly why such a concentration of fine churches should have been built at the same period in this particular place. The reason is that when the Count of Pallars, lord of this region, died in 1011, disagreement between his two sons resulted in the county's being divided in two parts: Pallars Sobirá and Pallars Jussà (the names mean Upper and Lower Pallars in Catalan). Some feudal lords profited from the quarrel, prospering on the strength of booty and favors. Among these were the lords of Eril, who eventually became a major power in the area. At the same time, military campaigns were being carried out to drive back the Arabs from the pre-Pyrenean area. The lords of Eril returned from these campaigns considerably richer, and to what better use could they put these riches than building fine churches to affirm the power of both Christianity and the feudal lords? To this end, the most skilled artists and craftsmen were brought in from Lombardy and set to work: they introduced the buttress, walls built of relatively small stones, and the now characteristic towers with their arched windows. Churches sprang up everywhere: in Taüll, for example, the church of Santa María and San Clemente were consecrated within a day of each other. The attention to detail on the exterior was echoed in the interior: originally, all these churches were decorated inside with large mural paintings. Almost all those that survived the centuries are now in Barcelona's Museo de Arte de Cataluña, though some have found their way to museums abroad. Replicas now stand in for the originals in many of the churches. It is perhaps true that they needed to be protected from deterioration, but it is a pity not to be able to see them *in situ*. In his *Viaje al Pirineo de Lérida* (Journey to the Leridan Pyrenees), Spanish writer and traveler Camilo José Cela, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1989, speaks out strongly on this issue, declaring that the museum is "the ossuary that holds—embalmed and bureaucratized—a large part of the artistic wealth that belonged to the villages where God had placed it, and that

The natural life of the Pyrenees is so abundant and their beauty so imposing that a visit there constitutes a wonderful experience, and one that can be enjoyed at many levels, by day-trippers and escapees from city life as much as by serious mountaineers and skiers.

ended up being swallowed by the city." This engaging book, written in characteristically sardonic tone, is an account of a journey made on foot in the summer of 1956, and depicts the Pyrenean region at a time when it was on the cusp between one era and another.

But this secluded valley has more charms than just its churches. Taüll, with its neat streets and little orchards is a pleasure to explore: viewed from above, its staggered slate roofs look like black wavelets. Durro is another village with a wealth of authentic architecture, interesting houses, and passageways. A word of warning to visitors: the churches are not open to the public except for guided tours which take place at different times on different days of the week.

Down in the valley is the spa of Caldas de Boí, whose waters were already being used for their medicinal properties at the time of the Roman occupation. One of the entrances to the Parque Nacional de Aigües Tortes y San Mauricio is also there. The park is divided into two sectors separated by a ridge traversed by just one pass, the Portarró d'Espot. As a conservation measure, both sectors are accessible only on foot or in the park's four-wheel drive taxis. The Boí, or Aigües Tortes, sector is flanked by high peaks of the like of Creu de Colomers and Pala Alta de Serrader, and is dotted with lakes such as Llong Llebreta, and Negre: the scene is idyllic. The entrance to the eastern sector, San Mauricio, is in Espot, in the Val d'Aneu, which we visited later, after our visit to the Valle de Arán (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 21). The Arán valley is one of the most characterful in the Pyrenees, unsurprisingly given that it was one of the most isolated places in Spain until the Viella Tunnel was opened in 1948: the only other point of access, the Bonaigua Pass, used to be closed by snow almost throughout the winter. The Valle de Arán is extraordinary on two counts: not only it is for the most part oriented from east to west, as opposed to north to south, but it also lies on the north face of the mountain.

No sooner had we emerged from the Viella tunnel than we noticed the difference in the houses compared with those in the valleys we had left behind us: here their roofs are much steeper and their wood is much darker in color. The same is true of the churches, which are far more stylized, especially the towers which are always capped with an almost conical slate roof.

Viella is the "capital" of the Arán valley and, like all its towns, it has felt the impact of Baqueira Beret ski resort, the biggest in the Pyrenees. The best feature of Viella is its little historic center, where there is an interesting folk museum.

What makes this valley particularly attractive, apart from its charming natural setting, are the unspoiled little villages, each neatly clustered around its church. Some of the buildings one passes on the roadside as one drives along are less attractive, though: restaurants, shops and other venues are not always in the best of taste. Tremendous care has been taken with new housing developments, however, with efforts being made to respect traditional architectural patterns. Though the results can look a little forced at times, there are some very successful ones. Towns such as Artíes, Unha, and Vilamós make one really appreciate the elegance of Arán's Romanesque and how harmonious this valley is: it would have been wonderful to explore this a few decades ago, perhaps when Cela was doing his explorations on foot. The Arán valley also has the best food in the Pyrenees: it ranges from the hearty to the elegant, and is always delicious. Restaurants such as Casa Irene are established classics, and the choice is constantly increasing.

Viella divides the valley in two: the part nearer France, through which the Garona (Garonne) flows, is perhaps quieter and less built-up, but there are more shops there, aimed at the many French visitors. Some villages are attractive in their own right, while the appeal of others derives from their dramatic, apparently precarious, location: Caneján is one of these. On the outskirts of Caneján, we saw our only *borda*, the Pyrenean term for the thatched huts where livestock is kept, or hay stored. Its owner told us that since no one grows wheat or cereals any more, there is no thatching material, so that bordas are given slate roofs nowadays.

Val d'Aneu

The other end of the valley, past the up-to-date ski resort of Baqueira-Beret, leads to the mountain pass known as Puerto de la Bonaigua, from which the view is panoramic. Beyond it lies the Val d'Aneu, surrounded by mountains, and through which the area's major river, the Noguera Pallasera runs. This valley's attractions include fine architecture, charming towns and villages, and a wide range of winter and adventure sports. Thrill seekers flock here: rafting and kayaking are popular favorites, and with the arrival of the good weather, the rivers soon fill up with craft. Between Esterri d'Aneu and Llavorsí lies a succession of valleys—Isil, Cardós, and Ferrara. En route, the landscape changes, becoming more severe, drier and rockier. As we round a bend in the Val d'Isil, the monastery of San Juan, tiny and beautiful on the river bank, comes into view. This valley attracts many cross-country skiers: a long trail leads to the abandoned village of Montgarri, once associated with witchcraft but today a point on the route of the *Marcha a Beret*, an annual race around the Baqueira-Beret massif in which thousands of enthusiasts take part.

In the town of Isil, we had

Ordesa National Park was created in 1918, thanks largely to the efforts of French Pyrenean expert, explorer, and enthusiast Lucien Briet. Since 1982 it has been known as the Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido and now covers 15,608 hectares (38,570 acres), seven times its original size.

lunch at Mesón Sastre, waited on by three generations of women, all equally friendly—Rosa, the middle one, also looks after some of the *albergues* that provide lodging for mountaineers. She tells us a dramatic story from the last days of Montgarri in the 1940s when the husband of the town's last surviving married couple died in the depths of winter and had to be buried in snow by his wife until spring. A jollier note was sounded by the information that the Festival de Escalarre, held every summer for the last several years, attracts tens of thousands of people to a sort of Pyrenean Woodstock. It lasts four to five days, during which there are performances (over 100 this year) by the likes of Bob Dylan, Deep Purple, and The Coors. Rosa loves it, because it brings life to the valley: "The first year was chaotic," she recalls, "because there hadn't been much organization and the fans literally exhausted local supplies, but it's very well organized these days." We headed down towards Espot, the pleasant town from which one enters the other side of the Aigües Tortes-San Mauricio Park, and then upwards again to the beautifully unspoiled San Mauricio lake, point of departure for excursions to the many other lakes in the park. We followed the course of the Noguera Pallaresa as far as Sort. Slightly further south is Gerri de la Sal and the magnificent Monasterio de Santa María. But to round off our trip we decided to head west towards La Seu d'Urgell, almost in La Cerdaña (see

The Arán valley has the best food in the Pyrenees: it ranges from the hearty to the elegant, and is always delicious. Restaurants such as Casa Irene are established classics, and the choice is constantly increasing.

Spain Gourmetour No. 32). La Seu is the biggest town in the area and has for centuries been, and still is, its center of commerce, as the arcaded streets of its historic quarter attest. Before developing into a town, this was originally an ecclesiastical see and its splendid cathedral is one of the finest examples of the Lombardic Romanesque in the Pyrenees. As we explored its cloister and admired its 51 capitals to the sound of Gregorian chants and bells, we thought over our trip. Our days spent exploring the region had revealed its many wonders, not untinged with sadness, both of which would leave an enduring impression. We had been made aware of the importance of achieving a balance between commerce and culture, urban and rural. We remembered the optimistic note sounded by Javier, our guide in Ordesa, who told us that when Lanuza was abandoned, its excellent church bells had been salvaged and transferred to Torla. Now that life has returned to Lanuza, it has claimed its bells back again, and Torla has had to make do with inferior replacements. A sign of the times? Let's hope so.

Sonia Ortega *is a journalist and has been coordinator of* Spain Gourmetour *since its first issue.*

See Recipes on page 108.

FIESTAS AND FOOD IN THE PYRENEES

Fiestas

The Pyrenean calendar is liberally punctuated by local fiestas, most of them, for obvious climatological reasons, concentrated in summer. Indeed, the very fact that the fine weather has arrived is something of a fiesta in itself for valleys which, some decades ago, spent long months cut off from the rest of the world.

Even so, towns such as Bielsa and others in the Gistaín valley rouse themselves in the depths of winter to celebrate carnival time. The carnival has survived there in very authentic form, and picturesque figures known as *madamas* and *trangas* still make an appearance. The madamas are unmarried girls dressed in beribboned skirts and colored sashes symbolizing purity, while the trangas are young bachelors, dressed in colored skirts and shirts but with their heads and shoulders covered in sheepskins and topped by large goat's horns, their faces painted black, carved potato teeth in their mouths, and big cowbells at their belts. To accentuate this ferocious aspect, they beat the ground with sticks. The Folk Museum (*Museo Etnológico*) in Bielsa has a fascinating collection of disguises of this type.

There is then a gap in the festive calendar until May when, on the first Sunday of the month, Jaca commemorates a victory over the Arab invaders of yore (known in Spain as *los moros*) with a flower-strewn spring festival. In late May or early June, when the rivers are swollen by the thaw, a fiesta known as *las navatas* is celebrated between Laspuña and Aínsa. During this, treetrunks are launched down the river Ara, in commemoration of the now extinct skills practiced for centuries by the local *madederos*. These lumberjacks, who worked high up in the mountains, would transport the trees they cut down in spring by river, themselves traveling on trunks which they controlled with long poles and shooting the rapids en route. In Catalonia, these madederos are known as *raiers*, and there, too, they are celebrated in fiestas. Every year since 1979, the local council of Pobla de Segur in the Pallars Jussá has been staging a lively fiesta on the first Sunday in July, which features raiers dressed as in the old days. The big festival on the river Noguera Pallaresa, this is a truly spectacular event.

A few days earlier, the feast day of San Juan on 23 June is marked by a night-time *fallas* celebration held in Isil in the Val d'Aneu. Catalonia is rich in celebrations of the summer solstice, and this is a survival of ancient purificatory rituals. Fir trees are felled a month in advance to give them time to dry out; they are cut into 1.5 m (5 ft) lengths and left up on the mountainside. On fiesta night, the lighting of a bonfire in the town square gives the signal for the youths waiting up on the mountain to set off at a run downhill bearing blazing logs: in the darkness this is a thrilling sight. When they reach the town, they throw their logs into the bonfire in the plaza, all to the beat of two traditional dances, the dance of the *bastons* and the dance of the *bolangera*. These celebratory fallas are of ancestral origin, and are believed to relate to the quest for fire in the mountains (the closest place to the divine sphere) so as to carry it down to the town to purify it. Similar fiestas, with certain variations as to the size of the torches, are also held in certain villages in the lovely Valle de Boí, from the middle of June to the 17th of July, the date of Taull's—the last in the sequence.

By high summer, there is hardly a village that doesn't have its own fiesta to celebrate, and modern "festivals" also take place at this time. The main article mentions the festival staged on the banks of Llanuza reservoir in the Tena valley: generally known as *Pirineos Sur* (its official name is *Festival Internacional de las Culturas*), this is held in the second half of July. As well as hosting the *Festival Folklórico de los Pirineos* folk festival, in August Jaca also has a festival of ancient music (*Festival Internacional en el Camino de Santiago*) and, also in August, the *Festival Internacional de Música "Castillo de Aínsa"* in the splendid setting of Aínsa castle. For lovers of pop music and the accompanying "scene," the place to go is the Val d'Aneu for the *Festival de Escalarre*, better known as the *Festival de la Vaca*—or Cow Festival—after the logo featured in its advertising material—where a young, lively crowd is guaranteed.

Specific town and village fiestas are pretty lively, too, particularly because traditional dances still survive hereabouts and come to light during these summer events. In Benasque on July 30th, they dance the *Ball de Benás*; during Sort's *Fiesta Mayor*, two couples dance the courtly *rigodón* to a band accompaniment, while in Seo de Urgell's equivalent on the last Sunday in August, they dance the *Ball Cerdá*. The Boí and Aneu valleys also proudly retain traditional dances such as the *Esquerraná* and the *Ball Plá*.

But it is probably in the Valle de Arán that the ancient dances have survived best: *Es Aubades* is the valley's most traditional one, and each town and village has its own special version of the aubades. The girls sit on a bench in the plaza while the young men dance until the musicians are exhausted. *Era Polca Piqué*, a dance common to the whole Gascon region, is danced by many couples at a time and features polka steps and much twirling. *Era Morisca* takes the form of a human chain of girls and boys holding hands and dancing through every street in the village. Some of these dances are quite obscure in their content: *Eth Puntet*, for example, representing the difference between white bread and brown bread vendors, is danced in circles around baskets of bread.

Another typically Pyrenean fiesta, held in Lavorsí, represents another important aspect of local culture. Shepherds from Catalonia, the Basque Country, and France gather there in August for a competitive sheepdog trial, which is followed by a vast meal for members of the fraternity. As the summer draws to a close, the fiestas tail off, with *La Morisma* marking the end of the season. This is celebrated every second year in Aínsa with an enactment of the victory over the Arabs (los moros) in the year 724. Aínsa's Plaza Mayor provides the stage for the 100 local inhabitants who turn actor for the day in a traditional event that has been held for the past half century.

Food

Good food is itself a sort of fiesta, and travelers in the Pyrenees will find plenty of it about. The food in Pyrenean Aragon is simple but delicious: roast lamb, pork

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in various forms (including cold cuts), game, and pulses are the basics of the local culinary repertoire, supplemented by excellent fresh trout from the rivers and other good seasonal ingredients such as round beans, known as *boliches*, from Biescas and Embún, and several varieties of wild mushrooms from the mountainsides of Huesca.

No matter how small the village, you will always find somewhere to sit down to griddle-cooked lamb chops or *longaniza* sausage. The range is broader in towns such as Benasque, Biescas, and Jaca whose little restaurants serve food that ventures beyond the strictly traditional. The Parador de Monte Perdido in the Valle de Pineta, deserves a special mention for its efforts in boosting the traditional local cuisine and reviving old recipes such as *cabrito en salsa de huevo* (kid in egg sauce). It devotes a whole section of its menu to lamb dishes (lamb is known as *ternasco*, rather than the usual *cordero*, in these parts).

Jaca is the place for sweet things, and is justifiably famous for its many different kinds of local cakes and biscuits. For wines, the Somontano area in the pre-Pyrenees produces wines with denomination of origin: though D.O. Somontano only acquired its D.O. status in 1985, it already has an excellent reputation both within Spain and abroad.

In the Catalan Pyrenees, gastronomy takes on a slightly different cast, for there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as Catalan-Pyrenean cuisine though there are still some clearly identifiable original features. Its present character is predominantly the product of later influences which have been enormous, especially those exerted by France and by other parts of Catalonia. Even so, there are some dishes, such as *olla aranesa*, that qualify as "native." As in the Aragonese part of the Pyrenees, lamb, pork, and trout provide the basics. Farmyard fowl and rabbits are also favorites, as are wild mushrooms. This area also has a long tradition of cheese making: local cheeses include *serrat*, a sheep's milk cheese; *tupí*, a version of serrat left to ferment in a vessel known as a *tupina* (the Valle de Arán has a cow's milk equivalent); and *llenguat*, a very strong, highly fermented sheep's milk cheese.

The Valle de Arán is where this region's best food is to be found, both in terms of local dishes and restaurants. The French influence is responsible for many dishes which have by now become genuinely assimilated into Aranese cuisine; these include patés, civets, and some desserts such as crepes, sometimes known as *pescajus*. The proximity of Baqueira-Beret's ski resort has triggered the creation of several excellent restaurants, so that in Artíes, Viella or Baqueira itself, there are excellent opportunities to sample good traditional Aranese food and newly created extrapolations from local cuisine. Much of the credit for the valley's gastronomic renaissance must go to Irene España and her famous restaurant, Casa Irene.

As in the Valle de Arán, local dishes are cherished in the Pallars. One of the oldest of these is a dish called *girella*, a sort of lamb offal sausage. Civet is another specialty, particularly civet of wild boar, while nearby Cerdaña is known for a dish called *trinchat*, and for its recipe of pig's trotters with turnips.

See Recipes on page 108.

USEFUL ADDRESSES IN THE PYRENEES

The following addresses will be useful to anyone planning to visit this lovely part of Spain. The area covered by this article includes parts of Aragon and Catalonia, two autonomous communities whose tourist organizations are therefore run separately. Addresses appear under the relevant heading.

Paradors Central Booking Office

The Spanish parador network has three hotels in the Pyrenees: one in the Valle de Pineta, one in Artíes (Valle de Arán), and one in Seo de Urgell. For information and reservations, contact the central booking office.
Tel: (34) 915 166 666
Fax: (34) 915 166 657
Internet:
http://www.parador.es

ARAGON

Central de Turismo Verde
(Green Tourism Central Office)
Porches de Galicia, 4
22002 Huesca
Tel: (34) 974 244 848
Fax: (34) 974 240 362
Internet:
http://www.huesca-turismo.com

This is the office to contact for across-the-board tourist information about the Aragonese Pyrenees. It covers rural accommodation, engaging mountain guides, ski resorts, walking tours, horse riding, mountain and cross-country skiing, snowshoe walking, hang-gliding, gliding, rafting, abseiling, canoeing... the lot. There are also cultural tours, and visits to Somontano wineries.

Federación Aragonesa de Montañismo
(Aragonese Mountaineering Federation)
Tel: (34) 976 227 971
Fax: (34) 976 212 459
Internet:
http://www.pirineos.net/fam

Parque Nacional de Ordesa-Monte Perdido
(Ordesa-Monte Perdido National Park)
Tel: (34) 974 243 361 / 974 486 212
Internet:
http://www.ordesa@mma.es

CATALONIA

Centro de Información Turística de Cataluña
(Tourist Information Center of Catalonia)
Paseo de Gracia, 107
08008 Barcelona
Tel: (34) 932 384 000
Fax: (34) 932 384 010
Internet:
http://www.gencat.es/probert

This office provides the same across-the-board information service as the Central de Turismo Verde office (see above), but with reference to the Catalan Pyrenees.

Federación Catalana de Montañismo
(Catalan Mountaineering Federation)
Tel: (34) 934 120 777
Fax: (34) 934 126 353
Internet:
http://www.feec.es

Parque Nacional de Aigües Tortes y Lago San Mauricio
(Aigües Tortes and San Mauricio Lake National Park)
Tel/Fax: (34) 973 696 189

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Naughty But Nice

SPANISH CHOCOLATES AND CAVA

Text: **José Carlos Capel**

After the discovery of America, the first chocolate landed in Europe —in "cake" form—around 1520, at the port of Seville. The "cakes" were disks of solidified cacao, as used in Mexico to make the bitter drink, xocolatl, with which the Aztec emperor Montezuma welcomed the Spanish captain Hernán Cortés on his arrival in the Americas.

That first imported chocolate was of the variety known as *forastero* (foreign or exotic), different from the *criollo* (indigenous) type that was shipped to Spain by the Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas from 1728 on, for the best part of the 18th century. This Basque company worked the American trade routes, carrying Venezuelan chocolate to the Cantabrian ports of northern Spain.

Although chocolate was not particularly well received at the Spanish Court of the early 16th century, the art of preparing and refining it so as to serve it hot, sweetened, and flavored with cinnamon and vanilla was soon mastered. In this form it became one of Spain's best-kept gastronomic secrets, one that was kept closely guarded for nearly a hundred years.

Served hot, sweetened, and flavored with cinnamon and vanilla, chocolate became one of Spain's best-kept gastronomic secrets, kept closely guarded for almost 100 years.

In the 17th century, however, chocolate consumption spread from the Iberian Peninsula into continental Europe, first into Flanders and then, some years later, into France when Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III of Spain, married the French king Louis XIII in 1615. During that century, numerous Spanish books were written on the subject of chocolate, which was believed to have medicinal, tonic, and even aphrodisiac properties. In 1777, the first factory making "tablets" of chocolate was opened in Barcelona by Josep Fernández, who produced chocolate in *onzas*, or ounces. These thick little cakes were perfect for making cups of rich hot chocolate, a specialty that until relatively recently was still known as *chocolate a la española*—Spanish-style chocolate.

Chocolate Today

It's 10 a.m. in the school run by prestigious Spanish chocolate-making company Chocovic, and brothers Alberto and Ferrán Adriá, respectively pastry cook and owner-chef of El Bulli restaurant in Rosas (Gerona), one of the most famous three-Michelin-star restaurants in the world, are getting ready to conduct a monographic seminar. Over two days, these star exponents of Mediterranean cuisine are going to reveal their secrets to pastry chefs and other professionals of the hospitality industry. Basic techniques for working with chocolate, tips, ideas, and instructions on how to create some of the innovative specialties for which they are so famous: sweet and sour vinegar "Forum" chocolates; chocolate covered popcorn (they call them *choco-kikos*); slabs of chocolate embedded with *chicharrones* (fragments of pork crackling)... Delicious. This is one of many courses held throughout the year at the factory in Vic, a small town in Barcelona province. A team of highly qualified teachers puts on adventurous teaching programs: courses on making chocolate *turrón* and traditional Easter figures; desserts and advanced courses on pastry and chocolate preparation. They are a huge success, and are always heavily subscribed.

Claudi Uñó is giving a course on making chocolates (in the sense of chocolate confectionery). This young master chef has won gold medals and other awards at European level, and the latest trends in modern chocolate-making are in evidence. Nowadays, making good chocolates requires one not only to use the best raw materials and master temperature control and technique. One also has to be constantly creative. Today's chocolates, be they black or white, conventionally or eccentrically shaped, are composed as they always have been of a little shell, an inner filling, and an outer coating, but their construction calls more than ever for displays of imagination and style.

It's no longer enough to use good quality freshly roasted nuts, butter cream, caramelized sugar, vanilla, cream, and coffee. Cutting edge trends are towards mellow reserve vinegars, exotic spices, tropical fruit flesh, caramelized exotic fruits, and many-flavored liqueurs. These ingredients are mixed and juxtaposed with each other like pieces of precious jewelry. The master chocolatier works by hand, taking his time, practicing his craft. So ductile is his material, which can change from liquid to solid in seconds, or two degrees centigrade, that he can create not only sculpturesque effects but also surprising flavor differences.

To achieve the best results, the first requirement is to use the finest chocolate, as fresh as possible. It should be remembered that most chocolates go off quite quickly. They are at their best within one week to six months, depending on their ingredients and where, and at what temperature, they are stored. Chocolates filled with fresh cream are the most perishable, but ones containing liqueur (marc de cava is one example), which acts as a natural preservative, can confidently be stored much longer. The Chocovic company uses state of the art technology and manufactures its exceptional coating chocolate as a separate product, using the world's three most highly regarded Latin American *cacaos finos*. These pure, unblended cacaos, selected from Latin America's most prestigious sources, are criollo chocolate from Venezuela, forastero from Ecuador, and *trinitario* from the Caribbean island of Grenada.

This sourcing of different types constitutes a revolutionary concept in working with coating chocolate. It means that each master chocolatier can use them alone or in combination as he likes, according to what best suits the purposes of his recipe. Criollo cacao is an exceptionally fine one, of which only small quantities are harvested each year (5-10 percent of world production), and has a smooth, slightly bitter flavor; forastero is slightly fruity with a barely perceptible hint of acidity, and trinitario is vividly aromatic with hints of ripe berries. Each variety has its own particular qualities which suit it to specific combinations. And after all, the Spanish market has centuries of experience in dealing with Latin American chocolate of different provenances.

At Chocovic, the extracted seeds of the different varieties are slowly roasted, ground and refined, yielding, many hours later, cacao paste and then chocolate proper, to which a proportion of cocoa butter extracted from another paste is then added. Cocoa butter, mixed with powdered milk and sugar gives white chocolate, which provides the color and flavor contrast which top-of-the-range chocolates so often feature.

Choc-Art

Spanish confectionery shops are always a visual treat, with brilliant windows and mouth-watering display counters enticing one in

In other countries, these grapes might amount to a bottle of wine.

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Well-chosen cavas and chocolate have an air of secret indulgence about them and both, the liquid and the solid, extend a subtle invitation to celebrate.

from the street. Traditionally, they sell fresh chocolates made either on the premises or factory made, and always beautifully presented and packaged. Chocoholics invariably have their particular favorites. The overall effect is of a series of fantastic still lifes, their creative flourishes contributing to the seduction. One enduring favorite is the *trufa*, or truffle: these are always round, resembling the strange underground fungi from which they take their name, filled with light, smooth creams of various flavors, and dusted with powdered bitter chocolate. *Cataníes* are a Catalan specialty, made of lightly sugared almonds coated in white chocolate and cocoa powder. Then there are *cortados*, multilayered rectangles of white, dark, and milk chocolate, and *lenguas de gato*—long "cat's tongues" (better known outside Spain by their French name of *langues de chat)* usually made of dark chocolate. And *rocas*, or rocks, irregular balls composed of an amalgam of chopped almonds and milk chocolate, *pralinés*, internationally known by much the same name, which in Spain appear in various guises but always contain varying proportions of walnut or hazelnut either coating the shell or in the filling. Alongside these classics, as one might expect, Spain's confectioneries also feature examples of the new trends (often very entertaining), some liqueur-filled, in unexpected shapes such as champagne corks. In their role as between-meal treats or the finishing touch to the perfectly presented lunch or dinner, chocolates surely merit an alcoholic accompaniment to bring out their full flavor potential.

Sparkling Company

Those of us prepared to explore new territory will enjoy the unexpected harmonies that can be achieved between chocolates and well-chosen Spanish cavas (see Glossary on page 130). What? Bubbly with chocolate? Well they both after all, the liquid and the solid, have something of the secret indulgence about them, and both extend a subtle invitation to celebrate. Cortados, perhaps the mildest flavored of the specialty chocolates in their combination of dark and white chocolate, create a delicate harmony with Freixenet's Reserva Real. This is a reserve cava, whose blending cuvée includes wines of various vintages, in which the fruit of the grapes and the aromas developed during a long maturation coexist perfectly. This is a pleasing, elegant cava, made from the three varieties typical of the Catalan region (Macabeo, Xarel.lo and Parellada), with the addition of ten percent of Chardonnay. It provides the ideal foil to the creamy smoothness of cortados.

