FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN

GOURMETOUR

SEAFOOD WITH SPANISH FLAIR: WONDERFUL THINGS TO EAT IN SHELLS

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No. 49 SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1999

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Editor
Cathy Boirac

Publication Coordinators
Sonia Ortega and Bettina Krücken

Editorial Secretary
Angela Castilla

Art Direction and Design
Luis Artime Diseño

Desktop Publisher
Mabela Tamayo

Color Separations
Espacio y Punto

Printed in Spain
Raycar, S.A.

Advertising
CEDISA, Almirante, 21
28004 Madrid
Tel: (34) 913 080 644
Fax: (34) 913 105 141

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ICEX
State Secretariat for Trade, Tourism, and Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Economy and Finance
Pº de la Castellana, 14
28046 Madrid
Tel: (34) 913 496 243
Fax: (34) 914 358 876
http://www.icex.es

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VETERANO

BRAVO DE JEREZ

OSBORNE

Dear readers,

As the year, century and millennium draw to a close, something similar is happening to the series we launched during 1999. One of these - the one that makes this issue's cover - has explored the enormous variety of fish and seafood caught and gathered off the Spanish coast and cooked in Spain's domestic and restaurant kitchens.

This issue also rounds off a world-wide series that has visited some of the most interesting Spanish restaurants outside Spain. New and long-established, modern and traditional, simple and de luxe, what they have all had in common is food truly representative of the cuisine of Spain as a whole or of its different regions. And after years of exploring restaurants, wineries, shops and places of interest off the beaten track, 'The Traveling Gastronomer' also makes his last appearance. It's the end, too, of 'A Lifetime Devoted to Wine', the series in which nine figures from the Spanish wine world have given their views on it as seen from their specific perspective - research, teaching, wine making - and of 'Peering into the Past', which has delved into the archives where much of Spain's history is recorded.

It's the end of an era (1986 - 1999) for Spain Gourmetour. In the year 2000, the editorial and production team aim to bring you new ideas, new products, new series, all in an updated presentation. We are all looking forward to it, and wish you in the meantime a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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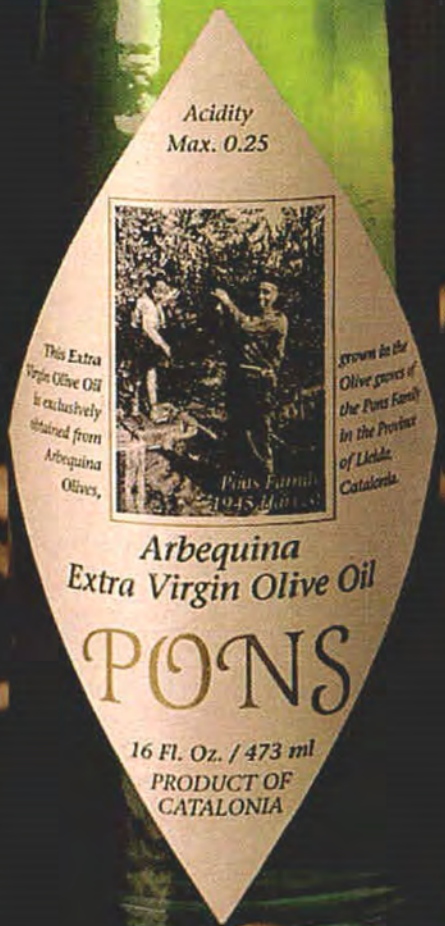

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LASTING IMPRESSIONS

VICKY HAYWARD

• The growing pile of new books on Spanish food includes two that leave the reader with a satisfied sense of what lies behind the recipes. **Los Sabores de España y América** (The Flavors of Spain and America) is a good example of a modest looking paperback that turns out to be a gem. The Spanish authors of the book's 13 short essays come from a mix of academic disciplines: anthropology, history, literary criticism, and ethnobotany. Texts focusing on Spain include two contrasting perspectives on the Old and New World food exchange, an anthropologist's look at the confused identity of Catalan cooking, and a piece on food and memory in contemporary Spanish fiction. Myths and clichés are blown away by solid research and plenty of new ideas are offered along the way.

By contrast **Culinaria Spain** is an object of desire.as much as a book. Taking an encyclopedic approach, its 500 pages contain a collage of dishes, customs, cooking techniques, recipes, regional specialties, and reportage pieces about everything from Spanish aphrodisiacs, cork, and monastic cooking to the contemporary face of agriculture, fishing, and the food industry. Plus, of course, there are a thousand color images along the way, for which the book won the Versailles World Cookbook Fair Awards 1999 for best photography in a Spanish food book. Unusually for this kind of book, there is strong point of view—diversity and the people behind the food are key themes; there is also a good balance between food from the land and sea, country and city, producers and cooks, homes and restaurants. There is, however, a notable absence of famous chefs past and present. The overall effect is like that of a panoramic view: sometimes your eye pauses and longs to explore one corner of the horizon more slowly, but the breadth of vision is breathtaking.

• A trio of books written for American readers do linger in detail on themes, regions, or

certain types of dishes. Penelope Casas, whose first book *The Foods and Wines of Spain* is a standard work for a generation of English language readers, interprets a national classic in **Paella!**, a collection of 60 rice recipes to be cooked in a paella pan. Rounded out by Spanish-inspired ideas for tapas, sweet things, and sauces, the dishes can be built into complete meals well adapted to the American kitchen. Writing in an affectionate and user-friendly style, Casas gives evenhanded treatment to recipes from Levante—paella's homeland—and other Spanish regions; she also presents creative modern takes on the classic formula. For wary first-time paella makers, there is a complete practical lowdown at the beginning of the book.

In **La Cocina Sefardí**—first published in English—Rabbi Robert Steinberg explores Sephardi Jewish recipes from around the Mediterranean and sets the cultural and historic background for them. There are, of course, few strictly Spanish recipes here: the origin of the Sephardi Mediterranean diaspora was the Jews' expulsion from Spain in 1492 on the day before Christopher Columbus set sail. But there are many interesting connections: Greek wine biscuits, Turkish spinach and chickpea soup, Middle Eastern almadrote and Caribbean rice with chicken and saffron, to name just a few recipes, turn out to be remarkably close to Spanish equivalents.

Finally, **Best of Gourmet 1999** has a 40-page feature on Spanish flavors that would make a good takeoff point for anyone just beginning to cook with them. Salt cod and potato fritters, grilled red peppers marinated for three days and asparagus with hazelnut sauce are examples of the clean, modern style. The recipes are structured as complete menus with wine suggestions.

• It was bound to be something of a publishing event when Santi Santamaría, chef-proprietor of El Racó de Can Fabés—Catalunya's first restaurant to win three Michelin stars—decided to put pen to paper. The result, **La Cocina de Santamaría, la Ética del Gusto**—the ethics of taste—does not disappoint. It's a big, slowly matured book with generous-hearted writing and recipes that seem to emerge naturally from one man's life, culture, landscape, and cooking materials as he lovingly describes them earlier in the book. But for Santamaría it is the culinary ethics informing his work which are the heart of the matter; equally, it is his commitment to these which holds together the different elements of a richly satisfying book, awarded the prize for Best Spanish Book by a Chef at the Versailles World Cookbook Fair Awards 1999. Joan Llenas' photographs are also an object lesson in understated images that reflect the food's aesthetics and inspiration.

• Basque gastronomy is a thriving culture that generates dozens of food books every year. Two recent titles give an intriguing glimpse into what is going today—and are a reminder of Basque chefs' ability to keep renewing their distinctive menus. **Tapas y Pinchos de la Cocina Vasca**, by J. García Salazar runs through 240 tapas recipes, a third illustrated in color. Some of the recipes are rather vague (no quantities, for example), but the wealth of ideas accurately reflects the ingenuity of tapa making in Basque bars.

Las Mejores Recetas de la Cocina Vasca II collects together the recipes from the 1998 Premios Pil Pil awards, the Basque culinary equivalent of the Hollywood Oscars. The prize for Best Creative Dish went to self-taught chef Israel Salaberría for his sweet bread crumb custard and apple sorbet garnished with caramelized pine kernels and sloe liqueur jelly. Journalist José Luís Barrena, who set up the awards, has some interesting things to say in his introduction about trends in Basque restaurant cooking, such as edible drinks, and what he calls "the Bulli effect."

For Spanish speakers, the new **Cómo Preparar** series of books is an easy way to find out about the nuts and bolts of Basque and other Spanish cooking techniques. A concise general text outlines the basic knowledge needed for preparing each type of ingredient—such as meat, fish, or pasta—and is followed by half a dozen everyday recipes from top TV chef Karlos Arguiñano and one complex *alta cocina* dish from Juan Marí Arzak, founding father of Basque *nueva cocina*. As one might expect from Basque authors, the book on fish and shellfish is especially interesting.

• John Radford's **The New Spain** is the most ambitious of a trio of books on Spanish wines. It is a brave attempt at a comprehensive study of Spain's D.O. regions and lesser known country wine producing areas, and won the

XIV CLUB DE GOURMETS INTERNATIONAL FAIR

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

* Data audited from the 13th Fair, 1999.

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U.K.'s prestigious Glenfiddich Food Award for the Best Drink Book 1999. Certainly it is a useful roundup, with additional sections on grape varieties, wine classification, and wine-making styles. But, perhaps inevitably given the speed of change in Spanish vineyards and *bodegas* today, short shrift is given to some of the most interesting new winemakers and their wines as well as key emerging areas such as Somontano or Valdeorras. Perhaps the publishers will allow the author to bring a second edition bang up-to-date.

For the time being the gap is filled for wine buyers by the **Guía Campsa de los Mejores Vinos de España**, given away with the annual restaurant guide for the first time this year. The 450 wines, arranged by D.O. (or other region) and bodega, were chosen by a group of French and Spanish sommeliers, enologists, and wine writers and include tasting notes, marks, and the price for each wine. An interesting detail is the name of the enologist included in each bodega's vital statistics.

By comparison with these two books, the new **Larousse Vinos de España**, which comes from a prestigious editorial team, is far less detailed—well over half of it is a general guide to wine—but it includes some good historical details, and soil and geological maps which help make sense of the variations within D.O.s.

• This year an estimated 150,000 travelers will have completed one of the medieval pilgrimage routes leading to St. James' shrine at Santiago de Compostela. Since 1999 was the century's last Holy Year—that is, when St James' Day, the 25th of July, falls on a Sunday—there has been a splurge of publishing on the subject (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47, pg. 7). The latest books include **El Camino de Santiago—La Ruta de las Estrellas**, a big illustrated book on the history, monuments, landscapes, and gastronomy of the various routes seen through the eyes of specialist writers—a historian, an art historian, a geographer, and two regional journalists—who were brought together by the Parador hotels. Apart from this the lavish, mainly architectural photos are a great guide to the sights along the route.

Two much smaller books—**Comer y Beber en el Camino de Santiago** by Blas Calzada and **Parada y Fonda para el Peregrino** by María Zarzalejos—look at the food and drink you'll find along the way. Neither author has researched pilgrims' food or the Camino's place in the history of agriculture, food, and wine, but both are of interest to today's travelers. Calzada's book is a light, relaxed guide to good meals along the way; María Zarzalejos' approach is largely recipe based with each regional section of the Camino introduced by a list of local products, an essay on the route, and its gastronomy. A small book on wines to take with you would be **A Catarlo Todo**, which gives routes for visiting wine bodegas; four of them could be linked up to the Camino.

• Other new guidebooks reflect travelers' growing search for unspoiled countryside. The second edition of the **Guía de Vías Verdes** is a wonderfully concise, complete guidebook to 31 cycling routes along abandoned railway lines. They come with the guarantee, of course, that there are no steep slopes along the way, which also makes them good for gentle walking. Four new titles have been added to the **Turismo Rural y Aventura** series, which combines practical information for exploring rural areas—in this case, the Canaries, Huelva, and two parts of Aragon—with background knowledge on natural history, crafts, food, and wine. El País Aguilar has brought out **Playas con Encanto**, a beachcombers' guide to 88 unspoiled spots around the Spanish coastline. Finally **Las Mejores Casas de Turismo Rural: Baleares** and **Turismo Rural en Asturias** focus on places to stay in individual regions, with pen sketches of the countryside. Food writer Eduardo Méndez Riestra's guide to **Lo Mejor de Asturias** is an altogether more sybaritic gourmet's guide designed to help you eat and shop your way around the region as well as find accommodations with character.

• Updated editions of previous best selling guides include the **Anuario de Turismo Rural en España y Portugal**, which lists 2,300 addresses of carefully picked places to stay, as based on the guide's own visits and readers' comments. Very practical and easy to use, it is subdivided into the main regions and then areas of particular interest within them, giving brief, condensed descriptions of each town or village, passport-style photos of the places to stay, driving maps locating each village or town, and walking routes. Alastair Sawday's useful **Special Places to Stay in Spain and Portugal** is "implacably opposed to the worst excesses of modern tourism" and gives 346 addresses, both off and on the beaten track. The **Guías con Encanto** guides to hotel and monastery accommodation are already modern classics for Spaniards while their new **Guía de Hoteles de España Para Viajar con Animales** is a revealing insight into the tricky life of a traveling dog. (The basic message is that if your owners forget your lead or health certificates, you're in for a hard time.)

Finally, for those who like to travel in style or for unrepentant dreamers, **Grandes Hoteles de España** is a sumptuous visual tour of twenty luxurious hotels—not necessarily the obvious ones—caught by Argentinian-born photographer Humberto Rivas' camera. Some are Renaissance monuments, others are hi-tech architectural experiments; the native architectural styles include Catalan Modernism and Andalusian *mudéjar*. For those who can afford to use this as a practical book, it is not so much a guide to hotels as to how they can be converted into unforgettable experiences.

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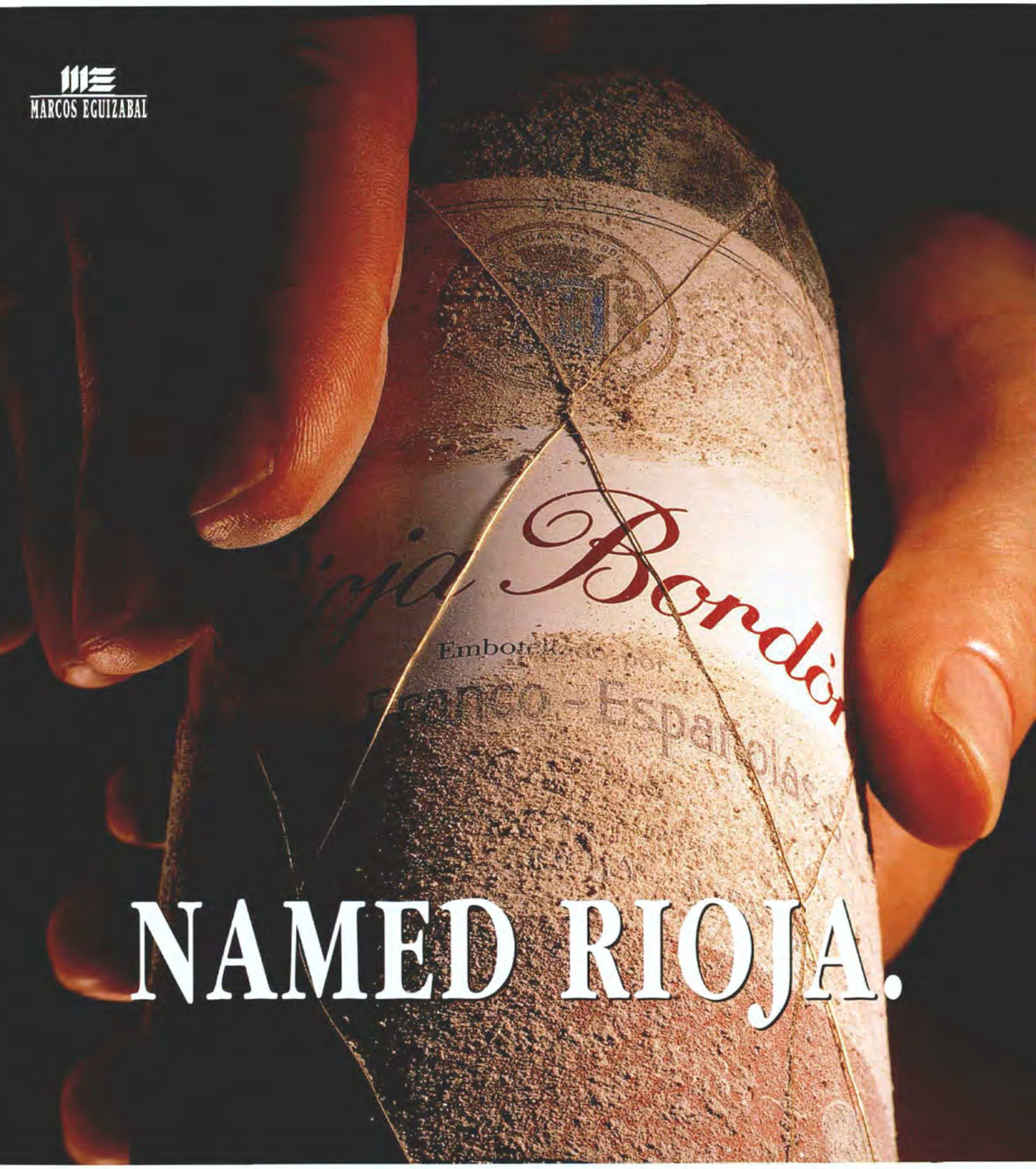

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Seafood with Spanish Flair (II)

This is the second of a two-part feature about Spain's great seafood. In our last issue we showed you ways to cook fin fish. In this issue we cover the wealth of shellfish to be found on Spain's coasts and typical ways of cooking them. Because Spain consumes more seafood than almost any other country in the world, this is the perfect place to pick up a few tips or learn a new and exciting recipe. Spain really knows what to do with seafood.

Wonderful Things to Eat in Shells

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

SHRIMP AND LOBSTER ARE THE WORLD'S FAVORITE SHELLFISH AND SPAIN HAS MANY WAYS OF COOKING THEM.

From the four corners of coastal Spain come the most fabulous shellfish in the world. From the sandy beaches of lower Andalusia to the wild and rocky cliffs of Galicia in the northwest; from the busy fishing ports and teeming markets of Catalonia to Levante's rich catch (with the Balearic Islands), Spain offers up, on any one day, some 50 or more varieties of wonderful edibles in shells. Square that with as many ways of preparing shellfish and you have a veritable treasure trove of fabulous eating.

A seafood market, a *tapa* bar or a *cocedero* (a place that sells and serves cooked seafood to take away) is a good place to start the inventory, which varies considerably from one region to another, and also by the season. In markets in Cádiz, in Andalusia, look for baskets of tiny jumping, live shrimp. In Santiago Compostela you'll find the famed *percebes*, a barnacle with its dollop of exquisite flesh. Near Barcelona, a harvest of delectable sea urchins is grabbed up by innovative chefs, who use the coral to give rich sea flavor and color to sauces. While at Murcia, the fabled shrimp of the Mar Menor is so esteemed that it commands astronomical prices.

And that's just for starters. Then there are clams, scallops, oysters, mussels, crabs, lobsters, squid, cuttlefish. And more! Shellfish is a wonderfully versatile food, which suits any diet and any menu, from a small nibble in a tapa bar to the profusion of shellfish served at receptions and holiday gatherings.

Shellfish (*mariscos*) divide into three main groups—the crustaceans, which include shrimp, crayfish, crabs, and lobster; the mollusks, both bivalve—mussels, clams, and scallops—and univalve—whelks and winkles—and cephalopods, those tentacled creatures, squid, cuttlefish, and octopus, which have their "shell" on the inside (e.g., a cuttlebone).

CRUSTACEANS

'The crustacean group includes two of the most highly prized foods in the world—shrimp and lobster. Spain has a good representation of both, in their various sizes and types, and superb ways to cook them.

Shrimp or Prawn? This family of crustaceans presents a real problem of nomenclature!

In general, the British call all of them prawns (except for the tiniest, which are shrimp), and the Americans call them all shrimp, including the biggest, which are "jumbo" shrimp.

In Spanish, there are many more names, each one describing a particular shrimp. So, for instance, *gamba*, is the common shrimp and a generic name. Usually these are small- to medium-sized (10-12 cm/4-5 in). They are used in *paella* dishes (often unpeeled), lending a lot of flavor to the rice, and, peeled, in that tapa-bar star, *gambas al ajillo*, shrimp sizzled with garlic. *Langostino* is a jumbo shrimp (12-16 cm/5-6 1/2 in), some varieties which are tiger striped. But, don't confuse the Spanish langostino with the French *langoustine*—they are not the same thing!

The *carabinero* is a jumbo-jumbo shrimp (up to 20 cm/8 in), which, uncooked, is a bright crimson color. It's particularly good split open and grilled and tastes rather like lobster. At the other end of the size scale are *camarones* and *quisquillas*, tiny shrimp, but full of flavor. Tiny camarones, found in the Cádiz area, are scooped up from the mouths of rivers. They're folded into a fritter batter and fried crisp in *tortillitas de camarones*.

Some jumbo shrimp have special cachet. These are langostinos de Vinaroz (which celebrates a shrimp festival at the end of June) and langostinos de Guardamar de Segura, both in the Comunidad Valenciana; langostinos de Sanlúcar, in Cádiz, Andalusia, where the Guadalquivir empties into the sea, and langostinos del Mar Menor, from the inland salt sea in Murcia. All of these are so delicious that they command very high prices indeed.

In Spain, these choice shrimp are usually served very simply—unpeeled and with their heads intact—boiled in salt water for a few minutes or else laid on a griddle and basted with olive oil. You get the personal gustatory pleasure of peeling them yourself. Novitiates are instructed to "suck the heads." That's because the delicious coral is in the first segment of the shell, at the base of the shrimp's "head."

Shrimp are highly perishable. Before the days of refrigeration, they were eaten only on the coasts where they were fished. Nowadays, they are packed on ice and sent to markets throughout the country or else flash-frozen for longer keeping.

Raw shrimp usually are of a gray-brown color, quite translucent. Some show the "tiger" banding. All of them turn pink when cooked.

Cigalas: scampi, Dublin Bay prawns, crayfish, Norway lobsters, and langoustines. All of the above are names for the very same crustacean, which, in Spain, is known as cigala. It is a beautiful creature, a miniature lobster, with a pale coral carapace and pincers tipped in white and orange. It varies in size from 12-20 cm (5-8 in). In French, this specimen is a langoustine—a word unfortunately similar to the Spanish word for shrimp, langostino. In Italian, this is the true scampi (or singular, scampo), although all sorts of prawns and shrimp are regularly called scampi even though they are not. In Britain the cigala is known as Dublin Bay prawn. Norway lobster is yet another name. Americans dub it sea crayfish.

The cigala has very sweet flesh. It is usually simply boiled in salt water and eaten plain, or used to garnish paella and other seafood dishes. It is also delicious grilled on a *plancha*, an iron griddle. The cigala changes color very little when cooked. The cigala is best purchased very fresh. Frozen it loses much of it's sweet flavor—though it still looks pretty.

Lobster, With or Without. With or without claws, that is. For lobster comes in both variations. With claws is the majestic *bogavante*, especially renowned in Galicia and the northern waters of

the Cantabria. Fresh, these lobsters are a blue-green color, but they turn bright red when cooked. They provide exquisite meat from both the tail and claws.

The *langosta* is the clawless spiny lobster, known throughout the Mediterranean, but especially esteemed in Menorca in the Balearic Islands. In Menorca it's the main protagonist in the local *caldereta*, a seafood stew of Ciudatella and Cala Fornells. Uncooked, it is a ruddy brown color. It's flesh is sweet and can be used in any lobster dish. The flathead lobster is another clawless one, though not a true lobster, known as *cigarra* or, in Galicia, *santiaguiño*, because the pattern of the lobster's shell somewhat resembles the cross of Santiago. Flatheads in Australian waters are known as "bay bugs."

In Catalonia, lobster is combined with chicken for a delicious version of surf 'n' turf, *mar y terra* (with a secret ingredient, a tiny bit of chocolate. See recipe on page 22).

Smaller lobsters (500-750 grams/1-1 1/2 pounds) are preferred to larger ones and a female, with coral, is preferred to the male. Lobster is best purchased live, from a holding tank. Second best is cooked and iced, or frozen.

Crabs and Claws. Several varieties of crabs are fished in Spanish waters. Tiny ones, called *nécoras*, *cangrejos*, or *andaricas* are served boiled in sea water, as appetizers in tapa bars, or else added to soups. Just pull off the legs and shell and pull out the meat inside. Of the larger crabs, *buey*, shore crab, and *centolla*, spider crab, are the best. The spider crab in Basque is known as *txangurro*. It's sensational sauced and baked in its shell.

Like lobsters, crabs should be purchased live and cooked immediately, or else purchased already cooked and chilled. Frozen or tinned crab meat could be substituted in any of these crab dishes. A good-sized crab provides slim pickings—about two-thirds of its weight is shell. A single medium-sized crab yields only about 150 grams of delicious meat.

In some fish markets and in cocederos where cooked shellfish is sold, you will find crab claws. According to seafood expert Alan Davidson in his useful little book, *The Tio Pepe Guide to the Seafood of Spain and Portugal* (published by González Byass), the fishermen in the Cádiz region remove from the male fiddler crabs the one large claw and then return the live crab to the water so that it can grow another claw for the following season. These crab claws, called *bocas de la Isla*, are simply boiled.

Barnacles, Like Truffles. These gooseneck barnacles (percebes) are like truffles in that they cost as much. They cost a lot because, first, they taste sublime and, second, they are rare and hard to come by. This particular barnacle grows in clusters on the wave-battered cliffs of Galicia and are gathered by men who lower themselves over the rocks, secured by thick ropes, to scrape the barnacles free. The percebe (minimum length 4 cm/1 3/4 in) is a thick, thumb-shaped protuberance with a pointed end. The delicious flesh is within. Percebes are boiled in salt water and served without any sauce.

MOLLUSKS

Bivalves are the ones with two hinged shells, the favorite oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops, while the single-shell mollusks include the abalone, limpet, sea snail, murex, winkle, and whelk. Though some of these may seem exotic, they can be found in Spanish tapa bars from coast to coast.

In addition to the market in fresh shellfish, an important industry, especially in Galicia, is the canning of clams, cockles, mussels, and squid. Look for mussels in *escabeche*, a tangy marinade; clams al natural, in a sweet brine; squid *en su tinta*, in black ink sauce, and many more distinctive preparations.

Mussel Bound. Galicia, in the northwest of Spain, grows about 90 percent of all the mussels sold in Spain and about a fourth part of all the mussels marketed commercially in the world. Mussels are raised on *bateas*, flat rafts anchored out in protected estuaries, from which dangle long ropes to which the mussels cling. They are hauled up after about two years, ready for harvesting, then deposited in depurification tanks for at least 12 hours to de-gorge sand. Some go to the canning industry, the rest are shipped fresh (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 39). El Grove in Pontevedra, center of mussel fishing, celebrates a mussel festival in October where you can sample the shellfish prepared in dozens of ways. Purchase mussels with their shells tightly closed and discard any which are cracked or open. Cook mussels on the same day they are purchased. After cooking, they may be kept, with or without their shells, refrigerated, for up to two days.

Mussels are superb, simply steamed open and served with a few drops of lemon juice, but they lend themselves to many other preparations too—mussel sauce for pasta, mussel soup, breaded and fried, stewed with potatoes, in *salpicón*, a salad of chopped tomatoes, peppers, onions, and vinaigrette.

Similar to mussels are the date-shells, *dátiles de mar*, which are gathered off the Mediterranean coasts of Castellón. Of a dark brown color, they somewhat resemble a date. Because this shellfish embeds itself in rocks, it is difficult to extract, and thus very expensive.

Oysters. Galicia in former times was famous for its oysters, pickled in escabeche and shipped in vats to inland Spain and as far away as England. Although the native oysters in the wild have become scarce, cultivated oyster beds are thriving. Similar to mussel cultivation, oysters are grown on thick cords suspended from rafts. Conditions in the estuaries of Galicia are so good that oysters reach commercial size of 6-7 cm (2 1/2-3 in) in less than two years, whereas elsewhere in Europe they take four years.

In southern Spain, the *ostión*, or Portuguese oyster, of Cádiz is another variety. Oysters can be dipped in corn meal and fried, or baked in a sauce, but the best way to enjoy them is raw with a drop of lemon juice.

Clams of Many Shapes. Clams are tasty bivalves which come in many shapes and sizes. From Galicia and the Cantabrian coast come *almeja fina*, carpet-shell clam (this is the French *palourde*, the Italian *vongole*); *almeja babosa*, venus shell, and *almeja rubia*, golden carpet shell. In Galicia, an imported clam also is being farmed. These are all quite good-sized clams (4-6 cm/1 3/4-2 1/2 in), delicious cooked *a la marinera*, fishermen's style, with garlic and white wine.

In Valencian and Andalusian waters the *chirla*, a very small ridged clam, is fished. In southern Spain they add flavor to seafood paella.

Wedge-shell clams (*coquina* in Andalusia; *tellina* in the Comunidad Valenciana) are tiny, triangular-shaped clams with wonderful flavor. They are popular in tapa bars and restaurants, served up in a garlicky sauce. A group of friends orders a ration to share. Everybody eats from the same platter and dips chunks of bread into the delicious sauce.

Another tapa bar favorite is the *concha fina*, or smooth venus shell, a very large clam, with beautiful smooth shells, the color of mahogany. They are served raw on the half-shell, a briny, sweet delight. Cooked, these big clams tend to be rubbery.

The razor-shell clam (*navaja*) is a long gold-brown rectangle, looking like a penknife or straight razor. It can be eaten raw or steamed open or grilled. It's very good.

The *berberecho* is not actually a clam, but a cockle. The cockle and several of the clams are important to the canning industry in northern Spain.

Clams must be purchased live, with shells tightly shut. Discard any with broken shells. Clams which have been farm raised are usually purged of sand before shipping to market. Otherwise, put them to soak in a basin of water for several hours or overnight, changing the water frequently. Where the Spanish specimens are not to be found, Manila clams, surf clams, pismos, littlenecks, cherrystones, or quahogs could be substituted in Spanish recipes.

Scallops. Long before Miró's famous Spanish

sunshine picture became the T-shirt emblem of choice for thousands of tourists in Spain, another symbol was worn by visitors to this country. The scallop shell—still known as the "pilgrim shell"—was worn on hats and dangled from belts of those who made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, seeking, not sun, but salvation. Legend has it that the body of Saint James (Santiago), who was martyred in Jerusalem, was miraculously rescued off the Galician coast by a horse and rider who came ashore covered with scallops. The French name, *coquille St. Jacques*, also means St. James' scallop shells.

In Spanish the scallop is *vieira, concha peregrina* or, a small variety, *zamburiña.* Outside Spain, scallops are more likely to be found in the frozen foods section. Unfortunately, frozen scallops are usually processed with only the dollop of white muscle, without the delicious coral. Frozen sea or bay scallops can be substituted in scallop recipes.

One-Shell Wonders. Lesser known shellfish such as these with only a single shell are to be found in tapa bars in Spain. There are *oreja de mar*, abalone; *caracola de mar*, sea snail or whelk; *cañaílla* and *búsano*, murex, and *bígaro*, winkle. All of these are cooked simply in salt water and usually served with a pin to extract the dollop of flesh from the shell.

CEPHALOPODS

Here begins the great tentacle and ink adventure, which includes squid, cuttlefish, and octopus. This category of shellfish wears its shell on the inside, in the form of a cartilage stiffener.

Squid, the User-friendly Cephalopod. Squeamish visitors to Spain's tapa bars sometimes reject good food because they don't know what they're getting. But, fooled by those big, crispy fried rings, which certainly do look a lot like fried onion rings, they wind up tasting, then loving, fried rings of squid. After that initiation, it's easy to try other ways of preparing squid.

Squid is user-friendly too, because it's easy to clean and cook in your own kitchen. Of the tentacled fish, this is the most tender, which needs the shortest cooking time. Besides being fried, squid is stuffed with meat or ham and served in a sauce, or cut up and cooked, Basque style, en su tinta, in a rich sauce blackened with squid ink, a delicious preparation.

Cuttlefish, Big and Small. Cuttlefish is *jibia* or *sepia.* The body is wide and oval shaped. Inside is the cuttlebone—the same sort you put in a canary's cage. The flesh of the cuttlefish is chewier than squid and needs slow braising. A fishmonger will usually clean and cut it up.

Small varieties of cuttlefish are *chocos*, which in Huelva are cooked with fava beans. Tiny ones can be cooked on a griddle whole.

Octopus, Not So Scary. The octopus, which is captured on all of Spain's coasts, has a bulbous head and eight long tentacles lined with a double row of suction cups. Big specimens look pretty scary, but, in fact, the octopus, with long cooking, is easy to prepare. Freshly caught, octopus sometimes is beaten against a stone to tenderize it. But, easier than beating: put it in the deep freeze for a few weeks, a great way to tenderize. Tiny ones, *pulpitos*, can be cooked on a griddle. Galicia's best known octopus dish, *pulpo a feira*, served up at summer *ferias* throughout the region, was once made with dried octopus, which could be kept for long periods of time in those days before the deep freeze. Traditionally the octopus was cooked in copper pots and served sliced, on wooden plates with a dressing of olive oil, coarse salt and sweet and hot paprika.

Shellfish Exotica. There are some strange and exotic shellfish, long known to fishermen in regions where they are to be found, which, once discovered by restaurateurs and innovative chefs, made a splash on big-time menus. Here are three.

The sea urchin, *erizo de mar*, is a round, blue-black spiky sea creature, the hedgehog of the sea, whose spines sometimes get lodged in children's feet at the beach. Alive and fresh, the lid cut off, the coral is delicious, "an extract of the sea, the wind of a squall, the essence of a storm," said Spanish writer Julio Camba (1882-1962).

Although they are too perishable to be found in markets, sea urchins are much appreciated on coasts where they are harvested, usually by scuba divers in wet suits during winter months.

