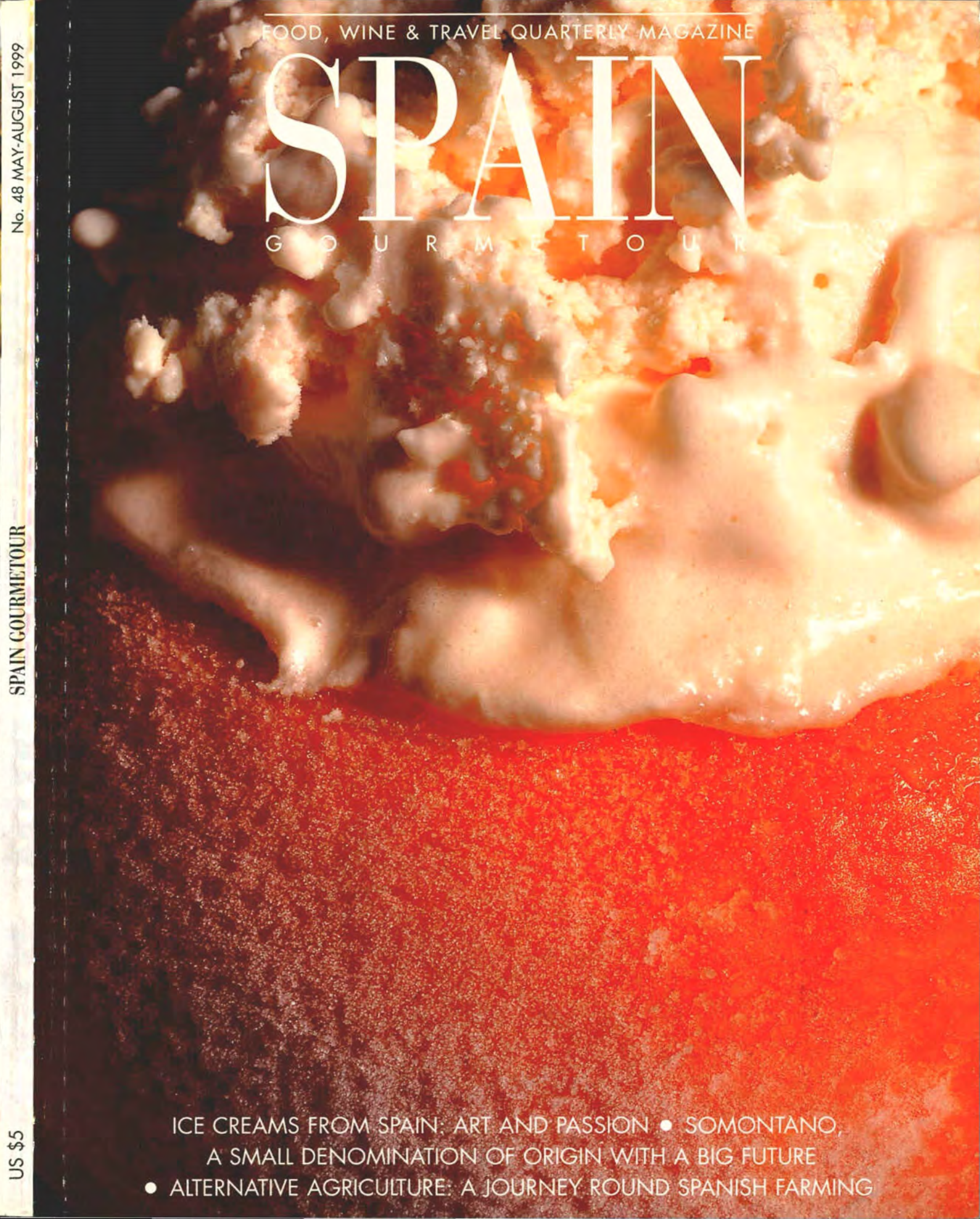
FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN GOURMETOUR



ICE CREAMS FROM SPAIN: ART AND PASSION • SOMONTANO, A SMALL DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN WITH A BIG FUTURE • ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE: A JOURNEY ROUND SPANISH FARMING

No. 48 MAY-AUGUST 1999

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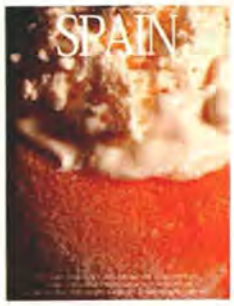

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VETERANO

BRAVO DE JEREZ

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Dear readers,

Ice cream from Spain! A refreshing and great summertime idea for the cover photo for our new issue of *Spain Gourmetour*. Whether served directly in the natural skins of oranges, lemons, pineapples, or coconuts, or in small earthenware bowls, the presentation is just as appealing as the taste.

In this issue's wine section, we present the Somontano wines, a Denomination of Origin (D.O.) located in the northeast of Spain. Following a successful launch on a number of foreign wine markets, the region has embarked on a course aimed at further expansion with modern and very creative wines.

The "A Lifetime Devoted To Wine" series continues with four top-notch experts from Haro in the Rioja, Madrid, and the Penedés.

Increasing demand for produce grown organically or by integrated crop management is reason enough for a new series on the fabulous potential of Spain in these sectors and on a few companies which have already shown good results over the past few years. The first installment in the series takes a look at fresh produce and products such as tomatoes, grapes, oranges, beef, rice, garlic, and strawberries. The second will concern processed food and the third will deal with wine.

With over 4,800 kilometers of coast line, Spanish cuisine is particularly rich in fish dishes that vary widely between the many coastal regions on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Our two-part series on fish and seafood, including their preparation, focuses on fish varieties that are easy to find outside of Spain and proposes typical Spanish recipes.

In the tourism and culture section, we invite you to Murcia and present the history-laden towns and small villages inland from the coast and virtually ignored by the bathing tourists crowding around the *Mar Menor*. The second installment in our series on the modern museums of Spain takes us to Valencia in the Valencian Institute for Modern Art and the Museum for Contemporary Art in Barcelona, where such delicious dishes as *paella* or *cap-i-pota* round off a good day contemplating the arts.

ANDALUSIA:
THE SPLENDOUR OF SPAIN

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If you would like to know more about the brochures of Spanish manufacturers and any subject dealt with in this magazine, except for tourist information, please write to the SPANISH EMBASSY COMMERCIAL OFFICE, marking the envelope REF. SPAIN GOURMETOUR.
If you would like to consult the brochures via Internet, please connect to:
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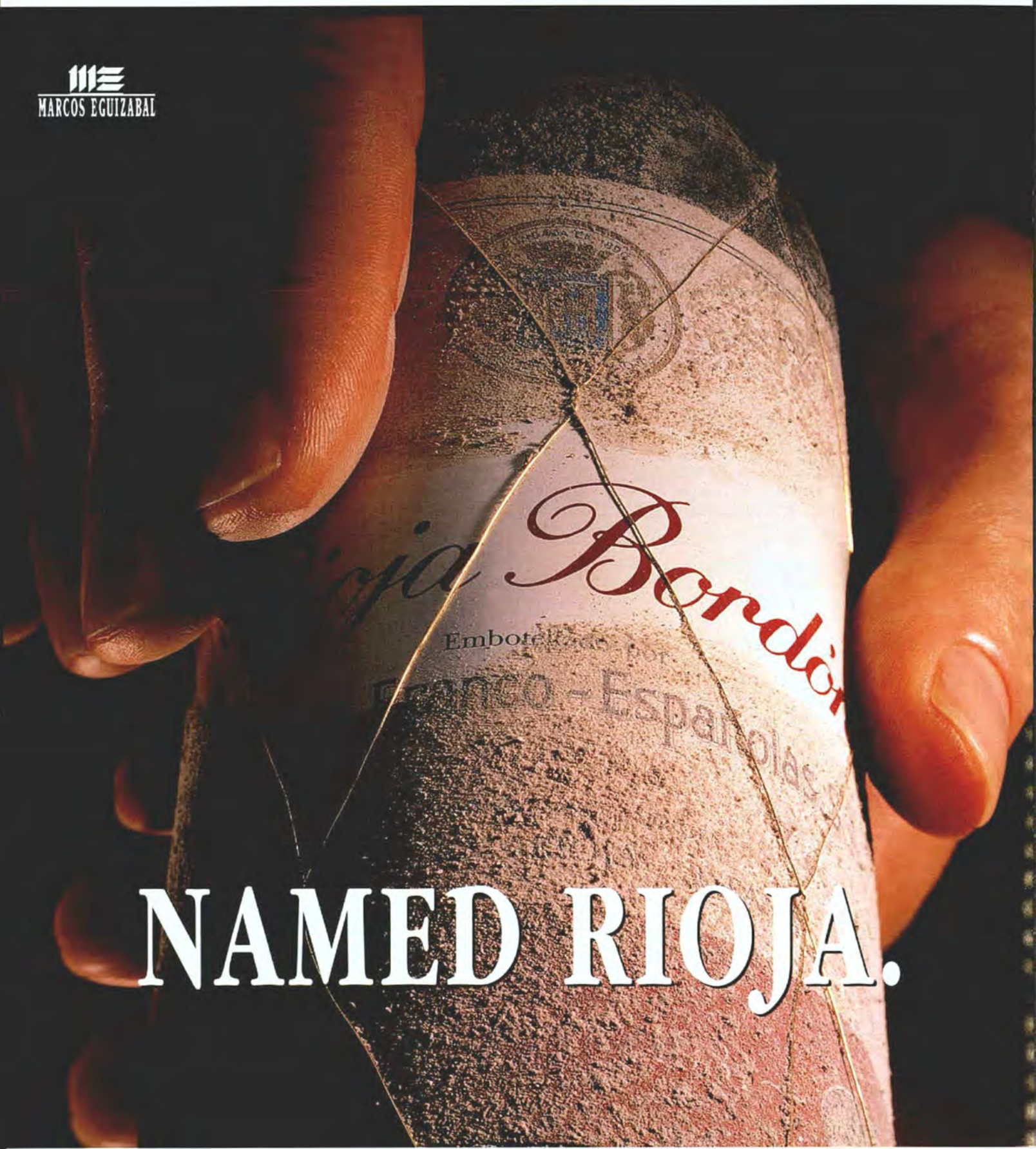

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The photographer of the interior of Café Ba-Ba-Reeba in our last issue on page 103 is Steinkamp/Ballogg Chicago.

Ice Creams from Spain: ART

&

PASSION

TEXT: ANA WESTLEY
STILL LIFE: MENCHU ARTIME
PHOTOS: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

SPANISH ICE CREAMS IN GENERAL HAVE A LOWER FAT CONTENT THAN SOME OF THE HEAVY CREAM MULTINATIONAL BRANDS, MAKING THEM LIGHTER AND LESS FATTENING.

When Mediterranean creativity and a passion for quality combine together in the frozen world of ice cream, the end result is absolutely irresistible. Centuries-old recipes and artisan elaboration, handed down from father to son, have not been lost with industrial production and innovation. Spanish ice creams are being introduced successfully in foreign markets not only in Europe and the Americas, but also in Middle Eastern and Asian countries.

For most of us, just the mention of the word ice cream can stir up an infinity of fond memories: warm and carefree summer days, a birthday party, a first date, celebrations and special occasions, a baby's first delighted smile... When we want a treat, what can be better than ice cream?

If you love ice cream, try Spanish ice cream in the form of frozen fruits with ice cream fillings or some of the other uniquely Spanish varieties and flavors presented in oven-fired ceramic dishes. There's a whole different world out there of delicious ice cream to be discovered by ice cream connoisseurs. Peculiarly Spanish flavors are finding unconditional addicts in new markets overseas. Some of these flavors new for foreigners are *turrón* or ground almonds with honey; meringue milk with cinnamon and lemon grind (*leche merengada*); raisins, nuts, and sweet Málaga wine ice cream in a ceramic cup, or frozen custard ice cream with a whiskey glaze topping.

Spanish ice cream exports are growing at rates of up to 26 percent led by Spain's largest ice cream producers: Helados Alacant and La Jijonenca based in Alicante, Royne in Madrid, La Ibense Bornay in Cádiz, Kalise in the Canary Islands, and La Menorquina in Barcelona. Most of these export sales are to the demanding upscale restaurant business.

SPECIALTY EXPORT PRODUCTS

"Where we can best compete internationally is in our own particular Mediterranean specialties," explains Joaquín Cestino of the Association of Spanish Ice Cream Producers. Practically every country makes ice cream and multinationals dominate the world market but there is a niche for ice cream specialties for the true connoisseur. With a long tradition of artisan products, Spain's ice cream specialists are quick to adapt to specific market needs both in Spain and abroad. Indeed not only have Spanish ice cream companies survived the onslaught of multinationals on their own turf, but have branched out themselves to overseas markets, especially in Europe and the Americas. The Spanish defense, according to Cestino, has been to develop its own specialty export products.

"What ingredients do we have here in Spain that have always been top quality and are associated with Spain?" he asks. "Fruit, almonds, and nuts have always been in abundance in this Mediterranean country," he points out. Spanish producers have had success in marketing abroad the novel whole frozen fruit ice cream, perhaps the dessert that most tourists in Spain may have tried, loved, and talked about back in their own countries. By whole frozen fruit, we are not just referring to pieces and chunks of fruit, but literally to a whole frozen fruit. An entire orange or lemon, for example, is hollowed out and filled with a smooth creamy sherbet or ice cream filling and then frozen. The frozen rind is the container for the sherbet. But the variety of fruit doesn't stop at oranges and lemons from Valencia. Other frozen fruit varieties include a hollowed out and frozen pineapple, half a coconut, and even watermelon and peaches. There is nothing quite like this exquisite dessert for a special occasion, a favorite in restaurants that take pride in the attractive presentation of desserts.

Spain's turrón, or ground almond and honey ice cream, is unbeatable. Turrón candy is as Spanish as the *paella* and a must on every table in Spain during the Christmas holidays. Ice cream manufacturers rightly discovered that Spain's fondness for ground almonds and honey could be converted into a year round passion in the form of ice cream. For Spaniards, it's a taste of Christmas any time of the year, and for foreigners, a nutty delight. The same ground almond and honey mixture used to make the flat golden bars of the holiday candy is added to ice cream for a rich and flavorful dessert. In Latin American countries that maintain Spanish holiday traditions, the flavor is a sensation, especially in Caribbean countries where the dry and crumbly turrón candy seems too rich for a hot climate. In the Southern Cone countries of Argentina and Chile, Christmas comes in hot summer weather where turrón ice cream is a perfect holiday alternative to the traditional turrón candy. Latinos also love the taste of leche merengada (meringue milk spiced with cinnamon and a pinch of lemon rind), a traditional cool summer drink served in ice cream parlors and now available as an ice cream flavor. Other favorites with tourists in Spain have been the varieties of sweet Málaga wine-flavored ice cream topped with a selection of Mediterranean nuts and raisins served in a glazed clay ceramic dish. Companies vary in their nomenclature for this favorite. Alacant calls it Melody (*Melodía*), a traditional name used in Catalonia for this variety, for example, and La Jijonenca calls it the Musician (*Músico*). Variations on *crema catalana*, a frozen custard with a caramelized flambé glaze topping in a flat ceramic dish, are also Spanish favorites introduced abroad in fine restaurants. A variety of international favorites such as

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chocolate mousse, Irish coffee, frozen custard with a whiskey glaze, and frozen whipped cream with nuts are also available for export.

EARLY ORIGINS

Many countries claim to be the inventors of modern day ice cream. The earliest origins, however, can be traced back to the days of the Roman Empire where a privileged nobility enjoyed flavored ices in the 4th century B.C. There are even historical references that the emperor Nero imported snow from the mountains and topped it with fruit juices and honey. The Moors who lived in Spain from 711 until the Christian conquest of Granada in 1492 are also credited with the popularization of exquisite desserts made from ice and snow from Spain's numerous mountaintops throughout Andalusia and the eastern coastal area of Levante.

Indeed, before modern refrigeration, snow was collected and shoveled into huge mountain wells for yearlong storage where it could be transported in ice blocks to other deep wells in nearby lowlands. In a warm summer climate, a frozen dessert is all the more appreciated. Perhaps this is why Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Spain, in a lesser degree, are credited with the first commercialization of the dessert. Marco Polo is said to have returned from China with descriptions of milk and water ices that were soon elaborated into recipes and popularized in Italy and France. Other legends credit the Arabs in Spain with the European introduction.

By the 17th century there were professional "ice makers" in several European countries and by the late 18th century cream ices had been developed. The discovery that salt would lower the freezing point of cracked ice led to the first practical methods of making ice cream around the world. The wooden bucket freezer with rotary paddles was in use until well into the 20th century for homemade ice cream. However, widespread distribution of ice cream became possible only after the development of mechanical refrigeration through the use of refrigerant gases such as ammonia in the 18th century.

The use of ice wells became so extensive in Spain in the 17th century, that a physician of the era, Doctor Matías de Porres was to write "everyone drinks with snow." In addition to various fruit juices and toppings, readily available in the fertile Andalusian and Levante lowlands, experiments were carried out with milk mixtures and cinnamon, the original leche merengada thought to be of Arabic origin. The drink was cooled in jugs set in cork insulated tubs with snow or ice. Experiments with chocolate and lemon juice in the milk mixtures were also popular in that era.

FROM SNOW WELLS TO INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

The snow storage wells can still be found in Spain in mountaintops in the Alicante region near the coast. Within just a 10 to 15 minute drive up to Puerto de la Carrasqueta outside Jijona, home of La Jijonenca, Spanish manufacturers of ice cream and turrón candy, several of these wells can be seen. Ones such as El Pou del Surdo were still in operation a hundred years ago until the advent of widespread mechanical refrigeration. Carved in solid stone, the well is over 20 meters (65 feet) deep and has a diameter of about 15 meters (49 feet). The pulley mechanism to bring up the ice and an iron ladder down to the depths are still in place just under the vaulted dome that covers the well, a true feat in itself. The Mediterranean Sea is clearly visible and on a clear day the island of Ibiza can even be seen. It is not hard to imagine beasts of burden ferrying this ice down to the coast for storage in other wells and cork-insulated tubs designed for the manufacture of ice cream. An industry was born.

Alicante is the region of Spain that has the most famed tradition of ice cream makers, perhaps because of the nearness of the mountains to the warm coast. Once refrigeration with gases was invented, this area already had the expertise in ice cream manufacture to become the most important producers in Spain. Two of Spain's major companies are located here: La Jijonenca in Jijona and Alacant outside Alicante in San Vicente del Raspeig. Both companies were formed by hundreds of small artisan producers who joined together sharing their recipes that were adapted to industrial production. A homemade taste is the end result.

These same original producers still operate their ice cream parlors where they sell the company's products. Alacant Ice Cream maintains a small museum of antique ice cream-making equipment, wooden tubs, machinery, and push carts that vendors took around the region selling ice cream in days gone past. There is a collection of the old wooden and cork-lined ice cream salt buckets that were still in use just a few generations ago before the days of widespread modern refrigeration.

CONSUMER HABITS AND NEW PRODUCTS

Unlike other European countries, ice cream consumption in Spain is mainly dominated by what marketers call the impulse sector: kiosk vendors in streets and beaches, sports events, etc. Cestino points out that Spaniards spend more time outdoors in the mild Mediterranean climate so it is only natural that they consume more ice cream on impulse. Other Europeans and Americans tend to buy more take-home ice cream. According to the

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IN THE DAYS BEFORE REFRIGERATION, AN ICE CREAM INDUSTRY HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO FLOURISH IN ALICANTE. MOUNTAINTOP SNOW WAS CONSERVED YEAR ROUND IN DEEP WELLS AND CONVERTED INTO ICE.

Spanish Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers, 36.5 percent of domestic ice cream sales are in this category. Supermarket take-home sales account for 24.5 percent, restaurants and ice cream parlors are responsible for 7.4 percent of sales, and other types of outlets account for the remaining 31.6 percent.

There are over 20 ice cream manufacturers, which include the multinationals, and half a dozen wholly Spanish capital companies. Sales for the entire sector in 1998 amounted to 270 million liters of ice cream products worth approximately 950 million Euros (1,053 billion US$).

Total exports increased 26 percent in 1998, due mainly to the energetic introduction of innovative new products such as whole frozen fruits and ice cream dishes in ceramic containers. Low fat, no fat, and sugarless varieties are also promising new products for weight watchers and diabetics, a growing domestic and foreign market. Spanish market growth of about six percent is attributed to manufacturers' efforts to increase year-round consumption, to new fat and sugar free products and to fast growing exports.

Spain lags behind other European Union countries in per capita consumption of ice cream though appetites are on the rise. Last year, according to the Association figures, Spaniards consumed six liters of ice cream per capita compared to 2.2 liters in 1980. This consumption still pales beside the 14 liters per capita ice cream consumption in Sweden and Norway or 17 liters per capita in the United States. Ice cream ranks as the third most favored dessert in Spain after fresh fruit and yogurt.

A LIGHTER PRODUCT

Ice cream manufacture in Spain is governed by European Union legislation. Technically speaking it is a heterogeneous, pasteurized, and homogenized mixture of various ingredients that include milk, milk or vegetable fats, water, sugar, and stabilizers. It can also contain a great variety of juices, fruits, and other ingredients such as chocolate, cookies, nuts, and flavorings. Sherbets contain relatively small amounts of milk products. Spanish ice creams tend to be lighter than some of the American and multinational varieties. Milk fat and cream content is lower or is substituted with unflavored vegetable oils that are less filling. Spanish, and indeed most Mediterranean consumers, prefer this lighter sensation where ice cream is an in-between meal snack that doesn't suppress a child's appetite for lunch or dinner, or a dessert compliment after a full course meal. The heavier ice creams with a high cream content are often so rich that they may substitute a full meal for a child, which most health experts would consider unbalanced nutrition, and are not exactly helpful for adult weight watchers.

In freezing, the volume of ice cream can be doubled by the inclusion of air, known as overrun. This percentage range of solids to air is defined in European Union legislation, although manufacturers say that Spanish consumers prefer ice creams at the higher end of overrun. They are lighter, airier and, of course, less fattening. If you are accustomed to a heavy cream flavor, the Spanish lightness is an appealing and healthy change in which fruit and other flavors are more prominent.

Production is mechanized and controlled by the latest computer technology. In a recent visit to La Jijonenca, turrón ice cream was in the production process. Local almonds had just been freshly toasted and ground and were being mixed mechanically with honey. One of the leading Spanish producers of turrón candy and ice cream, La Jijonenca, reports successful export results in Argentina, Chile, the Caribbean, and Miami, Florida. According to Marcos Ros, general director, La Jijonenca is one of the few companies that produces both turrón candy and turrón ice cream. They sell their turrón mixture to other manufacturers. "When it comes to turrón, we are the experts," he affirmed. La Jijonenca produces 6.1 million liters of ice cream a year of which ten percent is exported. Sales totaled 14.42 million Euros (16 million US$) in 1998.

Nearby Helados Alacant, which groups 188 small Alicante industrialists, reports that exports now account for 20 percent of production. They have recently decided to distribute their products in Russia. In addition to European countries and the Americas, Alacant markets its ice creams in Korea and Israel, with a 1998 production of 8,127 tons representing sales of 26 million Euros (29 million US$). For 1999 the company foresees a production of 8,650 tons and sales of 29 million Euros (32 million US$). According to Marcos Schulz, export manager, their domestic and international success is due to high quality and novel products and to flexibility with client needs and demands.

Ana Westley *has been a foreign correspondent in Spain for over 20 years where she has worked for various American publications including the* Wall Street Journal *and* The New York Times. *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.*

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CHILLED VALENCIA HORCHATA: A 3000-YEAR-OLD THIRST QUENCHER FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

Spaniards and tourists have long enjoyed the refreshing cool drink known as *horchata* that is made from crushed *chufas*, or earth almonds. It is typical of Valencia in southeastern Spain. Once sold only in ice cream parlors and dessert bars—the short shelf life prevented mass production until recently—thanks to technological advances that permit sterilization and industrial bottling the beverage is now produced for year-round distribution throughout Spain and for export abroad. Spain's tourists are no longer the only ones to appreciate the flavor and texture of this delightful age old Mediterranean refreshment once savored by the Pharaohs of Egypt and Emperors of Rome alike.

The nonalcoholic beverage is an ideal cool, sweet drink for summer, rich in thirst quenching mineral salts and high in vitamins and starch. Whitish in color, it is produced by emulsifying crushed chufas, or earth almonds, in water followed by the addition of sugar. It's taste and chalky texture is initially strange but pleasing. Those who have tried it are sure to repeat. The proportions of solids to water is regulated at minimum levels, although some producers increase the concentration of solids in the suspension. The chufa (Cyperus Sculentus) is actually a small tuber (10-25 mm/0.4 inches long and 8-10 mm/0.3 inches wide) that in many parts of the world is considered a weed. In certain Mediterranean soil conditions the little miniature potato-like root however is very rich in starch, fat, and sugars. In Spain it is only cultivated in one small district in Valencia called Alboraia and is protected by its own Denomination of Origin "Chufa de Valencia."

Nevertheless, chufa cultivation dates back to ancient Egypt where the root has been discovered in the tombs of the earliest dynasties. Scholars have found references that the tuber was cooked and eaten as a dessert by the Egyptians.

From Egypt, cultivation spread to North Africa and it is thought to have been introduced in Spain by successive waves of Moorish occupation which began in the early 8th century. One of the reasons the beverage enjoyed wide popularity in Moorish Spain may be explained by the prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the Islamic religion then dominant in Andalusia and Levante until medieval days. By the 13th century there are historical references that note that the beverage known as *llet de xufes* enjoyed widespread popularity in the Valencia region. In later medieval days, medicinal properties were attributed to the drink which was believed to help cure respiratory inflammations and stomach ailments. Popular tradition in Valencia holds today that horchata is an efficient remedy for diarrhea.

Legend has it that the name horchata was popularized by King Jaime I, The Conqueror, in the medieval days of the Christian crusade to liberate the Levante from Moorish domination. According to popular legend, a young girl is said to have offered The Conqueror a sweet white colored drink while resting outside the walls of Valencia. After tasting it the King is said to have exclaimed in the local Valencia dialect: "*Xó es or, xata*" or "This is gold, young maid." "*Or Xata*" became horchata and a name was born.

Spain produces 10.5 million liters of horchata made from Valencia-grown chufas. Ice cream companies such as La Jijonenca and Alacant, and Royne in Madrid, now produce not only bottled horchata beverages for export but also horchata popsicles (iced-lolly). The drink is becoming popular in Latin American countries and is gradually being introduced into other countries. Once you try it, you will want to try it again. It is best served ice cold.

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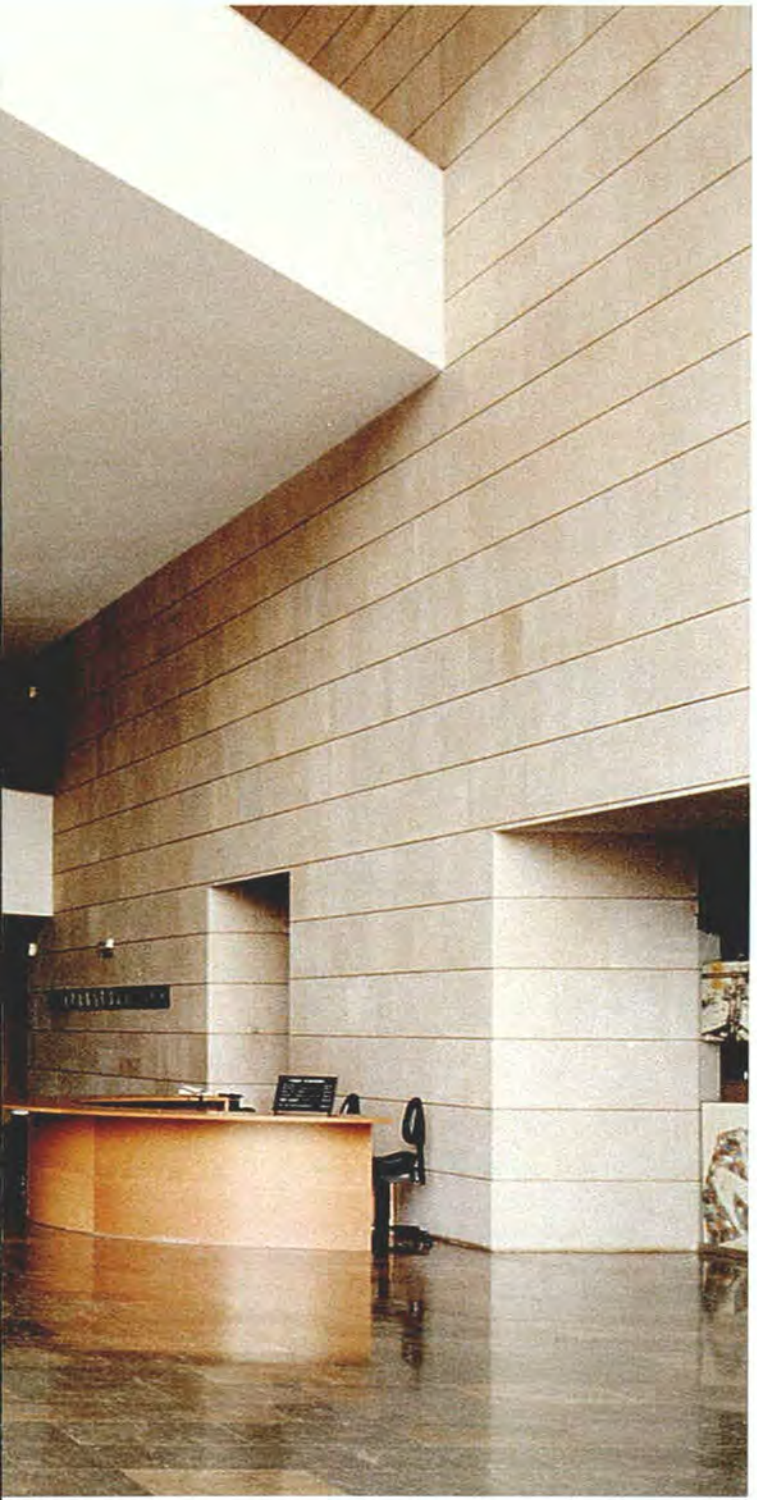
FADESA

The work of Julio González—of which there is a permanent exhibition—is literally fundamental to IVAM.

IVAM: Shaping Culture

TEXT: SONIA ORTEGA
TRANSLATION: HAWYS PRITCHARD
PHOTOS: IVAM/ICEX

Join us on the second phase of our art and food trip, taking in some of the best museums in Spain—mainly museums of contemporary art—which stand out not only for their content but also as buildings in themselves. Some are understated, others spectacular, but all house examples of the most avant-garde art produced in Spain and the rest of the world. And recognizing that man doesn't live by art alone, we also visit the best places to eat in each town on our itinerary. Our series continues with the *Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno*, better known as IVAM, in Valencia, and Barcelona's *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo*, MACBA.



Artistic, vivid, and vibrant with life, Valencia is a typically Mediterranean city. Ten years ago, it acquired an extra dose of all these qualities with the inauguration of a new modern art institute, the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, better known as IVAM, home of a rich permanent collection of modern art, among which the iron sculptures of Julio González figure importantly. The site selected for IVAM was the Barrio del Carmen, a part of town which contains both some of the most historically elegant buildings and the most popular haunts of traditional Valencia. This was a tactically astute choice of location, using art as a revitalizing force for a rather rundown urban area—MACBA, built in Barcelona's popular Barrio del Raval (see adjoining article), is another example of the same principle at work. IVAM is composed of two buildings, one ancient, one modern. The modern one, the Centro Julio González, is the institute's headquarters and was built on the ruins of ordinary houses on a street which follows the line of the medieval city walls. Designed by two Spanish architects, Emilio Jiménez and Carlos Salvadores, the Centro is a building whose pure lines and juxtaposition of stone and glass make a very definite visual statement but which nevertheless blends comfortably into its urban setting. The façade uses large expanses of glass which permit a partial glimpse of some of the exhibits within, while the linear play of the staircase linking the two floors of the great hall makes it a vast hanging sculpture in itself.

Most of the interior space in the Centro Julio González is occupied by eight galleries given over to permanent and temporary exhibitions, one of them—singularly—a display of remains of Valencia's medieval

THE IVAM HOUSES SPANISH AND INTERNATIONAL WORKS REPRESENTING THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF 20TH CENTURY ART AND PRESENTS A CONTINUOUS PROGRAM OF AVANT-GARDE EXHIBITIONS.

town walls. The tone of the galleries is classically "museistic," its simple, timeless fittings all designed to distract the spectator's attention as little as possible. The most spectacular gallery is a large hall, perfectly illuminated by natural light, specifically designed for showing sculpture. When I visited, it was being used for a special exhibition, evocatively entitled *Forjar el espacio* (Shaping Space), to mark IVAM's first ten years in existence. It included works by, among others, Julio González, Pablo Gargallo, and Pablo Picasso: all major artists who used new techniques of forging, soldering, assembling, and cutting metal to change the face of sculpture in the 20th century. Pieces such as *Femme au Miroir, Arlequín tocando la flauta*, and *Horned Beast*, by González, Gargallo, and Alexander Calder, respectively, provided a fitting celebration for a museum bearing the name of one of this century's most representative sculptors.