Trufas, subtly bitter, delicately smooth and creamy, we matched with another great cava—Gran Juvé & Camps. This prestigious *bodega's* top quality sparkling wine is elegant, fine, and rich in complex aromas, well structured, harmonious, full of flavor on the palate and with a long finish. It proved an excellent highlighter of the qualities of the chocolate truffle, all-time favorite of so many chocoholics. Moving into more complex matchmaking—almonds, chocolate, and cava—we uncorked a fresh, light, persistent cava, subtly reminiscent of dried apricots. This is how the palate experiences Vallformosa Brut, a lively sparkler with a classic, pleasant finish. This is the perfect cava to bring out the best in rocas and cataníes, chocolates which incorporate fresh almonds, either whole or chopped, and whose flavor owes its finer points to this elegant nut.

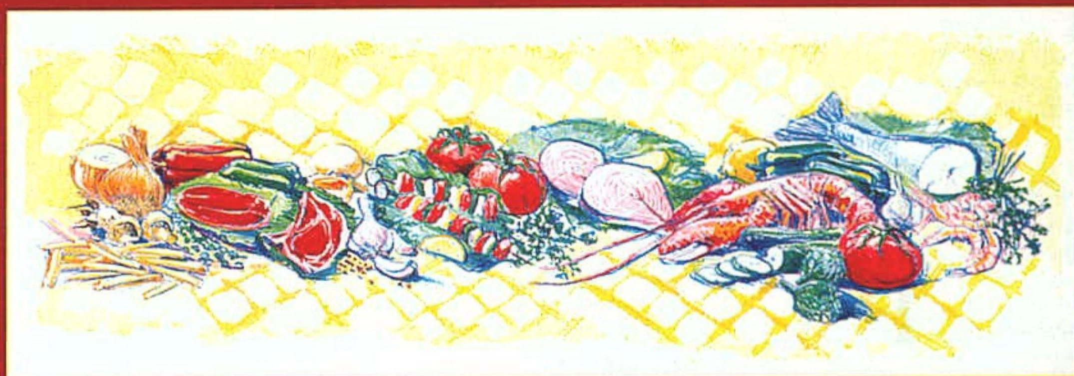
In the quest for new flavor experiences, we decided to experiment with contrasts. What cava could possibly make a significant contribution to the deliciousness of langues de chat made with pure chocolate, 71 percent dark, smooth textured and exquisitely, refinedly bitter? Our favorite match was a fresh, fruity cava with dominant notes of ripe apples and syrup, and hints of nut. The cava in question is Agustí Torelló's Brut Reserva, a clean, open wine with mature grace notes and a long, delicate aftertaste which wraps itself like silk about the incisive flavor of good lengua de gato.

Crunchy pralines, whose whole point is the harmony between hazelnut and chocolate, pose no problems when it comes to cava selecting. Cavas Hill's Reserva Oro is just the job: this dry, transparent, fruity wine, delicate and light, is perfect in the mouth and stands up confidently to the challenge posed by chocolate. The most daring and eccentric selection I have left until last: we matched Castillo de Perelada Cava Brut *rosado* 1995, with a novelty chocolate in the form of a chocolate champagne cork filled with a marc de cava cream. Within the realms of the weird and wonderful, this was a delicious combination, which just goes to prove that nothing is impossible in the food world. It was amazing to discover the contribution that this sparkling wine, made with red grape varieties Garnacha and Monastrell, could make to a sophisticated little chocolate filled with self-assertive marc de cava. Life is full of surprises.

***José Carlos Capel** is a food writer and member of the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy. Food critic of the daily newspaper* El País, *he also contributes to various Spanish publications about food, and is the author of 14 books.*

See Main Exporters on page 122.

BANGOR



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It was in Spain, where capsicum peppers were brought to Europe by Christopher Columbus, that they were first milled into a powdered spice. Deep red and dusty, called *pimentón* after the Spanish name for peppers, *pimiento*, it quickly spread through Spanish cooking. "They are used in stews and potages because they have a better taste than the common pepper," wrote Nicolás Monardes, doctor and botanist, of the capsicum in 1565. "...in one plant there are spices for all the year." Today spicy-hot or smoky-cool pimentón, packed in old-fashioned tins printed with saints and flowers, remains one of the Spanish kitchen's defining ingredients. Curiously, though, it has never received much attention as a culinary invention. Now that is going to change. This year smoked pimentón from La Vera, in Extremadura, becomes the world's first pepper spice with denomination of origin status.

RED, HOT, AND COOL: LA VERA'S SMOKED PIMENTÓN PEPPER

Text: **Vicky Hayward**
Photo: **A. de Benito/Sobremesa**

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La Vera's growing area in the central sierras is made up of three valleys which share the same protected microclimate.

In a blindfold tasting, it is easy to pick out La Vera pimentón from other red peppers. First comes its smoky aroma, reminiscent of a mountain village on a winter morning; next there is the fine texture, as it dissolves pungently on your tongue; and finally there are the three levels of heat, based on different varieties of pepper ranging from cool and bittersweet to spicy-hot. All three, however, have something in common. As the flavor spreads around your mouth, it is subtly restrained. It may make you sneeze, but it won't make you cry.

Taking off your blindfold, there are other identifying marks. One is color. La Vera pimentón's deep rusty and crimson shades are closer to those of an ocher pigment than an orangey paprika. This reflects another characteristic. While some other red peppers start life with more coloring power, La Vera pimentón's pigments have a unique stability which give it an exceptional long life as a natural food dye.

The second identifying mark is pimentón's silky-fine texture, almost like that of icing sugar to the touch, resulting from the repeated grinding between stones from between five to seven times. It is the combination of these peculiarities—native pepper varieties, slow oak-smoking and stone-grinding—which sets La Vera's pimentón apart in a class of its own.

On the Pimentón Trail

La Vera's smokehouses, like the water mills which once stood along its streams, have existed since medieval times. But their economic importance today dates from the agricultural revolution ushered in by the New World food exchange: the pepper plant—*Capsicum Annuum*, which like the potato and tomato is a member of the Solanacea family—was its first major success story.

Less than seventy years after Columbus presented the first samples to the Catholic Monarchs in 1493 at the Jerónimo monastery of Guadalupe—just down the road from La Vera—Nicolás Monardes wrote, "...it is known in all Spain, because there is neither flower nor vegetable garden, nor flowerpot in which it is not sown, for the beauty of the fruit it bears." (1565)

It is thought that pepper planting initially hopped from one Jerónimo monastery to another. La Ñora in Murcia, Yuste in La Vera (Extremadura), and Santo Domingo de la Calzada in the Rioja all lie at the center of today's major pepper-growing areas. From there it was a short step to local vegetable patches. Quite how the leap to pimentón happened is not known: some say through a tray of peppers accidentally left in the sunshine, others through the trial and error invention of a monk. More realistically, the conquistadors may have picked up the idea from the Aztecs, who used hand-pounded peppers to preserve game, and adapted it to the labor-saving flour mills.

What we do know is that pimentón was in common currency by the early 17th century, when French clergyman Bartolomé Joly no-

TYPES OF PIMENTÓN

Sweet (*dulce*): Smoky, tangy, brick red pepper, especially good to flavor absorbent potatoes, rice, and fish dishes. Traditionally grown from small native cherry peppers (*bola*), but since 1990 also grown from the new hybrid La Jaranda variety. Popular in cold cut-making, it is also widely used in cooking, especially in central and southern Spain. At its best within six months of milling.

Bittersweet (*agridulce*): Made from the native *ocal* variety, this blood red pepper (not blended as is often thought) produces a satisfyingly prickly, piquant heat and acrid edge around the mouth. It is La Vera's most traditional pepper—used for home-cured sausages, pork, and meat, bean, and game stews right through the center and north of Spain—and makes up two-thirds of production. Now also grown from a selected variety called La Jariza, it is at its very best for cold cuts within weeks of milling but keeps its flavor and aroma well for nine months after milling.

Spicy-hot (*picante*): An ocher pepper with a direct heat rather than a burning attack, which comes from a long pepper variety. Although it only accounts for around five percent of production, it is memorable in classic dishes such as Galician *pulpo a feira* (octopus), winter soups, and *chorizo*. The most volatile of the three peppers, it is best used within six months of milling.

Special Blends: The spice mills blend pepper to the balance of heat, color, and aroma required by large customers such as sausage makers.

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The fields where the peppers are grown remain small scale, with the low-lying smokehouses scattered among them.

ticed it being sprinkled into *migas*, or fried breadcrumbs, in the Castilian countryside. In this sense pimentón has always had a special place in Spanish cooking as the poor man's spice: the triumph of flavor over status.

The Poor Man's Spice

Nicolás Monardes was clear about the reasons for its popularity: "...it makes a better sauce than the common pepper: sliced into pieces and added to broth, it is a very excellent sauce, they are used in all things in which the aromatic spices brought from Moluo and Calicud (*sic*) serve. They differ in that those from the Indies cost many *ducados*; this other costs no more than sowing it..."

What pimentón lacked in social status—it rarely appeared in the recipe books by courtly cooks—it made up for in character and practicality, traveling right around the country in the hands of shepherds, muleteers, and fishermen. Many of their dishes, humble but ingenious, have now become regional classics: the shepherds' *calderetas* (lamb stews) and *gachas* (porridges); the muleteers' (*arrieros'*) salt cod, garlic, and pepper dishes; and the fishermen's stews and soups first made on board their boats. Likewise, as pimentón reached the different regions in the hands of muleteers crisscrossing the country, it became a key ingredient in emblematic regional dishes: Asturian *fabada* (bean stew), Galician *pulpo a feira* (boiled octopus liberally sprinkled with pimentón and salt), Rioja's potatoes with *chorizo* and pepper (*patatas a la Riojana*) and Castile's sausages and pork in which the pimentón played a double role as conserving agent and spice.

Curiously, the history of pimentón's younger cousin paprika ran a similar course until the turn of this century, when it emerged from rural Hungarian cooking into German cookbooks as "Spanish pepper" for seasoning veal *gulash*. But while paprika went on to worldwide fame via exports to wartime Germany and from there through postwar emigration to the United States, pimentón remained little known outside an increasingly isolated Spain.

The Pepper Fields

Today the La Vera pepper growing area has spilled over from its starting point in the Tietar valley into two other river valleys just to the west, the Ambroz and Alagón, which share the same sheltered microclimate. Here the peppers thrive on a combination of reliable but not scorching summer sunshine and plentiful pure water supplies. Simple irrigation began at the start of the 18th century and has become mechanized since the 1960s.

Over the centuries adaptation to the climate and the arrival of new varieties—over fifty exist in Extremadura alone—have calmed the burning heat of Columbus' first peppers. The most traditional are *ocal* (a subspecies of *Capsicum longum*), which produces the bittersweet agridulce pimentón, and bola, a sweet cherry pepper (*Capsicum cerasmforme*). In the last ten years, planting patterns have also been changed by a seed improvement program. New long varieties with uniform ripening, such as the Jarandilla and Jariza, have raised yields from 2,800 to 3,500 kg per hectare, and the same research is now underway with spicy-hot types.

The fields themselves remain small scale and, once prepared for planting with manure and weed killer, are generally left untreated after the seedlings are planted in May. As they grow into leafy bushes their starlike white flowers set into 15-20 fruit on each plant. By mid-September they begin to ripen into bright red, fully grown peppers and harvesting begins. Working by hand, the pickers—generally from the grower's family—select only fully ripe and undamaged fruit, returning later for second and third harvests. Seed selection is increasingly whittling this down to a onetime process.

The Smokehouses

Once picked, there are two crucial stages in the making of La Vera pimentón: the smoking and the grinding. The first process is the responsibility of the growers and the second is that of the spice mills, which began to replace the flour mills in the early decades of this century. In the denomination of origin's regulatory council, growers and millers have an equal say.

The smokehouses are simple low-lying structures, today more often built of cement than adobe, with traditional loosely tiled roofs and smoking grills made of chestnut or alder. They lie closed for most of the year, but smoke drifts up from them both night and day for just a few weeks in the autumn.

While the smoking process also sounds simple, it is a much more complex matter based on generations of accumulated knowledge passed on by the growers from father to son. A research program is now trying to pinpoint the effects in precise chemical terms. Clearly it inhibits the growth of microbes and retards the oxidation of the pepper oils, but it is also thought that enzymatic fermentation may be important in fixing the pimentón's coloring power.

The growers themselves say that the key is patient control of the heat and smoke. Once the peppers are stacked on the smoking grill in batches of 400-800 kilos, the fire is lit below them. Every day, the fire is restoked and the peppers are turned, the holm oak or oak burning slowly

The dried peppers are stone ground up to seven times to give the finished silky-fine texture.

enough to allow the peppers to dry rather than cook in their own moisture. After the first four to five days, when half the water is driven out, the temperature is allowed to rise as the peppers continue to shrink and dry.

The Spice Mills

Packed into sacks, the peppers are taken up to the spice mills where they are weighed and the quality checked before the growers are paid. In Jaraíz, the capital of La Vera pimentón, the tangy aroma and rusty dust of the crop hang heavily in the air as merchants with small vans flock in to buy the new-season pimentón at its best, fresh from the mills. Like the muleteers, they supply the villages right through central Spain where each family buys several kilos for the annual *matanza* or pig-killing.

Today's mills, purpose-built from the 1930s, are ingenious small-scale affairs. Pipes, hoppers, filters, enclosed millstones, and giant scoops make up elaborate circuits that sometimes resemble Max Escher drawings in their eccentricity. Each is slightly different, adapted to the requirements of space and the quantities of pimentón processed.

At the Unión de Productores de Pimentón, a cooperative set up in 1941 and now responsible for 29 percent of production, the peppers travel along a quality control belt, through a destalking machine and then from a double hopper into the electric mills, where they are ground seven times between electric mills. At La Dalia, a smaller family company set up in 1913, the peppers fall by gravity from a small cleaning filter to be ground five times between the mills below. Finally, at Aldeanueva del Camino in the Ambroz valley, in the small family mill that produces Santo Domingo pimentón, the peppers are ground between horizontal rather than vertical stones—the newest technology available—and the pimentón is filtered to remove impurities before packing. All the mills, large or small, are planning heavy investment over the next three to five years to modernize their systems in line with E.U. regulations.

But the principles of pimentón milling remain the same: the peppers are ground for eight to nine hours between ventilated wheels cut from a molded stone substitute before passing to a final polish between two heavier stones to give the final rich color and silky finish. It is the limited heat, never rising above 50°C (122°F), produced by the friction between the stones which allows the full flowering of the aromas and flavors locked in the peppers' oils. During the entire process, samples are taken for quality control testing at independent certified laboratories.

Finally, the small mountains of pimentón that accumulate on the mills' floors are scooped into sacks and stored away in cool, dark warehouses to be repacked in tins, aluminum bags or wholesale-size sacks for the cold cuts industry. At this stage the pimentón may be blended to order to produce the right blend of sweetness and piquancy. Here there is one all-important factor: that as little light as possible reaches the pimentón to avoid the color bleaching and the flavor fading.

Strength of Character

It is only in the last five years, since being granted D.C. (Denominación de Calidad or Quality Denomination) status in 1993 at growers' and millers' request, that La Vera pimentón has really come into its own. Before that its smokey pungency and deep color were valued in northern Spain, but milder unsmoked Murcian pimentón was preferred around the Mediterranean. Now, however, La Vera's strength of character has come into its own, even though the guaranteed quality means a higher price. In 1996, the La Vera pepper harvest accounted for just under a quarter of the total national crop of 5,500 metric tons.

Many of La Vera's sales still follow traditional food exchange routes around the country. Some 13 percent stays in Extremadura and 75 percent is sold elsewhere in Spain—with a high proportion of spicy-hot pimentón following the traditional muleteers' route to Galicia. Relatively little is sold in the Mediterranean, where Murcian unsmoked pepper is still the most popular.

Today, however, there are also small but increasing exports—some 12 percent. Of that figure, three-quarters finds its way to E.U. countries, often through chance personal contacts with quality food importers, manufacturers, or chefs. But La Vera pimentón is also finding its way to more distant markets to both east and west: Japan and the United States are growing slowly, and China is the next on the denomination's own agenda. And finally, bringing the pimentón trail full circle, there is Latin America. They are small beginnings. But both growers and producers are aware that quality and character travels well. After centuries of making a unique product that has been taken for granted or overlooked, the world may yet turn out to be their oyster.

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

See Recipes on page 111 and Main Exporters on page 122.

In the early autumn, the smokey aroma of the new-season pimentón hangs in the air of La Vera's villages.

PIMENTÓN DE LA VERA: DC* PRODUCTION 1991-97	1991-2	1992-3	1993-4	1994-5	1995-6	1996-7
PEPPER GROWERS	215	301	362	496	603	681
SPICE MILLS	8	12	12	14	15	17
GROWING AREA (HA/ACRES)	331/817	490/1,210	422/1,042	669/1,653	649/1,604	727/1,796
ESTIMATED PRODUCTION (TONS)	772	1,170	1,056	1,699	1,738	2,011
SALES (TONS)	508	513	561	1,090	1,184	1,304

Source: Pimentón de la Vera *Denominación de Calidad** or Quality Denomination (D.O. status from 1998)

COOKING WITH PIMENTÓN

Sautéeing pimentón in oil or lard is the best way of unlocking its full color, flavor, and aroma, but you need to proceed with care as it quickly scorches and becomes bitter. Slow cooking with plenty of liquid is less risky and allows the flavors to develop more fully. In a marinade, the heat is at its lightest. For gourmets, the acid test of quality and best way of appreciating a good pimentón is to use it raw as a seasoning. Always store pimentón away from the light to preserve its qualities.

Traditional Ways

As a seasoning: a pinch with salt for fried eggs, and a generous sprinkling with sea salt Galician boiled octopus.

For braised dishes, sautéed in the *sofrito* base: sweated in olive oil with chopped garlic and onion (plus possible additions of chorizo, cured ham, carrot, bell pepper) to start lentil and bean stews.

For marinating and curing pork: mixed with oregano, salt, and water (see recipe page 113).

For marinating fish: use 1 tsp each of sweet pimentón, cumin, and oregano, 3-4 cloves chopped garlic, 1 glass of sherry vinegar, and a little dry sherry.

In garlic soup: 4-5 cloves of pounded fried garlic, 1 clove of raw mashed garlic and 1 tsp bittersweet pimentón heated with 500 ml water.

For tossing hot boiled vegetables (*rehogado*): 2 cloves of garlic, 1 tsp pimentón, and a bay leaf sautéed in 3-4 tbsp of olive oil. For a Galician *ajada* add a dash of wine vinegar and onion.

Medicinal: mixed with warm water and used as a compress against rheumatic pain and lumbago (maximum 10 minutes on the skin) or macerated in alcohol to ease throat infections.

Quick Ideas

Black olives with pimentón and onion: 300 gr olives tossed with 1 level tsp bittersweet pimentón, 4 tbsp fruity olive oil, and 1 tsp wine vinegar.

Fresh white cheese with pimentón and lemon: a couple of large pinches of sweet paprika sprinkled over the top, or stirred into cream cheeses, with a little lemon juice and black pepper too.

Red-roasted chicken or duck: mix 3 tsp pimentón with a little olive oil and rub all over and inside the bird. Leave for one hour. Sprinkle more pimentón over the breast 10 minutes before the end. Dissolve the pan juices with dry white wine.

Potato puree with baked garlic, olive oil, and pimentón: 2 tsp of olive oil and the flesh of 1 head baked garlic beaten into 1 kg (2 lb) potato puree plus very thin, widely spaced lines of sweet pimentón (using plastic wrap as a masker).

Pimentón vinaigrette or mayonnaise: 1 tsp of sweet pimentón added to 100 ml vinaigrette gives a smoky edge to chickpea or bean salads; 1 tsp in 150 ml mayonnaise gives it a red blush.

"I don't want to make more money: after all, one only eats three meals a day," says Carlos Vargas, head of the Tabacos Vargas company. These words might seem strange coming from a man who has increased his business twenty-fold in the last three years and is poised to increase it by as much again in the next three. The numbers speak for themselves. In 1995 the company had four employees. Today there are 80. In 1995 they produced 25,000 cigars a month. Today they make 500,000. And all this in a family business devoted to the craft of cigar making since 1926. To say that Tabacos Vargas is the major Canary Islands manufacturer of cigars is only part of the story, for it doesn't accurately convey the craftsman-like quality prevailing in the Vargas workshop, where there is no place for machines. These are cigars made by hand with care and skill.

Text & photo: **Iñigo Moré** Translation: **Mark Little**

The secrets behind this success are a respect for quality and tradition, added to several key agreements with major cigar distribution companies for the marketing of the product under various labels. Tabacos Vargas, based on the Canary Island of La Palma, produces five different brands of cigars. "In Spain we sell Vargas and Montepalma," explains Carlos Vargas, "In the United States, in addition, we sell Don Xavier and Criolla and in Germany, Hacienda."

This network of distributors, with whom Vargas maintains a special subcontracting agreement, has fueled the company's outstanding growth. "Hacienda and Don Xavier cigars are made for the distributor, which is the owner of the brand name," says Carlos Vargas. "However, we in turn require that they specify that the cigars are "made by Vargas in La Palma." This phrase figures on the cedar boxes that hold these cigars, and the distributors are also committed to marketing a certain quantity of the other Vargas brands.

"We are a humble family," says Carlos Vargas, "but when it comes to tobacco we know what we're doing. If we sold our cigars without our signature, we could disappear. We might continue to make cigars, but we would be nobody."

Under this system, the distributors receive a substantial cut of the profits, but that doesn't worry Carlos Vargas. "Money is not as important to us as having a solid presence on the market," he says. "That's why we insist that we figure as the manufacturers of the cigars. Not that the distributors have a problem with this. They are proud to point out the source of the cigars in their advertising."

Carlos Vargas admits to having been involved in the most varied professions, from real estate promoter to banana grower to salesmen of military supplies, always working with his brother Enrique and following an unusual family tradition which dates back to his grandfather, Manuel Vargas, founder of the company. Don Manuel, as he is still re-

Holy Smoke
VARGAS CIGARS

membered, simultaneously worked as a fisherman, shoe maker, stevedore and, in his spare time, as a *tabaquero*, a cigar maker. He had considerable success in the tobacco trade, a craft in which he initiated his son Enrique Vargas at the age of ten. In time, Enrique expanded the business and within a few years had transformed Tabacos Vargas into a model company within the tobacco trade of La Palma, an island which, in turn, is a key reference point in the world of tobacco as a whole. It is here that the first cigars were made, or "if not the first, certainly the second cigars in history," according to Juan García, a Vargas executive with an amazing memory for historical detail.

La Palma is the westernmost of the Canary Islands and, therefore, the first to be sighted by ships sailing from the Americas. Tobacco arrived in La Palma with the first journeys of the Conquistadors, and from La Palma sailed the technology which would be used to process tobacco, along with farmers and skilled workers. As Juan García points out: "Five years before Havana was called Havana, a man from La Palma named Demetrio Pela and an Indian, Pio Manduca, established the first organized tobacco plantation in Cuba." At that time, present-day Havana was Puerto Carenas, where the town of San Cristobal de La Havana, originally located in the south of Cuba, would be relocated in 1519. From those earliest beginnings there was a close connection between La Palma and Cuba. Indeed, some growers produced two crops a year, "one in Cuba and another in the Canaries," says García.

While he was learning the craft from his father the young Enrique Vargas (now 78 years old, and known to everybody in the company as Papá) could little imagine the development the small business would undergo. Today, Papá continues to go to the workshop every day to supervise production and ensure that the family tradition is carried on. Papá also taught his sons to make cigars when they were ten, and Carlos Vargas in turn has done the same with his own children. "There are four generations of Vargas cigar makers, and three of them are currently working in the company," says Carlos Vargas proudly.

A Rare Treat

In their book *Cigars of the World*, the Bible of cigar smokers, the prestigious Swiss cigar experts Gérard Père et Fils say of Vargas that "they are the best cigars produced outside the Caribbean and Central America." Nevertheless, as Carlos Vargas himself sadly admits, until last December his cigars were not even available in mainland Spain because "they didn't let us Canarians sell our wares," referring to past restrictions due to the islands' special status as a duty free zone within Spain. Even so, many prominent Spaniards are among Vargas' most loyal customers, including Spain's King Juan Carlos I himself, who gives them as presents to his most illustrious guests. Recalls Carlos Vargas: "The first order from the Royal Family was for a gala dinner in the Royal Palace in honor of Rafael Caldera, the President of Venezuela." Venezuela, by the way, is considered by Canary Islanders as the "eighth Canary island," for the large community of Canarians living there. So close is the relationship that Canary newspapers such as *El Día* have a regular section devoted to news from Venezuela.

The relationship with the Spanish Royal Palace is evident in Vargas' office which is decorated with a number of royal portraits and autographed photos. Among other Vargas enthusiasts are the Spanish premier, José María Aznar, and even Archbishop Amigó of Seville. Carlos Vargas also cites the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abel Matutes, "who smoked Vargas up to a few months ago, when he suffered a heart attack," an ailment which Vargas puts down to cigarettes rather than cigars.

All Natural Product

"Vargas cigars," points out Carlos Vargas, "are made following a natural process from beginning to end. Our cigars are what the land yields, with a little water."

He adds with satisfaction: "As we do not have a budget for advertising, my promotional strategy consists of inviting clients to visit the workshop and the plantations so they can see how we make our cigars."

One of Vargas cigars' distinguishing factors is that they contain tobacco from La Palma, something that no other major producer can boast of. "Anyone can make cigars with tobacco from Cuba, Java, Sumatra, or Santo Domingo, but we are the only ones who can use tobacco from the island of La Palma," says Carlos Vargas. It is a type of tobacco which lends a subtle sweet nuance to each puff of smoke and gives cigars which are strong but without the harshness and raspy quality of some Havana cigars.

The process starts on the Vargas family's land where they grow their own tobacco, harvest it, cure it, and ferment it. The tobacco is grown in a handful of spots on the island, particularly in la Caldera de Taburiente, one of the world's largest volcano craters with a width of 10 km (6 miles). The tobacco is grown "without the aid of any added chemicals, just with a bit of compost."

After the leaves are harvested, they are dampened and then hung to dry for 45 days in the *tendata* (drying shed) until their deep green color has changed to the typical brown of tobacco. They are then ready for the curing process, which takes place for a period of another 45 days, after again dampening the leaves. Finally, the tobacco is taken to the fermentation chamber, a building of volcanic rock located in the center of Santa Cruz, the island's capital, where the leaves are kept in a hermetically sealed environment for six months. In this chamber the leaves are piled in a mound several meters high where the fermentation process generates a constant temperature of 43°C (109°F). During fermentation the tobacco releases humidity and ammonium nitrate as the starch is transformed into sugar. By the end of the process the heap of tobacco will have shrunk by two meters, and the leaves are smooth and thin, ready to be fashioned into cigars. As no chemicals are used to eliminate moths whose larvae feed on tobacco, the leaves

THERE ARE FOUR GENERATIONS OF VARGAS CIGAR MAKERS, AND THREE OF THEM ARE CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE COMPANY,

are subjected to a process of freezing to kill any insects or eggs. This process is repeated just after the finished cigar has been made.

