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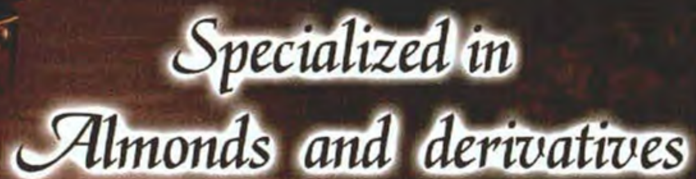

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Onion soup is something the rest of the world thinks of as quintessentially French. Yet did you know that Spain has been one of the biggest producers and exporters of onions in Europe since the mid-19th century? Or that in 1900 the wine growing region of Toro exported its wines to France, then suffering the ravages of phylloxera? Today, Toro and its local grape variety Tinta de Toro seem to be attracting a lot of investment. The same cannot be said, though, for the humble yet delicious goat's cheeses produced in regions as various as Andalusia, Castile and the Canary Islands and neglected for far too long. It's time we told you about them.

While our sportier readers ski this winter–perhaps on the slopes of Sierra Nevada, the southernmost ski station in Europe–we recommend they carry with them a healthy Mediterranean energy booster in the form of a handful of hazelnuts or almonds–or even a seasonal chunk of *turrón*. Another seasonal treat–more suitable for the long winter evenings–is a glass of Pedro Ximénez from one of Spain's long-established companies, Toro Albalá.

For this winter issue, the second installment of our Cuisines of Spain series looks at the food and foodways of the interior, land of pulses, the *Ibérico* pig, saffron, and many other classics.

And with the party season coming up, our wine section features *cava*, while Bartolomé Sánchez explains the fascinating biological aspects of sherry-making...

¡Feliz año nuevo! Happy New Year!

Cathy Boirac *Editor–in–chief*

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The Art of Aging Successfully. Part 2

ARNAL BALLESTER

SPANNING CENTURIES

Generations of experience combined with generous amounts of imagination and enthusiasm are powerful weapons for any enterprise. In the second part of this series we look at three Spanish companies whose origins go back to the 19th century, but which continue to face the future with all the enthusiasm and energy that marked their origins.

In each case, the secret of their survival and their continued success has been their reputation for making products of superior quality, a quality which has positioned them as leaders of their sector.

Now that they are well established in Spain, where these three companies are practically considered living legends, they are all looking beyond Spain's frontiers to conquer the international markets, backed by their formidable historical heritage and by a firm belief in the excellence of what they have to offer discerning consumers all over the world.

Toro Albalá
The Rewards of Experience

Text
Mark Little

In 1531, according to an old document, the ancestors of the Toro Albalá family arrived from Valladolid in northern Spain and settled in Andalusia, where they bought a house with a cellar for six ducats and 26 hens. Around the same time, the story goes, Peter Siemens, a German soldier in the army of King Carlos I, settled in the same area, bringing with him cuttings of vines from the Rhine region. The vines took well to the sunny growing conditions of Andalusia, eventually evolving into a separate variety. It was named after Siemens, with the hispanicized version of his name: Pedro Ximénez, now often abbreviated to Pedro Ximen or simply PX. With the passage of time, the fate of the Toro Albalá family would become inextricably linked to the vine the good soldier Siemens had brought to Spain, for the Toro Albalá winery in the village of Aguilar de la Frontera, in the Montilla wine region of Córdoba, is home to some of the most outstanding Pedro Ximénez wines in the world.

On touring the Toro Albalá winery in Aguilar, it soon becomes evident that this family has always been fond of collecting things, and that Antonio Sánchez himself, the winery's current owner, is something of a whirlwind when it comes to accumulating memorabilia.

First, there is the reception area, practically a museum itself, with all sorts of gadgets related to the ancient craft of wine making. There are rare antique wine presses–including a mobile press on wheels, dating from the days when the cellar masters would go from vineyard to vineyard to crush the grapes on the spot–plus scales, pumps, bottle-corkers, and old posters.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg, for in another part of the winery is Antonio Sánchez's pride and joy, a beautifully arranged hall with further displays, including soil samples, old enology equipment, and perhaps the world's finest collection of densimeters. One side of the hall is devoted to a library of nearly 2,500 wine books, some of them dating from the 17th century, and including priceless tomes by Herrera, Viala, and Pasteur.