The work of Julio González—of which there is a permanent exhibition—is literally fundamental to IVAM. Though officially opened in 1989, the museum had been in preparation for six years before that, priority having been given to assembling a sound collection before inaugurating a major building. The acquisition in 1985 of an important group of works by Julio González marked the first step in a process that, in proportional and comparative terms, has been described by art critic Calvo Serraller as "the best-managed rapid establishment of an art collection in the 20th century, not only in Spain but also in an international context." So, IVAM was inaugurated with its walls replete with works from its own collections. These are made up primarily of international works representing the historic avant-garde movements, especially from the 1930s on, and particularly those most influential on the development of Abstraction and, unusually, of typographic and photographic montage. Pop Art and the New Figurativism are represented by works of European and American artists.

The museum's collection is rich in works by artists who paved the way for recent directions in Spanish art—Equipo Crónica, Eduardo Arroyo, Saura, Chillida, Tápies, Millares—and the photographic acquisitions constitute an exceptional resource. The building is currently being extended to allow a larger selection of these reserves to be exhibited.

While the modern building houses the "classics," another building, several centuries old and just a few meters away, contains works by the most recent artists and the least formal works. The Centro del Carmen dates back historically and architecturally to the 13th century, when it was originally built as the Carmelite monastery from which this *barrio* takes its name. Today, surviving Gothic and Renaissance sections coexist happily with a 20th century building.

A Renaissance cloister provides access to the exhibition halls, and the first gallery, the Galería del Embajador Vich, occupies the Gothic chapel complete with Italianate tester. Leading on from this room is the impressive Galería Ferreres—a vast, high, white room, lit by skylights and with its huge walls left uninterrupted for showing the most cutting-edge art. Indeed, these walls must be fairly impregnated with art: for many years these rooms were used by the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes, the School of Fine Arts, whose students imparted a certain Bohemian zing to the Barrio del Carmen which it still very noticeably retains.

IVAM's record is already impressive, with over 200 temporary exhibitions in ten years—a fact that conveys something of the new lease of life it has injected into this part of an already vital Valencia. The city's several art galleries are concentrated in the Ciutat Vella, the Old Town, which is skirted by gardens planted in what was once the bed of the River Turia. This is the area where Valencia's most creative architecture is being built, confirming its reputation as a city with a taste for design and modernity.

MODERN ART, TRADITIONAL CUISINE

Modernity is not the watchword when it comes to Valencian food, however, for this is the home of *paella*. To be pedantic, the dish should really be called *arroz en paella*, "rice cooked in a paella," for this is what that big shallow pan is called. Reams have been written about paella at various levels of literature, but experts maintain that the best ones are eaten at home rather than in restaurants. It is also said that Valencia city isn't the best place for eating a restaurant paella—you should go to smaller towns such as Cullera, or further afield. This may be true for experts, but for anyone not brought up on paella, I honestly think it's carrying purism a bit far.

There are many places in Valencia city, especially in the seaside area of Malvarrosa, where you can eat not only good paella but also good examples of the vast variety of delicious rice dishes so typical of Valencian cuisine. Whenever you can, choose a restaurant where they cook over a wood fire—this is essential to making perfect paella.

The eponymous Carmela of Casa Carmela has been cooking paellas over a wood fire for the last twenty years, just as her parents and grandparents did before her. The date 1922 inscribed high up on the front of Casa Carmela shows how long it has been in existence, but as long ago as 1902 her grandparents used to set up a temporary restaurant in summer. It seems likely that Valencian writer Blasco Ibáñez (author of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, transfered to the screen by Vincent Minnelli in 1962), would have eaten there, for his summer holiday house, now a museum, is right next door. Like all *arrocerías*, as restaurants specializing in rice dishes are called, Casa Carmela is big and lively—paella is ideal for feeding large groups of people, and indeed that is part of its charm. Go at lunchtime (it doesn't open at night), and try genuine paella valenciana just as they used to make it in the countryside in the old days, with vegetables such as *ferraúra* green beans and the big, flat *garrofón* beans from Valencia's fertile "garden" belt, snails (*vaquetes* in Valencian), rab-

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THIS YEAR THE VALENCIAN INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART CELEBRATES THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS OPENING, WHICH SPELLED THE BIRTH OF A NEW CONCEPT OF MUSEUM FOR SPAIN.

bit, and chicken. Or any of the many seafood and chicken paellas, or arroz *a banda* (a version in which the fish and rice are served separately), or arroz *con bacalao y coliflor* (a moisty rice with cod and cauliflower), or with rice and pork ribs... Whichever version you choose, be sure you get some of the coveted *socarrat*, the golden crust of rice stuck to the bottom of the pan that some people, Carmela included, think is the best bit of a paella. Non-paella rice dishes are equally traditional in Valencia—arroz *con fesols y naps* (a moist rice with beans and turnips), for example, is cooked in an earthenware dish. The paella pan is also used for cooking the non-rice *fideuá*, another classic in which rice is replaced by thick noodles which, as cereals will, absorb all the flavors of fish and seafood juices. This part of town has a wealth of classic arrocerías: the famous La Rosa and La Pepica are very close at hand, and you can eat there to the sound of the sea. A little further away, in El Saler on the banks of La Albufera (the huge freshwater lagoon amid the Valencian rice fields), is Casa Carmina, which is highly recommended, especially for arroz con fesols y naps.

Unless you want to continue your rice research, San Nicolás is a good place for dinner—a pleasant little restaurant on the quiet square of the same name in Valencia's old quarter, and very close to IVAM. Here, the star dish is *pescado de roca*—rock fish—a generic term for an assortment of delicious and often underused fish. Valencia is surrounded by good quayside fish markets and owner-chef Felipe Bru snaps up *xuriolas*, *arañas* (weever), *gallinetas* (blue-mouth), *brecas* (pandora), and the like, which he bones and trims thoroughly and uses for various dishes. Among them is an excellent *all i pebre*—this is a sauce, typical of Valencian cuisine, made with garlic and *pimentón* (paprika) and traditionally served with the eel which used to be fished in abundance just a few decades ago in La Albufera. Valencia's Mediterranean culture certainly shows.

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

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M A C B A

Light and Truth in the Medieval Raval

Richard Meier's dazzling MACBA lights up the entire Raval, a neigh

TEXT: GEORGE SEMLER
PHOTOS: MANOLO URBANO/EL PAÍS

Few developments over Barcelona's last decade rival the impact of the luminous explosion of Richard Meier's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MACBA) in what was once the steamy penumbra of the Raval. Originally an *arrabal* or slum area outside the 13th-century city walls that ran down the left (northeast) side of the Rambla, the area west of the Rambla was finally enclosed by Barcelona's last ramparts constructed in the 14th century. The Raval was traditionally the city's south-

borhood traditionally known for the darker side of life in Barcelona.

The characteristic elements of Meier's habitual architectural language are all present in the MACBA: repetition of the white, the purity of simple geometrical forms such as the circle, the rectangle, and the triangle.

western hinterland, a zone favored for hospitals, convents, leper colonies, and immigrants. Always the city's most colorful and tumultuous sector, venue for everything from executions to unchecked nocturnal ribaldry, the Raval is the home of Barcelona's legendary Barrio Chino, named not for any Chinese influence (of which there is none) but for the neighborhood's dense concentration of foreigners and their Bohemian lives and times.

A key element in the Ciutat Vella restoration plan initiated under Mayor Pascual Maragall, the MACBA has spearheaded an unprecedented cultural movement in the Raval. Nearly a dozen art galleries have opened around the neighborhood, as well as restaurants and design stores. In addition, infrastructure ranging from drainage to power supply has been updated to serve the MACBA, the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea (CCCB) next door, the Convent dels Àngels across the square, and the Raval as a whole.

Isabel Bachs, who worked with fellow architect Richard Meier on the museum from the beginning of the project in 1989, describes Meier's pure rationalism as "a dialogue of light on white walls" and goes on to point out the elements characteristic of Meier's habitual architectural language, all of which are present in the MACBA. "...the repetition of the white, the purity of simple geometrical forms such as the circle, the rectangle, and the triangle."

Meier's museum projects began with the Villa Strozzi Museum of Modern Art in Florence (1973) and include the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, (1980-1982), the Museum of Decorative Arts in Frankfurt (1979-1984), and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (1999). One of the "new rationalist architects" who sought to eliminate ornamentation and create abstract art based on strict geometrical purity, Meier has remained faithful to this postmodern neoclassicism, as evident in MACBA's stark exercise in glass, stucco, and lacquered aluminum.

If Gaudí's originality was in his departure from the traditional tools of architecture such as the compass and the T-square, in favor of natural or organic shapes of nature, Richard Meier responds vigorously with basic symmetries and a classically geometrical discourse only broken by the irregular tower on the eastern corner of the building. "A tip of the hat to the great art nouveau master?" "Maybe so," responds Isabel Bachs. "Certainly it is the only organic concession in the building, possibly intended as a reflection of Barcelona's medieval shapes and corners."

Meier's southeast-facing glass façade collects and reflects light in different ways throughout the museum and throughout the day. "Light is a physical presence in Meier's architecture," continues Isabel Bachs, "and Meier's is a sliding light that bathes interior spaces as opposed to a direct frontal approach."

The linking of interior and exterior space, of the museum with the Plaça dels Àngels and the Raval outside, is one of Meier's recurrent themes beginning with the granite paving stones used in the square outside and, polished to a dark patina, in the main floor of the museum. The ramp leading up from the square to the entryway into the museum, a favorite for local skateboarders, continues inside up to the first and then the second floors, while the transparent glass façade itself provides the most obvious communication between inner and outer space.

Once within, the building seems to have an aery, floating quality, all plaster- and stucco-covered walls and columns seemingly raised a centimeter from the black floors. Meier achieves this effect by lining the pillars and walls with an extra layer of non weight-bearing material. The entire building is supported by slender, reinforced concrete columns or pillars, permitting the other elements maximum freedom of expression and mobility. The first two floors are illuminated by the natural light flooding through the glass façade or reflected off the white walls or the cylindrical white columns while the upper floor is illuminated directly by immense skylights in the roof.

The museum's contents include collections of three entities, the Generalitat de Catalunya (Autonomous Community), the

Calder, Oteiza, Tapies, Chillida, and a host of other contemporary masters seem to float in a rationalism so pure the walls don't even touch the ground.

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Barcelona City Hall, and the Fundació Museu d'Art Contemporani. The stated international vocation of the museum is balanced by an also stated special attention to Catalan art with a focus on contemporary artistic tendencies beginning in the early 20th century. Visitors to the museum's permanent collection, housed on the building's ground floor, are given an introduction to the main characteristics of the building as a work of art itself and to the underlying philosophies and concepts of contemporary art.

Featured in the permanent collection are works by Calder, Torres-García, Oteiza, Tàpies, Ráfols-Casamada, Hernández-Pijoan, Rauschenberg, Brossa and García-Sevilla, among many others, from Aguilar to Zush. The rooms are arranged to introduce the (often skeptical) visitor to the basic contemporary themes of movement, space, material, meaning, irony, conceptual content, and identity. Temporary exhibits are displayed on the second and third floors in rooms and spaces that can be adjusted to different sizes and configurations.

The area around the MACBA is well worth some careful exploration as well, beginning with the courtyard behind the museum, flanked by the back entrance to the CCCB in the Casa de la Caritat with the Santa María de Montalegre church and its quirky tower at the far end of the park. Around the front side of the MACBA, a Chillida mural occupies the wall to the west of the main entrance, with the back of neighboring apartment buildings providing an abundant and colorful laundry display in the background. Jorge Oteiza's *La Ola* (The Wave), a massive bronze block enlarged from a smaller Oteiza work, provides sliding and climbing surfaces for neighborhood children at the eastern corner of the glass façade, while the museum entrance itself has giant Tàpies bed frames and pillows tumbling off the wall.

Just a ten-minute walk from the MACBA through the medieval hospital de Sant Pau i de la Santa Creu is another great Raval institution, Casa Leopoldo, the Gil family's much loved restaurant.

CASA LEOPOLDO

Rosa Gil and her daughter run this busy enterprise with such a light and friendly touch that it can't help but prosper. Magnificent servings of everything from *revuelto de ajos tiernos y gambas* (eggs scrambled with shrimp and young garlic) to tiny cutlets of baby goat, sautéed wild mushrooms, clams in sherry, *habitas salteadas* (sautéed small broad beans) or the famous Catalan *cap-i-pota* (head and leg), select cuts from the head and hoof of pork, make the menu a difficult labyrinth of opportunities. The wine list is, as well, excellent here, ranging happily from Albariños to Riojas to Costers de Segres to cavas, while the general uproar of the place, boisterous and exuberant but never deafening, is perfect for encounters ranging from the romantic declaration to bacchanalian hilarity. Rosa seems to speak all the languages of the European Union and the word has leaked abroad, though, oddly, the cosmopolitan flavor of Casa Leopoldo never seems touristy, perhaps because of the restaurant's location in the wild Raval. The Gils, by the way, will send a taxi to collect you for no charge provided you're within the Barcelona city limits.

Other irresistible options are too numerous to list, though not mentioning Barceloneta's Can Majó, the Boqueria's Pinotxo, Fermin Puig's recently opened Drolma in the Hotel Majestic, or Jean Luc Figueras's eponymous place in lower Gràcia would be, well, criminal.

If the Raval's dense excitement inspires a longing for open spaces, Can Majó is now not only, as always, excellent, but at the very edge of the Mediterranean in Barceloneta since the disappearance of the old *chiringuitos* (beach kiosk that sells food and drink) that formerly lined the beach. The *caldero de bogavante* (a lobsterized cross between bouillabaisse and *paella*) is the house specialty and star creation. If the Boqueria market compels, try to get one of the nine bar stools at the internationally acclaimed Pinotxo where Juanito and his clan will know exactly which market purchase of the day you should have and prepare it perfectly for you along with a well-chilled bottle of the house white wine. Up Passeig de Gràcia at the corner of Valencia, the Hotel Majestic's Fermin Puig opened his gourmet enclave, Drolma, in early June of this year, surprising no one when it catapulted to the top of Barcelona's gastronomical charts. Puig has been maturing like a vintage wine while peers and pals like Santi Santamaría of El Racó de Can Fabes and Ferran Adrià of El Bullí have assumed their well-deserved places among Europe's culinary elite. Fermin's *foie gras a la ceniza con ceps* (foie gras steamed in tinfoil over wood coals with wild mushrooms), a recipe rescued from a childhood pig killing country feast, is an example of Fermin's hearty blend of tradition and creativity.

JEAN LUC FIGUERAS

And finally, for a complete change of mood, consider Jean Luc Figueras for a quieter and more refined setting and some of Barcelona's very best fare. Like a talented jockey who only rides winners, this is Jean Luc's third restaurant in Barcelona, following Azulete and Eldorado Petit, both of which closed with Jean Luc in command of what was arguably the most prestigious kitchen in town. Now, with his own place since 1994, located in what was once a Cristóbal Balenciaga studio, Jean Luc appears to be permanently entrenched. Don't hesitate to order the *menu de degustació*, the taster's menu. Selections vary with the market, but on June 1st 1999 included two house tapas followed by seven creations: an orange vichyssoise with a scallop pasta, nest of anchovies with green tomato croquette and ratafía (anis liqueur), fried prawn with ginger pasta and mustard and mango sauce, fresh market fish with a puree of white beans in anis and duck sauce with duck crisps, rack of roast suckling pig with a ragout of snails and wild mushrooms, and snails, strawberry sorbet with pepper and a Sauternes aspic, and a vanilla popsicle with pears in cardamom and chocolate. Wines suggested for the taster's menu range from whites aged in oak to powerful reds such as the Priorato Miserere... a postmodern feast to complete a challenging plunge into contemporary art and architecture and Barcelona's medieval Raval.

George Semler *is a Barcelona-based journalist who writes about life around the Mediterranean for U.S. publications ranging from* Saveur *magazine to the* Los Angeles Times. *Author of books on Madrid and Barcelona, Semler is now working on a book about a six-week walk across the Pyrenees.*

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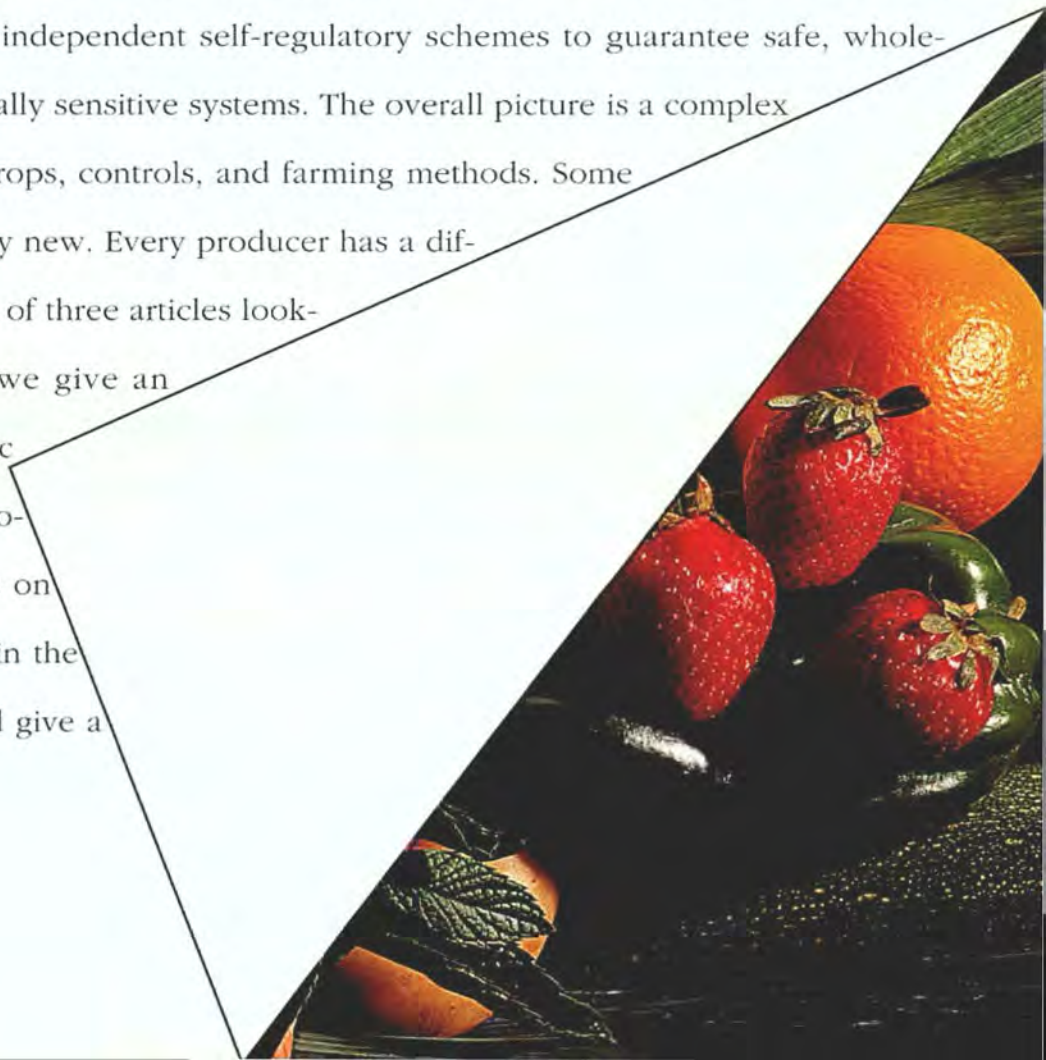
ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE (I)

A JOURNEY ROUND SPANISH FARMING

In the last three years food producers have begun to realize Spain's potential as a sleeping giant of organic and integrated agriculture. Organically farmed land has quadrupled in area since 1996, new regional laws have defined integrated crop management for a growing range of produce, and farmers have initiated their own independent self-regulatory schemes to guarantee safe, wholesome food grown in environmentally sensitive systems. The overall picture is a complex mosaic of landscapes, climates, crops, controls, and farming methods. Some are traditional. Others are radically new. Every producer has a different story to tell. This is the first of three articles looking at their experiences. Here we give an overview and portray eight organic or integrated farmers of fresh produce. In the next issue we focus on foods for the storecupboard and in the third we look at wine-makers and give a complete sourcing directory.



TEXT: VICKY HAYWARD
STILL LIFE: MENCHU ARTIME
PHOTOS: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

TODAY IN SPAIN THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 300,000 HECTARES (741,300 ACRES) OF ORGANICALLY FARMED LAND, THREE-QUARTERS OF WHICH ARE STILL IN CONVERSION.

Spanish alternative agriculture has followed a steep growth curve in the 1990s. The statistics speak for themselves. In 1992 there were 4,000 hectares (9,900 acres) of organically farmed land; today there are an estimated 300,000 hectares (741,300 acres), nearly three-quarters of which are still in conversion. To pick one other telling detail, in just two years over 750 Valencian orange growers have opted to work under 1997 regional legislation for integrated crop management.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Significantly, that growth curve parallels rising consumer demand abroad: an estimated 90 percent of all Spanish organic and integrated produce is exported, most of it to other European markets. Viewed in that light, and given international forecasts that consumer demand for organic and integrated produce will grow on both sides of the Atlantic by at least ten percent over the coming decade, the market for Spanish producers is now looking very strong.

They also have natural advantages: large reserves of virgin land—an estimated 50 million hectares (123,550,000 acres), of which half could be cultivated in some way; the ability to compete well in many areas in terms of quality; and the survival of traditional farming methods which are in line with today's good agricultural practices. Many small-scale farmers simply never had the money to spend on agrochemicals.

The first generation of producers have also managed to show that switching to organic and integrated production is not a utopian dream. They have taken the first difficult steps without subsidies, they have found niche markets abroad, and they are increasingly at ease with each export market's complex requirements. Organic almond, strawberry, and cereal farming, extensive beef rearing, and integrated rice, olive, and orange growing are all economically viable realities today.

At the same time the wider benefits of alternative agriculture have emerged: its creation of rural employment through labor-intensive methods, its natural braking of over-production, and efficient use of natural resources such as soil and water, both of which are precious commodities for Spanish farmers.

NEW ISSUES: FLAVOR AND TRACEABILITY

As the framework of defining regulations, surveillance, and support systems have been falling into place—see box, *Defining the Alternatives*—new issues have been coming to the top of the agenda.

"Today certifying growing methods is as important as the rules themselves," explains Juan Colomina, president of COEXPHAL, an Almerian exporters' association which introduced a pioneering growers' charter in 1996. "When we wanted to draw up a credible protocol unifying the different requirements of our export clients, the key was independent verification and traceability."

The checks for different systems are now increasingly similar in their structure and rigor. Agricultural technicians and growers jointly document the growing cycle and post-harvest handling of fruit and vegetables, or the rearing and slaughtering of livestock. Visits by independent inspectors from a standards institute, local or national government are used to double check growing or rearing methods; laboratory analysis of soil, plant and animal samples, plus the final produce, are used as a third check on the use of pesticides or other chemicals. Sanctions range from heavy Ministry of Agriculture fines to expulsion from self-regulatory schemes.

A second emerging theme is producers' interest in taking their own initiatives to respond to consumers' growing search for flavor and aroma rather than visually perfect produce.

"We see organic and integrated guarantees are a bottom line," comments Antonio Quirantes, president of the Almerian cooperative CASI. "But we want to go further, to grow produce that is positively desirable because it tastes so good. That means planting the varieties the consumer would like."

TOMATO GROWING IN ALMERÍA

Ten years ago Juan Carlos Ramos began growing winter tomatoes and spring melons on 10 hectares (25 acres) of family land in Almería, the southeastern corner of Spain. Farming in the desert-like scrubland here requires technical skill, precision, and ingenuity. Juan Carlos has set up two giant recyclable polythene and timber hothouses, a rainwater reservoir, drip irrigation that responds automatically to the sun's strength and soil's drainage, and a small desalination plant.

"Switching to integrated growing didn't really mean anything new for me," he comments. In 1996 Campovicar, the agricultural cooperative of which he is a member, decided to opt into COEXPHAL's growers' charter.

"The main difference," explains Juan Carlos with a rueful grin, "is the paperwork." He flicks through the grower's record book in which he and an agricultural technician document planting, treatments, and harvesting for each greenhouse and crop.

The charter, called UNE-155001, defines good agricultural practice from seed buying, irrigation, greenhouse materials, and soil treatment to pesticide use (a maximum of 50 percent of EU levels of a restricted list of products) and packing. New rules are brought in to meet new concerns: certified GM-free seed, labeling of natural pollinization, and centrally organized rubbish collection have all been added to the code in the last two years. Checks are implemented by AENOR, the national standards association. One negative toxic residue analysis from one grower incurs an entire cooperative's expulsion. So far it hasn't happened.

Meanwhile, Juan Carlos' tomatoes, around 120 tons a year, are now reaching North America as well as Europe thanks to the growers' charter. For him these are still early days. His eyes light up as he talks about future plans: perhaps a switch of varieties or installing air fans in the greenhouses. Here, in the desert, second guessing the future is a way of life.

THE VINALOPÓ VINEYARDS

Some 294 km (183 miles) north of Almería, just inland

DEFINING THE ALTERNATIVES

Integrated crop management: Eight regions—Catalonia, Levante, Murcia, Andalusia, Galicia, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, and Extremadura—have laws in place to define production methods and controls for various types of produce ranging from grapes, chestnuts, peaches, and tomatoes to apples and pears. The authorities responsible are working on standardization of the regional laws for each type of produce, aiming to achieve national minimum standards by the year 2000, and are also pressing for European guidelines. A guiding principle is the reduced use of systemic agrochemicals (often under 50 percent of EU-permitted levels) in favor of organic soil treatments, appropriate planting and cultivation methods, and the use of biological alternatives to pesticides.

Organic farming: Spain's primary regulation is the 1991 European Union law (2092/91), implemented since 1993 through committees in each of the country's 17 regions. Three years' conversion is required for previously farmed land. No systemic agrochemicals may be used: they are replaced by organic fertilizers, crop rotation, "friendly enemies" in the insect world, and solar soil cleaning of wet soil. Suppliers must certify GM-free seeds (that is, seeds free of genetic modification designed to confer or delete specific characteristics into or from the plant variety), organic animal feeds, and manure from extensively grazed animals. Checks include independent soil inspection and laboratory analysis of produce for residues. Certified produce carries a sticker with the organic logo and region of origin.

Self-regulatory standards and codes: These have been drawn up by growers' associations, export consortiums, the regulating bodies of denominations of origin (or quality) and other producers' organizations which wanted to anticipate clients' concerns or develop existing producers' codes to deal with environmental and nutritional issues. Although these are voluntary codes, they are generally independently verified and in some cases aim to unify all export markets' legal requirements. One example is UNE-155001, a growers' charter drawn up in consultation with AENOR, the national standards authority (see Almerian tomatoes).

SPANISH PRODUCERS' NATURAL ADVANTAGES INCLUDE LARGE LAND RESERVES AND THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL GOOD AGRICULTURE PRACTICES.

from Alicante, Europe's only denomination of origin table grapes grow in the Vinalopó valley. The 1,500 growers won sought-after D.O. status in 1992 thanks to an ingenious anti-bug device improvised early this century. By tying paper bags over each bunch of young grapes, the growers produce thin skinned, unblemished, honey-sweet grapes that can be left ripening on the vine for up to six months.

"The growing method has not really changed since my grandfather's time," explains Antonio Bernard, whose family's vineyard is just outside Monforte de Cid, one of seven towns with the valley's 9,000 hectares (22,250 acres) growing area. "It gave good grapes so we went on doing it."

By the 1940s, the grapes were finding markets around Europe thanks to their eating qualities, but the health benefits of the paper bags were not realized until the 1990s (see *Spain Gourmetour*, No. 44). In 1995 the Spanish "Green Star" export seal began to certify the grapes' integrated quality, with government laboratory analysis finding chemical residues at ten percent of EU-permitted levels. Two years later the grapes' bloom was also found to contain very high levels of Resveratrol, identified as a valuable anticarcinogenic and antioxidant by American scientists in 1997.

Today some 40 percent of the winter grape harvest, which varies from 18 to 23 million kilos, is exported to European markets. Prices reflect the work involved. Antonio employs 25 people, one for every hectare of his land, to tie the bags on in high summer and to harvest in winter, and 15 people the rest of the year.

"We had always known how good the grapes are," says Antonio philosophically. "They should be, with the work that goes into them."

THE VALENCIAN ORANGE GROVES

To the north of Alicante, a lush forest of orange groves fills Valencia's coastal plain and pushes north into Catalonia. Just twenty growers entered the Valencian regional government's scheme for integrated citrus growing in 1997 when laws came in to define appropriate agricultural techniques. But after the first harvest, 750 growers responsible for 4,000 hectares (9,900 acres) of groves have joined the plan.

Antonio Sánchez was one of the original twenty growers to make the switch. An agricultural engineer by training, he runs 350 hectares (840 acres) of groves around Saguntó owned by the Lladró porcelain family. Their land produces 5 million kilos of seventeen different varieties of mandarin and orange every year.

"It has worked out very well," comments Sánchez, "although you need to be in the groves every day to detect pests fast enough to eliminate them with auxiliary fauna. And you need to know what you are doing, to have some training. But we're already getting cleaner fruit, less pests, and better results from the organic fertilizers, and in the long term, we will also be able to offer cheaper produce because we are not spending on chemical treatments."

The success of the project region wide is built on decades of research work producing virus-free, disease-resistant varieties.

"We wanted to keep the ecosystem intact in the citrus groves and to improve natural resistance to disease," explains Ramón Coscolla of the Valencian regional government. "But research had to come before legislation."

Both he and Sánchez expect alternative production methods to continue to spread. Over 2,500 hectares (6,200 acres) of lemon and orange groves are registered for integrated growing in Andalusia and Murcia, and nationwide there are 1,400 hectares (3,700 acres) of organic growing.

Apart from this major grower and exporter, Martinavarro, based in Castellón but with groves in all four Spanish Mediterranean regions, has turned another 3,460 acres over to integrated growing under independent company standards drawn up in partnership with EUREP, the European association of retailers.

"The idea," explains José Luis Ripollés, "was to have one code to cross regional and European frontiers, which could be open to independent inspection by each retailer's representative as well as our own technicians. We don't label the fruit, but we take other systems further by defining at exactly which level of a pest invasion a grower can take action."

Launched in 1998, the scheme looks set for rapid expansion if this first season has produced the right results.

CASTILIAN BEEF REARING

For three generations Javier González Albertos' family has reared native black Avileña-Negra Ibérica cattle on a ranch close to Ávila, in Castile-León. Today, the 200-strong herd no longer makes the 300-km (186-mile) journey west to winter pastures in Extremadura but they are still extensively reared, grazing all year round on 600 hectares (1,500 acres) of rough pasture close to Ávila.

"We have tried to follow tradition," comments González Albertos, "to achieve a balance between the land and the cattle. It's not quite a craft, but it's close to it, with a lot of care and affection."

Calves are left with their mothers and, once weaned at five months, are fed on hay and GM-free grain-based feeds with added vitamins. Most animals are slaughtered between the ages of 10 and 18 months to give richly colored, strong flavored but tender beef sold in authorized butchers. A much smaller proportion is sold as free-range veal. Inspection systems are backed up by full documentation of the rearing process.

"We always eat the meat at home," comments Gonzalez Albertos. "The difference is in the feed and the breed."

In the last five years native breeds like the Avileña have come into their own. Others, such as the Morucha and Retinta (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41), are also registered for quality-label beef production under EU regulations and all three are now grouped as VEC (Vacuno Extensivo de Calidad, or Quality Extensively-Reared Beef). Since the Carne de Ávila label—originally a quality denomination, now also a protected geographical indication (PGI), was launched in 1994, the national Avileña herd has tripled to 6,000 an-

A FIRST GENERATION OF PRODUCERS HAS PROVED THAT ORGANIC AND INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT IS NOT A UTOPIAN DREAM.

imals. Organic conversion of over 60,000 hectares (148,260 acres) of grazing pasture in Castile-León and Andalusia also leaves rearers with the possibility of production on a much larger scale.

"We are very hopeful about the future," says González Albertos. "You only need to taste the meat to understand the difference. I think it is just a question of time as the herd grows naturally in response to rising demand."

MEDITERRANEAN RICE GROWING

Pedro José García Brotón's family has been growing rice in Calasparra, in the foothills of southeasterly Murcia, for as long as anyone can remember. When Pedro took over his father's smallholding in 1991 he switched to organic production. Yet he hardly changed his growing methods.

"Here the river water's so pure and there are so few pests that organic and traditional growing are almost one and the same," he says. "The main difference is dealing with the weeds. Now I have to pull them out by hand, which is slow work."