Once the leaves are ready it is time to determine the blend of tobacco, a specialty of the Vargas house. According to Carlos Vargas: "A good cigar must have four or five different types of tobacco." In his opinion, each different type has its qualities and one must know just how to combine them to obtain the perfect flavor without resorting to added seasonings. "This is where we are masters," says Carlos Vargas. "We know how to blend, maintaining the balance of qualities." A Vargas cigar will contain various types of tobacco, such as Santo Domingo, which is bitter; Brazil, which is strong; the somewhat abrasive Cuban tobacco and, above all, tobacco from La Palma. This last lends Vargas cigars their distinctive, subtle aroma. However, no amount of cajoling will extract from Vargas the exact percentages used. In fact, only three people know the formula: "my brother Enrique, Papá, and myself." He will go so far as admitting that each cigar includes tobacco from Sumatra, Java, Cuba, Brazil and, especially, La Palma. "Just imagine what goes into a cigar," he exclaims, adding that "the difficult part is not to make the cigar, but to maintain its characteristic flavor in spite of the number of different tobaccos used, and this is something we know how to do."

Once the tobacco is blended the craftsmen go to work, patiently rolling the different leaves. This part of the process starts with the making of the interior of the cigar, called *tirulo*, which is pressed and then enclosed in the wrapper leaf, or *capa* (the equivalent of the paper wrapper on a cigarette), for which the thinnest and finest quality leaf is used. This task is slow and painstaking, and occupies most of those who work at Vargas. "A good tabaquero makes around two hundred and fifty cigars a day, working from six in the morning to six in the evening." It is a delicate and exacting skill which will determine the "dynamic qualities of the cigar." In other words, that it burns evenly and draws smoothly. It is possible to achieve this with a mechanized process, but in this case the aroma of the cigar suffers. As Carlos Vargas explains, machine-produced cigars normally contain a sheet, called the *capilla*, made from powdered tobacco and paper, in which chopped tobacco rather than whole leaves are rolled, so the flavor of these cigars is diminished, and they are considered a second-rate product.

In spite of the difficulty of the work of the cigar rollers, Carlos Vargas is happy to note that the notable expansion of his company has lent the profession a new status. "Many good craftsmen left the trade looking for other professional horizons," he says. Now Carlos Vargas sees with pride how "many of my oldest employees are returning to the company because our growth allows us to offer them better salaries." This is a relief for Carlos Vargas because it is not easy to find good cigar rollers. "It takes three years to train a tabaquero," he says. However, the big drawback of this manual process is that "it is impossible to increase production without employing more tabaqueros," which is the reason why in the case of Vargas the profit margin remains the same even if production rises. "Those who make cigars by machine multiply their profit margin when they increase their sales," says Vargas.

In the workshop, the watchful gaze of Enrique Vargas—Papá—studies the workbenches of the tabaqueros. He carefully examines the cigars once they are made. Once they've passed the quality control, the cigars repose for a month to allow the different aromas to mesh. When the whole process is completed the cigars are shipped from the island by plane. "In four hours they are in Germany and that same night they are in the U.S., where there is a humidifying chamber waiting to ensure the proper conservation of the cigars."

Today Carlos Vargas claims to have a shortage of installations to satisfy demand. "We make 500,000 cigars a month but even so we cannot fill the orders," he says. In fact, he is already studying relocating the company in a new 2,500 square meter (26,800 sq. ft) facility, all the more surprising considering that only a year and a half ago they moved from the old 200 square meter (2,150 sq. ft), workshop, to the present factory space of 1,100 square meters (11,800 sq. ft). Another immediate plan is to organize a course to train disabled persons as tabaqueros. "It is a decent, well-paid job in which only the hands are used, one of the few trades certain handicapped people can master." These new tabaqueros will roll the tobacco grown on the new Vargas plantation, which in a year will start its activities on an experimental basis. The plantation will be covered with netting to create a greenhouse environment dedicated to the production of the capa, or wrapper leaf, the thinnest and most delicate part of the cigar.

***Iñigo Moré**, a lawyer and journalist, has worked for* El País *and* The Economist *group of Great Britain. Currently he runs his own business,* Mercados Emergentes.

Solera Gran Reserva

Cardenal Mendoza

Brandy de Jerez

Sanchez Romate Hnos. Jerez de la Frontera

PCYC

Photos: **Germán Gallego/Sobremesa**

Eighty percent of the rolling vineyards of Montilla-Moriles bear the Pedro Ximénez grape.

MONTILLA–

Fine Finos & Superb

JUST SOUTHWEST OF THE FABLED CITY OF CÓRDOBA, IN THE SUNBAKED HEART OF ANDALUSIA IN SOUTHERN SPAIN, IS THE HISTORIC MONTILLA-MORILES WINE REGION WHERE A TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION IN THE PRODUCTION OF

Text: **Edward Owen**

MORILES

Dessert Wines

HIGH QUALITY VINOS GENEROSOS HAS ASSURED A CLUTCH OF TOP AWARDS AND INCREASED WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION. THE REGION IS NOW PRODUCING SOME OF THE BEST VALUE FINOS AND PEDRO XIMÉNEZ DESSERT WINES IN SPAIN.

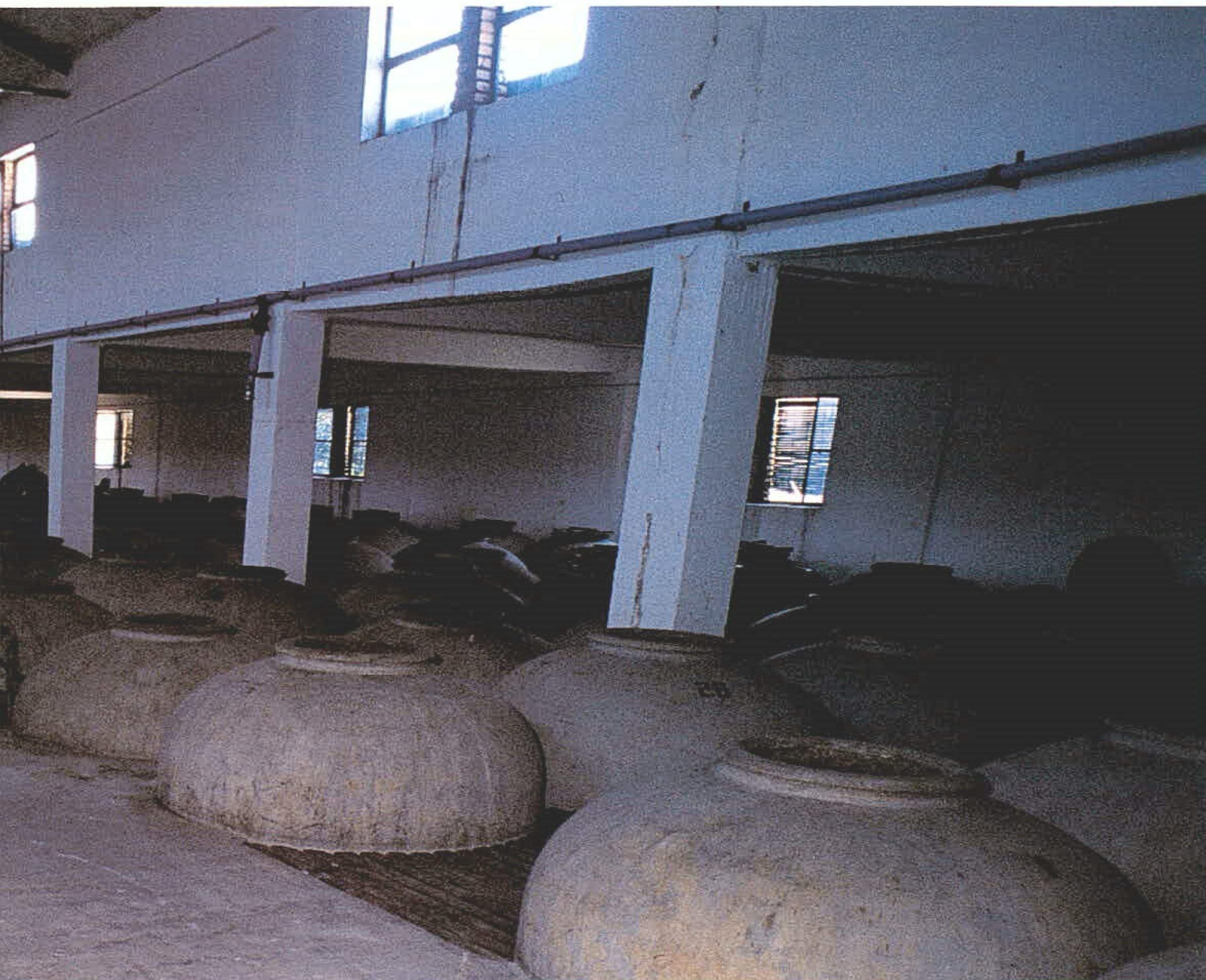
Leaving the Madrid-Córdoba highway, the country road snakes lazily between fields of wheat and giant sunflowers. On low rolling hills, olive trees march in neat rows towards the next gentle valley.

One passes the magnificent gray castle of the Duques de Osuna perched high above the whitewashed hilltop village of Espejo. Just beyond, the vineyards start in earnest and soon one enters the town of Montilla where almost every large building seems to be a *bodega*.

Archaeological finds show that wine has been produced in this region since Roman times when Córdoba was the capital of Baetica. The fame of the powerful wine, with a natural strength of up to 16 percent of alcohol, spread after it was enjoyed by both Rome and Pompeii.

In 719 A.D., the Emirs of Damascus took over Córdoba after the invasion of the Moors and for the next seven centuries the Muslims, officially teetotalers, took an ambivalent view towards the wines the Christians so enjoyed. Although many vineyards were uprooted, monks in the city were allowed to sell wine to their flock from their own taverns and it became known as *vino de monasterio.*

The Moors themselves were not averse to having a tipple and the 9th century poet, Al-Gazal, born in nearby Jaén and who was a member of the courts of Al-Hakan I and



In some of the bodegas you can still find the tinajas used traditionally for the second fermentation.

Abd-ar-Rahmán II, wrote an exuberant poem entitled: *¡Echa Vino, tabernero!*— Serve the wine, innkeeper!
The final defeat and expulsion of the Moors in the 15th century led to a regeneration of the cultivation of vines and wine production, making the region famous again. Miguel de Cervantes stayed in Montilla for six months when he was a purchasing agent for the Spanish Armada. He was later to use in his writings the local story of the *camachas,* women who were condemned as witches in 1572, although some said they were just intoxicated by the local wine.
In 1775 the noted Milanese cleric, Norberto Caina, included the wines from Lucena and Montilla in his list of the best Spanish wines.
Amontillado wine, old *fino* that is allowed to oxidize, originates in Montilla. The wines of Montilla are naturally strong enough to produce exceptional finos whereas fortified wines, or liqueur wines as they are officially known in the European Union, are those that have added alcohol because the wines are weaker.
And now, with an increasing number of international awards, the bodegas of Montilla-Moriles are out to prove their vinos *generosos* have their own appealing personality and are a worthy addition to any cellar or wine list. They already represent excellent value.

THE REGION

The Denomination of Origin (D.O.) of Montilla-Moriles

New technology has created superb award winning wines. Fino and the sweet Pedro Ximénez are the outstanding wines of the region.

covers 10,573 hectares (26,125 acres) of vineyards and starts some 25 km (16 miles) south of Córdoba on rolling landscape, between 300 and 700 meters (984 and 2,297 ft) above sea level.

The soil is mostly white and sandy limestone with more chalk which retains winter rains in the best wine growing area, 2,680 hectares (6,622 acres) of higher ground in the Sierra de Montilla and the Moriles Alta.

The area has one of the hottest Mediterranean climates in Spain with around 2,500 hours of sunshine each year and an average rainfall of only 600 mm. Temperatures vary between -5 and 45°C (23-113°F) in the shade, regularly hitting 40°C (104°F) during the summer.

The main vine is the sweet, fragrant and fruity white Pedro Ximénez which excels here and accounts for 90 percent of production. The constant heat ensures a high sugar—and therefore alcohol—content. For whites and finos the harvest usually takes place in August, much earlier than in other areas. But grapes to make the region's justly famous Pedro Ximénez dessert wine are picked later and dried in the sun on straw matting for about a week to become succulent raisins. Then strong hydraulic presses extract the sweet, dark nectar for aging in casks.

Other varieties grown are Baladí-Verdejo, Lairén, Moscatel, and Torrontés.

Jesús Flores, President of the Spanish Association of Sommeliers and Technical Director of Aula Española del Vino, admires Montilla wines: "I like them because they are naturally strong wines whereas fortified wines have been strengthened from 11 percent to 15 percent by adding alcohol. That means the wines of Montilla-Moriles have more body but at the same time they are delicious and delicate. The bouquet of the Montilla finos is of thyme, rosemary, and rock rose and there is a hint of hazelnut in its taste. In Montilla-Moriles there are great bodegas such as Toro Albalá in Aguilar de la Frontera as well as Alvear, Pérez Barquero, and Gracia Hermanos in Montilla," he says. "It is generally recognized that the best sweet Pedro Ximénez are the bottles from Montilla-Moriles. One has to realize that the finos of Montilla-Moriles are also acquiring a notable quality."

THE WINES

Manuel María López Alejandre, the charismatic secretary of the Consejo Regulador (Regulatory Council) of the Denomination of Origin Montilla-Moriles established in 1932, explains that his bodegas have made tremendous progress in the last few years.

Many bodegas have installed more sophisticated presses and the major trend has been to also install stainless steel tanks for cold fermentation. These tanks can also be used for the second fermentation process which traditionally took place in the *tinajas*—the huge Ali Baba type jars—and can also be used for storing wine, using inert nitrogen gas on top to stop it from oxidizing. More recently several bodegas have, or are about to, put in new state-of-the-art bottling plants.

The 1997 vintage was described as excellent, producing 67 million liters. Actual D.O. sales last year totaled 29.5 million liters of which 8.8 million, or 30%, were exported. By far the largest export was medium (44%) followed by fino (25%) and pale cream (18%).

"There have been enormous changes during the last 20 years, especially in technology," he says. "This year, 1998, the bodegas are going to invest more than 1 billion pesetas in equipment for making the wines. The quality is much better now. We are slowly increasing domestic and export sales because of the prizes we have won. The two star wines are the fino and the sweet Pedro Ximénez."

There are three categories of D.O. wines produced in Montilla-Moriles. The first are the vinos generosos —fino*, amontillado*, *oloroso**, *palo cortado* and others—with a minimum alcoholic strength of 15 percent, aged for at least two years in *solera* systems (see below).

The second are Pedro Ximénez wines of between 13 and 15 percent aged in the solera system and sold as *aperitivo* and dessert wines such as pale dry, medium, pale cream, and cream.

The third category are the white wines—young, light, fruity at 10-12 percent, with or without *crianza.*

The grapes for the young wines are the first to be picked—usually about mid-August—followed by those for the liqueur wines and finally by those to be sun dried for the Pedro Ximénez dessert wine.

Many grapes are pressed at a *lagar*, a small pressing house in the country, before being taken to the bodegas. Many cooperatives and bodegas have their own lagars which ensure the grapes are pressed fresh straight

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In 1775 the noted Milanese cleric, Norberto Caina, included the wines from Lucena and Montilla in his list of the best Spanish wines.

from the vine. In the 1980s the introduction of cold fermentation not only improved the first fermentation process for all wines, stopping the must from warming up as it ferments, but enabled bodegas to offset the worldwide slump in sales of fortified wines with the production of the young wines.
After their first temperature-controlled fermentation, liqueur wines are filtered and either put into huge concrete tinajas to sit during the colder months of the winter or stainless-steel tanks. The fino is protected from oxidizing in both the tinajas and later in the barrels by a layer of yeast, called *velo en flor*—unique to Spain—that forms on the surface exposed to air.
During February or March the selection of wines for fino or oloroso takes place. The *capataz*, or cellar master, decides which wines will be used to produce what. The wine which oxidizes to make oloroso is put in barrels which are usually aged by the solera system in the shade outdoors (the change in temperatures speeds up the oxidizing process) and the fino is moved to the *criadera* barrels to start the aging process over several years.
A domino process takes place in the solera system all year round between the stacked barrels in the fino warehouses to bring in the new fino and draw off the old for bottling. The oldest is in the solera butts on the ground and between a quarter and a third of the fino is drawn off at a time for blending and bottling. The liquid is replaced from a blend from the barrels above, the first criadera. The chain works upwards through the criaderas until there is room for the new fino in the upper tier. Fino barrels—all American oak, each with a capacity of 500 liters, some over 100 years old—are always filled only two thirds to allow the vital velo en flor to develop. This sounds familiar to you? But the Pedro Ximénez grapes, the microclimate, and the soil make the difference.
The capataz will be taking samples from the barrels, using a long handled *venencia* (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45). Although he will initially use his nose and mouth to assess the sample, these days laboratory tests will also be made and he will write his cryptic comments in chalk on each numbered cask. In the 18th century the capataz of the Alvear bodega was Carlos Billanueva who signed the best fino barrels "C.B.," the initials used today for the label of Alvear's leading fino. An *aspilla*—a measuring stick—is used to gauge how much liquid is in each barrel.
Care is taken not to disturb the flor which maintains its protective veil as a result of both feeding off the newer wine, making it thinner and more delicate, and oxygen. The fino itself becomes stronger in alcohol during the solera process because it loses about ten percent of its water content by evaporation through the wooden barrels.
"The flor is a type of yeast which needs oxygen to grow and survive. It consumes the volatile acid and improves the taste," explains enologist José Ignacio Ugarte at Montilla's award winning Bodegas Robles, "Montilla finos are the lowest in the world in volatile acid and the only wines in the world which can be kept, using the solera system, for 100 years in barrels without oxidizing."
The barrels have to be cleaned now and again because the flor leaves a sediment as it regenerates itself. But the live flor is taken from the barrel before cleaning and then returned to it afterwards to continue its vital role on the next fino put into it.

SOME MONTILLA BODEGAS

Alvear, founded in 1729, is not only the oldest bodega in Montilla but one of the oldest in Spain. It is owned by the distinguished, aristocratic Alvear family. Diego de Alvear (1749-1830), a brigadier general in the Spanish navy, saw his frigate sink with his wife and nine children aboard during an English attack.
He was imprisoned in England but was finally released to marry an English girl, Luisa-Rebecca Ward, and returned home to establish an export business with his former enemy which thrives today.
The Alvear bodega is in the middle of Montilla and is affectionately called La Monumental. Its buildings are beautifully maintained with palm-lined courtyards and purple bougainvillea climbing up whitewashed walls. Part of the complex includes a vineyard for experimental growths on the town's former football field.
The bodega has recently installed a new bottling plant with the latest clean room technology and is planning to incorporate new stainless steel tanks in its lagar, put in up to 2,000 more casks for oloroso production, and improve shipping with a new pallet system.

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The wines of Montilla have a natural alcoholic strength of up to 15 or 16 percent and produce excellent finos.

Robbert op de Beek, Alvear's assistant export director, points to the distant Sierra de Montilla where Alvear owns 200 hectares (494 acres) with its own lagar. They also buy from approved suppliers and produce about 10 million liters of wines a year plus a million liters of vermouth.

"The wine industry here is much more professional than 20 years ago," he says. "There is an incredible difference in technology and we are much more market oriented. We've been looking at what can be sold, what people like and then we've made it.

"People also recognize Montilla as a good balance between quality and price. People are becoming aware that we are not cheaper than fortified wines because of quality but because there is tax on the alcohol added to them."

Alvear supplied most of the U.K.'s main supermarkets with own label Pale Dry, Cream, Medium, and Rich Cream. It is also one of the few bodegas to supply the U.S.A., Canada, and Japan in quantity. Alvear blends a special cream for the U.S.A. which is sweetened with light dessert wine to 18 percent and lasts well.

At the International Wine Challenge 1998 in Bordeaux, Alvear's Pedro Ximénez 1927 won a gold medal and Alvear's Fino C.B. took a silver medal. At the same event in 1997, Alvear's Oloroso Asunción won the gold. Its Marqués de la Sierra white wine has been exported for the past 15 years.

Another major bodega is Pérez Barquero, established in 1905, now allied with Gracia Hermanos and the Compañía Vinícola del Sur, which markets Monte Cristo. The group accounts for 25 percent of the region's total production and has 190 hectares (469 acres) of its own vines.

Rafael Delgado Ruz, export director of Pérez Barquero, says that the U.K. is the principal export market (30%) followed by Holland (25%), Belgium (10-12%).

"With Pedro Ximénez grapes we have wines with a natural alcoholic strength of 15 degrees and in some years higher if the climate is hotter," he explains. "The concentration of sugar in the grape does not reduce during the night, as in other areas, but continues increasing.

"The first pressing is very gentle, squeezing about a liter from 1.4 kg of grapes, and this must is used to make the best finos in order to maintain the fruity taste of the grapes in the wine," he says. "The Sierra produces high quality and there are many small lagars we traditionally use. A heavier pressing is used for olorosos."

Most bodegas have a tasting area, called the sacristy, and here Pérez Barquero offers its award winning wines: Fino Gran Barquero, Amontillado Gran Barquero, Oloroso Gran Barquero, and Dulce Gran Barquero Pedro Ximénez.

Pérez Barquero is about to build a completely new bottling plant at its bodega. It will incorporate all the latest clean-room techniques and enable the company to increase production.

The elegant bodega of Gracia Hermanos, part of the Pérez Barquero group, is in an old flour mill next to the Montilla railway station. Gracia's María del Valle bottled fino sells well—the bodega exports mainly to the U.K., Holland, and Belgium. It also sells brandy to Mexico and Venezuela.

In 1982 Gracia Hermanos pioneered the production of a young white wine, called Viña Verde. Now the company is installing four new pneumatic presses to update and increase its overall output.

The two major groups in Montilla, Alvear and Pérez Barquero, have created an export association, Montisierra, to promote the sale of all generic Montilla-Moriles wines outside Spain. Montisierra was originally formed in 1981 when exporting was tough.

"Rather than have every bodega struggling to export on its own, we decided to act together," says Rafael Delgado of Pérez Barquero. "We have been especially successful in the U.K. in creating awareness of our wines and we are now embarking on promotions to wine critics and wine buyers in France and Germany. We distributed leaflets on Montilla-Moriles wines in general at points of sale at all the major supermarkets in the U.K. It was the first time we had done it—but we made it!" says Señor Delgado, "We also distributed a well written and detailed press pack."

Two other major Montilla bodegas are Bodegas Navisa and La Aurora. Navisa is run by Miguel Velasco Chacón. It uses 70 percent of its own grapes from its 500 hectares (1,235 acres) of vines and sold 3.5 million liters of wine last year, exporting nearly a third. Navisa was founded in 1950 and in 1990 acquired new installations where the warehouse was remodeled and an ultramodern bottling plant installed.

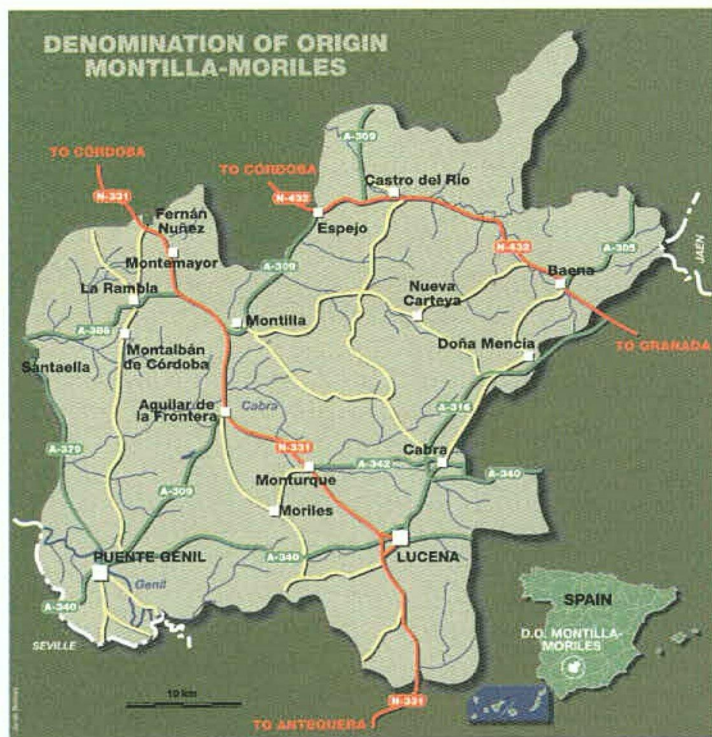
Bodegas La Aurora, established in 1973 because low

The bodegas of Montilla-Moriles are out to prove their *vinos generosos* have their own appealing personality.

sales meant grapes were wasting on the vine, is headed by José León Raigón. Aurora is a cooperative with 828 farmers who have 1,300 hectares (3,211 acres) of vineyards, exporting to five countries.
Always striving to improve quality, with a 20 percent increase in sales last year, La Aurora is investing 250 million pesetas (1,6 million US$) in special tanks which will improve extraction of the fresh fruit and primary aromas from the wine. It is also installing an Italian Pieralisi machine which uses centrifugal force to more effectively separate solids, like stems, from the virgin must.

AN OUTSTANDING PEDRO XIMÉNEZ

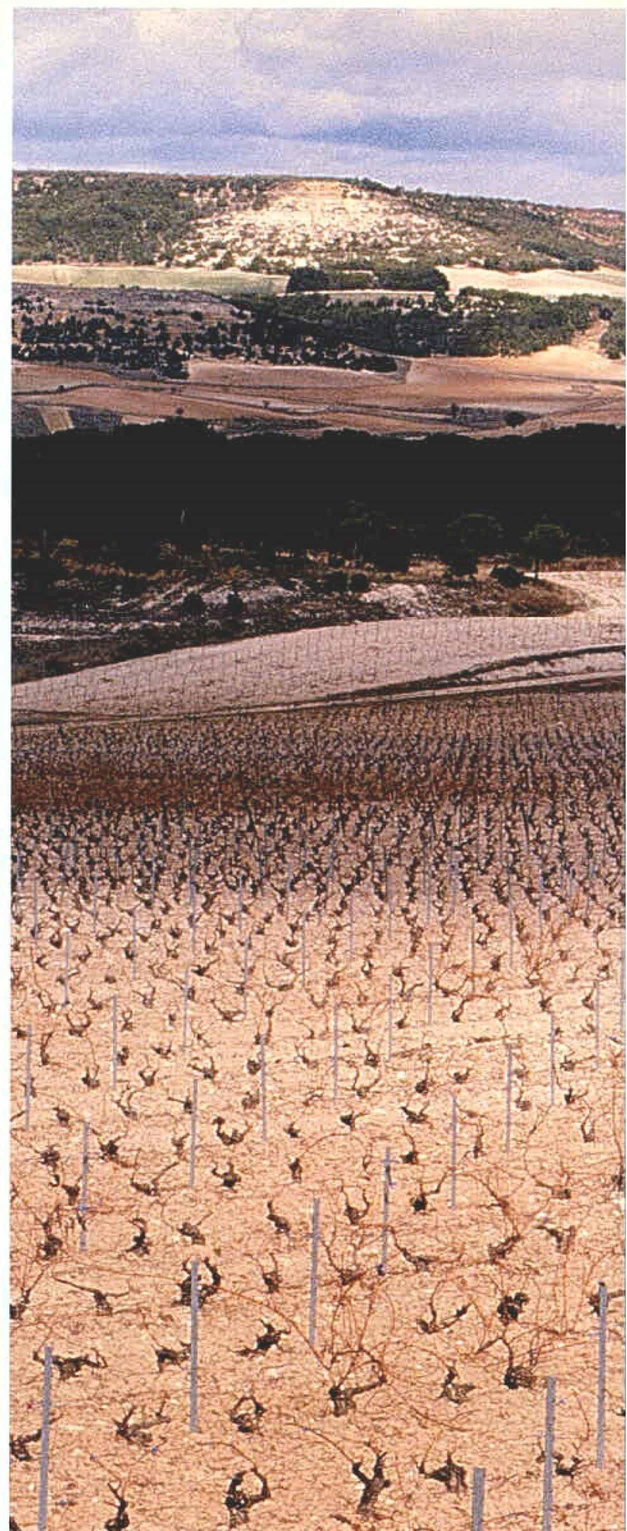
In nearby Aguilar de la Frontera, Antonio Sánchez, has built an excellent reputation for his Bodegas Toro Albalá, founded in 1844. In 1997 the Toro Albalá Don P.X. (meaning Pedro Ximénez) Reserva 1939 won the Gran Bacchus de Oro as the world's best wine at the prestigious annual international competition in Spain organized by the Unión Española de Catadores (Spanish Wine Tasters Union).
Señor Sánchez, a professional enologist and one of the region's most engaging characters, is dedicated to producing limited quantities of top quality wine. His 1939 Pedro Ximénez, exquisitely presented as a limited edition with a notary's scroll, is on the wine list of some of the world's top restaurants.
The bodega is in an old power station, acquired in 1924, and locals called the fino, Eléctrico. The name stuck and now Toro Albalá even sells fino in a bottle that resembles a large light bulb. One of his other bottles has a label in Braille for the blind.
Señor Sánchez also boasts an extraordinary museum, which includes a collection of 2,000 books on wine, and plans to open a cultural center for visitors—they already come from far and wide—which will include a practical demonstration of how solera barrels lose ten percent of their water content.
Torres Burgos, one of six bodegas in Lucena, is run by José Ignacio Torres whose great-grandfather founded the bodega in 1890. Last year he sold one million liters of wines, a third of which was his TB black label fino which won the Bacchus silver award in 1998. His grapes come from the higher slopes of Moriles Alta, 10 km (6 miles) to the west. "In Moriles Alta there is a special microclimate with acid chalk soil," explains Señor Torres. "It produces less grapes but the quality is better."
Further south at Bodegas Crismona, founded in 1904 in Doña Mencía, director José Molina offers a particularly smooth and fragrant fino, Los Cabales. It also offers a range of old wines with the label Crismona Selección which includes an 18° oloroso and a fine Pedro Ximénez Reserva. Crismona has a total of one million liters of wines aging in 2,000 barrels.