Finally, there is the family's private museum where one finds every corner crammed with an amazing variety of items–sea shells, Underwood typewriters, old watches, sewing machines, cameras–as if the contents of an entire flea market had been packed into this small space. Pride of place goes to a small barrel containing the first Pedro Ximénez produced by the Toro Albalá winery, from the harvest of 1844.

Another thing they collect here are wine prizes. Practically every wine competition into which Toro Albalá enters its wines results in a medal, trophy, or diploma, including a Gold Medal at the international wine challenge in Bordeaux for their Don PX Gran Reserva 1972. The biggest accolade went to a vintage Pedro Ximénez from the 1939 harvest, awarded the Golden Bacchus in 1997, the top wine prize in Spain.

It would take a poet, not a wine writer, to describe the rich range of nuances and evocations which burst forth in this monument of a wine. Velvety, deep, warm, richly sweet without being cloying, a wine that allows you to travel back in time… these are thoughts that spring to mind. And that's just the first sip; the second sip is even better. This extraordinary wine, mysterious in its opaque, almost black color, is the true expression of all the experience and wisdom accumulated by this wine-making fami-

Practically every wine competition that Toro Albalá enters results in a medal, trophy, or diploma.

ly over more than a century and a half.

The winery was founded by the owner's great grandfather, another Antonio Sánchez, in 1844 on a small estate known as La Noria. In 1922 the winery was renamed by José María Toro Albalá and moved to its present location in a building that was originally an electricity station. People in Aguilar soon took to calling the winery *El Eléctrico* and in the local bars, they will still jokingly order a *calambrazo* ("a jolt").

At their Aguilar winery, they make their clear, crisp dry fino El Lagar, using the *criadera* and *solera* system to blend different vintages over a period of ten years. (See Glossary on page 199). Once bottled, fino is prone to oxidation and should be drunk soon, and such is the fastidiousness at Toro Albalá that their policy is to keep the wine stored at controlled temperature, bottling the fino practically on demand, so that it reaches the consumer two months after bottling at the most. This attention to quality reflects on the price, which is higher than other wines from the Montilla area, but an uncompromising refusal to cut corners has earned Toro Albalá a solid reputation for consistently superior products, and a loyal following among connoisseurs.

For years, the winery sold practically all its production in Andalusia, a situation with which Antonio Sánchez was perfectly comfortable, but all those prizes were starting to attract the attention of foreign wine enthusiasts. So, almost grudgingly, the winery was dragged into the export trade three years ago. The results in 1997 were sales of a modest US$ 15,696 (18,000 euros). A year later, reports export manager Antonio Sorgato, foreign sales had jumped nearly tenfold to more than US$ 139,520 (160,000 euros). For 2000, with exports to 22 countries (the main markets are the United States, Japan, and the European Union) the forecast was US$ 523,200 (600,000 euros), and Sorgato has no doubts that export is where the future lies.

Fino represents a small part of Toro Albalá's activity. They are especially proud of their amontillado, a nutty, amber-colored wine typical of the region. A good example is the splendid, very old Viejísimo, whose blend contains vintages stretching back to 1922. But the true stars are, of course, the prizewinning dessert wines made with the Pedro Ximénez grape at their second cellar, in the nearby town of Lucena.

Sun and Craft

"The future of the Montilla wine region are Pedro Ximénez wines, made from carefully selected grapes which are spread out on mats to toast in the sun," says Sánchez. And when Antonio Sánchez gives an opinion, other winemakers in the region sit up and listen, for Toro Albalá has led the way many times in the past. "We like to think of ourselves as the locomotive that pulls the wine-making train in the region," says Sánchez.