Cádiz celebrates its "Erizá" festival in February, which attracts thousands to savor sea urchins gathered off the rocky shores of Tarifa. While in Asturias, the *oricios*—as they are called there—are consumed with the local cider. Catalonia, Asturias, and Comunidad Valenciana are commercializing sea urchin corals, frozen or in conserve, to be shipped anywhere.

The sea cucumber is another anomaly. It is ugly, but toothsome. Apparently, the fishermen on the Catalan coasts were accustomed to eating them. Called *espardenya*, because they resemble those rope-soled canvas shoes, they have achieved star status after first one and then another top restaurant featured them on menus.

The third is the *ortiga de mar*, or sea anemone. On the Atlantic coast of Cádiz this strange bit of seafood is dipped in batter and fried, producing a fritter which is crisp on the outside and meltingly soft inside. Unusual.

***Janet Mendel**, an American journalist resident in southern Spain, is the author of several books about Spanish cooking. She is presently working on a new book about the Spanish kitchen.*


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CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH SHELLFISH

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

You can see from this brief survey that shellfish cookery in Spain is a highly developed art, with much to choose from. From the simple to the sophisticated, there are shellfish for every taste. To enjoy seafood, try some of the following recipes for classic Spanish dishes.

Sizzled Shrimp
Gambas al Ajillo

In tapa bars this is usually prepared in individual servings. The tiny earthenware ramekin (*cazuela*) is placed directly on a gas or electric hob. It can be made in a larger quantity, but never sizzles quite so satisfactorily.

SERVES 1:
10 medium raw shrimp
3 tbsp olive oil
1 clove garlic, sliced
1 tiny piece chili pepper
Pinch of paprika (optional)
Bread

Peel the shrimp, discarding head and tail. Put the oil, garlic, and chili in a small flameproof ramekin. Put it on the heat until the oil is very hot. Add the shrimp and cook just until they turn pink and curl slightly, about two minutes. Remove from heat, add the paprika and serve immediately, while still sizzling, accompanied by bread to soak up the flavorful sauce.
Recommended wine: A red Valdepeñas D.O. Crianza '95, made of 100 percent Cencibel grapes. The intense color, ripe fruit, and wood aromas in combination with tannins give a balanced wine that makes a good partner for the shrimp with their pronounced flavor, alongside the pungency of the chili pepper and garlic and the smoothness of the oil.

Shrimp in "Trenchcoats"
Gambas en Gabardinas

SERVES 8 AS A TAPA:
500 g raw jumbo shrimp, peeled
A few threads of saffron
1 egg, beaten
4 tbsp water
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp bicarbonate of soda
100 g plain flour
Virgin olive oil for deep frying

Make a batter with the egg, water, salt, bicarbonate, flour, and saffron. It should have the consistency of pancake batter. Let it rest one hour. Dip the peeled prawns in the batter and fry them in hot oil until they are golden on all sides. Drain on kitchen paper and serve hot.
Recommended wine: A dry, white D.O. Rueda made mostly of Viura but with some Verdejo grapes. To counter the heaviness of the batter, an accompanying wine needs to have a fruity aroma and flavor and should be clean and fresh in the mouth. Although there is no reason why the shrimp should be greasy if fried in virgin olive oil at the right temperature.

Jumbo Shrimp with Dry Sherry
Langostinos al Fino

SERVES 4-6:
1 kg jumbo shrimp
50 ml olive oil
2 tbsp chopped onion
1 clove chopped garlic
75 ml *fino* sherry or *manzanilla*
2 tbsp tomato sauce
2 tbsp cream
1/4 tsp thyme
Salt and pepper
Chopped parsley

Peel the shrimp, leaving tails intact. In a pan, heat the oil and sauté the chopped onion and garlic. When softened, add the prawns and turn up the heat. Stir fry briefly, then add the sherry or manzanilla, tomato sauce, cream, thyme, salt, and pepper. Cook just until the shrimp are pink and slightly curled. Serve garnished with chopped parsley.
Recommended wine: A fino sherry or a manzanilla from Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Both are a light straw color and have a fresh, clean, and dry aroma with a touch of bitterness which contrasts with the special sweetness of the shrimp. Whether you choose a fino or a manzanilla, both will have the characteristic, fresh flavor of the Palomino grape. Use the same wine in the recipe.

Surf 'n' Turf
(lobster with chicken)
Mar i Terra

SERVES 4-6:
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp lard (optional)
1 small chicken, cut in serving pieces
Salt and pepper
Pinch of cinnamon
1 chicken liver
1 onion, chopped
Herbal bouquet of bay leaf, thyme, oregano, leek, parsley, and orange zest
4 tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
200 ml white wine
1 tbsp anise brandy
2 tsp flour or fine bread crumbs
1 or 2 lobsters (1 kg), each cut in half lengthwise, then quartered crosswise
1/2 tsp saffron, crushed
2 cloves garlic
30 g skinned hazelnuts, toasted
1 tbsp grated bittersweet chocolate or 1 tsp unsweetened cocoa powder

Heat the oil in a large cazuela or big frying pan. Season the chicken pieces with salt, pepper, and cinnamon and brown them in the oil and lard with the chicken liver. Remove the liver when browned. When chicken is nicely golden, add the chopped onion. Sauté a few minutes, then add the bunch of herbs, tomatoes, wine, and anise brandy. Cover and let the liquid reduce by half. Then add the flour or bread crumbs mixed in a little water. Add water or stock to just barely cover the pieces of chicken. Heat a little oil in a separate frying pan and sauté the lobster pieces with green lobster liver very briefly. Transfer the lobster meat to the casserole with the chicken. In a mortar or processor grind the saffron, garlic, hazelnuts, chocolate, and the livers of the chicken and lobster. Add reserved lobster juices to make a smooth paste. Add this mixture to the casserole and cook ten minutes more or until lobster is cooked through. The sauce shouldn't be too soupy. Garnish with triangles of fried bread and sprinkle with chopped parsley.
Recommended wine: A red crianza from the D.O. Costers del Segre, a blend of Cabernet-Sauvignon with Tempranillo and Merlot. A fairly powerful wine with balsamic and milky aromas alongside hints of berries, fresh vegetables, and mushrooms. A com-

plex dish like this one needs a well-structured wine with a full range of aromas to bring out those of the ingredients.

Basque Crab Casserole
Txangurro

This delicious dish could be made with any crab meat, though on the Basque coasts, the spider crab is used. The crab meat and sauce are then returned to the crab shell for a final pass under the flame. Because a single crab yields so little meat, it is not unusual to augment it with another kind of fish.

SERVES 4:
4 spider crabs or 450 g tinned or frozen crab meat
300 g white fish, cooked and flaked
4 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
100 ml Brandy de Jerez
250 ml tomato sauce or *sofrito*
150 ml white wine
Pinch of cayenne
Salt and pepper
1 tbsp chopped parsley
4 tbsp fine bread crumbs
1 tbsp butter

Put the live crabs into tepid, salted water. Bring them slowly to a boil and boil for 15 minutes. Drain and leave till cool enough to handle. Pry off the shells and reserve them, cleaned and oiled, for use as casseroles. From the crabs, discard the spongy gills and stomach, but save any liquid from the shell. Scoop out the soft, dark meat and flaky white meat. Crack the legs with a mallet and extract the meat. In a frying pan or cazuela heat the oil and sauté the onion until softened. Add the crab meat and flaked, cooked fish to the pan. Heat the brandy in a soup ladle, ignite it and pour over the crab. When the flames die down, add the tomato sauce, wine, cayenne, salt, pepper, and parsley. Cook for 15 minutes, adding a little reserved liquid if needed to thin the sauce. Spoon the mixture into the crab shells or into 4 oiled ramekins. Sprinkle the tops with the bread crumbs, dot them with butter, and put under a hot grill or into a preheated hot oven until the tops are browned, about 5 minutes.
Recommended wine: A very dry, white wine from the D.O. Bizkaiko Txakolina, with a very fresh, fruity aroma. The blend of Hondarribi Zuri, Folle Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc makes a zesty wine that serves to lighten the substantial flavors of the casserole.

Clams, Fishermen's Style
Almejas a la Marinera

MAKES 8 TAPAS OR 3-4 STARTERS:
1 kg clams (or mussels)
3 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp chopped onion

CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH SHELLFISH

2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp flour
100 ml dry white wine
100 ml water
Piece of chili (optional)
1 bay leaf
2 tbsp chopped parsley

Wash the clams in running water. (If using mussels, scrub them and remove beards.) Discard any shells which are opened or cracked. In a deep frying pan heat the oil and sauté the onion and garlic until onion is softened. Stir in the flour, then add the clams. On a high heat, add the wine, water, chili, and bay leaf. Cover the pan and shake the pan until the clam shells open. This takes 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat when most of the shells have opened. Pour into a serving dish and top with chopped parsley. Serve with chunks of bread.

Recommended wine: The best partner for raw clams is undoubtedly an Albariño, but for these cooked clams, try a dry, white D.O. Ribeiro made of Treixadura and Torrontés grapes. Clean on the nose with a fresh, fruity aroma and perhaps a hint of tropical fruits, this is a balanced and flavorsome wine, both creamy and slightly sharp on the palate.

Clams and Beans
Almejas con Fabes

SERVES 6:
250 g dry lima beans, soaked overnight
1 onion, quartered
2 cloves garlic
1 bay leaf
Sprig of thyme
Sprig of parsley
3 tbsp olive oil
1 kg clams
1/4 tsp saffron, crushed
1 tbsp bread crumbs
1 tsp salt
Pepper

Drain the soaked beans and put them to cook in enough water to cover with the onion, one clove of the garlic, and the herbs. When beans are half cooked, about 30 minutes, heat the oil in a frying pan and add the clams with a little water. Cover and steam them open over a high heat, shaking the pan until the clam shells open. Remove from the heat immediately. Strain the liquid and add it to the beans. Shell the clams, discarding any which do not open. In a mortar crush the saffron with the remaining clove of garlic and the bread crumbs. Mix to a paste with a little of the liquid from the beans. Add the shelled clams to the beans with the bread crumb mixture. Season to taste. Simmer for ten minutes.

Recommended wine: A young red, or perhaps a four-year crianza from the D.O. Bierzo, with the cherry color and creaminess of the Mencía grape. Its red berry, coffee, balsamic, and buttery aromas should team up well with this bean dish that marries the smoothness of the stewed beans with the sea flavor and special texture of the clams.

Stuffed Mussels
Mejillones Rellenos or "Tigres"

MAKES 18 PIECES:
1 1/2 dozen mussels, scrubbed and beards removed
3 tbsp water
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp minced onion
2 tbsp flour
3 tbsp white wine
125 ml mussel liquid
1 egg beaten with 1 tbsp water
4 tbsp fine dry bread crumbs
100 ml olive oil for frying

Steam open the mussels. Put them in a deep pan with the water. Cover the pan and put over a high heat, shaking the pan, until the shells open. Remove from heat and discard any mussels which do not open. Mussels can also be opened in a microwave. Place them in a microwave-safe bowl, partially covered, and microwave at full power for one minute. Stir and microwave one minute more. Remove any mussels which have opened and microwave one minute more. Again remove open ones. Repeat twice more. Discard any mussels which have not opened.

When mussels are cool enough to handle, remove and discard the empty half shells. Loosen the mussel meat from the bottom shell and arrange the mussels in their shells on a tray in a single layer. Strain the mussel liquid and reserve it. Heat the two tablespoons of oil in a saucepan and sauté the minced onion until it is softened, without letting it brown. Stir in the flour, cook for a minute, stirring, then whisk in the wine and the mussel liquid. Cook, stirring, until the mixture is thickened and smooth. Put a spoonful of this white sauce onto each mussel and smooth it level with the top of the shell. Refrigerate until the sauce is firmly set, at least one hour.

Place the beaten egg in one dish and the bread crumbs in another. Dip the mussels, open face down, first into egg, then bread crumbs. Arrange them on the tray in a single layer. (The mussels can be prepared up to this point, then frozen. Freeze them in one layer, then pack them carefully in a freezer bag or plastic container. Let them thaw at least one hour before continuing with the preparation.)

To fry the mussels, heat enough oil to cover the bottom of a frying pan. Fry them in two or three batches, breaded side down, until golden brown. Drain briefly on paper towels and serve hot.

Recommended wine: A D.O. Madrid rosé made from 100% Tempranillo grapes: its refreshing green fruit effect will balance both the richness derived from frying and the strong flavors of the stuffing. A current-year red, again from D.O. Madrid, or perhaps from La Mancha or Valdepeñas, would also be good—traditionally, these are what you would be given to drink with tapas in Madrid and its province.

Mussels Vinaigrette
Mejillones a la Vinagreta

MAKES 30 TAPAS:
2 1/2 dozen mussels, scrubbed and beards removed
Shredded lettuce
2 tbsp minced green onion
2 tbsp minced green pepper
2 tbsp minced red pepper
1 tbsp chopped parsley
4 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp vinegar or lemon juice
Dash of red pepper sauce
Salt to taste

Open the mussels as described in the preceding recipe. When cool enough to handle, remove and discard the empty shells. (Mussels can be cooked in advance and refrigerated.) Shortly before serving, arrange mussels on a bed of shredded lettuce on a serving platter. In a bowl combine the onion, green and red pepper, parsley, oil, and vinegar. Season with red pepper sauce and salt. Spoon the mixture into the mussels in their shells.

Recommended wine: Wine and vinegar make

poor bedfellows. If you insist on accompanying these mussels with wine, our recommendation would be to use lemon juice in place of the vinegar in the sauce and to try a white D.O. Bierzo made from Gewürztraminer. The association of the primary aromas of the grapes with the lemon aromas should make a creamy, very aromatic match for the strong vinaigrette sauce.

Scallop au Gratin, Galician Style
Vieiras Gratinadas a la Gallega

Fresh scallops are almost always sandy. They are best opened raw: insert a knife tip between the shells and sever the hinge. This is easy to do, as, unlike oysters or clams, the scallop's shells don't close tightly. Then pry the shells open. Cut the scallop free of the top, flat shell and discard it. Scoop the scallop out of the shell and cut away and discard the mantle (the rim) and the black section. The remaining white muscle and coral are both edible. Rinse in running water. The scallops are now ready for cooking. The shells can be saved in which to serve the scallops.

MAKES 6 STARTERS OR 12 INDIVIDUAL TAPAS:
2 dozen fresh scallops in their shells (or equivalent frozen scallops)
3 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, minced
1 clove garlic, minced
30 g ham or bacon, diced
2 tbsp white wine
2 tsp *pimentón* (Spanish sweet paprika)
Salt and pepper
30 g fine dry bread crumbs
1 tbsp olive oil

Open and clean the scallops as indicated above. Discard the empty flat shells. Place two scallops in a cleaned shell and set them on a grill pan. Heat the oil in a frying pan and sauté the minced onion, garlic and diced ham until onion is softened. Add the wine, paprika, salt, and pepper. Spoon this mixture over the scallops in their shells. Combine the bread crumbs with the oil and just a little water to make a paste. Spoon it on top of the scallops. Place the pan under the grill until the tops are browned and scallops are bubbling, about 8 minutes.
Recommended wine: A white D.O. Rías Baixas from the Rosal district, made from Albariño, Loureira, and Caiño grapes. This wine has an intense flavor with hints of tropical and citrus fruits and apple. A dry and flavorsome wine with a touch of bitterness is required here to bring out the sweetness of the scallop flesh and of the softly-fried onion.

CLASSIC SPANISH WAYS WITH SHELLFISH

Squid in Black Sauce
Calamares en su Tinta

This can be made with medium squid (20-25 cm) or with tiny ones, called *chipirones*. Small ones are left whole, stuffed with the chopped tentacles, fins and a bit of ham, while larger ones are cut into squares.

SERVES 6 AS A STARTER:
1 kg fresh squid
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
3 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1/2 kg tomatoes, peeled and chopped
6 tbsp white wine
1 tbsp brandy
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper
Pinch of cayenne
Chopped parsley
Triangles of fried bread

TO PREPARE SQUID FOR COOKING:
Whole squid has a long, narrow body pouch, white mottled with violet, from which protrudes a knob of a head and short little legs. To clean squid, gently pull the head out from the body pouch. It should come away with most of the entrails as well. Attached to the entrails is a tiny silver sac which contains the ink. Save the ink sacs in a cup covered with 2 tbsp of the wine. Cut the tentacles off just above the eyes and reserve them. Discard the head and entrails. Still inside the body pouch is the quill, a transparent "plastic" stiffener. Pull it out and discard. Next pull off the wing flaps from the body pouch and reserve them. Then remove all the pinkish membrane from the squid and discard. You should now have a white-fleshed body pouch, two wing flaps and a squiggle of tentacle, all edible. Wash the pieces in running water. If the squid is to be fried, use scissors to cut the body pouch, crosswise, into rings. For this dish, cut the body pouch into 5-cm squares. Pat dry with paper toweling. Heat the oil in a frying pan and very gently sauté the pieces of squid. Transfer them to a cazuela or flameproof casserole. In the oil, sauté the garlic and onion until soft. Add the tomatoes, remaining wine, brandy, bay leaf, salt, pepper, and cayenne. Bring to a boil and simmer until somewhat reduced, 15 minutes. Puree in a blender or put through a sieve, then pour the sauce over the squid in the casserole. Cover and cook until the squid are very tender, about 45 minutes. Break the ink sacs with a spoon and stir to dilute. Add to the squid and cook for another few minutes. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve with the fried bread.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Ribeira Sacra. This wine made from Mencía grapes has a gentle, fresh and fruity aroma with a slight astringency which should give just the right contrast for the smooth flavors of the squid and the ink sauce.

Cuttlefish with Fava Beans
Chocos con Habas

This is a dish typical of Huelva.

SERVES 4:
1 kg cuttlefish, cleaned and cut into small cubes
2 kg fava beans, shelled (or 750 g frozen fava beans)
150 ml olive oil
2 onions, chopped
8 cloves garlic, chopped
3 tbsp chopped parsley
1 tbsp pimentón (Spanish sweet paprika)
Pinch of hot paprika or cayenne
6 tbsp white wine or water
Salt
3 bay leaves

Cook the beans in boiling water (use stainless, earthenware, or enameled cook ware so beans don't turn dark) for five minutes, drain and refresh the beans in cold water. In a cazuela or flameproof casserole, heat the oil and sauté the chopped onion and garlic until softened. Add the cuttlefish and continue to sauté a few minutes longer. Then add half of the parsley and the paprika. Stir in the wine, salt, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes. Add the favas and additional water if needed. Cook a further 20 minutes until the cuttlefish is very tender and the beans are cooked. Sprinkle with remaining parsley.
Recommended wine: A white wine from the D.O. Condado de Huelva. The aromas of this pale, straw yellow wine—of ripe fruit and vegetables—and its low alcohol content and lightness should make it the perfect match for the fresh fava beans and cuttlefish.

Octopus and Potatoes
Pulpo con Cachelos

In Galicia where octopus is a longstanding favorite, cooks recommend dipping the octopus three times into boiling water before letting it simmer with onion and bay leaves. It should be tender in one to two hours, depending on size (test it by pricking with a skewer).

MAKES 8 TAPA SERVINGS:
1 whole octopus, weighing about 1 1/2 kilos, fresh or frozen (or about 500 grams frozen cooked octopus meat, thawed)
1 slice onion
2 bay leaves
1 kg medium potatoes, peeled
1 teaspoon coarse salt
1 1/2 tablespoons paprika
2 cloves garlic, chopped
100 ml olive oil

Freezing octopus tenderizes it. No need to beat it. Blanch the thawed octopus in boiling water for one minute. Drain. Bring another pan of water to a boil with the slice of onion and the bay leaves. Add the octopus and let it cook at a simmer for about one hour. It should be tender, just a little chewy. Remove and let it cool slightly. When cool enough to handle, slide off the pinkish skin and discard. (Optional. Many prefer to leave the skin.) Cut the potatoes in half and add them to the same water in which the octopus cooked and cook them until tender. With scissors, cut the octopus into bite size pieces. Arrange them on wooden plates with the potatoes. Sprinkle with salt, paprika, garlic, and drizzle with the oil.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Ribeiro, made from a blend of Mencía, Ferrón, and Caiño grapes. Unmistakably reminiscent of berry fruits and of the eucalyptus forests that surround the Galician vineyards, this is one of those wines that leaves purplish traces inside the glass. A wine with verve is needed to stand up to the paprika, the classic condiment for this dish.

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Spanish Sweet Wines

THE STRONG SUMMER SUNSHINE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GUARANTEE OF HIGH SUGAR LEVELS IN GRAPES IN SPANISH VINEYARDS. NOT ONLY DOES THIS MEAN SATISFACTORILY HIGH LEVELS OF ALCOHOL, BUT IT ALLOWS THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE SUPERB SWEET WINES, WHETHER FROM WHITE OR RED GRAPES. UNTIL NOW THE STARS HAVE BEEN FORTIFIED SPECIALTIES, LIKE PEDRO XIMÉNEZ, BUT OTHER STYLES AND VARIETALS ARE BEGINNING TO EMERGE ON A SERIOUS COMMERCIAL BASIS.

The Mediterranean people, the Spanish, not least, have a very sweet tooth, especially for cakes, confectionery, fruit juices, and sweet wines. Witness the spread of sweet cakes on many a breakfast buffet; some extremely rich sweet dishes like the caramelized egg yolk-based *tocino de cielo*, or their love of chocolate. Conversely the Spanish are not great makers of desserts and the selection in a traditional restaurant or at home is generally very limited. Maybe this is why they have made little effort to produce the stunning sort of sweet white light wines of which they are clearly capable.

Amongst purists, sweet wines are thought of in terms of the classic Sauternes or Barsacs from Bordeaux, the Auslese of Germany, or a botrytis white from Australia. Beaumes de Venise, port, sweet sherries, and Tokay are normally placed in a separate category as after dinner drinks. Essentially the concept of sweet wines in Spain was of those that were blended to meet demands for competitively priced wines at the volume end of the export markets.

Single varietal sweets from Spain like the whites of Moscatel, Malvasía, and Pedro Ximénez, and the reds of the Garnacha and Monastrell grapes have been overlooked or totally ignored. Yet they are more attractive than most wine drinkers realize. They are not only excellent drinks after dinner, but also go well with many cheeses and desserts. Friends who have tried a Montilla Pedro Ximénez with Christmas pudding, or a sweet Monastrell with a hard Manchego have eulogized over them and pressed me to bring bottles back from my travels in the Peninsula. Regrettably the sweet Malvasías of Mallorca are no longer commercially available, though there are efforts to revive their production.

Wine is the alcoholic beverage obtained from the fermentation of the juice of freshly gathered grapes. The yeasts on the skin combine with the sugar in the flesh of the grape to set up the reaction that results in the alcoholic degree. The sugar level in grams per liter converts almost equally into the degrees of alcohol of the wine. The fermentation normally runs until all the sugar has been absorbed, leaving the wine naturally dry. So, how are sweet wines made?

First, let it be said that we are focusing on naturally sweet wines, that is to say those with natural residual sugar after fermentation, and not those produced by blending nonalcoholic grape juice, (concentrated or rectified) with a dry wine (nothing wrong in that, but not what this article is about). It is also important to understand that when sugar is mentioned, I speak not of the granular variety with which we sweeten our tea or coffee, but the level of sweetness in the wine measured as residual sugar. Naturally sweet wines are best obtained by concentrating the

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

sweetness in the grapes so that residual sugar is present when the fermentation stops. There are four methods.

The first and most desired method in light wines, is botrytized grapes (Noble Rot) where a fungus develops at the time of full ripening, and the second is by drying ripe, very sweet grapes on mats or in troughs in the sun. Thirdly, late picking allows the development of as much sugar in the grapes as possible and, sometimes the botrytized or sun-dried effects occur at the same time. Fourth and finally, the fermentation can be arrested either by adding alcohol or by refrigeration, and this method is mostly used for red sweet wines, such as port.

RED REVOLUTION

For a long time during the middle of the century, Tarragona was well known for shipping ruby colored sweet red wines to fulfill a requirement of the clients in the drinking houses of northern Europe for a port type wine (sometimes called Poor Man's Port). At the same time, producers in Alicante made Fondillon, a much revered wine in its time (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 24). This is a sweetish red wine with alcohol between 16 and 18 percent that is aged for ten or more years in vats and casks until it has dried out somewhat, and developed a brownish tinge; old fashioned, but very warming. The popularity of both these types of sweet reds declined rapidly in the 1970s, and from the ashes are appearing a few select wines produced mainly with Monastrell grapes in Levante, and Garnacha grapes in Catalonia.

A star amongst these is Pansal de Calas from Celler de Capçanes, near Falset in Tarragona province. It is seventy percent Garnacha with the rest from Cariñena, and all from old vines. The grapes are picked three weeks later than the rest and the two varieties are vinified together with no fining, cold stabilization, or filtration, except a light one when bottled. To retain residual sugar, the fermentation is halted at 9.5 percent by the addition of wine alcohol to bring it up to 16.5 percent and then aged in a mixture of new and one year old French (Allier and Nevers) oak casks for five months. Production in 1997 was 1,800 half-liter bottles. It is a superb, rich full fruit wine with gorgeous sweetness and a perfect match for the richest chocolate desserts.

The Cooperative Agrícola Falsetenca a few kilometers away, has a clean, quite intense pure Garnacha *tinta* aged ten months in American oak, with fruit and toasted aromas, and a lovely sweetness of rich raisins. While, nearby in the newly prestigious and uniquely enchanting environment of Priorato, Costers de Siurana is producing a highly rated sweet red wine called Dolç de L'Obac. Made from a blend of Garnacha and Cabernet Sauvignon with a little Syrah, it has a lovely deep purple color, with complex, fresh, small fruit aromas and a lovely structure in the mouth between the fruits and alcohol. This is an outstanding wine. In this same region Rotllan Torra make their Amadis Dolç from these three varieties plus twenty per cent Cariñena, resulting in a dark cherry color with hints of oranges and vegetative elements on the nose and light, fruity flavors; another winner.

The Monastrell (French-Mouvèdre) vine has been neglected for too long. It is a vine that needs a longer than usual ripening period, so it is ideally suited to the hot, dry conditions, and ambient autumns of southeast Spain. It occupies eight percent of the vineyard area in Spain (100,000 hectares/250,000 acres) in the Levante region and the resulting wines are often high in alcohol, but liable to oxidize; both contributing factors in the production of the traditional sweet wines and Fondilló. But, now the Levantine winemakers are able to work better with it to produce lighter, fresher dry and sweet wines, thanks to the introduction of training vines on wires with drip irrigation, and the latest *bodega* techniques and equipment.

Jumilla, in Murcia at the southern end of Levante, is where Bodegas San Isidro (BSI) have developed Gémina 1998, a new style of naturally sweet red wine from Monastrell vines that are at least thirty years old. One thing that is particular to the wine is that, thanks to the limy soil and exceptionally healthy conditions in the vineyards, it is produced from Phylloxera free vines that are not grafted onto bug resistant, American rootstock.

About a kilo of raisin-like grapes is collected from each vine during the second week of October and combined with very slowly fermenting grapes picked earlier from the same vineyard. When the wine has attained 15 percent of alcohol the fermentation process is stopped by reducing the temperature to -2°C (28°F), and subjected to filtration to remove the bacteria. It is a vibrantly ruby red with raisin aromas amongst the fresh dry fruit flavors and tannins, and lacks the cloying effect of so many sweet wines, but is still fiery and a little naive. I am sure it will be another star in the years to come. By the way, do not confuse this wine with two others by the same name, the red *crianza* and *reserva*.

NOBLE ROT

Botrytis carries an element of risk, because it is a very damaging disease (gray rot) when found on unhealthy grapes, or in humid conditions. For its development to be advantageous, it is essential the vineyards, vines, and grapes are clean and healthy, and the weather fine. The winemaker will then be able to utilize the botrytis-affected grapes to produce a high grade sweet wine. When in this state the fungus is referred as being in "benevolent form" or "Noble Rot."

The vine varieties most suited to producing botrytized-affected grapes are not prevalent in Spain, but this does not prevent producers creating it with other varieties such as Grano Menudo, a Moscatel found in Navarre. Wines made with botrytized-affected grapes are extremely difficult and expensive to produce. The grapes have to be hand picked, and are tricky to handle, the fermentation is slow and difficult to induce, and the grape pressings are lengthy as the juice is extracted from the driest grapes. To my certain knowledge there is no sweet white wine produced entirely by the botrytized method in Spain, but it would come as no surprise to learn that the launching of one is imminent, because several producers are experimenting with the system and using it in part.

In Andalusia and the Mediterranean coastal areas of Levante, where temperatures stay high longer, high natural sugar content is achieved more easily, but the wines can be just as difficult to produce. The already very sweet grapes are picked and laid out in stone troughs (*lagares*) or on esparto grass mats and sun dried until they are raisins. These grapes might also have been late picked, but it is not normally necessary to delay the harvest in the south, whereas in the northern half of the country this is the essential technique to drive up the sugar levels in the grapes.

Residual sugar is measured in grams per liter, but the

sugar content does not necessarily relate directly to the level of sweetness that will be attained. Other factors like acidity and tannins can dry out the sweet taste, and in sparkling wines carbon dioxide is an additional factor. However, sweet wines are generally recognized to start at between 35 and 45 grams per liter, depending on acidity levels, and rise, seemingly unendingly, to over 500 grams per liter.

PRICELESS WINES

One such wine is the Pedro Ximénez (PX) 1830 of Alvear in Montilla. This incredible and outstanding wine records 560 grams per liter of residual sugar and is in such demand that to be allowed a bottle is a rare privilege. The date is the year the *solera* (see Glossary on page 126) was laid down, so it is not possible to increase production to meet increasing demand, and the amount removed from the solera in a year has to be severely limited so as to preserve the influences of the original wine in the system. But be not disheartened because their PX 1927 is also superb, even if it only has 400 grams of residual sugar per liter, and more is available. Such quality is not confined to these wines; Gran Barquero PX of Pérez Barquero is also regularly in the top listings when medals are being handed out. These wines are magical with desserts like a plum pudding.

Montilla, in Córdoba province, is the hottest part of Spain, and where the Pedro Ximénez vine is supposed to have been brought from the Rhine by a soldier of that name or a similar one, returning from the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Thus, it is dominant and both dry aperitif and sweet dessert wines are produced from it, unlike Jerez where dry wines are produced from the Palomino variety which adapts better to the wetter, coastal circumstances. However, Palomino is not known for yielding sweet wines, and there has long been a statute which allows Jerez to buy the wine of the sun-dried grapes from Montilla to supplement production from their own plantings, both for use as straight PX sweet wines or for sweetening olorosos into cream sherries.

Notable PX varietal wines in Jerez include the luscious, syrupy, raisin like Noé from González Byass which has won several Gold Medals including the International Wine Challenge in London; Venerable of Pedro Domecq a dark, even opaque, rich wine with almond and fig aromas and flavors, and the mahogany colored Pedro Ximénez 1927 from Osborne with an intensity of ripe fruit flavors.

Pedro Ximénez is also one of the two varieties in Málaga, known as Mountain Wine in Victorian times in Britain, because the grapes are grown and dried in lagares there. Sadly the popularity of wines from this region are declining more rapidly than other stylized dessert wines, but the one remaining producer of any substance, López Hermanos, makes the highly thought of Málaga Virgen. It is a rich walnut color with chestnut aromas and vanillin flavors produced from the first free run juice.

SUSTENANCE FOR SEAMEN

The sweet Malvasía wines of the Canary Islands owe their origins to the fact that this has been an important victualing stop for shipping for more than five hundred

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years. Columbus and his Conquistadors used the islands as a staging post as long ago as 1492. Sugar is a natural preservative and this is why the merchantmen purchased the sweet wines of the Islands to sustain them on their voyages to the Americas and Far East.

Perhaps those of Lanzarote are the most commercial for modern day consumers, and El Grifo makes a specific feature of the very old Malvasía vines planted in the volcanic soil around the winery in the middle of the island. Some of these vines are thought to be nearly two hundred years old, and are planted in holes three meters (10 feet) deep and two meters (6.6 feet) wide (to shelter them from the constant wind), and produce as little as two kilograms of grapes a year. They are preserved for tourist visits, but there are many more such vines, between fifty and eighty years old, still producing viable quantities of top fruit, and the Malvasía Dulce (12 percent alcohol and 65 grams of residual sugar) is a pleasant wine.

Nearby at Bodegas Mozaga they produce a beautifully delicate, not too sweet Malvasía that has a pale straw color, delicate aromas and a fresh fullness in the mouth; very much the wine for the ship's officers. To the west, and on the other side of the archipelago, in the lovely subtropical island of La Palma, the best sweet Malvasía (13.5 percent alcohol with 70 grams of residual sugar) I tasted was at Bodegas Teneguía at Fuencaliente. It has a bright, golden color, delicate aromas and a lovely rich freshness in the mouth. Although 2,600 pesetas (15.6 Euros/US$ 16.2) a bottle, it is excellent value.

It was also at Teneguía that I discovered Sabro, a Semillion style vine variety producing a botrytized style of wine (14.5 percent alcohol, 3.8 percent total acidity in sulphur and 65 grams of residual sugar) with full, golden color, deliciously light sweet aromas and Sauternes-like characteristics in the mouth. This wine is a snip at 650 pesetas (3.9 Euros/US$ 4) a bottle but it is all sold in Fuencaliente, so it does not even leave the island!

An Englishman, John Hill, planted the first vines (Vijariego amongst them) in El Hierro, in 1526 and production reached 2,872 pipes (1.5 million liters or 330,000 gallons) for local consumption and passing merchantmen. Production had halved by 1833 and is a mere fraction in 1999. This is the most westerly and least populated of the islands, and most of those wines were intensely sweet. The El Tesoro (The Treasure) of Juan Ávila Padrón on the northwest slope of the island near the capital Valverde, is just such a wine from the Vijariego. The vines grow very low across the volcanic rock, and natural alcohol levels of 17 percent with 150 to 200 grams of residual sugar are commonplace. Indeed they claim one wine to be botrytis affected (Uva Podrida Botritis), and if that is the case, this is probably the first in Spain. However, after cross examination, I am more inclined to believe that the very late picking means the grapes are sun-dried on the vines, with just a few showing the botrytis fungus. Only a few days ago, a friend told me of a brand new sweet red from Bodegas Insulares in Tenerife called Viña Norte Humboldt, which she describes as a beefy wine of the Listán Negro grape, full or ripe fruit aromas, and flavors of figs and tobacco. It sounds impressive.