Organic rice has been grown in Calasparra since 1982. Blessed by a cool dry climate and pure river water, the farmers had always used crop rotation and organic manure. They had little need of—or money for—pesticides and fungicides. Sixty growers now produce 225,000 kilos of organic brown and semi-polished rice. Pedro, for example, harvests an average of 8-9,000 kilos a year from his hectare of land. The fields are inspected by the regional agricultural department and the rice is cleaned, polished and packed in cloth bags separately in the cooperative's mill.

"I really made the change because the organic rice gets a slightly higher price," says Pedro. "It is extra work but it's worthwhile."

The success of Calasparra rice has inspired growers elsewhere to follow suit. In Andalusia, 14,000 hectares (34,600 acres) are now turned over to integrated rice growing and in the Ebro Delta, organic growing is just getting underway. Juan Enric Bonet, who will be harvesting his first crop of 16-20,000 kilos there this year, already has advance orders from wholesalers.

"I'd been farming ornamental fish with organic methods for a long time," he says. "I liked the idea of double use of the water, of balance. I'll see how it goes but in the long term it makes sense economically as well as environmentally."

FINO QUINTA

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AN ESTIMATED 90 PERCENT OF SPANISH ORGANIC AND INTEGRATED PRODUCE IS EXPORTED, MOST OF IT TO OTHER EUROPEAN MARKETS.

FRESH HERBS AND TOMATOES FROM TENERIFE

Juan Pedro González and his brother have been farming organically for five years in southern Tenerife. They decided to take the risk after importers told them a northern market existed for organic tomatoes ripened in the Canary Islands' winter sunshine.
"It is a huge change of mentality," comments Juan Pedro. "There is a lot of theory on organic farming, but in the end you have to learn from reality, from trial and error."
With the help of their cooperative's specialized agricultural engineer, things have gone well. Lower yields—of around 6-8 rather than 12-14 kilos per square meter in farming with pesticides—are compensated by higher prices. From November to May the tomatoes are shipped to Rotterdam for sale in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Holland.
Today 16 other local growers, all members of the local Nuestra Señora de Abona Cooperative, have followed the Gonzalez brothers' example. Many are older farmers for whom organic techniques are close to the traditional methods. Vine, cherry, and round salad tomatoes are grown in soils dug out from the nearby mountains and drip-irrigated from pure underground water sources. The fruit is protected from wind, rabbits, and pests by physical barriers, mainly nets.
This year, again on the advice of importers, Juan Pedro and his brother have diversified into growing fresh herbs—basil, chives, and mint—which are picked and flown to northern Europe the same day. As yet, they are not convinced by their second crop.
"The herbs are very labor intensive and prices aren't as stable as for the tomatoes. But we're completely committed to organic farming. In the island environment we value the soil and water. Avoiding chemicals is the best way of looking after them."

NATIVE GARLIC FROM MADRID

"The garlic bulb is smaller and so are the cloves," explains Pedro Martínez Robleño. "But the flavor is so deep and nutty, it is quite different."
Robleño, aged 48, owns a garlic-wholesaling warehouse in Colmenar de Oreja, 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Madrid and since 1995 has been farming 15 acres of organic land, growing garlic—a local pinkish-tinged variety called *ajo fino de Chinchón*—chickpeas, cabbage, and lentils. The land, at 750 meters (2,460 ft), is dry and relatively free of pests and the main work is in the preparation of soil with organic manure, planting and weeding by hand.
"I didn't know anything when I started," says Robleño, "But I saw the possibility of something interesting, something I liked, so I just started and learned as I went, with advice from the local committee and other organic growers."
His experiences have been varied. The lentils sell well, but as yet he does not make a profit on the garlic. Prices have to compensate for the smaller bulb size, with organic farming producing a crop of only four kilos as opposed to ten kilos a hectare with agrochemicals. However, the signs for the future are good. He now sells all his garlic to El Corte Inglés, the department store. "I think people will come to realize the difference. At first buyers tend to simply see smaller cloves. But when they have tried the flavor, they realize what they are paying for."

STRAWBERRY FARMING IN HUELVA

Juan Soltero, aged 32, grew up in Almonte, a village just outside western Andalusia's famous national park and bird sanctuary, the Coto Doñana. His father had grown wine and olives the traditional way, but Juan wanted to try organic farming after finishing his agricultural studies. He began in 1992 with just three hectares (seven acres) of virgin land owned by local authorities, growing Camarrosa strawberries alongside potatoes, carrots, and zucchini planted in rotation to enrich the sandy soil.
Today the family company, Bionest, grows some 400 tons of strawberries every year on 50 hectares (124 acres) of land leased from the regional government. From January to June, he employs 200 people to pick strawberries. The other six months a smaller team lays down manure, stocks up on recyclable packing materials, and plants in the autumn. Significantly, Soltero exports 97 percent of the strawberries to European supermarkets who run their own inspections alongside those of the Andalusian organic committee.
"Organic strawberries are smaller and give a lower yield because we don't use hormones to stimulate fruit growth," explains Soltero, "But they have a much more intense flavor, color, and firmer texture because of the slower ripening."
"Of course you make mistakes. You have to move in at the very first signs of pests or they get completely out of control. We lost a whole field of zucchini this year by moving in a few days late. So things are not always easy."
Juan was also lucky that his lands are well clear—over 70 km (44 miles) west—of the area affected by the dam which burst near here in 1998.
Yet overall, Juan's story is one of spectacular success. Such is demand that next year the growing area and the strawberry crop will triple. And his success is not isolated. As an indicator, the area of organic farming in Andalusia has multiplied by seven to a total of 50 hectares (123,550 acres) in the last four years.
"It is not always easy," comments Soltero, "to keep on top of pests. But it is immensely satisfying. I would never go back now. And we have certainly proved that organic farming is workable."

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

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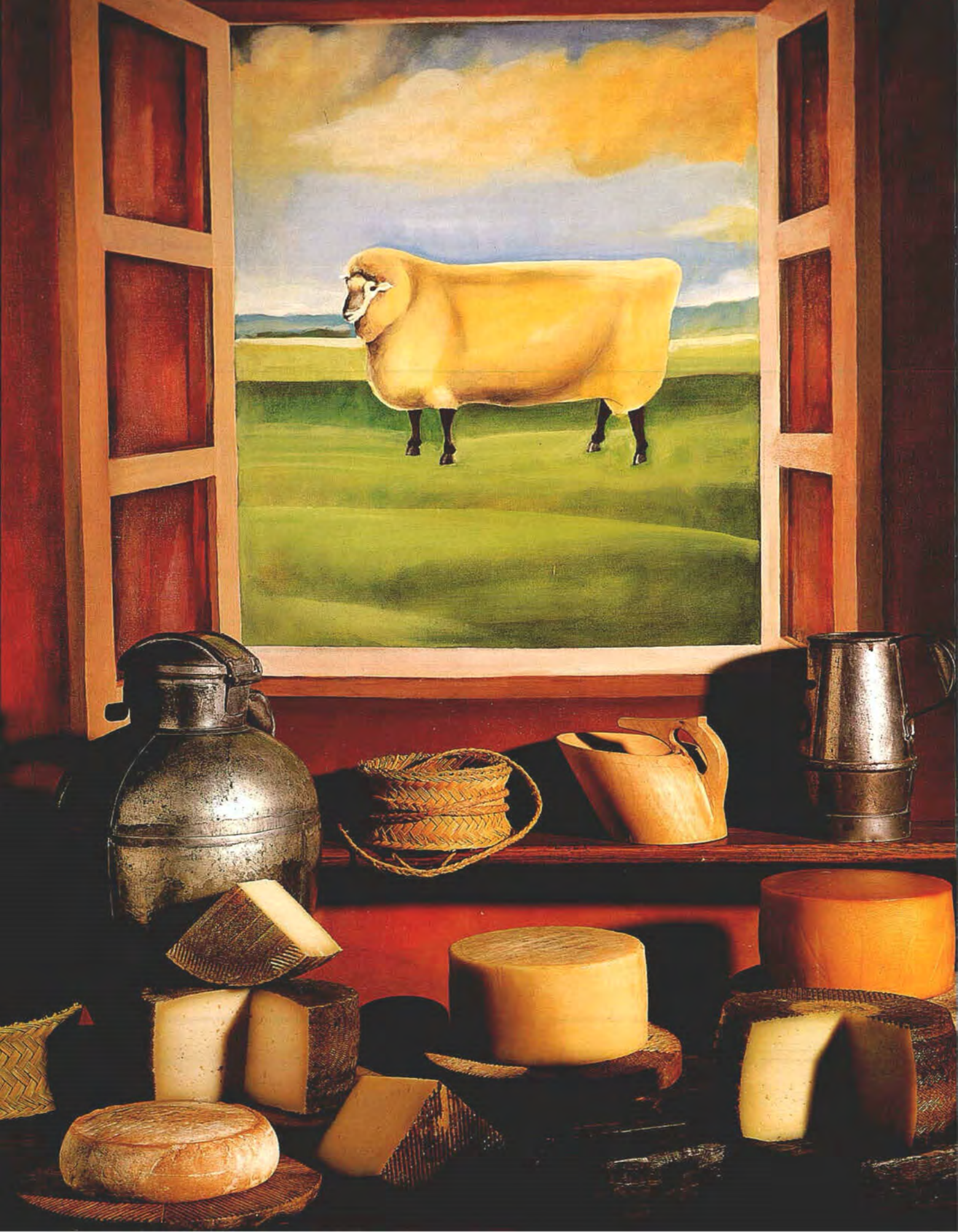

Sheep Chic

A Taste of Biodiversity

Given the way that agribusiness is taking over food production around the world, there is an unsurprising tendency to forget how good quality traditional foodstuffs from specific sources exhibit special attributes that are the product of their natural environment and traditional methods of processing. This article aims to draw attention to the risks involved in standardizing food production. To show the importance of biodiversity, it examines the differences among some of Spain's sheep breeds—their characteristics, management, and history—and how these are reflected in the traditional cheeses made from their milk.

TEXT: MARIANO SANZ
STILL LIFE: MENCHU ARTIME

TRANSLATION: HAWYS PRITCHARD
PHOTO STILL LIFE: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

As a general rule, good quality traditional artisan food products have their roots within the history of a specific people or group which, along with the animal and vegetable species with which it was closely interdependent, adapted readily to a particular terrain and climate. To mention Manchego cheese is to conjure up the close communion between shepherd, *manchega* sheep, and the vast Castilian plain. Likewise, Roncal and Idiazábal evoke the image of woolly *lacha* sheep grazing luxuriously on steep mountainsides, watched over by the Navarre-Basque shepherd and his trusty, clever sheepdog. Zamorano, Villalón, Burgos, Pata de Mulo... none of these cheeses would be what they are but for the rustic *churra* sheep, keenly cropping post-harvest legume and cereal stubble on the great plateau of Old Castile. Meanwhile, La Serena and Torta del Casar conjure up the clouds of dust raised by transhumant flocks, their shepherds, and mastiff dogs as they trail from north to south and vice versa in search of green mountain pastures, or shelter from the rigors of winter in the meadows of the lowlands. Spain enjoys an amazingly varied geography and landscape, and its countryside is rich in diverse plant and animal species—the technical term for this is biodiversity: no other country in Europe can rival its more than 1,500 endemic species. The biodiversity that exists among Spain's breeds of sheep alone provides some idea of the wider picture. Imagine an approximate square superimposed onto the map of Spain, with its vertices in lower Extremadura/upper western Andalusia, the Tierra de Campos of Castile and León, the pre-Pyrenean area of Basque Navarre, and the La Mancha plain. Within this quadrilateral lies what has traditionally been, and continues to be, Spain's most significant cheese-producing and sheep-rearing area.

Sheep have been unchallenged as the most prestigious and wealth-producing sector of Spanish livestock rearing, and during various periods of the nation's history it has exerted a cultural and socioeconomic impact that reflected this importance. Evidence exists from the Quaternary period of the presence in the Iberian Peninsula of sheep originating from Asia Minor, which acclimatized quickly to its varied conditions. The Celts also introduced sheep, and these two types, along with the product of interbreeding between them, constitute the three main strains of Spain's ovine livestock. The earliest pastoral cultures were nomadic in character, their flocks constantly on the move and the shepherds, their families, and few possessions traveling with them. Their movements about the Iberian Peninsula did not follow preordained routes, but were responses to whatever grazable pastures they found as they went.

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Transhumance

With the passage of time, this nomadic lifestyle evolved so that flock movements occurred only periodically, in response to seasonal change, the shifts being from plains and valleys to mountains, and vice versa. Routes became established and recognized, and shepherds established rudimentary dwellings alongside the summer and winter pastures. This method of transferring flocks from pastures parched by heat and draught in summer and seeking out lush mountain grazing, then subsequently returning them to less challenging territory in winter is known as transhumance.

With the emergence of a "farming" model of agriculture, methods of fixed livestock rearing, with flocks being kept in the same place continuously, developed and shepherds' skills became adapted towards managing a combination of agricultural and livestock-related tasks. The intuition and heroic hard work of the transhumant shepherd were no longer necessary. Another shepherding model, which still survives in Spain, is known as transterminance. This consists in moving flocks between different towns within the same province, all of which may be lowland, or some lowland and some highland.

Throughout Spain's history, its various sheep breeds have been a major source of wealth, high quality wool having been the principal moneymaker. The wool trade gave rise to important guilds—of weavers and shearers, for example—and to a lucrative export trade which kept many Spanish ports, particularly those on the Bay of Biscay, busy from very early on. Top quality wool and the profits it generated could also be credited with having bolstered the power and possessions of royalty, aristocracy, religious orders, and landowners. It also financed the *reconquista* (the ongoing war of reconquest waged by the Christians of Spain against the Arab invaders who occupied much of the Peninsula for many centuries) and helped pay for the voyages of discovery to the Americas and their subsequent colonization.

Historically, meat and milk, the other classic products of sheep-rearing, have been less significant than wool, though lamb and mutton and some well-known ewe's milk cheeses have featured importantly in Spanish gastronomy for many centuries. However, since the drop in wool prices caused by the advent of synthetic fibers, young lamb meat (*cordero lechal*) and ewe's milk cheeses have taken on greater economic clout, and today they are the biggest earners for sheep rearers.

Spain has nearly 50 native sheep breeds—that's biodiversity for you. Just four will serve to show how splendid their role has been in Spanish history:

JAVIER BELLOSO

FÉLIX LORRIO/ICEX

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MERINO

The Merino: Superwool Producer

In the 11th century, Fernando I of Castile divided his kingdom into territorial districts known as *merinatos*, or *merindades*, whose top administrator was a figure known as the *merino*. He was responsible for collecting a levy on the wool trade, particularly wool exports, on behalf of the Crown. It seems likely that this wool and, by extension, the breed of sheep from which it derived, took on the name of the official responsible for taxing it, for there is no earlier evidence of a breed being known by that name. The merino sheep had been prized for its fine white fleece and for the ease with which it coped with different terrains during transhumance ever since its introduction into the Iberian Peninsula via the area of the Guadalquivir valley known in the 5th century B.C. as Turdetania or, as the Romans called it, Betica. Under the Visigoths and Arabs, merino sheep spread through most of the Peninsula by means of transhumance, with concentrations of livestock forming in the plains of Castile and in the southeast. Huge transhumant flocks gathered from the Alcudia valley, the plains of La Serena, the Pedroches valley, the meadows of Extremadura and Andalusia, and the Guadalquivir valley, leaving their parched grazing lands in late spring to head systematically for *Las Cuatro Sierras del Norte*—the four mountain ranges of the north—Soria, Cuenca, Segovia, and León, to spend the summer months grazing on natural mountain pasture.

By the 5th century, at the height of Spain's period under Visigothic rule, laws were already being drawn up to establish which were the customary routes used by drovers for the transit of livestock, thus putting an official end to the nomadic pattern that had previously prevailed. It was King Alfonso X, known as Alfonso the Wise, who, in 1284, first granted privileges of passage and access to resources to the transhumant flocks of merino sheep which habitually traversed half the provinces of modern-day Spain. Their routes, denominated *Las Cañadas Reales*, The Royal Drovers' Trails, were walked for many centuries by hundreds of perfectly organized teams of shepherds and thousands upon thousands of merino sheep. The Cañadas Reales within the provinces of Soria and León were the most extensive, totaling up to 850 kilometers (528 miles): if their ultimate destination was Andalusia or lower Extremadura, flocks could be on the move for 30 to 50 days. Transhumant merino flocks generally numbered from 1,200 or 1,500 up to 10,000, and would be accompanied by a team of shepherds with very clearly designated titles and duties:

- the *mayoral* headed the team;
- the *rabadán* stood in for the mayoral in his absence and was the more "hands-on" boss of the other shepherds, of whom he was generally the eldest;
- the *compañero* assisted the rabadán and was usually the nearest to him in age;
- the *ayudador* and the *sobrado* were the youngest and fittest, and their duties were the most physically demanding tasks; and
- the *zagal* was responsible for the mares which carried equipment and provisions.

By their sides went their tough, faithful mastiff dogs, one or two per shepherd: they formed part of the flock and were trained to defend the livestock. They flanked the flock when it was on the move and provided a united defense against wolves or other marauders, wearing spiked iron collars to protect them from potentially fatal attacks by wolves, which went for the throat.

The whole history of transhumance and the heyday of Spain's flocks is dominated by the emergence of the powerful *Honrado Concejo de La Mesta* (Honorable Council of Mesta), which served as the main organizational body for shepherds and their transhumant flocks. This, too, was established by Alfonso X, in 1273, though tacit agreements had already existed between transhumant shepherds and the local authorities through whose territories they and their flocks passed. Members of La Mesta, as it became known, paid "service and turnpike" tolls calculated on how many head of sheep they owned. In return, the Mesta provided protection for flocks and their shepherds from hazards arising from Reconquest warfare, and attack and robbery by bands of highwaymen.

So powerful did the Mesta become that by the late 14th century it was a unique economic and social phenomenon. Merino breeding had evolved from a simple pastoral occupation into a mainstay of the State. It ensured the preponderance of livestock over agriculture until 1836, when, in the face of Spain's increasing agrarianism, the Mesta's relevance finally waned. Contemporary Spanish veterinary expert Sánchez Belda provides a neat thumbnail summary of the merino breed: "Spanish and universal, traveler and colonizer, humble progenitor of a race of giants, collective artisan creation of skillful shepherds, and standardized product of powerful ranchers of the southern hemisphere."

During Spain's political and economic decline in the second half of the 18th century, the preoccupied nation lowered the guard it had hitherto kept over the merino in the form of state protection against its export, and the breed gradually became "internationalized." The invasion of Spain in 1808 by Napoleon's troops was instrumental in this, for they plundered much of its merino stocks, and the breed subsequently spread to the rest of Europe, South Africa, Latin America, Australia, the United States, and elsewhere.

After many years in decline, merino sheep and the transhumance system are now enjoying something of a comeback. The Cañadas Reales are being reclaimed (as ramblers' routes and country lanes, for example), as is a whole pastoral (in the true sense of the word) culture that was on the brink of being lost forever. The merino is recovering its waned prestige, though now for its rich milk rather than its wool. This milk is used to make cheeses such as Los Pedroches, Torta del Casar, and D.O. La Serena which, from their use of cardoon-derived vegetable rennet, acquire a very particular texture, aroma, and flavor: Torta del Casar is fluid, lactic, slightly acidic, and La Serena creamy, unctuous, and slightly bitter. These are exceptionally creamy, spreadable cheeses whose flavors combine the elegant and the rustic, and these qualities are finding favor with the most demanding consumers.

The merino sheep is the migrant breed *par excellence*. Its milk is the basis of La Serena cheese.

A. USTARA/ICEX

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LACHA

The Lacha: Sturdy Highlander

The origins of the lacha breed can be traced to the migrating indo-european peoples who reached the Iberian Peninsula before the Celts and settled in the region of "green" or "wet" Spain in the western pre-Pyrenees, to whose Atlantic climate, wooded pasture lands, and wild, craggy topography they adapted perfectly. Today, the lacha is the sheep breed typically associated with Basque Navarre, where transhumance and transterminance have been practiced for thousands of years, the flocks being led up from the valleys into the mountains, even to high Pyrenean altitudes, where they spend the summer sheltering under trees from the high summer temperatures by day and feeding off the pre-Pyrenean grassland by night. There exists a genuine highland pastoral culture, centered on sheep, shepherds, their huts (known as *txabolas*), their foodways, and so on, in addition to a folklore tradition in which wolves, bears, witches, and the like loom large.

The lacha sheep is both rustic and truculent. Its long coat is composed of thousands of white wavy strands, and its face and skin can be either pale or dark. It is temperamentally unruly and ungregarious, and the ram is very aggressive. Consequently, shepherding them during transterminance or transhumance can be very difficult, and this explains why lacha flocks are smaller than those of the more docile, gregarious merino.

Basque Navarrese shepherds have always relied on the invaluable cooperation of their clever, agile sheepdogs which, despite their small size, are adept at keeping the flock under control, responding closely to the shepherds' signals. These shepherds and their dogs are renowned well beyond their own territory: they enjoyed a fine reputation throughout the Americas where many emigrated in the late 19th century.

The lacha gives good meat and milk, but its wool is of lesser quality than that of the merino. Even so, it has been widely used for locally crafted rugs and tapestries in Basque Navarre. Lacha lambs, slaughtered at around 10-11 kilos (22-24 pounds), provide the raw material on which local *asadores*—restaurants with wood-burning roasting ovens—have made their reputation, and roast lamb is the mainstay around which vast dinners are organized by groups of shepherds, friends, and gastronomes. Buttery D.O. Roncal cheese, with its delicate aromas suggestive of Atlantic woodland, and the firm, slightly piquant D.O. Idiazábal with its beech-wood smoked rind, are genuinely representative of the ewe's milk cheeses produced by the highland pastoral culture of the Pyrenees, and can hold their own alongside the great cheeses of the world. But equally typical are fine curd cheeses, delicious ewe's milk *cuajadas* (junkets), and the pungent, singular Gaztazarra (this last is something of a shock to the unaccustomed palate).

The Churra: Noble Peasant

The churra is a breed as ancient as the lacha, appearing during Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, introduced to Spain as a byproduct of European migrations and eventually becoming concentrated mainly in the Duero basin.

In early Castilian, the word churra was an epithet applied to anything closely connected with the farm worker's dwelling. So, for example, the *traje* churro was the outfit traditionally worn by the peasant farmer; the *vaca* churra was his cow. By extension, the type of sheep kept around the peasant farm became known as the *oveja* churra. Historically, the churra and the merino have been in permanent competition in Spain, their respective situations reflecting the preponderance of livestock over agriculture, or vice versa. The merino was emblematic of the triumph of livestock rearing over all other farming activity, while the churra could be said to have represented a balance between livestock and agriculture.

References to both breeds abound in Spain's popular sayings: one of the most obvious is the warning "*no mezclar churras con merinas*" (don't mix churras with merinos), its "oil and water don't mix" message highlighting the differences and rivalry between the two types and what they stood for.

First the Visigoths and later the Arabs, during their seven-century-long occupation of mainland Spain, contributed to consolidating the churra's position of disadvantage in relation to the merino. Early in the Reconquest, with battles being fought all over the Spanish countryside, the more settled churra flocks gained something of an advantage. Subsequently, however, the heyday of transhumance, with the powerful backing of Alfonso X and the creation of the Mesta, which functioned as an effective lobbying force, saw the merino take the lead again.

As the cultivation of cereal crops spread, and with the first signs of the Mesta's declining importance in the 18th century, the churra regained lost ground. From then on, the churra's qualities came to be recognized. These were the superb quality of its young lamb meat (*lechazo* churro), and its high yield of excellent milk which was used for fine cheeses—Burgos, Villalón, Castellano, Pata de Mulo and, principally, Zamorano, a Denomination of Origin cheese which is left to mature in shallow natural caves where, alongside robust El Duero wines, it develops its characteristic texture and flavor: a firm, dense interior with definite ewe's milk aromas and hints of piquancy.

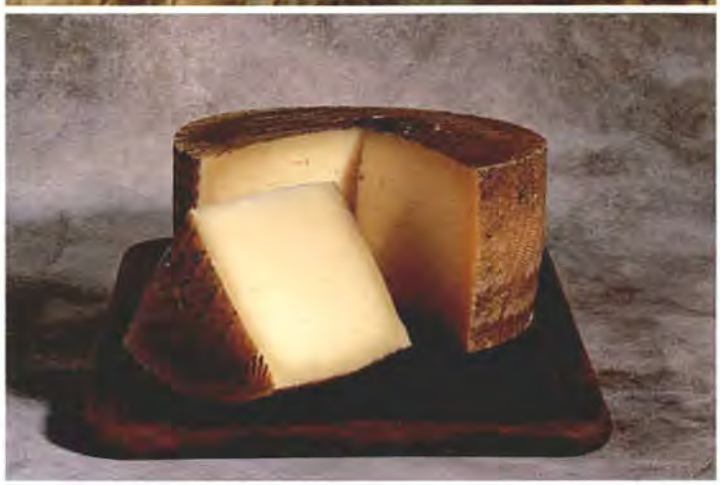
Churra sheep's wool, meanwhile, is used to make Zamora blankets, well known in Spain, for stuffing old-fashioned homemade mattresses, and for making rugs and tapestries. Some is even exported.

CHURRA

The churra's excellent milk-yielding quality, in spite of the scant grazing of the Castilian plains, has given rise to the Zamorano cheese.

PATRONATO DE TURISMO DE ZAMORA/ICEX

C.R.D.O. QUESO ZAMORANO/ICEX



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C.R.D.O. QUESO MANCHEGO/RAFA MARTÍN/ICEX

A. DE BENITO/ICEX

Manchega's sheep milk goes into the making of the most representative of all Spanish cheeses, Manchego, warm and rich in the mouth.

The Manchega: Mainly on the Plain

La Mancha (derived from the Arabic word *manhsa*, meaning land without water) lies at an altitude of 600 meters (2,000 feet), and its extreme continental climate gives temperatures above 40°C (104°F) in summer and below 10°C (50°F) on bitter winter days. This takes its effect on its flora and fauna, and even on the character of its inhabitants. The great plain of La Mancha has the largest expanse of land under vine in Europe, and cereal crops, olives, holm-oak, esparto grass (woven into molds for cheeses made in both Castiles) are also grown there. Back in the mists of time, the manchega sheep was brought to this flat land, parched and seared by lack of rain and the implacably beating sun, and it suited it perfectly. These big-footed black and white sheep have never been characterized as transhumant, despite their pattern of wandering 6 to 8 kilometers (4-5 miles) a day in search of food, cropping sparse pasture and stubble where they may.

Manchega sheep are very gregarious and make a docile flock. In the treeless, unpopulated landscape of La Mancha, one will often see the rather resigned figure of a shepherd, traditional bag over his shoulder, with his docile sheep trailing along behind in an orderly manner, helped discreetly along by a dog whose work consists in little more than keeping his master company in the unimaginable solitude of his daily life.

The manchega gives good meat and medium quality wool which is used for textiles, but its milk capacity is what makes its reputation. It yields milk even on the hottest days of the La Mancha summer, days when shepherd and dog seek out the only available shade for miles around and the sheep huddle together, forming a white woolly circle and tucking their heads under their neighbors' bellies to avoid the blazing sun as far as possible.

These are the conditions that produced D.O. Manchego, proud standard bearer for Spanish cheeses in general. With its elegant ewe's milk aromas and salty, toasty, nuances, D.O. Manchego is warm and rich in the mouth. In its time, Manchego cheese has been the food of shepherds, kings, and clerics alike, bartered for in fairs and markets during the Middle Ages, and the favorite food of Sancho Panza, Don Quixote's trusty sidekick. Today, it is one of the best known ewe's milk cheeses in the world, and something of a respected elder in the thriving family of Spanish cheese.

***Mariano Sanz Pech**, a recognized authority on Spanish cheese, is an agricultural and food scientist who has been a cheese specialist since 1969. He is ex-president of the* Asociación para el Fomento de los Quesos Artesanos *and is currently president of the* Consorcio de los Quesos Tradicionales de España.

See Main Exporters on page 128.

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Seafood with Spanish Flair (I)

You couldn't start anyplace better to learn how to cook your fish and shellfish than in Spain, which consumes twice as much seafood as any other country in Europe, and, worldwide, is right up there with Japan in per capita consumption. These are folks who really know what to do with fish. With that in mind, we present a two-part series on Spanish seafood gastronomy, beginning in this issue with fin fish.

Fish for Every Taste

TEXT: JANET MENDEL
STILL LIFES: MENCHU ARTIME
PHOTOS: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

MONKFISH IN ALMOND SAUCE

ROAST TUNA

SWORDFISH BROCHETTES

BREAM BAKED WITH VEGETABLES

EVERY REGION IN SPAIN HAS ITS DISTINCTIVE WAY OF COOKING FISH—FRIED, GRILLED, SAUCED, BAKED...

From the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the plains of Spain, fish occupies an important place in Spanish cooking. A visit to a fish market is one of the most quintessential of Spanish experiences, whether it's the busy wholesale market, where fish are unloaded at quayside, or the shoppers' markets in towns. Even a small-town market might offer as many as 15 different fresh fish daily and great city markets display even more variety.

Spain is a country with more than 4,800 kilometers (3,000 miles) of coastline. More than just beaches where sun lovers flock, the coasts are dotted with villages whose populations have traditionally earned their living from the sea—fishing, boat building, canning, and preserving. Each seafaring region has its own style of cooking fish, reflecting the traditional ways of life.

For example, Andalusia, which produces more olive oil than any other region in the world, is justly famous for its fried fish. Catalonians cook fish in several of their distinctive sauces, such as *picada*, made with local almonds. In the rice-growing regions of Valencia, Alicante, and Murcia, fish cooked with rice is popular. In the Basque Country, dockside *asadores* where whole fish, fresh off the boat, are grilled over hot coals, developed the style of cooking fish *a la espalda*, opened up and served on its back. Galicia, in the northwest corner of Spain, boasts some of Spain's best seafood. There, fish is cooked with exquisite simplicity, often poached and served with *ajada*, an easy garlic and oil sauce. Other fish dishes around the country derive from traditional fishermen's stews, cooked aboard the trawlers.

Historically and traditionally, fish has been important to Spanish life and culture. In a traditionally Catholic country, where the faithful observed the church's proscriptions against eating meat on certain fasting days, fish was always an important alternative for dinner.

Before the days of refrigeration, inland regions depended on sources of freshwater fish or salted and dried fish such as *bacalao*, salt cod, for their Lenten meals. Only the rich could afford fresh fish transported from seaports by runners or mule teams to interior markets.

Modern transport—refrigerated trucks and fishing vessels equipped to process and freeze fresh fish at sea—has radically changed things in the last 30 years. Now some of the best fish, the freshest fish, is to be found in landlocked markets such as Madrid.

With increased demand and decreased supplies of fish, prices have steadily gone up over the years. Although there are inexpensive fish—mackerel, sardines, grey mullet, skate, and shark are remarkably cheap sources of excellent protein and taste—most fish nowadays is fairly pricey. Nevertheless, Spanish consumers are lining up to buy it—and not just for fasting days. Spaniards love fish and shellfish for holiday occasions and they serve it everyday too. And, they are experts in cooking fish.

Eating fish, of course, is one of the main criteria of the healthful Mediterranean diet, along with olive oil, fresh fruits and vegetables, fiber-rich legumes, and the complex carbohydrates of bread, rice, and potatoes.

LESSONS IN GREAT SEAFOOD COOKERY

The first lesson in great seafood cookery is *buy fresh.* Look for bright and bulging eyes, shiny skin, red gills. If poked, the flesh should feel firm and springy. Where defrosted frozen fish is sold, it should be marked accordingly. Frozen fish is generally more economical than fresh, but is best purchased frozen and defrosted very slowly in the refrigerator.

The second lesson: *go for variety.* There is seafood to suit all tastes, cooking styles, and budgets. Big fish will please those who hate fiddly bones, while big-flavored but bony rockfish is just the ticket for lovers of Mediterranean fish soups. Fanciers of fried fish will jump at flaky hake, gourmets will snap up the superb sea bass, and thrifty housewives can balance household budgets with economical blue fish. There are more exotic choices too, such as colorful wrasse, skate, scorpionfish, eel, and much, much, more.

The third lesson is to *have the fishmonger do the work.* In Spanish markets, fish is usually sold whole. Spanish consumers like to see what they're buying and be assured of its freshness. Any fishmonger worth his salt will be happy to gut the fish, scale it, fillet it, skin it, slice it. Elsewhere in the world, fish is frequently marketed already cleaned, filleted, and packaged. Sometimes you have to go to specialty fish shops to find whole fish.

The most important rule of all: *take care not to overcook the fish.* Test it as it cooks by probing gently with a fork. Fish is done as soon as it is opaque and flakes easily. You should be able to just separate the flesh from the bones. As a very rough guide to cooking time, measure the fish at the thickest part and allow about 3-4 minutes per every centimeter of thickness (whether you grill, bake, poach, or fry).