Sánchez has an enthusiasm for his craft which is contagious. He is a lively and entertaining conversationalist, and an eminently knowledgeable one at that. Before he took over running the winery, he already had a reputation as one of the few professional enologists in Andalusia, "except that in those days,

we weren't called enologists, but *técnicos*–technicians." Vintners from all over Spain came seeking his advice and wine-making wizardry and he played midwife in the birth of many of the region's signal wines. For instance, he designed the first table white made with Pedro Ximénez for the Purísima wine cooperative in Puente Genil. It was a model soon followed by other wineries in the region.

Sánchez says there is a promising future in these table whites, but that they have a long way to go before they develop their full potential. "Give it another fifteen years or so, experimenting with blends of Pedro Ximénez with other varieties, and Montilla white will rival those of Rueda," he forecasts.

And what does the future hold in story for the winery? "I believe our secret lies in staying small, and specializing in a few, deluxe items, the wines we make best" says Sánchez. "We are craftsmen, dedicated to making exclusive wines for the more discerning segment of the market. In my years as an enologist, I saw too many wineries founder because they had overexpanded and tried to cover too much of the market."

The idea about which Antonio Sánchez is most excited is organic wine. Around two acres of vineyard are now cultivated using organic methods, which will progressively spread to the rest of the acreage. Toro Albalá is already producing organic sweet PX although, due to the time involved in the criadera process, we'll have to wait a bit longer for an entirely organic fino.

For Sánchez, it is a logical progression, and with a grape of the unique qualities of Pedro Ximénez which lends itself marvelously to environmentally-correct cultivation, half the battle is won. These sweet wines, packed with the aromas and flavors of sun-drenched southern Spain, are a fitting tribute both to hardworking people at Toro Albalá, and to that mysterious soldier named Peter Siemens.

On touring the Toro Albalá winery in Aguilar, it soon becomes evident that this family has always been fond of collecting things, and that Antonio Sánchez is something of a whirlwind when it comes to accumulating memorabilia.

Bernardo Alfageme S.A.
Three Kittens and a Can

Text
Mark Little

There's no mistaking Vigo's raison d'être. The scent and sounds of the sea permeate this bustling city which nestles at the tip of the Ría de Vigo estuary on the coast of Galicia, northwestern Spain. It is the biggest fishing port in Europe, and base for one of the world's most powerful fishing fleets, ranging thousands of miles in search of tuna and other prized catches.

Little could Bernardo Alfageme Pérez, a textile dealer in the landlocked province of Zamora in northern Spain, have realized that one day his name would be linked to that of Vigo and to one of the most popular brands of tinned fish in Spain, processing around 29,000 tons a year.

In the second half of the 19th century, Bernardo would make the 250-kilometer- (150-mile-) journey to Asturias, on the northern coast of Spain, to sell his fabrics. So as not to make the return trip empty handed, he would load up with the famed salted sardines from the Asturian coast to sell them in Zamora. Eventually, the salt fish business overshadowed the rag trade and in 1873 Bernardo established a factory dedicated to pickled anchovies in the Asturian fishing town of Candas. It was the official birth date of the Bernardo Alfageme S.A. canning company, still a family-owned business more than a century and five generations later.

As the business grew, so did the need to range further to secure supplies of fish for canning. At that time the city of Vigo was already among the principal fishing ports in Europe, especially for one of the most important fish in the Spanish diet, sardines. In 1915, Bernardo's son Hermenegildo Alfageme moved the operation to Vigo, establishing a modern cannery there. The factory moved on several occasions, each time to larger premises, until in 1931 the company bought the soccer field used by the local team, Fortuna (later Celta de Vigo) to build a new plant which was a model of high technology in its time.

Today, viewed from the entrance, the factory has a quaint old-fashioned look to it. In the offices which

The Bernardo Alfageme factory in Vigo has a quaint old-fashioned look to it, but down on the shop floor there is nothing at all old-fashioned.

occupy an upstairs gallery, creaking wood floors and wall paneling have been carefully preserved to maintain that comfy atmosphere of other times. But down on the shop floor there is nothing at all old-fashioned about this operation. In a finely-tuned process, tuna caught by the far-ranging fleet of Galicia arrives to be cleaned, cooked, cut, packed in cans to which olive oil or other sauces are added, sealed, sterilized, and labeled, all in one seamless operation carried out in impeccably clean conditions. In fact, this was the first company in the sector to earn the ISO 9002 standard from the Lloyd's registry in 1996, which entails a rigorous control of every stage of the process. It is said that the lot number stamped on a can of fish from Bernardo Alfageme can be used to trace it back to the very name of the ship which caught the fish, where and when, and who the captain was.