MELLOW MUSCATS

The only Moscatel I discovered in the Canaries was at El Grifo in Lanzarote where they produce a very commercial wine of 17 percent alcohol and 100 grams of sugar. What the Spanish call Moscatel (generally called Muscat elsewhere) is a major variety for producing sweet wines on the Peninsula, especially in Levante and Navarre. The common Moscatel vine in Spain is the Moscatel de Alejandría, and was no doubt the vine introduced by the Phoenicians to Málaga and Cádiz around 2000 B.C. It is also known as Moscatel Romano, Moscatel de Málaga, and de Chipiona. Some outstanding wines are being produced in Levante using the Alejandría, not least the Moscatel de la Marina of Enrique Mendoza at Alfàs del Pi, near Benidorm and the Casta Diva Cosecha Dorada of Bodegas Gutierrez de la Vega at Parcent, near Calpe. Both of these are hugely fragrant wines with citric fruit flavors and very limited production. Further north in Valencia Bodegas Schenk produces Estrella at 12 percent alcohol with a good acidity that helps emphasize the fresh and lively aromas and flavors of the grape, while Vicente Gandía has the award winning, clean, crisp, and fresh Castillo de Liria Moscatel with 15 percent of alcohol. Both wines are ideal as a leisurely, after dinner digestive.

Notable amongst the Moscatels of Spain are those made from the Moscatel Grano Menudo (aka Muscat Blanc de Petits Grains—a name it owes to the small size of the fruit). This is reckoned to be the classiest of the Muscat varieties and in recent years three producers have hit the headlines with their wines.

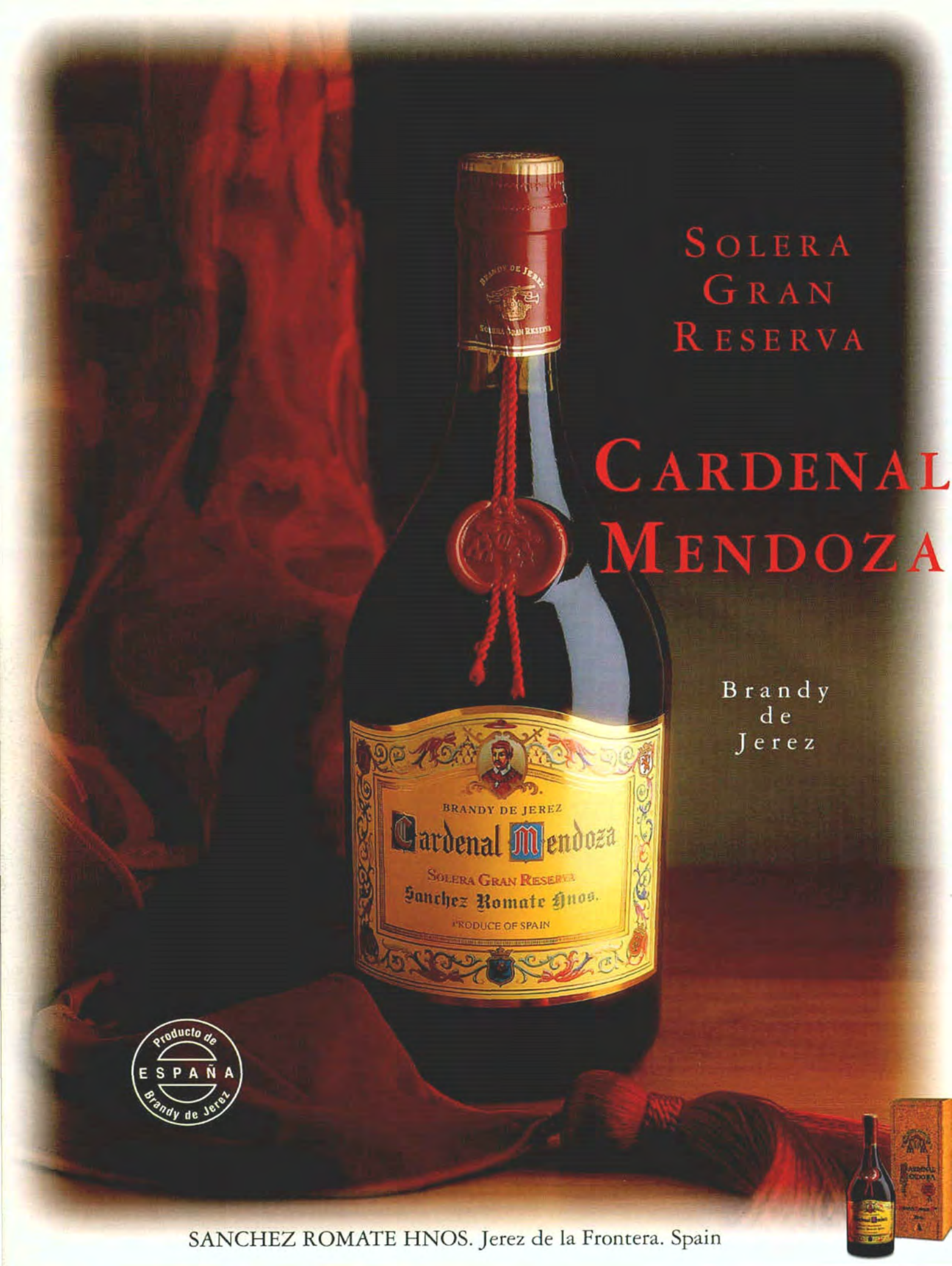
Fernando Chivite of Bodegas Chivite evolved his Chivite Colección 125 Vendimia Tardía by, as the name suggests, late picking the Moscatel grapes from their own El Candelero vineyard at Corella in the Ebro Valley. The grapes are picked in early November, by which time some have developed botrytis. The wine is fermented in Allier oak barrels and shows hints of green with clean intense aromas of the grape and a silky, crisp and creamy taste. Sold in half liter bottles, it is a 95 pointer.

Corella has been a home to the Muscat for four hundred years, and Herederos Camilo Castilla are gaining a fine reputation for their Capricho de Goya which shows toffee aromas with fine integration of oak vanillins and acidity. Also sold in a half liter bottle, is the Ochoa Moscatel with its light and delicate color, floral and fruity aromas with a lively freshness and roundness in the mouth. Definitely an award winning wine.

These classy wines from Navarre are leading the way for the future generation of sweet wines in Spain. It is a special occasion, though not a widely held custom, to drink sweet wines with desserts at the dinner table, but Spaniards are slowly beginning to develop a liking for them after meals instead of the ubiquitous brandy, aguadiente, or liqueur.

Jeremy Watson *devoted thirty years to the selling, marketing, and promotion of Spanish wines in Britain. He now lives in Mallorca and travels the Peninsula on a regular basis visiting the wine regions researching, reporting, and writing on the subject.*

See Main Exporters on page 114.

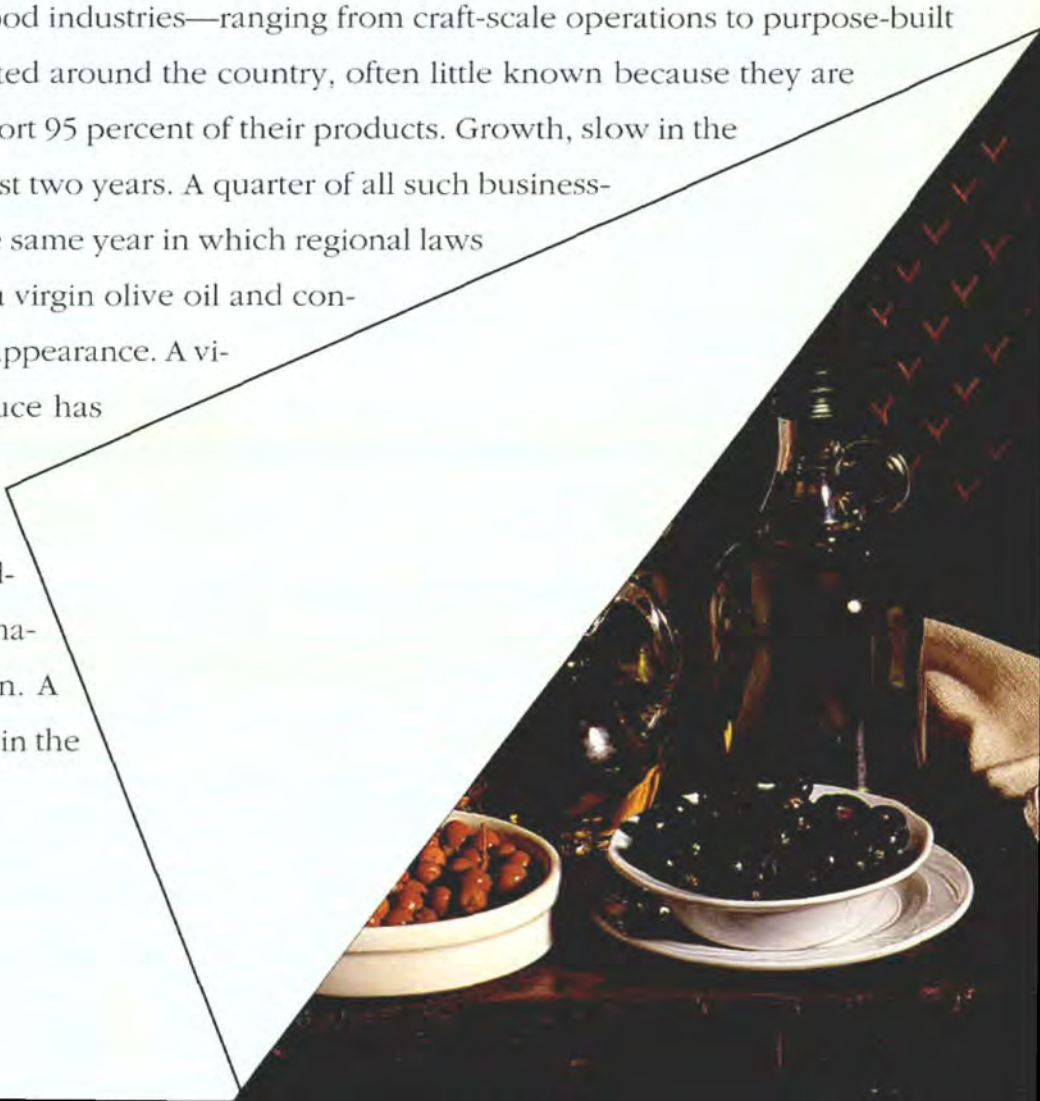


SANCHEZ ROMATE HNOS. Jerez de la Frontera. Spain

ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE (II)

THE ORGANIC STORECUPBOARD

A visit to a natural grocery store in Spain reveals a surprisingly wide range of native products for an organic shopping list: olive oils from five different regions, hard and soft wheat flours, honeys, jams, cured olives, fruit juices, dried fruits, nuts, cheeses, yogurts, fruit and vegetable preserves, dried herbs, and pâtés. A total of 450 organic food industries—ranging from craft-scale operations to purpose-built dairies and factories—are now dotted around the country, often little known because they are tucked away in rural areas and export 95 percent of their products. Growth, slow in the early 1990s, has picked up in the last two years. A quarter of all such businesses have been set up since 1998, the same year in which regional laws for integrated food products—extra virgin olive oil and conserved asparagus—made their first appearance. A vital catalyst for fresh organic produce has been the growing demand abroad for certified natural products. Here is the story behind eight such products and their makers, plus a summary of the legal framework in Spain. A sourcing directory will be included in the third and final article on wines.



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

THE SIGNS ARE THAT ORGANIC PRODUCTS ARE DUE TO TAKE OFF ON THE SAME GROWTH CURVE THAT FRESH PRODUCE DID FIVE YEARS AGO.

"One of the reasons why organic groceries have been slow to appear," explains Ángel María Lagasa of the Navarrese organics regulatory council, "is simply Spain's diversity. There were a lot products to which we needed to apply the European law because of the range of geography, climate, and customs here."

As he suggests, the application of the relevant laws was neither quick nor easy. But there are other reasons why natural groceries have been slow to appear. Organic farming took off here in the 1970s, mainly as a response to growing export demand for fresh Mediterranean and subtropical produce. Even today demand still outstrips supply, so producers have little need to diversify. Vegetable and fruit preservers, for example, often cannot find enough growers to supply them with organic produce. The unusual structure of public rather than private regulatory bodies may account for a lack of commercial drive in the sector. And finally, there has not been a strong local market to support natural gourmet products. Catalunya, one of the few regions with a budding domestic market, now shows possibilities for the future. Prices of organic products there have fallen by half in the last five years and today there are over 90 organic manufacturers.

However, there is a feeling today that organic products are due to take off on the same growth curve that fresh produce did five years ago. "In some ways I think the slow, steady takeoff has been an advantage," comments Ángel María Lagasa. "It has allowed us to keep a very tight system of inspection and controls. What concerns me now is that education keeps pace with the products' growing commercial value."

CLOSING THE CIRCLE

One area of potential is the number of traditional Spanish products—many unknown abroad—that could be certified as organic with little or no change in their production methods. The 688-page *Inventario Español de Productos Tradicionales (Spanish Inventory of Traditional Produce and Food Products)*, published as part of the E.U.'s Euroterroir project, is a revelation. For while there are few organic cheeses, vinegars, spices, cold cuts, or preserves on the market, the book contains a wealth of natural gourmet products with that potential.

"There is great capacity and potential," comments Francisco Casero, president of the coordinating Comisión Reguladora de Agricultura Ecológica, "and it is important to close the circle of organic farming with manufacturing." Today, with the rising confidence in the organics market, it is the producers themselves who are setting up the sector's much needed infrastructure. Small-scale producers are beginning to establish brand names. Some, such as Dinamis in Aragon, which produces high quality traditional cured olives and toasted almonds, is beginning to distribute and export for other producers. Olive oil makers, such as Oro de Génave in Jaén, are beginning to provide formal or informal management and consultancy skills to encourage growers to switch to alternative agriculture. Biodynamic producers Elafos operate a series of warehouses around the country and buy products to supply customers' year-round export demands.

Alongside this, the regional organics regulatory councils are organizing an increasing number of congresses, symposiums, and short courses to provide the necessary know-how for producers. In Andalusia, 4,000 farmers have attended courses in the last three years. The recent formation of INTERECO, a new forum for coordinating the regulatory councils (see The Legal Framework) will also help facilitate the flow of information and contacts for sourcing certified natural products.

GOLDEN AND GREEN: THE FIRST OLIVE OILS

Today, ten years after Spain's first organic olive oils were made, over 40 percent of all organically registered land in Spain is dedicated to olive growing: 15,000 ha (37,000 acres) in Andalusia, 1,100 ha (2,700 acres) in Catalunya, and 41,000 ha (101,000 acres) in Extremadura. These and two other regions—Aragon and Levante—offer a total of some 18 brands of extra virgin oil, Spain's leading organic food product.

"Organic olive growing is natural, easy, and can be very productive," comments Antonio Rey of Oliflix. He produces organic extra virgin olive oil from Arbequina and Empeltre olives grown on 200 hectares (500 acres) of groves scattered around Flix, high in the Catalan hills behind Tarragona. "Ideally one needs large parcels of land surrounded by wild land, and a good altitude to keep down pests. In the 1940s all the production here was organic. It's a question of respect for the land."

Rey supplements olives from his family's groves, some of which are several hundred years old, with the harvests of four local organic growers and a handful of abandoned farms he has brought back into production since 1989. His olive mill is entirely traditional. The olives are stone milled and cold pressed; the oil is then slowly decanted in tanks,and filtered for excess damp. The result is a light, sweet, golden oil with 0.5° acidity and a peppery aftertaste. "The final oil is only 20 percent of the olive's volume," he explains. Bottled in black glass to keep out the light, much of the annual production—averaging around 25-30,000 liters a year—is exported to longstanding German, French, and American clients. Rey considers many of them as friends.

Some 800 km (500 miles) further south, growers in the mountainous Sierra de Segura, in northern Andalusia, switched to organic methods in the late 1980s as part of a European project, Eclair. It was set up to foster viable agriculture in natural parks. "We did not make many changes in the groves. Pesticides hadn't arrived here," explains Concepción Árias, president of the Cooperativa Sierra de Génave. But they did invest in continuous steel pressing machinery imported from Germany. "The


Puré de Albaricoque
Puré de Tomate
Miel de Brezo
Níspero
Salsa de tomate
Tomate entero pelado
Mil flores

ONE AREA OF POTENTIAL IS THE NUMBER OF TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS THAT COULD BE CERTIFIED AS ORGANIC WITH LITTLE CHANGE IN PRODUCTION METHODS.

trickiest thing has been paying for the mill."
Meanwhile their oil, Oro de Génave, has gone from strength to strength. Pungent, green and highly aromatic (0.4 acidity), made from Picual olives under Sierra de Segura D.O. controls, it is now made by 85 growers and exported around Europe, the United States, and the Far East. In coming years, production will rise from 500,000 to a million liters of oil.

ORGANIC OIL TODAY: THE BASICS

Today Spanish organic oils offer the full range of character based on climate and olive variety: there are Andalusia's big, aromatic oils; Catalunya's mild, almondy or grassy new-season Arbequina oils; Extremadura's lesser known fruity oils made from Picual and Morisca olives; Aragon's golden oils made from Empeltre and Farga olives, and the balanced oils from Valencia.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Terminology The only legal Spanish term for organic production is *ecológico*. The terms *biológico*, *orgánico*, and natural do not imply certified growing. Products derived from integrated crop management are known as *productos de agricultura integrada*. Certified biodynamic farming using the techniques developed by Rudolf Steiner, is called *biodinámica*.

Legislation for organic products The primary regulation for organic products is European (EU 2092/91 and subsequent modifications) and implemented in Spain by 17 independent *consejos reguladores*, or public regulatory councils, one in each region (Extremadura has separate consejos for fresh produce and manufactured products). Certified products carry the numbered seal with the name of the region. Products are analyzed for residues by state-accredited laboratories; factories and workplaces are checked throughout the production season; all raw ingredients must be certified organic with the exception of permitted nonorganic ingredients listed in Annex VI to 2092/91 (for example pectin, carragheen, lactic acid, bees' wax); purchases of organic ingredients must tally with volumes of production; and companies manufacturing organic and conventional products must have separate warehousing areas and production time slots.

Legislation for integrated products The legal framework for certifying products derived from integrated crop management exists only on a regional level for two products: extra virgin olive oil from Andalusia and conserved asparagus from Navarre. In both cases certified products will reach the market in the year 2000. Catalunya is currently drafting a law for integrated olive oil production. All such laws prohibit the use of chemical soil cleaners and fertilizers, permit limited use of approved pesticides and make growers' record books compulsory. Often maximum pesticide residues are pegged at fifty percent of the E.U.-permitted levels. For additional details see the relevant sections of the article.

Interpreting the legislation E.U. laws specify over 300 infringements but each consejo may add to these if relevant to the local context. Therefore products may vary according to the area of production. Examples are wine and extra virgin olive oil, for which forms of harvesting, cultivation, the pressing machinery, and bottling materials vary considerably, reflecting local customs. Integrated legislation varies from one region to another for the same product.

Coordinating bodies In May 1999 ten regional organic authorities formed INTERECO to work towards the evaluation and coordination of certifying methods and the standardization of quality control. It plans to create *marcas de garantías* with stricter criteria than E.U. legislation in some areas. The Comisión Reguladora de Agricultura Ecológica (Regulatory Commission for Organic Farming) also formally exists as a coordinating body.

Other codes of practice European standards for organizations certifying quality (EN 45011 and ISO 65) are voluntary for public bodies, but most organic committees are implementing them through ENAC (Entidad Nacional de Acreditación). Since 1987 ATRIAS (Associations for Integrated Treatments in the Olive Groves) have existed as voluntary growers' associations; from this have grown integrated crop management laws. Biodynamic products are certified by the public regional authorities and the Asociación Biodinámica de España.

Subsidies Subsidies for organic farming from E.U. funds have been available in some Spanish regions; local government must provide twenty-five percent of the funding. In 1997 a total of 800 million pesetas (4.8 million Euros) was received. Subsidies are intended to encourage extensive farming or organic agriculture (minimum five-hectare areas and five-year periods), to provide farmers with supplementary training, and to preserve threatened species. Indirect subsidies are available for integrated farming. No subsidies are available to support organic or integrated manufacturing.

Genetic modification (GM) E.U. organic laws do not permit the use of any GM material, whether in the form of seeds, pest control methods, or additives to products. Some integrated laws ban GM seed or plant stock. (There are no authorized varieties of GM asparagus or olives in Spain.)

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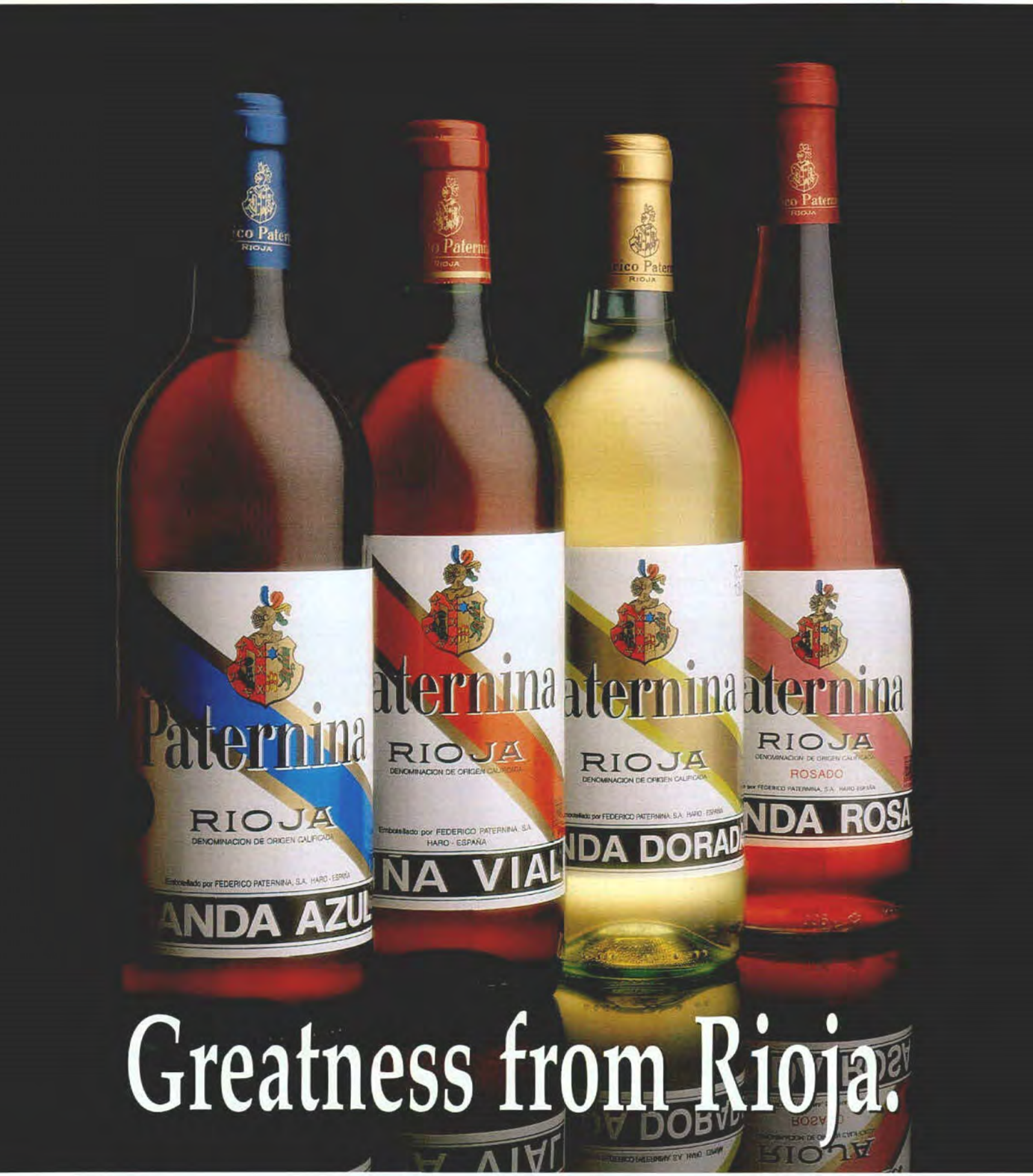

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"THE FUTURE IS IN THE PRODUCERS WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND THE KIND OF SCALE ON WHICH WE CAN WORK BEST." SANTIAGO CLARAMUNT ANDREU, WHO GROWS ORGANIC ALMONDS AND OLIVES.

These are now being exported right around the world.

The oils may be broadly divided into two groups. Those made in small quantities from estate-grown, tree-picked olives—such as Núñez de Prado, certified as organic since 1994—or olives from a handful of selected local groves, such as Oliflix, Elafos in Aragon, and Oro de Mágina in Andalusia, are generally stone milled and cold pressed the same day they are picked, decanted, and are left minimally filtered to avoid losing the oil's vitamin and antioxidant content, complexities of aroma and flavor. Some are exported for pharmaceutical and cosmetic use.

Organic oils produced in greater quantity—such as Oro de Génave in Andalusia, Estornell and Oleastrum in Catalunya, and Viriato in Extremadura—are processed by the continuous system, with makers taking care to keep temperatures down. At Oro de Génave, the machinery is run at 25°C (77°F); at Viriato, centrifugal separation is replaced by decanting; at Ulldemolins, the Catalan cooperative which makes Oleastrum's organic oil, the machinery runs at 60 percent capacity to avoid overheating.

The organic oil-making principles, however, remain the same. The olives must be certified organic, from groves treated only with organic fertilizer and copper as a fungicide (it will disappear in 2002). Pressing machinery is cleaned without chemicals by high-pressure water jets; if a mill makes conventional and organic oil, it is washed through each time it switches to organic production. Water used for extracting the oil made by continous and centrifuged systems must be dechlorinated (this is also compulsory for all Garrigues and Siurana D.O. oils) and the olives washed only by air and water. Final oil samples are analyzed to reveal chemical residues of up to a billionth part. Bottled in glass—or, for larger quantities of 5 liters and upwards in tins, food plastic or metallized food bags with pressure plugs—each container is certified and numbered by the regional organics council.

CHANGES IN THE GROVES

In the decade since the first oils were made, growing methods have also evolved.

OVER FORTY PERCENT OF LAND REGISTERED FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN SPAIN IS DEDICATED TO OLIVE GROWING. ALMOST A THIRD OF IT IS IN ANDALUSIA.

Mateu Nogens, one of 20 organic olive growers in the Catalan village of Ulldemolins, in the northern Priorato, farms a dozen hectares (30 acres) tucked away down long mountain tracks, the groves are full of butterflies, ants, birds, and bees, even the odd wild boar. "And of course weeds, as other people call them," says Mateu. "I don't see them that way."

Mateu has been experimenting with grassing over the groves to combat erosion and moisture loss, to avoid damaging tree roots, and to increase the soil's organic content (it has risen to six percent). One grove is also being used for trials by the local government's pest control unit. Small bags containing pheromones and chemicals that produce food aromas are hung on the trees; the bags themselves are soaked in pesticide. In a second series of experiments, colonies of natural predators are released into the groves at the beginning of the growing season.

"The idea is to have solutions prepared in case there is a major invasion of fruit flies," explains Barbara Celada, of the pesticide department. "It hasn't happened yet, but we want to be ready in case it does."

In another development, 12-15,000 hectares (30-37,000 acres) of olive groves under integrated management will give their first harvest this winter in Andalusia. The regional legislation advocates low density planting, anti-soil erosion techniques, and other agricultural practices—such as tree picking rather than beating the trees (*vareo*). Approved pesticides may be used if necessary; maximum residues are set at 50 percent of E.U. levels. Finally, many growers are now using the discarded olive pulp and juices as a source for fertilizers. One mill, the Molino de Zafra in Extremadura, is planning to sell such natural manures to local growers of all kinds of organic produce.

TOASTED ALMONDS AND CURED OLIVES

Santiago Claramunt Andreu presses olive oil, but only in small quantities to share with friends and family. He converted 17 hectares (40 acres) of almond and olive groves just outside Fabara, in the Sierra de Mequinenza, to organic farming after he began to work his family's land in 1986. The landscape here in eastern Aragon is spectacularly beautiful, but it is harsh farming terrain. Temperatures drop as low as minus 13°C (55°F) in winter.

"Most traditional farming here is organic but uncertified," comments Santiago. He grows almonds and olives from the trees he inherited, using organic methods and harvesting according to the biodynamic calendar when possible. He cures the whole olives the old fashioned way, without caustic soda, and sells the almonds both raw and toasted. The workshop, a classic cottage industry, is immaculately hygienic. Tubs of olives in brine sit in one small room; stacks of raw ingredients—sacks of shelled almonds and rough sea salt from the Guérande—sit in another space alongside a revolving home-designed stainless steel drum for toasting almonds. Off this space opens a packing room, and a cupboard for the finished products.

The most distinctive of Santiago's products are the wonderfully fruity, black, crinkly skinned Empeltre olives dry cured with salt in large heaps. Kept in a tub of brine for long keeping, they are dried again before final packing in jars. Alongside these are local black and green olives in brine with thyme for up to two years till mild and mellow. The almonds, stripped of their outer skin and shelled, are toasted to a crispy sweetness the day they are vacuum packed in glass jars.

Today Santiago exports all his production—2,500 kilos of olives and 3,000 kilos of almonds—delivering them personally to his French buyers. He has never been able to meet demand and is now distributing for a few other trusted growers. "I think the human aspect is very important. The future is in the producers working together closely to find the kind of scale on which we can work best."

ASPARAGUS AND PEPPER PRESERVING

José María Munárriz began working in Conservas Ayló—in the Navarrese village of the same name, close to the region's market-gardens—in 1983. Six years later he and a partner bought out the company and began the slow shift to organic production. He is now on target to achieve 100 percent organic production within three years. The range of produce has grown steadily to include *piquillo* peppers, asparagus—15 tons, produced within Navarra D.O. controls—artichokes, tomatoes, leeks, cardoons, and green beans. The organic products look and taste exactly the same as the conventional version. Most are exported via a Catalan distributor: the peppers go to the United States and the asparagus to Germany. Work is also underway on a new, larger, purpose-built factory.

"It's essentially a one-man operation," stresses José María. "I take on around 30 people in the pepper season and 12 for the asparagus. Skinning and peeling by hand are very laborious processes."

Adapting to organic preserving methods was not the greatest challenge. "It is not that difficult if you use the best quality produce. Preserving is essentially a question of time and temperature. Asparagus, for example, is always treated at 116°C (240°F), which kills any germs. Artichokes are trickier. We replace normal salt with untreated sea salt, and citric and ascorbic acid with organic lemon juice, for example in the piquillo peppers." All packing is in glass and recycled cardboard.

His main challenge has been laying his hands on enough produce: he buys from 40 growers he has sought out in Navarre, Aragon, and the Rioja, but still cannot keep pace with growing demand. From next year, the task may become harder: Navarre will also begin to produce preserved asparagus grown by subsidized integrated agricultural methods.

"IT'S NOT ENOUGH JUST TO MAKE A NATURAL PRODUCT, IT ALSO HAS TO BE OF THE HIGHEST GOURMET QUALITY." PILAR LECINA CALVO, OWNER OF AN ORGANIC DAIRY.

Residues are expected to come in at well under ten percent of permitted E.U. levels. The asparagus will be packaged in glass with the addition only of sugar, salt, citric and ascorbic acid. José María, however, has decided to stick with organic produce. "It may be difficult to find, but I am committed to organics in the long term."

PIMENTÓN FROM LA VERA

In 1993, José María Bernal Briceno bought an abandoned farm in La Vera, a fertile valley on the south side of the Sierra de Gredos (Extremadura) where the river is fed by pure snow waters. José María and his partners brought 14 hectares (34 acres) of pasture and eight hectares (20 acres) of market garden with greenhouses back into production of organic beef and fresh vegetables sold from the farm throughout the year. For four years they were registered for biodynamic production. But they are also Spain's only producers of organic *pimentón*, the finely ground red pepper that is a local specialty (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 46). Part of the crop is smoked and sold locally. Unusually, the rest is air dried and exported to central Europe.

In many respects the pepper growing follows the methods of local farmers decades ago. "Because we cannot get tractors into the field, we weed by mule or by hand when the plants are fully grown. We also use some biodynamic methods, such as a silice-based product for fertilization. It gives even ripening." Once harvested, the peppers are dried and taken to one of the local mills for stone grinding and polishing into the silky fine red pepper, which is then bagged up in light-resistant sacks. "We try to mill large batches because we lose five percent to the specially cleaned machinery." Samples are analyzed by the regional organics inspection authorities to check that it is free of salmonella or e-coli or other bacteria.

"The challenge for us," says José María, "is to compete successfully with similar European products even though we are virtually unsubsidized. We are managing although it is hard work. It all depends on making a product with consistent quality."

MURCIAN APRICOT AND PEACH PUREE

In 1990 Juan Sánchez Fernández linked up with several local partners to build an organic preserving factory just outside Calasparra, where the Murcian sierra meets the local plains. Juan had already managed a preserves factory and was inspired by watching the takeoff of local organic rice growing.

"The cool, dry climate and pure river water give this area great potential," he comments. At the moment twenty certified growers produce for the company, which also has its own experimental 10-hectare (24-acre) farm growing apricots, tomatoes, and artichokes in rotation with lettuce, broad beans, and broccoli. So far organic products make up 30 percent of production, with a million kilos of locally grown organic apricots, peaches, and plums turned every year into purees and pulps. Next year Juan hopes to add artichokes to the list of products, which already includes tomato ketchup, tinned tomatoes, and wild mushrooms grown in Extremadura. In the long term he also hopes to make his own natural jams.