Edward Owen *lives in Madrid and writes for* The Times *and* The Express of London *as well as* Lookout, *Spain's English language magazine.*

*N.B.: The use of the terms fino, amontillado, and oloroso for Montilla-Moriles wines are not permitted in the U.K.

See Main Exporters on page 122.



A journey down the River Duero slices east to west through the wide-horizoned landscape of Spain's central tableland. This is the heartland of Old Castile. Medieval cities and castles bathed by glaring sunlight dominate fields which stretch as far as the eye can see. Famed for fine wine in medieval times but largely forgotten by this century, the region's vineyards began to make a spectacular comeback twenty years ago. For all four denominated areas—Ribera del Duero, Cigales, Rueda, and Toro—the basis of that revival lies in the distant past. Their wines range from aromatic reds to citric whites but share an explosive intensity of flavor from native grape varieties which have acquired that character through centuries of slow adaptation to local growing conditions. But the stakes remain high. A late frost or midsummer hailstorm can wipe out a vineyard's entire harvest. Perhaps that is why the winemakers themselves are also such a vital part of the story, their strength of character underlying not only that of the wines but also the region's renaissance as a whole.

CASTILE-LEÓN

Text: **Vicky Hayward**

CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX

Vineyards near Valbuena in the Ribera del Duero D.O.

FERNANDO BRIONES/ICEX

One of the famous Vega Sicilia vineyards.

The courtyard of Palacio de Avellaneda in Peñaranda.

Curving like a silver and bottle-green snake, the River Duero winds quietly across the valley where the Ribera del Duero's vineyards are planted. Only when you drive up to the pastures below the low cliffs edging the valley, or gaze down from castles and villages built above the river, can you track its course.

Discreet as the Duero may be, it has literally shaped this terrain, eroding a wide, flat channel in the *meseta*, where the altitude drops to between 700 and 950 meters (2,300 and 3,100 ft), just enough to allow vineyards to be planted. Running along a 110 km (68.4 mile) stretch of the river banks, the Ribera de Duero's vineyards are heavily concentrated on the north bank just to the west of Aranda de Duero, a medieval crossroads town. Here, buckling and erosion have left uneven patches of alluvial clay and sand over chalky bedrock, and vines increasingly eat into the stands of pine, wheat, and sugar beet fields which once looked set to oust them.

Archaeologists suggest that vine growing along the Duero dates back to pre-Roman. But winemaking today is clearly rooted in the medieval vineyards and grape varieties planted when the river became a defensive line between the reconquered Christian north and the Muslim south late in the 11th century. Vineyards spread outwards from monasteries such as Santa María de Valbuena (1143) and Santa María de la Vid (1162)—literally St. Mary of the Vine—to supply the monks, front-line soldiers, and colonists repopulating the empty frontier lands.

With flourishing markets close at hand—the royal city of Valladolid, Santiago's pilgrimage route to the north, and Medina del Campo's trade fair—winemaking along the Duero became a major industry. As the preamble of a Valladolid statute put it, this was "the principal matter and business of this city and its lands" (1590). Contemporary statistics give some idea of the scale on which the wine flowed. The French 20th century historian Fernand Braudel quotes one source estimating that Valladolid's citizens knocked back an average of 100 liters of wine a year in 1650, at the same time that Aranda del Duero's *bodegas* are said to

CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX

have produced 6 million liters of wine annually. Bodegas tunneled deep into the earth helped to give temperature control and stability to the wines. Some—such as the 7 km (4 miles) warren under Aranda's town center—later fell into disuse while others have remained working wine cellars right through the centuries.

What, then, were these early wines like? In this part of the Duero most were white—in Toro they were already purply-black reds—but as drinking fashions shifted to follow the French preference for red, the bodegas began to make *claretes*, or rosés tinted the color of cranberry juice by throwing black grapes into the press. Hence the name of the Ribera's emblematic native variety: Tinta del País or Tinto Fino.

Signs of Identity

A small thin-skinned grape, Tinta del País developed its native character by slow adaptation to new growing conditions. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of other varieties brought here in the last century: Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. But it is Tinta del País, probably planted by medieval monks from the same rootstock as Tempranillo, which gives Ribera's reds today their place on the world wine map. It gives the young reds their heady fruitiness, ruby color, and rich aromas, and the older wines their complex balance of tannins, acids, and fruit which is now beginning to show such remarkable potential for aging. The grape's potential was discovered thanks to one man, Don Eloy Lacanda y Chaves, who planted it experimentally on a small estate in 1864. Its wines became, and still are, legendary under the name Vega Sicilia, but it was another century—after phylloxera and the vagaries of agricultural policy led to many vineyards being torn up—before Tinta del País became the basis of today's Ribera del Duero denomination (1982). Since then, however, growers have been swept along by critical and commercial success. Today nearly a hundred bodegas are bottling wine from an aver-

CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX

age annual harvest of 20 million kilos of grapes—and they can barely keep pace with demand.

The bodegas include every kind of venture—cooperatives, estate wineries, and traditional family bodegas—but all are small- to mid-size operations which leave plenty of room for personality. Just outside Roa, the Perez Pascuas brothers, once growers, have become domain winemakers. Their policy of gentle pressing and extraction, blending the *reservas* and *gran reservas* (see Glossary on page 130) with Cabernet Sauvignon, and avoiding filtering, gives exceptional wines. The real key, they say, is the age of their vines. "Trying to make a Gran Reserva with fruit from young vines is like sending a toddler out to do a grownup job," exclaims José Manuel, the bodega's enologist whose grandfather planted the family's first vines—many still in production—seventy years ago.

At Sotillo, in the heart of the growing area, the Arroyo family operation is more traditional. Run by four brothers and sisters, the bodega buys most of their grapes locally and still stands next to the old village wine presses. The red wines are 100 percent unblended Tinta del País. Dark and concentrated, but never aggressive, they are laid down in the family cellar tunneled horizontally through a neighboring hill centuries ago. Heavy and sober, full of fruit, perfume, and matured tannins, these are superb wines.

Looking to the Future

A stone's throw from Sotillo, Valduero is another family-owned bodega run along more contemporary lines by Iñigo Manso and Yolanda García, who met while training as enologists. They are planting upland slopes, leaving the vines trailing close to the ground, and are building a new bodega powered by solar energy. While they, too, see the long-term future in a shift from young wines to crianzas, reservas, and gran reservas, they still make a rosé like those which held sway here till 25 years ago and are also experimenting with a white made with the

The River Duero near Roa.

CARLOS NAVAJAS/ICEX

The Castle of Peñafiel.

largely overlooked native Albillo grape. "We don't want to lose the old traditions," explains Iñigo. "Each one has its value."

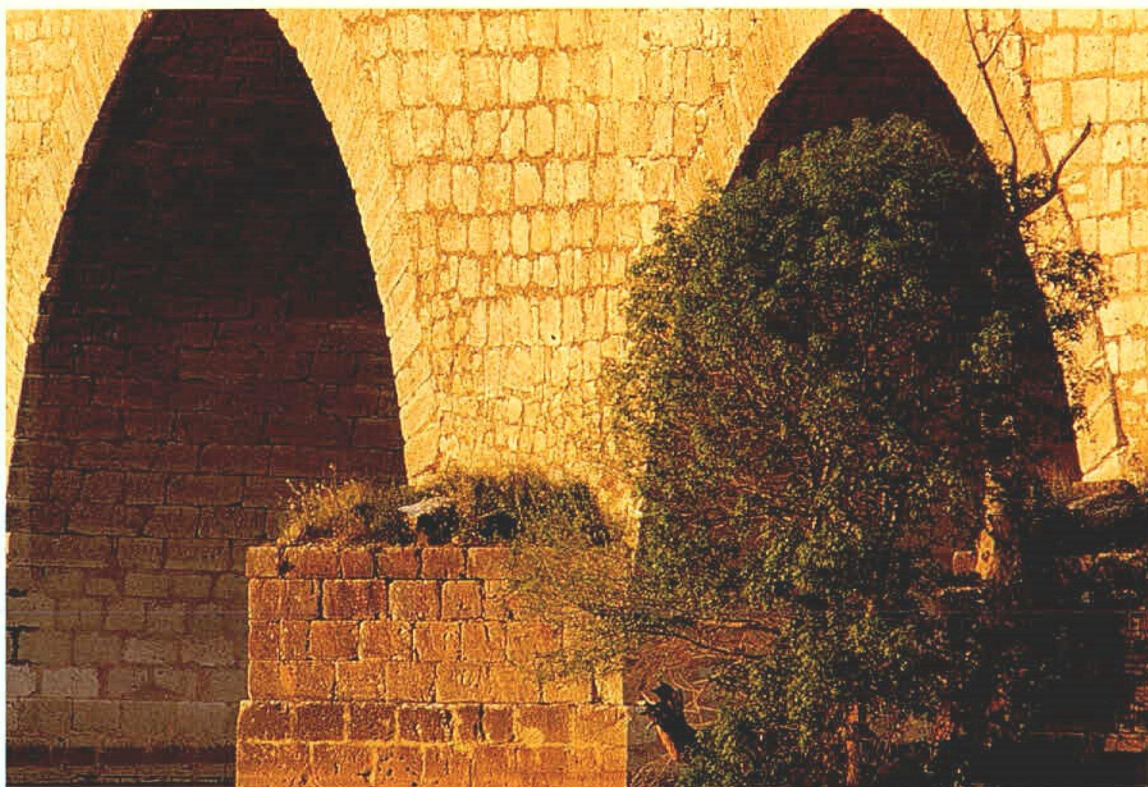
Finally, visits to two linked bodegas, Pesquera and Condado de Haza, give you a chance to see the exceptional vision of the man behind two of Ribera's most celebrated wines. Alejandro Fernández used his father's wooden beam-press to make Pesquera till 1982, and it still stands next to today's functional purpose-built bodega that he designed himself. Here an overhead crane system eliminates lost aisle space. Condado de Haza, 20 km (12.4 miles) to the east, is the much more recent realization of his dream to build a bodega in its own vineyard. No expense has been spared—but the deposits, as at Pesquera, are manually operated.

"Of course," comments Fernández, with a wry grin. "Otherwise I would make wine like everybody else." Is it a lot more difficult, I ask. He grins again and, by way of an answer, shakes his head and points to his nose and eyes.

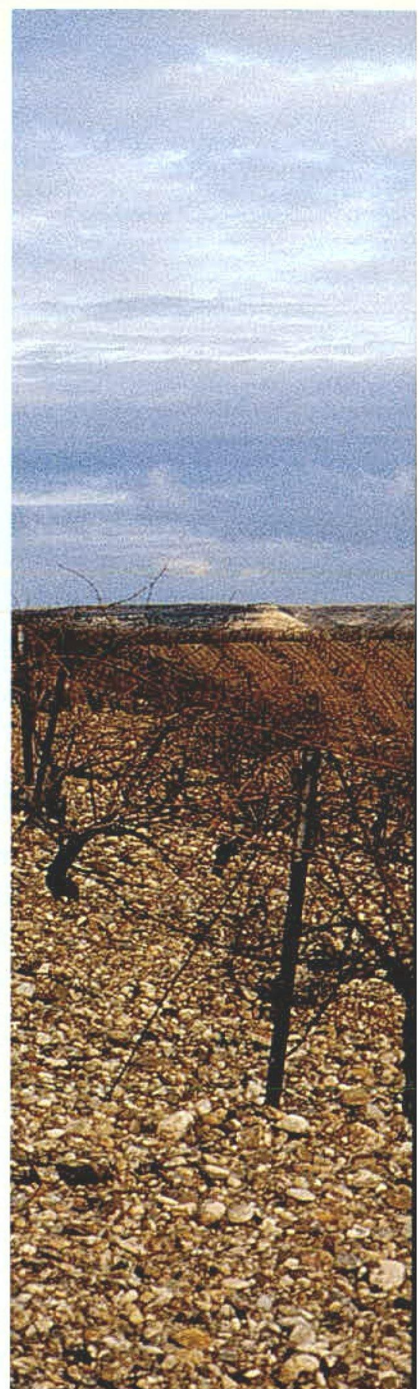
What is most striking in the Ribera today is that for all the differences of approach there is a remarkable shared confidence in the future. Everyone seems to be rebuilding, extending their vineyards, or tunneling out new cellars. Occasionally, the level of investment is truly spectacular, as at Torremilanos, close to Aranda, where the Peñalba family has spent more than a decade putting one of the area's oldest bodegas (1903) on a secure new footing. That has involved consolidating a 200 hectare (495 acres) vineyard, converting the seigneurial estate house into a grandiose hotel and building a spacious streamlined bodega. It makes splendid, very fruity reds in both traditional and blended styles.

The long-term outlook is indeed rosy: the wines here can only improve over the next decade as new planting matures and winemakers increasingly lay down wines to see their full potential for aging. An added bonus that has scarcely been commented on yet—and is relevant for the whole region—is the minimal level of chemical treatments used throughout this region, a natural advantage given by the extreme dry climate, but one which the dynamic D.O. regulatory

FERNANDO BRIONES/ICEX



The Duero River passing a bridge in Tordesillas.



Vineyards of Alejandro Fernández's Tinto Pesquera.

body here hopes to develop into growing conditions close to fully organic.

The Strength of Tradition: Cigales and Toro

A short hop to the northwest, Cigales' vineyards border the River Pisuerga as it runs south to Valladolid to join the Duero. Famed from the 16th century for their rosés, locally called *claretes*, this is the most traditional of the four denominations. Most wineries remain small-scale family affairs supplying the local market with robust rosés—either young, or crianza or reserva—which have plenty of kick, body, and the characteristic cranberry red color. The bodegas generally sit close to the anthill like clusters of old cellars on the wine towns' dusty outskirts. Generally speaking they buy grapes from small-scale growers in village vineyards, or *majuelos*, whose families do the harvesting; the Cigales wine fiestas that follow are the most local and lively of those around the region.

Chilled stabilization, stainless steel hoppers, crushers and filtering vats have helped to produce subtle, complex wines in recent years, but basic vinification follows traditional formulas. The mixed grape varieties are either simply crushed—not pressed—and the free juice (*mosto de yema*) left to drip off by gravity; or the juice is mixed with musts from grapes left for a few days on the skins before fermentation starts.

The signs are, however, that change is on the way here as elsewhere. The local grape varieties allowed by the 1991 D.O. regulations—red Tinta del País and Garnacha plus smaller quantities of white Verdejo, Albillo, and Viura—may be supplemented by Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, which are being planted by larger bodegas such as Frutos Villar. Red wines made from Tinta del País and Garnacha are also coming into their own, made both by *bordelais* methods or with carbonic maceration. Softer, with a less marked personality than those of the Ribera but still full and spicy, they have vanilla overtones.

But the strength of the winemaking tradition can be felt most strongly in Toro, where the wines take their name from the lovely hon-

P. SANCHO MATA/ICEX

ey-colored medieval town built above the River Duero. Today you still drive in through the old city gate and the old historic quarter keeps forty medieval churches and convents, most of which were built with wine wealth. Such was the reputation of its blackish red wines in medieval times that they were allowed to enter Spanish cities such as Seville and Palencia, which banned other wine imports. And their reputation lingered on: at the end of the 19th century, large quantities were sent by rail to France during the phylloxera crisis. But made above ground in this century, the loss of temperature control in the old underground bodegas produced wines so strong that, as one local joke put it, they were made for chewing rather than drinking.

Old Grapes, New Wines

Toro's revival was thanks largely to the vision of one winemaker, Manuel Fariña, who took over his father's vineyards thirty years ago. Trained as an enologist, he realized the value of the native grapes, especially Tinta de Toro—another adapted variant of Tempranillo—and of growing conditions. The pebbly alluvial soils here hold the warmth of the sun on freezing winter nights and protect the vines' roots on scorching summer days, helping to produce intensely flavored grapes.

"The problem," says Fariña equably, "was that people blamed the grapes for mistakes in their own winemaking." He revolutionized his wines through a few key moves: earlier harvesting of the grapes, precise temperature control of fermentation, reduced maceration on the skins and careful aging in oak. The resulting wines, named after Toro's cathedral, the Colegiata, soft and velvety, powerful but not overpowering, have shown the area's enormous potential, winning admiration first abroad and then at home.

Today, just over a decade after Toro's denomination status was confirmed in 1987, the growing area—largely planted with Tinta de Toro and Garnacha Tinto—spreads over 6,000 hectares (14,800 acres) and, with

BODEGAS ANTAÑO/ICEX

P. SANCHO MATA/ICEX

Subterranean aging cellars of Bodegas Antaño. Above: The typical luceras *or* zarceras *ventilate this subterranean labyrinth.*

winemakers such as Vega Sicilia and Alejandro Fernández moving into the area, golden years seem to lie ahead. Manuel Fariña now shares the running of the business with his son and nurtures hopes that more local growers will set up their own bodegas. Meanwhile, in the Fariña laboratories just outside town, he continues with his own experiments. Most recently he has come up with a wonderful white dessert wine—not D.O. but well worth searching out in local restaurants—and a fruity younger red. And he is also working on a cask-aged sweet red. That will be one to watch.

Rueda: The Turn of the Wheel

Following the Duero upstream from Toro on the road back to Madrid, one comes to the historic old town of Tordesillas (see page 87) and Rueda's vineyards. The countryside here is classic Old Castile, the land of Queen Isabel and her daughter Joanna the Mad, who was kept prisoner here by her family for forty years to prevent her laying claim to the crown. Red brick churches and silos loom up above flat villages huddled between fields of wheat and sugar beet stretching to the horizon. Only as one draws close to the river, north of La Seca, do the vineyards emerge, planted in the wide band of alluvial soils deposited by the river.

The story runs that when French enologist Professor Emile Peynaud was helping the premier Rioja bodega Marqués de Riscal search for a native grape from which to make white wines, he paused here just long enough to pick and taste just one grape off a roadside vine. It was a native Verdejo, a variety which has grown here since Muslim times and was used to make celebrated cask-aged whites here through the medieval centuries. However, after phylloxera swept through at the end of the last century it was largely replaced by the hardier Palomino, used to make sherry-like Pálido wines, and the unique Dorados left out in large courtyards in the sun in curvy glass bottles until they turn a deep gold.

Peynaud knew as soon as he tasted his Verdejo grape

IN MEDIEVAL TIMES, WHEN CASTILE-LEÓN WAS SPAIN'S MOST IMPORTANT VINEYARD REGION, WINEMAKING WAS A MAJOR INDUSTRY IN THE DUERO VALLEY.

that this was the right place for Marqués de Riscal to make white wines, and their first light, citric, tangy vintage appeared in 1973. After that, things moved quickly. The area became a Denomination of Origin in 1980 and today 27 bodegas—large and small, traditional and new—make white wines from a 6,000 hectare (14,800 acres) growing area planted with Verdejo; Viura, another native grape used for blending; imported Sauvignon Blanc, which has taken on a new character here in the extreme climate; and finally the old Palomino, now well on the wane, although one hopes enough will survive to make Dorado, a favorite cooking wine with chefs.

Perhaps the most striking feature of any visit here is the heavy investment in technology, not only in the bodegas—primarily for cold-fermentation and filtering—but also in the vineyards. Mechanized field-care now includes harvesting, usually done in the cool of the night in the space of a few days.

Then one notices how the wines themselves have evolved. Marqués de Riscal showed the way with cold maceration techniques giving fuller, flowery wines, which are now made by many bodegas; a few have also begun to make oaky, cask-fermented Verdejo varietal whites. At Bodegas de Crianza de Castilla La Vieja, Antonio Sanz has gone further, also making sparkling *cava* and oak-fermented Chardonnay as well as traditional whites and reds, to which many others are now turning their attention. They may be developed separately under the Medina del Campo regional quality denomination. Happily, they have also decided to keep making the old-fashioned Dorados that sit soaking up the sun outside.

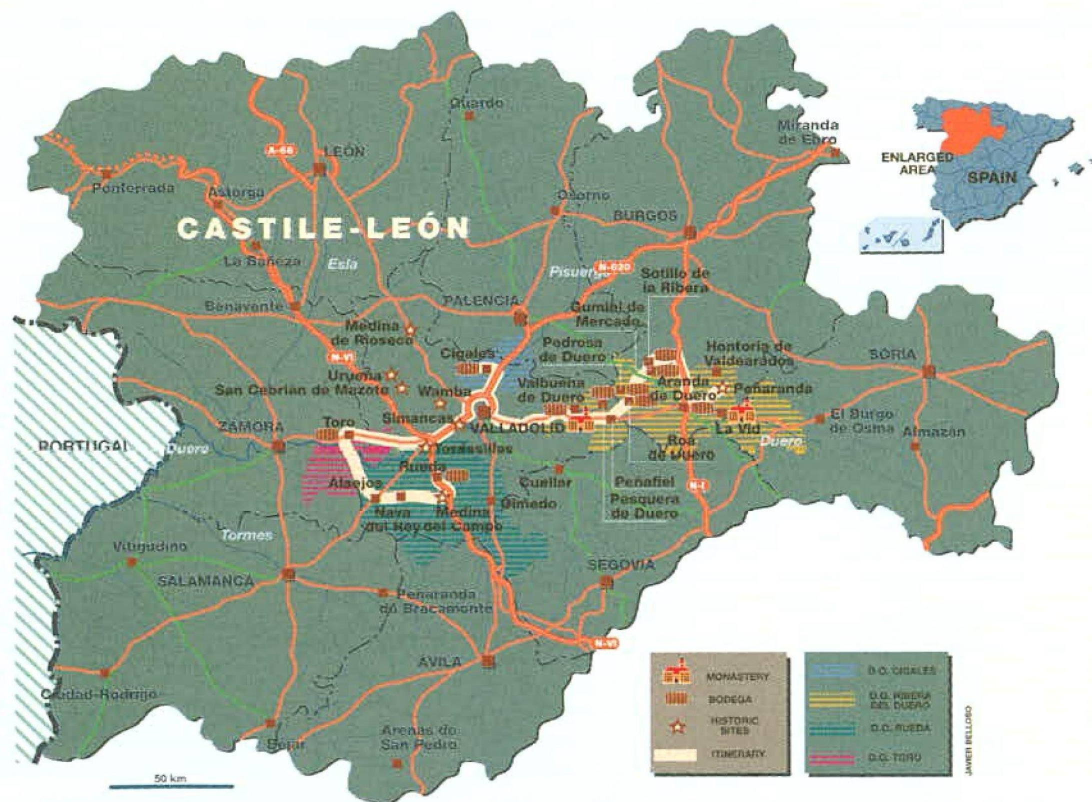
But not all winemakers here are persuaded by the newer wines. Vinos Sanz, on the edge of town, is a small family bodega now in its sixth generation that made the shift back to Verdejo in the 1970s but since then has chosen to stick with the young, light, lemony wines built around the its characteristically long aftertaste. Production is small, with enologist Juan Carlos Ayala Sanz putting the emphasis on a personal style: careful harvesting, preferably by hand, into old-fashioned boxes; separate fermentation by variety of free-dripped and pressed musts; and no maceration or vacuum filtering.

"I'm not against technological innovation," he explains, "but I'm only interested in what's right for our particular wines and grapes—we're still looking for the very intense dry flavor, light nose and long aftertaste that's most characteristic of Verdejo."

Finally, at Bodegas Antaño, there is a chance not only to visit a state-of-the-art bodega run by computerized controls, but also to make an excursion into a vast network of underground bodegas spreading over several square kilometers. Owner José Ruíz, originally a restaurateur, is doggedly restoring them to their former glory. After years of work, the excavations are still turning up new levels and cavernous extensions of unknown age. Ruíz remains modest about his ambitions.

"I am not a wine expert," he explains, "but I do love this area. Also I am convinced that in the long term this area, carefully developed, will be one of the most important for wine in the country."

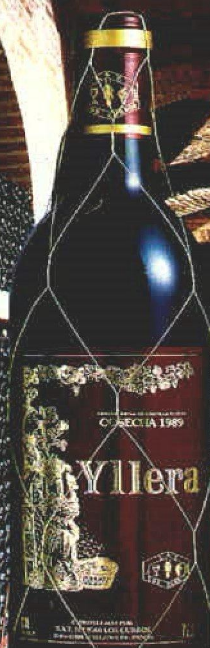
One may say his underground explorations are a luxury. But one may also wonder if, as the wheel of history turns, it may not turn out to be another case of personal vision, sketching out the scale to which the wine industry will grow once again.



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

See Recipes on page 114 and Main Exporters on page 122.