A SAMPLING OF THE MARKET'S VARIETY

Here is a sampling of the variety of fresh fish to be found in Spanish markets.

Blues. In the category of blue fish appear some of the hugest of fin fish—tuna—and tiniest—fresh anchovies. Blue fish have a higher fat content than "white" fish, thus apportion healthful Omega 3 fatty acids, which help protect against clogged arteries.

- Albacore tuna (*bonito del norte*). A light-fleshed tuna.
- Anchovy (*boquerón, anchoa, bocarte*). Fresh anchovies are about eight centimeters long (3 inches), pretty silvery fish with a protruding upper jaw, from whence they get their Spanish name, boquerón, or "big mouth." Anchovies are delicious crisply fried in olive oil or "cooked" in a vinegar marinade. Anchovies can be found in European and Asian waters. Elsewhere, small sardines or smelt might be substituted.
- Bonito. This is a meaty fish with very dark flesh which can be used instead of tuna or mackerel.
- Mackerel (*caballa*). A blue-green fish with dark wavy lines and silver-blue belly. It's very tasty grilled or baked and a very economical fish. Amberjack or bluefish are alternatives to mackerel.
- Sardine (*sardina*). Grilled on a driftwood fire on the beach, fresh sardines are a

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BIG FISH, ROCKFISH, FLAKY FISH, BLUE FISH—THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERY TASTE AND BUDGET AT THE MARKET.

wonderful treat. Silvery-blue sardines measure from 10-15 centimeters (4-6 inches) long. Small herring or mackerel might be substituted for fresh sardines.

• Tuna (*atún*). King of the blues, in size and in stature, tuna is the "red meat" of fish. It is usually marketed in steaks—and is often cooked like meat too, whether grilled (rare) or pot-roasted. Tuna is still fished by the same methods that were used 2,000 years ago, in *almadraba* nets (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45). Alternatives to tuna in recipes are other meaty fish, such as salmon, halibut, swordfish, marlin, or shark.

Sea Breams. It's a tossup, whether Spain's favorite fish is one of these breams or the hake. Take your pick! Besides the two breams listed below, others in the family, also much appreciated, are *pargo, urta, dentón, sargo, herrera, breca, salema,* and *chopa*. In North America, sea breams are called porgy and the sheepshead is a fine example which can be substituted for any of the Spanish breams. Snapper also makes a good substitute in recipes.

• Gilthead bream (*dorada*). The dorada is a silvery fish marked with gold spots on its forehead—thus the name gilthead. The flesh is firm and moist, so it's good baked whole or grilled. Dorada is one of several fish now being successfully farm raised in Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 43). These come to market of a fairly uniform size and wonderfully fresh.

• Red bream (*besugo*). This fish is traditional Christmas Eve fare in Spain. It is a pink-gray in color, with a large black spot on its "shoulder." It can be used interchangeably with the gilthead. Incidentally, in France they have those shaped pans for poaching turbot, called *turbotière*. In Spain they have *besugeras*, besugo pans, rectangular pans of varying sizes, suitable for cooking almost any fish. They are metal and can be used on top of the stove or in the oven.

Cod Family. Although cod is a constant in Spanish cooking, it is not found in Spanish waters, but comes from distant fishing grounds in the North Atlantic and appears as dry salt cod, *bacalao*. The most esteemed fish of the cod family, to be found in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, is the hake.

• Hake (*merluza*). A superb silvery-grey fish with lean, white, delicate flesh. In Spanish markets, the best specimens are *de anzuelo*, hooked on a long line, because the delicate fish are not damaged as they might be when fished in a net. Hake is wonderful just floured and fried in olive oil. It also lends itself to cooking with flavorful sauces. Take care not to overcook hake, as it can disintegrate. Substitutes for hake in recipes are cod, haddock, whiting, tilefish, jewfish, or mahi mahi.

Flatfish. Who will be king of the flatfish—sole or turbot? Where these fish are not available, substitute other flat fish such as flounder, John Dory, plaice, brill, or halibut.

• John Dory (*pez de San Pedro, gallo*). A wonderful fish, which can be used in any recipe for sole.

• Monkfish, anglerfish, goosefish (*rape*). It is firm, a bit chewy, and does not disintegrate in cooking, so it's a good choice for fish stews. Monkfish has a huge head, so in popular Spanish cooking it often makes two dishes—a soup from the head and a sauced dish with the tail. Conger eel can be cooked like monkfish.

• Sole (*lenguado*). Nothing is so magnificent as a freshly-caught Dover sole, so fresh it almost breathes. (In spite of the name, Dover, it is common in the Mediterranean as well as the Biscay Sea.) It needs no embellishment in cooking, whether laid on a hot griddle or lightly floured and pan fried in olive oil.

• Turbot (*rodaballo*). Small sizes of about one kilo come to market from specialty fish farms. Wild turbot can weigh in at several kilos and might be cut crosswise into steaks. If not available, brill or halibut is a possible alternative or, in Australia and New Zealand, the trevally.

Rockfish. Quite a few fish can be grouped in this category. Some of them are bony, so not worth cooking on their own. Village housewives know how to make good use of these fish, which are especially flavorful, in seafood soups and stews. Big ones can be baked in wine or grilled. In this group are the gurnards (*rubio, garneo*), rascasse (*cabra, rascacio*), scorpion fish (*cabracho*), and redfish (*gallineta*).

SEA BASS AND OTHER CLASSY FISH

•Sea bass (*lubina*). A beautiful silvery fish with moist, textured flesh. Sea bass is one of the finest fish in the sea, so it stands to reason that anything resembling it sometimes gets passed off as the real thing. Close relatives are *baila* and *corvina* (meagre or croaker). Of similar appearance as sea bass is the grey mullet, *lisa*, a nice fish in its own right, but not in the same category as bass. In North America striped bass is a good substitute, while in Australia, barramundi is suggested.

• Grouper (*mero*). A big fish, with a ruddy skin, its flesh is lean, solid, and flavorful.

• Red mullet (*salmonete*). A superb fish of a bright red hue which is usually grilled. In Asian waters, the goatfish is a close relative. Otherwise, redfish, rockfish, or snapper might be substituted.

Big Fish and Meaty Fish. Sharks, swordfish, and such.

• Dogfish (*cazón*). A kind of shark. It is often marinated in vinegar and oregano, *en adobo*, then floured and fried in olive oil until golden, a popular dish in *tapas* bars.

• Swordfish (*pez espada, emperador*). Marketed in steaks. Take care not to overcook swordfish, as it easily becomes very dry. It is best quickly grilled. Olive oil, garlic, and lemon juice are fine accompaniments. Substitutes for swordfish are marlin, halibut steaks, and shark.

Janet Mendel *is an American journalist resident in southern Spain for more than 30 years. She is the author of four books about Spanish cooking. The most recent is* Tapas and More Great Dishes from Spain, *fully illustrated by photographer John James Wood.*


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CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH FISH

RECIPES SELECTED BY JANET MENDEL
WINES RECOMMENDED BY MARÍA JESÚS GIL DE ANTUÑANO

These are some of the classic fish dishes to be found in Spain. You can enjoy them anywhere in the world, substituting other fish if necessary. If you use Spain's fine olive oil and other Spanish ingredients, the dishes will taste just like the originals, with Spanish flair.

Basque Tuna and Potato Stew

Marmitako

This is one of many versions of typical fishermen's stews in which all the ingredients are cooked together in a pot. The name comes from *marmita*, the deep earthenware pot in which it cooks.

SERVES 6:
1 kg fresh tuna or albacore
3 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped
2 red or green peppers, cut in strips
500 g diced tomatoes
2 tsp *pimentón* (Spanish paprika)
Salt and pepper
Red pepper flakes, to taste
1 kg potatoes, peeled and cut in chunks
200 ml white wine
120 ml water

Cut the tuna into bite-size chunks, discarding any skin and bone. Set it aside. In a deep earthenware pot or a stew pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion, garlic, and peppers without letting them brown, until they are very soft. Add the tomatoes, paprika, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes and cook on a high heat for a few minutes. Add the potatoes, combine them with the other ingredients, then add the wine and water. Bring the liquid to a boil, then cover the pot and cook on a medium heat until potatoes are nearly tender, about 15 minutes. Add the fish to the casserole without stirring, cover, and cook another 5-10 minutes until the fish is cooked through. Let the stew rest, covered, five minutes before serving.

Recommended wine: A red *crianza* '95 D.O. Rioja (see Glossary on page 142) made from Tempranillo and Mazuelo. The chosen wine should have mild aromas of wood and ripe fruit and in the mouth should be full of taste. Its fruitiness should blend in with the marmitako while lightening it.

Roast Tuna or Bonito

Bonito asado

Tuna and bonito are popular fish in Asturias. Some recipes—including this one and the popular *rollo de bonito* or bonito roll, can be eaten either hot or cold.

SERVES 4:
1 slice of tuna or 2 of bonito (approx. 1 kg)
1/4 l olive oil
7 garlic cloves
2 onions, in thick slices or sections
Salt
Pepper
Chili pepper

Thinly slice two of the garlic cloves. Season the fish with salt and leave to marinate in the oil with the garlic slices for at least two hours or overnight. Pour some of the marinade oil into an earthenware dish and fry the fish until lightly browned on both sides. Then add the onion, the remaining garlic cloves left whole, and a couple of rings of chili pepper. Cook over a low heat for about two hours or until tender.

If you prefer to eat the fish cold, cover it with the remaining oil (adding more if necessary) and chill in the refrigerator.

Recommended wine: A red D.O. Monterrei made from Mencía and Arauxo (Tempranillo) grapes with ten percent of María Ordoña (Bastardo). With an attractive shine and a powerful berry aroma, this is a full-tasting wine with sufficient tannin to prevent it from being overpowered by the strong flavors of the roast.

Bream, Grilled on its Back

Besugo a la espalda

Originally a style of grilling *a la brasa*, over hot coals, this is easy to do under a grill (broiler) or on a griddle. Besugo is the red bream, but any sea bream (porgy or scup) could be prepared this way. Snapper makes a good substitute for bream.

SERVES 1-2:
1 whole sea bream weighing about 750 g
Salt
1 tsp olive oil
1/2 tsp coarse salt
2 tbsp olive oil
2 cloves garlic, sliced crosswise
Red pepper flakes, tiny chilis, or a sliced ring of red chili, to taste
1 tsp vinegar

Have the fish gutted, scaled, and split open along the belly and butterflied. The head is usually left on, split so that it lays flat. Salt the fish lightly and let it rest 30 minutes. Brush a griddle with 1 teaspoon of olive oil and sprinkle it with the coarse salt. Heat the griddle. Lay the fish, flesh-side down, on the griddle and cook 4-5 minutes. Turn the fish, skin side down and cook another 5 minutes or until the fish is cooked through. When the fish is cooked, you should be able to lift out the spine and discard it. The skin should be deliciously crisped. (Another way to cook the fish is to place it on an oiled and preheated, very hot, grill pan (broiler pan) skin-side down and place under the grill (broiler), without turning, until the spine can be easily removed.) While the fish is cooking, in a small pan place the 2 tablespoons of oil, sliced garlic, and red pepper flakes. Heat just until the oil begins to sizzle, but don't let the garlic brown. Remove from heat and immediately add the vinegar. Serve the grilled fish on its back with the garlic oil spooned over it.

Recommended wine: A chacolí from the D.O. Bizkaiko Txakolina made from Hondarrabi Zuri, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Riesling grapes. These varieties give a fresh, light, and slightly green aroma that brings out the delicacy of the bream but is not overwhelmed by the strong flavor of the fried garlic and chili.

Bream Baked with Vegetables

Besugo al horno

Any large whole fish—snapper, sea bass, or turbot—could be prepared in this manner. If using smaller fish, it will be necessary to partially cook the potatoes before adding the fish to the pan.

SERVES 4-6:
1 whole fish, weighing
1 1/2–2 kg
Salt
5 tbsp olive oil
1 kg potatoes, thinly sliced
5 cloves garlic, chopped
3 tbsp chopped parsley
1 green pepper, chopped
Salt and pepper
1 onion, sliced
1 large tomato, sliced
1 bay leaf
1/2 tsp pimentón
(Spanish paprika)
125 ml dry white wine

Preheat the oven to 190°C (374°F). Gut and scale the fish (the head can be removed, if desired). Rub the fish inside and out with salt and let it stand 15 minutes. Pour half the oil into the bottom of a besuguera, a rectangular oven pan, and add a layer of half the potatoes. Sprinkle half the garlic, half the parsley, and half the peppers over them and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add a layer of all the sliced onion and most of the tomato. Add the remaining potatoes, garlic, parsley, and peppers, and more salt and pepper. Place the fish on top of the potatoes and top with the remaining slices of tomato. Tuck pieces of the bay leaf in the potatoes and sprinkle with pimentón. Pour over the remaining oil and the wine and put on a low heat until the liquid begins to simmer. Then cover the pan with foil and cook in the oven until the potatoes and fish are done, about 40 minutes. Remove the foil during the last 15 minutes.
Recommended wine: A white Chardonnay with Perellada and Moscatel, from the D.O. Alicante. The tropical fruit aroma and slight grapefruit tang of this light wine make it the ideal partner for such a simple fish dish.

Turbot, Galician Style
Rodaballo a la gallega
This dish is an example of the simplicity of fish cookery in Galicia. Any white-fleshed fish can be prepared in this way. A large turbot is usually cut into crosswise steaks, but you could poach the whole fish.

SERVES 6:
1 1/2 kgs turbot steaks
(or a whole turbot)
750 g potatoes, peeled and cut in chunks
1 l water
1 onion, quartered
2 bay leaves
1 tbsp salt

FOR THE *AJADA* SAUCE:
100 ml olive oil
4 cloves garlic, quartered lengthwise
1 tbsp pimentón
(Spanish paprika)
1 tbsp wine vinegar

Place the potatoes in a pan large enough to hold the pieces of turbot. Add the water, onion, bay leaves, and salt. Bring to a boil and simmer until the potatoes are nearly done. Place the turbot steaks (or whole fish) on top. Cover and simmer until the fish steaks are cooked, 8-10 minutes. Remove the fish to a serving platter, reserving the cooking liquid. Place the potatoes around it. Cover with a piece of foil and keep warm. Have ready a saucepan with the olive oil. Heat it with the garlic without letting the garlic color. Remove from heat and stir in the pimentón, vinegar, and several spoonfuls of the reserved cooking liquid. Spoon this sauce over the fish and potatoes and serve immediately.

CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH FISH

Recommended wine: A young red D.O. Ribeira Sacra with an intense aroma of red berries and some creamy notes to marry well with the richness of the turbot and with the pimentón, fried garlic, and vinegar of the dressing.

Hake, Basque Style
Merluza a la vasca
For this dish the hake is usually cut into thick crosswise steaks. Hake fillets could be used. Prepare and serve it in an earthenware *cazuela.*

SERVES 6:
1 1/2 kgs whole fresh hake, cut into crosswise steaks
Salt
2 tbsp flour
100 ml olive oil
6 cloves garlic, sliced crosswise
150 ml white wine
1/2 tsp salt
150 g clams
A few peeled prawns (shrimp), if desired
2 tbsp chopped parsley
6 spears of white asparagus from Navarre
1 hard-boiled egg, sliced

Salt the fresh fish steaks and let them sit for 15 minutes. Then pat dry and dust them with the flour. Heat the oil in an earthenware cazuela or frying pan. Add the sliced garlic and the pieces of hake. Let them cook, without browning, in the oil for 2 minutes on each side. Then add the wine, salt, clams, and, if desired, a few prawns. Cook the fish, shaking and rocking the casserole, until the fish is just flaky and clam shells opened. The sauce should be somewhat thickened. Add the chopped parsley and garnish with the asparagus and sliced egg.
Recommended wine: A white, *reserva* D.O. Rioja (see Glossary on page 142), with a strong, fresh aroma reminiscent of the wood, that is zesty enough to compete with the many ingredients and the flavorsome sauce.

Gilt-Head Baked in a Salt Crust
Dorada a la sal
Baking fish in salt is a manner of preparation found from Murcia to Málaga and Cádiz. In these Mediterranean coastal regions *salinas*, or salt flats, are a major source of sea salt. The salt bakes into a crust, sealing in the juices, which makes for exceptionally moist fish. It requires a whole fish, with head. Don't scale the fish. Either have the fish drawn through the gills or else leave it ungutted.

SERVES 2-3:
1 whole gilt-head bream, weighing 1 kg or more (or bream or sea bass)
2 kg coarse sea salt
Sauces to accompany the fish

Pat the fish dry. Put a layer of the salt in the bottom of an oven pan just large enough to hold the fish. Place the fish on top and mound all of the salt over it. Pat it down firmly. Bake in a preheated 215°C (420°F) oven for 30 minutes. To serve, lift off the encasing salt and skin. Use a large spoon to scoop the flesh onto plates. Remove spine and scoop out remaining flesh. The sauces commonly served with the fish are *alioli*, garlic mayonnaise, and *aliño*, an oil and lemon dressing. (These recipes accompany other recipes in this article.) Here is a somewhat different sauce from the Canary Islands, where it is served with fish.

FOR THE RED SAUCE (*MOJO COLORADO*):
3 cloves garlic
1 small red chili or to taste (or use *pimentón fuerte*, hot paprika)
1 tsp pimentón (Spanish paprika)
1/2 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp oregano
3 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp wine vinegar
100 ml water
Salt and pepper

In a mortar or blender crush the garlic and chili with the paprika, cumin, oregano, oil, and vinegar. Add water to dilute the mixture and season with salt and pepper.
Recommended wine: A dry, white D.O. Somontano with a powerful aroma. Cooking fish in salt concentrates the aromas so the wine must not be too much for them but at the same time should be full, complex, rich and long in the mouth.

Mixed Fish Fry
Pescados fritos
A typical mixed fish fry on the coasts of Málaga, Granada, or Cádiz, would consist of a heap of fresh anchovies; rings of squid; whole *pescadilla*, which is a small hake, often fried with its tail caught between its teeth, or else a piece of hake; tiny whole soles; small red mullets—in other words, a selection of the day's freshest catch.
The recipe couldn't be simpler: Fry each type of fish separately. Dredge the fish in flour, then shake it in a sieve to remove excess flour. Heat olive oil in a deep frying pan or use a deep fryer which has a basket. The oil should be not quite smoking. Place fish into the hot oil without overcrowding. The fish should cook through in the time it takes to brown on both sides—timing depends on the size of the pieces. Remove and drain on paper toweling. Sprinkle with salt. Serve piping hot with lemon wedges.
Recommended wine: A fine, white wine from the D.O. Condado de Huelva. An uncomplicated wine with aromas of flowers and freshly-cut grass, clean, fresh, and tasty on the palate without being too saline.

Monkfish in Almond Sauce
Rape en salsa de almendras
A dish popular in Catalonia, where the sauce, made with ground almonds, is called *picada.*

SERVES 6:
1 kg monkfish tails, cut crosswise into 3-cm thick slices
Salt
Flour
4 tbsp olive oil
20 almonds, blanched and skinned
2 cloves garlic
1 sprig of parsley
1 slice of bread, crusts removed
1/2 tsp saffron
3 tbsp white wine or dry sherry
1 onion, chopped
175 g diced tomatoes
125 ml fish stock or water
Salt and pepper

Salt the fish slices and let them stand for 15 minutes. Then dust them with flour. Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the fish quickly on both sides. Remove it to a cazuela, an earthenware casserole. In the same oil, fry the almonds, garlic, parsley, and bread until the bread is crisped, then skim out. In a mortar, blender, or processor, grind the almonds, garlic, parsley, and wine to make a paste. Crush the saffron and add it to the paste. In the remaining oil, fry the onion until softened. Add the tomato and fry for several minutes. Stir in the almond mixture and fish stock or water and simmer for 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and pour over the fish in the cazuela. Simmer very gently (or bake in a medium oven) until the fish is done and flakes easily, about 20 minutes.

Recommended wine: A white, aged D.O. Penedés with smoky notes to blend with the almonds. A full flavor in the mouth is needed to contrast with the smoothness of the fish, while the accompanying sauce requires a full, mellow, and persistent wine.

Marinated Fresh Anchovies

Boquerones en vinagre

Fresh anchovies are abundant on the Mediterranean and Bay of Biscay coasts. Fried, you can eat them bones and all. The marvelous thing about them is that the center spine pulls out easily, leaving the two tiny fillets attached by the tail. These are marinated, raw, in vinegar then dressed with oil and garlic. You'll find them in *tapas* bars throughout Spain.

MAKES 12 TAPA SERVINGS:
1/2 kg fresh, whole anchovies
250 ml light wine vinegar
2 tbsp water
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp olive oil
3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
2 tbsp chopped parsley
Shredded lettuce to garnish
Lemon wedge to garnish
Chopped green onion to garnish

Cut off the heads and pull out the innards of the fish. Grasp the top of the spine and pull it down across the belly of the fish, then cut off the spine, leaving the fillets attached at the tail. Place them, skin-side down, in a single layer in a nonreactive container. Pour over the vinegar, water, and half the salt. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours. The fillets will turn white and opaque. (They can be kept refrigerated several days.) Before serving, drain off all the vinegar marinade and rinse the anchovies in ice water. Drain well. Arrange them skin-side down, like spokes of a wheel, on a serving dish. Sprinkle with remaining salt, oil, garlic, and parsley. Garnish the dish with lettuce, a cut lemon in the center, and a little chopped green onion. Serve the anchovies accompanied by strips of bread. Some people like to lay an anchovy on the bread; others use the bread to dip into the garlicky dressing in the dish.

Recommended wine: The powerful flavors of the vinegar, garlic, and parsley mean the accompanying wine must be a strong, young red such as a D.O. Toro made of Tinta de Toro grapes. This wine is full of taste, verve, and color.

Marinated Mackerel

Caballa en escabeche

While the previous recipe calls for marinating raw fish which is "cooked" by the vinegar, this one calls for cooked fish. In the days before refrigeration, escabeche was a way to preserve foods. Now it is a way to add flavor. Almost any fish can be prepared in escabeche—try trout, sardines, grey mullet, eel, tench.

SERVES 8 AS A STARTER:
2 kg fresh mackerel
30 g flour
Olive oil
10 cloves garlic, slivered
4 bay leaves
1 sprig thyme
1/2 tsp oregano
2 cloves
10 peppercorns
2 tsp pimentón (Spanish paprika)
1 red chili or red pepper flakes (optional)

CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH FISH

1 carrot, peeled and sliced
1/2 onion, sliced stem to root
250 ml white wine
250 ml water
250 ml sherry vinegar
2 tsp salt

Clean the fish and cut it into thick (4 cm/1.5 inches) crosswise slices. Dust the pieces lightly with flour and fry them in just enough hot oil to cover the bottom of a frying pan. Remove them when they are browned on both sides and cooked through and transfer to a glass or crockery container with a lid. Strain the oil to remove bits of flour. Return it to the pan with an additional 6 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the garlic, bay leaves, thyme, oregano, cloves, peppercorns, paprika, chili, carrot, and onion and cook gently for 2 minutes. Add the wine, water, vinegar, and salt. Cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and cool slightly, then pour over the fish. Cover and marinate, refrigerated, for at least 24 hours and up to 3 days. Serve the fish, drained, at room temperature garnished with pieces of carrots and onions from the marinade, tomatoes, lettuce, and olives. Drizzle with a little additional marinade. Boiled potatoes can accompany the fish, with the marinade as dressing.

Recommended wine: White reserva or crianza D.O. Rueda made from Verdejo grapes, with a complex aroma of spices from the aging process in Limousin oak. This will help it to stand up against the strength of the marinade and the mackerel.

Swordfish Brochettes
Brochetas de pez espada

A favorite way of cooking fish is *a la plancha*, on an iron griddle. Whole fish such as *salmonete* (red mullet), besugo (red bream), sole, and sea bass are cooked this way (just slash through the thickest part of the fish). Steaks and fillets such as swordfish, monkfish, and grouper are also cooked on the griddle. Usually the fish is served with an aliño, a dressing, spooned over the grilled fish. In this recipe, the fish is cut into cubes and threaded on skewers. Monkfish, conger, dogfish shark, or other solid-fleshed fish could be substituted for the swordfish.

SERVES 4:
600 g swordfish
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt
1 tomato
1 onion
1 green pepper
Aliño, dressing, to serve with fish

Cut the swordfish into cubes of about 4 cm (1.5 inches). Place them in a bowl with the olive oil and salt. Cut the tomato, onion, and peppers into eighths and add to the swordfish. Let marinate for 30 minutes. Thread the swordfish on skewers, alternating with pieces of vegetable. Heat a griddle, brush it with oil, and grill the skewers, turning them, until fish is done, about 8 minutes. Serve with the sauce spooned over.

FOR THE GRILLED FISH DRESSING (ALIÑO):
3 cloves garlic, chopped
4 tbsp chopped parsley
150 ml extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 large lemon
1/2 tsp salt

Stir all the ingredients together. Spoon over grilled fish.

Recommended wine: A '97 rosé D.O. Penedés with a fresh but powerful aroma of red berries to compete with the dressing and refresh the mouth after a fish with such a strong personality.

Rice and Fish, Fisherman's Style
Arroz abanda

Use one or more firm-fleshed fish such as monkfish, skate, bream, grouper, rockfish, redfish, gurnard. Shellfish such as prawns and mussels can be added too.

SERVES 6:
2-3 kg fish
1 onion
4 tomatoes
Thyme, bay leaf, and parsley
2 l water
250 ml white wine
Salt and pepper
3 tbsp olive oil
4 cloves garlic
1 green pepper
500 g Valencia rice (medium-short grain)
1/2 tsp saffron
6 peppercorns
Alioli, garlic sauce, to serve with the fish

Clean the fish and either fillet it or cut it into thick slices. Put all the heads, bones, and trimmings into a large pot with half an onion, two tomatoes, thyme, bay leaf, parsley, salt, and pepper. Cover with the water and wine. Bring to a boil, skim and simmer, covered, for an hour. Strain the fish stock into another pot and bring it to a simmer. In it, poach the prepared fillets or slices of fish, removing them with a skimmer as they are done and placing them on a platter. Fish is done when it flakes easily, about 6-8 minutes for solid-fleshed fish.

Heat the oil in a paella pan and sauté the remaining onion, chopped. Then add the remaining tomatoes, peeled and chopped, 2 cloves of minced garlic, and the pepper cut in strips. Measure out about 1 liter of the stock in which the fish was cooked and add to the pan. Crush the saffron and peppercorns with 1 teaspoon of salt. Dissolve in a little liquid and add to the pan. When the liquid boils, stir in the rice. Cook over a high heat for 5 minutes, then cook slowly until rice is done, about 15 minutes more. The rice is served as a first course, the platter of fish, accompanied by alioli, second (though if preferred, it can all be served together).

FOR THE GARLIC SAUCE (ALIOLI):
Here are two ways to make this sauce. The traditional one calls for raw egg. The adaptation is for those who prefer not to consume raw eggs.

1 whole egg
3-4 cloves garlic
175 ml olive oil
2 tbsp wine vinegar or lemon juice
1/2 tsp salt

Place the egg and peeled garlic into a blender and process until the garlic is smooth. Add the oil in a slow stream, with the motor running, until the sauce is thick and emulsified. Add the vinegar or lemon juice and salt.

100 ml bottled mayonnaise
4 cloves crushed garlic
8 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp lemon juice
Salt, if necessary

Place the mayonnaise in a bowl and whisk it smooth. Add the crushed garlic, then whisk in the olive oil slowly. Stir in the lemon juice and add additional salt if necessary. Store refrigerated.

Recommended wine: A rosé from the D.O. Cigales, made from Tinta del País, Garnacha, and Verdejo grapes. This has a fresh nose with aromas of raspberry and strawberry. It is refreshing in the mouth so counters the effect of the garlic.

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Somontano,

TEXT: DAVID SCHWARZWÄLDER
PHOTOS: FÉLIX LORRIO/ICEX

It would seem that the early days of the Somontano wines, a Denomination of Origin located in the northeast of Spain, are slowly drawing to their end. After the initial years of the start-up period during which the Somontano wines were launched with great success on the international wine markets, a new period of major activity began. The Denomination of Origin regulatory council reinforced the legal requirements and the major producers now find themselves in the middle of a far-reaching expansion phase. Not only have the three large producers made impressive efforts in terms of economic development, but their creative drive has made their enormous investments all the more worthwhile.

A Small Denomination of Origin with a Big Future

Enate is one of those wineries where the production of truly fine wines year in and year out has become evident.

The view, on approaching the Somontano vineyards from the southeast, is truly impressive. In the background, the tremendous peaks of the Pyrenees reach upwards, just below are stretches of good-sized hills and, finally, to the north of the approaching visitor, a slightly rising plateau bearing the name Somontano, which means "at the foot of the mountains." The landscape is full of contrast. The southern part is made up of rolling hills planted with vineyards and grain crops as well, whereas the northern part is marked by abrupt cliffs, steep valleys, and deep gorges. Picturesque villages nestle up against the hills for protection from the wind from the Pyrenees. The next thing the visitor notices on taking a closer look at the landscape is that the vineyards are not concentrated in one area, on the contrary a large number may be found in hidden valleys. The only spot where there are a striking number of vineyards is Barbastro, the main town in the region. The upper, flat-bottomed valleys form the first sediment basins of the Pyrenees. The soil here is rich with minerals from the long-extinct volcanos, thus offering excellent conditions for wine growing. The lower areas are widely spread over the rolling hills made up of somewhat rocky soil. The restructuring process of the vineyards made optimal use of the orographic features of the region, with the result that the Denominación de Origen (D.O.) now has one of the best oriented vineyards in all of Spain. Almost 80 percent of the vines are trained on trellis.

Futuristic architecture, interior decorating styled with a vengeance, Enate is one of the most ambitious winery projects.

Strangely enough, Somontano, located in the northern part of the Huesca province not far from the mountains, is the D.O. with the most temperate climate in the entire region of Aragón. Here, it is cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter than in other areas which are influenced by the typical continental weather patterns found in central Spain. The mountains protect from the very cold temperatures and provide for sufficient precipitation. The Spanish call these particularly advantageous weather conditions an Atlantic climate with Mediterranean influences. The result is, first of all, an elegant, subtle wine, a lot of fruit, and a good degree of acidity. Secondly, the climate produces wines of exceptionally constant quality, year in and year out. These two factors have created for the Somontano wines a very special position in the Spanish wine sector and are, of course, a significant element in the very rapid success gained by the wines both in Spain and abroad.

When the Somontano Denominación de Origen was created in 1985, the region already had a long wine-growing tradition, but was devoid of any modern wineries or wines of any renown. Though wine was grown here more than two thousand years ago, the first real period of recognition began with the Romans, who significantly improved the existing wine-growing techniques. Until the great phylloxera crisis at the turn of the century, Somontano had a longstanding tradition of producing good, powerful wines. It was with the replacement of the old vines with high-yield varieties after the phylloxera cri-

VIÑAS DEL VERO

Last year, the constant quality achieved by this pioneer in the Somontano region was awarded with the Alimentos de España award.

sis and the series of crises in the Spanish wine sector during this century, when Somontano slowly slipped into oblivion. The region produced standard, bulk wine for the surrounding towns and villages, until the Cooperativa de Sobrarbe progressively started to replace the existing vines with new ones, at the beginning of the 1980s and thus introduced a new era.

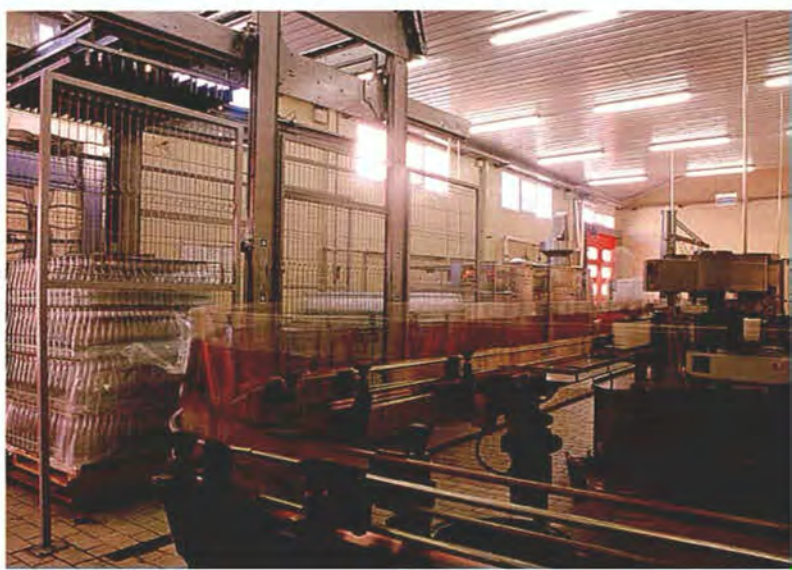
AN UNCOMMON PRODUCTION STRUCTURE

On fleeing the other side of the Pyrenees where the phylloxera crisis had already struck, the Lalanne family from France resettled in the Somontano region just before the turn of the century. They rapidly produced bottled wine and progressed over a short period of time to the point of becoming a supplier to the Spanish court. In addition to the worthy fact that they succeeded, in the face of numerous difficulties, in bottling their wine for almost an entire century, the family also has the honor of being the first winery to successfully introduce French vine varieties to the

Viñas del Vero is among the technically best equipped wineries in all of Spain.