The native apricots, outstandingly full in flavor, are a specialty. Washed, stripped of their leaves and stalks, hand selected and mechanically stoned—but not skinned, to avoid using caustic soda—the apricots are cooked at 180°C (356°F) in a double steam chamber, then either left whole for canning or pulped. A new sterilizing machine feeds metallized food bags with pressure plugs alongside a traditional machine which fills aseptic steel vats lined with inert liquid food paint. Key differences in the organic preserving process are the high temperatures replacing stabilizers, for example in tomato products, and the organic lemon juice balancing the alkalinity where necessary.

The company only makes 20 percent of its organic products under its own label, Biosol, but volume grows alongside the range of product. Over 90 percent of the products are exported, with Germany and the United Kingdom as the main established markets, the majority going in wholesale quantities to manufacturers of certified organic baby foods, diabetic or organic jams, and natural yogurts.

"Growth has been slow," comments Juan, "but I'm hopeful about the future. There was a clear takeoff in demand last year, with new interest from Japan, the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States. And last year the organic orchards were more productive than the conventional ones. Many growers would switch now if they had the know-how."

HONEY AND JAM FROM EXTREMADURA

Carlos Doñoso is one of three dozen organic honey producers in Spain. Over half keep their hives in northern Spain's large stretches of woodland and sierras. Carlos settled and began to farm organically in the Sierra de Gata in northern Extremadura in 1983. He bought an abandoned 25-hectare (60-acre) farm called Las Albercas del Becerril with the royalties of a book he had written, planted a variety of fruits—plum, fig, and quince trees, as well as kiwis—and decided to make honey while the orchards grew.

"Organic honey making is very different to methods generally used today," explains Carlos.

He keeps 500 hives deep in woodland, some 25 km (15 miles) from the closest cultivated land (the legal limit is 3 km (1.8 miles), reflecting the bees' journeying distances). Only hives in a very exposed position in the mountains are moved during the winter months. The bees feed entirely on wild flowers—heather, thyme, wild lavender—and tree nectars, especially that from the oak tree. In winter, they sleep and feed on some 15-20 kilos of honey left in the hive for them. No sugar or supplements are fed to the hive and illness is treated

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ORGANIC FARMING TOOK OFF IN THE 1970S, MAINLY AS A RESPONSE TO GROWING EXPORT DEMAND FOR FRESH MEDITERRANEAN AND SUBTROPICAL PRODUCE.

with tropical plant extracts. If the illness is not cured, the hive in question is left untouched for the year. When the honey is cut it is decanted and filtered, but left unpasteurized as a solid honey that crystallizes easily.

Today, Las Albercas del Becerril is also producing natural jams. The fruits are left on the tree until very ripe, with a perfect natural sugar content for jam making. Any further sweetness is supplied by the honey. The jams are made in a small professional kitchen built for the purpose, packed in glass jars with recycled paper labels and stored in a warehouse nearby with the honey.

"We are beginning to export the kiwi jam to France and I think we will have a brand soon," comments Doñoso. "We used to have over 700 hives, but we have cut back now because of the work. Each of our hives produces around half the honey of a conventionally kept hive, moved during the year. But the honey keeps all of its vitamins and other qualities intact."

TURRÓN AND MARZIPAN FROM ALICANTE

The Garcímartín Vallello brothers began to make organic turrón and confectionery in Jijona, Alicante in the early 1990s. "Our father's chocolate-making business began to founder," explains Jerónimo Garcímartín Vallello. "I believed in organic production and thought it could be an alternative."

Now they make traditional and organic versions of turrón—the hard white Alicante nougat and soft brown Jijona turrón—as well as marzipan, fruits in syrup, jams, carob flour, and diabetic chocolate. Their main challenge was sourcing ingredients and balancing flavors: for the turrón and marzipan they use thyme honey bought from Carlos Doñoso—imported raw sugar, ground and whole almonds in their skins. The only nonorganic ingredient is the dehydrated egg white in the turrón (organic is not yet available).

"The final products do taste and look different," comments Jerónimo, "The marzipan is a little darker with a slight aniseed flavor from the raw sugar. For the turrón we leave the skin on the almonds and toast them."

The almonds are cleaned by scanner to pick out shell fragments and the marzipan is made with rigorous hygiene since no additives are used. Another challenge was the cost of separate warehousing and production schedules for conventional and organic products. Practical restraints limited production. But with a new factory now well underway the brothers are beginning to consider the possibility of expanding from traditional Spanish Christmas markets into export—to Florida and France, for example. They are also researching new products such as *guirlache*, almond and caramel brittle with sesame seeds.

"Some people buy our products simply for the taste so we feel we must be on the right track," comments Jerónimo. "Even the other manufacturers have congratulated us on the quality and flavor."

CHEESE AND YOGURT MAKING

Perhaps the most emblematic story is that of Pilar Lecina Calvo and her late husband Francisco, who set up their organic dairy in the isolated Sierra de Alcaráz (in Castile-La Mancha) over ten years ago with just four cows. "My husband always felt that organic farming could be important for such a remote area."

Today, a new purpose-built dairy turns 500 liters of milk a day into yogurt, three different cow's milk cheeses—two made from pasteurized milk and one from raw—and two goat's cheeses. The dairy works seven days a week, with ten pairs of hands working full stretch. At six in the morning the herd of forty cows is milked and pasteurization starts. At ten o'clock the goat's milk is brought in by two shepherds who sell to the dairy. By that time the yogurt culture has been added to the pasteurized cow's milk and is being fermented in glass-fronted heated chambers. Cheese making goes on till three in the afternoon, and the rest of the day is spent labeling, packing, and dealing with orders. The main difference in the organic cheese making process is that no anti-mold paints or wax are used; the natural mold on the rind is washed and brushed off.

Pilar stresses that the cows' diet and hygiene is fundamental. Grazing—two hectares (5 acres) per cow under E.U. laws—is supplemented by homemade feed based on organic barley, oats, corn, and local alfalfa. "There are no alternatives to antibiotics, which means throwing away the milk for at least eight days if a cow falls ill. We set that time ourselves, although it's more than what is legally laid down. So good food and hygiene are vital elements in making sure the cows don't fall ill."

All the dairy's cheeses stand up in their own right as gourmet products. The pasteurized cheeses are young and semisoft; the raw cow's milk cheese is mature and nutty, with great depth of flavor. But the yogurt, now sold in major supermarkets right around the country, leaves little surplus milk for cheese making—so, like most of Spain's organic cheeses, there is enough only for longstanding clients, many of them in the region. But the new dairy, with its seven chilled storage and maturing rooms, will allow production to grow, both of yogurt and of cheese.

"I think it's essential to understand one thing," comments Pilar. "It's not enough just to make a natural product, it also has to be of the highest gourmet quality."

Vicky Hayward *is a writer, journalist, and book editor whose articles about culture, the arts, travel, social issues, and food are published internationally. She is senior editor of Booth-Clibborn Editions, London. She lives in Madrid.*

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RESTAURANT REKONDO (BILBAO) PABLO NEUSTADT/ICEX

Spanish Reservas: Wines to Treasure

TEXT: BARTOLOMÉ SANCHEZ

TRANSLATION: MARK LITTLE

WHENEVER THE SUBJECT OF WHICH WINES ARE WORTHY OF ENSHRINING IN THE CELLAR COMES UP, OUR THOUGHTS TURN TO FRANCE IN GENERAL, AND TO BORDEAUX AND BURGUNDY IN PARTICULAR. BUT WHAT OF THE AGED *RESERVA* WINES OF SPAIN? ALTHOUGH THEY MAY NOT BE AS WELL KNOWN ABROAD, SPANISH RESERVA REDS HAVE AMPLY PASSED THE TEST OF TIME AND HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY HAVE THE SAME VERVE AND STAYING POWER AS THEIR FRENCH COUNTERPARTS OR AS THE BAROLOS AND BARBARESCOS OF PIEDMONT. THE SPANISH WINEMAKING SCENE IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING A WIDE-RANGING REVOLUTION WHICH IS ALSO AFFECTING WHAT ARE KNOWN IN SPAIN AS VINOS DE GUARDA—WINES MEANT FOR LAYING DOWN FOR FUTURE ENJOYMENT. WITH A MORE HIGHLY CONCENTRATED CHARACTER, MORE COLOR, AND A HIGHER ALCOHOL LEVEL THAN TRADITIONAL RESERVAS, THESE WINES HAVE THE FULL POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE WITH AGE. LONG LIFE, THEN, TO THE SPANISH WINES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

P. SANCHO MATA/ICEX

"Reserva" is a Spanish word which, applied to wine, has acquired an international significance. This term was used to distinguish the choicest wines in the vintner's cellar, usually those reserved (hence reserva) for private use by the family or for some special occasion. It appears that the first to use the word "reserva" on a commercial basis for the marketing of their wines were the winemakers of Rioja, though its use soon spread to other Spanish wine regions.

It is an appropriate term given the peculiarities of the marketing system traditionally used in Spain: usually the most select wines, the ones with extraordinary structure and a forceful character, were held back—in reserve—and left to repose in the dark cellars and bottle racks at the winery. They were kept there until the vintner deemed that they had reached their peak, so that they would not reach the drinker until the wine was at its optimum consumption point. Until now most wineries have continued with the custom of aging their wines at the cellar, rather than leaving the bottle aging to the consumer as is the practice in France. Often the wine has been aged for much longer periods than the minimum time limits stipulated by the regulations. For this reason, until a few years ago few people felt the need to maintain a private wine cellar in their home: there was no point, as the wine would not improve with further aging. Domestic wine collections were a rarity, if not an eccentricity.

The added value brought about by the transformation of a young wine into a fine aged reserva has not always been profitable for the wineries. The system involved a considerable investment in the infrastructure needed for the storage

of large amounts of bottles: bottle racks, suitably conditioned cellars, and naves to allow the slow development of the wines, not to mention the cost of extra staff and the risks entailed in storing a product which, after all, is a living thing.

The European—or more precisely French—approach is different. The chateaux of Bordeaux, and French wineries in general, cleverly involve the consumer in the aging process. Under the French system, the wine enthusiast buys the wine when it has just been bottled, right after completing its aging in the cask. This way it is the consumer, not the winery, who takes on the risks entailed in bottle aging, and as an extra bonus the winery needn't sit on a large, immobilized stock.

This alliance between the consumer and the producer is taken one step further with the French system of selling wine *en primeur*. It is the ideal method for those enthusiasts who are knowledgeable about wine, for they can save a considerable amount of money if all goes well, but it's something of a gamble. The wine is paid for in January following the harvest, when it is in a completely raw, unpolished state, having been just fermented. At this stage it is more like an untamed colt than a wine, and only the drinker with a well-honed knack for wine tasting will be able to judge whether the wine holds promise for the future. Usually, the buyer takes delivery of the bottled wine some two years after paying for it, but it is still no more than a wine-in-the-making, and he will have to continue caring for it and pampering it for years, in the hopes of having a fine wine at the end of the exercise. If the wine is from a good year, the consumer will have paid around 130 Euros (US$ 135) for a wine

UNTIL NOW MOST WINERIES HAVE CONTINUED WITH THE CUSTOM OF AGING THEIR WINES AT THE CELLAR, RATHER THAN LEAVING THE BOTTLE AGING TO THE CONSUMER AS IS THE PRACTICE IN FRANCE.

which may be worth twice as much after a few years. Obviously, it all depends on whether the consumer hits on a good vintage. If the year is bad and the wine turns out to be poor, any savings will be wiped out.
There have been a few timid attempts in Spain to sell wine "*a la francesa*," as they call it, whereby the consumer takes charge of aging the wine, but many experts feel this is due to the present high demand and shortage of wines from such emerging regions as Ribera del Duero and Priorat, and that we cannot speak of a general trend towards the French system.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Why should one keep a wine for twenty or thirty years? Obviously, the aim is to let the wine evolve so that it can reach its peak, that point when it displays its full potential. Great wines—that is, those with extraordinary qualities due to the strength of their components, the abundance of tannins, their generous alcohol content, the high percentage of fixed acids, and the dry extract and trace elements which are present in minuscule quantities but nevertheless are crucial to the wine's aging potential—need a long period to develop and mature in the bottle. During this phase of their life, all the wine's components will become more polished. They will not disappear, but they will be transformed, endowing the wine with totally different aromas and flavors. It is a magic transformation which will cause the wine to change color, aromas, and texture. All the effort and risk involved in storing the wine for a long period seek nothing other than perfection and harmony, in a quest for that new quality, the bouquet, which appears only in wines which have aged nobly.
The different *Denominación de Origen* regions of Spain supply a back label for each type of wine marketed under their auspices. The drinker who is not familiar with the terminology used may be confused to see the same brand name on different styles of wines at different prices. Thus "Viña Such and Such" may designate an unaged young wine which should be drunk within two years. But the same "Viña Such and Such," in its aged crianza version, will be a wine whose characteristics—selection of grapes from older vineyards, more tannins and greater structure thanks to the vinification process applied—will allow it to keep between eight and ten years. Then there's the reserva, also called "Viña Such and Such," which will be a very special wine, expressing all the virtues of the winery.
Only grapes from the choicest and oldest vineyards, with the best orientation and situation and producing grapes that are resistant to oxidation will be included in the blend. More importantly, the reserva will only be made in exceptionally good years when the grapes are of sufficient quality to produce a wine which can withstand a long aging period. A good reserva will be able to rest for up to 12 years without showing the slightest fatigue (a deterioration whose telltale signs are a faded yellowish brick color, diffuse and unpleasant aromas, and a flabbiness or lack of flavor to the taste). But there is still one more type of wine in the range recognized by the Denominación de Origen: the "gran reserva." In most cases this is nothing more than the choicest casks containing the winery's reserva. Needless to say, this wine will be the very finest the winery offers, their pride and joy.
In Spain as elsewhere the wine most suited for aging is that bottled in the 1.5-liter magnum, not only because this is the ideal size for keeping the wine, but because the wineries only bottle their top products in this format. The magnums bottled by Vega Sicilia—which, like Mouton Rothschild, bear a label with a painting by an acclaimed artist especially commissioned for each vintage—are especially famous.
The typical Rioja classification of crianza, reserva, and gran reserva has proven so successful that the regulations in most Spanish wine regions are practically a copy of those used in Rioja, a sort of collective recognition of the region's historical prestige. Wines designated as crianza must have spent one year in oak casks and another year in the bottle before being marketed. In the case of a reserva, the aging period is one year in the cask and two in the bottle. And to qualify as a gran reserva the wine must spend two years in oak casks and three years in the bottle. In other words, a gran reserva will have rested for at least five years in the winery's cellars before becoming available. Of course, these are the minimum stipulated aging periods, but the winemaker can increase the aging period in the cask or in the bottle as much as he wishes.
Today some Denominación de Origen areas are modifying their statutes, cutting the required aging periods to half because when new wood is used its influence on the final bouquet of the wine is too forceful. In some regions, especially the Ribera del Duero, wineries are now making a type of young wine called *media crianza* (half aged) or *pasado por barrica* (passage through wood). This increasingly popular designation applies to a young wine which has undergone a short stay in the wood, four to six months, usually in casks of new wood. According to the official regulations it is no more than a young wine, but the tannins and aromatic elements leached from the fresh wood lend this type of wine more complexity and greater staying power.

A GLORIOUS BEGINNING

Don Eloy de Lacanda y Chaves, a winemaker from Rioja, could barely have imagined he was giving birth to a legend when in 1864 he bought the Vega Sicilia estate on the banks of the Duero river (Ribera del Duero) in Valladolid. (The property's original name was "*Pago de la vega de Santa Cecilia*," which translates as "Estate of the Valley of Saint Cecilia.") In those days the Rioja region was enjoying its most splendid period. Its wines were sought after, in many cases serving to replenish the dwindling stocks of Bordeaux at a time when the vineyards of the Gironde region, decimated by the phylloxera blight, could not supply its traditional markets. The varieties Don Eloy chose for planting fulfilled the minimum requirements demanded of wines in those days: fineness and longevity. For this, Cosme Palacio Hermanos, the winery owned by Don Eloy, resorted to the tried and true Tempranillo


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THE TYPICAL RIOJA CLASSIFICATION OF CRIANZA, RESERVA, AND GRAN RESERVA HAS PROVEN SO SUCCESSFUL THAT THE REGULATIONS IN MOST SPANISH WINE REGIONS ARE PRACTICALLY A COPY OF THOSE USED IN RIOJA.

grape (known here as Tinto Fino), with which they were familiar from Rioja and which still reigns supreme in the vineyards of both Rioja and Ribera del Duero. They also planted, for commercial reasons, the introduced varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Malbec.

Nobody can deny that Don Eloy showed fantastic foresight. In a few years his Valladolid wines were venerated in the most select circles. The wine's fame and quality has lasted to our days, for it has not strayed from the original model even though the winery itself changed hands a number of times. Since its purchase in 1982 by the Álvarez family, the installations have been modernized, more vineyard acreage has been planted, and they've even changed enologists, but the wines are still produced at the same pace as 100 years ago. The Vega Sicilia Único doesn't see the light of day until after ten or twelve years of aging in the winery cellars. And if we are fortunate enough to come across an Único from the harvest of '62, '68, or '70, for example, it will be in perfect condition for drinking and will show a youthfulness unexpected in a wine of this age.

The Vega Sicilia "miracle" was possible thanks to the fantastic growing conditions in the Ribera del Duero region. The limy, alluvial soil is poor, and the region is subject to harsh weather, reaching the very extremes which a vine can be expected to endure. Only the protective presence of the Duero river tempers these conditions sufficiently so that the grapes, given the proper treatment, can serve as the basis of a truly superior wine. Yet, in spite of its success, for many years this emblematic Spanish winery stood alone in the region, as none of the neighboring winemakers seemed inclined to follow its example. Even though its fame spread well beyond Spain's borders, Vega Sicilia continued to be a solitary island of excellence. Until the 1970s the local growers of Ribera del Duero seemed unaware of the fantastic raw materials growing in their vineyards and, with few exceptions, they were devoted to making a pale, thin wine locally known as *clarete* (nothing to do with claret), an unaged wine somewhere between a rosé and a young red. The only winery which achieved a certain renown for the undeniable quality of its products was the Peñafiel wine cooperative, makers of red reserva "Protos."

Finally, in the '70s, a handful of local wineries started to make aged reds which have since earned a place among Spain's most prestigious vintage labels. Such is the case of Alejandro Fernández of Pesquera, with his Janus, Pérez Pascuas with their Pedrosa, or Ismael Arroyo with his Valsotillo. The highest marks in the Ribera, at least as far as price is concerned, have been scored by a Dane, Peter Sisseck, with a wine which is almost mythical for its scarcity, called Dominio de Pingus, which fetches a hefty 481 Euros (US$ 500) a bottle. And that, with only three harvests to his credit. This must be some kind of record. The wine itself, a fine example of elegance and of the perfect meshing of its elements, is more evocative of a Bordeaux than a wine born on the banks of the Duero. Although it holds great promise for the future (ten to twelve years) it is still too soon to make a definitive judgement.

RIOJA: UNDISCOVERED GEMS

The best examples of wineries which have the ideal conditions for making reserva wines with the qualities to improve over the years are to be found in Rioja. Due to Rioja's longstanding and steady commercial ties with Bordeaux, there has been a lively professional exchange between the two regions for generations. Back in 1786 the Quintano brothers (enterprising young men of a family from Labástida in the Rioja Alavesa with a long winemaking tradition), in particular the cleric and indefatigable traveler Don Manuel Quintano, introduced French winemaking techniques to make the aged wines they'd learned about in the Medoc. Later, with the arrival in 1862 of the prestigious Bordeaux enologist Jean Pineau, the region developed a winemaking system very similar to that used to make long-lived wines in Bordeaux. In this regard Marqués de Murrieta and Marqués de Riscal were two pioneering Rioja wineries.

From these winemaking strongholds arose the great wine of Rioja which would achieve such prestige over the years. Even today there are bottles resting in the "cemeteries," as they call the winery bottle racks in Rioja, containing old wines that have never seen the sun. Aside from the two Marqueses mentioned above there are other worthy examples: La Rioja Alta, Bodegas Bilbaínas, Muga, the great Imperial wine from CVNE, Martínez Bujanda, or López Heredia with their Viña Tondonia. At these wineries I have enjoyed some of their very oldest and most legendary vintages, wines which in spite of their venerable age still were fresh and full of life. The vintages of 1922, 1928, or 1931 still display lively aromas of fruit and freshness to the palate, not to mention the fantastic vintage of 1948 or, more recently, 1964, one of the historical vintages of the 20th century.

Over the last few years a number of new wineries have emerged in Rioja which answer to a more modern style of winemaking. They are seriously committed to producing wines which are a true expression of the terroir, wines with the personality and character needed to improve over time. Their initial success has been aided by three excellent years which, as luck would have it, came one after the other: 1994, '95, and '96. Bodegas Eguren with their small Pago de San Vicente; Marqués de Vargas with their Cosecha Privada; Marqués de Cáceres with their Gaudum; Bodegas Roda and their Roda I; Fernando Remírez de Ganuza or Cosecheros Alaveses, with their Pagos Viejos, Viña del Pisón, and Grandes Añadas... these, among others, have revolutionized the winemaking sector of Rioja. The recipe is simple: carefully choose the vineyard, select only the best grapes, apply long maceration periods, and spare no expense investing in top quality cooperage. This spirit of renovation has spread to the entire sector. A good example is Bodegas Lan, a classic winery which is now totally renovated after making enormous investments to keep abreast of the new times. Even the Labástida

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wine cooperative has produced a wine meant for laying down, thanks to a meticulous selection of grapes from old vineyards owned by members of the cooperative.

PROMISING RESERVAS FROM CATALONIA AND ARAGON

The winemaking revolution has spread to other Spanish regions. In Catalonia, the well-established Miguel Torres winery (see article on page 73) with their Gran Coronas Etiqueta Negra, a magnificent Cabernet Sauvignon from the Penedés, have launched a red made with Samsó, Monastrell, Garnacha, and Garró. Aside from the historical Penedés wineries like Torres or Jean León, which makes another classic Cabernet Sauvignon, there has been a reemergence of the historical region of Priorat. Here the Garnacha (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37) has been vindicated as a fundamental grape variety, growing in perfect symbiosis with the slate soil known in Priorat as *llicorella*. To this ideal combination of vine and terroir is added the supporting role of grapes such as Merlot or Cabernet and the inspired winemaking talents of vintners such as Álvaro Palacios (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37), creator of the already famous L'Ermita and Finca Dofí; Josep Lluis Pérez, maker of the Martinet range; the Swiss-American Dafne Glorian with her Clos Erasmus; René Barbier and his Clos Mogador; or the Pastranas with their Clos de l'Obac. Collectively known as "the Clan of the Clos"—"clos" being Catalan for a small wine estate—these winemakers have injected new life into a region of ancient winemaking tradition, which today is the source of wines of great character and personality. Theoretically Priorat wines will not have the same potential for improving with age as a Rioja or a Ribera, for the Garnacha grape, the basis of a good Priorat, is more prone to oxidation than the Tempranillo. Still, we have only seen the results from the first of the "clos" wines to become available, from the harvest of 1989. We must wait to see how other vintages develop to know exactly how these wines perform over a long time.

The Aragonese region of Somontano (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 48) is also producing wines with a promising future. Here a handful of wineries are making wine of superior quality: Compañía del Somontano, which has in Gran Vos their flagship wine; Bodegas Pirineos with their Señorío de Lazán reserva, and Enate, whose star wine, Reserva Chillida '94, is the one with most promise at the moment, a wine which should continue to improve over the next ten years.

Spanish reservas have never been better. Encouraged by the demand for such wines internationally, Spanish vintners have replaced outdated equipment with state-of-the-art technology, and the haphazard custom of mixing of grapes from various sources has given way to the careful selection of grapes, sometimes even choosing them according to vineyard. Even more importantly, there has been a total change of attitude among winemakers. Thanks to this new spirit we are seeing what are being called *vinos de alta expresión*—wines of high expression—great Spanish reds which have earned their rightful place in the cellars of the most demanding connoisseurs.

We have discussed the Spanish regions which have traditionally made wines with a long life, during which the fruity primary aromas of youth are magically transformed into a final, elegant bouquet. Within a few years, thanks to the innovative spirit sweeping through the vineyards of Spain, you'll be hearing about wines worthy of laying down in your cellar from many more Spanish regions. Let's raise our glasses to that.

***Bartolomé Sánchez** is wine director of the specialized magazines,* Vinum España *and* Mivino.

SPANISH WINES UNDER THE HAMMER

The most surprising cases of Spanish wines sold at auction are to be found among the new-style wines, made by wineries with a short history but which benefit from the talents of top enologists. Aside from the "Dominio de Pingus" mentioned in the article, there's that tribute to the Garnacha grape, "L'Ermita '95," a four-year Priorat which fetched 409 Euros (US$ 395) at an auction in New York. The wineries themselves do not normally put their bottles up for auction, but it is not unusual to find a Vega Sicilia, Marqués de Riscal, Murrieta or Pesquera from some private collection going under the hammer. One outstanding example, for the price it fetched, was a collection of Spanish wines auctioned in London for 151,000 Euros (US$ 145,000). Then there was a lot of six bottles of Murrieta's "Castillo de Ygay 1917," for which the bidder paid 6,014 Euros (US$ 5,800). Another interesting lot consisted of six bottles of "Vega Sicilia Reserva Especial" (not a vintage wine, but one made with a blend of the best vintages) which sold for 2,556 Euros (US$ 2,450) at an auction in London. "Gran Corona Etiqueta Negra" became a particular object of desire among wine speculators, following its triumph at the Wine Olympics in Paris, and in the 1990s the 1970 vintage reached an unheard of value, fetching a price of more than 240 Euros ($230) at an auction in Johannesburg. But the Spanish wines which have attracted the highest bids are to be found among the great fortified wines. Christie's has auctioned Gonzalez Byass Vintage sherries for prices unheard of in Spain, of up to 578 Euros (US$ 560). The record for a Spanish wine was set not long ago, coinciding with the Wine Spirit Trade Fair in London: 632 Euros (US$ 610) for each of the "Reliquias" from Barbadillo.

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Vegetables by the Jar

SPANISH VEGETABLE PRESERVES ARE AN EXCELLENT SECOND BEST TO FRESHLY PREPARED VEGETABLES. FAST PROCESSING OF SELECTED VEGETABLE PRODUCE STRAIGHT AFTER PICKING KEEPS IN ALL ITS FLAVOR, TEXTURE AND NUTRITIONAL PROPERTIES. THE RESULT IS FAST FOOD THAT TASTES GOOD AND DOES YOU GOOD.

Vegetables are grown throughout Spain, in a wide range of climates, soils, and districts. Spain is the birthplace of many plant species, the scene of extensive varietal selection and the country which sent out towards Europe and other continents a large range of vegetables that were brought by Spaniards after the discovery of America, such as green beans and peppers. Others were introduced and cultivated by the Arab inhabitants of Spain, such as spinach and artichokes. The special characteristics and delicacy of Spanish vegetables mean that new Specific Denominations and Denominations of Origin are continually being established (see Glossary page 126) as well as other quality endorsements for both fresh and preserved products. The bottling and canning industries are always located close to the areas of cultivation and tend to concentrate on the main local crops. So, for example, in the Ebro Valley (in the northeast of Spain), the main products are the traditional crops of white asparagus, *piquillo* peppers and even artichokes, whereas in Andalusia the usual preserves are broad beans and baby broad beans, green asparagus, garlic shoots, and green beans. Other vegetables processed in the same way are cardoons, Swiss chard, borage, spinach, and leeks and these keep the factories working year round although increasing interest in these preserves is encouraging companies to give greater weight to this range.

TEXT: JULIA LÓPEZ DE SAGREDO

TRANSLATION: JENNY MCDONALD

STILL LIFE: *MENCHU ARTIME*

PHOTO: A. DE BENITO/ICEX

THE SPANISH VEGETABLE PRESERVE INDUSTRY HAS THE GOOD FORTUNE TO BE BASED ON A TRADITIONALLY RICH AND EXTENSIVE VEGETABLE GARDEN THAT SUPPLIES IT WITH VARIED, TOP-QUALITY RAW MATERIALS.

The Mediterranean vegetables that are considered most "exotic" outside Spain are artichokes, broad beans and baby broad beans, cardoons, and borage. The latter is being grown increasingly in a small area of northern Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 42).

Artichokes were highly esteemed during the Middle Ages in Moorish Spain and were subject to much selection work. The native varieties differ from the Italian or French varieties in size, tenderness and the absence of the hairy segment in the middle, the finest and most widely grown being the *Blanca de Tudela*. This is a small, round, compact artichoke with tight leaves. It is mostly grown in the areas of Benicarló in Castellón on the Mediterranean coast, and Tudela, to the south of Navarre. Both of these areas have the corresponding Denomination of Quality.

Spanish broad bean varieties are known worldwide for their quality and some of them are included in all the main seed catalogues. The baby beans are from the same varieties but the fruits are picked before they can grow. The best size is below 11 mm (0.42 in). The actual harvesting is hard work because growth has to be constantly checked, and picking takes place every day. For a staff of 150 in the factory working in three shifts, 1,200 people need to be employed in the field.

The quality of cardoons (a type of edible thistle) is enhanced by wrapping the plants in black polythene cylinders for 20-30 days before harvesting. This keeps the stalks white and tender.

Of special interest are piquillo peppers, especially those from Lodosa (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45). The preserving process, which involves slow roasting the peppers in wood-fired ovens, is covered by a Denomination of Origin for this region of Navarre. The special characteristics of this variety are the short length, triangular shape, average diameter, low weight, and bright red color. It is a more flavorsome and delicate pepper than most and is especially versatile for cooking.

After the barbarian invasions, green asparagus was grown almost exclusively in Spain and only at the end of the Middle Ages did it spread to the north and center of Europe. There are two specific denominations in Spain for the quality of fresh and bottled or canned asparagus. These are for the white Navarre asparagus (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 17) and the purplish-green from Huétor-Tájar in Granada which is the closest variety to *triguero* or wild asparagus (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47).

Spain is renowned for its traditional garlic crops but the green shoots picked before the bulb forms make another, especially tasty vegetable.

Also of top quality is Swiss chard with its long, wide stems and large leaves. It is becoming increasingly popular as a preserve.

NATURAL, CONTROLLED PROCESSING

Most of the Spanish bottling companies have developed from traditional family concerns, some being based on their own farms. For all of them, success is based on the use of genuine, local-grown produce, with natural processing that protects the specific characteristics of the raw materials. Experience with the vegetables and knowing how they should be handled means that any loss of nutritional content, vitamins, texture, and organoleptic attributes during the bottling or canning process is minimal. The process takes place fast, with just a few hours between harvesting and preserving, with exhaustive controls taking place at every stage, especially during blanching and sterilization. The characteristics of the vegetable and the type of container used have to be taken into account in sterilization to achieve the right balance between temperature, timing, and pH. The process should never last more than 30 minutes with the temperature not exceeding 120°C (248°F) and, if the pH needs to be reduced, as it does with artichokes, the values set always aim to have no effect on the natural flavors of the product or on its color.

Certain especially delicate vegetables, such as baby broad beans and piquillo peppers, need to be sterilized over water rather than in water to prevent any change in texture. In these cases, citric acid has to be added to bring down the pH and prevent the development of microorganisms. Other vegetables are simply packed in a brine solution.

The factories always receive newly-harvested vegetables which are processed directly without any intermediate storage because all of them, especially those with leaves, rapidly become dehydrated if left, with the loss of many properties and damage to the texture. Only the specially sensitive white asparagus is kept under refrigeration between the field and the canning plant.

As the products enter the factory, they are inspected by experienced technicians to determine their condition and the different qualities. The main stages of the process—washing, blanching, cooling, packing, and sterilization—are the same for all the vegetables. The laboriousness of the process depends on the product. Some are more labor intensive, requiring more skilled workers and more exhaustive controls, and this is reflected in the selling price.

The preparation of cardoons is especially complex as these are large plants but only the whitest parts of the stems are used. Yield is therefore very low, only 30-40 percent of the fresh weight. The largest leaves have to be cut by hand, then the stems are peeled by hand and cut by machine into 3-cm (1.17-in) pieces. The jars have to be carefully packed—also by hand—leaving no gaps and ensuring that the full weight is reached.

The preparation of artichokes is also complex although the tough, external leaves and the stems are cut by machine. This is done after a short blanching process which keeps the artichokes firm and allows them to be peeled without breaking. As with cardoons, the yield is

SPANISH VEGETABLE PRESERVES ARE A KIND OF HEALTHY FAST FOOD, CONTRIBUTING QUALITY AND DIVERSITY TO THE DAILY DIET AND MAINTAINING ALL THE FLAVOR AND PROPERTIES OF FRESH VEGETABLES.

low with only 40-50 percent of the fresh vegetable actually being edible. Artichokes are bottled either whole—the so-called hearts—for which those that are smallest, most tender and have the most standard color are used, or in halves.

The process of preserving asparagus is very delicate. Peeling is carried out before blanching for the smaller spears and after it for the larger sizes. Some companies actually peel the spears by hand. As with artichokes, the selection process has to be carried out by experienced workers who have to insert the individual spears in the peeling machine correctly to prevent them from being damaged or incompletely peeled. It is also important that the spears maintain a certain degree of moisture. Inspections are carried out after the peeling and blanching processes to check the sizes, the degree to which the tips have opened up, any incomplete peeling and the presence of twisted or marked spears. Peeling defects are corrected or spears are reclassified in a different category. The cooling process is especially important in asparagus because of the possibility that microorganisms might develop. Green asparagus is easier to preserve as peeling is not necessary.

Baby broad beans not only require daily picking but also exhaustive selection in the factory. It is calculated that to obtain 400 g (just under 1 lb) of beans under 11 mm (0.42 in), about 12 kg (26 lb) of fresh beans in the pod are required. This makes the product fairly pricey although, if the size is increased by just a few millimeters, the price can be halved. Baby broad beans and their larger counterparts are presented not only in brine but also fried in olive oil and even including pieces of *serrano* ham.