Pídalos por su nombre



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- ***"Piquillo" Red Peppers Stuffed with Monkfish***

P. SANCHO-MATA/ICEX

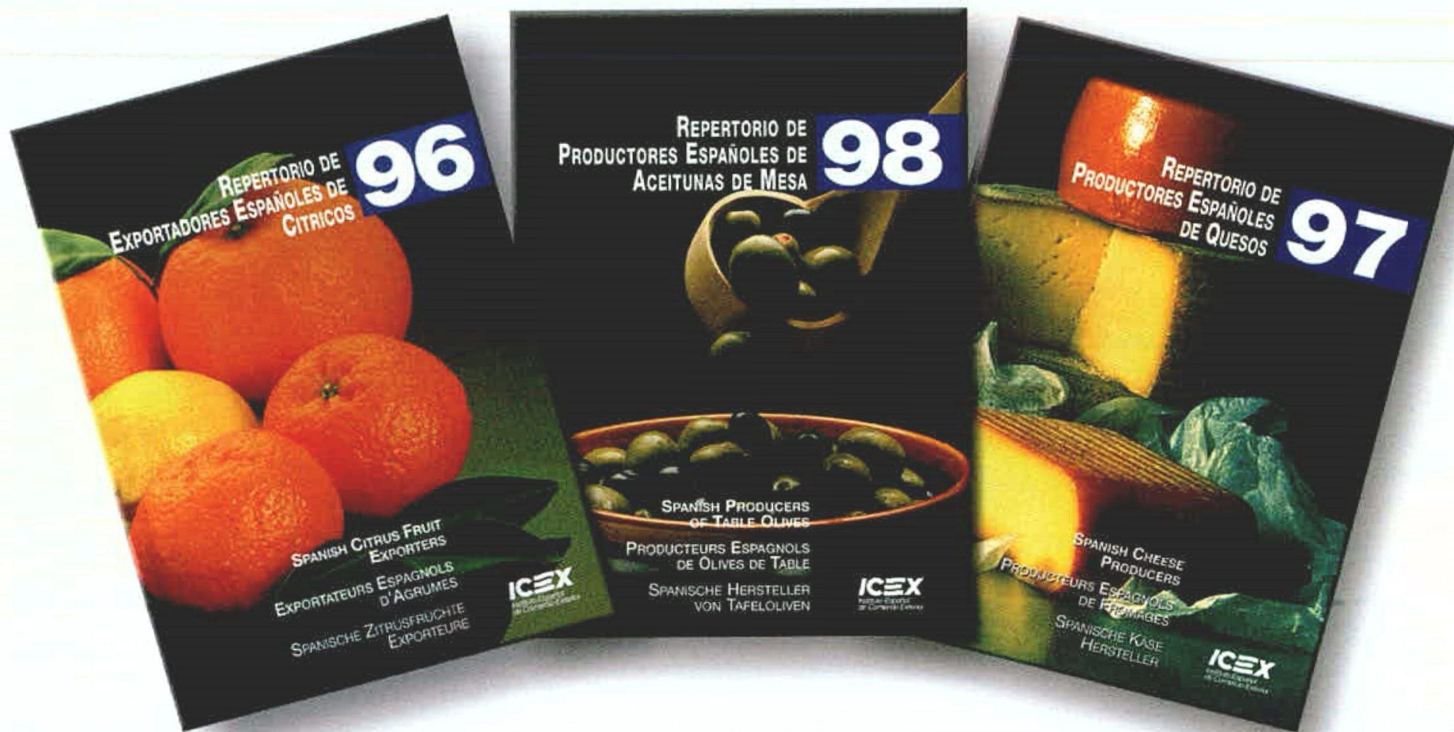
Roast lamb and suckling pig are favorites of the Castilian gastronomy.

A STAR DISH: ROAST LAMB

One star dish today overshadows all others on Castile's regional menus: *lechazo asado*, or roast baby lamb. You will find it on offer wherever you go and gourmets love to debate which town or city offers the best. Burgos, Aranda, Peñafiel, Sepulveda, and Roa are all considered in the running. (See *Spain Gourmetour* No. 44.)

The roasting process sounds simple enough, but is not easy to get right. The quarters of lamb are salted and placed on racks in unglazed terracotta dishes with a little water in them, then placed on the tiled floor of domed wood-fired adobe ovens. A dab of lard or squeeze of lemon juice are among roasters' extra tricks, others use pine and ash as the firewood. The lamb, slowly roasted in its own fat in the dry heat, comes straight to your table in its cooking dish, cut roughly into pieces. Locals know how to pick their way through the crispy golden skin and bones, meltingly tender flesh, and almost completely fatless roasting juices. They also usually go for the front quarter *(cuarto delantero)*, said to be less fleshy and offer more crispy bones. Much comes down to the quality of the produce. Once available only during winter and spring, lechazo originated from the shepherds weaning spring lambs early to release their mothers' milk and provoke a second autumn lambing. But with the dish becoming a restaurant classic in the last three decades, the lambs are now produced all year round. Most—some 70 percent—are reared in Zamora and Burgos provinces. A regional quality label (*Indicación Geográfica Protegida*) ensures it comes from the right breeds—the Churra, Castellana, and Ojalada—lean long-bodied animals with their fat deposited in clusters instead of spread evenly under the skin. The quality label controls pastures, transport, and slaughtering methods, and the lamb produced under its aegis is marked by a metal label stapled on to the meat.

GUIDES TO SPANISH FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCERS



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The Parador of Tordesillas is surrounded by thousands of pine trees.

PARADORES

TORDESILLAS:

A PARADOR AND A PALACE

Like many historic towns in Spain and the rest of Europe, Tordesillas grew around its strategic position on a natural crossroads. Today, nearly two thousand years after the Romans built here, it remains a key meeting point between routeways across the Peninsula connecting Portugal and Galicia to the center of Spain, and shorter regional ones running off radially to the Castilian cities.

In 1958, when hotels were still few and far between, the *parador* was built here as an overnight stopping-off point—or *albergue de carretera*—for those on the road. Since then the hotel has grown from 18 to 71 rooms, but it keeps the air of an oasis in the harsh *meseta* with tired looking travelers arriving after a long day on the road. Today, however, the parador also makes a great leaping-off point for exploring Castile's cities and vineyards.

Even if you are just passing through on a long journey it is worth finding a few hours to look round Tordesillas, which stands behind stout walls perched above its medieval bridge. There is one outstanding monument: the Convento de Santa Clara, built as a royal palace from 1340-1344 and twenty years later converted into a convent by Pedro the Cruel's illegitimate daughters. They kept the outstanding *mudejar* features put in by workmen from Toledo and Seville—gilt coffered ceilings, Arabic baths, and fine plasterwork tracery—and today, after six centuries as a closed convent, it remains an outstanding example of the mudejar palatial style (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 32).

It is here, in 1494, that Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas, or Line of Demarcation, which carved up half the world by dividing their American conquests along a line 370 leagues west of Cape Verde. Back in the parador's dining room a fine tapestry refers to these New World associations: gentlemen in seigneurial clothes bob around in boats on a blue sea. One suspects that the discovery of America wasn't quite such a civilized affair.

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STILL LIFE: MENCHU ARTIME PHOTO: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

THE FLAVORS OF OLD CASTILE

Menus in Castile-León are short and to the point. Black pudding, cheese, lentils, and garlic soup are examples of the sober way in which dishes are described. But do not be misled. For the food here, while medievally straightforward, is full of inimitable dishes produced by centuries of learning how to wring the best from the harsh landscape.

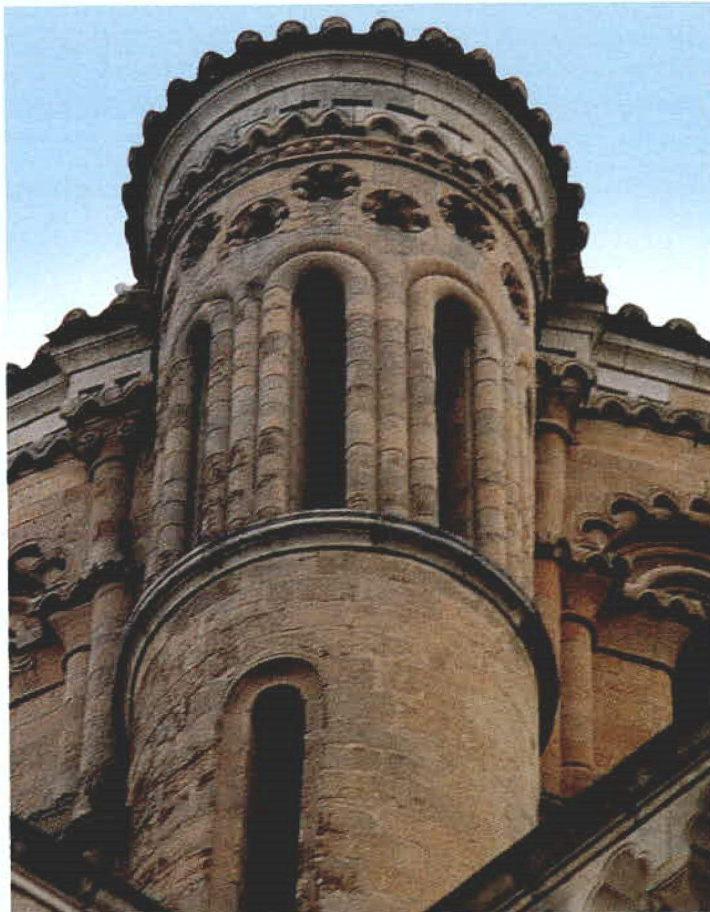
Many gourmet specialties have their roots in frugal home-preserving. Cured ham (*jamón*), loin of pork (*lomo*) and *chorizo* sausages were used sparingly to flavor bean stews. Today they are more often served in big mixed platters, sometimes jokingly called "Castilian shellfish," as an *aperitivo*. Most distinctive of all is *morcilla de Burgos*, a blood sausage made with rice and onion, usually simply sliced and fried.

Cheeses, once also a way of eking out protein, are now served in generous platefuls. Today Castile-León remains a major sheep's milk producer, and local semi-artesanal cheese-makers—as well as factories—still make nutty, intensely flavored Zamorano (now a D.O.) and Castellano cheeses. At the other end of the scale fresh white soft cheeses like Queso de Burgos and Pata de Mulo (Mule's Leg) from Villalón, or unpressed *requesón* curds, turn up at the end of a meal with honey or quince paste.

Cooking methods remain heavily influenced by the old wood-fired ovens and kitchens. Dishes like braised partridge, garlic soup, and bean stews become remarkable slowly cooked over gentle heat. So, too, do local lentils, beans, and chickpeas, sold here by place of origin as a guarantee: Fuentesauco for chickpeas, Barco de Ávila and La Bañeza for beans, and lentils from La Armuña.

Only when it comes to sweet things do the names become enticing: St. Lorenzo's sponge cakes, St. Anthony's buns, and St. Clare's ring biscuits are just three examples. Such is the variety of these baked goods made with the fine local white flour that one could travel right around the region visiting bakers, sweet shops, convents (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 43) and restaurants, tasting and trying these cakes and biscuits without ever having the same cake twice.

The Colegiata church in Toro.



P. SANCHO MATA/ICEX

TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISITING BODEGAS

Ribera del Duero is in the early stages of organizing wine routes and the *bodegas* are generally used to visits. Elsewhere this is not always the case, although visitors—particularly with a professional interest—are happily received providing a time is booked in advance. It is best to explain what you would like to see and to take a Spanish speaker with you. Most bodegas sell wine, but not all accept credit cards.

DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN OFFICES

Cigales D.O.:
Tel: (34) 983 580 074
Fax: (34) 983 586 590
Ribera del Duero D.O.:
Tel: (34) 947 541 221
Fax: (34) 947 541 116
Rueda D.O.:
Tel: (34) 983 868 248
Fax: (34) 983 868 135
Toro D.O.:
Tel/Fax: (34) 980 690 335

FEATURED BODEGAS

Cigales D.O.
Bodegas Frutos Villar
Ctra de Burgos s/n
47270 Cigales
Tel: (34) 983 586 868
Fax: (34) 983 580 180
Family company with vineyards in all four denominations; traditional functional bodega (Muruve, Conde de Siruela, Riberal, Conde Ansúrez, Cansina).
Ribera del Duero D.O.
Bodegas Ismael Arroyo S.L.
Los Lagares 71
09441 Sotillo de la Ribera
Tel: (34) 947 532 309
Fax: (34) 983 870 088
Traditional family bodega making fine wines aged in the village's honeycomb of cellars dating back to the 17th century (Valsotillo, Mesoneros de Castilla).
Bodegas Alejandro Fernández Tinto Pesquera S.L.
c/ Real 2
47315 Pesquera de Duero
Tel: (34) 983 870 039
Fax: (34) 903 870 088
Pesquera is an emblematic bodega. Alejandro Fernández made wine with his family's old wooden press here till 1982 when he designed and built his own.
Condado de Haza
Ctra La Horra
09300 Roa de Duero
Tel: (34) 947 525 254
Fax: (34) 947 870 088
Condado de Haza is the realization of Alejandro Fernández's long-held dream—a bodega set in its own vineyard by the river—built with Pesquera's profits.
Bodegas Peñalba López
Pza. Primo de Rivera 4
09400 Aranda de Duero
Tel/Fax: (34) 947 501 381
Imposing modern bodega, with dining and tasting room plus hotel, surrounded by vineyards (Torremilanos, Torre Albéniz).
Bodegas Hermanos Pérez Pascuas S.L.
Ctra de Roa s/n
09314 Pedrosa de Duero
Tel: (34) 947 530 100
Fax: (34) 947 530 002
Recently rebuilt state-of-the-

art bodega, now in its third generation, close to the family vineyards (Viña Pedrosa, Perez Pascuas).

Bodegas Valduero S.A.
Ctra. de Aranda s/n
09440 Gumiel del Mercado
Tel: (34) 947 545 459
Fax: (34) 947 545 609
A double bodega: one still under construction in the vineyards, the other 400 years old with a stone lodge and an enlarged underground cellar. French and English spoken.

Rueda D.O.
Bodegas Antaño
c/ Arribas 7
47490 Rueda
Tel: (34) 983 868 533
Fax: (34) 983 868 514
Completely refurbished state-of-the-art bodega with impressive subterranean cellars. (Viña Mocen, Vega Bravia, Viña Cobranza)

Bodegas de Crianza Castilla La Vieja
Ctra. N-VI km 170.6
47490 Rueda
Tel: (34) 983 868 116
Fax: (34) 983 868 432
Large family-run bodega producing a wide range of wines; next door is a large food delicatessen with bar. (Bornos, Palacio de Bornos, Almirantazgo de Castilla)

Bodegas Vinos Blancos de Castilla
Ctra. N-VI km 172.6
47490 Rueda
Tel: (34) 983 868 003
Fax: (34) 983 868 563
The bodega which inspired the first replanting of Verdejo grapes from the 1970s still evolves alongside its wines. (Marqués de Riscal)

Vinos Sanz
Ctra. N-VI km 170.5
47490 Rueda
Tel: (34) 983 868 100
Fax: (34) 983 868 117
Interesting small family winery, now in the sixth generation, moving steadily towards domain wines with a clear personal philosophy.

Toro D.O.
Bodegas Fariña
Ctra. de Tordesillas s/n
49800 Toro
Tel: (34) 980 577 673
Fax: (34) 980 577 720
The first Toro bodega to win acclaim internationally, Fariña continues to produce surprises; the bodega, functional, was rebuilt in 1988.

WINE FIESTAS

Cigales D.O.: (Oct.) *Fiesta de la Vendimia* in Cigales. Harvesters' and *bodegueros'* processions, grape pressing, regional dances, and wine flowing through the night.
Ribera del Duero D.O.: The *Muestra de Vinos de la Ribera de Duero,* held 40 days after Easter in Peñafiel gives a chance to taste the full range of Ribera wines. In Sotillo de la Ribera, during Holy Week: vine cuttings and crates are burned in the bonfire-lit procession.
Rueda D.O.: (end Sep. to mid-Oct.) *Fiesta de la Vendimia.* Held in Rueda and Serrada, with wine tasting, grape pressing, *paella.*
Toro D.O.: (29 Jun.) *Fiesta de San Pedro.* Wonderful old garlic and pottery fair with some wine and cheese on sale too. (Oct.) *Fiesta de la Vendimia.* Recently revived here and at Morales de Toro.

PRINCIPAL SIGHTS & VISITS

All opening hours need to be checked in advance.

BURGOS PROVINCE

Aranda de Duero: The town's underground bodegas are open to the public (guided visits Tue.-Sun. 12 noon to 7 p.m.). The Iglesia de Santa María La Real, a fine example of Isabelline Gothic, and the church at Gumiel de Huzán, 12 km away, a national monument, are open Tue.-Sun. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 5-7 p.m.
Baños de Valdearados & Clunia: The Roman remains at Clunia Sulpicia include two bath complexes, a theater carved out of the rock, and a palace. (Tue.-Sun. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-8 p.m.) At nearby Baños, a 13th century mosaic depicts the triumph of Bacchus, Tel: (34) 947 534 229 for visits.
Peñaranda de Duero: Picturesque walled medieval town with castle, adobe houses, splendid 15th-century Palacio de Avellaneda (Tue.-Sun. 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 4-7 p.m.) and an 18th-century pharmacy. Just outside the town Santa María de la Vid (St. Mary of the Vine) keeps the 13th century image of the same name (open 10:30 a.m.-12.30 and 4-7 p.m.).
Roa de Duero: Small country town with splendid panoramic view east and west over the Duero valley (Mirador del Espolón), a lovely vaulted church and good restaurants.
Santo Domingo de Silos: Benedictine monastery made world famous by the recordings of its monks' Gregorian chants, sung briefly at morning and evening mass. Inspirational 13th-14th century cloister.

VALLADOLID PROVINCE

Medina de Rioseco: Market town with faded medieval splendor. Highlights include Santa María de Mediavilla church (Napoleonic troops used the Capilla de los Benaventes as a kitchen) and the nearby *Museo de los Pasos* of Holy Week Sculpture (both Tue.-Sat. 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 5-8 p.m.).
Peñafiel: The old town has kept its squares, fine churches (do not miss San Pablo, in the Gothic-mudejar style), river walks and the castle, which from summer 1999 will house a wine museum dealing with Valladolid's four denominations, plus a library. General opening times are Tue.-Sat. 12-2 p.m., 5-8 p.m. Also a good base for exploring nearby villages such as Curiel, Olivares, and Sardón. A wine train which will stop at bodegas from Valladolid to Peñafiel is planned for the near future.
Rueda: From here it is a short drive either west to Nava del Rey and Alaejo, villages with imposing churches, or east to Olmedo (with a cluster of mudejar architecture).
Santa María de Valbuena : Founded in 1143, this is one of the purest examples of the Cistercian style and the first monastery to plant vines in the valley.
Simancas: Small town dominated by the castle which is now home to the crown's historical archives (visits Mon.-Fri. 12:15 noon only, for video and exhibition room).
Tierra de Campos: West of Cigales, the Montes de Torozos become rolling wheat fields. **Urueña** still lives within its medieval walls; the *Centro Etnográfico* Joaquín Ruiz, c/ Real 4, exhibits old musical instruments and costumes (Tue.-Fri. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 4-7 p.m., Sat & Sun 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Tel: (34) 983 717 472). Nearby are two mozarabic churches (**Wamba** and **San Ciprián de Mazote**) and Santa Espina Cistercian monastery (general times 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 5-7 p.m.) and a small museum of country life in **Tordehumos** (12 noon-2 p.m. weekends and holidays).
Tordesillas: Historic crossroads town. The splendid 14th century mudejar *Convento de Santa Clara* was briefly a palace (open Tue.-Sat. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 3:30-6.30 p.m., Sun 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 3:30-5:30 p.m.). The nuns make

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cakes. The *Museo de San Antolín* (Tue.-Sat. 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.) is a fine museum of religious art inside a converted Gothic church.
Valladolid: Now largely modern and businesslike, but once a royal city in the days of the itinerant medieval court. The main sight is the *Museo Nacional de Escultura* (Tue.-Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-6 p.m. and Sun 10 a.m.-2 p.m.), which includes some of the *pasos* from the city's famed Holy Week processions.

ZAMORA PROVINCE

Toro: Lovely old town, largely built with wine wealth and rich with mudejar and Romanesque architecture. Santa María La Mayor is a jewel and compendium of architectural styles; the *Museo del Salvador*, inside a 13th century church, focuses on the mudejar style. General visiting times Tue.-Sun. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 5-8 p.m.).
Zamora: A short drive downriver from Toro, the city's golden-stoned historic quarter is clustered around a superb cathedral (10 a.m.-1 p.m., 5-8 p.m.).

ACCESS TO THE RIVER DUERO

Access to the river is not easy. The longest stretch is a country route from Tordesillas to Toro (L-600 and C-112). Otherwise, there are tracks or roads down to the river from Simancas and the villages close to Peñafiel.

EATING AND GASTRONOMIC SHOPPING

SHOPPING

BURGOS PROVINCE

Aranda de Duero: Good selection of ceramics and pottery from the large Saturday morning market. Cheeses, wines, black pudding (*morcilla*), and other produce in the food shops.

VALLADOLID PROVINCE

Peñafiel: El Empecinado, Ctra. Valladolid-Soria, km 300.5 is a useful roadside stop-off (restaurant, hotel, and wine shop) where you can pick up most Ribera del Duero wines and some local cheeses, biscuits, and cold cuts.
Rueda: the town's high street, once the main highway, is lined with shops selling wineskins, wine, cheese, pottery, and cold cuts. The Bodega-Museo de Vieja Castilla (km 170.6), specializes in gourmet products from further afield (open 8 a.m.-9:30 p.m.).
Toro: Great nuns' cakes from the Dominican *Monasterio del Santo Espíritu* (specialties are *bocaditos del cielo* and *amarguillos*). Three Zamorano cheesemakers with direct sales. On St. Peter's Day (29 Jun.), the town turns into a huge traditional country fair selling garlic, domestic pottery for cooking, wine and cheese.
Valladolid: Pecados Originales, Pasaje Gutiérrez 6, and Sommelier, Colmenares 1, are excellent specialist wine shops. You can also spend a morning visiting the different convents which sell the nuns' homemade cakes and sweets: San Joaquín and Santa Ana, Santa Isabel, Nuestra Señora de Portaceli, Santa Catalina de Sena, and La Visitación.

FEATURED RESTAURANTS, INNS, AND BARS

BURGOS PROVINCE

Aranda de Duero: Mesón El Lagar, c/ Isilla 18, Tel: (34) 947 510 683. *Mesón* with a large selection of wines to drink or buy, and *tapas* or full meals that go beyond roast meats. The old bodegas below are now being used for winemaking again.
Peñafiel: Mesón Don Jose, C. Atarazanas 5, Tel: (34) 983 880 733. Roasts and other dishes from home cooking such as rice with hare, *pisto*, and veal's tail with artichokes.
Roa de Duero: Asados Nazareno, 09300 Roa, Tel: (34) 983 540 214 and 983 540 162. Down to earth restaurant offering just roast *lechazo*, which perhaps explains why it's so good here. Salad and bought-in puddings.

VALLADOLID PROVINCE

Tordesillas: Hostal Juan Manuel, c/ Valdehuertos 2, Tel: (34) 983 770 951. Roadside restaurant, not the most elegant, but highly rated by locals for its local dishes such as *gallo a lo turresilano* (see Recipes on page 118).
Urueña: Mesón de la Loba Parda, c/ Santo Domingo 7, Tel: (34) 983 717 015. Small inn in hilltop medieval village serving fine cheeses, cold cuts, and local dishes.
Valladolid: Mesón Panero, c/ Marina Escobar 1, Tel: (34) 983 307 019. Traditional Castilian cooking: potage, salt cod, stewed pigeon.

ZAMORA PROVINCE

Toro: Casa Lorenzo, Pta. del Mercado, Tel: (34) 983 691 153. Among Toro's bars and restaurants this one next to the market has local specialties like *congrio al ajo arriero* (conger eel with garlic and peppers).

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATION

BURGOS PROVINCE

Aranda de Duero: La Posada de Salaverri, Hontoria de Valdearados, Tel: (34) 947 561 031. A stone mill converted into a welcoming small country hotel and restaurant with orchard garden (15 minutes drive from Aranda).
Hotel Torremilanos, Pza. Primo de Rivera 4, 09400 Aranda de Duero, Tel: (34) 947 501 381. The old vineyard mansion, just off the highway, recently converted into a hotel in the grand style.
Peñafiel: Hotel Ribera del Duero, Avda. Escalona 17, Tel: (34) 983 881 616, Fax: (34) 983 881 444. Streamlined modern hotel in converted flour mill and factory, just a short walk from the old town.
Melida: Corral de Escuela, Tel: (34) 983 880 611. Village house rented out under the rural tourism scheme; a great base for exploring.

VALLADOLID PROVINCE

Tordehumos: Centro de Turismo Rural, Tel/Fax: (34) 983 714 586. Organizing local bed and breakfast style accommodation, houses for rent, bicycles, and guides.
Tordesillas: Parador Nacional de Turismo, Ctra. Salamanca 5, Tel: (34) 983 770 051, Fax: (34) 983 771 013. Peaceful oasis-like hotel with a swimming pool in a large pine grove outside town.
Valladolid: Hotel Mozart, Menéndez Pelayo 7, Tel: (34) 983 297 777, Fax: (34) 983 292 190. Converted 19th century mansion in city center.

ZAMORA PROVINCE

Toro: Hotel Juan II, Paseo del Espolón 1, Tel: (34) 980 633 300, Fax: (34) 980 692 370. Well established family hotel with wonderful views over the river valley and the Colegiata church and a good restaurant (around which the hotel grew).
Zamora: Parador Nacional de Turismo, Condes de Alba y Aliste, Pza. Viriato 1, Tel: (34) 980 514 497, Fax: (34) 980 530 063. Converted Renaissance palace with annex right in the historic center. Good restaurant.

TOURIST AUTHORITY PHONE NUMBERS

Aranda de Duero:
(34) 947 510 476
Cigales: (34) 983 580 000
Peñafiel: (34) 983 881 526
Tordesillas: (34) 983 796 375
Toro: (34) 980 691 862
Valladolid: (34) 983 351 801
Zamora: (34) 980 531 845

Turrón de España
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Turrón de España

Turrón de España: Tradition in Portions

The exact recipe has been carefully guarded by the *maestros turroneros* for over 500 years. The ingredients of almonds, honey, sugar, and egg white make *turrón* a much-prized sweet that is an essential part of the Spanish Christmas and family reunions. Turrón de España is now offering this superb traditional product in bite-sized portions on the United States market.

Not only do the turrón molds hold a sweet confection, they also hold the heritage of remote cultures, of civilizations that lived together in harmony and of ancestral celebrations. The Moors who came in the year 711 and stayed until 1492 brought turrón to Spain and the first written reference to the production of turrón, in the Arab and Jewish communities of Jijona in the province of Alicante, dates from the 14th century. Its quality soon became known outside the Spanish frontiers and in the 16th century it was being exported to Japan. Since then, the recipe has been transmitted from generation to generation and has come to find a permanent place on the Christmas menu of millions of families in Spain and beyond.

At present, about thirty family companies continue production in the traditional manner. They are the heirs to a tradition which mainly produces two types of turrón—the soft turrón made of honey, almonds, and sugar, and the hard turrón which also includes egg white and wafer. Over the years, the creativity of the producers has enriched this basic mixture with fruits, chocolate, and other ingredients so that there is now a multitude of varieties. And now three of the main producers—Delaviuda, Industrias Jijonencas, and Turrones José Garrigós—have merged to form the association Turrón de España with a view to exporting turrón portions to the United States.