The cooperative sells young wines, crianzas, and reservas, the majority of which are a successful mix of classic and modern tastes.

region and thus reveal its remarkable potential for the production of great wines.
In 1986, the association for the agricultural and social development of Aragón (DAYSA, financed by banks and a number of private companies), started planting vines for the winery that today is known as Viñas del Vero, in order to fully exploit the vast potential of Somontano and to experiment with varieties from other regions. As a result, the restructuring of the vineyards, undertaken years previously by the large cooperative, was decisively accelerated.
The production structure of the Somontano region is uncommon, to say the least. Three large wineries represent 93 percent of total D.O. production, while another five small, virtually unheard of wineries fill out the picture. The remarkable feature is that the three large wineries in no way correspond to the stereotypes of very large producers, but produce highly individual and very modern wines. What is more, they are among the technically best equipped wineries in all of Spain. In addition to the very particular climatic conditions, that is certainly the key



Bodegas Pirineos, processes, and markets the entire production of some 200 associates.

THE SPECIAL CLIMATE IN SOMONTANO MAKES FOR SUBTLE WINES WITH GREAT FRUIT AND AN UNCOMMONLY CONSTANT LEVEL OF HIGH QUALITY VINTAGES.

to the success of the Somontano Denominación de Origen.

MANY FACETED AND PERFECTLY CRAFTED

The Viñas del Vero winery, founded under the name of Covisa, is located on the San Marcos domain that once belonged to the long-established Lalanne family. The winery installations are housed in a large terraced building. The unwieldy-looking construction is in fact remarkable in design because the wine-production process runs step by step, from the top section to the next one down, using natural gravity, with the result that no pumps are required to transfer the grapes and the must.

Right from the initial arrival point of the grapes, the white and red wine production lines are separated. The traditional line of *tintos*, i.e. blended wines, is fermented in barrels made of American oak. They develop into wines with a highly pronounced Spanish taste and a classic *crianza* touch of wood (see Glossary on page 142). On the other hand, the red varietals, single-variety wines, mature for five to six months in barrels made of French oak. All four, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Pinot Noir, are powerful fruity wines, and have remarkable structure. The designer wines Gran Vos (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir) and Clarión, created anew each year from a blend of the best white must, bear the signature of enologist Pedro Aibar on their labels. Last year, the constant quality achieved by this pioneer in the Somontano region was awarded by the Agricultural Ministry with the highest distinction that the Spanish government can bestow on a company in the food industry, the Alimentos de España award.

FUTURISTIC AMBITIONS

Futuristic architecture, interior decorating styled with a vengeance, modern art on the labels, Viñedos y Crianzas del Alto Aragón, better known by its Enate brand name, is one of the most ambitious winery projects in all of Spain, making an equal impression on both wine amateurs and professionals. The wines are produced according to the most

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THE VARIETY OF THE WINES AND PRODUCTION STYLES OF THE THREE LARGE WINERIES IN THE SOMONTANO DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN IS STRIKING.

precise guidelines, whereby fruit and simple elegance are the most outstanding features. The most modern winery techniques, unbridled creativity, and good taste all fuse together like a palette of colors to form a wine work of art. The straightforward Chardonnay 234 with a surprisingly acidic accent, named after the highest parcel of land in the vineyard, stands out in the Enate line of wines to the same degree as the Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, the longest-produced wine of the winery. The latest creation of enologist Jesús Artajona was all the rage on the Spanish wine market. With the wonderfully complex Reserva Chillida (Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot), available only in very small quantities, the winery entered the very select group of elite Spanish producers. At this level of quality, it is not surprising that the prices are impressive as well. Enate is one of those wineries where the production of truly fine wines year in and year out has become so evident that one can easily forget just how difficult it really is to regularly produce outstanding quality.

A HIGH-TECH COOPERATIVE

It may be said that Bodegas Pirineos is today at the head of the only cooperative (formerly the Cooperativa Sobrarbe) in the Somontano region that purchases, processes, and markets the entire production of some 200 associates on almost 950 hectares (2,347 acres). The winery installations were just recently brought up to the most modern standards. During the complete renovation process, enologist Jesús Astrain had his say in the matter and could thus push through a number of technical details that, when added up together, made the difference between a traditional cooperative and a modern winery in a position to produce top-quality wines. For example, in the old section of the cooperative, he installed a set of small tanks that he can use in the future to prepare small quantities from single lots. The cooperative has just begun to exploit the potential of the available vineyards. The list of wines marketed is already impressive, nonetheless. Under the brand names Montesierra, Alquézar, and Señorío de Lazán, the cooperative sells young wines, crianzas, and reservas, the majority of which are a successful mix of classic and modern tastes. A truly distinctive feature of the cooperative is the intriguing wines made from local vines, such as the single-variety Moristel and Parreleta wines, that are simply unavailable elsewhere. Bodegas Pirineos makes a major effort to continue growing traditional grape varieties, thus voluntarily distinguishing itself from the other producers. But that is not to say that the offering is lacking in more modern products. Behind the new label bearing the Bodegas Pirineos company name, hides a Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot wine, fermented in barrels and produced using the finest workmanship.

JAVIER BELLOSO

A WIDE SELECTION OF VARIETIES

With the exception of the Penedés and the huge Denomination of Origin Ribera del Guadiana in Extremadura, no other Spanish region producing quality wine can offer such a multi-faceted array of grape varieties as Somontano. This remains true in spite of the restrictions imposed by the regulatory council in 1997, when it struck the Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and Gewürztraminer varieties from the list of authorized grapes. The twelve varieties form an array of classic Spanish, French, and local (primarily the red Moristel and Parreleta) grapes. Wine producers thus have a remarkably wide palette at their fingertips with which they can give their creative instincts free rein. Almost 75 percent of all Somontano wines are made of red grapes.

Some 3,000 hectares (7,413 acres) of vineyards lie within the boundaries of the Somontano Denomination of Origin, however, only 2,035 hectares (5,028 acres) are registered as quality-wine vineyards. Concerning the vine planting, the eight producers do not have a common policy, though a majority of the vines on the registered D.O. surface area are fairly recent. Bodegas Pirineos and Viñas del Vero both have a number of old vineyards, whereas the vines of Enate, the third of the three large producers, have been almost completely renewed. Each year, new vineyards are planted.

However, the producers nonetheless make the effort to keep an eye on the existing old vineyards of the local red Moristel variety, as well as the Garnacha, just in case a rare opportunity comes along. Bodegas Lalanne, for example, is conducting a number of experiments, with the help of expert enologist Telmo Rodríguez from the

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WINE PRODUCERS HAVE A REMARKABLY WIDE PALETTE OF GRAPE VARIETIES AT THEIR FINGERTIPS TO GIVE THEIR CREATIVE INSTINCTS FREE REIN.

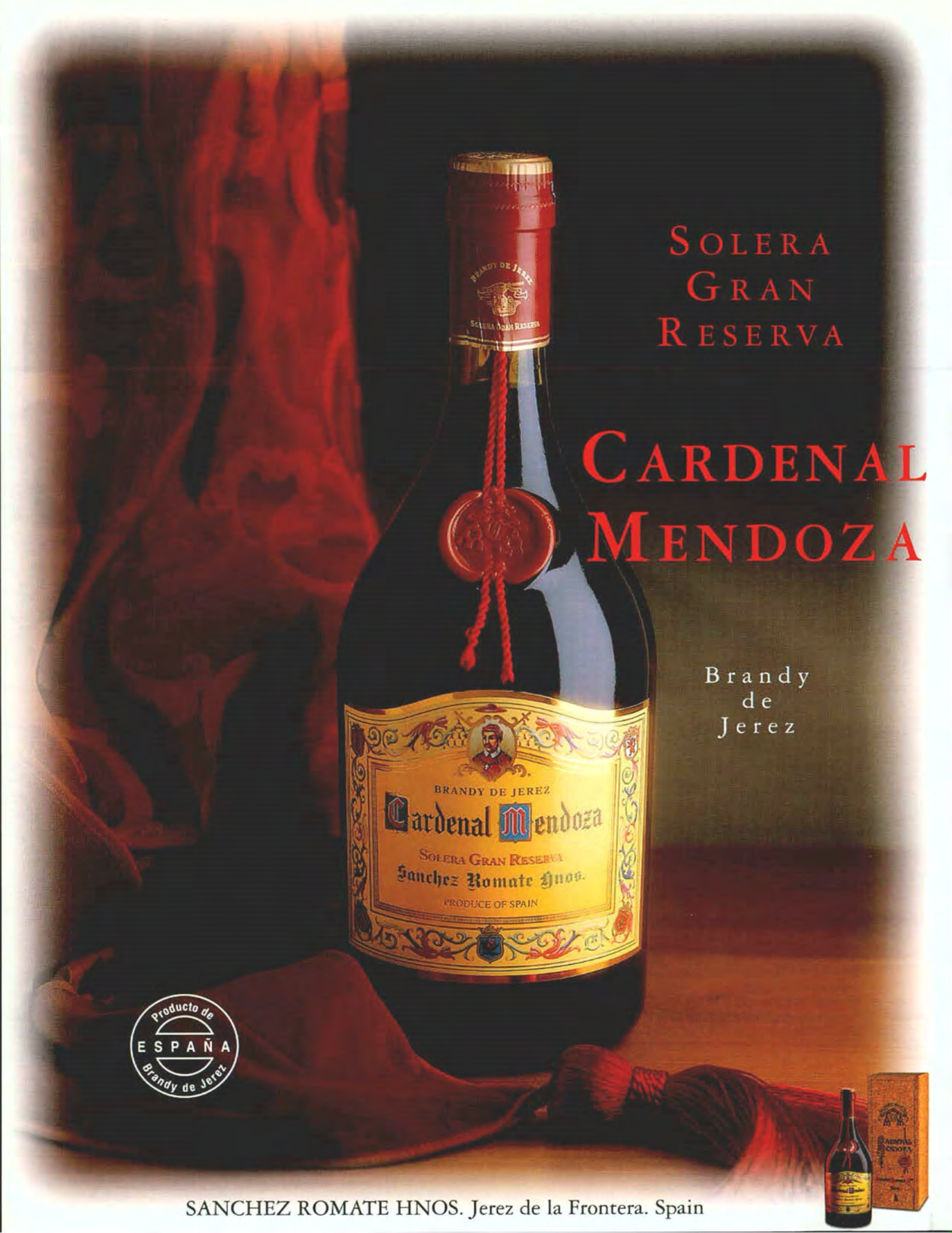
Rioja, to produce a special reserve wine using exclusively old vines. For the time being, their basis is made up of 25 hectares (62 acres) of their own vines, which are worked by the Lalanne couple and their three daughters Laura, Lucrecia, and Leonor. It would appear that the small property is off to a fresh start. In the last year's crianzas composed of Cabernet-Sauvignon and Merlot, one can clearly note that the to date somewhat rustic work habits are increasingly a thing of the past for the winery, which intends to focus more on red wines in the coming years.

Another small producer, certainly worth close scrutiny over the next few years, is Javier Valdovino with a family business operating under his own name. In addition to his young wines, which instill an impression of being very modern, the self-taught wine producer has bottled a future crianza composed of Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo, a dazzling wine with a clear fruit and real substance. His six hectare (15 acre) vineyards have until now been capable of producing barely 50,000 bottles per year, however in the near future, new vines will be entering into production. The region and wines have just recently made a name for themselves, yet the Somontano pioneers have again struck out on the next step. Through major investment efforts, the already remarkable installations will be carefully prepared for the future, capacity will be increased and new wines are already in the making. In any other wine region, one would have to harbor grave reservations about the effects of such rapid growth on the quality of the wines, but not in Somontano. On the contrary, quality has always been the major winner of the giant steps taken previously, steps which have turned the Denomination of Origin from being a nothing region into one of the finest zones of production in all of Spain.

Journalist and author ***David Schwarzwälder*** *has lived and worked for the past 15 years in Salamanca where he is active primarily in the field of Spanish wines and cuisine.*

See Main Exporters on page 128.

Consumed With Passion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(III)

A Lifetime Devoted to Wine

TEXT: VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ TRANSLATION: HAWYS PRITCHARD PHOTOS: PABLO NEUSTADT/ICEX

We continue this series with three more portraits—well four, actually—for our gallery of Spanish wine maestros. Whether academically grounded or self taught, all have pursued outstanding careers in wine, their action-packed professional lives giving them particular significance in any retrospective assessment of the recent history of the Spanish wine scene. Manuel Ruíz Hernández, head of the microbiology section at the Enological Station in Haro (La Rioja), reveals himself as an impassioned eclecticist, a firm believer that technical know-how alone does not work unless tempered by humanism, because "pure" technical expertise can be prone to manipulation. Father and son team Luis and José Hidalgo, both qualified agronomists with countless winery ventures in various wine growing areas and many years of teaching and research to their joint credit, have turned their surname into one that is synonymous with the wine world. More specifically, Luis Hidalgo has been instrumental in setting up 204 wineries, most of them cooperatives, while his son José rapidly established himself as one of the star enologists on Spain's "new wine" scene, acting as technical consultant to many wineries in La Mancha, Rueda, Ribera del Duero, and Galicia. Agustí Torelló is quite an institution among *cava* wine makers. Asked for the secret of his professional success, he replies that: "You have to love your product and be patient with it, and make your way up a very long ladder rung by rung." He declares himself "a born cava maker" with no interest in making any other sort of wine.

Manuel Ruíz Hernández

Luis and José Hidalgo

Agustí Torelló Mata

Manuel Ruíz Hernández: Last of the Great Humanists

Madrid-born Manuel Ruíz Hernández was taken to the Castilian town of Zamora as a very small child for a month's holiday at his maternal grandmother's house. It was 1936 and, as ill luck would have it, the visit coincided with the Franco-led uprising and the outbreak of the Civil War. The originally intended month's stay stretched into 16 years. But despite this prolonged period beside the wine-associated Duero, it was neither Zamora nor its adjacent wine growing area that triggered his eventual enological career which, in his case, could be said to have been a product more of accident than vocation.

Ruíz Hernández has a pleasant, singsong voice and a learned expression, so it came as something of a surprise to discover as we talked that this image of Haro Enological Station's (La Rioja) respected expert has somehow to be reconciled with another thinly disguised underlying character, that of the unrepentant radical who states his views on a regular basis through the medium of his own internet web site. Steadiness—not a virtue traditionally associated with the Spanish—has been one of the key characteristics of his professional life. He observes wryly: "Being steady in your work gives you an advantage over everybody else; here in Spain if you do the same thing two days running, you immediately become an expert." That said, though, he believes that technical know-how alone does not work effectively unless tempered by humanism. "Pure" technical expertise can be prone to manipulation, susceptible to mixed interests, while the more eclectic mind enjoys greater independence.

In an increasingly technically dominated milieu, in which everyone seems to be going freelance, he misses the old-style, traditionalist "schools" favoring particular approaches to wine.

Though these might have represented minorities—followers of a particular teacher in Bordeaux, for example—they were always there as points of reference. He has no hesitation in identifying two figures who were formative influences on him. "One was Cristóbal Mestre Artigas, a marvelous technician in Villafranca del Penedés, who provided a terrific boost to viticulture and enology at the end of the last century and created a school of followers. The other, the humanist influence, was Enrique Lagunero, a disciple of the writer and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, from whom he learned to love and respect the wellspring of genuine Spanishness—not that of imperial Spain, but of the original Spain. This makes it particularly pleasing for me to be in La Rioja, so close to the source of the Spanish language." (The first known examples of written Castilian were discovered in manuscripts in the nearby monastery of Suso, some 1,000 years ago).

Manuel Ruíz remembers his voluntary exile in the town of Haro as being rather tough at first. "I've been in these parts since 1960, working for the Directorate General of Agriculture in both a monitoring and teaching capacity. I was even president of the Regulatory Council of the Denomination of Origin Rioja during a rather inactive phase (1968) of that institution's existence; the signing of the Preferential Treaty with the European Community revitalized it. When I moved here, I was very aware of what I was leaving behind in my previous environment as a student in Madrid—there I was a keen attender of lectures, conferences, all sorts of cultural events. Here, I put my head down and worked hard and fast: when you're terribly aware of being isolated you react against it and do everything very fast, as if you're wound up too tight. That's how, two years after I arrived in Haro, I won the Juan de la Cierva research prize. Contrary to what I'd expected in my naiveté, I found that I'd become a 'suspicious person' vis à vis the hierarchies in Madrid, my own former teachers. So, I severed my connections with academic orthodoxy and put down roots in my new adoptive home."

From his position as learned consultant, Ruíz Hernández has been a marvelous ally for Rioja wine, though he now seems to be turning his gaze on wider horizons for, according to him: "Anyone, anywhere, who is trying to do things well can count on me as a collaborator. Obtaining quality wines, wherever you are, requires you to act intelligently upon an appropriate environment, and exert your critical faculties—and you will certainly find many obstacles in your way. The classic pattern in Spain is that the growers aren't culturally attuned to thinking in the medium term, and this puts them at a disadvantage. It is depressing to find that in Riojan viticulture there is a generational divide—there's a rush to make money fast."

Manuel Ruíz Hernández' current enthusiasm is backing the new "collectors" wines, craftsman-made for a minority market. "In the long run, these are the wines that will safeguard traditional roots. To paraphrase Cervantes, I'd say that I haven't found birds in the nests of yesteryear. Expressed in the simplest terms, the ideal Rioja is made with 5,000 kilos of good, small, Tempranillo grapes in an oak *depósito*, trodden daily with rubber boots. You can multiply this process by a hundred or a thousand, with mechanical or computerized methods, it makes no difference."

Analyzing the current situation in D.O. Rioja, Ruíz Hernández shrewdly advises restraint so that any mistakes, if they happen, happen slowly—uncontrolled price-rises and a predictable drop in quality are an example. "There is one undeniable fact the world over, and that is that less wine is being consumed, more is being produced, and from smaller plantations."

Luis and José Hidalgo: Family Recipe

Father and son team Luis and José Hidalgo, both qualified agronomists with countless winery projects and many years of teaching and research behind them, have made their surname one that is synonymous with the wine world. Luis Hidalgo (born in Lérida in 1917), whose patience and perseverance his son José both praises and emulates, illustrated our interview with documentation, lovingly searching among the many files in his office for the exact bit of information that he couldn't quite call to mind as we talked. Being born in the Catalan city of Lérida was accidental, for the family really originates from Mora, a town in Toledo, where they named a school after him some years ago. Luis believes that "You come from where you live, and not from where you were born." In his case, he moved to Madrid at an early age, and there went on to write 14 books and over 100 learned papers, published in several languages. Being, in his own words, "a ghastly swot," he built up an academic record dense with qualifications, and shortly after finishing his studies started work at the Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Tecnología Agraria y Alimentaria, a.k.a. INIA. That was in 1945, a tough time for post-Civil War Spain during which, like so many, Luis Hidalgo held down several jobs at once. He worked at INIA in the mornings, at the Patronato Juan de la Cierva Instituto de Fermentaciones Industriales in the afternoons, and at eight o'clock at night, taught biology at a school preparing students for entrance to the Escuela Superior. He earned a total of 23 US$ (21 Euros) a month for all three. On Saturday nights, he would go home to Mora to work in the family winery and distillery, "La Cervantina," returning to Madrid at seven on Monday mornings. Given this punishing regime, it is astonishing that Hidalgo had time to get to know a woman, any woman—the only chance was to bump into someone in the corridors of INIA or the Patronato. And that's what eventually happened. He met and married a chemist colleague, and they had two sons and two daughters. José, second of the four, listens with a smile as his father recalls that "In our house, no one was allowed to fail an exam, and no one did. While any of the children still had studying to do we didn't even want to have a television to distract them."

José Hidalgo's first wine and vineyard memories are of going out into the countryside as a boy with his father. Luis Hidalgo set up 204 wineries, most of them cooperatives, making the most of the pro-cooperative climate of the 1960s. "They sprang up like mushrooms; if one project turned out well, several more would soon follow. Looking back on it now, it served its purpose; it stabilized grape prices, improved the methodology of harvest reception, and definitively consigned to the pages of period novels those pathetic scenes of endless queues of carts at the *bodega* gates, with farmers waiting up to two days to unload their grapes."

José Hidalgo completed his studies at twenty-one. He makes it clear that "Despite being the son of the great Luis Hidalgo, my first professional efforts involved a lot of heavy spadework, just like everybody else." He set up a consultancy providing a package of services (setting up the winery, the production process, and help with marketing) and operating in various wine growing areas—La Mancha, Valdepeñas, Rueda, Cigales, Ribera del Duero, Valdeorras, Rías Baixas, and elsewhere. However, he doesn't take kindly to being called a "flying enologist," such a modish job description these days.

In 1994, he accepted an invitation to update Bodegas Bilbaínas, a Rioja Alta firm with a long traditional reputation and producer of cult brands, but which in technological terms had not moved on since the 1940s. Quite a challenge for José Hidalgo, who observes the D.O. Rioja from within "with some concern," adding: "At present, the sector is going along at full sail and with a following wind thanks to some marvelous vintages which have coincided with booming sales of modern wines and a favorable set of economic circumstances. But we must realize that worse times will come."

On the current state of Spanish enology, he agrees with his father that "the revolution has only just begun," though they differ over the way that viticulture should be developed. Luis, the more skeptical of the two, believes that "vineyards change slowly. A vine lives for 50 years and, as long as no one tells him otherwise, the grower will treat it just as his ancestors did." José believes that winery enologists these days are much more aware of viticulture than they used to be, and are therefore in a position to influence their growers and change this passive attitude. Father and son both point out that introducing improvements into Spanish vineyards is handicapped by the extremely atomized nature of plantations: the average size of a plot in La Rioja, for example, is around 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres).

"I've given many talks to groups of growers," says Luis Hidalgo, "and in my experience they usually don't believe anything you tell them or accept anything you suggest. They listen suspiciously." Focusing on La Rioja, where grape prices have rocketed alarmingly in the last few years, after decades of lack of interest in growing their own grapes on the part of the bodegas, José comments: "In most cases, the bodegas are responsible for excesses being perpetrated by the growers at present. A lot of grapes are being produced, and they fetch high prices, but no one is keeping an eye on quality. One kilo of grapes in Rioja, at cost, fetches around 0.32-0.38 US$ (0.3 Euros). The 1.6 US$ (1.5 Euros) that was asked for the '98 harvest represents a big margin. As far as I'm concerned, it's one thing for a grower to have his source of income guaranteed, but quite another for him to aim to make a systematic killing every year unchallenged."

While José Hidalgo carries on his transformation of Bodegas Bilbaínas, Hidalgo Senior enjoys a rather unusual retirement, still working hard as consultant to UNIDO, the industrial branch of the United Nations, which provides support to developing countries.

Agustí Torelló Mata: Sparkling Personality

Agustí Torelló Mata was born 64 years ago in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, world capital of cava (see Glossary on page 142), to tailor parents and musician grandparents. He inherited neither of these vocations nor, by his own account of himself, any money—not even enough to pay for his honeymoon.

Some years earlier, when he was just thirteen, shortly after the end of the Civil War (1939), he started work with his uncle, José Mata, at Cavas Recaredo as a laborer—"mining" (the local term for tunneling out the cellars where the cava is laid down), starting—literally—at the bottom, as all new recruits did in those days. "From my uncle I learned to be neat and systematic, necessary and very useful qualities for handling bottles later during processes such as disgorgement. Sometimes, I'd go out with him on the cart to collect wine from the *masías* (local farmhouses). Even then, I knew intuitively that this wasn't the ideal way to treat the raw material for making sparkling wines."

Impelled by a desire to learn, Torelló attended various enology courses in Vilafranca and Requena, and read up on his subject voraciously—"I had to read the books over and over because I just couldn't understand them first time." Gradually, the knowledge stuck, and by the time he was eighteen he bravely set up a laboratory in his home town, from which he provided *bodegueros* with advice about the basics of the winemaking process. He recalls that, in those days, companies sold cava and gasified wine side by side, some of them very firmly established houses such as Calixtus, Rigol, and Lavernoya, which later disappeared from the scene.

"I became obsessed with the idea of visiting Champagne," he remembers, "so I studied French intensively and got people to recommend me and eventually managed to get introductions to Epernay and Reims. In those days, of course, there were enormous differences between what was being done in France and what we were doing in Catalonia. And relations with the Champenois were difficult—they were tremendously suspicious of my interest."

Inevitably, Agustí Torelló's reputation as a technical specialist was soon soundly established on his home territory, and he became advisor to several companies, such as Torelló (not to be confused with Agustí Torelló Mata), Nadal, Masía Bach, and Segura Viudas. He eventually became technical director of Marqués de Monistrol, a post he held for 20 years—"just until Martini bought the bodega. I knew that I wasn't going to get on with a multinational, and I was right." He then returned to Segura Viudas, part of the Freixenet group, where he spent 15 productive years.

"I never stopped making batches of sparkling wine in my own home, which I would then sell on to other *cavistas*. The late 70s and early 80s were a golden age for cava, but again I was prevented by lack of money from launching a label of my own. Some of my colleagues made their fortune during that period, though they weren't overly fastidious about the quality of their product."

At last came the launch of Kripta—a genuine Agustí Torelló cava, presented in a bizarre, amphora-shaped bottle, and just the first step on the road to perfection. Sr. Torelló states categorically that one of his objectives is "to make my cava the best in the world," and feels proud, if unsurprised, that Pierre Gagnaire's three-star restaurant in Paris includes Kripta on its very select wine list. As to the secret of professional success, Torelló maintains that "you have to love your product and be patient with it, making your way up a very long ladder rung by rung."

He is a stout champion of the native cava grape varieties, classics Xarel.lo, Macabeo, and Parellada, and believes Chardonnay's role in cava contributes nothing to quality: "It develops in the bottle much too quickly." He claims to have the best collection of native yeasts, and is also extremely choosy about his grapes at harvest time. "Some cavistas don't understand business. A good drinking wine can't provide the base for a cava. Until quite recently, cavistas have paid no attention to their grape sources—that's why our grape prices are among the lowest in Spain. Anything conducted on the basis of cheating the growers can't be called businesslike. Both sides need to get together around a table. Sometimes, the big companies think that their money can buy people's consciences and common sense." As to the image of his beloved cava, Torelló finds the price range existing within the current market absurd, with bottles costing from 1.6 to 8 US$ (1.5 to 7.5 Euros), all called "cava" without further qualification. "We all put the same thing on the label, confusing and baffling the consumer. Most, for example, don't include the disgorgement date, a vital piece of information for evaluating how fresh a wine will be."

Agustí Torelló Mata knows for certain that he will be in his present post in his own cava winery until he dies. He is happy that three of his children are involved in the family business: "We are cavistas, we'll never make non-sparkling wines. Cava has the advantage over other wines that it can be drunk at any time. The fashion for red wine will pass—there's a snobbish element to it, and it's too expensive."

His personal taste extends, apart from cava, to a good Rueda white and some of the Catalan Chardonnays, young or cask fermented.

Víctor Rodríguez *is an author and journalist who specializes in wine. A regular contributor throughout the media, he is currently editor of* Vino y Gastronomía *magazine.*

The Palacio de Guevara reflects the life-style of the noble families in Lorca in the XVII century.

MURCIA
a beautiful stranger

Thousands of tourists gather each year along the Mar Menor saltwater lagoon in Murcia province in southeastern Spain to indulge in the mild climate, but very few make the effort to visit the towns and villages in the interior part of the region. The history of human presence in the area goes back some 8,000 years, to which rock and cave drawings bear witness in some thirty different locations. The archeological museums in Caravaca de la Cruz, Lorca, Cartagena, and Murcia, the traditional showcases for history, are of course important sources of information, but interested travelers will also note in the agricultural methods still in use today, as well as in the villages, towns, and ports of the region, the vast heritage left by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Byzantines, and Moors, who all learned to appreciate the advantages of the region. Thanks to agriculture and mineral wealth, the cities in Murcia have always been comfortably affluent as is evident in their multifaceted architecture dating from the Renaissance and Baroque periods or, visible in Cartagena, the modernist period. Our short trip through the beautiful, yet virtually unknown region of Murcia will hopefully incite others to visit the areas lying just beyond the "small sea" of Mar Menor.

Our trip begins in the northeast section of the region, in Yecla. Starting in Madrid, we head southeast and leave the highway near Almansa in order to move on through the countryside around Yecla. Here, where the Monte Arabí rock stands alone, the first cave drawings whose style differs from the familiar Levantine style were discovered. Today, the primary activity in the area is wine growing, as should be expected in the heart of the Denomination of Origin bearing the same name. It is perhaps the Spanish poet, José Martínez Ruiz "Azorín" (1873-1967), who best expressed the character of the area. He spent part of his school years in a boarding school in Yecla and an inscription from his writings is to be found on the bell tower in the market square of the town: "I love Yecla. The good peasant people... I see how they love, how they love the earth... They have enormous faith. The faith of the ancient mystics... That is the old Spain. Full of legends. Heroic." The small town is very rural and has but few monuments to show: the handsome Plaza Mayor with its unusual Renaissance arcades, the

The Palacio de Aguirre is a beautiful example of the Modernismo architecture in Cartagena.

TEXT: BETTINA KRÜCKEN TRANSLATION: SYNONYME PHOTOS: CARLOS MOISÉS GARCIA

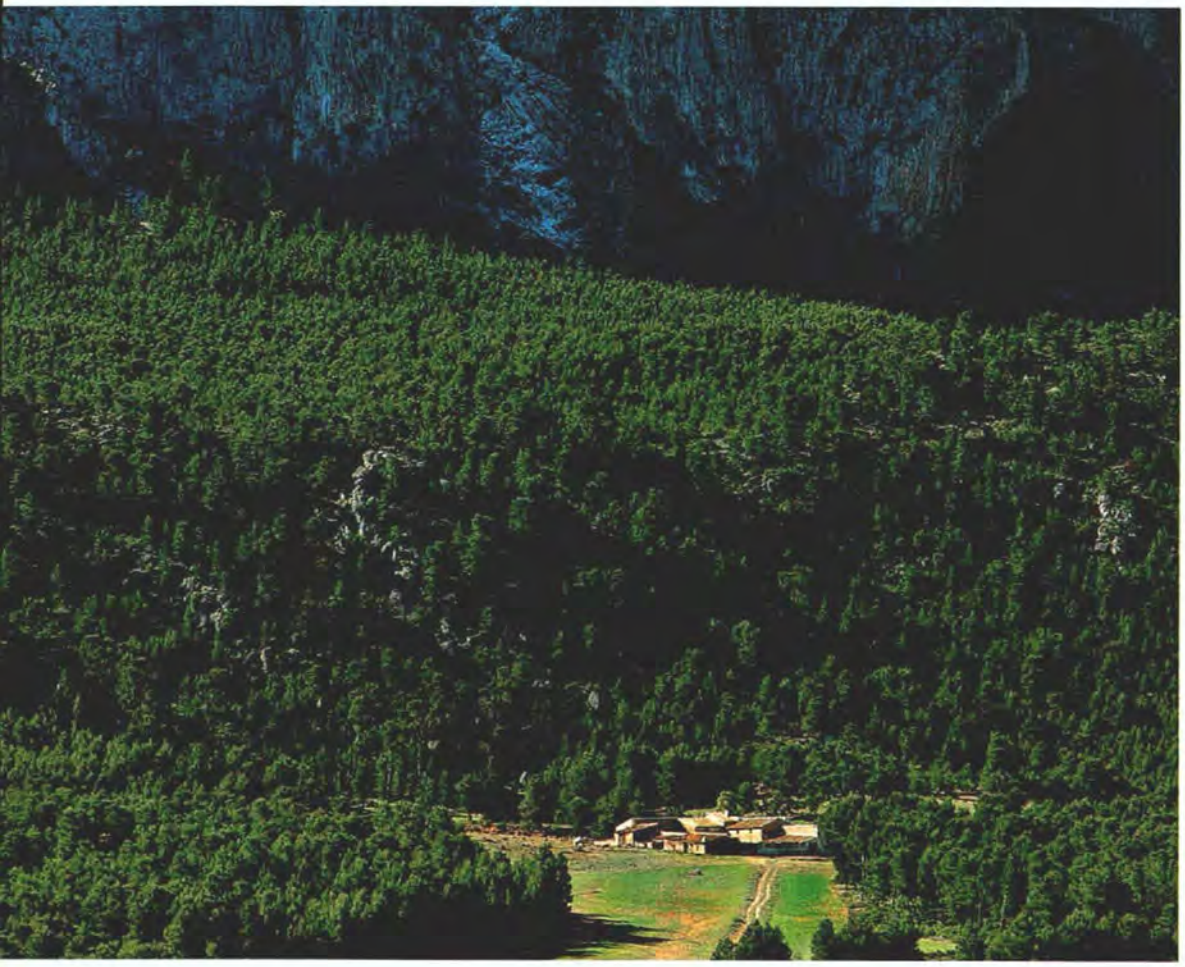
gothic Salvador church with its Renaissance tower decorated with 32 grimacing faces, situated on the slope just above the plaza, and the Purísima church with its dome covered with blue and white glazed roof tiles. On the *Cerro del Castillo*, the mountain overlooking Yecla, you find the remains of a Moorish fortress, the chapel of Purísima Concepción, the patron saint of Yecla, and a wonderful view over the town and far into the distance.