Piquillo peppers differ from other vegetables in that on arrival at the factory they are washed then baked slowly in wood or gas ovens, the aim being to blister the skin so that it can be carefully peeled off manually, leaving a firm texture. The stalk and seeds are removed by hand. "A laborious process!" says Isabel López, the quality manager for the Pincha canning company in Lodosa, which is the main producer of this product with 4 mil-

THE TOP SPANISH CHEFS HAVE HELPED TO FOSTER INTEREST IN PRODUCTS SUCH AS CARDOONS, PIQUILLO PEPPERS, OR ARTICHOKES BY INCLUDING THEM IN SOME OF THEIR MOST EXQUISITE CREATIONS.

lion kg per year. The top quality peppers, that is, the smallest with the brightest red color that are suitable for stuffing because their tips are closed, are packed in jars in their own juices. The other peppers are packed whole or in strips in brine or flavored with garlic, with or without olive oil.

Green beans are one of the simplest and fastest vegetables to preserve. Spain's largest producer, with 60 percent of the national market and annual increases of 25-35 percent, is ALSUR in the province of Málaga. It packs 128 jars per minute whereas it only produces 5,000 a day of piquillo peppers. The beans are first topped and tailed in a rotating cutting machine and, since only tender varieties of both the traditional round and flat beans are used, they do not need stringing and can also be sliced by machine.

Leaf preserves include spinach, borage, and Swiss chard. The latter is rather more tedious to prepare because the stems have to be cleaned by hand. Another product frequently prepared by these companies is mixed vegetables. Quality varies depending on the vegetables included and on whether packing is done by hand, which is usual for whole vegetables, or mechanically.

GAINING IN POPULARITY

The concept of vegetable preserves offering quality and diversity has moved towards that of healthy, fast food. We have all been drilled in the need for including vegetables in our diets because of their high nutritional, vitamin and mineral content and their beneficial effect on health and in the prevention of disease, but we do not always have fresh vegetables at hand or the time or knowledge to prepare them correctly. The canning industry, with its experience in handling and processing the different types of vegetable, and its facilities that exceed those available in the average kitchen, is able to provide us with healthy, tasty, and varied products for both home and restaurant use. Thanks to their quality and convenience, the market for these products is growing both inside and outside Spain. In addition, they help to enrich and give variety to meals. Some of the preserved vegetables are considered fairly exotic outside Spain and others would not otherwise be consumed at all as they grow in locations that are far from the main markets, are highly sensitive to transport and storage, or the preparation process is tedious or unknown.

The presentation of vegetables in glass jars is not only attractive but it allows potential consumers, who may not be familiar with the products, to see what they are buying. Most are packed only in brine without preservatives, so all that is needed is to heat them in their own juices or to drain and warm them in a little olive oil in a frying pan or the microwave. What could be more convenient?

Julia López de Sagredo *is an agriculturalist. She worked for seven years in the Spanish economic and commercial office in Dusseldorf (Germany) where she was responsible for the promotion in Germany of Spanish processed agricultural and food products. She currently lives in Málaga and, amongst other activities, collaborates with the specialist press on agricultural and food topics and in foreign trade.*

See Recipes on page 102 and Main Exporters on page 114.

COOKING TIPS

Vegetable preserves permit rapid preparation of healthy menus and, unlike ready-made dishes, allow us to add a personal touch. The vegetables just need to be heated in a microwave oven and seasoned with salt and a little olive oil to be ready for eating, either alongside meat, fish or eggs, or as a main dish on their own. In Spain they are often prepared by just sautéing them in a frying pan with olive oil and garlic, or with little pieces of serrano ham, and accompanied with boiled potatoes or fried potato cubes. Another common way of serving them, especially for green beans, is to mix them with a homemade tomato sauce for eating either hot or cold, depending on the season. Nuts and dried fruits are another delicious variation. Try, for example, spinach with raisins and pine nuts, Swiss chard with crushed almonds or walnuts, or cardoons in almond sauce. Piquillo peppers are not just an excellent accompaniment but can be stuffed with a wide range of foods, from simple canned white tuna fish to more elaborate fillings such as bechamel sauce with spinach, serrano ham, hake or salmon, ground beef, mushrooms and prawns in scrambled eggs, cod or rice with shellfish. In general, these preserves are excellent in salads, vegetable stews, in soups, with rice, in baked egg dishes, aspic, omelettes or scrambled with eggs. They have enormous potential for adding originality and variety to your meals. Next time you have friends round, why not offer them a variety of *tapas* based on Spanish vegetable preserves?

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MARICHU

Spain's Culinary Delegation on Four Continents (III)

FRANCE, BELGIUM, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

For many years now, we have been reporting on Spanish gastronomy and restaurants in every region in Spain. In this three-part series, our aim has been 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 has comprised thirteen selected restaurants in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Tokyo, Sidney, Vienna, Munich, Zurich, Paris, Brussels, Antwerp, and London.

Paella is only prepared in the Mediterranean areas of Spain. But—thanks to tourism—foreigners associate that dish, the symbol of the art of dealing with leftovers, with a utopian and topical Spanish cuisine. Alberto Herráiz did not grow up in the Mediterranean part of Spain, but rather, in Don Quijote's, in the magical city of Cuenca, with its hanging houses. And he left them hanging there one day, in love with art: he traveled to France to visit all the Michelin three-star restaurants and wound up conquered by Paris and its museums.

But since one can't live on air, Herráiz had to earn a living by practicing the profession he knew best: cooking, which he learnt from his mother, the guiding spirit of the family restaurant, Mesón Nelia. He was eight years old when he wore his first waiter's jacket. And he was 33 when he opened his own restaurant. Nowadays, Herráiz thinks that in those days his cuisine was probably rather experimental. But he was happy: customers attracted by the excellent local museum—the painter Antonio Saura and writer Ramón Chao—invited him to their tables and spoke to him of the wonders of Paris. One day, Chao lent him the key to his Paris apartment. He never returned. A chef who feels at home in the kitchen, he worked in several more or less Spanish ones in the French capital, where the '90s were years of Spanish culture and *tapas*. Finally in 1997, just a stone's throw from the Seine and Notre Dame, he opened the Fogón Saint Julien, which today boasts an impressive press book.

"Tapas that make the vegetable garden sing, paella rewritten with squid ink: the gastronomic revolution of Iberian cuisine," proclaimed the weekly magazine *Paris Match*—more than 700,000 copies in print—in the highly unusual article—three pages worth!—it devoted to him. Another emblematic magazine, *Elle*, printed a small booklet on "Wines & Tapas" totally devoted to his dishes. And called him the "Doctor of Tapas." *Vogue* highlighted him in its very select guide to Paris. And so did the *Gantié*, *Pudlo*, and *GaultMillau* guidebooks. We don't have enough space to list the names—from the *Herald Tribune* to *Le Monde*—of all the publications that have praised him. Perhaps because Herráiz has the intelligence to offer a formula with an accessible price: 165 francs for "the chef's tapas," one of the six paellas, and dessert. No routine here: a classic rice may be preceded by classic tapas—pork loin (preserved in olive oil); homemade croquettes—or bolder ones: fried egg and potato tart with ham; skewered blood sausage with potato and white cabbage... Classic desserts—custard; chocolate with miniature *churros*—or "sweet tapas": pineapple ravioli; skewered fresh fruit with yogurt and a pinch of cinnamon; crunchy apple with vanilla ice cream; olive oil sherbet...

But above all, El Fogón has become the showcase for superior Spanish products: smoked Iberian ham, salted tuna fish, *bomba* rice from the Ebro estuary and organic rice from Calasparra, *cecina* (beef jerky) from León, Núñez de Prado olive oil, saffron from La Mancha, sweet paprika from La Vera, a variety of cheeses. Herráiz even managed to impose, in the capital of Europe's largest consumer of bottled water, the brand from his native province, Solán de Cabras (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 46). And his wine list pays equal attention to all of Spain's denominations of origin.

Of course, what is of greatest importance to Herráiz, is that in less than

two years, there has been a spectacular growth of interesting customers. And if a society reporter has enough to keep busy with—Catherine Deneuve and Victoria Abril are regular customers, the chef—who escapes to his nearby apartment to compose visual poems, in the style of Marcel Duchamp or Joan Brossa—is more moved by the permanent presence of artists: the painter Miquel Barceló—whom he took to the Rungis market to find a "paintable" fish and for whom he eventually posed; novelists Vázquez Montalbán and Ramón Chao; the crew from the Odeon and Bobigny Theaters; Joan Punyet Miró, the painter's grandson...

A medal was awarded to him in April 1999 by his mentor, Antonio Pérez—famous "object searcher" who established in Cuenca the foundation that bears his name—who dedicated the catalog ("Antojos"—"Whims") of his show at the Instituto Cervantes in Paris to him, with this flower: "For Alberto Herráiz, with whom I have found so many objects."

Oscar Caballero *is a Spanish correspondent in Paris and author of 15 books. He is a member of the French Association of Gastronomic Columnists (APCIG) and the Association of Wine Columnists (AFJEV).*

Fogón Saint Julien
10, Rue Saint Julien le Pauvre
Paris V
France
Tel: (33 1) 435 431 33

Le Grillange
7 Avenue E. Pirmez
1040 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: (32 2) 649 26 85

The subtlety of the name Grillange can be discerned in the contraction of the French words *grillade* (grill) and *ang* (angel), the name of the talented owner of this establishment. Ever since he opened his restaurant in 1984, Ángel has been refining his cuisine, without ever forgetting his origins: Spanish cuisine. His restaurant is located very close to La Chasse, the large shopping quarter in Etterbeek. In his case we can reverse the proverb: "while out to hunt, Ángel found his place." Never better said, since after a long and fruitless search to find the ideal location in which to fulfill his dream, he was ready to give up his project. One day, walking along Avenue E. Pirmez, a "For Sale" sign drew his attention: it was love at first sight.
The old burgher's house was entirely renovated, in an especially cozy style. Although at first it was mainly a grill, the business evolved over time to become a real restaurant, albeit with a Spanish accent. Ángel's gastronomic experience had begun, however, much earlier. The first years of his life were perfumed with the aromas and flavors of the typical Asturian dishes prepared by his grandmother. Those were the first steps in his culinary education. Today, when he speaks of those days, his eyes take on a special shine. With a grandson's emotion, from time to time he adds these tasty dishes to the menu. This greatly pleases his Spanish customers, who can find once again authentic reminiscences of their homeland. At the age of ten, he joined his parents in Belgium, where they had settled in Brussels after roaming around Europe for some time. In the kitchen of his mother's tavern he began to learn culinary techniques, which he decided to improve by attending a hotel school in Brussels. Disappointed when he found out that the school's curriculum did not include a single course on Spanish cuisine, he interrupted his studies after just two years. Like a real homing pigeon, he worked in various establishments, until he met Eddie Van Maele in the kitchens of Ten Wijngaert, at that time a great deluxe restaurant. Eddie taught him how to properly approach the difficult career of chef. This was Ángel's real start as a culinary artisan. Unfortunately, he was then drafted into the army, not in Belgium, but in Spain, and for a period of two years. This could have meant the end of his apprenticeship, had he not been ordered to organize dinners for high-ranking officers in various different military regions. This allowed him to discover the multiple facets of his native cuisine. This experience proved to be the basis for his highly personal vision of Iberian gastronomy. For him, the cuisine of Galicia is totally different than that of Catalonia. The former is based on Atlantic seafood and fish, the latter has mainly Mediterranean nuances. Asturias is largely influenced by the Cantabrian mountains where game is so plentiful that Obèlix would have loved to be born in this region. Navarre, on the other hand, is paradise for vegetarians due to its numerous vegetables. In Castile and León lamb and local cheeses are dished out in huge amounts. And for Ángel, Extremadura means "Iberian ham," whereas Andalusia reminds him of olive oil and sherry or Montilla wine-based cuisine. But for our maestro virtuoso, Basque cuisine is the most inventive and tastiest of all. Every month the menu highlights a specific region, which allows regular customers to sample the abundant gastronomy

offered by the Iberian Peninsula. All at a moderate price. At first, Ángel gave his culinary creations French names, afraid that otherwise they would be misunderstood or not properly appreciated. In those days Belgium swore by French cuisine. This has now changed. The current menu and daily specials are written in his native language, with names that sound like castanets.

But Ángel had another lucky encounter in his life, finding the woman of his dreams, Rosi. She shares with him today the good fortune of being able to satisfy their customers. Trained in public relations, Rosi adapted very quickly to the requirements of this profession. Like all Spanish women, she got her grounding in cooking as part of her education, but she was obviously a very talented student. Rosi and Ángel form a real dream team of Spanish cuisine in Belgium. He is exuberant and always ready to fulfill his customers' slightest wishes, while she prepares the dishes with the regularity and precision of a Swiss watch.

Today, anyone who loves Spanish cuisine will feel delighted at the Grillange, whereas the culinary neophyte can discover the Iberian culinary arts here step by step (or dish by dish). Ángel will be very pleased to guide him. At the Grillange, the welcome is very ebullient and the tone is set immediately. It is not unusual to see Ángel embracing his customers, who very soon become his friends. Apart from the fact that Ángel's smile is superbly underlined by his fabulous mustache, his way with words also helps to put customers immediately at ease. The menu sings the names of the delicious dishes that Ángel and Rosi offer: *pijarra jaenera*—a typically Andalusian salad from Jaén. *Cebolla rellena*—a large onion stuffed with tuna and fresh salmon that come straight from Asturias. *Pintada en pepitoria*—a specialty from Castile and León that includes olives and almonds. *Fabada asturiana*—a dish based on beans, chorizo sausage and blood sausage, and bacon, an homage to his native land. In the autumn, Ángel and Rosi serve *cochinillo* (roast piglet) every Friday. At dessert time, the inevitable *crema catalana* pleases all those who love sweets. The wine list includes wines from most of Spain's grape-growing areas. It is a real compendium of Spanish wines. One can find, among others, the very rare Vega Sicilia Único, but also a Colegiata from the Toro area, and excellent Riojas, wines from the Penedés, Priorato, and even from Yecla. Albariños, Ruedas, and Somontanos, whose great reputations honor the wine list, not to mention two French white wines (it is inevitable, this is Belgium). The excessive wine list permits wine lovers to make plenty of discoveries.

A new challenge currently occupies Ángel's thoughts, namely, to protect the names of certain Spanish culinary preparations. Too many names, such as for example, paella, chorizo, and tapas, are used and abused to define dishes that are industrially manufactured and then sold in large supermarkets. It is true that such dishes can be tasty, but often their ingredients have nothing to do with the original recipe. A real artisan, Ángel would like to see a denomination of origin system similar to the one that already exists for wine and also for cheeses. Another crusade for this tireless Don Quijote, whom he inevitably resembles.

Harry De Schepper

The restaurant Península Casa Española is located right in midtown Antwerp, very close to the Boerentoren, the city's first skyscraper, excepting the illustrious cathedral. The Boerentoren could be a good reference point to locate this Spanish restaurant, which is not far from the Place Verte (Groenplaats) and Meir Alley, a very chic shopping area. The restaurant is located amidst other establishments on a pedestrian-only street, a real microcosm of international gastronomy. The small window full of odds and ends, and a Spanish flag hanging outside, proudly remind one of the establishment's style: a real casa española. The restaurant's dining room, a small, vaulted corridor, was in the Middle Ages and in later years a warehouse for goods from faraway places, brought in by ship. We must not forget that Antwerp was and still is a great cargo port, the real hub of Belgian maritime commerce. The parents of the owner, Rafael Dobon, imported Spanish food products. They managed a small empire of various stores scattered around town. This specific place was called the Península because when his parents separated, his mother was left with this store: the minuscule peninsula of their empire. She opened a Spanish wine business. Her son Rafael, born in Spain, in Linares, Jaén, arrived in Belgium with his parents at the age of three. Therefore his education was marked by two traditions, those of his Spanish roots and those of a large city. As an adolescent, he returned to live with his grandmother in Madrid. A real "bon vivant," he went to study at the university. But instead of attending classes, he skipped courses and instead discovered the habits and way of life of his ancestors. After a few years that were poor in formal studies but rich in gastronomic experiences, he returned to Belgium where he opened, with some help from his parents, his first restaurant: El Maya (in honor of his daughter). The difficult events surrounding his parents' separation led him to pick up his pilgrim's staff once more. This time, he decides he wants to see the world. He visits Australia, eastern Asia, and Japan, where he meets Hisa, who will become his lifelong companion. At the age of 24, he takes over his mother's business, but as soon as the supermarkets begin selling Spanish wines, he can no

Península Casa Española
Wiegstraat 20
2000 Antwerp
Belgium
Tel: (32 3) 231 41 65

longer compete with them. The wine store is converted into a restaurant. The house specialty is paella, widely demanded by the city's residents. Slowly but surely, his customers become more international. It becomes as easy to find there the city mayor, traders from the port, members of the liberal professions, as it is to find tourists who are visiting Antwerp and are looking for a good meal at a reasonable price. Once, when part of the U.S. Navy fleet docked in town, the ranking admiral honored the Península with a visit. The welcome offered by Hisa, who ten years after they first met became his wife and collaborator, might lead a visitor astray. Her rising sun smile seems to belong in the neighboring Vietnamese restaurant, but she will greet you in Spanish with a charming oriental accent. The small dining room has six tables and can accommodate some twenty customers. The menu choices are somewhat limited, but regulars are charmed by the new dishes they find each month.

The *sopa de ajo*, a bouillon with eggs and garlic, and the *riñones al Jerez* are perennial Rafael dishes, but his specialty is still paella. He makes it either with fish or with meat. His *atún con salsa de pimiento verde* is a tasty and amusing variant of a pepper steak. Sometimes, one can detect in the finishing touches of the dishes that Rafael offers his customers, an oriental touch—a nod and a wink to the fusion of his artistry with the country of origin of his partner. For dessert, the *pijama*, a cream with seasonal fruits and whipped cream, fulfills the dreams of all sweet lovers. The *carajillo* is a variation on the traditional Irish coffee, but you will never find out the ingredients, since Rafael keeps them very secret. In the wine list there are only some fifteen wines, but those who insist get to choose from the large choice available in the Península's private cellar. All grape-growing regions can be found there, each of them represented by several vintages. The daily wine list only includes table wines, but at interesting prices.
The Península is an inevitable stop in this beautiful town called Antwerp for all those who love Spanish cuisine.

Harry De Schepper *is a freelance journalist specializing in gastronomy and wine. He teaches both subjects at the COOVI in Brussels.*

The new-found appreciation by the British for all things related to the table has allowed the introduction of different food cultures in a country generally reluctant to change. Having failed in the past, the Spanish tapa, this time in an authentic mood, is fighting back from a truly prestigious platform: Harrods in Knightsbridge, one of the best-known stores in the world.

The love affair of the Northern European and in this particular case of the British, for something as capricious, informal and exciting as the Spanish custom of enjoying tapas is a reality more than ever in the London food scene today and the list of tapas bars will take several pages. Some are better than others but sadly only a few are capable of being compared with the majority of their counterparts beyond the Pyrenees. All is in the hands of whoever is responsible for the making of the small dishes in question, and his or her capacity for understanding that the main secret has to do with high quality, freshly cooked ingredients. Here, as in Spain, the experience can be outstanding or quite disappointing.

Apart from the array of serious restaurants already well established in the store, Harrods has for the last few years been opening small ethnic restaurants in the Food Hall area which have become very popular with the clientele, many of whom come from all over the world. The popularity of all foods Mediterranean and the tastes in food of the very many Spanish and Spanish-speaking visitors who come to Harrods, combined with the availability of a range of high quality Spanish ingredients here in Britain, encouraged the decision makers at Harrods to extend their existing gastronomic offer. Designed with simplicity and to a certain extent reflecting the taste of new style establishments in Madrid or Barcelona, Tapas opened in October 1998 serving Spanish quality food. Today this bar has already proved that it is possible to get close to reality if we are talking about authenticity of the food that is served. It should be easy. The chef, José Luis García is a professional chef who has worked at the Club 31 and the Hotel Ritz in Madrid. Moreover, close by is the Food Hall of one of the most famous stores in the world, which should provide everything needed for the small but perfectly equipped kitchen.

Now, four Spanish chefs work in the kitchen of Tapas, and this is an

Tapas
Harrods Limited
Knightsbridge
London SW1X 7XL
United Kingdom
Tel: (44 171) 73 01 234

achievement. In general, good professional Spanish chefs are very reluctant to take work outside their country, one of the reasons for the lack of success in Britain of a quality Spanish food culture which still remains mostly unknown; but things are changing fast.

Chef García's idea is to present a personal selection of authentic modern Spanish *platos en miniatura* from all over Spain, rather than just following the traditional tapa repertoire from Andalusia, Catalonia, or La Mancha. Having said that, always present on the frequently changing menu are some of the all-time favorites such as *pulpo a feira* (octopus with potatoes dressed with olive oil and paprika); *tortilla española* (omelette of potato and onion) or variations on the theme: *tortilla de bacalao* (salt cod omelette), *tortilla de pimientos* (green pepper omelette); *chipirones en su tinta* (squid in its own ink); and probably one of the best selections in town of the legendary *jamón ibérico* and *embutidos ibéricos* (the cured ham and cold cuts made from the free-range, acorn-fed Iberian pig).

The menu is divided into five sections: cold and hot tapas; Iberian ham and cold cuts; specialties; Spanish cheeses; and desserts. Dishes such as *merluza pochada con verduritas crujientes* (poached hake with crispy vegetables), *jamoncitos de capón al chilindrón* (chicken with onion, garlic, and pepper), *ensalada malagueña de bacalao* (a salad of smoked cod with roast red pepper and garlic), *lomo de cordero castellano* (best end of lamb with mustard, fresh herbs, and bread crumbs) are all perfect examples of the chef's excellent approach. The wine list, short but carefully selected, offers excellent examples from Rías Baixas, Navarre, Rioja, Penedés, and La Mancha.

María José Sevilla *is a food writer and broadcaster and director of Foods from Spain in the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in London.*

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See Recipes on page 107.

Flavour is made of Gold & Green

(III)

A Lifetime Devoted to Wine

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

This third group of portraits of shapers of the contemporary Spanish wine scene brings our series to a close. Features have emerged as common to them all, including not only what active lives these veteran professionals have led, but also how readily they blend science with humanism in their day to day work.

Miguel Agustí Torres is the figurehead of an impressive commercial empire which sells 30 million bottles a year and whose sphere of influence extends worldwide, with wineries and companies in Chile, California, and China. He has been a pioneering figure in nearly all aspects of Spanish wine growing, and is still hatching new products.

José Serrano has played a leading role in nearly all government initiatives designed to generate real change and improvement in Spanish wine over the last 20 years. He has traveled over half the country's highways and byways in the process of conducting a viticultural census, and has been instrumental in setting up many of Spain's viticultural and enological stations and experimental wineries.

José Serrano

Miguel Torres

José Luis Hernáez Mañas

José Luis Hernáez has been director of Galicia's Viticultural and Enological Station since the late Eighties, since which time he has exerted a sort of spiritual guidance over the region's wine-growing sector, if the productive research carried out there is anything to go by. In addition to his work at the station, he recently took on an advisory post in the Agriculture Ministry of the Xunta de Galicia, Galicia's regional government, from which post he is striving to complete the process of converting the region's vineyards, one of his primary obsessions.

José Serrano: Peripatetic Expert

By his own admission, José Serrano is an absolute professional, someone who expects his work to provide rewards other than the merely financial. Creating wealth and the means of distributing it is something that he still finds stimulating after several decades in various positions of responsibility at the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture. "I've never been tempted to leave the Administration," he comments, "nor has the private sector ever made me an offer I might have found tempting." Madrid-born Serrano is 55 years old, his steady gaze is sometimes severe, and his palate superb. He started work in the laboratory of INIA (Spain's National Institute for Agricultural Research) at the age of 16, and wine is a genuine and consuming passion for him. He believes that wine should always be pleasurable: young or mature, top or bottom of the range, it should never be bothersome. Unlike many Anglo Saxon specialists who, for obvious reasons, came to wine only as adults, Serrano benefitted from the natural, lifelong familiarity with wine that is part of the Mediterranean culture. He recalls the various ways in which this came about. There was always, for example, a bottle of Valdepeñas on the table at everyday meals in the family home, while refreshment on summer afternoons took the form of Méntrida red mixed with fizzy lemonade, which their mother rationed out judiciously to José and his brothers. Many facets of José Serrano's subsequent professional life were shaped during his early experience at INIA, when he was simultaneously studying for his agricultural engineering qualifications. "The Sixties was a dynamic period, full of development schemes and all that sort of thing. Building *bodegas* was all the rage. I was personally involved in the final stages of the Nuestro Padre Jesús del Perdón cooperative project in Manzanares (Ciudad Real), and it was quite a landmark of engineering at the time."

His studies completed, Serrano managed a company which tackled such projects as then embryonic experiments with growing extra-early crops in coastal Almería. The first spray-watering devices to be seen in Spain were brought back in his luggage from a trip to Israel. Back in Madrid for Christmas one year, he was head-hunted by Gabriel Yravedra (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47), head of INDO (the National Institute for Denominations of Origin) to join the crack team of over 20 specialists that was carrying out the new viticultural census. "Our enthusiasm in that team sometimes made us forge ahead too fast for comfort as far as the anxious growers were concerned, so we were rather misjudged. The cereal-growing policies adopted during the postwar period had pushed vines to one side, relegating them to places where it wasn't worth trying to grow anything else."

Implementing the census, a resource still in use today, turned José Serrano into a peripatetic expert, and he also acquired an intimate knowledge of country paths and byways. He learned, too, the importance of tapping the oral tradition in rural areas. "You must bear in mind that the emigration that occurred in the Fifties and Sixties effectively deprived many parts of this country of a whole generation, a phenomenon that hadn't happened in most of them since Neolithic times. For example, it came as shock to find country dwellers asking me, a city man, if it was advisable to strip the leaves off the vine in summer, and that sort of thing. The reason they were asking me was because the people that they should have learned these things from simply weren't there. I remember once I had to go to a village in the Vallés area of Barcelona province, where the population had grown from five thousand to twenty-five thousand in just a few years. No one there could tell me how to get to the various vineyards in the district of which we were to take a census." But Serrano balances that anecdote with another from Galicia, a region where he came into contact with members of the now defunct Servicio de Guardería, a custodial service provided by the local Cámaras Agrarias (Chambers of Agriculture). Their ability to recognize the local terrain was astonishing: "They could look at an aerial photograph for the first time and very quickly identify such and such a farm or ancient holding by its half moon or rabbit's ear shape."

Gradually, José Serrano's work within INDO became more specifically concerned with the technological improvement of Spanish wines. It was rather like passing on recipes, using his own experience to explain on a small scale how to work with certain grape varieties and how to communicate information from one area to another so that successes achieved could be capitalized on. This was how Spain's various enological stations equipped with small experimental wineries came into being all over the country—in Huelva, Leiro (Galicia), Requena (Valencia), Pedrosa (Ribera del Duero), Tacoronte (Tenerife), Jumilla, and Rueda.

"I'm quite convinced that the system of denominations of origin has worked well in Spain, and is still doing so. These are excellent times for Spanish wine. If you were to take an average of Spanish wine as a whole, weighted on the basis of quality, you'd certainly find us to be world leaders." Serrano believes that one of the keys to this successful evolution is that technology has been harnessed for the benefit of wine rather than vice versa. "Wine is a noble, healthy product and one that is becoming more authentic by the day. We've emerged from a technological epidemic whose symptoms were wines that were not so much worse as more homogeneous. In other words, they lost their charm."

Asked to comment on the recent upturn in some Spanish wine prices, José Serrano finds it a perfectly understandable and justified phenomenon, though he understands why some winery owners find these heights dizzying. But, as he says: "If you want to treat your friends to something imbued with culture, recommended by the WHO, and praised by Virgil, you're hardly going to manage all that for 200 pesetas."

Miguel Torres: Wine Diplomat

Miguel Torres, both brand name and person, is quite simply the best known representative of Spanish wine in the world. Indeed, in some parts of the world, he is its only known representative. Eponymous head of a company that sells 30 million bottles a year, he is the creator of such classics as Milmanda and Mas la Plana, and of market phenomena such as Sangre de Toro.

Until the death of his father, he was known as Miguel A. or Miguel Agustí Torres, to differentiate between them in the dynastic sequence. A gifted communicator, he has inherited from his father a taste for travel—he spends three months of the year traveling the world as ambassador for his wines and, by extension, for Catalonia and Spain. "It's a fact," he agrees, "my father passed his travel addiction on to me. I remember he would tell us proudly how he had sold two cases of Torres in Fiji, or in some remote Canadian province. I think it provided him with a reasonable alibi for traveling and contemplation. Perhaps in an effort to keep up with him, I have also had my share of business transactions that you might call exotic. Three years ago, I had to pursue my importer in the Seychelles, hiring helicopters to go from one island to another until I managed to finalize a deal. By which time, of course, the costs incurred had made the deal more picturesque than profitable."

For Miguel Torres Jr., wine grew from being just routine into a passion almost without his noticing. "When you're young, you don't think about shouldering the responsibilities of the family business. I made my first trips to Champagne and Burgundy with my father at the age of twelve, but all I can remember about them is how good the food was."

At nineteen, he switched from studying chemistry at Barcelona University to enology at Dijon. Of his time in the famous mustard town he recalls the feeling of freedom, the more liberal approach to timetables, and life in general away from his family, in an environment which, for him, was quite a contrast to the Barcelona under Franco that he had left behind.

His return home provided an opportunity to put what he had learned into practice. The family firm bought wine in those days: it did not then make its own. He set enthusiastically about making his first wine, though apparently with marked lack of success. "I suspect they let me hang myself with my own rope—it really was a disaster." Lessons had been learned in the process, however, and just a few years later Miguel Torres presented Viña Sol, a white wine made of Parellada grapes fermented at approximately controlled temperatures, which made everyone sit up and take notice.

The quest for greater technological control continued with the acquisition of the first stainless steel tanks, high tech equipment that was brand new to Spain. And he continued in this vein, forging ahead with new advances and applications and in the process establishing his reputation as a pioneer in his field. "It isn't a question of being, or having tried to be, any more or less original than anyone else, but it has been Torres company policy to focus on the product rather than on the market. Viña Esmeralda came into being not in response to demand, but by accident—a clean, dry white, made with Moscatel grapes that until then had been used for making *mistela* (grape juice with added alcohol) in Sitges."

Things started going well for Miguel Agustí. He used the profits from brandy and wine sales to finance the purchase of land for plantations. "We were a wine-making family with no land left—the erstwhile Torres estate had been sold by my father a year before the Civil War. However, we knew that there was still one bit of that original property, a two-hectare (five-acre) plot, which had been made over to an unknown partner. An old cooper with the company helped us find that person, and we eventually planted the first collection of grapes there as an experiment."

When Torres discovered that Cabernet Sauvignon was a viable variety, adaptable to the soil of the Penedés, he planted more hectares of this originally Bordelais variety in the Pacs area. He made history with the 1970 vintage, emerging victorious from a blind tasting held by France's *Gault et Millau* magazine, in which the Torres red was pitted against some legendary French Cabernets. The results of this tasting, on which the Torres company capitalized expertly, also created a rush among Catalan—and other—growers to import Cabernet cuttings. Like anything done to excess, this was to have its down side. In outspoken moments, Miguel Torres has been known to admit that if he were starting out now, he would choose not Cabernet Sauvignon but other varieties more closely related to the ecosystem of his native Catalonia.

"These are good times for Spanish wine, and we should make the most of them. We are enjoying the best of both worlds, given that European orthodoxy hasn't held sway here in such matters as restrictions, atomized production, varieties, and so on. We've been more liberal than the French, and that flexibility equips us to deal with worldwide competition. Here in Catalonia, specifically, we have absorbed the New World approach, growing over 30 grape varieties, while at the same time enjoying the benefits of our ancient European heritage, with its system of denominations of origin, chateaux and monasteries... Reclaiming native varieties, such as Monastrell and Verdejo, gives one only a brief head start over the rest, because they can be planting them in California in five years time if they choose to. What is important is the availability of the sort of land that allows you to make well-structured whites, or reds with the gentle tannins of ripe grapes." In the Miguel Torres company, staff are encouraged to generate 50 ideas a day towards improving production and company management, but its owner still thinks this target rather low. The idea of floating the company on the stock market, as other Spanish wineries have done, is not under consideration, however. "I respect the bodegas that do it, but it wouldn't work for us. We reinvest 95 percent of our profits, and we couldn't keep that up with stock market shares to consider."

José Luis Hernáez Mañas: Galician Explorer

Despite his surprisingly thorough adoption of the Galician mindset and turn of phrase, José Luis Hernáez Mañas was born in Chamberí, one of Madrid's most traditional neighborhoods. But he has, after all, been living and breathing Galicia for over a quarter of a century. He arrived here with his brand new agriculture degree certificate still unframed, and has since dedicated most of his energies to this Land's End of continental Europe. Chatting with him, one feels that he is literally overflowing with viticultural and enological knowledge, so that he just can't hold back when he gets onto his subject. Along with his official passion for vine and wine, he confesses to at least one other, unofficial, one for botany, and claims to have the best plant collection in Galicia.

He occupied various significant posts from 1972 on, being made director of Galicia's Viticulture and Enology Station (Estación de Viticultura y Enología de Galicia) in Leiro (Orense province) in the late Eighties. He recently agreed to double up his research work at the station with an advisory post in the Agriculture Ministry of the Xunta de Galicia, the regional government. "Mark you, I loathe politics, but they are letting me do a job that promotes the conversion of Galicia's vineyards, and that's one of my chief obsessions," explains Hernáez Mañas. "We'll do everything we can from here to promote the cause, for the cooperation of the farmers is essential. In Galicia, the rural population is largely made up of elderly people, resistant to dramatic change, and unless the growers cooperate, any experiment in the area of conversion is doomed to failure."

It helps to place Hernáez Mañas' words in context: Galician viticulture is a collection of small vineyards, and where notions of amalgamating holdings are strictly pipedream material. Ten percent of the cultivable land in this autonomous community overlooking the Atlantic, is taken up by stones piled one on top of the other, the barriers that mark out property borders. Galicia's geoclimatic characteristics give it more in common with the wine-growing areas of Bordeaux and Alsace than with the rest of Spain. "The Atlantic connection is a fact," says Hernáez Mañas, "but the idea of a rainy Galicia where all the vines are uniform is a myth that needs debunking—there are big differences between one locality and another. Even vine training systems vary. To give just two examples, the classic arbor system of the Salnés valley (Pontevedra province), which Italian professor of enology Mario Fregoni believes to be Etruscan in origin and adapted for use in Galicia by the Roman legionaries, alternates with Grecian-vase pruned vines in Betanzos (La Coruña province) further up the coast. Traveling inland, one finds a Mediterranean climate in Galicia's valley floors—illustrated by the little-known historical fact that Galicia was self sufficient in olive oil in the 17th century."