Turrón de España brings together the tradition and legacy of the three companies forming it. Their ancestors' recipe is basically as follows. Take pure honey made from the nectar of the oranges that grow in the orchards along the Mediterranean coast, mix with sugar, glucose, and egg white, and cook for thirty minutes. Then add the essential ingredient—the sweet, local Marcona almonds that are first sorted, peeled, dried, and toasted. This is the formula for the hard turrón, gastronomy turned into an art form. Then a special touch that differs this association's products from the norm. Instead of the usual 200-gram slabs, Turrón de España is offered in 20-gram bars to be served with coffee or as a dessert. So tradition and innovation come together to bring us something of the past.

How the Project Started

Turrón de España is the offspring of a specific project—the Strategic Study for the Internationalization of Turrón that was commissioned in 1966 from a U.S. consultancy by several companies in the sector and the Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior—ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade).

One of the first findings of the study was that, in spite of more or less stable production since 1995 of about 34,000 tons per annum, exports had been very sluggish. In addition, the domestic market was at saturation point because nine out of ten Spanish homes already buy turrón. So the ceiling had been reached and there was an urgent need for alternatives. According to Marta Angulo, Head of the Processed Food Department of ICEX, "Two difficulties arise with exports of turrón. On the one hand, most consumption has been in countries of Hispanic tradition which are the main customers. On the other, consumption is strictly seasonal, because turrón is closely linked to Christmas celebrations."

Text: **María Lázaro** Translation: **Jenny McDonald** Still life: **Menchu Artime** Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

Turrón is a vehicle for the Mediterranean culture, the fusing of ancient civilizations and the wealth of the lands where its ingredients grow.

Between 1996 and 1997, the Strategic Study analyzed possible markets, formats, and distribution channels. The series of interviews with importers and distributors concluded that the turrón from Alicante—the hard type—was the most promising and that the most accepted format was individual portions. The end result came in mid-1997, with the study pointing clearly to a new focal point for export strategies—the United States—and to a new channel—coffee shops and gourmet shops.

From the Mediterranean to the Pacific

An intense blue was chosen to represent the Mediterranean sea, the profile of the packed almonds was converted into a mosaic design, a red seal accredits quality and historical tradition, and black and gold signify nobility. These are the colors and designs of the corporate image of Turrón de España. Soon after the conclusion of the Strategic Study in August 1997, when the three producers decided to join forces by creating Turrón de España, they also agreed that the presentation should be both traditional and novel. So they designed the emblem and chose to sell turrón in small 20-gram bars packed in cellophane so that customers can see at a glance the high almond content. These are exposed in little sacking bags holding 20 to 25 portions, and several point-of-sale display materials and leaflets describing the history and background of turrón were also devised.
The acid test came at the end of 1997 with market trials along the west coast of the United States and a specific objective—coffee shops, a type of establishment that is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S., where people can escape the city bustle to relax or talk quietly over a cup of coffee.
"We chose three cities—Seattle, because it was the birthplace of the coffee shops, Portland because it is very much an American city with little Hispanic influence, and San Diego which is the opposite with a high concentration of Latin American population. We held meetings with ten coffee shop chains, trusting that at least two would show an interest in our product. But we ended up with nine, and four have already placed orders. We placed advertisements in several specialist coffee magazines—*Coffee and Cuisine, Specialty Coffee, Retailer,* and *Fresh Cup.* The first ad brought 150 enquiries. Every time we gave a sample to a potential distributor, the response was "Tell me more." These are the satisfied comments of Martin Wilson, managing director of Turrón de España. And in just a few months, Turrón de España has delighted the palate of thousands of Americans and has gained recognition by the specialized distributors. This has been achieved with the help of a carefully managed promotion campaign that was organized locally.
Turrón de España has had to work hard to gain its entry visa. Its debut was in Seattle where it sponsored the Laser Light Show Spectacular which is held annually in December to welcome in the New Year. From there to the Fancy Food Fair at the end of February in San Francisco, one of the most important in the sector. An appearance at the North West Food Service Fair in Seattle in March was followed by the most significant of the events, the Specialty Coffee Fair in Denver in mid-April. There, Turrón de España won one of the most important awards, the second prize for the Best New Product. So it achieved its credentials with flying colors. Turrón de España is also carrying out sponsorship of cultural and social events. It collaborates through donations with the contemporary theaters of Seattle and Portland and with the San Diego Opera. And it has also sponsored two competitors in the Pacific Coast Triathalon and Biathlon events.
The result is that Turrón de España now has representatives in five U.S. cities—Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, and Chicago, with Boston next on the list. "We have surpassed our expectations," says Martin Wilson. "Our product will soon be present in about 600 or 700 coffee shops belonging to several chains, as well as in a further 600 independent establishments. So we have now decided to introduce turrón in portions to gourmet shops this September although this was originally planned for 1999."

New Varieties

But that's not all. Martin Wilson has many more plans. In September, not only will Turrón de España first offer its products in gourmet shops in the United States but it will also be extending its range to include three new varieties. So far, the hard turrón has only been sold in 20-gram bars with the characteristic whole almonds. In autumn, customers with a sweet tooth will also be able to try portions with a partial coating of black chocolate. And portions will also be produced with almond pieces in a smaller size—15 grams and 8 mm thick—both with and without chocolate, for sale in candy stores.
After the United States, the next port of call will be Europe and this move will be made at the start of 1999. Meanwhile, in the factories, the confectioners prepare their molds. A gentle flame, near-boiling pots, patience, and much pampering are the keys to this age-old, luxury confection.

Turrón in Figures (Metric Tons)

	1995	1996	1997
Production	34,242	33,996	34,166
Exports	3,200	3,021	2,794

Source: Spanish Association of Turrón and Marzipan Producers

María Lázaro *is a journalist who specializes in foreign trade and writes for another ICEX magazine,* El Exportador.

See Main Exporters on page 122.

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Tempranillo and Company

A GRAPE VARIETY AND ITS BLENDS

As a result of the quality revolution in Spain's vineyards which began in the 1970s and spread throughout the country during the 1980s, certain varieties, formerly minority ones in Spain, have acquired new importance, while others have been introduced from elsewhere. This article looks at how this fascinating development has affected one specific variety, Tempranillo, and also assesses its performance in combination with other varieties..

Tempranillo is the best-known Spanish variety outside Spain, largely for its role as the basis of one of the most highly regarded Spanish wines in export market terms. But it is no longer the Riojan exclusive it once was. Plantations of Tempranillo have spread all over Spain, and it has proved to have adapted very successfully. When quality wines are the target, choice of grape variety is of primordial importance. In the areas bordering La Rioja, an alternative was sought to Garnacha—a variety that had been very widely planted for reasons of ease of cultivation and its very high yield, priorities which had been fundamental tenets of traditional Spanish viticulture overall. Navarre and Aragon opted to start by reinstating Tempranillo, a variety which, though still present in their vineyards, had been relegated in favor of other more easily cultivated and productive varieties.

In much the same way, experimental centers in Spain's several Autonomous Regions, in conjunction with the more pioneering wineries, began planting experimental varieties and offering incentives to growers for those varieties and for adhering to specified growing methods. The experimental period is not over yet, it is an obvious indication of conclusions already reached that Tempranillo is the authorized, and in some cases recommended, variety in 23 Denominations of Origin as the basis for quality red wines. It is important to realize that Tempranillo is known by different names in different growing areas (see box on page 100).

According to popular etymology, Tempranillo takes its name from the fact that it is an early grape—*temprano* is the Spanish word for early. (It does ripen earlier than the other traditional varieties, although in France it would be much in line with the rest, so the name would not really make sense).

Text: **María Antonia Fernández Daza** Translation: **Hawys Pritchard** Still life: **Menchu Artime** Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

The gentle revolution that has taken place in Spain's vineyards and wineries over the last 20 years has been opportune, and its benefits are starting to show.

Early ripening is a characteristic of vines grown in colder places, or on high ground, which need to speed up their vegetative cycle before the autumn cold sets in. For this reason, it is believed to be of northern origin, as opposed to other varieties such as Garnacha, Viura, Monastrell, Palomino, Malvasía, and Moscatel which are of Mediterranean provenance.

This provides the basis for the theory that Tempranillo originates from Burgundy: its vegetative process is similar to that of Pinot Noir, and its wines also age similarly, allowing for obvious differences. It is a fact that monks belonging to various religious orders following the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela carried with them vine cuttings, among other novelties, which they distributed among the various Spanish monasteries of their respective orders.

Tempranillo, which thrives in clayey-chalky soils, gives wines with a pleasing suggestion of mulberry or blackberry, a sensation of freshness and dryness in the mouth, as opposed to the majority of Spanish grapes which give wines which are slightly sweet and warm. It possesses the virtues of "cold" or Atlantic grapes, which age well in wood: a good tannic structure, with color and acidity lasting well during aging. This crucially important balance is the motive behind all the experimentation and investment carried out in Spain with a view to improving wines and guaranteeing successful aging.

Tempranillo Around Spain

The tradition of blending grapes from the three Riojan sub-zones observed the principle that the grapes obtained from, for example, the Rioja Alta, give wines high in alcohol and acid but, in the cooler, wetter areas, low in color, even in years when weather conditions are normal. Meanwhile, in the Rioja Alavesa, there is enough pigmentation and alcohol, but, because the soil there has a high potassium content, its wines are very low in acidity. This, then, is why traditionally the wines of the three zones have been blended. This same reasoning was—indeed still is—the justification for blending Tempranillo with Rioja's three other red varieties: Garnacha, Graciano, and Mazuelo. Depending on its origin and vinification, each contributes different characteristics: Garnacha's input is alcoholic strength and freshness in young wines not intended for long maturation; Mazuelo (France's Carignan) gives robustness, while Graciano (which had been on the wane) gives a wine charm or grace—the *gracia* from which it takes its name.

In Ribera del Duero, however, Tinto Fino achieves a better balance. This has been shown to be the same variety as Tempranillo, acclimatized and adapted to the area (it is an adapted clone). The predominant fact that its vegetative cycle is short is very fortunate in an area where the summer is very short. The visible difference between the two plants is very slight, but the difference is much more marked in wines made from them. Tinto Fino's main characteristic is color intensity: it gives wines of a very strong, dense, bluish violet. Its polyphenolic structure is wide, abundant and long lasting; these are very long-lived wines. This increase in intensity over the performance in Rioja is attributable to there being more sunshine per day in Ribera del Duero. These wines have higher acidity, since the altitude here, almost at the limit at which vines can be grown, means that the nights are cold, so that less acidity is lost.

In Navarre, Tempranillo used to coexist with other varieties, but with a lower profile, for here the territory is dominated by Garnacha, an easier variety to grow, posing fewer problems and being less demanding overall. The climatic diversity within Navarre provides a cold, rainy climate in the Pyrenees and Atlantic and Continental climates in the center, even Mediterranean and semi-arid in places. And all these have their pros and

FACTS ABOUT TEMPRANILLO

Synonyms: Cencibel, Tinto Fino, Tinta de Toro, Tinta del País, Ull de Llebre

Denominations of Origin where it is an authorized variety: Alella, Alicante, Binissalem-Mallorca, Bullas, Calatayud, Campo de Borja, Cariñena, Cigales, Conca de Barberà, Costers del Segre, Jumilla, La Mancha, Méntrida, Navarra, Penedés, Ribeiro, Ribera del Duero, Rioja, Somontano, Tarragona, Toro, Utiel-Requena, Valdepeñas, Valencia, Vinos de Madrid

Leaf characteristics: Large-sized, pentagonal in shape with deep lateral sinuses, seven-lobed, with a dark green surface and velvety underside

Bunch characteristics: Medium sized, very compact, shaped like a "winged" cylinder

Berry characteristics: Medium sized, spherical in shape and bluish-black in color, with white pulp.

Susceptibilities: Sensitive to oidium and, slightly, to mildew, and to potassium-rich soil.

The approach adopted when introducing new varieties into the Denominations has provided the stimulus to apply the same approach to varieties already in existence there.

cons: Tempranillo is adapting very readily to Navarre's winegrowing areas, giving wines that can be spectacularly good. Plenty of polyphenols and enough acidity are what it takes.

In Catalonia, the Ull de Llebre grape loses some of the variety's personality under the influence of the Mediterranean climate. Once a traditionally white variety growing area, some of its vineyards have now been replanted—in Penedés especially—with varieties introduced from elsewhere. Some of these have not caught on, however, and Tempranillo has emerged as the protagonist though it is not the only variety to accept the challenge posed by a high demand for red wines. This area is starting to make a name for itself as much for its wine styles as for its chosen varieties.

In Utiel-Requena, and rivaling native variety Bobal, Tempranillo offers an elegant, flavorful structure, though here it already resembles La Mancha's Cencibel more than Riojan Tempranillo. Cencibel wines from La Mancha and Valdepeñas have more structure and less acidity than their Riojan counterparts: there is a slightly rustic note and a "taste of the sun" about them, in some cases reminiscent of fresh figs, or dried figs when made with grapes that have had too much sun. They develop more rapidly during aging.

Another Tempranillo worthy of mention is grown in Almendralejo (Badajoz), in the Ribera del Guadiana D.O., similar to La Mancha's, though here it retains the name Tempranillo. There are more balsamic notes to the wines of this area, and a slight "woodland" taste. Low acidity is their main drawback as candidates for long aging.

Initially, Toro had to fight to save its Tinta de Toro variety, which used to suffer from a very bad press on the domestic market. Abroad, things were less difficult, since it had no reputation to overcome there. On occasion it has been touch and go in this Denomination, with wineries such as Fariña having to struggle to save the variety from falling victim to errors of the past. Their first task was to establish what it was capable of and then (they are approaching this stage now) to discover how its blends develop. The bodega's Manuel Fariña believes that "this variety's uniqueness has opened doors for us." Perhaps even more than would have been the case with better known but less original varieties. There is still plenty of scope for development with this one which, of the various Tempranillo clones, is the one that reveals the greatest capacity for polymerization between tannins and anthocyans (better fixing of polyphenols).

While these experiments with Tempranillo were going on, other varieties were also being studied, each separately but following the same pattern. As one might expect, the areas that were first off the mark have now more or less resolved issues of variety choice and winemaking approach.

Navarre Leads the Way

Since the setting up of its Viticultural Station, Evena, in 1981, Navarre has been a trailblazing center, among the most modern in Europe, geared towards providing service to concerned growers within its ambit. Its experimental work nearly always represents a response to requirements within the sector. Basically, their research work concerns seven vine varieties: Garnacha, Tempranillo, Cabernet-Sauvignon, Merlot, Mazuelo, Chardonnay, and Viura. Various clones, pruning and growing methods, soils, treatments, monitoring water-related stress in plants (this is also done in areas susceptible to draught during vegetative development), are the sort of issues dealt with. And the aging of wines, too. Results have been quickly achieved. Plantations are being renewed, not only with new varietals but also with improved clones. Tempranillo is gradually taking over part of Garnacha's majority holding, so that there is greater diversity within the vineyards. One conclusion (which shows how modest growers have to be—they always keep one eye on the sky) is that enough sunshine is essential to good wine, especially in August if the grapes are to ripen properly.

The wines have been exhaustively monitored, each being made separately: "Tempranillo gets priority in blends, but success depends on many factors," declares Julián Suberviola, Evena's Head of Enology. Some years, the components of the best blends can vary dramatically—it depends on how the base variety is behaving.

Tempranillo in Blends

The arguments in favor of Tempranillo both in Navarre and Aragon, and extrapolable for the rest of Spain, are based on the fact that it is a very rounded variety, aromatic, rich in alcohol and well suited to aging: it is well structured and has plenty of color, namely a high enough concentration of anthocyans and tannins if the yield is sufficient and it has had enough sun to ripen. In general terms, of the introduced varieties, Cabernet-Sauvignon is the one that adapts best. It is more dependable than Merlot, which gives good wines but shows more tendency to *coulure*. "What we look for in blends is complementarity: wines that round each other out produce the best wines, even improving on the base wine, and that's the object of the exercise," adds Mr. Suberviola. The combination of Tempranillo and Cabernet-Sauvignon works very well in general, the latter contributing more acidity, aromatic power, and better tannic structure to Tempranillo.

In Somontano, events moved even more quickly: in that good results were obtainable there whatever the variety, there were fears at first that this area might turn into a producer of Cabernet-Sauvignon and Chardonnay. They then began planting Tempranillo like everybody

The introduction of Tempranillo into 23 of Spain's D.Os has had the effect of breaking the 'monopoly' formerly enjoyed by others varieties and diversifying the vineyards.

else. Viñas del Vero winery, for example, pursued various experimental schemes with the local administration, conforming to Euro-requirements, to establish the most appropriate varieties. The results are now to be found in the marketplace, where they are being very well received. Tempranillo adapted very well to both soil and climate. "Tempranillo's biggest enemy is productivity," declares Pedro Aibar, manager of Viñas de Vero. "The interest in blends is an attempt to complement its qualities, and Cabernet-Sauvignon contributes personality to a blend." Their experience has shown that the best blends are of Tempranillo and Cabernet-Sauvignon. Specifically, they are working on two lines: monovarietals in general, aimed at absolute beginners in the wine world (he thinks of this line first and foremost as a "communication concept, given that it is easier to identify a variety than a winegrowing area"). The other line, blends, is for experts, better-informed consumers. These are designer wines, in which the ensemble, the finished wine, is the important thing, rather than its components, which are not even mentioned. Both lines have their specific markets.

Pedro Aibar feels confident about Tempranillo, which is already attracting attention at international wine events. "I hope that it provides a window for Spanish wines. The notion that Spanish wines are made from Tempranillo could serve as a market base, just as there is an initial idea that all French wines are made from Cabernet Sauvignon, even though it isn't true. Truisms are inevitable, and generating them is no bad thing if it creates a quality image and point of reference," maintains Pedro Aibar.

Return of the Native

Rioja is also carrying out a program of research into Cabernet-Sauvignon and its suitability as an authorized variety for the Denomination. The program is due for completion at the end of 1998. In parallel, and as a response to the area's more conservative sectors, research is also being done into Graciano, an almost lost native variety now being reinstated by a group of enthusiasts led by the manager of Bodegas Ijalba, Mr. Sancha: Their Graciano monovarietals have reached the marketplace. Observations of the qualities of this variety have revealed that some are similar to those sought in Cabernet-Sauvignon. This means that purists can reinforce their wines using native grapes. For Hurtado de Amézaga of Marqués de Riscal, Tempranillo provides the basis of a Rioja. When it is good, it is very, very good, but such results call for careful control of yields and for using the appropriate clones. It can be matched with, and complemented by, other varieties such as Graciano, which contributes liveliness in color and acidity, and other aromas of a different fruit, and very fine tannins. Tempranillo is complemented and improved by a small quantity of another variety of this sort, especially in years when Tempranillo wines are less structured than in others.

Untapped Potential

In Ribera del Duero, where the grapes are better balanced, its wines do not display significant deficiencies which could, in principle, be compensated for by other varieties. For over a century in Vega Sicilia they have had "foreign" grapes, and even though their performance in this area has not yet been thoroughly studied, it seems that the best results are obtained when they are harvested overripe. Of the Denomination's 12,200 hectares (30,146 acres), only 89 hectares (220 acres) are planted with Cabernet-Sauvignon, so that replanting with other varieties is still very much in the early stages. Future plans involve Tinto Fino, though other suitable varieties are not being overlooked with a view to adding a little touch of personality, that little bit extra.

What is happening in the most advanced regions now will be replicated in the rest, which are following good examples and collaborating both with the administration and with research centers and private companies—these last often move ahead more quickly than the scientists.

The renovation of Spain's winery installations had already marked an important and almost automatic advance in the quest for quality improvement in Spanish wines. Subsequently, or simultaneously in some cases, the conversion of its vineyards means that Spain is being taken seriously among the world's fine wine producers and, furthermore, for singular qualities which distinguish them from other, more internationally known ones.

In the course of this conversion, Tempranillo's characteristics have been demonstrated with crystal clarity: it adapts well all over mainland Spain, being considered unsuitable only in Priorato, the Balearic Islands, and the Canaries. In general, experiments in blending it with other varieties, both native and introduced, indicate that it combines well with Cabernet-Sauvignon on condition that Tempranillo is always the prioritized variety, and that it can be improved by another variety or varieties which contribute complexity to the blend in the form of aromas, tannic structure, color, and acidity.

***María Antonia Fernández-Daza** holds a Higher Diploma in Viticulture and Enology form the Escuela Superior de Ingenieros Agrónomos in Madrid, and a DUAD from the Oenology Institute of the University of Bordeaux. She has worked in almost all facets of the wine world. She is currently a consultant to the PIPE 2000 plan, whose aim is to promote the internationalization of Spanish companies, and she also takes part in wine seminars and tastings for various branches of the media.*

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TEMPRANILLO IN AUSTRALIA

Tempranillo—just the name lets you into the secret that it would be well suited to Australia. It speaks of temperate-zone climates, which Australia has in common with this grape's home, Spain. But Australia has virtually no Tempranillo. Why?

Most wine people agree that the potential for Tempranillo is vast in our country. Spain gave us the merino sheep, from which we produced superfine wool the equal of anything in the world. Why not wine grapes as well?

There is a little Tempranillo in Australia, and it's recently begun to spread. A leading experimenter in grape varieties, Brown Brothers, made a trial batch from grapes grown in northeastern Victoria, in 1996. The grapes were grown on the private vineyard of Browns' chief viticulturist, Mark Walpole. He has two hectares at Whorouly, in one of the warmest, lowest-altitude sites (about 150 meters) of the generally cool King Valley region. "The vines were planted in 1994 and we have released the '96 vintage, the first, as a cellar door-only label," says Browns' Steve Kline.

Browns habitually releases small-make experimental varietals at cellar door, which means they're only available from the winery. "We are pretty happy with it, but I think it's just a little bit oaky. There will be a '97 to follow it. I'm also hoping we might do a Riojan blend in the future, Tempranillo with Graciano and Grenache." Needless to say, this would be a first for Australia. Browns have had Graciano for some years and have always made it as a solo varietal, also sold only at the winery.

Nepenthe Vineyards, a new producer in the Adelaide Hills, is planting two hectares of Tempranillo this year (1998). These vineyards are at Charleston, a warmer, lower-altitude part of the hills than the main Nepenthe vineyards at Lenswood. Says winemaker Peter Leske: "From our information, it is a relatively early-ripening variety. We are planting it partly as an indulgence, partly because Mediterranean varieties are trendy now—not that we're chasing trends—but we have seen what others are doing with Italian varieties, such as Sangiovese and Barbera, and decided to be different. So we have also planted Zinfandel (a rare grape in Australia)."

Other Australians growing a smattering of Tempranillo are Yarra Yering in the Yarra Valley and Happs at Margaret River. Yarra Yering makes a port-style fortified wine from its Tempranillo, blended with several Portuguese and Spanish varieties. Another Yarra Valley winemaker, Philip Dowell of Coldstream Hills, is interested in Tempranillo and would like to plant it. Like others, he reports that Tempranillo planting material is hard to obtain. Dowell thinks it very strange that Australia has not shown interest in Tempranillo before, especially as the Spanish link has been strong with other varieties. We've had large areas of Grenache (Garnacha) and Mourvèdre (Mataro) for a long time. These two are currently enjoying a renaissance, sometimes as single varietals but usually in blends with Shiraz (Syrah).

Stephen Pannell, red winemaker for BRL Hardy, one of the three biggest wine companies in Australia, is also keen to try his hand at Tempranillo. Having toured Spain, he is enthusiastic about the grape's potential. He's already found a McLaren Vale grower with some young Tempranillo vines and the company intends to plant its own soon, at McLaren Vale and possibly Padthaway.

But, for Tempranillo, it's just the beginning in Australia. It is a variety that should be well suited to a wide range of Australian conditions and it is quite possible that if this article were to be rewritten in ten years, there would be several exciting new Aussie Tempranillos making a splash in the ever-widening wine pond.

Huon Hooke *writes various weekly and monthly wine columns in the Australian press and contributes to the* Wine Spectator *in the U.S. and several international wine guides. He edits* Langton's Wine Review, *judges in about eight shows a year in Australia and overseas, runs wine courses in Sydney where he lives, and chairs the judging panel of the annual Tucker & Co. Australia's Wine List of the Year Awards. He has also worked in several wineries.*

TEMPRANILLO IN THE U.S.

Although finding a wine in Spain made from the Tempranillo grape is easy to do, this is not the case for American-grown Tempranillo wines since U.S. plantings of this grape are relatively scarce.

Among American red grapes, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, and the emerging Merlot are the most widely grown. Tempranillo, on the other hand, was introduced in California in the 1960's by Harold Olmo, the renowned viticulture professor at the University of California, Davis School of Viticulture and Enology. He called it Valdepeñas because he brought it from that place in east-central Spain. While in the U.S. Valdepeñas is considered to be a synonym for Tempranillo, for the sake of clarity the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, the U.S. government agency that regulates such matters, is considering phasing out the term Valdepeñas in favor of Tempranillo.

If the grape variety, Valdepeñas, indeed is Tempranillo, its arrival in California may actually date back to the 1920's. J.B. Cella of the Roma Wine Company located near Lodi, is believed to be the first to cultivate the grape in that state. According to Ernest Gallo, of the mammoth E. & J. Gallo Winery in Modesto, his brother Julio soon became California's largest grower of Valdepeñas. In those days, most of the Valdepeñas lost its identity through blending in generic wines, or it was used to make dessert wines or brandy which dominated the U.S. wine scene at that time.

Today, however, there are limited plantings of certified Tempranillo vines that were planted by winegrowers seeking to make wines more like those made from Tempranillo as grown in Spain.

Greg Boeger, of Boeger Winery in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains, became enchanted by the wines made from Tempranillo during a trip to Spain nearly twenty-five years ago. The Tempranillo grape allows him to make a wine which is vibrant, fruity, and intense. He calls this "wondrous" wine Milagro, a blend of Tempranillo, Grenache, and Graciano. He began making this wine in 1994 and his current production of 600 cases per year sells very briskly.

The 1998 vintage will produce the first commercial bottlings from two other California wineries. Gundlach-Bundschu Winery in Sonoma County started with cuttings of that varietal from two vines acquired from the University of California at Davis and now has three hectares (seven acres) of vines. Further inland, the R.H. Phillips Winery near Sacramento has 15 hectares (39 acres) of Tempranillo planted, 5 hectares (13 acres) of which are currently in production. Both wineries consider their growing conditions to be well-suited to Tempranillo, as evidenced by the promise of their experimental batches.

Wine drinkers in America looking for the lively fruit and intensity of flavors produced by Tempranillo, must, at least for now, turn to the distinctive Tempranillo wines from Ribera del Duero, Rioja, and the Penedés, among other regions of Spain that are readily available in the U.S. Depending on the success of the pioneering efforts of Boeger, Gundlach-Bundschu, and R.H. Phillips wineries, others may follow suit and the next wine phenomenon may very well be a New World Tempranillo.

David Strada *is a San Francisco-based writer and food and wine consultant, specializing in promotions and marketing. He is the former executive director of the American Institute of Wine&Food and the International Association of Women Chefs and Restaurateurs.*

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

As recently reported in an article in the American publication, *Business Week* (Aug. 3, 1998), Spain currently has one of the fastest growing and most solidly based economies in Europe. The affluence created by Spain's booming economy, coupled with the fact that Spain is the third most popular tourist destination in the world, has had a profound effect on Spanish gastronomy. During the past two decades, in addition to the growth of gourmet-inclined tourism, Spanish national demand for excellence in gastronomy and for the first-rate ingredients that go into fine cuisine has fueled perhaps the greatest culinary Renaissance Spain has ever known. As I pointed out in my last column, Spain's regional cuisines and signature chef restaurants now compete with the best of Europe.