On the road to Jumilla, we continue to drive through endless vineyards, equipped with drip-irrigation systems similar to those found on all the local fields growing fruit. The region has always been very dry and when it does rain, it comes down so hard that often more damage is done than good. The three Denominations of Origin in the Murcia region, D.O. Yecla, D.O. Jumilla and D.O. Bullas, used to be known for mass production of wine. However, in the past few years, some of the wineries have made the switch from quantity to quality and now produce some good, award-winning red and rosé wines, using primarily Monastrell grapes with some other varieties such as Cabernet-Sauvignon and Merlot (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45).

In the center of Jumilla, we observe the beautiful wrought-iron *miradores*, a type of glass-paned balcony, on many of the houses in the snaking alleyways. The Santiago church combines a number of architectural styles from the 15th through the 18th centuries. The nave is gothic, the transept, tower, and wrought-iron door to the sacristy date from the Renaissance period, while the interior decorating is exclusively in the highly decorative Spanish plateresque or rococo style. Above the town is a castle dating from the 15th century, with a completely restored tower. Today, the castle is the stage for the *Moros y Cristianos* presentation, a show held in August relating the battles between the Moors and the Christians.

Some six kilometers south of Jumilla, hidden in the Sierra Larga mountains, lies the very calm Santa Ana del Monte Franciscan monastery. In the Renaissance chapel of the monastery, one of the two *Cristo de la columna* sculptures by Francisco Salzillo (1707-1783) may be admired. The sculpture, portraying Christ tied to a column, is one of the most important works of the artist from Murcia. We were to discover the second sculpture of Christ in the museum devoted to Salzillo in the capital city.

Our next stop is Calasparra where excellent rice is grown. This rice, some of which is pro-



An isolated farm on the wooded slopes in the Sierra de Espuña mountains.

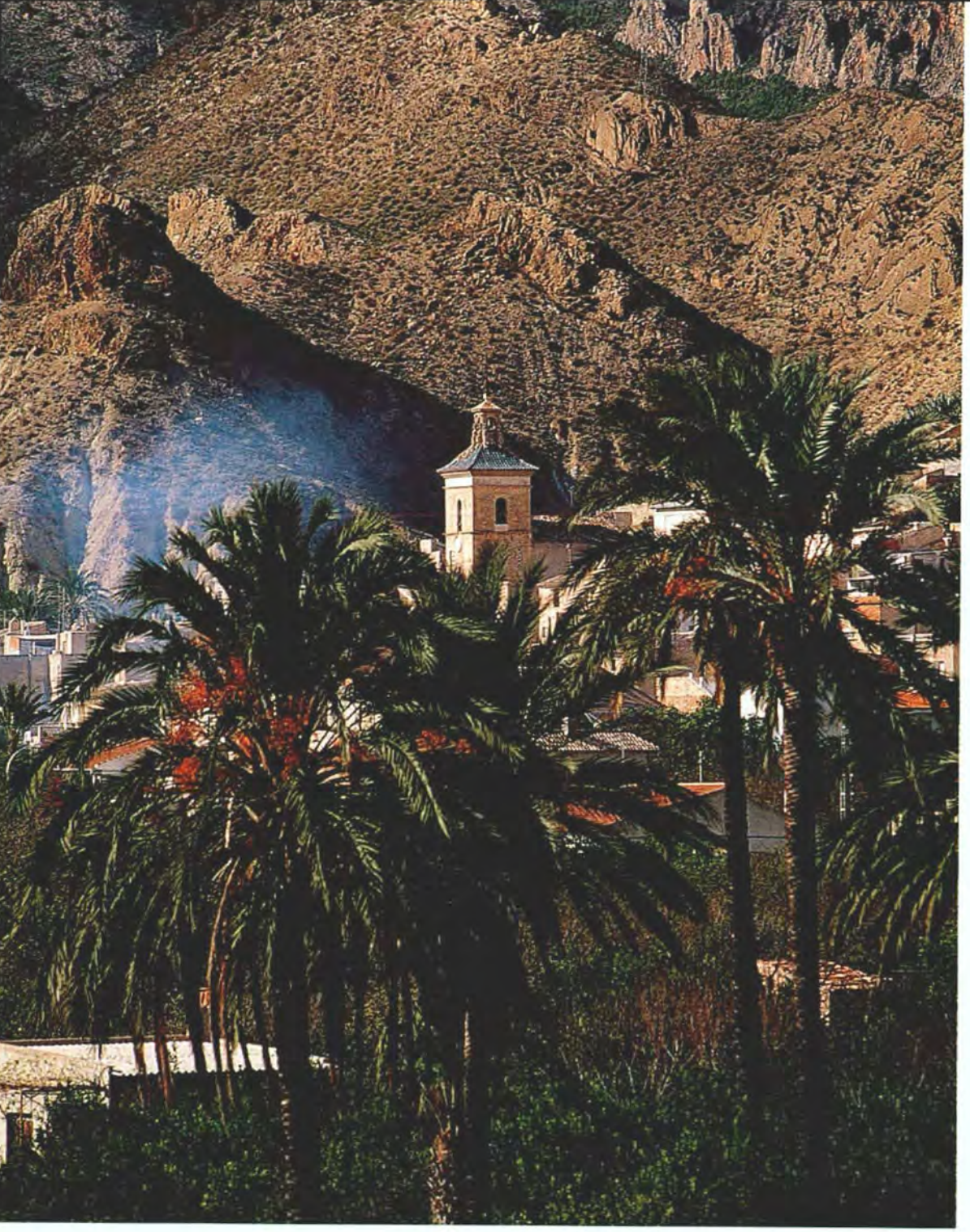
The Monte Arabí rock emerges from the endless vineyards around Yecla.

duced organically (see page 40), has its very own Denomination of Origin. On the way from Jumilla to Calasparra, the landscape has changed. The northeastern part of the region still shows the arid face of the dry Castilian high plateau, whereas here, abrupt mountains surge up from the green, forested landscape and the Segura river cuts deep gorges, like the *Cañones de Almádenes.* In the surrounding area, a scattering of dams contribute to regulating the water resources of the region. Among them are the two Moratalla dams and the dams del Cenajo, del Argos, del Quípar, and del Cárcabo.

STRATEGICALLY POSITIONED: THE VILLAGES IN THE NORTHWEST

For hundreds of years, the region of Murcia marked the border between the Christians in Castile and the Moors in the neighboring kingdom of Granada. Villages such as Mula, Moratalla, Caravaca de la Cruz, or Cehegín are all located in strategic positions on hills, built up around the old fortresses.

Our visit to Caravaca de la Cruz happened to fall on the second of May, the high point of the week-long Spring festival. The beautiful village, normally very calm and placid, is head over heels. This is the day of the *Caballos del Vino* horse races, which commemorate the daring deed of the Christian cavalry who blasted their way through besieging troops, bringing wine and food to the fortress. The horses, heavily adorned with head-dress, cords and brightly colored, embroidered hangings, are shown off in the streets of the village from eight in the morning until after the race, which takes place at two-thirty in the afternoon. During the presentation, crowds of people, often dressed as Moors or Christians, excite the horses and make them rear up. For the actual race, four men accompany each horse in a wild, galloping attempt to be the first team over the finish line at the top of the hill in front of the fortress. High above the streets, inside the fortress walls, lies the main church of the town, the Chapel of the Sacred and True Cross, whose sumptuous Baroque façade made of red marble stone from Cehegín was built in the beginning of the 18th century. The inside



Ulea is one of the oasis-like villages scattered in the mountains along the Segura valley.

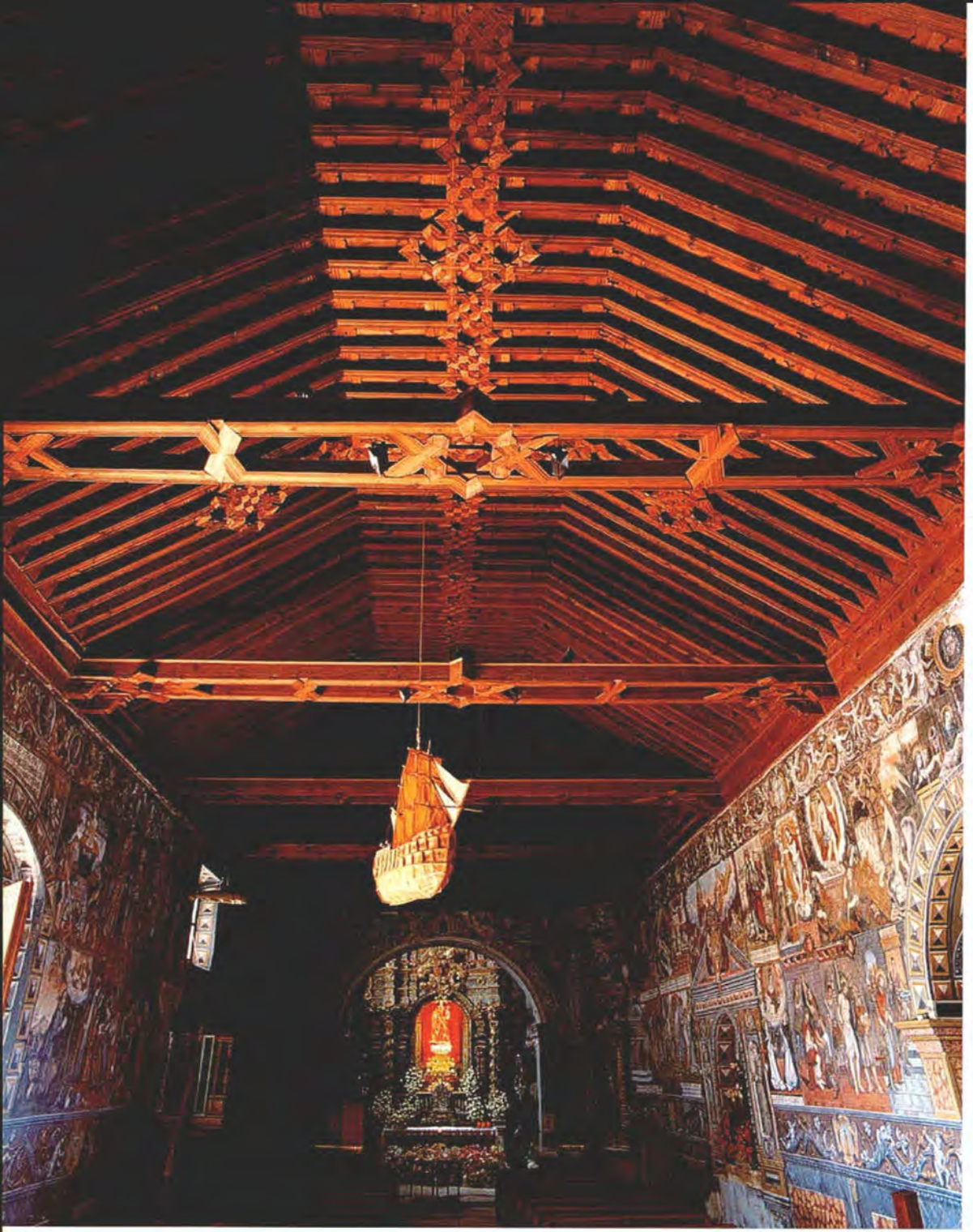
of the church, which dates from the 17th century, contrasts starkly with the façade in that its style is pure Renaissance. The apse shelters a four-armed cross at the center of an old legend. In the year 1232, in the confusion of the Reconquista, the Saracen king Abu Said reigned in the castle of Caravaca and held many Christians prisoner. Of course, he had to feed them and so decided that each prisoner must work, each in his own profession. Among the prisoners was a priest, Ginés Chirinos. Out of curiosity, Abu Said finally asked him to preach. Everything required to celebrate the mass was gathered together, only one thing was forgotten—a cross. Just when the mass was scheduled to begin, two angels carrying the four-armed cross appeared and the king was so impressed that he and his entire court converted to Christianity. Which is also a form of Reconquista, but enough of legends...

We stroll through the pretty, whitewashed, and flower-bedecked *barrio medieval*, the medieval

quarter, then down to visit the wonderful Renaissance El Salvador church, built in the 16th century, and the single-nave Purísima Concepción church, exuding tranquillity with its impressive, polychrome paneling in the Mudéjar style. The San José church is overwhelming with its gold-saturated rococo styling from the 18th century. There is an endless array of sights to discover if one strolls through the narrow streets of the old town center and has the time to admire the public and religious buildings in some calm. Today, however, we flee from the tumult of the festival and retire to the tranquillity of Moratalla and Cehegín.

Winding through the narrow, steep streets of Moratalla, we climb to the ruins of the castle and the Asunción church, with its front square offering a marvellous view to the far reaches of the valley and over the constantly changing rhythm of the roofs covered with beautiful old tiles. From here, high up, one immediately understands why both the Moors and the Christians felt

Mining has left the mountains near Mazarrón look like a bizarre moonscape.



The Ermita de Santa Eulalia in Totana has outstanding murals and a curious collection of exvotos.

safe in Moratalla. Located in a strategic spot at the top of the mountain and surrounded by thick forests rich with game, the village has access to fertile fields and water from the Benamor river. The first inhabitants in the area arrived in prehistoric times, as a number of rock drawings in various places around Cehegín demonstrate and the oldest archeological finds date from the Neolithic period. The Iberians founded Begastri, which later under Roman and Visigothic rule achieved some renown. In the 7th century, the town was even a bishop's seat, though today, even the ruins of the palace are hard to find.

In the 10th century, Cehegín was founded at the top of the Puntarrón hill by the Zenhegie Berbers in view of controling the comings and goings of their Christian neighbors in Begastri. The customary *madinat* design of Moorish towns can still be observed in the old part of the village with irregular, winding streets and small houses packed together along the hillsides. The

The halls and patios of the Casino in Murcia are decorated in neo-arabic, neo-classic or Louis XV. style.

village reached a fair degree of affluence through agriculture and in particular the nearby marble quarries, which look like some cubist ghost town as one drives by. In the 18th century, a number of beautiful noble palaces were built in the Murcian Baroque style along the street between the Plaza de la Constitución and the Plaza del Mesoncico. Most have been restored and signs now explain their past. Unfortunately, the María Magdalena church and the Ermita de la Concepción with its paneling in the Mudéjar style, both listed as historic monuments, have not received the same amount of attention.

Until 1958, the remains of an Arab castle with six towers in more or less good shape stood on the Plaza de la Constitución, but were then unfortunately torn down to make space in the village.

From Cehegín, we continue on to Lorca through the mountainous terrain of the Sierra de Espuña nature park. We pass by Bullas and Mula, with its remarkably maintained castle on the mountain top, then turn in Pliego onto a high road that leads us again through a completely different landscape, past isolated orchards of almond, olive, or fruit trees. The eyes are drawn irresistibly upwards, to the steep, wooded slopes and the rocky summits. Beyond the tops of the mountains, on the other side of the range, there are countless hiking trails that cut through the thick mediterranean pine woods to the highest point on Morrón Espuña, which culminates at 1585 meters (5,200 feet). Toward the end of the 19th century, the Sierra de Espuña was almost completely bare, due to excessive cutting of the forests over the centuries. In 1891, a concerted reforestation effort was undertaken and today, the mediterranean pines, holm oak and many other varieties constitute the largest single forest in the entire region of Murcia.

INDEPENDENT LORCA

We skip Aledo and Totana, which are certainly worth a visit, and press on much too quickly through the river valley of the Guadalentín in the direction of Lorca. The Arabs named the river *Uad-al-lentín*, the river of mud, because following a hard rain, the river swept along unbelievable quantities of silt which overflowed into the valley, thus producing remarkably fertile soil. In this area, artichokes and every other type of fruit and vegetable are grown for sale to the restaurants and markets not only of the region, but all of Europe.

Even from far off, one recognizes above the city the ruins of the Arab fortress with the tower that Alfonso X, the Wise, built after the conquest of Lorca in the year 1244. The fortress of Lorca played an important, strategic role in the history of the city, because it was here that the political and military center of the independent territory Todmir or La Cora was located. In the year 713, when the Arabs pushed forward from Granada to Lorca, they found themselves obliged to come to an agreement with the local Visigothic king Teodomiro, who united Lorca with six other towns in the area and formed an independent border territory between the Moors and the Christians. Dating from the Middle Ages and still in place today, are the remains of the town wall and a gateway, El Porche de San Antonio in the Zapatería street. The gate was built on an angle according to Arab tradition so that any invading forces could not simply gallop straight in, but first had to ride or run along a curve, thus gaining time for the defenders to close the gate. After the fall of Granada in 1492, the town spread out into the valley and the modern center of Lorca, the Plaza de España, now lies at the foot of the mountain. Here, on the square, is the collegiate church San Patricio, built between 1536 and 1780 and named after the Irish patron saint because on the 17th of March in the year 1452, on St. Patrick's Day, Lorca won a decisive victory against the Arabs. In the hope of having the bishop move to Lorca, the church was built with the dimensions of a cathedral, including three naves, multiple lateral chapels and a tower housing the sacristy. In spite of the construction work spanning over two centuries, the inside of the church is pure Renaissance in style, whereas the influence of the Valencian Baroque style may be noticed on the main façade. Unfortunately, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the church was almost completely plundered, to the point that virtually none of the paintings or other furnishings now date back to the Renaissance or Baroque periods.

The two-story town hall (1677-1739), originally built as a prison, forms the western end of the square and influences the overall character with its harmonious round arches in the Renaissance style. The Cava and Zapatería streets, which start from the Plaza de España, are among the most beautiful in all of Lorca because they have retained their original character. No one should miss an evening stroll through the old town with the romantic street lanterns and a dinner in the recently opened Restaurant La Cava. The restaurant is located in a very nicely decorated, four-story house on Cava Street and offers excellent food, an interesting wine list, perfect service, and a remarkable sherry vinegar! There are an uncountable number of buildings and noble palaces from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries worth seeing in the old town, unfortunately we cannot give a complete description of them all here. On the Plaza del Caño, next to San Patricio, stands the partial remains of the Casa del Corregidor, the house of the municipal judge, on which may be seen a stylized ship's bow with two men, the legendary founders of the city. Immediately nearby is the Pósito, the former grain silo which now houses the municipal archives. On Lope Gisbert Street one finds the Guevara palace or *Casa de las Columnas*, with an impressive Baroque door as well as an interesting interior courtyard and private rooms. On the Plaza de San Vicente, we came across a relic of Roman times with a curious twist. On a Roman mile stone found not far from Lorca, stands an image of San Vicente, a saint from Valencia who preached in the beginning of the 15th century in Lorca. Unfortunately, he held forth in his mother tongue and the Lorquinos, who did not understand a word he said, showed very little interest and finally simply ignored him. San Vicente left Lorca shortly thereafter in a very angry mood, and is said to have proclaimed, "From Lorca, I do not even want a speck of dust." It is for this reason that the inhabitants of the town established his "place of honor" directly on a dusty street corner.

Lorca is worthy of a visit not only because of its history and beauty, but also because of an event that has established its reputation well beyond the national borders. The processions here during the Holy Week (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41) have truly biblical dimensions. On the magnificently decorated floats, a vast array of figures from the Old Testament are portrayed, including Moses, Cleopatra, Nero, Cesar, unbelievable quanti-

es of horses, floats... the scenery is comparable to that of Hollywood movies! The processions for the Passion of Christ are much more serious, but both have in common the enormous amounts of work put into the gold and silver embroidered capes, which may be admired the rest of the year in the museum rooms of certain churches. One of the typical dishes in Lorca, that are particularly well prepared in the Cándido restaurant, is also said to be of biblical origin, the *guiso de trigo*, a wheat-based specialty. Lazarus' sister is supposed to have served this dish to Jesus Christ on Palm Sunday, after he woke Lazarus from the dead. Until recently, there was a long-standing tradition in Lorca of distributing wheat from the Pósito to the poor on Palm Sunday. We leave Lorca after a relaxing walk through the wonderful, green *Alamedas*, a select residential district in the southeast section of town, that looks just like a large, blooming park.

THE COAST

It was our original intention to explore the hidden coves along the coast of Murcia, but that is easier said than done. Not far from Águilas lies a series of nice beaches that are not yet overrun by the Germans, the English, or the Dutch. Farther to the north-east is the Calnegre and Cabo Cope nature park, part of which is used agriculturally. Access to the water is possible in some spots through tomato and vegetable fields. In this area, the coast is lonely and undeveloped, but consists primarily of rocks with many small coves that are quite difficult to reach. But with enough patience and time, or with a small boat to approach the coves from another point along the coast, it is possible to swim all alone in the absolutely clear water. We struggle on and finally end up on a sandy trail in the hills of the Calnegre and Cabo Cope nature park and the Sierra de las Moreras, far from our original goal but with a magnificent view over the sea and the shore line 500 meters below us. Near Bolnuevo, we make it to the water once again and come across a beautiful sandy beach several kilometers long. The search continues on past Puerto de Mazarrón to Azohía, one of the pretty coves that the people from Cartagena like to visit in summer. We drive on, skipping Cartagena and continue to the Calblanque nature park. From the small village of Los Belones, a number of small trails lead to the saltworks and a nice sandy beach. Near the saltworks and preferably in the early morning, one can observe many birds, including geese, ducks, quail, various types of heron, and gulls.

CARTAGENA: A SAFE HAVEN

On the way back to Cartagena, we pass by La Unión, which was founded at the end of the 19th century as a mining center. The town became rich at the turn of the century through the production of lead. During that period, the market hall in the modernist style was built. Today, the *cante jondo* flamenco song festival is held there every year. The mountains between La Unión and Cartagena look like a bizarre moon-scape with harsh red, ocher and yellow colors that remind one of the hard work done by the *mineros* from Andalusia.
Cartagena was founded in 223 B.C. by Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal, under the name Quart-Hadast (New Town), and taken over fourteen years later by the Roman marshal Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, who renamed the town Cartago Nova. The site

was, however, already occupied by sizeable settlements as early as the bronze period, due to the configuration of the natural port, renowned as one of the safest in the western Mediterranean, and the mineral wealth in the surrounding area. The Romans drained the marsh surrounding the hills fortified by Hasdrubal and turned the peninsula-formed enclave of the Punic warriors into a major trade city. After the Romans, came the Alanes, Goths, Vandals, and the Suebes, who let the important trade and military post slide into decline, until the Byzantines arrived to turn the town back into a flourishing trade center. Later came the Arabs and the Castilians, but the primary archeological relics that remain today are the ruins of the rich Roman period. They include the theater, that was not discovered until 1987 under the ruins of the 13th-century Santa María la Vieja cathedral, and is now being excavated completely. Other elements are the remains of the amphitheater in what is today the bull-fighting arena, parts of a Roman road and of a house, the so-called "Byzantine wall," that is, however of Roman origin and was simply reused by the Byzantines, and finally the Roman necropolis with the Torre Ciega outside the town.

What strikes one most, however, on walking through the old streets, are the many buildings in the *Modernismo* style, the Catalan form of the Art Nouveau style. At the end of the 19th century, trade and mining had again brought prosperity to Cartagena and La Unión, with, as a result, growth and a reorganization of the town. Architects were called in from Barcelona, who built magnificent houses for the rich bourgeoisie of Cartagena. Fortunately today, many of the somewhat downfallen houses are being renovated thanks to grants from the European fund and the town is recovering the splendor and beauty of its past. Other buildings have already been restored or simply well maintained, for example, in the Calle Mayor, the Casa Llagostera, the casino and the Casa Cervantes, and at the end of Calle Mayor, the town hall with its superb staircase, the Gran Hotel, the Casa Zapata, Casa Dorda, Casa Aguirre, Casa Pedreño, Casa Clarés, the train station and finally, last but not least, the beautiful Casa Maestre on the San Francisco square, which is absolutely striking with its gigantic hevea and palm trees. Our visit ends with two particularly worthwhile museums in this history-laden port city, the Archeological Museum and the Museum for Maritime Archeology, where one can discover interesting traces of the original settlers, the Argar culture, the mining industry, and over two thousand years of maritime trade in Cartagena.

MURCIA: THE BAROQUE CAPITAL CITY

We leave the glistening reflections of the sea and the fresh wind in the palm trees behind us and turn back away from the coast to the capital city of the region, Murcia. Leaving the expressway for the city center and driving along the banks of the Segura, we are greeted by a lilac splash of color on the Glorieta de España. The Jacaranda trees in front of the town hall and the bishop's palace are in full bloom in the beginning of May. Murcia is a great city to visit on foot because the center is not very big and above all, there are many pedestrian zones and small, quiet squares where one can spend a relaxing moment. In this town, there are tables and chairs everywhere, set up under large parasols where you can actually find a seat. The city is busy, but not hectic. In the evenings with mild temperatures, one can sit under the trees in the soft light of the illuminated Baroque churches and enjoy the cooking of the *huerta murciana*, the fruit and vegetable gardens that ring the city.

The Moors gave the name "Mursiya" to the town they founded in the year 831 and which was completely surrounded by a wall with 95 towers. Today, one may still see remains of the wall on the Plaza Santa Eulalia, near the Verónica church. The best preserved parts of the wall, discovered during renovation work, are inside the Rincón de Pepe hotel, in the La Muralla Bar. The importance of the Arab legacy in Murcia, however, is to be detected most clearly outside the walls, in the huerta, where even today canals and reservoirs are still in use for the irrigation of the many fields. It is true that the Romans had laid the groundwork and drained the swampy banks of the Segura river by digging canals, but the Arabs were the true engineers of the system. An enormous, working water wheel may be admired, along with many other instruments used to cultivate the fields, in the Museo de la Huerta located in the nearby town of Alcantarilla. Agriculture, trade, and the crafts, for example the manufacture of silk, turned Murcia, starting with the Arabs and continuing on with the Castilians after 1244 and the Reconquista by Alfonso X, the Wise, into an important capital city.

Architecturally, the city today is marked primarily by the Baroque buildings from the 18th century. The best and most impressive example is the façade of the cathedral (1736-1754). The original main mosque of Murcia was turned into a church after the city was conquered, but then completely destroyed in 1369 and built again in the Castilian-gothic style. The Capilla de los Vélez, in a richly decorated late-gothic style, and the Capilla de Junterón from the 16th century are eminent masterworks of Murcian church architecture.

Other Baroque churches worthy of a visit include San Nicolás and San Miguel, San Juan Bautista, Santo Domingo, Santa Eulalia, el Carmen, la Merced and many more, though some may be visited exclusively during mass. A particular jewel is the San Juan de Dios church, located close to the cathedral, with much more convenient visiting hours. The oval-formed Baroque church was restored in 1996 and possesses, in addition to a number of superb sculptures by Francisco Salzillo, whose museum is housed in the Jesús church, a collection by other well known sculptors such as Domingo Beltrán, Nicolás de Bussy, and Marcos Laborda. The most famous sculptor from Murcia was a true master at bringing out, in the attitudes and faces of his figures, their true feelings and personality. The sculptures of Christ's birth in the nativity crib or the group of the Last Supper are fascinating. During the Holy Week, the sculptures of the Last Supper are prepared for the procession on Good Friday and the table is laid with fresh fruit and vegetables, roasted meat and fish, wine and bread, plates, napkins and crystal glasses. Then the entire, magnificent masterpiece is carried through the streets. This is another example reflecting the importance of the huerta for Murcia, that is expressed in other spring celebrations as well, when *El Bando de la Huerta*, the "huerta peasants" gather all sorts of food in their typical, amply cut clothes drawn in at the waist, for later distribution to other participants.

EUROPE'S VEGETABLE GARDEN

The remarkable quality of the lemons, oranges, a wide

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variety of orchard fruit, tomatoes, zucchini, artichokes, peppers, eggplants, capers, etc., etc. have resulted in a booming industry for both fresh produce and preserves as well as a marvelous, many-faceted cuisine. Each day, tons and tons of fruit and vegetables leave Murcia for delivery throughout Europe and the rest of the world. We wanted to take a closer look at the situation and arranged an appointment with Don Raimundo González in his restaurant, to talk with the renowned connoisseur and defender of Murcian cooking and, of course, to sit down to a meal with him. In response to the question as to why produce from Murcia have such vibrant taste, Señor González brought out a large bulbous tomato, a small dish of tiny strawberries, and a few prawns from the Mar Menor and placed them in front of us. The Raf tomato, an old variety that is once again increasingly produced in the area around Mazarrón, has a sweet, juicy taste that can be turned into a real treat with just a bit of olive oil and salt. The prawns from the saltwater lagoon surprise us with their full taste. The high salt and iodine content in the Mar Menor does not make fish and seafood saltier, but does make for an intense taste with more "content". There is a word for that in Spanish, "sabroso", which could be translated as "tasty", but that translation hardly does justice to the prawns.

A strong, alluring flavor wafts up from the strawberries which taste wonderfully sweet. Later, after the meal, we are served some more strawberries with a bit of freshly pressed orange juice for dessert and the idea comes to my mind that only the words of an Arab poet could truly describe this taste. The explanation is quite simple. It is the right variety that makes the difference, plus the sun which increases the natural sugar content, if the fruit is allowed to ripen on the stem. Of course, they must also be well prepared and the simpler the preparation the better.

Right in the middle of the huerta there are some small, unpretentious restaurants where even the most simple dishes become a gourmet feast. One notable restaurant is Casa El Alias on the road to El Palmar, Southwest of the city. Here we try one of the specialties of the region called *tápenas*, which are simply the pickled stems of the *capparis spinosa*, whose fruit we call capers. The stems have the taste of the capers, but more substance and are served very simply with tomatoes and a bit of olive oil. Another specialty, which we recommend you taste hot out of the oven in the Bonache shop on the Plaza de las Flores in the center of Murcia, is *pastel de carne*, a small meat pie with a delicate puff pastry spiraling crust. And, of course, do not forget *salazones*, the salted and air-dried fish specialties such as *mojama* made of tuna fish, or roe of Mújol, hake, or cod (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45). Finally for dessert, there is marzipan from Moratalla or the sugary sweet yemas de Caravaca, or even *paparajotes*, the lemon leaf in a tender crust that is available everywhere in Murcia during the spring festival (see the recipe on page 124).

JAVIER BELLOSO

MOORISH TERRITORIES IN THE SEGURA VALLEY

The next morning, we take a last look at the city and the huerta from the Virgen de la Fuensanta chapel that lies to the south of the city on a hill. The chapel is the destination of a colorful and joyful pilgrimage each autumn. The road back takes us up river along the Segura through villages and landscapes clearly marked by the character of their former inhabitants, the *moriscos*, Moors living under Christian rule. The small villages lie hidden everywhere throughout the mountains, oases nestled in the dark green, sprouting palm and fruit trees. We stop shortly in Archena to have a look at the hot springs that were used already in Roman times. The curative waters, 52°C hot, roil up in an underground cave from a rock that has since been integrated in the spa center. We continue on northwards, past the beautifully situated villages of Ulea, Ojós, and Ricote, in the direction of Blanca and Abarán. The view from our car windows is fantastic, but we are in a hurry. We allowed for much too little time to visit an entire region, even though Murcia is a particularly easy place to observe and understand thousands of years of history.

Bettina Krücken *has been coordinator for* Spain Gourmetour *since 1994.*

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PUBLISHED TITLES

- Spanish Producers of Sausages and Other Processed Meat (1999).
- Spanish Wine Producers/Exporters. D.O. Ca. Rioja (1999).
- Spanish Wine Producers/Exporters. D.O. Ribera del Duero (1999).
- Spanish Wine Producers/Exporters. D.O. Rías Baixas (1999).
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The Doughnut King

In 1962 a baker from Catalonia named Andreu Costafreda went to the United States on a business trip. There he had an experience which would change the course of his family's life. He ate a doughnut.

It was a revelation, a baker's equivalent of Moses receiving the stone tablets on Mount Sinai. When Costafreda returned home, he was a man with a mission: to introduce the doughnut to Spain. He was convinced the idea would work, but not even he could have predicted that by the time he died in May 1998, aged 89, his Panrico/Donut group would be selling doughnuts to the tune of 700 million units a year.

Now, the group of companies he founded is poised to embark on what could be its most exciting adventure yet. Having conquered Spain with their doughnuts and other baked goods, they are about to take on the world.

TEXT: MARK LITTLE
PHOTOS: PANRICO/ICEX

PANRICO DONUT GROUP

Panrico produces from pre-sliced sandwich bread to cupcakes and sweet rolls, but their star product continues to be doughnuts, which account for 30 percent of their billing.