In 1980, working closely with other Galician experts, Hernáez Mañas examined his own conscience before drawing up a quality plan for Gallego wines. "In viticulture, the idea was to recover native varieties—I prefer to call them 'ancestral' varieties—in a strategic move to endow Galician wines with genuine personality. Looking back, it seems to have succeeded. One clear achievement in this area has been the emergence of such varieties as Albariño, Godello, Treixadura, Silveirina, María Ordoña, and Merenzao—all noble enough not to have to resort to other 'outsider' varieties. As for wine quality, in my humble opinion that issue was dealt with in the Eighties. Here in Spain we have made efforts to show the rest of the world that we know how to make wine just like them, but there is now a growing appreciation of our potential for making wines that are personal and distinctive, which may be in or out of fashion but will always be well regarded. That's where I consider myself a pioneer."

The team, headed by Hernáez Mañas, at the Leiro station has so far classified 220 vine varieties, of which 60 are held to be of ancestral origin, to use his preferred term. Albariño, the sovereign of the lot, needs special temperature and moisture conditions which it finds to perfection in the area covered by the Rías Baixas denomination of origin. There has been much speculation about possibly Rhenish origins for this variety and other grapes of northwestern Spain, perhaps introduced via the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. Hernáez Mañas treats this theory with skepticism: "The aromatic composition of Albariño, with its flowery hints of linden and lavender, differentiates it from the German Riesling, so I don't find the notion of medieval monks loaded with vine cuttings traveling the Camino de Santiago a very convincing one. Do you find Albariño outside Galicia? The theory of certain varieties brought in by the Romans becoming crossed with wild vines sounds more likely to me."

Be that as it may, there is nothing fundamentalist about Hernáez Mañas when he declares: "What I am against is the uniformity that certain applications of technology impose. Culture is becoming uniform nowadays and wine is at risk of the same thing happening. That's why I make a point of speaking up for individuality. My approach is to tell people that there are Chilean spider crabs and spider crabs caught in the Galician *rías* (these are a local seafood delicacy); but though they are both spider crabs but they aren't the same and aren't equally good."

Hernáez Mañas is given to making this sort of proclamation wherever he goes, even on the home patch, where Galician wines could hardly be said to need boosting, for Gallegos love them.

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

Under the Volcano

LA GARROTXA

Text: Sonia Ortega

Translation: Hawys Pritchard

Photos: P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX

LA GARROTXA, A LITTLE AREA OF CATALONIA EQUIDISTANT FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE PYRENEES, HAS MANY QUALITIES TO RECOMMEND IT AND ITS INHABITANTS ARE VERY PROTECTIVE OF THEM: LOVELY MEDIEVAL TOWNS, AN UNSPOILED YET APPROACHABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, A VARIETY OF MUSEUMS AND GOOD RESTAURANTS... NOT BAD FOR STARTERS BUT, AMAZINGLY, LA GARROTXA ALSO HAS VOLCANOES. THOUGH INACTIVE FOR THE LAST 10,000 YEARS OR SO AND NOW THOROUGHLY 'CIVILIZED' AND COVERED IN VEGETATION, THEY ARE NEVERTHELESS ONE OF THE AREA'S MAIN ATTRACTIONS.

It's hard to believe that these green hillsides, now densely wooded with oak, ilex and beech, belched forth fire and lava many thousands of years ago.

The *mikwah* of Besalú is the best-preserved example of medieval Jewish purification baths in Europe: these were discovered by chance in 1964 when a local dyer was having a well dug.

Seen from the air, the landscape of La Garrotxa looks like a rural idyll: green and gently undulating, dotted with little towns and villages, and with overlapping mountain ranges tastefully arranged. The perfect bucolic setting for our first flight in a hot air balloon. Despite ominously unsettled weather the few days before, we set off into a cloudless early morning sky just as the sun was beginning to warm things up. Northwards, we could see the gentle undulations giving way to the steeper mountains of the Alta Garrotxa and, behind them, the impressive barrier of the Pyrenees. Over to the east, the silvery sheen we could see in the far distance was the Mediterranean.

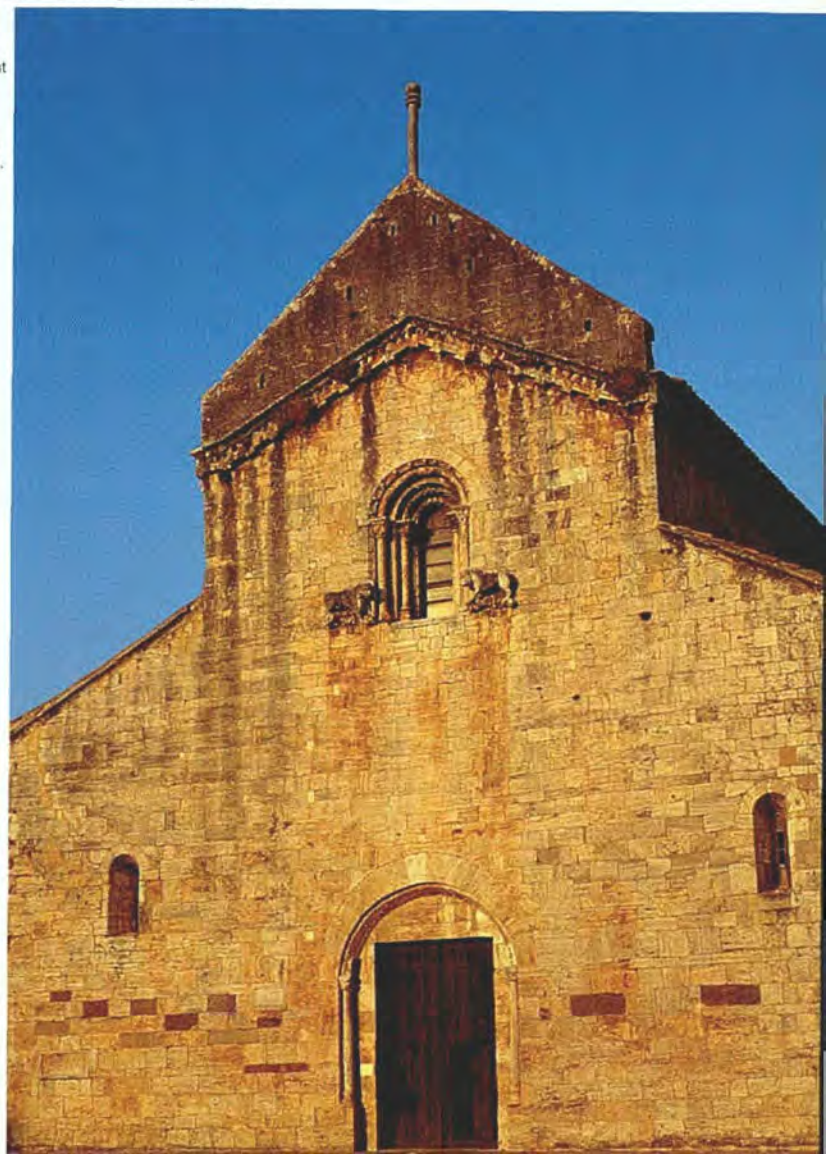
It's hard to believe that these green hillsides, now densely wooded with oak, ilex and beech, belched forth fire and lava many thousands of years ago. But the evidence is there in the form of 38 volcanic cones contained within the 12,000 hectare (30,000 acre) expanse of La Garrotxa's *Parque Natural de la Zona*

Castellfollit de la Roca is surely one of the most photographed places in Catalonia. It stands 60 m up on basalt cliffs almost a kilometer long, overlooking the rivers Fluviá and Turonell.

Romanesque hermitages, many of them on a pilgrimage route, scattered the landscape of Alta Garrotxa. Some of them are obviously abandoned, but others have been restored and can be visited.

Volcánica (Volcanic Zone Nature Park) the area's chief tourist attraction. From the air, we could identify the most readily recognizable volcanoes quite clearly: Santa Margarita, which has a little hermitage inside its great crater; Croscat, the highest, with the variegated dark colors of its interior visible; and the several 'urban' volcanoes around which the town of Olot, La Garrotxa's capital, has grown up. We also saw a bird's eye view of some of the lovely towns and villages we had already explored at ground level—Castellfollit de la Roca, perched on a basalt precipice; the welcoming medieval walled town of Santa Pau; Besalú—poetically pretty with its ancient bridge. And we could appreciate, too, how liberally dotted the landscape is with *masías*—the farmhouses characteristic of the Catalan countryside—some up in the hills and others down on the plain, surrounded by sown fields. Though one couldn't tell this from the air, La Garrotxa's masias are

One of the outstanding buildings on the grand Prat de Sant Pere esplanade in Besalú is the church of Sant Pere, an impressive early Romanesque church (1003). It has an ambulatory typical of pilgrimage cathedrals.



DIEGO DÍAZ/ICEX

Santa Pau, right in the heart of the volcanic zone, is a little town famous for its medieval center. The historic part of town, contained within old town walls, is built around the castle and the Plaza Mayor.

often imposing buildings, in both size and beauty. Nearly all have a sundial set into the facade and many have a large south-facing arcaded terrace, giving them a rather monastic look. Though agriculture and livestock are still important to the area's economy, many masías have now been turned into restaurants—some rustic, others luxurious—or 'rural tourism' accommodation, used primarily by the city folk from Barcelona, just

The first impression one receives of the Alta Garrotxa is one of solitude, a splendid solitude of gorges and ravines, some spanned by impressive medieval bridges, as at Llierca .

Olot has no significant historic buildings for these were all destroyed by earthquakes in the 15th century. It does have some outstanding Modernista buildings such as the Solá-Morales house.

125 km (77 miles) away. So far, La Garrotxa fans have been mainly Catalan and French , but there are also loyal English visitors who regularly enjoy the ideally balanced formula of rambling by day and being *bons vivants* by night. This area is used to tourism, and it shows in the existence of a sound infrastructure and, particularly, in the determination shown both by private individuals and public bodies to avoid its disadvan-

Olot is surrounded by poetically beautiful places like Parc Nou, a splendid botanic garden. It is a favorite spot with the added attraction of the interesting Volcano Museum.

La Garrotxa's *masías*—the farmhouses characteristic of the Catalán countryside— are often imposing buildings, in both size and beauty.

tages while capitalizing on its benefits. One such benefit is a reduction in the pattern of depopulation that has affected some parts of La Garrotxa. As in so many parts of the world, the last few decades have seen many people migrate away from the countryside and into the towns. This has hit the isolated area of Alta Garrotxa particularly hard.

ALTA GARROTXA

I should make it clear here that, geographically speaking, there are essentially two Garrotxas, one mild and one rugged. In fact 'rugged land' is what the word 'Garrotxa' means, though the description is only really applicable to its highland parts. In earlier times the population of the highlands lived in virtually self-sufficient masias, visiting Olot just once a year to stock up on the few things they were unable to produce themselves. The sausages and other charcuterie made in these masias and in the villages evolved into something approaching an art form, and the tradition still survives though local products are not always home-made today.

This is the Garrotxa of Marià Vayreda's novel *La punyalada* (The Stabbing), a portrayal of a harsh land which many fled for an easier life. One of her characters, a miller, declares: "...I'm tired of being a miller and living among wolves, always afraid of being torn to pieces ... I want to huddle up close to a village". The novel is set in the 1870s, the period when the exodus from the Alta Garrotxa for the lowlands began. Understandably, then, the first impression one receives of the Alta Garrotxa is one of solitude, a splendid solitude of gorges and ravines, some spanned by impressive medieval bridges, as at Llierca and Oix, still paved with ancient stones. Other survivors from the distant past are the thirty or so Romanesque hermitages, many of them on a pilgrimage route, scattered about this landscape of bare subsistence. Some of the hermitages are obviously abandoned, but others have been restored and can be visited, among them San Pere de Lligorda (barrel vaulted), and Beuda (triple apsed and with fine wrought-iron work decorating its door). Assumpta, the mayor of Beuda, offered her services as an off-the-cuff guide, with her husband as backup. Unlike many others, she and her family, rather than abandoning their masía, have adapted part of it into 'rural tourism' accommodation. It is called 'Can Mahola', which means something along the lines of 'House of the Pact with the Arabs'. I couldn't help observing that since the Arabs were expelled from Spain in the historic year of 1492 there wouldn't have been any left for her family to reach a pact with, and was chastened to be told that the pact predated the expulsion: the house dates back to 1312, since which time it has been occupied by no fewer than 33 generations of the same family. This splendid family homestead stands firmly on a little hill, sur-

rounded by dense Mediterranean woodland of pine, oak and ilex. In the old days, many charcoal burners worked in the woods of the Alta Garrotxa, and their ancient paths were also used by smugglers and bandits, for the border with France is just over the mountains.

Nowadays, the paths are used by ramblers. We walked one to reach the old priory of Santo Sepulcro de Palera, consecrated in 1085. We had done some reading up beforehand: the church became a basilica, namely a church with special privileges granted by the Pope, which included the right to provide sanctuary within an area of thirty paces around its confines and to confer the same favors accorded to pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. When the Holy Places fell into Turkish hands in the Middle Ages, the Christian Church designated El Santo Sepulcro de Palera a substitute. We were therefore expecting a building that reflected this status, but found something very different and, if anything, preferable: a simple gem of Romanesque architecture set among cypress, fig, olive and pomegranate trees, which seemed to encapsulate the essence of the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. Until quite recently, the church and its adjacent buildings, including a guest house, were looked after by a custodian almost as old as the century. He has not been replaced so far, and we felt a little as if we were trespassing when we explored the beautiful cloister. Led by Assumpta, we continued our personal pilgrimage to one last hermitage—Santa María de Segueró, hidden away on a wooded hillside. However, our attention was somewhat diverted by Can Noguer, a majestic casa *pairal*, or family mansion, far more sumptuous than the classic masía—in fact something like a cross between a masía and a Sicilian palace as featured in the works of Lampedusa. Standing in a splendid garden with trees centuries old, this imposing house with its heavily decorated facade was one of the most important in Catalonia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Being part of a mayor's entourage brings with it certain privileges, and among these was being invited in by the owners, and shown around a small part of their vast palace-masía, a museum in its own right.

OLOT

Leaving the most rugged—and nonetheless beautiful—part of La Garrotxa behind us, we headed for lower ground and the 'other Garrotxa' with its milder landscape of meadows, woods, rivers and charming valleys. We were making specifically for the local capital, Olot. Olot is known as 'the town of the volcanoes', but it could just as well be known as the town of painters and sculptors, or banks, or even saints, as we were to discover. Situated in the center of La Garrotxa and with 28,000 inhabitants, it is a prosperous town. There is an important local charcuterie industry, and it used also to be a center of textile production (textiles have been one the principal sources of wealth and development in Catalonia since the late 18th century). In 1787, an estimated 50% of Catalonia's production of knitwear came from Olot. This explains the many of the considerable fortunes made in the town, and the many banks and branches opened there.

As well as commercial prosperity, Olot also has a reputation for artistic and cultural activity, at grass-roots rather than elite level. There is a connection, for it was the textile industry's constant demand for new designs for printed fabrics that led to the foundation in 1783 of the *Escuela Publics de Dibujo* (Public School of Drawing), which later became the *Escuela de Bellas Artes* (School of Fine Arts), where young designers could be trained. Fabric design gradually gave way to more ambitious aspirations and, by the 19th century, on the strength of the reputations of painters and teachers such as Joaquim Vayreda and Josep Berga, by the 19th century an Olot School of painting had emerged, a realist school, with landscape as its most characteristic genre. By 1880 the demand for print designs had disappeared, and to provide alternative employment for their students the leading lights of the Escuela de Bellas Artes set up Arte Cristiano, a craft workshop to produce religious figurines in tune with the aesthetic of the period. The figures, known as 'Santos de Olot', became hugely popular and a thriving industry developed. At its peak in 1940, it needed 15 companies to meet the demands of the domestic market and exports, mainly to the Americas. Though demand is now a fraction of what it once was, Santos de Olot are still craftsman-made and are fine quality products; many are designed by well-known local sculptors such as Miquel Blay and Josep Llimona and their characteristic polychrome finish owes much to the painting skills of the locals: indeed, many successful painters have done stints in the *santos* workshops.

Despite the fact that art has been an integral part of life in Olot for centuries, it has no major monuments or significant historic buildings for these were all destroyed by violent earthquakes in the 15th century. It does have a pleasant and carefully tended 'old quarter', with some outstanding Modernista buildings such as the Gaietè Vila and Solá-Morales houses, the Baroque church of San Esteve and the former Convento del Carmen which now houses the Escuela de Bellas Artes, still as active today as it was two hundred years ago. Outside the old quarter is the Ensanche Malagrida, a garden suburb project created on part of his estate in 1914 by the opulent Manuel Malagrida. The elegant building where he once lived is now a youth hostel (yes—Olot has everything!). Pieces of sculpture are dotted here and there about the town, many of them well-known and much loved, such as *Maternidad* by Josep Clara, a native of Olot, which presides over one of the town's main squares. There is also an interesting local museum, the Museo Comarcal de La Garrotxa in an elegant neo-Classical building with a courtyard, which traces the area's history, though most of Its space is given over to works of Olot's landscape painters. Artistic loading in the local gene-pool is much in evidence, and is manifested in a particular way each Autumn on 18th October, when the Feria de San Lluc is held. Traditionally, this was the fair for which farmers would make their annual visit to Olot for provisions to last them through the year. Nearly 50 years ago, an art fair, *La Feria del Dibujo*, was set up as a sideline to the agricultural

fair and general market. What began with a few local painters exhibiting their works on some stone steps has by today developed into is an enormously popular event which attracts visitors from all over Catalonia and painters from farther afield. It came as no surprise, then, when a local friend told us with obvious pride: 'In Olot we don't put posters on our walls—we hang paintings'.

No surprise either that this area's painters should have become so engaged with its landscape. Olot is surrounded by poetically beautiful countryside; places like La Moixina with its wetlands, meadows, springs and oak-woods seem to have been designed with translation onto canvas in mind. The very painters who set up their easels there seem to contribute yet another picturesque element to the scene. Parc Nou, a splendid botanic garden is another favorite spot with the added attraction of a Volcano Museum.

VOLCANO PARK

The volcanoes at last! These are the star attractions of La Garrotxa in general and Olot in particular, since there are several right in the middle of town. The mountains of Girona (Spain's north-easternmost province) that lie between the rivers Fluvia and Ter were first shaken by volcanic explosions 350,000 years ago. There ensued a cycle of eruptions which eventually died out some 11,500 years ago, and which created a landscape unique in mainland Spain and now a protected area in the form of the *Parque Natural de la zona volcánica de La Garrotxa*. La Garrotxa's volcanoes are characterized mainly by eruptions of the Strombolian type: these cause a cone to form which then splits down one side and emits a stream of lava. The lava can flow for as far as 10 km (6miles), and as it cools it solidifies into basalt, one of the hardest rocks there is, often taking on bizarre shapes. Layers of this type of lava stream can be seen in the spectacular basalt cliffs on which the town of Castellfollit del la Roca stands.

The most popular and readily recognizable volcanoes are Santa Margarita, Croscat and Montsacopa. The first of these is very clearly conical in shape and inside its huge 350m (3,280 ft) crater there is a little hermitage, from which it takes its name—according to legend, Saint Margarita placated a dragon that once lived in the crater. Croscat is both the youngest and the highest (100 m/328 ft) volcano on the Iberian Peninsula. However, it is the effects of mining, carried out here in the mid-Sixties, that have given it its claim to fame. Its enormous deposit of lapilli was exploited over

a long period as a source of light, resilient building material. The huge scar this produced is still exposed and, now cleverly restored, it provides an excellent teaching aid demonstrating the internal structure of volcanoes. Montsacopa, which stands guard over Olot, is the most thoroughly domesticated of the lot, with houses built on its foothills and fruit and vegetable patches on its slopes. Nearly 40 volcanoes can be visited in the park: there is an information center and many marked paths for exploring it on foot. The combination of spectacular volcanic shapes and luxuriant vegetation in this relatively wet part of the country creates very appealing landscapes. Particularly attractive is La Fageda d'en Jorda, a spectacular area of beech forest, very well preserved and, at barely 500 m (1640 ft) situated very low down for this sort of woodland. Walking among the tall trees one can understand what inspired Joan Maragall (1860 - 1911) one of Catalonia's best-known poets to write the poem that now greets visitors to these woods. Beech, ilex and oak trees cover nearly 75°/o of the park, and the rest of the land is cultivated.

LOWLAND GARROTXA

Beyond the boundaries of the park lie the meadows, fields and little valleys closed off by mountain ranges of lowland La Garrotxa. This is the area known as La Vall de Bianya, whose population lives in scattered masías with arcaded facades added around the mid-19th century to give them more of a 'stately' look. This charming valley is dotted with many Romanesque hermitages, among them Sant Salvador and Santa Margarita de Bianya, this latter set in very bucolic surroundings and very close to Mas Guitart, a masía of the kind described above, now tastefully converted to rural tourism accommodation. Also close by is the Capsacosta Roman road which has remained in constant use, and a long stretch of which has recently been rehabilitated and signposted. Further south lies the Vall d'en Bas, again with clusters of masías, *casas pairales* and little churches tucked into the landscape. This is the most agricultural part of La Garrotxa, and lovely old villages, such as Mallol, stand out against green fields of maize or blend into the folds of the terrain, like the tiny hamlet of Sant Privat d'en Bas. If we carry on southwards we come to Hostalets, a lively town whose buildings have sequences of wooden balconies, and San Feliu de Pallerols whose town center is medieval. The castles in the surrounding countryside were the scene of the *Remensa* , a revolt of the peasant farmers in the 15th century. The *'vía verde del carrilet,* or 'green railway line', runs through here. The *carrilet* was a narrow gauge train which, until 1969, linked Olot with Girona, the provincial capital. The 57 km (35 miles) of track have now been converted into a splendid and well cared for path for cyclists and walkers. The old platforms, converted and run by local youth schemes, are now agreeable resting places where one can stop for a drink.

We left some of the best places until last. The biggest of these, despite having barely 2,000 inhabitants, was Besalú, also historically the most important given that it was formerly the county capital (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 31). It is a very well preserved medieval town with splendid buildings. To stroll about its porticoed plaza and its *call* (Jewish quarter) is to take a trip through time, in more than the usual metaphorical sense, back to the days of the legendary Bernat de Tallaferro, count of Besalú—for the last few years, on Summer evenings the inhabitants of Besalú dress up in period costume as characters from the town's history. One of the outstanding buildings on the grand Prat de Sant Pere esplanade is the church of Sant Pere, an impressive early Romanesque church (1003). It has an ambulatory typical of pilgrimage cathedrals, and a hospital which provided care for pilgrims traveling the road to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. There was a sizable Jewish community which co-existed with the Christian population until 1415 when it was forced to live in a designated part of town. Winding streets lead to the *mikwah,* the best-preserved example of medieval Jewish purification baths in Europe: these were discovered by chance in 1964 when a local dyer was having a well dug.

Between Besalú and Santa Pau (the other medieval town that is a must on any visitor's itinerary) is Castellfollit de la Roca, surely one of the most photographed places in Catalonia. And understandably so: standing 60 m (200 ft) up on basalt cliffs almost a kilometer (half a mile) long and overlooking the rivers Fluviá and Turonell, it is a spectacular sight, particularly in the dawn light and by night, when it is floodlit.

Santa Pau, right in the heart of the volcanic zone, is a little town almost as famous for its medieval center as for the little green beans, known as *fesols* , that are grown here. The historic part of town, contained within old town walls, is built around the castle and the Plaza Mayor, which dates from the 13th-15th centuries. This triangular, porticoed square is better known as the Firal dels Bous, or Ox Fair, after the most famous of the many markets and fairs that used to be held in it. There are good restaurants in Santa Pau, which makes it very lively at weekends, but the rest of the time it is a peaceful little town, its ancient stones and the modern sculptures in the streets easy on the eye and spirit.

Back at the balloon, Toni our pilot , responsible for arranging perfect weather for our flight, has also provided a farewell treat in the form of an Olot specialty sweet, *coca de llardons,* and a bottle of cava. We clink our glasses with Angels and Nuria, our hosts in La Garrotxa. Then it's up, up and away...

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

See Recipes on page 110.

VOLCANIC COOKING PLUS A LITTLE MORE

Translation: Jenny McDonald

Good cooking, in La Garrotxa as elsewhere, is based essentially on local produce. And in such an unusual place as this, this is especially true. The concept of "Volcanic cooking" was devised in 1995 with the idea of promoting a number of dishes that focus on the local products which, as a result of cultivation or rearing on volcanic land, have a special flavor and texture. There are a total of eleven basic products—some of which are universal such as pork, corn (used in the traditional winter dish of *farro*) or potatoes, while others are more specific such as Santa Pau haricot beans or buckwheat that is used to make the typical local fritters called *farinetes* (see Recipes page 110). The others are turnips, wild boar, snails, chestnuts, truffles and mushrooms—plenty to choose from!. Many restaurants have joined forces around this concept and offer travelers a number of traditional dishes such as *Escudella i carn d'olla*, the Catalonian stew that contains a variety of meats, *butifarras*, potatoes, vegetables and *pilota* (a dumpling of minced meat, egg, breadcrumbs, garlic and parsley). The stock is served first with noodles, then is followed by the pilota, meat and vegetables. Pig's feet, which are usually very well cooked in Catalonia, are something special in La Garrotxa—with mushrooms, snails, turnips ... The Santa Pau beans are invariably featured on local menus and are exquisite either in salad in the summer or as a warming winter dish in combination with butifarras.

But whether they fall under the "Volcanic Cooking" label or not, La Garrotxa—though its population is only about 50,000—has a wide variety of restaurants. There are traditional farmhouses in remote spots offering either a hearty escudella, or just a simple char-grilled steak—a specialty in Catalonia—or there are restaurants offering more creative dishes based on the traditional recipes and products. For the last 15 years, November has been "La Garrotxa Gastronomy Month" in which the restaurants present their specialties. This is yet another indicator of the district's enthusiasm for its cuisine and amounts to a splendid opportunity for food-lovers to get to know this part of Spain at a memorable time of year—not only are the autumn trees marvelous, but it is a paradise for wild mushrooms. Many dishes include these. Try the pumpkin and gray agaric soup or *casoliu*, a stew of chicken, rabbit, mushrooms and meatballs.

But if I had to choose one feature of all the food on offer in La Garrotxa I would choose its sausages and charcuterie. There is such a variety that there is always something suitable, whatever the time of day. At breakfast, what better than the typical country bread rubbed with fresh tomato and sprinkled with a few drops of olive oil, and a few slices of white, black or egg butifarra, *longaniza*, *fuet* or ham? There are many types of butifarra—the Catalonian national sausage. They are made with pork meat, lard and spices and black butifarras also contain blood. These sausages are boiled, whereas the fuets, longanizas, *xacallona*, etc., which are similar to French saucissons, are cured. Any butcher in La Garrotxa, however small, will have a good supply, as will the "Agrobotigas". These are a type of large, modern supermarket which function as cooperatives and sell all sorts of local agricultural products and, to a lesser extent, products from the rest of Catalonia and other regions. The first ones started up about 10 years ago. They are managed in a careful, innovative way and offer top quality products.

Now on to desserts. Starting with cheese, the La Garrotxa cheese is a mild, slightly sharp cheese made of goat's milk. Or you could try the cheeses which are made by hand every day by Abel Ibáñez in his farmhouse in La Pinya and which he has named after a sort of owl called "La dama blanca". Abel uses carefully-selected Friesian cow's milk to make two types of cheese —"serviette" cheese of Arabic origin and so called because it is molded in a cloth, and "atura" cheese (atura being a special type of mold). His aim is to recover the waning cheese-making tradition of the area.

For those with a sweet tooth, Olot is the place to go. Its many cake-shops offer the spongy *coca de llardons*, a sweet, large bun made with cracklings, or the *tortell adobat*, an aniseed-flavored, ring-shaped cake that perfumes the streets of old Olot with its magnificent aroma. To drink with them, try the local liqueur, *ratafía*, which is made from a selection of fruits and herbs soaked in eau-de-vie or very refined spirits. The fruits used traditionally are green walnuts collected in midsummer, with aniseed, chamomile, nutmeg, thyme, clove, oregano ... although in fact every family has its own favorite recipe that is passed on from father to son. And tradition dictates that it must be made on the night of Saint John, the mystical date of the summer solstice. It is also produced following artisan methods but on a larger scale in Ratafía Russet in Olot. This hundred-year-old enterprise still soaks the fruits in beautiful, old wooden barrels.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Below are the addresses of a number of tourism organizations in La Garrotxa that can supply information on accommodation, restaurants, museums, sports, etc.

Centro de Información del Parque Natural de la Zona Volcánica de La Garrotxa
Casal dels Volcans
Avda. de Santa Coloma, s/n
17800 OLOT (Girona)
Tel: (34) 972 266 202/012
Fax: (34) 972 270 455
http://www.gencat.es/mediamb/pnzvg.htm

La Garrotxa. Tierra de Acogida Turística
Passeig de Barcelona, 1entresol 2
17800 OLOT (Giona)
Tel: (34) 972 271 600
Fax: (34) 972 271 666
E-mail: citaolot@ddgi.es

Instituto Municipal de Promoción de la Ciudad de Olot
Bisbe Lorenzana, 15
17800 OLOT (Girona)
Tel: (34) 972 260 141
Fax: (34) 972 270 056
E-mail: impc@olot.org

Centro de Iniciativas Turísticas de Olot (CIT)
Mulleras, 33 - Apdo. 167
17800 OLOT (Girona)
Tel: (34) 972 270 242
Fax: (34) 972 271 211
E-mail: citolot@futurnet.es
http://empresas.futurnet.es/citolot/

Cataluña Web a Web
http://com-radio.com/CATWEB/garrotxa.htm

La Garrotxa.Net
http://www.garrotxa.net/cerca/

Patronato de Turismo Costa Brava-Girona
Emili Grahit, 13-15 9è B
17002 GIRONA
Tel: (34) 972 208 401
Fax: (34) 972 221 570
E-mail: cbrava@cbrava
http://www.cbrava.es/girona/

Tourist Information
Tel: (34) 902 119 337

A RIOJA AGAINST THE TIDE

BODEGAS LAN are part of a major industrial group committed to a new business ethos, whose ultimate goal is to give priority to the quality of its wines and, through these efforts, to become a member of the elite group of prestige Rioja wines.

BODEGAS LAN has always grown its own vines in a magnificent estate vineyard called "Viña Lanciano". This vineyard is situated in a highly privileged part of the Rioja Alta sub-zone, bordering on the Rioja Alavesa and on the banks of the River Ebro. This zone is characterised by the influence of both the Atlantic and Mediterranean climate, allowing the production of rich, aromatic red wines with the ideal acidity and alcoholic strength for cask ageing. This unique terroir produces wines which are sold in limited quantities in numbered bottles, the cellar's highest quality Reservas. These wines have the "Château" –bottled style and are only put on sale for those vintages classified as Very Good or Excellent.

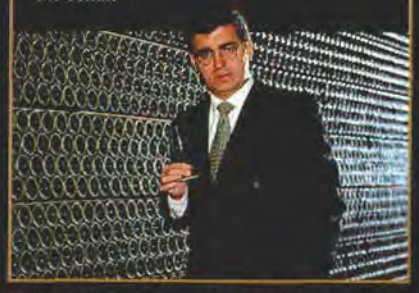
The BODEGAS LAN GROUP also has wineries in other winegrowing Denominations, for example, Santiago Ruiz in the Rías Baixas of Galicia and Covina in Labastida, Álava.

A SKILLED TEAM OF EXPERTS

BODEGAS LAN possess a skilled team of professionals with long experience in the winegrowing industry and expert knowledge of the processes of production and marketing of great wines.

Technical Staff
BODEGAS LAN GROUP

- An agricultural engineer who performs the duties of Group Technical Director and is in charge of the Research and Development Department.
- Three Biologists: One responsible for the Winegrowing Guidance Department, and the other two work in the Microbiology and Research Department.
- A Chemistry graduate who directs all the analytical and quality checks.
- Three enologists in charge of the production process and the movements of wine inside the cellar.



IN CONSTANT EVOLUTION

BODEGAS LAN are in the middle of a major programme of expansion and modernisation of their plant, with the aim of equipping them with the latest technology.

At the present time, BODEGAS LAN has completed a new ageing area with American- and French (Allier)- oak casks, being the first winery in the world that has introduced a state-of-the-art automatically controlled system for stacking casks, which performs all the movements necessary for racking the wines by robot.

During 1999 another new storage area will be constructed where all the vats will be made of stainless steel and automatically controlled.

And, finally, a new vinification plant is planned, with 120 self-emptying, stainless steel vats with 35,000 litre capacity, also totally operated by robots, thereby eliminating the use of pipes for transferring grapes, must, wine and fermented grape skins and residues.

LAST AWARDS OBTAINED

The excellent quality of BODEGAS LAN wines has won great international esteem, with a presence in over 30 different countries. In recognition of their quality, BODEGAS LAN wines have received numerous awards over the years. In the last year alone, 1998, the following accolades were bestowed :

- Gold and Bronze Medals. Bordeaux International Wine Challenge 1998.
- *Prix d'Excellence* Civart – France .
- Gold Medal , Chicago World Wine Championships 1998.
- Gold and Silver Medals, and Best Spanish Red Wine Trophy, Shanghai International Wine Challenge 1998 (WINE Magazine).

Rioja Wines

A SERIOUS COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

The meticulous care which characterises BODEGAS LAN starts in the fields, checking the quality of the grapes in all the vineyards which supply them.

Pioneers in the Rioja Denomination of Origin, during the 98 harvest, this winery introduced a new system for grading the quality of the grapes. The purpose of this system is to ensure the control of optimum quality grapes and to reward the efforts of those growers able to produce them through the payment of higher prices.