This was underscored recently on a trip I took to Spain to speak at the International Olive Oil Council-sponsored Conference on Spanish Regional Gastronomy and the II International Congress on the Mediterranean Diet. Besides focusing on traditional Spanish cuisine, the conference also highlighted olive oil's time-honored place in gastronomy and the health benefits of the so-called Mediterranean Diet, which, of course, features olive oil—98% of which comes from Mediterranean countries—and emphasizes a fresh vegetable, fruit, and grain weighted diet over red meat and fatty foods.

During the conference, I would also have a chance to sample a great number of regional Spanish dishes *in situ*, prepared by first-rate culinary professionals and traditional practitioners demonstrating authentic Spanish dishes. I arranged to meet an old friend, Len Pickell, president of The James Beard Foundation and Diane Kern, a James Beard Foundation trustee, in Barcelona to take them on a culinary tour of classical cuisine restaurants before the conference began. As a counterpoint, we would also visit **El Racó de Can Fabes, Sant Joan 6, San Celoni (Barcelona), tel: (34) 938 672 851**, chef Santi Santamaria's three-star Michelin restaurant in a village outside Barcelona (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41). Santamaria's food lived up to its billing with such dishes as a melt-in-your-mouth veal marrow cream with truffles, rockfish in cabbage with Swedish flying fish roe, and the incredibly rich *tripitas de bacalao*, or salt cod "tripe."

At **Can Majó, Almirall Aixada 23, Barcelona, tel: (34) 933 101 455**, an elegant old favorite in Barcelona's working class port district, La Barceloneta, we had marvelous fried baby artichoke hearts; succulent, sweet, grilled *navajas* (razor clams); small, garlicky *coquinas* (small wedge clams); tiny *calamares* sautéed in olive oil with tender young fava beans and artichoke hearts; and *fideos a banda con langosta* (a typical Catalan *paella*-like dish with lobster, using pasta instead of rice). A crisp, light Miranda d'Espiells Chardonnay from Juvé y Camps, one of Catalonia's top *cava* (*méthode champenoise* sparkling wine) producers, and a delicious Jean León Petit Chardonnay were excellent companions for this seafood-based luncheon.

One morning, we visited Barcelona's legendary **La Boquería** (Mercat de San Josep), recognized as one of the world's best and most colorful markets (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38), where a *merienda* (late breakfast, or between meals meal) stop at **Pinocho** (just inside the main entrance to the market, to the right; **tel: (34) 933 171 731**, is *imprescindible* (essential) for everyone from the mayor of Barcelona to market vendors, top Catalan restaurateurs, and visiting gastronomic stars. Juanito, the colorful owner, keeps up a continual banter and stops briefly to pose for two-thumbs-up photos while serving such traditional dishes as *pa amb tomaquet* (classic Catalan bread rubbed with olive oil, ripe tomatoes, and fresh garlic); scrambled eggs with shrimp, wild green asparagus, and young garlic shoots; clams in a wine sauce; and great sugar-dusted *xuxos*, pastries filled with vanilla cream.

One day for lunch, we ventured into the depths of the Barcelona's El Raval district, where **Casa Leopoldo, San Rafael 24, tel: (34) 934 413 014**, stills serves wonderful Catalan classics in a stylishly old fashioned ceramics-tiled dining room decorated with copper pots, baskets of flowers, and oil paintings of famous bullfighters. We sampled the ubiquitous, but always welcome, Catalan tomato bread with house cured anchovies in olive oil, superb *jamón ibérico de bellota* (sliced ham from acorn-fed Iberian free-range pigs), baby fava beans with diced cured *serrano* ham, and grilled wild mushrooms with *botifarra*, Catalan sausage.

The sight of Len Pickell, a gastronome of international repute, contemplating a plate of grilled young goat chops and fried eggplant slices with an anticipation normally reserved for caviar, truffle, and foie gras dishes, was a classic. Late in the afternoon, after a couple of bottles of Las Campanas *rosado* (a fine Navarre rosé) and the ripe, dark, black cherry-flavored Hacienda Monasterio from Ribera del Duero, we left this Barcelona gem.

The conference moved on to Córdoba for several days where more panels of experts presented educational seminars extolling the healthful and gastronomic virtues of olive oil, demonstrations featuring Andalusian frying techniques using olive oil; a luncheon featuring excellent Andalusian *tapas* specialties from Córdoba's legendary taverns; and a chance to sample the great cold soups of the south: classic Seville-style, brick-orange *gazpacho*; stunning *ajo blanco* (a garlic, olive oil, and almond based soup served with grapes or apples as a garnish), and *salmorejo*, a thicker Cordovan version of gazpacho that is often used as a sauce.

Back in the United States, Spanish cuisine, food products, and wine are beginning to capture the imagination of more and more Americans, including some of the country's top culinary figures.

Even top-rated French chefs in America, such as Daniel Boulud, chef-owner of Daniel in Manhattan, considered by many to be the best restaurant in America, and Jean-Louis Palladin, chef-partner of Napa in Las Vegas, are starting to take notice of Spanish cuisine. Boulud, who is moving Restaurant Daniel this fall to the East 65th Street site once occupied by Le Cirque (where he made his name years ago), is also opening **Cafe Boulud in the East 76th St.** premises now occupied by Daniel. At Cafe Boulud, he plans to offer four tasting menus named *La Tradition*, *La Saison*, *Le Potager*, and *Le Voyage*. *Le Voyage* represents the inspiration Boulud absorbs from the "exotic flavors of world cuisines." His opening Le Voyage menu in September will feature Spain & the Basque Country (four provinces of which are in northern Spain and the rest in southern France).

Palladin was so impressed by the Spanish Basque cuisine at New York City's Marichu Restaurant, that he spent hours talking with chef-owner Teresa Barrenechea, who is now one of the hottest up-and-coming female chefs in Amer-

ica. Palladin invited her to Las Vegas to cook with him at Napa Restaurant during a gastronomic week that featured star chefs from around the country. After hours, Palladin had Barrenechea cook her Spanish and Basque specialties for the other chefs. Each time Barrenechea turned out a particularly appealing dish, Palladin would exclaim, "That one is for me." (See Lasting Impressions on page 9 for a review of her new book).

Chuck Williams, the founder of the famous Williams-Sonoma cookware stores and a globetrotting gastronomer, was a recent visitor to **El Alambique, Plaza de la Encarnación 1, Madrid, (tel: (34) 913 738 585; fax: (34) 913 738 787; e-mail: amezua@access-net.es)**, one of Spain's top cookware shops, which also offers in-store cooking classes. El Alambique is the creation of the tireless Clara María G. de Amezúa, who is one of Spain's most elegant women and her country's equivalent of America's grand dame of gastronomy, Julia Child. Her daughter, Gabriela Llamas, also teaches classes at El Alambique and makes frequent gastronomic trips abroad to gather new ideas for her classes.

On a recent trip to Seattle, next to the famous Pike's Place Market, I was thrilled to find **The Spanish Table, 1427 Western Ave. (Pike Street Hillclimb), Seattle, WA 98107, tel: (206) 682-2827; fax: (206) 682-2814; e-mail: tablespan@aol.com)**, an amazing two-story emporium filled with what is probably the finest selection of Spanish food products, wines, ceramics, cookware, and Spanish cuisine and wines in the United States.

Spanish cuisine and wines are also getting some excellent press coverage in the United States these days. Rufino López, whose **Solera Restaurant, 216 E. 53rd St., New York City, tel: (212) 644-1166**, was recently given a two-star rating by Ruth Reichl, restaurant critic of *The New York Times*, is "on a roll," as they say in Las Vegas. David Rosengarten, a star on the *Television Food Network* and Restaurant Critic of *Gourmet Magazine* (one of America's top gastronomic magazines), reviewed *Solera* in the September *Gourmet*, praising Barcelona-born chef, Mariano Aznar. "I'm willing to bet that, with the increasing demand for the real taste of Spain, the López-Aznar collaboration could ultimately create America's breakout Iberian beachhead," Rosengarten wrote.

In September, Rufino López and Mariano Aznar joined forces with David Liederman, founder of David's Cookies and a very successful longtime New York restaurateur to open **Solera on Hudson, One Bridge Street, Irvington, New York, tel: (914) 591-2233**, which is located next to the Irvington train station, just half an hour from New York City in affluent Westchester County.

Santé: The Magazine of Restaurant Wine & Spirits, dedicated its September/October 1998 issue and the cover shot to the New Iberia and featured reports on the wines of Navarre, Ribera del Duero, and La Rioja. There was also an article about **Jaleo Restaurant, 480 7th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., tel: (202) 628-7949**, which, along with Padre Luis Lezama's Washington branch of **La Taberna del Alabardero, 1776 I Street, N. W., tel: (202) 429-2200**, gives Spanish cuisine two top ambassadors in the U.S. capital. To celebrate its fifth anniversary, **Jaleo** ran a two-week complementary tasting program offering samples of sherry and selected Spanish cheeses to their customers.

The Wine News usually has an extensive article or two on Spanish wines in every issue, often with reports on the gastronomy and travel tips in Spanish wine regions. In the August/September issue, there were articles on Rioja wines as good values and on the surprising emergence of high-quality white wines from all around Spain. The October/November issue featured a wine tour of the Atlantic Ocean-influenced wine regions of northern Spain with a special focus on the Basque Country. **Executive Wine Seminars, P.O. Box 1791, New York, NY 10113-1791, (tel: 1-800-404-WINE; e-mail: ews.wine@instantlink.com; web site: www.ewswine.com)**, is one of America's most prestigious wine tasting/seminar programs. **EWC's Fall 1998 Wine Program** held an exceptional tasting, "Spain's Newest Superstars," which featured a dozen wines, which co-director Howard Kaplan called Spain's new "first growths." In the brochure announcing the tasting, Kaplan wrote, "the most exciting developments in recent years have taken place in Spain. This tasting will forever change the way you view Spanish wines."

Lately, it seems like everyone wants to get on the Spanish food and wine bandwagon.

__Gerry Dawes__ has been traveling the gastronomic and wine roads of Spain for 30 years. He has been to Spain more than 20 times in recent 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 Enthusiast, *and many others.*

RECIPES FROM THE PYRENEES

Recipes selected by Sonia Ortega
Wines recommended by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Trinchat

SERVES 4:
1 kg cabbage
1/2 kg potatoes
1 tbsp sugar
4 slices streaky belly pork
4 cloves garlic
Salt
8 tbsp oil

Remove the stalk from the cabbage and cut the rest into even-sized pieces. Wash and drain. Peel the potatoes, wash and cut into big pieces. Cook together with the cabbage in salted water with the sugar for 25 minutes.
Drain well and crush the potatoes and cabbage. Peel the garlic and fry until golden. Then brown the pork and remove. Lightly fry the cabbage and potato mixture with the garlic until very dry. Check for seasoning. Divide the mixture into four portions and brown in a small, greased, non-stick frying pan, shaking it so that the mixture does not stick. Turn over and brown on the other side. Serve with a slice of pork on top.
From the book *Menús completos* by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano.
Recommended wine: A white, oak-fermented D.O. Priorato made from 100% white Garnacha grapes. Although the cabbage in this recipe has lost most of its strength after the long cooking process, it would go well with a wine reminiscent of fruit including banana to mellow its flavor still further. A light, fresh wine is needed here and this one has a long, dry finish gained from its time in the barrel.

Hot Pot from the Aran Valley

SERVES 6:
250 gr white haricot beans
200 gr belly pork
200 gr veal shank
250 gr boiling fowl
300 gr black *butifarra* sausage
300 gr white butifarra sausage
2 carrots
1 onion
300 gr cabbage
300 gr potatoes
150 gr thick noodles
Salt

MEATBALLS:
100 gr ground veal
100 gr ground lean pork
50 gr ground belly pork
20 gr fresh white breadcrumbs
1 egg
1 clove garlic
1 sprig of parsley
Salt, pepper, and flour
Olive oil (for frying)

Leave the haricot beans to soak overnight.
Peel and slice the carrots, onions, potatoes, and cabbage. Wash and chop the parsley. Peel and chop the garlic.
Place the beans with the belly pork, the veal shank, the boiling fowl, the carrots, and the onion in a pan of cold water. Season, bring to a boil then simmer.
When half cooked, add the potatoes and the cabbage and bring back to a boil. If necessary, add cold water.
After a few minutes .add the thick noodles and finally the butifarra sausage. Check the seasoning.

When the meat is cooked, remove, cut into pieces then return to the pan. Make the paste for the small meatballs with the ground meats, the salt, pepper, breadcrumbs, egg, garlic, and parsley. Fry in small quantities. Drain and add to the hot pot. Bring to a boil, remove from the heat and serve.
From the book *Cocina tradicional en Paradores: Cataluña*.
Recommended wine: A red '95 D.O. Empordá-Costa Brava made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. More than just a stew, this exceptional dish deserves a powerful, flavorsome wine with an attractive and intense aroma that will not be overcome by the powerful aromas of the food. The marked tannins in this wine will be lightened by the gelatinous meats and the beans.

Trout from the High Pyrenees

SERVES 4:
4 trout
8 slices of streaky belly pork
100 gr bacon
4 red peppers
100 ml olive oil
1 sprig of parsley
1 clove garlic
Salt

Gut and bone the trout. Wash and dry with a cloth.
Wash the peppers and bake in the oven. When soft, peel and chop. Chop the bacon and mix with the peppers. Stuff the trout with this mixture, season, and wrap with the pork slices.
Place the trout in a roasting tin with a little oil. Bake at a medium temperature. When ready, transfer to a serving-dish. Sauté the finely-chopped garlic, and the parsley in the pan juices and pour over the trout before serving.
From the book *Cocina tradicional en Paradores: Aragón y La Rioja*.
Recommended wine: White '96 D.O. Somontano made from Chenin Blanc and Macabeo with a little Chardonnay. These wines are clean and bright on the eye, like river trout, and fresh and clean on the nose, with plant and flower aromas that should blend well with the bacon and peppers. The single fried clove of garlic should not affect the flavor of the wine.

Roast Baby Lamb

SERVES 4:
4 shoulders of baby lamb
100 gr lard
1 sprig rosemary
200 gr onion
1 kg potatoes
3 cloves garlic
Olive oil and salt

GARNISH:
3 cloves garlic
1 sprig of parsley
2 glasses of white wine

Place the seasoned and larded lamb on a roasting dish. Roast with the sprig of rosemary and the garlic cloves for 40 or 50 minutes turning once to brown the meat on both sides. Add the finely-chopped garlic and parsley to the white wine, pour over and finish roasting.
To accompany, thinly slice potatoes and onions. Season and sprinkle with oil. Mix and bake in a medium oven.
From the book *Cocina tradicional en Paradores: Aragón y La Rioja*.
Recommended wine: A red '95 from the D.O. Campo de Borja made of Garnacha and Tempranillo grapes. Its aromas of preserved fruit are an excellent foil for the greasiness of the lamb, which calls for a slightly tannic sweetness by way of contrast.

Civet of Wild Boar

SERVES 6:

2 kgs wild boar (leg)
1/2 l olive oil
Flour
Game stock

MARINADE:

3 carrots
3 onions
2 leeks
2 l red wine
5-6 black peppercorns
1 sprig thyme
1 sprig rosemary
1 bay leaf
Salt

Bone the leg of wild boar and cut the meat into even-sized pieces. Slice all the ingredients of the marinade and prepare.
Place the meat in the marinade and leave in the refrigerator or a cool place for approximately 2 days. Remove the meat, drain, coat with flour then brown over a high heat.
Sauté all the marinade ingredients, except for the wine, in the same oil. When soft, add the wine then after a few minutes the stock. Reduce then pass through the food mill. Combine the sauce with the meat, check for salt and leave to cook slowly until the meat is perfectly cooked.
Serve with steamed carrots.
From the book *Cocina tradicional en Paradores: Cataluña.*
Recommended wine: A red *crianza* D.O. Priorato, preferably the one used in the marinade. A strong 100% Garnacha wine is the best choice to partner the strong flavor of the boar. The aromas of the Priorato wines range from leather to spices, and may include coffee, *eau-de-vie*, cocoa, and balsamic aromas. With this dish there is no need to worry about the flavors overpowering each other.

Pescajús

SERVES 6:

PANCAKES:

1/4 l milk
100 gr flour
2 eggs
20 gr powdered sugar
1 small tsp of brandy
1 small tsp of anisette
25 gr butter
A pinch of salt

CATALAN CREAM:

1/2 liter milk
4 egg yolks
75 gr sugar
100 gr sugar (for caramel topping)
30 gr cornstarch
Stick of cinnamon
and lemon rind

PANCAKES:

Mix all the ingredients except for the butter. Strain then add the melted butter.
Lightly grease a frying pan with butter, pour in a small quantity of the mixture and turn the pan until the mixture coats the base in a thin layer. When set, turn over and cook until golden brown. Remove and leave to cool.

CATALAN CREAM:

Heat up the milk with the cinnamon stick and the lemon rind. In a separate bowl, mix together the egg yolks, sugar, and cornstarch. Pour the milk over the mixture then return to the heat. Stir constantly until the mixture thickens. When cool, fill the pancakes with the cream and fold into four. Sprinkle with sugar and caramelize by pressing with a red-hot, lattice-shaped iron.
From the book *Cocina tradicional en Paradores: Cataluña.*
Recommended wine: Desserts are best served with a sweet wine. Here we recommend a D.O. Penedés to contrast with the slight saltiness of the almost unsweetened pancake and with the burnt caramel topping. Another suitable Catalonian sweet wine would be a D.O. Empordá Costa Brava made from Garnacha or, for a really exquisite choice, a crianza D.O. Priorato made from Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sirah.

RECIPES WITH PIMENTÓN

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

Potatoes and Rabbit in the Mountain

Like so many country dishes from the sierras—this one is from the area around Salamanca—the lack of meat or chorizo sausage is compensated by herbs, garlic, and pimentón. The dish's name is apparently a joke. First-time eaters would invariably ask, "Where is the rabbit?" to which the cook's reply was, "In the mountain." Although this may not look very exciting, there is almost no better way to appreciate the full color, aroma, and flavor of pimentón. From *Cien guisos populars salmantinos*, a privately published book written under the pen-name Aveli.

Serves 6:
1 1/2 kg potatoes

For the *sofrito*:
3 tbsp of olive oil or quality lard
1 onion, skinned and chopped
3 cloves of garlic
3 fresh sprigs of parsley
Sprig of thyme
1 level tsp bittersweet pimentón mixed with 3 tbsp water
A pinch of spicy-hot pimentón, optional

Peel the potatoes and cut them into chunks. In a heavy-bottomed pan, heat the lard or oil gently with the finely chopped onion, pounded garlic, and parsley, and a little thyme and salt. When the onion is softened add the pimentón and water, and cook everything together slowly until soft. You can also add a little hot pepper if you wish.
Recommended wine: A good partner for this dish, which uses spices to make up for the omission of meat, would be a raspberry-colored rosé D.O. Cigales, in which the full flavored Tinto Fino is mellowed by a small proportion of Verdejo and Albillo. With its aromas of fresh herbs, flowers, and red fruits, this wine should lighten the spice flavors without masking them.

Braised Chickpeas, Spinach, and Salt Cod with Pimentón and Coriander

Pimentón often appears in lentil, chickpea, and bean stew pots. It may be briefly sautéed in the initial *sofrito* (see page 57), added directly to the cooking liquid or at the end in a *rehogado* (see page 57). This recipe from Villafranca de los Barros in Extremadura is the most unusual Lenten version of this dish I have come across. It comes from the *Recetario de cocina extremeña* by the Cofradía Extremeña de Gastronomía.

Serves 6:
500 gr dried chickpeas, soaked overnight
100 gr salt cod, soaked overnight
Salt

For the rehogado:
1 medium-sized onion, skinned and chopped
1/2-1 tsp pimentón, to taste
1 handful of spinach or Swiss chard, boiled and squeezed dry
1 sweet green bell pepper, trimmed and roughly chopped

For the machado:
2-3 black peppercorns
1 clove of garlic
1 clove
1 large sprig of coriander
Salt

The chickpeas and salt cod may be cooked well in advance. Cover them with water (unsalted) and simmer slowly until cooked for about 2 1/2 hours (or they may also be done in 30 minutes in a pressure cooker). They may then be left till an hour before serving.
Prepare the rehogado: heat the olive oil gently and sauté the onion, pimentón, spinach, and green bell pepper, turning them frequently in the pan. Add to the chickpeas, season with salt and cook everything together for about an hour. A few minutes before removing them from the heat, add the flavoring machado of pounded black pepper, a clove, a garlic clove and coriander sprig. Serve hot.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Méntrida. This dish is a favorite all over Spain, although paprika is not an essential ingredient, so could be accompanied by any local new, light, red wine. The creamy, fruity aromas of a Méntrida wine, made from Garnacha and Cencibel, would make for a fine match and would tone down the paprika flavor.

Fishermen's Fresh Tuna with Pimentón Adobo

This recipe is midway between a Spanish *escabeche* and a Latin American *adobo*, with the fish briefly cooked and then left to marinate in the same liquid. The recipe comes from *Ranchos de a bordo*, published by the Ministry of Agriculture, a book of dishes from the fishing boats in the 1930s and 1940s. The author adds two pieces of advice: go easy with the cumin and pound everything well for the adobo.

SERVES 6:
2 kilos of fresh red or big-eye tuna, skinned, boned and cut into 5-cm-thick slices

FOR THE ADOBO:
4 cloves of garlic
1 tsp of cumin
2 wine glasses of good wine vinegar
Salt
500 ml extra virgin olive oil (or enough to cover the fish)
1 level tsp sweet or bittersweet pimentón
1 bay leaf

Make the adobo: pound the garlic, cumin, vinegar, and salt and mix them with the oil in a large flameproof earthenware dish or pan in which the fish fits. Finally, add the pimentón and bay leaf. Heat very gently for 8-10 minutes. Remove and cool. Cover and chill until required.
Recommended wine: A semisweet white Rioja made from a blend of Viura and Malvasía grapes. Although no wine goes particularly well with a marinated dish, a white Rioja combining ripe fruit aromas with the smooth sweetness of Malvasía grapes will stand up well against the vinegar of the marinade. If the idea of a semisweet wine alongside the sharp flavors of vinegar and paprika seems a little too experimental, you can't go wrong with a Manzanilla de Sanlúcar.

Reddened Monkfish Salad

Francisco Muñoz Muñoz cooks at Jarandilla Parador in the heart of La Vera's red-pepper country. Here, sitting in the lovely patio where the birds chirp out a loud chorus, he ran through all the local ways of cooking with pimentón: shepherds' *migas*, or fried breadcrumbs, *sopas canas*, a milky winter garlic soup, marinated baked tench and *caldereta* (see the recipe below). But he also came up with this recipe, which suggests pimentón's virtually unexplored potential in modern cooking.

SERVES 4:
400 gr monkfish fillet
50 gr sweet smoked pimentón
100 ml extra virgin olive oil
Salt
500 ml seasoned fish stock
Small extra pinch of sweet pimentón, optional

FOR THE SALAD:

A mixture of curly endive and chicory leaves (or other seasonal salad greens: for example, watercress, crispy lettuce, rocket)

3 tbsp fruity extra virgin olive oil

1/2-1 tbsp lemon juice, to taste

Prepare the fish 1-2 hours before serving: remove the membrane, but leave the fillet in one piece. Mix the pimentón and oil and spread it all over the fish, rubbing it in well.

Bring the stock to a steady simmering boil in a pan large enough to take the fish. Season the monkfish with salt, tie it up in a piece of boiling muslin to keep it in shape, lower it into the stock and cook for 10 minutes. Remove and leave to cool.

Wash and trim the salad leaves and make a bed of them on a serving dish. Slice the fish finely with a very sharp knife and lay the slices, overlapping, in a row or circle on the salad leaves. Moisten with the olive oil and lemon juice and, if you wish, sprinkle over a small pinch of sweet pimentón.

Recommended wine: A white cask-fermented D.O. Rías Baixas with a high proportion of Albariño and a hint of Treixadura and Loureiro. This way of preparing monkfish—with its shellfish flavor—gives it the appearance and texture of lobster. Since only a minimum amount of paprika is used in the finished dish, any wine that would marry well with lobster would be a good choice.

Marinated Roast Fillet of Pork Studded with Chorizo

Toño Perez, chef-proprietor of Atrio restaurant in Cáceres, streamlines Extremadura's traditional dishes to bring out the best of their subtle flavor complexities. Here is a good example of his inspired roots cooking. Its flavors and ingredients were inspired by the feast which followed the annual pig killing, sausage and ham making. The pork is infused in the region's traditional *adobo*, or curing marinade, basted from within by chorizo sausage, and finally served with a spiced potato puree.

SERVES 4:

4 fillets of Iberian pork, each weighing 300 gr
Salt and pepper
250 gr potatoes, peeled
1 morcilla, or 1 black sausage (cooked and crumbled) and a pinch of bittersweet smoked pimentón
1 Iberian chorizo (or other soft cooking chorizo)
A few sprigs of fresh oregano, to garnish

FOR THE ADOBO:

1 tsp crumbled fresh oregano
1 tsp bittersweet smoked pimentón
1/2 l white wine
8 tsp extra virgin olive oil

Stir together the ingredients for the adobo in a dish and use them to marinade the pork fillets, turning them from time to time. Remove the meat, drain it, and pat dry.

Set the oven to 200°C (400°F), gas mark 6. Boil the potatoes, mash them to a light puree and beat in the morcilla, or black sausage with a pinch of pimentón. Keep the puree warm. Lay the seasoned fillets in a shallow-sided roasting tin, cut small incisions in the top half of each one and insert the chorizo pieces. Roast in the oven for 12 minutes and reserve the cooking juices.

Spoon some potato puree into the center of each person's plate and place a fillet on top and pour over the cooking juices (do not deglaze). Finish with a few stems of fresh oregano or another aromatic herb.

Recommended wine: A red D.O. Ribera del Guadiana made of Tempranillo and Garnacha. Aging in the barrel and the bottle tempers the strength of the grapes and brings out aromas reminiscent of cherries, raisins, coffee. These warm flavors will team up well with the herbs used in the marinade.

Lamb Caldereta

This is one of the most classic dishes in which pimentón plays a key role. It can be found in various versions right through central Spain. Depending on the area, you may find it made with red peppers, almonds, cumin, and tomatoes: this is the La Vera version, with pimentón as the main flavoring. Once made with mutton, it is now inevitably made with younger lamb. The recipe comes from *La Cocina Tradicional de la Vera* by Jose V. Serradillo Muñoz.

SERVES 6:
2 kg lamb, chopped into braising pieces
Salt
100 ml olive oil
4 cloves of garlic, skinned
200 gr lamb's liver
200 gr onion, skinned and chopped
1 bay leaf
1 red bell pepper
1 tsp bittersweet pimentón
500 ml wine
100 ml olive oil
1 tsp plain flour
4 black peppercorns
500 ml chicken, meat, or ham stock
Fresh parsley
Salted water

Salt the pieces of lamb and leave them for 15 minutes. In a large flameproof casserole in which the lamb will fit, heat the olive oil gently. Fry the whole garlic cloves, remove and keep on one side. Add the whole lamb's liver, fry it and, when golden, remove. Then add the pieces of lamb and fry them, if necessary in batches, stirring until golden-brown and sealed on all sides. Add the chopped onion and the bay leaf.
Sprinkle the lamb with the pimentón, immediately stir in the wine, and heat gently to reduce it. Sprinkle in the flour, tossing well with the meat, add the stock, and cook for 45 minutes.
Meanwhile, pound the peppercorns, sautéed garlic, red pepper, a few drops of olive oil, and the fried lamb's liver to a paste. When the lamb is tender, stir in the paste and leave to cook for a further 10 minutes.
Recommended wine: A red wine from the Tierra de Barros district in the D.O. Ribera del Guadiana, made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. This strong-flavored stew with liver, garlic, and cloves could easily overpower a delicate wine so the choice needs to be for a wine that is strong in color, aroma, and flavor. The aromas of this Ribera del Guadiana—of very ripe red fruit and even of raisins—make it warm on the nose and on the palate, allowing it to mellow the exquisite flavors of the dish without losing any of its own qualities.