THE SECRET OF THE DONUT'S SUCCESS IS ITS SUPERFRESHNESS. THE DOUGHNUTS ARE DISTRIBUTED WITHIN HOURS OF BEING MADE, AND ANY UNSOLD DOUGHNUTS FROM THE PREVIOUS DAY ARE WITHDRAWN FROM THE SHELVES.

The little pastry with the hole in the middle is one of the great success stories in Spanish business.

Andreu Costafreda was the son of a miller from the village of Alfarrás, in the province of Lleida (northern Spain), and started his first bakery in Barcelona when he was 19. In the early 1960s Andreu and his son Albert, together with their friends the Rivera family, set up Panrico. Panrico, Spanish for "tasty bread," is also an acronym for Panificio Rivera Costafreda. Aside from freshly baked bread, their specialty was breadsticks, called *grisines*.

The initial investment was 2,404 Euros (2,667 US$). Today Panrico and its twin, Donut Corporation Española, bill 451 million Euros (500 million US$) a year, and last year they reported profits of 30 million Euros (33,3 million US$). They produce goods ranging from pre-sliced sandwich bread and snacks to cupcakes and sweet rolls, but their star product continues to be doughnuts, which account for 30 percent of their billing.

The group dominates Spain's doughnut business with a market share of 85 percent. When the American franchise chain Dunkin Donuts expanded to Spain in 1995, it would have been a mission impossible—among other things, the canny Costafreda had registered "Donut" as a trade name—if it weren't for the fact that Panrico owns 50 percent of Dunkin Donuts' Spanish operation, in a joint venture with Allied Domecq.

BREAKFAST IN AMERICA

Costafreda was 52 when he visited America at the invitation of the U.S. embassy in Madrid. He was traveling as the representative of the bakers of Catalonia, to whom the Americans hoped to sell wheat. In that respect the mission was a failure, for this was during a time when there were many obstacles for trade with Spain. But the little round pastry Costafreda carried in his briefcase, along with a commitment from the Donuts Corporation America to back the venture, was to turn out to be a souvenir of more lasting significance.

As soon as Costafreda returned from the U.S. he began experimenting with recipes for doughnuts in order to adapt them to local tastes. The result was a doughnut which is much lighter and softer than its American cousin.

The idea was to promote the Donut as a super-fresh product, to be sold right after it was made. Costafreda targeted the corner bakeries and the local cafés as the main outlets, hoping to capitalize on Spaniards' addiction to midmorning snacks. It was a novel idea at the time, for this was the first time bakeries were selling an industrially-produced fresh-baked item in addition to their own bread. Costafreda chose these outlets, rather than the traditional food store, because he cleverly reasoned that people visited the bakery every day, whereas they only shopped at the store once a week.

The doughnuts were, and still are, marketed in the same way as the daily newspaper, on a sale-or-return basis. The outlet is visited every day by the distributor, who takes back any unsold doughnuts from the previous day.

The formula proved a success, but it meant that the production center had to be geographically close to the outlets. It also required a network of distributors. In a Spain with poor road communications, whenever Panrico wished to expand to a new market it entailed setting up a whole new doughnut factory and a new distribution network.

Eventually, Panrico/Donut had built up an empire of 13 factories in Spain plus two in Portugal, with 4,700 employees, in addition to an army of 2,300 distributors servicing some 100,000 outlets, each distributor with his own van and working on a self-employed basis. The main outlets continue to be small retailers, as opposed to large supermarkets, which still account for only 21 percent of Panrico's pastry sales.

At first the Donut was targeted at children, as the perfect snack to pack in the school lunch box. But as the kids grew up, they simply refused to stop eating doughnuts, and today adults form the bulk of the market. This progression is reflected in the TV commercials for Donuts, which have always been distinguished by their humorous touch. In one early classic, a schoolboy on his way to school suddenly slaps his hand to his forehead, a look of shock on his face, and exclaims "Jeez, I forgot the doughnuts!" It's been years since that commercial was last shown, but the phrase has passed into the Spanish language to signify any type of forgetfulness.

The latest ad is definitely aimed at the adult end of the market: it is a takeoff of the famous Sharon-Stone-crossing-her-legs scene from *Basic Instinct* and launches the most recent variation on the Donut theme—doughnuts with a cream or chocolate filling. This newest development comes in addition to other innovations such as the chocolate-covered doughnut and the "Donette," which is smaller and denser in texture, more similar to the original New York doughnut. Still, the star seller continues to be Andreu Costafreda's original sugar-glazed doughnut.

BOLLYCAO: A KID'S FAVORITE TREAT

Talk about rolling doughnuts! At Panrico's Barcelona factory they roll off the line at a rate of 50,000 a day, plus another 30,000 or so of the other types of doughnut. Due to its nature as a freshly-made-this-morning item, the amount is fine tuned according to the forecast for the demand of the moment, which varies according to the day of the week, the season, and whether or not it's a holiday.

Until the company's recent move to swank new offices in a residential district of Barcelona, the factory was Panrico's headquarters, and it continues to be the heart of the operation. Much of the activity at the Barcelona plant revolves around developing new products. Upstairs, in the large kitchen, staff work daily at trying different combinations. Those that show promise are then taken downstairs to the experimental production line, to check how they perform in an industrial environment. Interestingly, some items which work perfectly well in the kitchen fail to make the grade on a larger scale.

Across the hall from the

XIV CLUB DE GOURMETS INTERNATIONAL FAIR

7th, 8th, 9th and 10th April, 2000
Pabellón de Cristal
& Pabellón de La Pipa
Casa de Campo
MADRID

If you are a **manufacturer, exporter or distributor** of high quality food and beverages, why is it important to be on exhibition at the Club de Gourmets International Fair?

- **Because this is one of the few specialised fairs of *delicatessen* food and drinks in the world.**
- **Because 39,915* professionals, Spanish as well as foreigners, visit this fair every year.**
- **Because among these visitors we can find*:**
  - 23,3% Restaurants
  - 15,4% Stores:
    - 31,4% Retail or Specialised Stores
    - 42,9% Department Stores
    - 20% Grocery Chains
  - 13,3% Professionals of the Agribusiness Industry
  - 12, 2% Bars or Similar Businesses
  - 9,1% Food Distribution
  - 7,1% Catering
  - 6,4% Hotel Chains
- **Because the rank* of the visitors from these enterprises is:**
  - 36% Owners, Presidents, General Managers or Managers
  - 23.2% Commercial Department
  - 21% Purchases Department

If you are **responsible for the purchase** of high quality food and beverages, why is it important to visit the Club de Gourmets International Fair?

- **Because this is one of the few specialised shows of *delicatessen* food and drinks in the world.**
- **Because 679* enterprises (46% Food, 45% Beverages) took part in it.**
- **Because the following products were on show*:**

Wine	38,4%
Cava and champagne	1,8%
Spirits and eau-de-vie	6,5%
Baking, sweets, chocolate and biscuits	3,5%
Oil	6,7%
Smoked and salted products	3,3%
Cheese	3,0%
Sauces and pasta	3,0%
Pre-cooked dishes	1,9%
Condiments, spices and vinegar	1,9%
Snacks and beer	1,2%
Dairy products and derivatives	1,6%
Canned meat	1,0%
Canned vegetables	5,2%
Canned fish	2,3%
Ham and charcuterie	5,3%
Pâté, foie-gras and other duck and goose products	1,7%
Fresh products	4,4%
Honey and jam	3,8%
Coffee, tea and infusions	0,6%
Table accessories (linen, dinner services, glassware, etc.)	0,4%
Tobacco	0,5%
Other items (cooking utensils, books, magazines, etc.)	2,1%

* Data audited from the 13th Fair, 1999.

IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE SEND THIS VOUCHER BY FAX
Fax: 34 91 431 13 59, e-mail: reyes@gourmets.net, http://www.gourmets.net

❑ EXHIBIT AT THE FAIR ❑ VISIT THE FAIR

COMPANY ADDRESS
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THE PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF DOUGHNUTS IN SPAIN IS THREE AND A HALF TIMES HIGHER THAN IN THE U.S. PANRICO/DONUT DOMINATES THE SPANISH MARKET, WITH 700 MILLION DOUGHNUTS SOLD EACH YEAR.

kitchen is the tasting room where each product is subject to the test of blind tasting by the company's own team of tasters, plus others hired in from the outside. The most important opinions, though, often come from the real experts, the people who know more about this kind of thing than anyone else: the 11,000 or so children who visit the Barcelona factory every year on school trips, some of whom are shanghaied into joining the tasting team. More than one recipe has been modified on the advice of a gang of ten-year-olds.

Once a new product has run the gamut of tests, it goes on to be incorporated into the company's line, which now is comprised of more than 200 items, everything from chocolate-filled croissants to pizza bases. But so far none of them has been able to match the success of the Bollycao, the company's second biggest seller, accounting for ten percent of sales.

Unlike the doughnut, an idea imported from abroad, the Bollycao is a strictly Spanish development. Traditionally, Spanish schoolchildren had to face long hours until lunch time, that is two o'clock. After a breakfast at home which was perfunctory at best, they had to be provided with some sustenance to keep them from fainting out of sheer hunger halfway through the school day. Usually, the best a busy mother could do was to shove a slab of chocolate into a bread roll. Needless to say, the kids usually ate the chocolate and threw away the bread.

The Bollycao is brilliant in its simplicity. It is a sweet bun into which chocolate cream has been injected. To ensure customer loyalty, it also comes with a collectible card or sticker wrapped in plastic which—if my own four-year-old is to be trusted—is the Bollycao's principal ingredient.

Some 130 million units are sold a year, with Panrico holding a seemingly untouchable 75 percent market share in this area.

In 1973, the British group Allied Lyons bought 100 percent of Donut Corporation America, thus becoming Panrico's new partners in Spain. Their backing enabled the company to grow unabated, introducing new products and expanding into Portugal, but Allied's purchase of the Domecq Sherry company in 1994 signaled a reorientation of the British group, focusing on their core business, drinks. In financial sectors it was a given that the group, renamed Allied Domecq, would divest itself of its share in the bakery sector, and thus of Panrico.

Albert Costafreda bought Allied's share for 132 million Euros (147 million US$) at the beginning of 1999, thus becoming Panrico/Donut's principal shareholder, though the two companies continue to be partners in the Dunkin Donuts Spanish operation.

Not for nothing was Albert Costafreda named Catalan businessman of the year in 1997. For the two years prior to the deal the company had already been preparing for a new phase, with a view to going public in the near future. The appointment of a new general manager, Rafael Villaseca, was the first step in a major restructuring of the company.

Part of the plan involves streamlining their operations in Spain, a complex web of companies and factories, working with a certain degree of autonomy, under five different groups serving different parts of the Iberian Peninsula. This made for a lack of uniformity in the range of products, and in some cases even the price structure. Due to the somewhat haphazard setup, most Spanish consumers aren't even aware of the connection between Panrico, Donuts, and Bollycao, unless they're given to reading the small print on bread packages and pastry wrappers.

The plan is to introduce a measure of uniformity by merging the score of companies that make up the group. It is a necessary first step if Panrico is to go forward with plans to go public, a move which would provide backing for their future plans of expansion in Spain and abroad.

Although the group is one of the big players in the domestic market, Spain still holds challenges for Panrico. Not the least is chipping away at the Bimbo corporation's dominance of the sandwich bread market. In 1983, Panrico first started making pre-sliced bread. Although Bimbo's hold on the market is nearly as strong as Panrico's on the doughnut business, Panrico's own customers demanded the product, and Panrico saw it as an area with plenty of room for growth. Now they have a respectable market share of 35 percent, between their own brands and distribution brands for various chains.

FIRST BEIJING, THEN THE WORLD

But for the group, Spain is a mature market—the average Spaniard eats his way through 12 kilos of industrial pastries a year, a great many of them manufactured by Panrico—and the most exciting prospect is the export trade. With a billing in 1998 of 12 million Euros (12,8 million US$), this area represents a fraction of Panrico's business, so there is definitely room for growth in that direction, and Panrico has set up a new department to develop the foreign market.

It's true that in 1985 Panrico had already expanded to Portugal, but that was regarded as a natural progression, due to the geographical proximity and cultural similarities between Spain and Portugal, where they now have two factories.

This new foreign venture is more ambitious in scope, and is being carried out on two fronts. One involves the direct export of products made by Panrico in Spain, the first targets being Europe

How the cake is shared
(Percentage of Panrico/Donut billing by product)

Donuts and Donettes	40%
Bollycao	10%
Bread and similar products	20%
Pastries, snacks, cupcakes, breadsticks and others	30%

Source: Panrico/Donut

and northern Africa, the principal customers being the U.K., Germany, and France. France, for instance, is close enough to Spain for the distribution of Panrico's bread, which has a shelf life of around 12 days. They have introduced it under the brand name La Maison du Pain de Mie, and despite the notorious difficulty and competitiveness of the French market, have secured a foothold in some of the major distribution chains.

But this formula can be used only in the case of products with a medium-to-long shelf life. When it comes to doughnuts, whose success depends on their freshness, the company has to export not the product itself, but experience and know-how in the form of an entire factory. For their first pilot experiment, Panrico couldn't have chosen a more distant venue. Encouraged by the success of other Spanish companies in China, in 1997 they opened a factory in Beijing, with an initial investment of 7.2 million Euros (8 million US$). In its first year, the factory which employs 200 people, billed 12 million Euros (13.3 million US$).

In China, the doughnut is an exotic example of Western cuisine. But the group's future factories abroad will be set up in areas with more similarities with Spain.

According to Guido Ophelders, appointed to head Panrico's international operations at the beginning of 1999: "The success of Donuts in Spain is due to Spaniards' eating habits. Most Spaniards have the briefest of breakfasts at home, with a more substantial second breakfast taken later in the morning, at a cafeteria. So, after our Chinese experience, we're looking at those countries with a similar gastronomic culture and a climate which allows people to eat away from home. That narrows the targets down to southern Europe, northern Africa, and Central and South America."

The first likely choice is to be Greece. To test the waters, for the past two years the company has been distributing doughnuts in Greece, made from frozen dough produced in Spain. Based on that, it looks like the next doughnut factory will be set up in Athens.

Their new export strategy has involved a change in approach. "Before, the idea was to sell a Spanish product abroad," says Guido Ophelders. "But now we have adopted as our own that wise old business adage, 'think global, act local,' and aim to adapt our products to the demands of the local market."

In a way, that's exactly what Andreu Costafreda did when he started making Spain's first doughnuts 37 years ago.

Mark Little *is an American-born journalist based in southern Spain. He was editor of the English-language* Lookout Magazine *for many years, and is now a freelance writer contributing to publications and guide books about Spain.*


Asturiana
NORTHERN SPANISH
CUISINE


CASA AURELIO


RESTAURANT
Don Quijote


WINE BAR


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TABERNA
DEL ALABARDERO


Bodega
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342
MARICHU

Spain's Culinary Delegation on Four Continents (II)

AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND, AND GERMANY

For many years now, we have been reporting on Spanish gastronomy and restaurants in every region in Spain. In our new three-part series, our aim is to bring genuine Spanish cuisine even closer to our readers, so you will be able to sample it at home in your own city or country. This Spanish culinary delegation will comprise thirteen selected restaurants in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Tokyo, Sidney, Vienna, Munich, Zurich, Paris, Brussels, Antwerp, and London.

Six years ago, the furniture storeroom of a fervent lover of Spain was turned into the first real *tapas* bar of Vienna. Even inspectors from Gault & Millau raved about the *Serrano* ham, *boquerones*, and the rest.

When in 1992, Walter Stützer came to the conclusion that he really had to do something with all the furniture and odds and ends that he had brought back from his many vacation trips to Spain over the years, Spanish cuisine was not exactly the hot thing in Vienna and rarely went beyond *sangría* and *paella*. If a bottle of Rioja wine ever turned up on a table, virtually no one knew how to pronounce the name. But once he had turned his cellar storeroom, with great effort, into a typical Spanish restaurant, with high chairs, large, dark wooden tables, oil paintings of Spanish grandees, authentic Spanish church candles, an open fireplace, and a steep entry, plus uneven walls imitating those of peasant homes seen in the Balearic Islands, it turned out that the exotic nature of Spanish cuisine in Vienna was truly a minor problem compared to others. For example, the Serrano hams that Stützer had hung over the bar in typical Spanish fashion were not to the liking of the Austrian sanitary inspection authorities. The highly restrictive import regulations applicable at that time obliged him to use the Serrano hams, Jabugos, and Guijuelos for decorative purposes only. Had even the slimmest slice been cut from the delicious hanging hams, the authorities would have immediately closed Vienna's first, and at that time, only tapas bar.

Such desperate times are, however, a thing of the past. Today in Vienna, there are almost as many tapas bars as sushi bars and Spanish wine is "in." Now, if Walter Stützer leaves a ham hanging over the bar untouched, it is simply because that particular ham is better decoration than a delicacy. Top quality is the top priority for the exuberant *aficionado*. All tapas are made on site and if the sweet, plump Spanish peppers used to prepare his delicious *pimientos* are not available on the market, he prefers to strike the item from the menu rather than accept other peppers from Holland.

Even though the Bodega has long offered main dishes such as *bacalao a la malagueña* (cod Málaga style), *pollo a la sevillana* (chicken Seville style) with an orange-mint sauce or the oh so aromatic *gambas al ajillo* (gambas fried in garlic oil), the many and varied tapas are still the absolute favorite among Walter Stützer's regular clients who now include virtually everyone in Vienna with a warm spot in their heart for Spain. The pimientos mentioned above, a delicious seafood salad with dill, fabulous boquerones in vinegar, scallops au gratin, olives, *alioli* that goes wonderfully with the baked gambas and, finally, the specialty of the house, dates rolled in slices of bacon and fried just the way it's done on the Canary Islands. They are all prepared by Marianne Stützer, Walter's wife, a born and bred Austrian gal from the Steiermark region, at least until she also succumbed to her husband's burning passion.

Another remarkable feature is the wine list in the Bodega. There are wines from Rioja (Stützer's favorite spot on the Iberian Peninsula, after Barcelona), from Penedés, Ribera del Duero, Navarre, León, Andalusia, Galicia, wines ranging from simple table wines to rare bottles. Walter knows most of the producers personally, has visited their vineyards and convinced them with his charming craziness, just as he has convinced each of the hundreds of clients who have nibbled a

few olives and drunk a glass of wine in his Bodega. Of course, his wine-producing friends tell him where to find the best *chorizo* and the most delicious olives. Some 50 wines are available on the wine list and about half of them may be ordered in small quantities, served in Riedel wine glasses. Another 50 are available, but must be specifically requested.

Another typical aspect of Walter Stützer's Bodega Española is the fact that next to the dark bar room, he has set up a small workshop where he personally repairs the antique furniture and renovates the old chairs, tables, cabinets, shelves, and chests of drawers that he obtained in large part from an antique merchant in Rioja. "I do not want to invent anything," he says, "I just want to be *todo auténtico.*"

Bodega y Vinoteca Española
Belvederegasse 10
1040 Vienna
Austria
Tel: (43 1) 504 55 00



The perfectly styled, Mediterranean experience from Austria's best catering specialist in the shadow of Stephans Church.

The fact that Attila Dogudan, Vienna's favorite gourmet and catering chef with such well-known clients as Formel 1, Grand Slam, and Lauda Air, had fallen in love with Spain's landscapes, cuisine, and inhabitants was known for years only to his very best friends. The world famous gourmet explained that it was on Ibiza that he had learned to appreciate the simplicity of Mediterranean cuisine, the magic of olive oil, and the authenticity of cooking with wonderful local, fresh products. He wanted to "finally get away from foaming lobster bisque" and was convinced that uncompromising authenticity was the only way to transmit his fascination to his clients: Isabel López and Sandra Tarruella, the two young designers of the sensational "Tragaluz" restaurant in Barcelona, were hired, the 400 square meters of wooden flooring were hewn and oiled in Málaga, and the round stones artfully arranged in the cement slabs that remind one of the new port in Barcelona are, of course, from Barcelona.

Dogudan's efforts to ensure authenticity did not stop there, however. The waiters at the Aioli are hired in Spain, Italy, and France because that is the only way, according to the catering specialist, to fully express the "Mediterranean flair." Authentic ingredients are not lacking either. Fresh fish, Catalonian onions, and even specialties from northwestern Spain, such as the small, green *pimientos de Padrón*, unknown except to the most experienced connoisseurs, are flown in several times each week from the Catalonian capital by Lauda Air. In the open kitchen, however, the very popular concept in Attila Dogudan's famous Do & Co restaurant a few floors above, rules an Austrian chef. Christian Leidinger previously worked in the Formel 1 and Grand Slam departments of the catering company. His calm, easygoing cooking style attracted attention and he was the obvious choice for the Aioli.

Since the spring of 1998, when the Aioli opened after months of renovation work, the restaurant has been chock full almost every day. The reason may be the warm atmosphere created by the two young designers, the food, or the system concocted by Dogudan to make the meal an experi-

Aioli
Stephansplatz 12, Haas-Haus
1010 Vienna
Austria
Tel: (43 1) 532 03 73

ence. Diners can select Italian appetizers from their own small buffet, and sausage, ham, and some 50 different cheeses from France, Italy, and Spain, including the famous *torta del Casar*, are all artfully presented in separate display cases. A few steps away, fresh bread is baked every half hour and the wine is served in the special wine section. The organization is, of course, more American than Mediterranean in nature because the clients, instead of simply asking the *patrón* what he advises, must wander from section to section, but taken as a whole, the result is nice.

The dozen different tapas and the main dishes rarely change (another sign of the "systematic" organization), but the up side is a true effort to achieve a continuously high level of quality. The *boquerones en vinagre* (anchovies in vinegar) are fresh and spicy throughout the year, the delicious *pescaítos fritos* (small fried fish), or the tenderly crisp-fried cuttlefish, *chipirones fritos*, may vary somewhat in size from season to season but remain among the best tapas available in Vienna. And though the balance between the mild fruity taste and the deceptively hot bite of the pimientos de Padrón, dipped in olive oil with sea salt, may vary occasionally, they are nonetheless excellent every time.

The wines offered by the Aioli are limited to a few from each of the three "host" countries and the priority is given to vintages that go well with a meal, such as the Viña Sol from Miguel Torres or the Rioja from Muga. The coffee served is still Italian for the time being, but Attila Dogudan has for some time now been considering offering his own mix roasted according to Spanish standards. And if outside, on the Stephansplatz, a snow storm is passing through, a computerized light system, programmed in house, helps to make sure the warm Mediterranean sun shines on the *gambas* and the *tortillas*.

Florian Holzer *has been editor in chief since 1989 of the restaurant and bar guide* Wien, wie es ißt *and editor in chief of* Visa-Magazin *from 1992 to 1995. Since 1995 he is a freelance wine columnist for the daily* Der Standard *and from 1996, a restaurant critic for the economic review Trend, a regular contributor to the magazine* À la Carte, *and writing on culinary subjects for the news magazine* Profil *and for a number other newspapers and magazines.*

Casa Aurelio
Langstraße 209
8005 Zurich
Switzerland
Tel: (41 1) 272 77 44

The Casa Aurelio restaurant in the largest Swiss city, Zurich, is a meeting place for people who like fine food, and where everyone feels at home.

Aurelio Lorenzo, who left Pontevedra, Galicia in 1970 for Switzerland and has been there ever since, is a man who not only can do everything, but who does it, too. That is hardly surprising because as a young man, Aurelio started in the restaurant business as a dish washer, moved on to waiting tables, and has been head waiter in some of the most well-known restaurants in Luzern and Zurich before he opened his first restaurant, the Blaueck, some 17 years ago. Then six years ago, he moved to the up and coming section of Zurich and founded Casa Aurelio, located in a calm courtyard. He quickly turned the restaurant into a gourmet meeting spot with a particular feature, his clients immediately feel right at home. Of himself, Aurelio says, "I am a manager who does everything, I can even cook if need be... Parking my clients' cars is the only thing for which I have now hired someone."

Aurelio knows his clients and is ready to fulfill special desires. "If six or eight people are together, I offer them specific menus," he says and occasionally does the same thing in the evening for 50 or 60 people, in which case the kitchen and serving staff must be on their toes. And it works, because Aurelio knows he can count on his crew, with Hans Bischoff at their head. Even late evenings, when in other restaurants the kitchen has long since closed down, he never says anyone is too late. "Sometimes, we have reservations for after 11 p.m., but the level of attention and care is always the same." "His greatest strong point," says a client, "is that he never cuts corners on you." That holds true for the prices, too. "I am not cheap," says Aurelio, "but I have never ever heard of a client that was not happy with what we offer." And, "We are out to please each client. I always try to do something for each and every one. If I see

someone with an empty plate before the other people at the table have finished, I ask them if they would like some more. At no extra cost. And I have never in my life ever billed a client for a daily soup." Those are small things that make for success.
His restaurant can hold 110 at a time. According to people in the know, that is a difficult number to manage. But Aurelio Lorenzo does it well. Above all, he never stops. "He is the guy in our business who works the most in Zurich," say colleagues. That is because he is the boss in two other restaurants as well, the Madrid in the old town of Zurich and, more recently, the Wolfbach. On Sundays, when Casa Aurelio is closed, he is busy at the Madrid.
And just what are the major specialties that the chef serves up in Casa Aurelio? First of all, *parrillada* (grill platter), but also Steak Aurelio, veal cutlets from the grill and whatever the season has to offer, whether asparagus, mushrooms, dandelion salad, etc. "When cepe mushrooms are available, I sometimes serve up to 150 half portions per day," he says proudly. Among the special dishes is *lubina a la sal* (bass baked in a salt crust) which is a must for some clients.

Casa Aurelio has a particularly good reputation concerning wine. Of course a man from Galicia has Albariño wines on hand, but the list also includes a wide selection of Rioja wines, Catalonian wines, and a particularly nice selection from the Duero region. According to Aurelio, his favorite wine is the Ribera del Duero Protos Gran Reserva 1990, but he also has some Vega Sicilia in his wine cellar, just in case anyone is willing to pay for it.
We would gladly have continued listening to Aurelio Lorenzo talk about his restaurant and how he managed to start it up. But we will soon come again and feel "right at home."

René Begert *writes travel guides in Zurich and contributes to various newspapers and magazines, as well as working for the Spanish Tourist Office in Zurich on the monthly review* ¡Hola España!

Important things depend not only on the "what," but also on the "how." That is certainly true for the service in the Don Quijote restaurant which is, quite simply, outstanding. Francisco Guzmán, 32, his own boss since January in the oldest Spanish restaurant in Munich, has forgotten nothing from the ten years of close collaboration with his predecessor, Benigno Díez. The two always worked together as they attentively served (and pampered) their clients. The goal, then and now, was to advise clients, not give them a sales pitch.

When his former boss, after 33 years in the Don Quijote, considered retiring, Guzmán, a trained auto mechanic who switched to the restaurant business just 13 years ago, bravely took a stab at what was the chance of his life. The young man from Madrid proposed himself as the successor... and was accepted! There could be no question of banks financing the purchase. The new owner had stashed away part of the necessary capital and monthly payments were arranged for the rest.

"Things with my ex-boss are so good that there was not even the slightest problem," explains Guzmán. As he freely admits, "I am fully aware that I have walked into a smoothly running operation." But even smoothly running operations need a bit of fresh air from time to time and the new owner has started to make some changes, diplomatically, but with great method.

To start with, the menu was critically reviewed at the beginning of the year. Mexican dishes, for example, which really have nothing to do in a Spanish restaurant, were struck from the list and not replaced. Also struck were various dishes found in any Greek or Italian spot, e.g. baked cuttlefish. What remained were a number of corner stones in Iberian cooking, such as shrimp in garlic oil.

The new *patrón*, who readily acknowledges that he is no master chef, brought in a young cook. Mané II, 29, was born in Granada, learned his craft on Mallorca, and stayed there for almost 15 years. Even during that time, he often traveled to Munich where he spent the winter months from November to March.

Today in the Don Quijote, the man from Andalusia with the Mallorcan background prepares a colorful array of food from the various Spanish regions, ranging from Catalonia to his homeland Andalusia, and from Mallorca to La Mancha. The new menu comprises some 55 dishes, from *aceitunas sevillanas* (olives) to *Flan Quijote* (caramel pudding with cherries, ice cream, and whipped cream), from the absolute must, *gambas al ajillo* (gambas in garlic oil) to the widely appreciated *gazpacho* (the chilled soup from Andalusia), from *paella valenciana* (the classic rice dish) to *faisán a la manchega* (pheasant), from *conejo encebollado* (rabbit in an onion sauce) to *dorada a la sal* (bream baked in a salt crust).

Restaurant Don Quijote
Biedersteiner Straße 6
80802 Munich
Germany
Tel: (49 89) 34 23 18

In response to the eternal question concerning the chef's personal specialties, the answer is "All types of sauces, kid goat, lamb roasts, stuffed quail, and game."
The change in ownership has certainly done no harm, on the contrary, to the small restaurant located in the Schwabing quarter, below ground but not at all somber, with a friendly atmosphere and not overly decorated with tourists in mind. It is very busy and reservations are recommended. A colorful, mixed clientele, ranging from students to the business crowd, occupy the 44 seats with pleasure to freshen up their vacation memories with Spanish wine and cooking or to test the waters before their next trip to Spain.
And for anyone who has actually lived in the country for a while, such as football star Paul Breitner, who played for the Real Madrid, the Don Quijote is almost a trip back home. Breitner is not the only famous person to have found his way to the restaurant. Franz Beckenbauer celebrated his mother's birthday in the agreeable room below ground. Boris Becker forgot everything and anything to do with tennis for a few hours. Popular comedian Peter Steiner could take pleasure in the food, without having to repeatedly comply with requests for autographs.
A few words on the wine list, which does not exactly do justice to those who know and love Spanish wines. We must take into account, however, what Francisco Guzmán had to say by way of an excuse, "We are still working off the stock from my old boss. In the future, things will be different and we have started testing a wide range of new wines."
As of today, the available selection is simply typical, with twelve reds from the Rioja, Navarre, Penedés, and Somontano regions and seven whites from Rioja, Navarre, Penedés, and Rías Baixas. The clientele in the Don Quijote is certainly up to more than that.
With the succulent sea bream we tried a nice Monte Real from the Rioja region... and were quite content with it. That is hardly surprising, the versatile owner of the restaurant, who has spent over 30 years in Munich and speaks perfect German, had heartily recommended the wine and served it well chilled.

Hans-Ulrich Prost *lives in Munich and works as a freelance journalist and author in the food and drink sector.*

Photos: New York, Gerry Dawes/ICEX; Washington, D.C., Taberna del Alabardero; Chicago, Peter Barreras/ICEX; Sydney, Oliver Strewe/ICEX; Tokyo, Matao Ogata/ICEX; Munich, Alfredo Sinesi/ICEX and Alessandro Fichtl/ICEX; Vienna, Aioli and Lalo Jodlbauer/ICEX; Zurich, René Begert/ICEX; Brussels, Ángel Vega/ICEX; Antwerp, Harry de Schepper/ICEX; Paris, Avelino Estevez/ICEX; London, Nick Milner/ICEX.

See Recipes on page 122.

Unheralded Regional Restaurants with Great Food

During my three decades of traveling in Spain, I have eaten in many of Spain's highest-rated restaurants, but—as I have already mentioned in previous writings—some of the most treasured memories of my peregrinations across this wonderful country have been chance experiences in little-known restaurants that reflect the uniqueness of each region's seasonal produce, traditional recipes, and cooking techniques. I find them in villages, in the back rooms of country bars, along the wine trails, and even in large cities like Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia. The cook may be the owner's wife-partner; a young local chef who trained in a gastronomic capital such as San Sebastián, or even a former television commentator turned restaurateur. The food can be disarmingly good.

On a recent trip, my companion and I attended the XIII International Salón de Gourmets in Madrid and tried an impressive array of Spanish food products and wines from some of the more than 600 exhibitors.Then we spent a few days at Seville's April *Feria*, where celebrants dance *sevillanas* until dawn and drink 50,000 cases of manzanilla de Sanlúcar in a week. After the feria, we were driving through Huelva province in a hilly area of northwestern Andalusia that is famous for some of Spain's best pork products, including Jabugo hams, which come from the free-range *ibérico* pigs that roam the area's cork forests. We were headed for Extremadura to visit the ancient Roman city of Mérida and spend the night at the city's *parador*.

At lunchtime, we stopped in Santa Olalla (Huelva) at the unassuming **Restaurante Carmelo, Marina Española, 23; tel: (34) 959 190 169**. After perusing the *tapas* at the bar, we found a modest dining room in back and ordered a *tabla de embutidos ibéricos*: A cutting board with excellent *jamón de bellota* (cured ham from lean, black-footed, acorn-fed Ibérian pigs), *morcón* (a large *chorizo*-like sausage), *salchichón* (similar to *saucisson*), and marbled *caña de lomo* (cured pork loin). Next came lightly fried green peppers and fresh anchovies pickled with vinegar, olive oil, garlic, and parsley. As a main course, we had *presa de ibérico*—juicy, lean, grilled pork fillets with crisp fried potatoes and a house sauce of cumin, oregano, tomato, and garlic. From Extremadura's Tierra de Barros wine region, Monasterio de Tentudia 1992, a silky Tempranillo-Garnacha blend, drank well with this unpretentious, but delicious, country food.