This system immediately evaluates the grapes according to five parameters: alcoholic strength, total acidity, pH, colour and grey mould (botrytis) analysis (sanitary control).

LAN

Fuenmayor (La Rioja) SPAIN
Tel.: + 34 941 450 950
Fax: + 34 941 450 567
e-mail: bodegaslan@fer.es

RICHARD AVEDON/OSBORNE

OSBORNE, This bull means business

BRANDY OSBORNE VETERANO

- Un poco macho un poco ángel -

TEXT: MARK LITTLE
PHOTOS: OSBORNE

IT STANDS PROUDLY ON HILLTOPS ALL OVER SPAIN: THE UNMISTAKABLE SILHOUETTE OF A BLACK BULL. IT NO LONGER CARRIES A BRAND NAME, BUT THE TRAVELER IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZES IT AS "EL TORO DE OSBORNE"—THE OSBORNE BULL. IT IS AN IMAGE SO POWERFUL THAT IT HAS TRANSCENDED ITS ORIGINS AS AN ADVERTISING BILLBOARD AND BECOME AN INEXTRICABLE ELEMENT OF SPANISH ICONOGRAPHY. THE OSBORNE COMPANY, LIKE THE BULL THAT IS ITS EMBLEM, EMBODIES A UNIQUE SPIRIT WHICH COMBINES DEEP-ROOTED TRADITION AND A MODERN APPROACH TO BUSINESS.

The house of Osborne, which traces its roots back to the 18th century, is currently undergoing a far-reaching process which will take it renewed and refreshed into the 21st. This is a company that is constantly reinventing itself. The new spirit is summed up in one of their latest Spanish television commercials—titled "*Así somos*; This is the way we are"—which combines the classic image of the bull with such symbols of the New Spain as the modernistic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

It is an expression of the self confidence which has been the guiding force of this family-owned company since its foundation.

An important part of the new plan calls for consolidating and expanding the Osborne presence abroad. At present, exports account for somewhat more than ten percent of Osborne's business (turnover in 1998 was 47,000 million pesetas (282.5€, $298 million), but the international market is growing at a faster rate than the domestic one and with an ambitious investment and marketing strategy the company can expect to double its international trading over the next three to five years. In their favor, they offer products of which they are justifiably proud, including fine sherries, brandy de Jerez, aged wine, and the best ham in the world.

Some time ago Osborne realized that the future was in top quality, high-end products rather than in trying to attract customers by cutting prices. The approach seems to be paying off. Last year for instance, the sales of Osborne's sherries in Holland rose by four percent, while at the same time there was a decline in Dutch sales of own-brand supermarket sherry, even though this last is almost half the price. It is just one more indication that today's international consumer is more interested in quality.

Of course, it is no good to make the best products in your sector if you don't tell anyone about it. When a new general manager; Felipe Sánchez, was appointed just over two years ago one of his first endeavors was to refocus the company's marketing strategy, with a view to firmly establishing the Osborne name on the international market.

AN ENGLISHMAN IN SHERRY LAND

In fact, Osborne has been a company geared towards export since its very origins. Our story begins in the second half of the 18th century when a Devonshire man named Thomas Osborne arrived in the city of Cádiz. There he befriended the British Consul in Cádiz, Sir James Duff, co-founder of the Duff Gordon winery, and Osborne began exporting Duff Gordon's wines to America. Aware of the potential for growth in the sherry trade, Osborne went on to start his own winery in Cádiz in 1772, later moving it to the seaside town of El Puerto de Santa María, near Jerez.

The connection with Duff Gordon was to prove long lasting. The two wineries joined forces in 1832, and later Duff's descendants sold their share to the Osborne family. Osborne kept the well-established Duff Gordon label, however, until they started distributing their products in Spain in 1890: the domestic item was designated with the more pronounceable (for Spaniards) Osborne.

More than two centuries after its foundation, Osborne continues to be an entirely family-owned business. Its one hundred and eighty-plus shareholders are the original Thomas Osborne's descendants, whose interests are represented by the board of directors, with Ignacio Osborne acting as chairman and Tomás Osborne as president, the fifth generation of Osbornes to head the family concern.

Osborne's history is closely linked to the town of El Puerto de Santa María, on the Bay of Cádiz. El Puerto stands at the southern tip of the sherry *Denominación de origen* region, and is especially renowned for the crispness of its dry *fino* sherry, due to the proximity of the sea. It is also well known for its seafood: people come from all over the country to its famous Ribera del Marisco (Shellfish Row) to sample freshly cooked shrimp. The

THE FIRST OSBORNE BULL, MADE OF WOOD AND STANDING FOUR METERS, WAS INSTALLED ON THE BURGOS HIGHWAY NEAR MADRID. MORE RECENT VERSIONS ARE MADE OF METAL, TOWERING 12 METERS AND WEIGHING FOUR TONS. AT ONE POINT THERE WERE MORE THAN 500 OF THEM DOTTED AROUND SPAIN.

THE JEREZ REGION IS THE SOURCE OF AROUND 90 PERCENT OF THE BRANDY MADE IN SPAIN AND OSBORNE, FOLLOWING ITS PURCHASE IN 1990 OF THE BOBADILLA WINERY, ROSE TO BECOME THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR BRANDY PRODUCER.

town has one of Spain's most attractive bullrings. It was built in 1880 by Thomas Osborne's son (also named Thomas), with seating for exactly 12,816 people—the entire population of El Puerto at that time.

Not far from the bullring are the Osborne headquarters. Thousands of visitors make the pilgrimage to the venerable cellars, which occupy several town blocks. Entering through the reception area, which looks like a combination of English clubhouse and Andalusian hacienda, they are taken on a guided tour of cellars filled with row upon row of old oak sherry butts, while a guide explains the *solera* system of combining different vintages (see Glossary on page 126); the magic of the *flor* yeast which forms on the aging wine and accounts for its exceptional dryness and nutty aroma; and the difference between the various types of sherry: fino, *amontillado, oloroso,* cream...

After the ninety-minute tour, visitors might come away with the impression that this is a tradition-bound company which has barely changed in generations. What they might not guess is that Osborne is a major player in the Spanish food and drinks sector, whose activities reach far beyond the boundaries of Jerez and sherry.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BULL

Labels like the delicious Oloroso Bailén and Fino Quinta dry sherry are considered among the top in their class but Osborne is, above all, brandy, the famed Brandy de Jerez, which this house has been making since the 19th century.

Brandy de Jerez is a drink with almost as old a tradition as sherry wine. Since the middle ages distilled wine spirits had been a major export to places like Holland (hence the name *Holandas* to designate the clear wine spirit of Jerez). At the beginning of the 19th century, Jerez vintners took to aging the wine spirits in casks which had previously held sherry wine, which imparts a distinctive aroma and flavor.

The Jerez region is the source of around 90 percent of the brandy made in Spain, and Osborne, following its purchase in 1990 of the Bobadilla winery (home of the popular 103 brand), rose to become the country's major brandy producer. Centered at the modern El Tiro cellar on the outskirts of El Puerto de Santa María and accounting for 54 percent of the company's trade and 38 percent of its international sales, brandy is Osborne's core business, and a key element in their export activity.

Osborne supplies 95 percent of the Spanish brandy sold in Germany, the world's largest market for this spirit, where the classic Veterano label is especially popular. They also have a strong presence in other European countries and in such historically loyal markets as Mexico.

But while its inherent quality and favorable value-for-money ratio earned Spanish brandy a warm reception abroad, back in Spain things weren't going so smoothly. In the 1980s alarm bells started ringing in Jerez as the market for brandy declined after years unchallenged as Spain's favorite spirit. A new generation of Spaniards tended to identify brandy with unsophisticated old fuddy-duddies. It was considered far trendier to drink Scotch whisky.

Companies like Osborne were quick to react. Advertising campaigns reminded young drinkers that brandy is not limited to enjoying as a digestive after a meal, but is a versatile drink that lends itself to all sorts of occasions. The message was: "It's okay to drink brandy on the rocks or to mix it in a long drink." Thanks to this campaign Osborne's mid-range brandy Magno established itself as one of the market leaders, and overall the domestic market for brandy is once again on the rise.

Now Osborne has let another bull loose: a brandy named El Toro. A departure from the classic image of brandy, El Toro is a spirit specifically designed for using in mixed drinks rather than on its own, having been filtered to remove the stronger aromas and flavors of traditional brandy. El Toro was introduced on the Spanish market this year, targeted at fashionable bars and trendy discos where young adults congregate rather than at supermarkets. Its release outside Spain could follow next year, with Germany being the likeliest test market.

Two years went into preparing for this latest drink, not the least in market research and coming up with the appropriate presentation. El Toro comes in a strikingly modern, metallic gray bottle. Osborne has always placed great importance on how their products are packaged. In 1964, for instance, they enlisted the creative genius of none other than Salvador Dalí to design a bottle for their top-of-the-line brandy, Conde de Osborne. The crazily tilted, opaque white bottle still stands up as a daring example of commercial design.

Osborne's most lasting contribution to Pop Art is, of course, the well known bull. It was in 1956 that they commissioned designer Manuel Prieto to come up with a logo to promote their popular Veterano brandy. The result was the now-famous "bullboard" (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 24). The first one, made out of wood and standing four meters (13 feet), was installed on the Burgos highway near Madrid. More recent versions are made of metal, towering 12 meters (40 feet) and weighing four tons. At one point there were more than 500 of them dotted around the Spanish countryside.

Yet this was an endangered species: in 1989 a new law banned advertising billboards along intercity roads in Spain, and it looked like the Osborne bulls would fall

PERCENTAGES OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SALES OF OSBORNE PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	DOMESTIC SALES	INTL. SALES
BRANDY	54%	38%
SHERRY	8%	20%
RIOJA WINE	6%	24%
ANISE LIQUEUR	11%	3%
HAM AND PORK PRODUCTS	19%	3%
PORT WINE	2%	12%

Source: Osborne

victim to the bulldozers even though Osborne had removed the advertising lettering, leaving only the familiar silhouette. Spaniards reacted as if part of their national heritage were under threat. Artists campaigned to save to bull, intellectuals wrote lengthy essays in the press. Such was the outcry that the Osborne bull was finally spared, the Spanish courts pronouncing that its cultural value far outweighed its advertising function.

FROM JABUGO TO RIOJA

Hiring Salvador Dalí or coming up with the bull billboard idea are examples of a flair typical in a company which is something of a maverick in Jerez, as it usually does the opposite of everyone else. When most Jerez growers were tearing up vineyards to stave massive over production (the vineyard area was halved in the region), Osborne was replanting and buying new acreage, both in Jerez and in La Mancha, the source of the wine spirits that go into brandy, thus ensuring their future self sufficiency.

And while other *bodegas* were being bought out by international drinks companies, Osborne remained steadfastly a family concern, resisting offers even in the toughest of times. Instead, they *bought* companies. They were also pioneers in setting up their own distribution network, Odisa, established in 1972. Aside from allowing Osborne to control the marketing of their own products, it would prove useful in obtaining concessions to distribute other companies' goods.

At the end of the 1960s the Osbornes had decided that the best way to compete in the modern marketplace was to leave the day to day management of the company in the hands of trained professionals, and they became adept at headhunting the most talented minds in the drinks sector. One of the first determinations the new management team took was to reduce Osborne's almost total reliance on brandy, which amounted to around 90 percent of the business. This meant diversifying, branching out into other sectors of the food and drinks trade.

The list of Osborne's acquisitions makes for a fascinating study, including as it does, some of the star items of the gastronomic firmament. In just over two decades, between 1967 and 1988, Osborne bought outright or acquired a share in companies producing port wine, Rioja wine, anise liqueur, gin and other spirits, cured hams and sausages, and cured cheeses. One thing all these companies had in common was that they were, like Osborne, old family firms specializing in top quality products. The Catalan firm Anís El Mono, for instance, was established in 1870 by Vicente Bosch, and is respected as the producer of Spain's most prestigious anise liqueur (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37). Osborne bought the company in 1974.

Osborne has since sold the Boffard cheese company and their share in the Rives spirits factory, but the remaining companies within the group constitute a vital part of Osborne's future strategy in Spain and abroad. One of them is Sánchez Romero Carvajal, a name whose mere mention triggers the enthusiasm of Spanish

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gourmets. It was started in 1879 by Rafael Sánchez in the town of Jabugo, in the north of Huelva, western Andalusia. Over the following century it established a firm reputation for producing the best cured hams in Spain, from the prized *Ibérico* pig.

When Osborne entered the company in 1983 with a 30 percent share (they are now sole shareholders), their efforts were directed towards modernizing the process with a view to complying with European Union regulations, but without sacrificing the traditional quality of the resulting hams and sausages. They were also instrumental in preserving the purity of the unique Ibérico breed, which was at the time threatened by uncontrolled cross breeding.

The free-ranging Ibérico pig spends the autumn months foraging for acorns in the oak forests of the Huelva mountains (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33). After the *matanza*, or pig slaughter, the hams are salted and then hung to cure in dark cellars for around 18 months. The Ibérico is a slow-growing breed which requires plenty of space, and the curing process is lengthy. As a result a good Ibérico such as Sánchez Romero Carvajal's legendary "5 Js" is the most expensive ham in the world, but that doesn't stop Spaniards from snapping up most of the annual production of more than 140,000 hams a year and as many shoulders.

Fortunately, some is left over for the growing number of foreign enthusiasts of *jamón* ibérico. Such a specialized item might appear difficult to export, but Osborne has an advantage in tourism. With 47 million visitors, Spain is the world's second biggest tourist destination after France, and a great many of those visitors make their way to taverns and restaurants where they sample this delicacy first hand. Naturally, when they return home they want the genuine article. Prosciutto just won't do.

Sánchez Romero Carvajal exports its ham, sausages, and tinned pork products to countries that include France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Holland, and Switzerland. The company has invested in state-of-the-art vacuum packaging technology to ensure that the product is as excellent as if it had just been cut off the bone in a Spanish restaurant. Osborne's hams are a big hit in such choice outlets such as Harrods of London and Fachon of France.

Unlike ham, which requires a certain prior knowledge by the consumer, some things practically sell by themselves, such as Rioja wines.

Osborne's purchase of a winery in Rioja in 1973 was a combination of amazing foresight and incredible good luck. At that time Rioja was going through a crisis, plagued by over production and an abundance of unoutstanding wine. Who was to suspect that just over a decade later, goaded by the success of Ribera del Duero, Spain's premier wine region would be once again at the forefront of Spanish winemaking, a byword for quality, that the world would be clamoring for Rioja wine, or that vineyard acreage would be as valuable as gold dust?

Bodegas Montecillo was founded in 1874 in the Rioja town of Fuenmayor. It was a small winery with a modest production, using traditional methods, but with an enviable reputation for superior aged red wines. This was exactly what Osborne was looking for: a small winery which offered plenty of room for expansion. In a move that appears masterful with the benefit of hindsight but was deemed sheer madness at the time, they invested heavily in a new winemaking facility. In the long run the bet paid off handsomely, with renewed interest in Rioja wines both in Spain and abroad, and Osborne's efforts have continued. In 1996 they invested some 700 million pesetas (4.2€, $4.4 million) and brought annual production up to 225,000 cases.

Montecillo's labels Viña Cumbrero and Viña Monty have had an especially good reception abroad, accounting for nearly a quarter of Osborne's international sales. Half the production is destined for export, the main clients being Sweden, Great Britain, Norway, and Holland. Montecillo is also the calling card with which Osborne is set to conquer that Mount Everest of all international exporters, the American market.

According to Jeremy Parsons, who was appointed to head Osborne's international division a year ago, the U.S. could provide valuable lessons for the future, as the place to test marketing techniques that can later be applied elsewhere.

Here Osborne has used a direct, hands-on approach to promote their wares, with participation in wine fairs and other events, and one-on-one contacts with restaurateurs and wine writers to complement conventional advertising. Largely as a result of this, Montecillo wines have had rave reviews in the American wine press, precisely at a time when Americans are more interested than ever in red wine.

By establishing a name for Montecillo and by extension the Osborne name, the way is paved for the group's other products. Osborne's sherries already enjoy quite a reputation among American connoisseurs, including the line of rare sherries which they introduced in the 1990s. These are sherries from extremely old soleras and are indeed rare, with production in some cases limited to 200 liters a year.

Osborne and the American gourmet seem made for each other. There is a demand among discerning American consumers for top quality foods and wines, products with—we might as well be blunt about it—a certain snob appeal. The mystique of the after-dinner brandy, the rare sherry which has spent decades in the cellars of El Puerto de Santa María, hams from pampered free range Ibérico pigs, fine red wine made with handpicked Tempranillo grapes and aged in casks of French oak... these are things which appeal and in which, as luck would have it, Osborne are acknowledged masters.

Mark Little *is an American-born journalist based in southern Spain. A former editor of* Lookout Magazine, *he now contributes to publications and travel guides on Spain.*

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A Stroll amongst Vines and Wines

There is an incredible wine boom going on in Spain. For a wine writer, trying to keep up with the plethora of good Spanish wines being produced these days is quite a job (see below American Importers Specializing in Spanish Wines). It had always required long hours of criss-crossing this Texas-sized country and tasting scores of wines. Now, there are dozens of new wineries with hundreds of good wines to be tasted, if one ever hopes to keep abreast of the latest developments in Spain.

When I began visiting Navarre in the early 1970s, there were perhaps three wineries that merited a visit. In the 1980s, forward-looking Navarrese planted foreign varietals; existing *bodegas* revamped their facilities; and state-of-the-art wineries were built. In the 1990s, Navarre lived up to its promise as world-class wine region, producing some exceptional barrel-fermented Chardonnays; dry, food-friendly *rosados* that are among the world's best; a broad range of reds ranging from elegant, traditional Tempranillo-laced blends to rich Cabernet Sauvignons and Merlots; and Moscatel dessert wines that are superb with *foie gras*. At last count, I had visited a dozen Navarre wineries and a half dozen more are high on the list for my next trip.

In the early 1980s, I used to visit five or six wineries in the Ribera del Duero. Vega Sicilia was the only winery well known outside the Ribera, but Alejandro Fernández Pesquera and Pérez Pascuas Viña Pedrosa showed the potential that would place them among Spain's most sought after wines a decade later. In the past few years wineries have popped up like mushrooms. The Ribera del Duero *Consejo Regulador* now lists more than one hundred wineries.

In 1988, I visited the ancient region of Priorato and tasted at the only two wineries whose wines were being imported in the United States. I also visited a small grower who sold rather unfinished bulk wines, but, even though his rough Garnacha and Cariñena-based wines were works in progress, I was so impressed by their potential that I predicted a great future for Priorato. A few years later, I tasted half a dozen very good wines. Now the Priorato D.O. has some 25 producers and several Priorato wines have drawn international attention, selling from US$ 50 to US$ 100 (€ 48-96) per bottle.

Just a few years ago, Toro, which like its eastern neighbor, Ribera del Duero, sits astride the great Duero wine river, had one major winery, Fariña, and a few cooperatives. Toro is now being billed as the "Castilian Priorato," the next great up-and-coming Spanish wine region. Important producers from the Ribera del Duero, Rueda, and La Rioja have bought vineyards and are planning new wineries in Toro.

Galicia is a journey unto itself, with several wine regions calling for attention. Rías Baixas has at least two dozen producers making wonderfully fruity, floral Albariños. Inland produces flinty, dry whites that are fine companions to seafood. The terroir-laced wines of Monterrei D.O. are very promising and Valdeorras, where the Godello grape is grown on splendid, hillside slate soil, shows the potential to produce grand cru caliber white wines.

In La Rioja, still Spain's major red wine region, there are so many good wines that a week is hardly enough to taste the wines from the classic Rioja Alta bodegas making time-honored traditional reservas and gran reservas (see Glossary on page 126); from the new chateau-like wineries of the Rioja Alavesa; and the interesting wines emerging from Rioja Baja.

Every year more boutique *cavas*, excellent white wines, and ever-improving reds are showing up in Penedés outside Barcelona. As if these major areas were not enough, every year interesting new wines emerge from D.O.s such as Somontano, Conca de Barberá, Tarragona, Jumilla, and La Mancha. There are fringe benefits to this peripatetic life of visiting Spanish wine regions. Since I try to taste as many wines as possible with food, because I believe most table wines will be consumed as companions to a meal (not as samples judged on a few sips in a blind tasting), I have had many opportunities to verify firsthand in excellent little-known country restaurants just how wonderful Spanish food has become. My experiences in these places, where beautifully interpreted classic dishes made with local seasonal produce paired with regional wines often produce sublime combinations, have convinced me that Spanish cuisine is well into what is undoubtedly its golden age.

On a recent trip to Spain, I visited the Ribera del Duero on the way to Bilbao, where I spent three days working on a project involving the Guggenheim Museum; then I was due in La Rioja, Navarre, and Cataluña. On my last afternoon in Bilbao, I was invited to lunch by José Luís Iturrieta, who writes a daily gastronomic column for the Basque newspaper, *Deia*.

Since there are few people, if any, more knowledgeable about Basque cuisine than Iturrieta, when this enthusiastic food expert talks, I listen. He wanted to introduce me to Mikel Bustinza, owner of **Horma Honda, Barrio Barnagoitia, a few kilometers southeast of Amorebieta-Echano (Vizcaya); tel: (34) 946 733 415**, a wonderful country restaurant in a converted *caserío* (a large Basque stone-and-timber family farmhouse) outside Bilbao. Iturrieta raved about Bustinza's great wine cellar, which included Dominio de Pingus, Danish winemaker Peter Sisseck's celebrated new Ribera del Duero wine (Sisseck—see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47—is also the enologist at Hacienda Monasterio). Made primarily for export, only one to two percent of Pingus' production is allotted to Spain.

After driving up a narrow, winding mountain road above the Ibaizabal valley, I found Horma Honda. Cars lined the edges of the one-lane road beside this very popular caserío. I met Iturrieta and his two other guests, Agustín Martínez, director of Bilbao's Hotel Ercilla, and Antonio Lavandero, owner of La Gabarra, an excellent Basque *asador* (grill-and-roast house), in Deusto near the Guggenheim Museum.

For once, Iturrieta ordered something other than a Basque wine, a 1997 Belontrade y Lurton, a luscious, fruity white Rueda, which we sampled earlier at **D'Vinno "La Tienda," Ibáñez de Bilbao 6, Bilbao, tel:/fax: (34) 944 234 882**, a marvelous small shop owned by Esperanza Ares, a knowledgeable young woman who specializes in hard-to-find Spanish wines.

The Rueda was great with superb *cangrejos del río* (river crayfish) in a sauce made with *chorizo*, tomatoes, and onion. Next we had a dozen phenomenal, lightly-grilled clams sprinkled with Spanish extra virgin olive oil and lemon juice. The Basques' special affinity for mushrooms, showed in a dish of exceptional woodsy *ondo beltza* (*boletus edulis* or *porcini*), sautéed with bread crumbs and white wine. Also excellent was the Basque delicacy, *kokotxas al pil-pil*, the "throat" of hake, in a smooth emulsion made with fine olive oil, garlic, parsley, and a bit of dried *picante* chili pepper.

With a huge, juicy grilled steak with roasted potatoes, Bustinza opened both Dominio de Pingus 1996, listed at 80,000 pesetas (US$ 500/€ 480), and Álvaro Palacios L'Ermita 1996 (from Priorato), another of Spain's most heralded new wines (36,000 pesetas; US$ 225; € 216). Drinking US$ 725/€ 697 worth of three year-old Spanish wines (Pingus' second vintage and L'Ermita's fourth) with Horma Hondo's food was indeed a special way to spend an afternoon. At four p.m., I headed for a rendezvous with 40 Rioja white wines in Logroño, the capital of La Rioja.

Thomas Perry, director of the Rioja Wine Exporter's Group introduced me to **El Lagar, calle Huesca 13, tel: (34) 941 250 309**, a Logroño favorite. Like so many good regional restaurants in Spain, El Lagar was a simple place with no pretensions, whose mission is to serve good, uncomplicated traditional food and reasonably good wines at very reasonable prices. Maura Villanueva, the owner and *cocinera*, specializes in *comida casera* (homecooking) that puts many expensive restaurants to shame. Her simple *ensalada* was perfect

vine-ripened tomatoes, wonderful sweet onions, Spanish olive oil, and wine vinegar. Marinated fresh anchovies were delicious and so were braised *puerros* (leeks) dressed with red Rioja wine vinegar, olive oil, and coarse salt. We had a beautifully balanced, richly flavored, 1996 Viña Salceda Rioja Tinto de Crianza. With the entrees, *pimientos de piquillo* stuffed with *cabracho* (rock-fish) and *asadurilla*, devilishly rich lamb giblets cooked with garlic and peppers in delicious sauce, we drank a 1987 Viña Albina Rioja Reserva, an inexpensive, but elegant wine with lovely fruit and a long spicy finish. For dessert, we had three classics, *leche frita* (literally, fried milk; a delicious milk, sugar, and cinnamon pudding-like mixture that is battered and lightly fried in olive oil), excellent homemade flan, and *arroz con leche* (a creamy rice pudding).

A day later, I was halfway across Spain in Catalonia tasting the big, rich wines of Priorato which have become an international sensation. With young enologist Sara Pérez Ovejero, whose father, Josep Lluis Pérez, is one of Spain's most respected winemakers, I tasted their superb, well-balanced Clos Martinet wines and their spectacular new wine from the 80-year old Cims de Porrera vineyard. In Gratallops, now a major wine town, I met Carles Pastrana and his wife Mariona Jarque, owners of the Costers de Siurana winery, for lunch at one of my favorite Priorato restaurants, **Hostal La Font, calle Consolació 2, Gratallops, tel: (34) 977 8392**. We drank the silky, richly flavored 1997 Clos de L'Obac Miserere with a fine lunch of melon with *serrano* ham, *escarola y esqueixada de bacallá con romesco* (escarole with strips of marinated bacalao with a pepper and hazelnut romesco sauce), *caracoles* (land snails in sauce), and *conejol a la brasa* (grilled rabbit) with *alioli*.

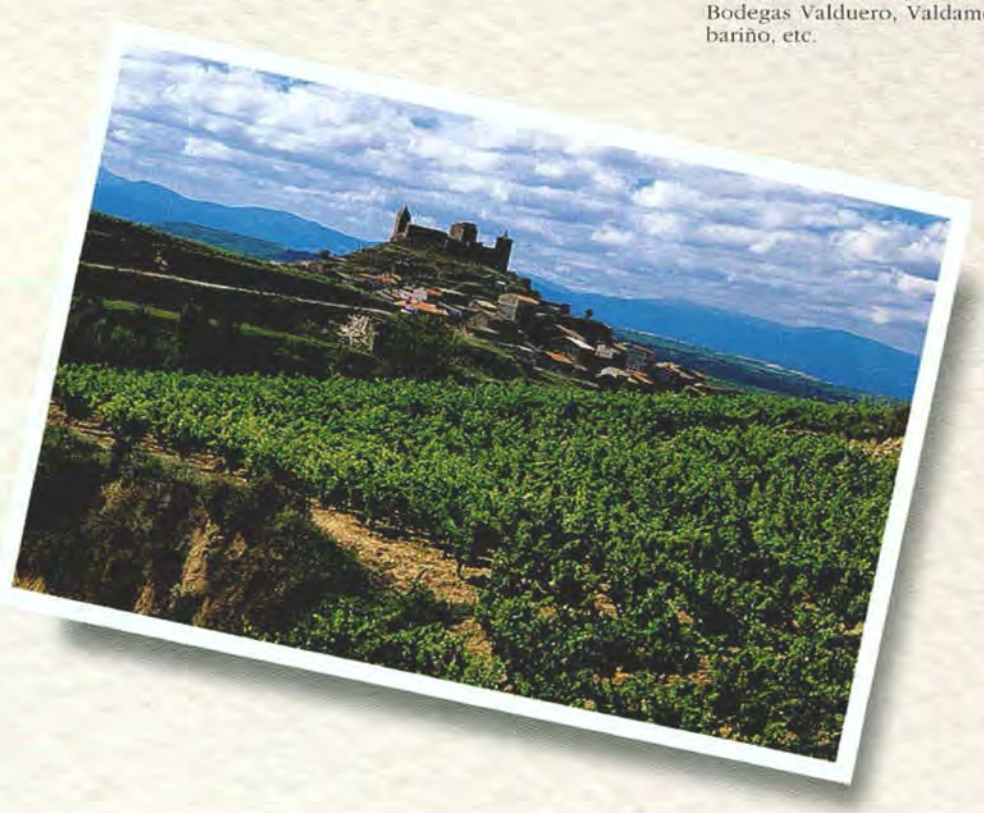
After lunch, I met one of Spain's most highly regarded young winemakers, Álvaro Palacios, at Piro, another Gratallops restaurant, and tasted his smooth, balanced 1997 Les Terrasses and the richer, more tannic 1997 L'Ermita, from his great old vines hillside vineyard. As luck would have it, René Barbier, the owner-winemaker of Clos Mogador was having lunch with Christopher Canaan, another peripatetic wine man who owns Europvin, a major importer of Spanish wines. They invited me to taste both the exotic 1997 Clos Mogador and the surprisingly mature tasting 1997 Daphne Glorian Clos Erasmus, which is also made at Barbier's Clos Mogador bodega in Gratallops.

The next morning I visited Barbier to taste his 1998 wines from barrel, then set off for Vilafranca del Penedés to have lunch at Mas Rabell and taste the wines of Miguel Torres. La Rioja and Navarre were then my next stops. After two and a half weeks in Spain, I had barely scratched the surface. I felt a bit like Don Quixote tilting at windmills, which reminded me that there are several interesting wineries in La Mancha that I need to visit on my next trip.

***Gerry Dawes** has been traveling the gastronomic and wine roads of Spain for 30 years. His articles and/or photographs have been published in* The New York Times, Food & Wine, Playboy, Martha Stewart Living, The Wine News, The Wine Enthusiast, Santé, *and many others. In October 1998, he was the first foreigner to receive the prestigious* Cena de los 11 Vinos *wine award in Madrid.*

Importers Specializing in Spanish Wines in the United States:
A decade ago, only a couple of importers handled significant portfolios of Spanish wine in the United States. Now there are several companies with large Spanish portfolios. The following are the major ones:

- **Classical Wines from Spain, 4000 Aurora Avenue, Suite 222, Seattle, WA 98103; tel: (206) 547-0255, fax: (206) 547-2426.** Hidalgo sherries, Pesquera (Ribera del Duero), Condado de Haza (Ribera del Duero), Morgadio and Lusco Albariño (Rías Baixas), Bodegas Bretón (La Rioja), Casta Diva (Alicante), Bodegas Pireneos (Somontano), Cellers Pasanau (Priorat), Guelbenzu (Navarre), and others.
- **Fine Estates From Spain–Jorge Ordoñez Selections, 75 Fox Meadow Lane, Dedham, MA 02026; tel: (781) 461-2621, fax: (781) 461-2570.** San León Manzanilla, Llopart cava, Teófilo Reyes (Ribera del Duero), Ismael Arroyo (Ribera del Duero), Abadia de Retuerta (Castile and Leon), Bodegas Cantabria (La Rioja), Remirez de Ganuza (La Rioja), Remelluri (La Rioja), Muga (La Rioja), Martín Codax Albariño (Rías Baixas), Bodegas Nikeas (Navarre), Clos de L'Obac (Priorato), and many others.
- **Europvin, S. A.–Christopher Canaan Selections, 25 Hall Ave., Watertown MA 02172; tel: (617) 924-7620, fax: (617) 924-7625.** Emilio Lustau sherries, Vega Sicilia (Ribera del Duero), Viña Pedrosa (Ribera del Duero), La Rioja Alta, S.A., Bodegas Magaña (Navarre), Mauro (Castile and Leon), Clos Mogador (Priorato), and others.
- **European Cellars–Eric Solomon Selections, 121 W. 27th St., Suite 1103, New York, NY 10001; tel: (212) 924-4949, fax: (212) 924-0567.** Artadi (La Rioja), Augustus (Penedés), Capcanes (Tarragona), Carmelo Rodero (Ribera del Duero), Vega Sauco (Toro), Clos Erasmus and Scala Dei (Priorato), Enate (Somontano), and Fillaboa Albariño (Rías Baixas).
- **Frontier Wine Imports, 2 Point View Place, Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046; tel: (973) 334-2320, fax: (973) 334-5148.** Barbadillo sherries, Fariña (Toro), Bodegas Ochoa (Navarre), others.
- **De Maison Selections, Fordham Square, 1249 N. Fordham Blvd., Suite E-1, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; tel: (919) 933-4245, fax: (919) 932 61 07; e-mail: demaison@wordnet.att.net.** Bodega Señorío de Otazu (Navarre), Bodegas Palacios Remondo (La Rioja), Viña Sastre (Ribera del Duero), Vagal (Castile and Leon), Avinyó cava, Joan D'Anguera (Tarragona), Rottlan Torra (Priorat).
- **Shaw Ross International Importers, 15960 NW 15th Ave., Miami, FL 33169; tel: (305) 625-6561.** Marques de Riscal, Cardenal Mendoza, Sánchez Romate Jerez,etc.
- **CIV USA, 10419 Old Placerville Road, Suite 252, Sacramento, CA 95827, tel: (916) 368-7188.** Martínez Bujanda, Cristalino cava, Jaume Serra, Condes de Alvarei Alvariño.
- **A.V. Imports, 6450 Dobbin Road, Suite G, Columbia, MD 21045; tel: (410) 884-9463.** Bodegas Valduero, Valdamor Albariño, etc.



RECIPES FOR VEGETABLE PRESERVES

Recipes selected by Julia López de Sagredo
Wines recommended by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Asparagus with orange and lemon sauce

In Spain, quality white or green asparagus is usually eaten at room temperature, on its own, with olive oil or a sauce such as mayonnaise or vinaigrette. Here we have chosen a variation with the juice of citrus fruits to give added sparkle and fruitiness.