RECIPES FROM CASTILE-LEÓN

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

Castilian Garlic Soup

The three essential ingredients in this soup—garlic, bread, and water—all need to be of good quality. Do not be tempted into thinking that stock is an improvement since it masks the other flavors. Beyond that, though, you can improvise around the local variations in ingredients: lard is used rather than olive oil in Zamora, for example, and pepper seeds and chopped tomatoes are added in León. You can also sauté the garlic first. Usually the bread is broken into small pieces so it swells into sops, but I like this fried-bread version given to me by Vale Riana, who was born in the Burgos countryside but cooked for a Madrid family for thirty years. Garlic soup was often eaten early on winter mornings before going out into the bitter cold, and I really enjoy it that way.

SERVES 4:

750 ml water
4 fat garlic cloves, skinned
8-cm length of French bread or an equivalent chunk of coarse crusty bread, not processed or steam baked, and at least 1 day old
90 ml olive oil
1-2 tsp pimentón (mild, bittersweet or spicy-hot)
Salt
4 eggs

Heat the water in a flameproof casserole. Chop or pound the garlic to a paste, using a pestle and mortar, a garlic press, or the blade of a knife. Add the garlic to the water and leave it to cook through for 5-10 minutes. Meanwhile, slice the bread very thinly (leave the crust on) and fry it in the olive oil, sprinkling a little pimentón and salt in the oil. Add the bread and oil to the water and simmer gently for another 10-15 minutes. You can leave the soup for several hours or overnight at this stage.

Just before serving, poach the eggs in the soup: break each egg, in turn, into a ladle and lower into the soup. Remove from the heat as soon as the white is set and serve into deep bowls. The idea is to stir the soup around so the egg breaks and continues cooking in threads.

Recommended wine: A rosé from the D.O. Cigales made of Tinto Fino, Verdejo, and Albillo. Fresh on the nose with aromas of fruit and herbs, this is a fine-tasting wine that is warm on the palate. It will refresh and lighten the seriousness and even harshness of the soup. It is important that the wine chosen should have structure and taste so that it can hold its own against the paprika and garlic while blending well with the eggs which also tone down the sharp flavors of the soup.

White Haricot Beans with Hare and Oyster Mushrooms

María Arévalo never planned to become a professional cook. Born into a Segovian shepherding family, she learned to cook when she got married. Now, much later in life, she has taken to it like a duck to water after her husband's sudden death left her in charge of the Mesón Don José in Peñafiel. Dishes on the menu include rice with hare, lentils, veal's tail with artichokes, and these beans. The quantities here are calculated around a whole hare, but they could be halved. If you can lay your hands on wild mushrooms, so much the better. The best beans to use are Blanca Redonda from the two local D.O.s: El Barco or La Bañeza.

SERVES 12:
1 whole hare (see below)
1 kg white haricot beans
Salt
90 ml olive oil
1 large onion, weighing 120 gr, skinned and chopped
2 garlic cloves, skinned and sliced
1 green bell pepper, chopped
Small handful of fresh parsley, roughly chopped
Piece of spicy-hot dried pepper, to taste
2 bay leaves
1 sprig of thyme
250 gr oyster mushrooms, wiped clean
A splash of Spanish brandy
1 level tsp sweet pimentón

María recommends cleaning the hare but leaving it in its skin for two days if possible. She leaves the beans to soak in salted water for at least 12 hours in a heavy-bottomed pan large enough for the cooking stage. Joint the hare and cut it into chunks. Season well with salt and set aside in a cool place. Heat the olive oil gently in a large frying pan and sauté the onion, garlic, bell pepper, parsley, the spicy-hot pepper (if you are using it), the bay leaves, and thyme. When the onion is softened, add the hare pieces and sauté them until they are golden.
Add the hare and the mixture into the beans, stir in the cognac, pimentón, and enough water to cover. Put over low heat, bring to a gentle simmer and cook slowly for 1 1/2 hours, shaking the pan occasionally to ensure it is not sticking and adding a little cold water from time to time if the beans look as if they are drying out. Add the mushrooms, cook for another half hour, and check the seasoning.
Recommended wine: A red *reserva* from the D.O. Toro. This is a powerful dish in which the smoothness of the mushrooms partners to perfection the soft texture of the beans. An excellent choice is a red Toro wine aged in the barrel and the bottle giving the right alcohol content to stand up to the hare. The aromas should be of flowers, vanilla, and coffee but at the same time the flavor needs to be polished and smooth to balance this delicate yet full-flavored dish.

Cauliflower al Ajoarriero

Named after the muleteers who traded garlic around the inland *meseta*'s towns and villages, ajoarriero dishes remain a part of everyday cooking. The salt cod ones are the most famous, but I like this dish from Valladolid because of the quieter flavors. This is, by the way, one of the region's few really distinctive vegetable dishes—other than *pisto* and *asadillo*, both based on bell peppers—and is great with a full red wine.

SERVES 4-6:
1 large cauliflower
5 cloves of garlic
3 tbsp roughly chopped parsley
1 tsp rock or sea salt
3 tbsp olive oil, and a little extra for frying
About 2 tsp pimentón, sweet or bittersweet (to taste)
Splash of wine vinegar

Wash and break the cauliflower into small florets and simmer in salted boiling water until just tender. Meanwhile, pound four of the garlic cloves, the parsley, and salt in a mortar. Stir in the olive oil and three tablespoonfuls of the cauliflower's cooking water.

Separately, sauté the final sliced clove of garlic in a little olive oil in a heavy-based frying pan. Turn the heat down to low, add the pimentón and a little wine vinegar, and stir in the mortar's contents. Bring everything briefly to a boil.

Drain the cooked cauliflower well in a colander, transfer to a heated serving dish, and pour the contents of the frying pan over the top.

Recommended wine: A red, non-D.O. Rueda. Although the most outstanding Rueda wines are the white wines, some red varietals are also produced in this region from Tinto de Toro or Tempranillo. These would go well with the strong flavor of cauliflower combined here with the classic, powerful ajoarriero sauce, which is usually a partner for cod.

Trout and Rabbit Escabeche

Escabeches—that is, pickled fish, poultry, game, or meat—pop up all over Castile as an old-fashioned preserving method. But they have remained popular in the age of the freezer and fridge, partly because they taste so good and also because they are ideal instant but real food to make ahead of time. If you are planning to drink wine with an escabeche always use good wine vinegar, or a mixture of wine and vinegar, in the dressing. This recipe comes from El Lagar in Aranda de Duero, a hybrid restaurant, bar, and winemaking *bodega*, where the oak barrels for crianzas (see Glossary on page 130) are kept in the cellars below. Its particular specialty is this plate of mixed escabeches, held together by the flavors of the pickle.

RED SWEET PEPPERS "DEL PIQUILLO"

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

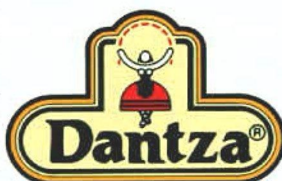
The traditional serving way:

RED SWEET PEPPERS DEL PIQUILLO WITH GARLIC

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 PERSONS

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

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



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SERVES 4:
2 whole trouts, weighing approx 500 gr
Little olive oil for frying
4 rabbit joints, weighing approx
750 gr or 500 mg boneless chicken breasts or loin of pork

FOR THE ESCABECHE:
600 ml extra virgin olive oil
300 ml good quality wine vinegar, or mixed wine and vinegar
2 glasses of water
Salt
1 large onion, skinned
4 whole garlic cloves, skinned
4 large sprigs of thyme
4 bay leaves
24 peppercorns

Put all the escabeche ingredients into a flameproof casserole or pan (not aluminum). Leave to simmer for 10-15 minutes. Meanwhile fry the trout briefly in a little olive oil.
Decant half the escabeche into another pan and use to cook the rabbit or meat until just tender, testing it with the point of a knife. Remove from the heat, cover, and leave to cool. Meanwhile, simmer the trout very briefly for 3-4 minutes in the other pan, cover, and leave to cool. Leave the dishes in the fridge or a cool larder for a week for the flavors to develop and serve flaked and shredded into small pieces together on salad leaves.
Recommended wine: A red crianza '95 D.O. Ribero del Duero made from Tinto Fino and Cabernet Sauvignon. These marinades are never easy to match up with wine because the sharpness of the vinegar tends to overpower the more delicate flavors of the wine. A good idea to temper the marinade would be to prepare it with 50% of this wine and 50% vinegar. The red fruit aroma alongside the hints of minerals, herbs, and the green pepper flavor of the Cabernet Sauvignon, should complement the vinegar marinade provided it is not too strong.

Stewed Turresilano Farmyard Fowl

Just a glance at the names of villages like Pollos (Chickens), Venta de Pollos (Chicken Sales), and Pozal de Gallinas (Hen's Pail) tells you how traditional poultry rearing is around Tordesillas. This was a grandmother's dish, as locals put it, till chefs looking for something local that would work on restaurant menus revived it. Carlos Gayubo, native of Aranda de Duero and chef at the Tordesillas Parador, gave me this recipe. Ideally, he says, it needs to be made with a farmyard cock with the kind of mature red meat that needs plenty of cooking to tenderize it. But if that is difficult then a hen would also do. In the old days the cock's crest would have been included but recently it has been banned from slaughterhouses.

SERVES 10-12:
3.5-4 kg farmyard cock or hen
750 ml water
75 ml extra virgin olive oil
2 bay leaves
1 onion
50 gr whole blanched skinned almonds
50 gr unprocessed bread
3 cloves of garlic
1 parsley stalk
500 ml rancio Rueda wine (an oloroso sherry is a good substitute)

GARNISH:
Triangles of toast
Flaked or finely sliced blanched almonds
Fresh parsley

Clean the bird, chop it into pieces for stewing and season them. Make a stock with the neck, spine, and feet, simmering them together in the lightly salted water, for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Meanwhile, sauté the pieces of fowl or hen in the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan. Remove and keep to one side. Add the bay leaves, onion, almonds, bread, garlic, and parsley to the pan and sauté for 5-10 minutes, turning well. Pound in a mortar (or blend briefly in a food processor or liquefier). Pour the wine over the mixture and then add the cock. Cover with the stock and cook slowly, covered, for 2 1/2 hours. Transfer the fowl to a heated serving dish and decorate it with the toast triangles, almonds, and fresh parsley.
Recommended wine: A red reserva '91 D.O. Ribera del Duero. This is a Tempranillo varietal wine that is aged in oak for 18 months. It is clean on the nose but is not too complex so will not conceal the delicate aromas of the chicken. The aging process gives balance and a good structure on the palate and the tannin content should tone down the fattiness of the chicken. A warm wine is needed here.

Lamb and Potato Confit

In the Tierra de Campos this was the traditional way of cooking baby lamb to give a preserved meat that would last for more than one meal. It needs patience and care to duplicate the kind of slow diffused heat that would have come from using an earthenware casserole over a wood fire, but is worth the effort. Do not be frightened by the quantities of oil and lard; they turn into an olive oil dripping that can be used for cooking the potatoes and flavoring stews or other dishes. The recipe, from the village of Urueña in the Montes de Torozo, was given to me by Damaso Vergara of the Mesón La Loba Parda. He emphasizes that you must trim all the fat off the lamb and that the dish improves with several days keeping. This goes well with a simple green salad and, Damaso suggests, creamed baked garlic.

Serves 4-6:
600 gr baby lamb per person, cut into chunks on the bone, all fat removed
500 gr quality lard
1 liter extra virgin olive oil (0.4 acidity)
1 head of garlic, divided into cloves but not skinned
3-4 bay leaves
1 small handful of parsley sprigs
1-1 1/2 kilos frying potatoes, peeled

Choose a heavy-bottomed casserole, ideally made of earthenware, or a copper-bottomed pan. There should be enough space for the lamb to fry comfortably. Put the lard, oil, bay leaves and garlic in the casserole or pan over the lowest possible flame or setting on your stove. At the right temperature the oil should have small champagne-like bubbles rising to the surface.
When the garlic is golden, add the lamb and parsley. Keep the temperature low, swaying the pan gently from time to time during the cooking. During the first 20-30 minutes the lamb's juices will seep out into the oil. At the end of cooking time, after about 1 1/2 hours in all, the meat should be cooked through but still tender and hardly browned. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. When the fat has solidified place the casserole, covered, in the fridge or a cool larder (or transfer from a metal pan into a storage container).
When the right moment has come to eat the lamb, pick out the chunks you need with the fat that clings to them into a heatproof dish. Scoop the remaining fat into a deep frying pan and use to fry the potatoes. Drain them on kitchen paper towels and keep the fat to use again. Meanwhile, heat the lamb through briefly in a hot oven.
Recommended wine: A red, non-D.O. Rueda made from Tempranillo and Cabernet-Sauvignon. The varied aromas and flavors of this wine together with its sharpness and acidity make it a good partner for this creamy lamb which, although served with practically no oil and with the potatoes well-drained, is still a rather greasy, gelatinous dish that calls for a balanced wine with body and a good tannin content.

RECIPE FROM FORUM

Recipe by Dara Dumbs, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York

Roasted Vegetable Towers and Manchego Crostini with Sherry Vinaigrette

SERVES 3:
1 small eggplant, cut into 6 slices (1/4-inch thick)
1 small potato, cut into 6 slices (1/4-inch thick)
1 Spanish onion, cut into 6 slices (1/4-inch thick)
3 Portabella mushrooms
1 cup Piquillo peppers, cut in chunks
12 ounces Mahon cheese, thinly sliced
1 medium tomato, seeded and finely diced
12 slices (1/4-inch thick) French bread
4 ounces Manchego cheese, grated
12 ounces arugula or other bitter greens

Preheat oven to 425°F. Prepare sherry vinaigrette. In a shallow non-reactive pan place eggplant, potato, onion, and mushrooms; pour 1/4 cup of the vinaigrette over vegetables; marinate for 30 minutes. Drain off excess marinade. Arrange vegetables in a single layer in an oiled shallow baking pan(s); roast until just tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Prepare 3 vegetable towers by layering equal amounts of vegetables and cheese for each tower, in the following order: Portabella, Piquillo peppers, eggplant, potato, onion, and Mahon cheese; repeat with Piquillos, eggplant, potato, onion, and Mahon. Place stacks in a shallow pan; broil until tops are browned and bubbly. Meanwhile, make Manchego crostinis by spooning diced tomato over French bread slices; sprinkle with grated Manchego cheese; broil until cheese is golden brown. Toss arugula with reserved vinaigrette. On serving plates, arrange warm vegetable towers over arugula; serve with Manchego crostinis.

SHERRY VINAIGRETTE:
2 tbsp sherry vinegar
1-1 1/2 tsp Spanish paprika
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp ground black pepper
1/2 cup Spanish olive oil

In a small bowl, combine sherry vinegar, paprika, garlic, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in oil until blended. Yield: 2/3 cup

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

Weight
METRIC/OUNCES & POUNDS

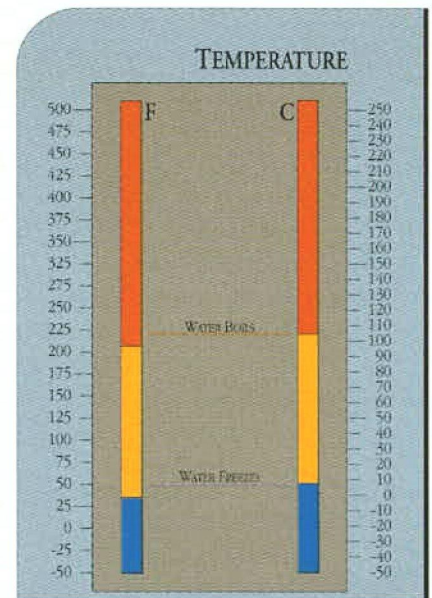
10 grams = 1/3 ounce
50 grams = 1 3/4 ounces
100 grams = 3 1/2 ounces
250 grams = 8 3/4 ounces
500 grams = 1 pound + 1 1/2 ounces
1 kilo = 2 pounds + 3 1/4 ounces
1/2 ounce = 14 grams
1 ounce = 28 grams
1/4 pound = 110 grams
1/2 pound = 230 grams
1 pound = 450 grams

Fluid Measures
METRIC/U.S. STANDARD

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

Oven Temperature

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



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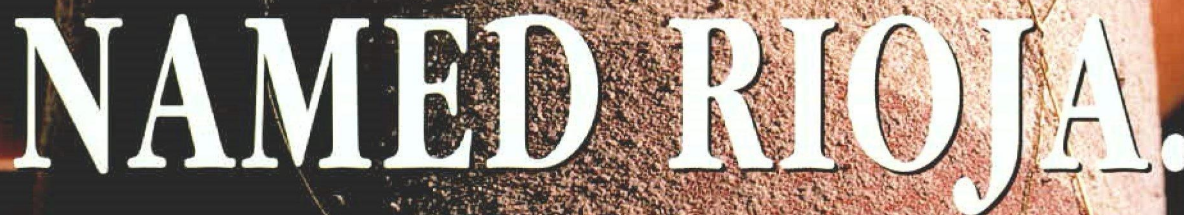

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Source: FEAD (Spanish Federation of Sweets Association) and ICEX

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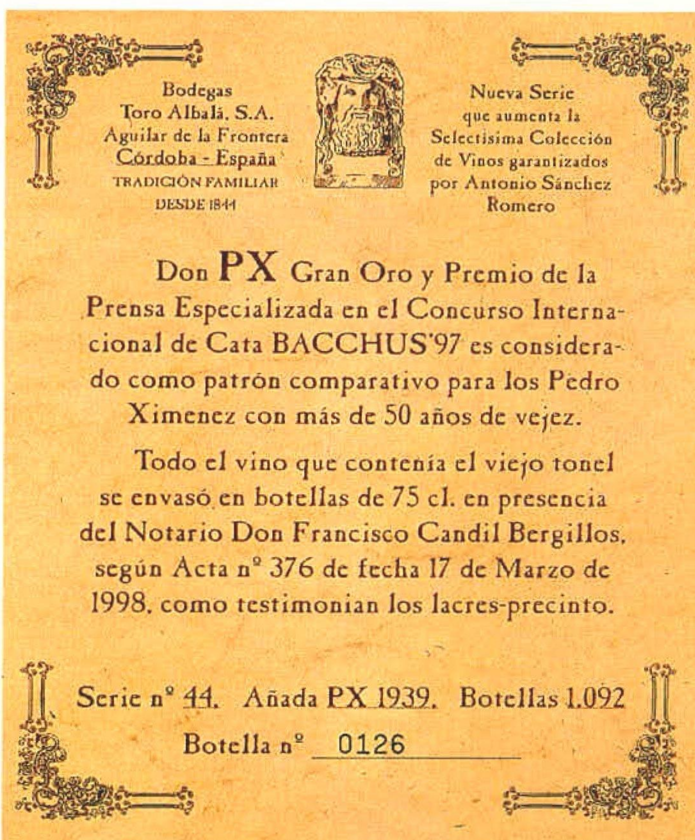

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The winning porrón in this year's harvest festival in Alella.

CASAL D'ALELLA/ICEX

Everybody knows that wine has been a much appreciated liquid since Biblical times. Ecclesiastes encourages us to "drink your wine with a joyful heart." It is no surprise, therefore, that there should be traditional songs that are inextricably connected with wine and which are sung in moments of special euphoria. In Spain there are a number of such ditties, but without doubt the most popular, one which all Spaniards have sung at one time or another, is the one whose refrain goes, simply, "*Asunción, Asunción, echa media de vino al porrón*" (Asunción, Asunción, pour half a measure of wine into the porrón). Indeed, the convivial ceremony of drinking wine from a porrón is a deep-rooted custom in Spain, especially in the Levante region and Catalonia, where no country home was without its porrón.

The porrón, made of glass, is a sort of cross between a decanter and a wineskin. The Spanish dictionary defines it as a "wide-bottomed glass container frequently used in some Spanish provinces—principally in the Catalan region—to drink wine which spurts in a jet from a spout rising at an angle from the base." To drink from the porrón, one raises it a few inches from the face to aim the jet of wine into the mouth, gradually stretching it out to arm's length, which aerates the wine and increases the sensation of freshness. Put this simply, it might appear a straightforward operation, but in fact it requires a certain skill to drink from a porrón without getting soaked in wine. There are true artists who are capable of drinking wine through a small gap between their clenched teeth, without spilling a drop, but novices would be well advised to wear an old shirt. In any case, the porrón is perfect when you are drinking wine in true rustic style, which means a double joy: that of good wine and good company.

The porrón, at least in Catalonia, dates back to the 14th century, of which there are a few surviving examples. Since then it has acquired different shapes and designs. The most common is the conical one with two spouts, but there are also more rounded ones or more cylindrical models known as *porronas* or *catalanas.*

Porrón of the Year

Every year at the end of September numerous villages and cities celebrate their principal annual fair to coincide with the grape harvest. The town of Alella in the province of Barcelona is one of them, with the peculiarity that for the annual fiesta they commission a special porrón, of a different design each year, which has become a curiosity prized by collectors. This year Alella, which produces wine under its own *denominación de origen,* celebrates the 24th edition of its harvest festival and as usual will present its por-

rón of the year. These porróns are made using the ancient technique of glass blowing, and are replicas of Catalan models from the 18th and 19th centuries, which can be considered the golden age of this wine dispenser. They are specially made by the glass workshop installed in the Spanish Village in Barcelona, the only establishment in Catalonia which still practices the craft glass blowing. They are usually produced in small quantities (800 units on the last occasion), and cost around 4,000 pesetas ($27).

Catalonia is not the only home of the porrón. If there is a place which can be singled out as being specially well known for the manufacture of porróns, it is without doubt the town of L'Ollería in Valencia, where there are two cooperative workshops—La Mediterránea and Vidrieros de Levante—in addition to three factories, Viart, Citrocolor, and Fabril Glass. As is the case with so many other objects, for economic reasons the porrón is no longer made by hand, but is produced industrially. The figures say it all: a small factory-made porrón costs 125 pesetas (less than a dollar), compared with 1,000 pesetas ($7) for the handmade article. Porróns come in half a liter, one liter, and two liter sizes, although larger ones are produced for decorative purposes.

In L'Ollería, they also make some curious variations on the porrón theme, such as the so-called porrón *bolsa*, which has in its center a sort of container for ice to keep the wine cool. There is also the porrón *trampa*—the "booby-trap porrón"—whose spout is camouflaged so that anyone not familiar with its use invariably gets wet.

Experts, perhaps stretching the point a bit, say that wine does not taste the same if it is drunk from a factory-produced porrón instead of a handmade one. And if drinking from a porrón is an art, cleaning it is no less demanding: it must be done with sand and rice, to remove the "*sostre*," the crust of sediment which forms on the bottom.

The workshops of L'Ollería sell porróns and other glass objects to several Spanish regions and abroad, especially Germany.

Joaquín Camarena, the chronicler of L'Ollería, is an expert on the subject and he maintains that the tradition of making porróns in this town goes back a long way. In a 1790 manuscript it is recorded that "its glassworks was one of the oldest in the realm" and the tradition of making glass items can be traced back at least to the 16th century, before L'Ollería was even a township. In the Capuchin monastery in L'Ollería are displayed presses, more than 300 years old, used to make porróns and there are also some curious antique examples of the porrón itself, well worth seeing.

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.*

Text: **César Justel**
Translation: **Mark Little**

CÉSAR JUSTEL/ICEX

Drinking from a porrón without getting wet requires patient practice.

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.

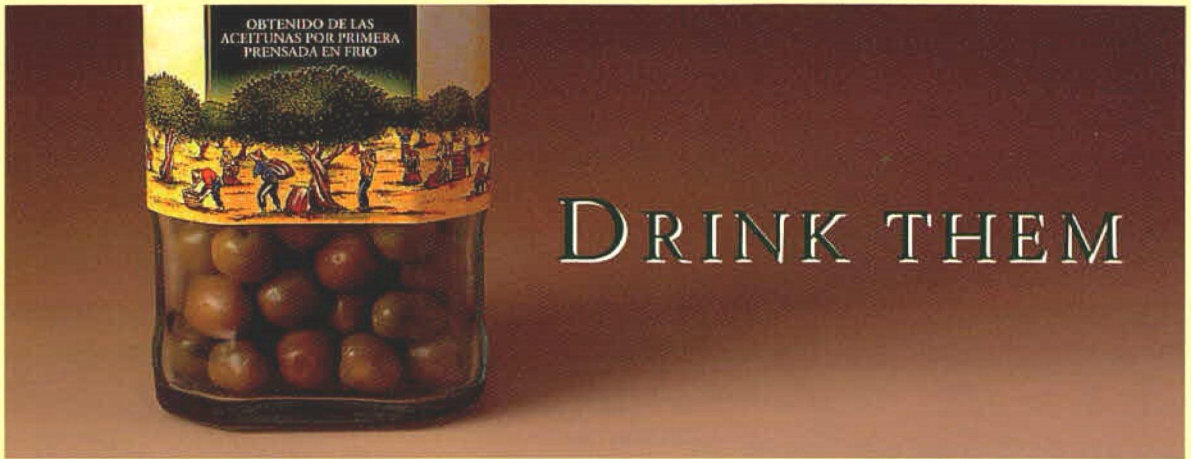
DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN (D.O.)

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



If you could press one of these olives, it would give you hand made Borges Extra Virgin olive oil. Natural and true-to-type, the oil obtained from the first cold pressing of the olive. With nothing else to it.

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

PRODUCTION In just the same way, after a single pressing in the silent cellars which remain at the same temperature for 12 months of the year, virgin oil, with all the unique flavour of the first pressing is stored. More than virgin, Extra Virgin. **ORIGIN** The production process is not the only factor that makes an olive produce an oil with character. Outstanding land- the northeast region of Spain with its ideal microclimate and unique soil components- and the Arbequina olive, make Borges Extra Virgin the oil it is.

CATHY BOIRAC
DPTO. PUBLICACIONES PERIODICAS - DFP

TASTE Intense but smooth, fresh with a slightly fruity aroma. Born of the earth, the sun and the sky. A special flavour that makes it one of the most precious oils in the world.

From the first pressing, the first oil.

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Bodegas Bilbainas was established as a company in 1901, though its history goes back as far as 1859.
It owns an estate of 260 hectares of vineyards surrounding the bodega itself in Haro, the heart of Rioja Alta. The grape varieties grown include Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo.
The red wine VIÑA POMAL comes from an exceptional vineyard of 100 hectares on the state of Bodegas Bilbainas in Haro, Spain.
VIÑA POMAL RESERVA 1993 comprises 80% Tempranillo, 5% Garnacha and the remaining 15% almost equal proportions of Graciano and Mazuelo grapes.

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