Two days later, we visited Toro (Zamora), which is located down the Duero River Valley from Valladolid. Here, top producers from the Ribera del Duero and La Rioja are planting vineyards and planning wineries that promise to make Toro Spain's hottest up-and-coming wine region. We met former Vega Sicilia enologist, Mariano García of Bodegas Mauro in Tudela de Duero (Valladolid), who showed us his Toro vineyards near San Román de Hornijos in a warm, stony area highly reminiscent of France's Châteauneuf-du-Pape. García's vineyards contain some splendid old Garnacha vines, which he blends with the area's rich Tinto de Toro (Tempranillo), to produce San Róman, a wine that shows Toro's enormous potential.

At Nuestra Señora de las Viñas Cooperative in Morales de Toro, enologist Eloy Jalón let us taste their young, quaffable Viña Bajoz and soft, Garnacha-based Viña Pedrera. Next door, at the unprepossessing **Restaurante Chivo, Av. De los Comuneros, s/n; tel: (34) 980 698 219,** we were shown to a charming, rustically decorated back dining room. As we tasted García's brilliant Mauro and San Róman wines, Chef Agustín Gamazo began sending out food. First, there was a fine *bacalao* salad with chopped tomatoes, red peppers, and onions dressed with extra virgin olive oil, sprinkled with Spanish *pimentón* (paprika), and served with wonderful crusty bread. Garcia's finely structured wines were a good counterpoint to *cerdo de matanza propio de la olla*, pork loin and chorizo that had been preserved in pimentón-laced fat. Surprisingly, Gamazo's sautéed version was juicy and not greasy. Next came a *potaje de alubias* (white bean stew), then superb grilled sea bass with a hot garlic vinaigrette. A cheese-cake mousse with raspberry puree was the finale to a memorable meal. After lunch, Gamazo told me he had worked in San Sebastián at Ganbara, an Old Quarter tapas bar renowned for traditional Basque Country specialties.

Hidden on a side street near northern Madrid's Plaza de Castilla, **Restaurante Cala Fornells, Infanta Mercedes, 105; tel: (34) 915 793 643**, is named for a fisherman's cove on Menorca in the Balearic Islands. Long a rendezvous for top yachtsmen in the Mediterranean, the Fornells Cala is frequented by King Juan Carlos I, an avid sailor, who likes to dine on Fornells' legendary *caldereta de langosta* (a fisherman's stew made with local lobsters). Owned by Chef Juan Santamaría, a former television personality and Mallorca native, Cala Fornells is a charming restaurant that is not well known even in Madrid's gastronomic community, although it deserves to be. Santamaría's menu features caldereta de langosta and other Balearic Islands dishes, but his specialty is perfectly cooked *arroces* (the *connoisseur* does not use the word *paella*). Made with Spain's premium, plump, short-grain *bomba* rice, many of Santamaría's arroces are traditional, but some 40 percent are his own creations. They are among the best rice dishes I have tasted. He cooks them in an unusual paella pan (the broad, flat cooking utensil from which Spain's national rice dish, paella, takes its name), which he invented. The pan has metal dividers, so he can offer two, three, four, or six different rice dishes at once. Each diner can have their favorite arroz or a sampling of rice dishes.

This spring, several of us had a memorable meal at Cala Fornells. We started with bacon-wrapped dates; small, crisp, fried fish; and a *coca de trampó*, a Mallorcan pizza-like bread with roasted red peppers, tomatoes, and onions. Then came grilled *gambas rosas*, the highly-prized shrimp from Palamós, a Costa Brava village. Santamaría obtains most of the fish served at Cala Fornells from a select group of Palamós fishermen.

After the appetizers, Santamaría served four rice dishes in the same pan. *Arroz vegetal* was made with mush-

rooms, artichokes, and wild asparagus; yellow, saffron-flavored *arroz con langosta y almejas* had lobster and clams; delicious *arroz negro* (colored with squid ink) was served with assertive Catalan *alioli*; and *arroz con manitas de cerdo* contained *garbanzos* (chickpeas), zucchini, and the tender pig trotters. With the arroces, we drank a dry, smooth, Mallorcan wine, José L. Ferrer Reserva Tinto 1994 (Benissalem D.O.).

Santamaría was not through: There were tasting portions of wild land snails with aromatic herbs; scrambled eggs with bacalao and shoestring potatoes; and superb jamón de bellota of the D.O. Guijuelo (prized acorn-fed Salamanca ham). Then, succulent grilled lamb chops were brought sizzling to the table on a special oven-heated slate resting on a mat lined with pine, rosemary, and thyme, which gave off smoky wisps of enticing Mediterranean smells, Santamaría's idea of aroma therapy. For dessert, we had a fabulous *crema catalana* (crême brulée); a fine almond cake; and *borrachitos con gin Mahonés*, "drunken" babas soaked in Xoriguer, a Menorcan gin. The desserts were a fitting finale to a meal that was an excellent introduction to the Balearic Islands cuisine and to Juan Santamaría's exceptional talent with rice.

And now, news from the United States: Eric Asimov, a *New York Times* restaurant columnist, recently spotlighted **Pintxos, 510 Greenwich Street, New York; tel: (212) 343-9923**, a Spanish-Basque tapas bar, owned by Chef Javier Ortega from San Sebastián and his American wife, Debra. At Pintxos (Basque for tapas), Ortega serves such classics as *chipirones en su tinta* (baby squid in a squid ink-colored sauce), *pimientos del piquillo rellenos de bacalao* (piquillo peppers stuffed with brandade-like bacalao puree), and filleted *boquerones* (fresh anchovies) marinated in olive oil and garlic. The wine list features the refreshing Basque white wine, txacolí; food-friendly, versatile Rías Baixas Albariños; and red wines from La Rioja Alavesa and La Ribera del Duero.

This spring, at **Domingo Restaurant, 209 E. 49th St., New York City; tel: (212) 826-8269**, the owner, Spanish opera star Plácido Domingo, hosted a reception sponsored by the National Tourist Office of Spain to present author Penelope Casas's new book, *Paella! Spectacular Rice Dishes from Spain*. Osborne sherries and Montecillo Rioja wines accompanied paellas provided by **Paellador USA, Inc., 445 Park Avenue (14th Floor), New York, NY 10022; tel: (212) 755-8845; fax: (212) 755 8863; www.paellador.es** a Catalan company, which sold over 3,000,000 oven-ready paellas in Europe in 1998 and is now marketing their unique concept in the United States.

Elissa Hambrecht, who lived in Barcelona, and Catalan chef Antonio Buendía, formerly chef at New York's El International and El Dorado Petit, and Miami's Cafe Barcelona, have opened **Vinga, 320 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California; tel: (415) 546-3131; fax: (415) 546-4098; www.vinga.net** near the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Vinga serves traditional Catalan dishes with modern touches. Listed under Pica-Pica, tapas include Arbequina, Manzanilla, and Farga Aragón olives; serrano ham; Manchego cheese; and Spanish anchovies. Vinga also offers paellas and rice dishes made with Valencia rice and Spain's excellent *pimentón* and saffron.

With Pamela Busch, Vinga's wine consultant, the owners have created a Tuesday-night Spanish "Wine & Dine" series. One week, a multi-course dinner features a Spanish wine theme, the following week Busch conducts a wine tasting class on the same theme. In March, the wines were from La Ribera del Duero (Pesquera, Arzuaga, and Hacienda Monasterio). In June, Galician wines, including Rías Baixas Albariños, were spotlighted. Future events will feature Priorato (September) and Spanish cavas, brandies, and sherries (November).

***Gerry Dawes** has been traveling the gastronomic and wine roads of Spain for three decades. His articles and/or photographs have been published in* The New York Times, Food & Wine, The Wine News *and many others. In October 1998, he was the first foreigner to receive the prestigious* Cena de los 11 Vinos *wine award in Madrid.*

RECIPES FROM MURCIA

Recipes by Raimundo González from the book
Murcia- El libro de la Gastronomía
Wines recommended by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Grilled Spring Vegetables

SERVES 4:

1 large eggplant
1 large zucchini
1 bundle of green asparagus
1 bundle of spring onions
8 large mushrooms
Olive oil and salt

Slice the vegetables very thinly. Choose medium- to small-size asparagus and peel.
Grill on a lightly-oiled griddle until just golden. Drizzle with oil to taste and season with salt and a little pepper.
Recommended wine: A rosé D.O. Jumilla, made of 100 percent Monastrell grapes, with a medium, softly-sweet nose to balance well with the delicate flavors and aroma of the food. In the mouth the wine should have just the right degree of sharpness to accompany the vegetables.

Zarangollo (Zucchini with onions)

Serves 6:

2 kg zucchini finely sliced
1 kg onions in very thin strips
1/2 l olive oil
Oregano
White pepper
4 garlic cloves, crushed in a mortar
Salt

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan and add the garlic. Before it begins to darken, add the onion. Lower the heat and leave to cook very slowly. When the onion begins to soften, add the zucchini, stir, and cover. Cook slowly for approximately twenty minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and oregano and continue to cook until both the onion and the zucchini are soft. Drain well before serving.
Recommended wine: A white D.O. Jumilla. Made of equal proportions of Airén and Macabeo grapes, its hints of fresh fruit should take the edge off the garlic which is the only strong flavor in this otherwise mild dish.

Caldero (Fish and rice stew)

Serves 4:

400 g rice
2 *ñoras* (small dried red peppers)
3 bulbs of garlic
250 g olive oil
2 ripe tomatoes
1 gray mullet, weighing about 500 g
1 blue mouth, weighing about 500 g
200 g grouper and monkfish, cleaned
200 g prawns
1 egg yolk
Salt
Pepper
1 small boiled potato

Heat half the oil in a large aluminum pot. Fry the ñoras then remove and set aside. Fry the fish heads then remove and set aside too. Then add the peeled and chopped tomato and fry for about five minutes. Add two liters of water.
In a mortar, crush the fried ñoras and one of the raw bulbs of garlic.

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Add to the pan and cook for five minutes. In this stock, cook the salted fish cut into thick slices. When cooked, remove and keep warm. Remove one cupful of stock. Check the rest of the stock for salt, add the rice and leave to cook slowly for twenty minutes. A few minutes before the rice is done, place the prawns on top.
In the mortar, crush another of the garlic bulbs, mix with the cupful of stock and pour over the fish which is served separately.
To make the sauce which is usually served as an accompaniment to this dish, crush the third garlic bulb with the cooked potato then add the egg yolk and beat until creamy. Continue beating while adding the remaining oil drop by drop. This should give the texture of mayonnaise. Serve the sauce in the mortar.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Yecla with a good color. Its intense aroma of red berries will compete with that of the rice as it is brought to the table. The Monastrell grapes, in a careful blend with Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, and a touch of Merlot, give a wine that in the mouth is zesty, warm, and very fruity and that should marry well with the fish and its strong accompanying sauce.

Chuletas de cordero al ajo cabañil (Lamb chops with garlic potatoes)

SERVES 4:

1 kg lamp chops
1 kg thickly-sliced potatoes
150 g olive oil
4-5 cloves of garlic
2 tbsp wine vinegar
1 tbsp sugar
100 g water
Salt
Freshly-milled black pepper

In a frying pan, fry the potato slices in half the oil.
In another frying pan, fry the chops—with the meat pulled upwards off the bone so they can be easily eaten with the fingers—in the rest of the oil.
When both are cooked, season with salt and pepper and mix in a single pan. Blend together the garlic, sugar, water, and vinegar and pour over the potatoes and meat. Mix together and cover. Cook over a high heat for five minutes.
Place the potatoes in the center of a round dish and arrange the chops around them with the long bones pointing inwards. Serve very hot.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Bullas made from Monastrell grapes. This is a young wine with a touch of wood and slightly spicy notes which would be flavorsome in spite of the strong dressing of the lamb.

Paparajotes (Lemon fritters)

MAKES SOME 30 PAPARAJOTES:

1/2 l milk
1/2 l water
6 eggs
750 g flour
Lemon zest
Cinnamon
100 g sugar
Lemon leaves
Oil for frying

Beat together the milk with the water and egg yolks. Add the flour gradually.
While beating, add the lemon zest, sugar, cinnamon, and four beaten egg whites. When well mixed, leave to rest for half an hour.
Heat oil in a frying pan, dip the lemon leaves in the batter and fry carefully.
To serve, arrange on a napkin and sprinkle with confectioners sugar and a little cinnamon.
Eat just the coating, not the leaves!
Recommended wine: A sweet D.O. Jumilla with a toasted aroma and flavor would make a good accompaniment for these unusual fritters that are delicious as a midmorning or mid-afternoon snack. The sweetness of the wine enhances the lemon and cinnamon flavors.

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RECIPES FROM SPANISH RESTAURANTS ABROAD

Dates rolled in bacon and fried

Recipe and wine recommendation from Bodega y Vinoteca Española, Vienna, Austria

Cut fresh dates in half and remove the seed. Roll the dates in slices (not too thin) of lightly smoked bacon. Slowly cook on all sides in the frying pan and serve hot.
Recommended wine: Amontillado or a dry Oloroso.

Meatballs in tomato sauce

Recipe and wine recommendation from Restaurant Aioli, Vienna, Austria

SERVES 4:
500 g ground beef
2 cloves of garlic
Parsley
2 eggs
4 tbsp of olive oil

FOR THE SAUCE:
700 g plump tomatoes
1 onion
2 tbsp of olive oil
1 bay leaf
0.125 l of stock
Dry hot peppers

Mix well the ground beef with the garlic, finely cut parsley, and eggs. Add salt and pepper. Form 20 walnut-sized balls and cook them in the olive oil. Then let them sit in the tomato sauce for ten minutes and serve with the parsley on top.
Sauce: Finely dice the onion and heat in the olive oil. Blanch the tomatoes, remove the skin and seeds, cut into small cubes and add to the onion, with the bay leaf and stock. Reduce over low heat for 30 minutes and spice with a bit of hot peppers.
Recommended wine: Bodegas Muga, Rioja Reserva '94

Marinated mussels

Recipe and wine recommendation from Casa Aurelio, Zurich, Switzerland

FOR 4 TAPA SERVING:
500 g large mussels
15 cl dry white wine
1 tsp of back pepper corns
Salt
2 tbsp lemon juice
1/2 red and
1/2 green pepper
2 shallots
1/2 bouquet of parsley
4 tbsp olive oil

Fully clean the mussels under running water and throw away any that are already open. Heat the wine with the pepper corns, add the mussels, cover and cook for three minutes on a high flame until the mussels are open. Remove the mussels, reduce the liquid by one half, strain and spice with the salt and lemon juice. Break off the empty half shell of the mus-

sels. Lay the full half shells on a platter. Rinse the peppers, remove the seeds, and dice finely. Remove the outer skin of the shallots and dice them finely. Rinse the parsley and finely chop the leaves. Mix everything with the oil in the liquid and pour over the mussels.
Let sit for one hour.
Recommended wine: Terras Gauda, Albariño from Galicia

Lamb fillet steak with sauce from the Alpujarras

Recipe and wine recommendation from the Don Quijote restaurant, Munich, Germany

SERVES 4:

12 fresh lamb fillets
100 g of whole almonds
4 slices of white bread (lightly fried in a pan)
2 cloves of garlic
8 saffron strands
1 tsp of sweet *pimentón* (Spanish paprika)
1 bay leaf
1 dash of salt
0.1 l of olive oil
4 soup spoons of tomato sauce
1 dash of black pepper
Fresh thyme (chopped)
4 cl of brandy

Clean the lamb fillets and cut to length. Lightly salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil with the almonds and sliced garlic. When the garlic turns a light brown, add the pimentón, saffron, thyme, bay leaf, tomato sauce, white bread, and 0.1 liters of water. Heat to boiling and mix in mixer.
Flambé the lamb fillets in a small amount of olive oil and the brandy. Add the sauce, cook for ten minutes, add salt and pepper to taste.
Recommended wine: Beronia Gran Reserva 1991 or an Enate Crianza 1991.

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

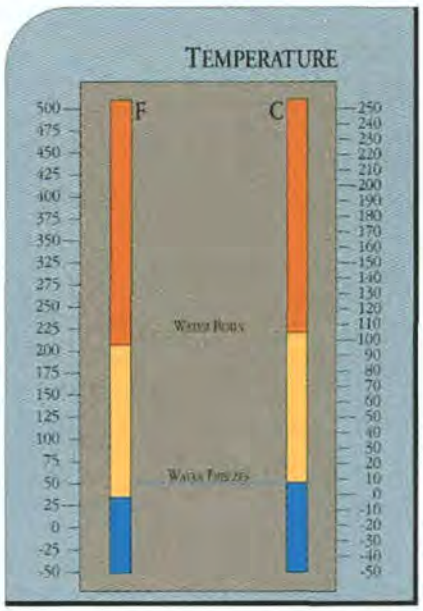
10 grams = 1/3 ounce
50 grams = 1 3/4 ounces
100 grams = 3 1/2 ounces
250 grams = 8 3/4 ounces
500 grams = 1 pound + 1 1/2 ounces
1 kilo = 2 pounds + 3 1/4 ounces
1/2 ounce = 14 grams
1 ounce = 28 grams
1/4 pound = 110 grams
1/2 pound = 230 grams
1 pound = 450 grams

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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source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Chufa de Valencia

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source: ICEX

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source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Idiazábal Cheese

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source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Manchego Cheese

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Seville's Archivo General de Indias

An old friend of mine, the distinguished British historian Hugh Thomas, tells a brilliant tragicomic story about an attempt by Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of the Aztec empire, to gain friends and influence in Spain shortly after he had unexpectedly become lord and master of Mexico. His plan was to send a shipload of presents to the royal court back home and, having assembled an incredible assortment of exotic New World products—fauna and flora, and, naturally, gold—he carefully matched the value of each gift to the importance of its intended recipient.

Unfortunately the present-laden galleon was jinxed and every conceivable mishap occurred during its return journey. The crew was struck by fever and then endured terrible storms. Fighting broke out on board, a jaguar (one of Cortés' presents) escaped from its cage and created mayhem, and finally the galleon, which was well off its course, was captured by pirates off the coast of Brittany. Hugh had everyone laughing when he regaled a dinner party with the tale of this extraordinary incident and, later, he recounted it in detail in a monumental biography that he wrote of Cortés, the Conquistador.

"One of the most fascinating elements of it all," I remember him saying, "was how hard poor Cortés had worked on those presents. This list of who was going to get what was a very true picture of the power structure in Spain at the time." That was what I had on my mind when I visited the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Hugh had learnt about the list of presents and had drawn his conclusions about the people who mattered in early 16th-century Spain thanks to his painstaking research in this very archive. "Ah, professor Thomas," said Magdalena Canella, the director of the Archivo General de Indias, when I mentioned that I knew him well, "Professor Thomas is one my most assiduous and favorite clients."

Refuting the Black Legend

A highly qualified librarian, Magdalena Canella runs one of the most emblematic archives in the world and, in a very specific sense, a unique one. This is because the Archivo General de Indias was artificially created on the basis of an idea and in order to refute another idea; it was purpose-built to counter the "black legend" propaganda about Spain's plunder of the New World that was much in vogue in late 18th-century Europe. Hostile books, published in both England and Holland (coincidentally the two nations that were seeking to break Spain's trading monopoly in South America) had written up in gory detail how the Indians had been exterminated by the cupidity of the conquistadors and the fanaticism of the friars that accompanied them. "We must close, once and for all, the mouths of such evil speaking and passionate rivals and make their ignorance inexcusable," wrote an advisor to Charles III, Spain's king at the time. "We must go to the root of the matter and, by researching irrefutable documents, recreate, as it were, history as if nothing had been written and published before."

The monarch agreed immediately that a counter-propaganda exercise was required and in 1779 a learned archivist and geographer called Juan Bautista Muñoz received a royal commission to write A History Of The New World. Muñoz was a methodical man and he set about scouring libraries in royal palaces, government departments, and convents in order to bring together the "irrefutable documents" that would support the Spanish case of an enlightened colonization that had brought civilization to newly discovered lands. He never got around to actually writing a definitive history of the new world but what he did do was to create the Archivo General de Indias which was a far greater achievement.

From Money Exchange to Library

The archive, which was formally inaugurated in 1790 with Muñoz as its chief librarian, occupies a large, square, solid, and severe-looking late 16th-century building that had once been Seville's market and money exchange or *lonja*. It stands alongside the city's truly immense gothic cathedral and it was built on this site because the cathedral's canons had protested that traders and moneylenders had invaded their sacred precincts. The judicious Philip II, anxious to keep both God and Mammon happy, instantly made the adjacent land available for the lonja and ordered his favorite architect, Juan de Herrera, builder of El Escorial, to draw up its initial design.

When Muñoz decided that this edifice was the ideal home for the documents he had collected, Seville was no longer a thriving commercial center and the lonja, occupied by squatters, had become something of a slum dwelling. Charles III asked his favorite architect Juan de Villanueva to lend a hand in the creation of a magnificent upper-story, U-shaped library where Muñoz' precious files would occupy row upon row of mahogany and cedar wood shelves from floor to ceiling.

The dossiers arrived on mule trains from Simancas, the national archives that Philip II had set up near Valladolid (see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 49, 39, 26) in the late 16th century, and they contained all the paperwork that had been accumulated by the Council of Indies, the governing body that was created to administer the New World in 1524, five years after Cortés' conquest of Mexico. More mule trains arrived with documents from the Casa de la Contratación, the Commercial Office for South American trade that had been created in 1503, scarcely 10 years after Christopher Columbus' first landfall in the Caribbean. There was a poetic justice in the arrival of these dossiers for the original Casa de la Contratación had stood in Seville, close to the old lonja. The commercial office was moved to Cádiz and the Atlantic coast at the beginning of the 18th century, hastening Seville's decline, because the Guadalquivir river was no longer navigable for the larger vessels that plied the New World trade routes.

The Tip of the Iceberg

The U-shaped library with its document-lined shelves is open to the public and there is an almost as handsome, high-ceilinged, stone-walled, spacious reading room area on that same first floor that is reserved for professional historians. There must have been 60-odd there, silently absorbed in their documents or quietly tapping the fruits of their research into their personal computers, when Magdalena Canella showed me around. "About half of the researchers are Latin American," she whispered "and there are also lots from the U.S."

Would they bring their documents to life with sensational stories as Hugh Thomas did with Cortés' ill-fated ship of presents? If they know how to look they could do that and more. Nearly 400 years of Spain's involvement with a seaborne empire is there, from the earliest letters that Columbus wrote describing his discoveries to the police reports on the 19th century politicians who forged new nations and severed the continent's links with the mother country. It is the sensational saga of the Old World's shock encounter with the New World and it has every conceivable passionate and dramatic element: heroism, humanity and intellectual curiosity, vanity, villainy, and greed.

What is breathtaking about the Archivo General de Indias is that the relentless bureaucracy of the political mandarins in the Consejo de Indias and of the trade administrators in the Casa de la Contratación, ensured that everything was written down for posterity. Historians have only researched the tip of this colossal documentary iceberg. "There are more than 40,000 dossiers archived here under general headings and each contain around 1,500 folios," said Magdalena Canella, "but only about 10,000 of these dossiers have been examined in detail."

***Tom Burns**, Madrid correspondent for the* Financial Times, *is the author of a trilogy on Spain's transition to democracy. He has worked as a journalist in Spain for more than 20 years and studied Modern History at Oxford University.*

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The coat of arms of the Inca dynasty, painted in oils on parchment, that was granted by the Spanish crown in a 1545 decree addressed to "those royal persons who represent Us" in the kingdoms and provinces of Peru. One of the Archive's documentary jewels, it illustrates Spain's enlightened engagement with the New World.

WATCH THIS SPACE

May-August 99

AUSTRIA

CAVA AT VIENNA'S SCHWARZENBERG PALACE: ON 6 JUNE, A TWO-PART CAVA PRESENTATION (WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE INSTITUTO DEL CAVA), WITH WINES FROM 24 BODEGAS AND A SOMMELIER-GUIDED TASTING, AIMED INITIALLY AT A PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCE (WINE WRITERS, AUSTRIAN IMPORTERS, WINE PROFESSIONALS) AND, LATER IN THE PROCEEDINGS, OPEN TO ENTRANCE FEE-PAYING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. D.O. CIGALES, TORO, Y RUEDA. E-MAIL:BUZON.OFICIAL@VIENA.OFCOMES.MCX.ES

DENMARK

CAVA SEMINAR FOR SOMMELIERS: ON 18 AND 19 MAY, AT THE TOP OF TOWN, HOTEL RADISON, COPENHAGEN, AND AT RESTAURANT RENÉ, AARHUS, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF 19 UCEVE CAVA BODEGAS. A REPEAT OF A VERY SUCCESSFUL FORMULA.

THIRD SALON DEL VINO: ON 3 JUNE AT COPENHAGEN'S OLD STOCK EXCHANGE, THE BØRSEN. EXHIBITORS INCLUDE 36 SPANISH BODEGAS FROM SIX D.O.'S, AND 19 DANISH IMPORTERS. AN EVENT THAT REGULARLY ATTRACTS A GOOD ATTENDANCE OF, FOR EXAMPLE, RESTAURATEURS, FOOD AND WINE WRITERS, AND IMPORTERS. E-MAIL:BUZON.OFICIAL@COPENHAGUE.OFCOMES.MCX.ES

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

FROM THIS ISSUE ON, WATCH THIS SPACE WILL BE MONITORING EVENTS STAGED BY SPANISH EMBASSY COMMERCIAL OFFICES ABROAD TO PROMOTE SPANISH FOOD AND DRINK DURING THE PERIOD COVERED BY EACH OF SPAIN GOURMETOUR'S THREE ANNUAL ISSUES. WE START WITH MAY TO AUGUST.

ITALY

A taste of Real Ibérico for Rome, Milan and Pesaro: Three promotional events for *Jamón Ibérico* cured ham—a presentation and tasting at Rome's "high society" international horse race in the Piazza di Siena (19th-23rd May); a seminar explaining how to carve, serve, and store Real Ibérico, aimed at importers, delicatessens, and professional cooks (in Milan, 30 June); a presentation and tasting at three gala dinners to mark the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro (7, 8, 9 August).

Italian food writers visit the Basque Country, Navarre and La Rioja: The visit (31 May-4 June) takes in companies producing Ibérico ham, canned and bottled vegetables, cheese, vinegar, canned fish, and wine.
E-mail: buzon.oficial@milan.ofcomes.mcx.es

JAPAN

Wine seminars for retailers: Aimed at increasing retailer awareness of Spanish wines, and presented by Tomoko Ebisawa of *Vinotheque Magazine*, each seminar concentrates on a specific D.O. or area. Rias Baixas seminar on 27 May (Ribera del Duero and Cava and North Catalonia follow later in the year: these seminars tend to be oversubscribed—Watch This Space).
E-mail:buzon.oficial@tokio.ofcomes.mcx.es

NETHERLANDS

Taking Rueda on board: A tasting of Rueda wines for 50 wine writers and restaurateurs on board the vessel Grazyna at Maarssen, near Utrecht, with a 4-hour trip along the River Vecht. Presentation by Frank Smulders MW, followed by tastings of various Rueda wines from the seven participating bodegas and their Dutch importers, matched up with dishes specially prepared by Michelin-starred chefs Erik van Loo and Marc van Gulik.
E-mail:buzon.oficial@lahaya.ofcomes.mcx.es

U.K.

Foodies visit Catalonia: Food writers from England (Michael Bateman, Lindsey Bareham, Clarissa Hyman) and Ireland (Petra Carter, Honor Edgar, Danna Allen, Maureen Tatlow) and New Zealander Peter Gordon, chef at The Sugar Club, sample Catalan cuisine, and visit sources of some individual products—cheese, ham, vinegar (23-26 May).

Jamón, jamón!: A presentation by 16 Spanish exporters of serrano and ibérico ham and other cold cuts at London's Four Seasons Hotel on 1 July reflects this sector's awareness of Britain's increasing appetite for these products. They are becoming more and more available in delicatessens, big stores, and even the major supermarkets.

Spreading the word about Navarre: A press trip of prominent non-London-based wine writers visiting Navarre (25-28 May), begins with a generic tasting of the wines of ten different bodegas and goes on to visit six other bodegas within the region.

A taste of Galicia for London and Manchester: The Consejo Regulador Rías Baixas collaborates in mounting two tastings of the 1998 vintage. In London on 8 June at the new Mauritian Fish Restaurant in Holland Park, top journalists, including Jancis Robinson of *The Financial Times*, sample fish dishes designed to complement the wines. The same tasting takes place in Manchester's Bridgewater Concert Hall on 9 June—the strategy of taking Spain to the regions in action.
E-MAIL:BUZON.OFICIAL@LONDRES.OFCOMES.MCX.ES

U.S.

Great Matches: This successful series of tastings of Spanish wines matched with interpretations of Spanish food by leading chefs continues with events in Seattle (May 18th), Los Angeles (May 20th) & Dallas (May 26th). Previous Great Matches have been well attended by the wine and food press, the trade, and the general public. More to come in the autumn—Watch This Space.

Aspen Food and Wine Classic: At this prestigious event's Spanish Pavilion, over 75 Spanish wines are presented by their U.S. importers.

Parador guests: Gastronomic weeks organized by New Mexico's Paradors feature guest chefs from paradors in Spain (Hotel Wyndham Garden, Alburquerque 20-26 May; Hotel Radison, Santa Fe 25 May-2nd June).
E-MAIL:BUZON.OFICIAL@NUEVAYORK.OFCOMES.MCX.ES

Production at its best

As one of the key sectors in the Region of Murcia's economy, agriculture has traditionally been considered our strongest export. A wide variety of products, fresh and processed, originate from Murcia's agricultural sector, which is classified as one of the most revolutionary and advanced in the market.

Technological advances, constant adaptation to the needs of consumers, a permanent presence in influential European Union markets (Murcian products are part of the daily staple of millions of European households), and the loyalty to our brands, have made this sector an essential ingredient of our Region's economic foundation.

The total production in this sector in 1997 was about 2.800 million USD of which over 48% was mainly exported to European Community countries followed by the United States and Japan.

Canned Fruits and Vegetables

The production in the canned fruits and vegetables sector in 1997 was of 1,000 million USD according the Canning Association and 70% of this was destined towards export sales.

The canned fruits and vegetables sector is comprised of 70 companies that utilize the latest technology and level of specialization. Over 70% of the national consumables production production proccedes from the Region of Murcia.

Meat Products

The meat sector grossed sales of over 25 million USD in export sales. This industry is comprised of companies who process food, prepared food products and export live stock (mainly pork).

Wine, Olive Oils and others

The food industry in the Region of Murcia also encompasses other products of prestige in foreign markets, such as frozen products, **pickles, prepared foods, oils, cheese, wines** (with 3 Denominations of Origin), confections, candy, etc.

Fresh Produce

The Region of Murcia is the leading producer nationwide of fruits, in 1998 the total production (in metric tons) was; lemons 358.420 Mt., peaches 195.403 Mt., melons 186.912 Mt., oranges 112.480 Mt., apricots 89.797 Mt., plums 39.654 Mt., and table grapes 82.048 Mt.

With vegetables, the Region is the leading producer of lettuce 356.692 Mt., tomato 347.691 Mt., followed by onions, artichokes, broccoli and green beans and the second producer of peppers and peas.

Paprika

The Region of Murcia is the leading producer of Paprika nationwide (80% of the total) and with over 100 companies dedicated to its elaboration.

F O R E I G N M A R K E T S

Food produce from the Region of Murcia is present within most important international markets. Our most important client as mentioned above is the European Union followed by the USA, Japan and Benelux for both elaborated and fresh produce.

Plan de Promoción Exterior 96-99
Región de Murcia

"The Foreign Promotion Plan is a joint initiative of the Development Agency and the Chambers of Commerce of the Region of Murcia to promote the presence abroad of companies from this region."

http://www.murcia-expo.com

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REGION DE MURCIA

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CAMARA OFICIAL DE COMERCIO, INDUSTRIA Y NAVEGACION DE MURCIA

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GLOSSARY

WINE AGING TERMS

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

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

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

Notes:

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

2. Wines are often kept in vats for a few months prior to aging in casks, so the arithmetic varies for each one.

3. Many *bodegas* age their wines for more than the stipulated minimum periods.

SHERRY

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

CAVA

This is the Denomination of Origin for sparkling wines produced by the traditional method, that is to say, that the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle in which it is sold. The *cava* demarcated region is in several zones, the most important of which is Catalonia. The others are Aragon, Navarre, La Rioja, Castile-Leon, Extremadura, and Valencia. The Cava Denomination should not be confused with other denominations that might be associated with the provinces in which cava is produced. The minimum aging period for cava wines is 9 months in the bottle, though many spend between 18 months and 3 years, and a few up to 5 years.

DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN (D.O.)

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

DENOMINACIÓN ESPECÍFICA (D.E.)

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

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

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