SERVES 4:
2 bottles or large cans of extra large white or green asparagus, or 1 of each type

SAUCE:
2 yolks of hard-boiled eggs
1 raw egg yolk
1 small tsp lemon juice
1 tbsp orange juice
A pinch of salt, and pepper
1 glass of olive oil
1 egg white

Chop the hard-boiled egg yolks and mix with the raw egg yolk. Add the orange and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Gradually add the olive oil, beating as if for mayonnaise. Check the seasoning. Beat the egg white until stiff and add to the sauce. Arrange the well-drained asparagus on a serving dish, pour over the sauce and decorate with slices of orange and lemon.
Recommended wine: A D.O. Navarra white made from Chardonnay grapes and cask fermented: the cask-derived aromas in combination with this variety's characteristic smokiness will complement the complex flavor of the asparagus, while the buttery notes and touch of acidity will stand up well to the tanginess of the citrus dressing.

Broad bean omelette

Vegetables can be combined with eggs, either in omelettes or scrambled. In Spain, fish, shellfish, and chorizo are often added.

SERVES 2:
300 g preserved broad beans
4 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
4 eggs
Salt and pepper

Heat 3 tbsp of olive oil in a frying pan and sauté the onion and garlic for a few minutes. Add the broad beans, turn in the oil and leave to cook for about five minutes. Remove from the heat and drain. Beat the eggs, season with salt and pepper and add the beans. Place the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in a frying pan and heat. Add the egg and bean mixture. When the first side is set, turn over by placing a plate over the frying pan and turning to place the omelette on the plate. Then slide back into the frying pan to cook it on the other side. Serve hot or cold.

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Recommended wine: A current-year Tempranillo (Cencibel) and Garnacha red—D.O. Cariñena, Valdepeñas or La Mancha would all be equally good sources. Its fruity roundness in the mouth will "aromatize" the eggs, whose flavor in this recipe is dominated by the fresh beans and the onion.

Scrambled eggs with prawns, garlic shoots, and triguero asparagus with piquillo peppers

Wild or *triguero* asparagus is highly prized and in Spain is always small and has an intense aroma and flavor. The most similar cultivated asparagus is the green and purple variety grown in Huétor-Tájar. This dish can also be made with small green asparagus.

SERVES 4:

3 tbsp olive oil
150 g preserved garlic shoots
200 g preserved green asparagus tips
150 g small cooked and peeled prawns
8 eggs
Salt and pepper
8 whole preserved *piquillo* peppers

Pour the three tablespoons of olive oil into a saucepan or frying pan. When hot, add the well-drained garlic shoots and green asparagus tips. Sauté for a few minutes. Add the prawns and fry gently for a few more minutes. Beat the eggs, season and add, stirring all the time until the mixture has set to taste. For a lighter mixture, add two tablespoons single cream or evaporated milk. Serve on the center of a dish decorated with the piquillo peppers forming a star shape around the egg mixture. Possible variation: Instead of asparagus and garlic shoots, use 300 g piquillo peppers in strips, or 300 g of spinach or Swiss chard, or combine the prawns and garlic shoots with mushrooms.

Recommended wine: A D.O. Penedés white, made from Chardonnay, Xarel.lo and Chenin Blanc, mature enough for the aniseedy exotic fruit and floral aromas of these varieties, in combination with the effects of wood ageing, to complement a dish whose flavors are, despite its ingredients, uncomplicated.

Cardoons in white almond sauce

Almonds always make a good accompaniment for vegetables, either chopped or in a sauce. The following is a very common way of preparing cardoons in Navarre and in La Rioja and often forms part of the main Christmas menu in Spain.

SERVES 4:

2 large bottles of preserved cardoons (approx. 1 kg)
5 tbsp olive oil
120 g sweet, raw, peeled almonds
3 garlic cloves
1 leek, preserved or fresh (in which case, use only the white part)
White pepper

Drain the cardoons, reserving the liquid. Heat the oil in a deep frying pan, brown the garlic and the sliced leek, then remove. Crush both together with 80 g almonds and some of the reserved liquid (about 300 ml). Beat well. Pour the sauce into the frying pan and heat gradually, stirring occasionally until it boils. Add a pinch of ground white pepper. Add the cardoons and the rest of the almonds after first crushing them in a mortar. Leave to cook over a low heat for a few minutes, stirring occasionally and adding more of the reserved liquid if necessary, depending on the thickness desired for the sauce.

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Recommended wine: A white Rioja made from Viura grapes with a small proportion of Malvasía and tank and cask aged: the vanilla aromas acquired in the cask will match the subtle flavor of the cardoon in almond sauce without overpowering it.

Artichokes with clams

Artichokes are a popular vegetable in Spain, especially fresh from the market. They are often served sautéed with ham or stuffed with white sauce and ham or meat, etc. Sometimes served cold, they combine well with anchovies and piquillo peppers, or with salmon and capers, or tuna fish with a good olive oil.

SERVES 4:
20 preserved artichoke hearts
2 finely chopped garlic cloves
2 tbsp olive oil
1/4 l vegetable or fish stock
1 tbsp flour
2 tbsp dry, white wine
24 clean clams

Drain the artichoke hearts. Brown the garlic cloves in hot oil in a deep frying pan or earthenware dish. Add the flour then mix in the white wine and the stock. Add the clams and cook until they open. Then add the whole artichokes and cook for a few minutes before serving.
Recommended wine: It is notoriously difficult to find a wine that goes with artichokes, but they have a certain sweetness of flavor in common with clams which would be nicely complemented by a chacoli from the Basque Country—Guetaria, Guipúzcoa or D.O. Vizcaya. You could also serve this dish with a white with a good acidic edge—some of the D.O. Ribeiro wines made from Triexadura, Torrontés, and Palomino grapes, for example.

Vegetable stew

Bottled mixed vegetables make life easier when preparing vegetable stews or a common dish in Spain that is known as Russian salad. This is made by adding a mayonnaise to diced, cooked vegetables. The salad is served cold with green or black olives and strips of piquillo peppers.

SERVES 4:
2 large jars of mixed vegetables
5 tbsp olive oil
100 g onions
150 g serrano ham
2 tbsp flour
1 vegetable stock cube
Salt and sweet *pimentón*
2 hard-boiled eggs

Drain the mixed vegetables. In a deep frying pan, heat the oil and add the very finely-chopped onion. When it has turned golden brown, add the diced ham and the flour. Fry lightly then add the vegetables together with a little water in which the stock cube has first been dissolved. Season with salt and sweet pimentón and leave to cook gently. Serve decorated with the hard-boiled eggs in slices or quarters.
Recommended wine: The assortment of vegetables and flavors involved in this dish cries out for a D.O. Navarra rosé made from Garnacha grapes: highly aromatic, clean and fresh, yet light and well balanced, its fruity, almost cakey, aromas will highlight rather than mask the delicate vegetable flavors.

RECIPES FROM SPANISH RESTAURANTS ABROAD

Cuenca "Morteruelo"

Recipe and wine recommendation from Fogón Saint Julien

Serves 6:
1/2 kg hare
1/2 kg field rabbit
1 partridge
1/4 hen
1/2 cured elbow of ham
0.4 kg pork liver
1/2 kg pork loin
1 2-day-old loaf of bread
0.4 l extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
2 tsp oregano
Salt to taste
1 tsp caraway seeds
1/2 tsp cinnamon
4 tsp sweet paprika from La Vera

Cook all the meat for 6 hours. Skim and set over low heat. Let cool. Set aside the broth.
Clean the meat, breaking it into crumbs by hand. Grate the liver and mix in with the rest of the meat.
Cut the bread into slices.
In a large skillet, heat the oil, add the bread, stir and remove. Add the paprika carefully so that it does not burn. When it changes color, add a little broth, and when it is well mixed, add all the meat, the bread, the spices and cover with the remaining broth. Set over high heat and stir with a long wooden spoon until you get a thick and smooth gruel. Serve very hot.
Recommended wine: Estola, Gran Reserva 1985, Bodegas Ayuso, S.L. D.O. La Mancha.

Asturian bean stew

Recipe and wine recommendation from Restaurante Le Grillange

Serves 8:
1 kg butter beans
4 smoked *chorizos* (pork sausages)
4 smoked blood sausages
500 g shoulder of pork
200 g salt pork
100 g serrano ham on the bone
1 salted pork ear or tail
1 medium onion with 3 cloves stuck in it
2 cloves garlic

Soak the beans in cold water to cover well for at least 10 hours (preferably overnight). Singe the skin of the salted meats to remove any bristles. Soak the meats in warm water. Place the beans, garlic, and onion in a large pan and cover well with water. Bring to a boil. Remove the scum. Add the other ingredients and leave to simmer for 1 to 2 hours, depending on the quality of the beans. The stew will be ready when the beans are soft to the tongue. During cooking, the pot should be shaken occasionally by its handles, never using a spoon which might break the beans. Remove the scum occasionally and check that the beans are always covered with liquid. Add small amounts of water if necessary (always cold water).

When the dish is cooked, add salt if necessary. Leave to rest for a few minutes. Remove the meats and cut into 3-cm pieces. Arrange on a dish and serve at the same time as the stewed beans in a soup tureen.
Recommended wine: A red D.O. Toro, full of flavor and refreshingly acidic.

Shrimp in garlic sauce

Recipe and wine recommendation from Restaurante La Península

SERVES 4:
6 large shrimp per person (unpeeled)
8 cloves garlic (unpeeled)
100 ml olive oil
100 g butter
Freshly-chopped parsley
A little Brandy de Jerez

Place a black steel frying pan over a hot flame. When hot add half and half oil and butter and fry the unpeeled shrimp until they change color. Add the unpeeled cloves of garlic and sauté with the shrimp. Remove the shrimp and keep warm. Deglaze the pan with the brandy. Reduce to half and beat in the butter. Add the freshly-chopped parsley and pour the sauce over the shrimp. Serve very hot.
Recommended wine: A smooth but flavorsome white wine such as an oak-aged Muga '98.

Artichoke and asparagus in a green garlic sauce

Recipe and wine recommendation from Tapas

SERVES 8 TAPA PORTIONS:
8 medium size fresh artichokes
20 fresh, tender, green asparagus
200 ml extra virgin olive oil
30 g pistachio nuts, chopped
1 egg white
1 glass water
20 g chives, chopped
50 g fresh bread crumbs
2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Salt and white pepper

To prepare the artichokes: in a large pan bring plenty of water to a boil with a little salt and some lemon juice. Remove all the outer leaves and inside filaments of the artichokes leaving just the hearts. Cook until tender and let them cool in the water in the pan to avoid darkening of the flesh. To prepare the artichoke leaves, boil them in water and a little salt but avoid overcooking. Remove from the water and refresh under the cold tap.
To cook the asparagus, wash them well then boil in plenty of lightly salted water until tender but still firm—al dente. Remove from the water and refresh immediately under the cold tap.
To prepare the sauce use an electric blender or food processor. First add the egg white, garlic, chives, pistachios, lemon juice, bread crumbs, half a glass of water, and a little salt and pepper. Blend for a while then, with the machine still running, add the olive oil little by little as if making mayonnaise. This sauce should have a medium consistency.
To serve, drain the artichoke hearts, slice and place on plates. Drape the asparagus over, decoratively, and cover with the sauce. Garnish with cherry tomatoes and a few chives or endive leaves.
Recommended wine: Chardonnay of Bodegas Castillo de Monjardín or Guelbenzu Blanco of Bodegas Guelbenzu, both D.O. Navarra.

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RECIPES FROM LA GARROCHA

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

La Deu homestyle potatoes

La Deu is a restaurant in an old farmhouse in Olot that has included this family recipe on its menu for decades. A former, food-loving mayor of Olot used to sing its praises at every opportunity to the extent that, over the years, it became a local classic.

SERVES 4:

8 medium-sized potatoes
100 g minced beef
100 g minced pork
1 onion
500 g ripe tomatoes
Flour
Milk
1 egg
Olive oil
Salt

Peel the potatoes and slice finely. Fry in olive oil, drain and set aside. For the filling, first brown the minced meat in a little oil. In a separate pan, sauté the peeled and seeded tomatoes together with the chopped onion. Add the meat and bind everything together with a thick béchamel sauce made with the milk and flour.
Take two potato slices at a time and place a little stuffing between them. Coat with beaten egg and fry until they turn an attractive golden brown. Drain and serve.
Recommended wine: A deep cherry-red 98 D.O. Plá de Bagés. Its slight herbal flavor in the mouth balances out the richness of the meat and béchamel sauce. The round, vervy tannins tame any oiliness and the 100% Merlot grapes leave a fine aftertaste.

Santa Pau beans with butifarra pork tripe sausage *(Fesols con butifarra de perol)*

This is one of the most characteristic dishes of the La Garrotxa area. Its main ingredient are *fesols* - a sort of haricot bean that has a specially smooth texture when grown locally because of the volcanic substrate in the soil. Almost all the local restaurants offer a recipe including fesols. Cal Sastre is a pleasant restaurant in Santa Pau in which Margarita Colldecarrera bases her cooking on a wise blend of tradition and innovation. It was she who had the idea of replacing the traditional butifarra pork sausage with a special sausage made with pork tripe which, after boiling in the pot with the other sausages, takes on a very special flavor.

SERVES 4:

600 g haricot beans
400 g *butifarra* pork tripe sausage
Oil and salt

Leave the beans to soak overnight. Drain and wash two or three times with clean water. Place in a pan with plenty of water and bring to the boil. The secret of perfect beans is to boil them first over a very high

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heat for about 10 minutes, then to bring down the temperature and leave to cook for about 75 minutes, but ensuring that they continue to boil gently at all times. Altogether, they should boil for about 1 hour 30 minutes. The salt is added at the end and, if extra water is required, it must be hot. Once they are cooked, drain and set aside.
Heat a little olive oil in a frying-pan. Add the butifarra in pieces. Using a fork, stir continuously with a circular movement until it breaks up. When it is all broken into small pieces, add the beans and stir until the two ingredients are well mixed but without allowing them to dry up.
Recommended wine: The combination of creamy beans with the strong-flavored pork sausage suggest a red 97 *crianza* Cabernet Sauvignon from the D.O. Plá de Bagés – its rich, toasty aroma should blend well with the smoothness of the beans while holding its own against the butifarra.

Mushroom-stuffed pig's feet in a black turnip sauce

Pig's feet cooked in a variety of ways are a common feature of menus in La Garrotxa, especially in winter. The most traditional recipe combines them with the much-prized local 'black' turnips, or they may be stewed with snails. A more modern version is the *carpaccio* served in the Les Cols restaurant in Olot in which thin slices are dressed simply with olive oil, vinegar, salt, pepper and roasted pine nuts.
The recipe we give here is from the Cúria Reial restaurant in Besalú and uses a variety of mushrooms for a seasonal stuffing.

SERVES 3:
6 pig's feet
250 g wild mushrooms (chanterelle, milky agaric, fairy rings, russula and *llenega*, a type of Hygrophorus)
1 egg
100 g minced pork
100 g minced beef
Salt and pepper

FOR THE SAUCE:
1 onion
1 carrot
2 garlic cloves
Skin of one orange
Skin of one lemon
100 g black turnips
1 tbsp chocolate
Black pepper
Clove, rosemary, thyme
Salt
Butter

Cut the feet in half lengthwise and cook together with all the ingredients of the sauce and somewater. Meanwhile, prepare the filling with the finely chopped mushrooms, the minced meat, the egg and a little salt and pepper.
When well cooked, remove the pig's feet from the pan and leave to cool. Carefully remove the bones. Take a sheet of aluminium foil and place one half of the foot on it, cover with stuffing then place the other half on top. Wrap the foot in the paper and return to the sauce. Do the same with the other feet and cook in the sauce for 20 minutes.
To serve, remove the aluminium foil and serve the feet either whole or in halves with the strained sauce and the turnips cut in cubes.
Recommended wine: This method of preparing pig's feet gives a less hearty dish than usual so a good partner might be a Cabernet Sauvignon rosé with a good proportion of Garnacha from the D.O. Plá de Bagés. Its fresh, fruity aroma – reminiscent of blackberries and cherries – gives an added lift to the sauce. Serve at 8-10ºC (46-50º F).

Farinetes with *ratafia* liqueur and honey

Buckwheat used to be one of the most characteristic crops of La Garrotxa. It is a rather fibrous wheat usually associated with other parts of the world (buckwheat flour is typical for making *blinis*) and, although it likes the conditions in county, it is rarely grown now. Here buckwheat flour is used to make *farinetes*, a *polenta*-like paste which is fried in portions and served as a dessert. Margarita, from the above-mentioned Cal Sastre restaurant, orders the paste from a local *masía* then she fries it and adds the finishing touch.

SERVES 4:
250 g buckwheat
1 litre water
Salt and sugar
Olive oil for frying

Stir the flour into the water with a little salt over a low heat for about 40 minutes, stirring all the time in the same direction so that the mixture neither sticks nor separates. Pour into a mould and leave to cool.
Cut into 1 cm (1/2") slices. Heat plenty of oil in a frying-pan. The secret lies in correct frying – the oil must not boil but needs to be very hot. Place the fritters one by one in the hot oil and, when the edges are golden, turn over. The mixture is very delicate so care must be taken to prevent the fritters from breaking. When fried on both sides, remove and drain on kitchen paper. Sprinkle with sugar and a few drops of the local *ratafia* herb liqueur. Serve with honey to taste.
Recommended wine: Apart from the actual ratafia liquor which would make an ideal partner, another option to go with these fritters, which are not particularly sweet, might be a semi-sweet white wine made from Parellada grapes from the D.O. Penedés. A moscatel would probably be overpowering although the moscatel from the D.O. Penedés that is blended with Gewürztraminer might also be a good choice.

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E-mail: codinfo@codorniu.es
http://www.codorniu.es
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Simancas' National Archive

Where better can you store the national documents that trace the creation of the nation state we know today than in one of the royal castles that bridged the medieval world with our own modern epoch. That was one thought I had as I drove to the castle of Simancas through Castilla la Vieja, or Old Castile, the table land that became the cradle of the Spanish nation. I also had Philip II (1556-1598) on my mind because it was this complex monarch, a Renaissance prince to his fingertips, who turned Simancas into a strong room for the state's archives.

As its very name implies, Old Castille is a land of ancient castles for it is peppered with medieval fortifications. Here, in the castle by the medieval wool town of Medina de Campo, the redoubtable Isabel of Castile, *la Católica*, the Catholic queen who conquered the kingdom of Granada, Islam's remaining redoubt in Spain, and financed Columbus' voyage to the New World, died in 1504; there, in Tordesillas, where Isabel secured a treaty with Portugal that recognized each country's seaborne empire, her daughter and heir Juana la Loca, Joan the Mad, was imprisoned in one of the castle's turrets after she went completely off her head. Here, in the ornate castle of Coca, the ubiquitous Fonseca family amassed power during Isabel's reign; there in the gloomy keep that dominates the walled town of Cuéllar, the Alburquerque family saw its fortunes rise and fall.

Computers in a Castle

The majority of Castile's castles are tourist sights in varying stages of disrepair. Not so Simancas which is a hive of activity with stacks of computers holding the floor among the book-lined shelves of its wood paneled reading rooms. Visitors sensitive to history approach Simancas with reverence, for beyond the castle's now empty moat, through its broad outer battlements, past the tiny entrance that leads to its courtyard, lies the record of Spain at the zenith of its power. The documents that tell the story of Spain between the beginning of the 16th century and the end of the 18th occupy 12.5 kilometers (7.5 miles) of shelf space.

Simancas, a sleepy small town, stands on the banks of the meandering Pisuerga river between Tordesillas and Valladolid, the city that served as the base camp for the itinerant court that followed Isabel and her husband Ferdinand of Aragon as they traveled the length and breadth of their domains. The town became a landmark when their grandson, the Habsburg emperor Charles V, who was the son of the mad Joan and reigned in Spain as Charles I, ordered his personal documents to be stored at Simancas' castle. Charles, who was seldom more than a week in the same place, had Simancas recommended to him as a suitable archive by his powerful chief secretary, Francisco de Cobos, who happened to be the castle's comptroller.

Philip II, Charles' son, who became the most powerful ruler of his age as he consolidated Spain's New World empire, turned Simancas into a general registry not just of the Habsburg family papers but of every state document. Philip had very modern ideas about running a nation state and its overseas possessions and the necessity of having proper documentation was high on his state craft agenda. Since he worshipped his father whose papers were already at Simancas, the town's castle was designated the national archive. "Philip was quite clear about the purpose of this registry," says José Luis Rodríguez de Diego, the director of the Archivo General de Simancas. "He controlled his empire by issuing a stream of written documents and he had to have access to them."

The Genius of Philip II

Rodríguez de Diego says he is "completely in love" with Simancas and he bubbles with excitement, stammering to get his words out, when he explains the "uniqueness" of the library. He talks about Philip II, the creator of the archives and, all too clearly, his personal hero, as if he had just had breakfast with him. "Philip was a genius," he says, "and one of things he used to say was you could only deal with matters, and resolve specific issues, if you knew the problem's background."

Philip did not have to await the invention of the microchip to know that information is power and to act accordingly. I can imagine Philip, in his cramped bedroom come study in the Escorial, the huge palace-monastery he built for himself by the Guadarrama mountains, puzzling over, for example, a drop in revenues from a particular estate and growling "Get me the papers" to his secretaries; off would gallop a messenger to Simancas, two days hard riding away. Philip, in a spindly hand, would scribble remarks in the margins of these documents and instruct his secretaries to produce new ones. Once he was satisfied that his orders had been understood and had been duly circulated, the documents he had requested were sent back to Simancas together with the new ones.

The "uniqueness" of Simancas is that it was the first national archive to be custom built for this purpose and the first to be placed away from the court itself thus emphasizing its autonomous sta-

tus as an instrument of the crown's power. Soon after coming to the throne, Philip ordered Juan de Herrera, his chief architect, to redesign Simancas as an archive and Herrera, who was soon to take on the immense project of building the Escorial, threw himself into this initial task with his customary zeal. He knocked down the existing castle, preserving just one turret which was where Charles V had stored his personal papers, and built a sober red brick building around a square central courtyard.

According to Herrera's design, the north and east facing wings, which are less exposed to sun and have small grilled windows to reduce the light still more, were set aside to house documents and the other two wings, which have large windows were designed as offices and reading rooms. Along with wooden shelves that used the best pine available, vents were built through the brick to circulate the air and help preserve the documents. It was a far seeing design; barring electric light and modern artifacts such as PCs, Simancas remains much as it was more than 400 years ago. The only real difference is that it is used by professional historians, up to 45 a day and nearly half of them non-Spanish, instead of by harassed royal secretaries seeking to solve national problems.

An Archive to Run an Empire

In 1561, the same year Philip ended the itinerant court tradition and set up his capital in Madrid, a chief archivist was appointed to run Simancas and ordered to live in the town. The monarch personally dictated a set of regulations, all of thirty chapters long, for the national archives and this rule book is characteristic of Philip's practical sense and his painstaking attention to detail. The regulations forbade fires, and also water, within the precincts of the castle, specified that the archives could only be used in daylight hours and created a number of administrative posts such as a permanent porter, to ensure that the complex was run securely, efficiently, and kept clean.

Rodríguez de Diego took me to the small octagonal room, in the remaining turret of the original castle, where Philip had his personal papers in the floor below those of his father. They are kept in identical, easily transportable wooden boxes, the size of a small picnic hamper, which are neatly stored in beautifully carved shelves and the ornate wooden fretwork covers the room's ceiling. Rodríguez de Diego's voice dropped to a whisper as we entered the room: "I think this is almost a sacred place." I could see what he meant for the strong box that Philip had built for his papers reminds one of a tabernacle. He visited this room, an old man at the age of 65, in 1592 and spent two days, hermit-like, inside it, refusing to attend the festivities that the town of Simancas had arranged in his honor. Shut up in that little room, I can imagine Philip brooding on what place he would occupy in history and how Spain would fare after his death. He, at least, had placed in Simancas a complete record of his reign and by and large his successors did the same until 1844 when a new center for state papers was opened in Alcalá de Henares and Simancas itself was opened as a treasure chest to historical researchers. This continuity would have comforted Philip even though Spain, 250 years later, was a shadow of the super power it had been during his reign. Historians have been forever grateful to his foresight.

***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.*

ARCHIVO GENERAL DE SIMANCAS

Map of the town of Aranda de Duero (Burgos) made in 1503. This is the oldest map kept in the Simancas' National Archives and illustrates the layout of a Castilian town of that period. Drawn in red and black inks on paper, the map was made to mark the occasion of opening a new street in the town.

WATCH THIS SPACE

September-December 99
Compiled by Hawys Pritchard

AUSTRALIA

Old World Charm in Melbourne: The European, a city center wine bar and restaurant which (remarkably in this New World setting) serves exclusively European wines, hosted a Spanish food and wine event from 20 September to 17 October. Seventy Spanish wines were available by bottle and glass for the duration, and the menu of dishes and *tapas* was designed by Adelaide-based Spanish chef Justo del Amo and The European's resident chef. An *in situ* preview on 8 September, was presented by Ralph Kite-Powell, wine correspondent of *The Melbourne Age*, giving the press and trade the opportunity to sample the food and wine featured.

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AUSTRIA

The Best for Guests: ICEX took a stand for the ninth year running at Salzburg's *Alles für den Gast* (Everything for the Guest) food fair from 6-10 November, with the active involvement of five Austrian importers of Spanish fine foods and wines. The country's biggest and most international food fair, this was a particularly effective showcase for gourmet Spanish products, its catchment including not only the thriving local hospitality industry and buyers from hotels, restaurants, delicatessens, and good wine merchants generally, but also prospective customers from northern Italy and southern Germany. Products represented included *Ibérico* cured ham and other cold cuts, canned tuna, *piquillo* peppers, olive oil, cheese, confectionery, *cava*, brandies, and D.O. wines from Rioja, Somontano, and Priorato.

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SPAIN GOURMETOUR

This issue's digest of events promoting Spanish food and drink backed by the economic and commercial offices at the embassies of Spain around the world covers the period September to December inclusive.

CANADA

A Month at the Movies: Toronto's International Film Festival in September featured 20 Spanish films and co-productions under the series title "Discreet Charms." Celebrities included directors Carlos Saura, Fernando Trueba, and Benito Zambrano, who presented their latest films in person. Backing from the Spanish Consulate, Commercial and Tourist Offices, and the Ministry of Education and Culture ensured a high Spanish profile throughout the Festival (the "Vinos de España" logo looming large in the program), which was attended by His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador, José Cuenca Anaya. A cava reception at the Japan Foundation, with wine by the top cava *bodegas* and food by Toronto's smart Segovia restaurant, launched an exhibition of cinema posters and stills from the works of Ivan Zulueta and Bigas Luna.

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DENMARK

Rioja at the Borsen: A tasting at Copenhagen's old Stock Exchange on 30 September presented Riojan wines to the trade (importers, journalists...) and the general public.

Murcia Comes to Copenhagen: A Murcia event on 13 October at the NIMB building in Tivoli Park presented an overview of the region—investment, tourism, sport, crafts—plus a seminar on the Mediterranean diet, particularly as represented by Murcian products (fresh produce, cured ham, cheese, wine, olive oil) followed by a luncheon of regional dishes prepared by a restaurateur from the home patch.

Hands-on Navarre: Working lunches for wine journalists in Copenhagen and Arhus on 2 November provided an opportunity to judge how Navarre wines perform in conjunction with food. Sommeliers got their chance at equivalent lunches in Copenhagen on 3 November and Arhus on 4 November.

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FRANCE

Montilla à la Maison: A tasting of the wines of Montilla for journalists and sommeliers at the Paris Maison des Sommeliers was held on 16 September.

Gourmet Day: On 4 October at Le Bristol hotel in Paris, the fourth in a series of fine food events designed to provide showroom and networking facilities for Spanish small and medium producers of gourmet foods and wines. Invitees included journalists, importers, distributors, delicatessen chains, and restaurateurs.

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GERMANY

First Night Celebrations: New Spanish movies were launched with cava preview parties in Munich (20 September), Berlin (25 September), and Hamburg (27 September).

Wooing the Press: Jerez launched its latest campaign in Germany with get-together events for the press in Berlin (22 November), Hamburg (23 November), Dusseldorf (24 November), and Munich (25 November). Two groups of journalists visited Jerez in early and late November, and another in December. Meanwhile, the winner of the **Barkeeper of the Year** award, sponsored by Brandy de Jerez, was presented to the press on 4 November.

Galician Gastronomy: The wines of D.O. Rías Baixas featured in presentations-cum-seminars at posh restaurants in various parts of Germany over many months, including: Restaurant Langhaus, Berlin (1 October); Restaurant Schachener Hof, Lindau (15 October); La Mairie im Haus Bey (18-19 October); Restaurant und Hotel Bareis im Schwarzwald (11 November); Restaurant Linde, Heidelberg (20 November).

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ITALY

Spanish Food and Wine at the Palace: ...Milan's Palace Hotel, that is, on 15 November. This one-day event featured some 30 exhibitors, two thirds of them as yet unrepresented in the Italian market. Products included canned, smoked, and salt fish, ibérico and serrano cured ham, extra virgin olive oils, aromatized vinegars, canned and bottled vegetables, saffron and other spices, cheeses, patisserie, D.O. wines and spirits. Relevant commercial contacts, restaurateurs, and the food and wine press were on the invitation list. A buffet of Spanish dishes set the tone.

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JAPAN

Ongoing Wine Seminars: Seminars for an invited focus group of 30 retailers (who must attend the complete series of three) aimed to create *amantes de vinos españoles* among retailers and, by extension, their customers. The seminars were conducted by Tomoko Ebisawa of *Vinotheque* magazine, with wines provided by Japanese importers—Ribera del Duero on 29 September, followed by cava and several D.O.s from the North of Catalonia on 24 November. A further series is planned for the year 2000 (its focus group to be selected early in the New Year), with Rioja, Jerez, and Penedès among the coming attractions.

Chain reaction: Twelve Takashimaya and Tokyu stores promoted Spanish wine during October and November, each featuring wines from at least five importers and sourced from at least ten *bodegas* anywhere in Spain. Hosted tastings were held.

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NETHERLANDS

HAVE A SHERRY!: "COOKING WITH JEREZ," A COMBINED PRESENTATION AND LUNCHEON FOR THE PRESS AT THE RON BLAUW RESTAURANT IN OUDERKERK A/D AMSTEL ON 20 SEPTEMBER, WAS STAGED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE JEUNES RESTAURATEURS GROUP. TEACHERS AT DUTCH CATERING AND HOSPITALITY COLLEGES VISITED THE BODEGAS OF JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA FROM 4-8 OCTOBER. TASTINGS AT MAASTRICHT'S CULINAIR FAIR (12-14 NOVEMBER). A SEMINAR IN NOVEMBER FOR THE PRESS AND EMPLOYEES OF TRENDY BARS AND CAFÉS AIMED TO TARGET NEW SHERRY DRINKERS. ALL THESE EVENTS WERE BACKED UP BY A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN—OUTDOOR POSTERS, ADS IN THE PRESS—THROUGH OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER.

D.O.S ESTABLISH PROFILES: LA MANCHA WITH A PRESENTATION ON 13 SEPTEMBER AT AMSTERDAM'S HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY (WINES FROM EIGHT BODEGAS, THE TASTING GUIDED BY WINE WRITER GERT CRUM); RUEDA WITH A STAND AT THE CULINAIR FAIR IN MAASTRICHT (12-14 NOVEMBER); VALDEPEÑAS WITH A PRESENTATION ON 15 NOVEMBER AT AMSTERDAM'S NAVAL MUSEUM (WINES FROM SEVERAL BODEGAS, TASTING LED BY GERHARD HORSTINK); NAVARRA WITH A 2-WEEK TV CAMPAIGN (DECEMBER).

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U.K.

SHOWCASE '99: AT THE SECOND EDITION OF THIS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL FOODS AND WINES FROM SPAIN EVENT, AT LONDON'S FOUR SEASONS HOTEL ON 22 SEPTEMBER, 40 IMPORTERS SHOWED THE TRADE, PUBLIC AND PRESS THE QUALITY SPANISH PRODUCTS NOW AVAILABLE ACROSS THE BOARD IN THE U.K. LEADING CHEFS CREATED DISHES WHICH "FOCUSED ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD AND WINE, WITH COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS SET ASIDE FOR TASTING AND EXPLORATION." SEMINARS ON OLIVE OIL (BY DR. DÍAZ RIVAS) AND WINE (BY JOURNALIST CHARLES METCALFE). ALL THIS, AND MUSIC TOO.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF WINE AND FOOD: SHERRY AND OLIVE OIL WERE AMONG THE PRODUCTS REPRESENTING SPAIN AT ONE OF THE U.K.'S TOP FOOD AND WINE FAIRS AT LONDON'S OLYMPIA FROM 7 TO 10 OCTOBER.

COMPETITIVE EDGE: NOW IN THEIR FOURTH YEAR, THE SPANISH WINE LIST OF THE YEAR AND ANNUAL SPANISH FOOD INGREDIENT COMPETITIONS ARE ATTRACTING HUNDREDS OF ENTRIES. A TRIP TO SPAIN FOR NATIONAL WINNERS.

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U.S.

MORE GREAT MATCHES: MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRADE AND THE GASTRONOMICALLY AWARE PUBLIC TO EXPLORE A WIDE RANGE OF SPANISH WINES, PRESENTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH TAPAS CREATED BY TOP CHEFS. IN NEW YORK ON 28 SEPTEMBER (FOOD BY BILL PEAT OF ASIA DE CUBA, WENDY MALOUF OF BEACON, ALEX GARCIA OF CALLE OCHO, BRIAN YOUNG OF POP, MARIANO AZNAR OF SOLERA ON HUDSON, AND JIMMY BRADLEY OF THE RED CAT); CHICAGO ON 14 OCTOBER AND MIAMI ON 28 OCTOBER.

RIOJA FESTIVALS: THESE WALK-AROUND TASTINGS GAVE THE TRADE AND CONSUMERS A CHANCE TO MEET REPRESENTATIVES OF RIOJA'S TOP TEN BODEGAS. AT AUSTIN, TEXAS (5 OCTOBER); SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO (7 OCTOBER); ATLANTA, GEORGIA (4 NOVEMBER); PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA (9 NOVEMBER); WASHINGTON, D.C. (11 NOVEMBER).
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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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