The Vigo plant is now devoted almost exclusively to tinned tuna, while newer plants opened further up the coast in Cambados and O Grove to process other specialties, which include a wide range of fish and shellfish. Each of the plants is located strategically close to the source. For instance, at the O Grove center they process shellfish, including one of the most typical Galician specialties, mussels. Cultivated on long ropes dangling from rafts called *bateas* in the rich waters of Galicia's estuaries (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 39), these juicy mollusks reach an enormous size. Bernardo Alfageme's product range features around 100 different items, everything from pickled anchovies to elvers, mackerel, baby cuttlefish, and *zamburiñas*, a local shellfish best described as being halfway between a scallop and a cockle.

They are market leaders in canned squid and mussels, as well as sardines. Canned tuna, with 11,500 tons processed a year, accounts for nearly half of Bernado Alfageme's production, but their emblematic product continues to be sardines. While most Spaniards have never heard of Bernardo Alfageme, practically everyone in Spain is familiar with their onomatopoeic brand name, "Miau," which means, exactly, a cat's "meow." The original logo for the sardines showed three kittens staring longingly at an open tin, "his master's voice" fashion. When first devised in 1900, it was a daring departure in marketing techniques. In those days the norm was to give grandiose names to products, usually containing adjectives like "splendid" or "supreme," but the folks at Alfageme reckoned that kittens, acknowledged experts when it comes to sardines, would best symbolize the excellence of their product.

Adapting to the Market

Although the logo is so well established in Spain it has become something of an icon, the company had to switch tactics with their newer export markets, lest their delicacies end up by mistake in the pet food shelf of the supermarket. The cans are sold under the brand name "Alfa," among others, and there are no felines on the label. For marketing manager Renata Paz, the success of Bernardo Alfageme lies in its ability to combine loyalty to the original concept –top quality seafood–with the capability of changing with the times and adapting to the demands of each new generation of consumers, never ceasing to invest in the latest technology to stay one step ahead of the game.

As with so many other foodstuffs–smoked fish, cured ham–canned fish started out as a way to preserve the fish's qualities over a long time, allowing its storage for months or years. Due to modern distribution methods that is no longer necessary. Today, people buy canned seafood because they like the flavor, and what was once a basic necessity is now regarded as a delicacy, something you purchase to enjoy now, or even to give as gifts to friends. A tin or two of Miau is an essential ingredient in the Spanish Christmas basket.

To ensure the loyalty of a new generation of con-

sumers both in Spain and abroad, Bernardo Alfageme are putting the emphasis on establishing their products as deluxe items of unimpeachable quality, and also on diversifying the preparations of the fish. Canned sardines are no longer just canned sardines: they may be sardines in extra virgin olive oil, or in a spicy sauce, or in a lemon marinade. Another marketing plus are the nutritional aspects, now that consumers are more concerned about a healthy, balanced diet. The beneficial qualities of fish such as tuna and sardines are widely known. And thanks to the nature of the canning process, there is no need to resort to artificial additives. A tin of tuna fish will contain, aside from the fish itself, nothing but olive oil or brine, salt, maybe some vinegar or lemon juice, and perhaps tomato, onion, or a few spices for extra flavor. Exports currently account for around ten percent of the business (Bernardo Alfageme had sales of US$ 96.76 million/80 million euros in 1999), but exports have increased considerably in the last four years and this is one area where the company sees some of the greatest opportunities for continued growth, according to export manager Vicente Rodríguez Calvo.

For the export market, Alfageme is banking on some of its more quintessentially Spanish items. Everyone in the world is familiar with canned tuna fish, and the competition is fierce, but other items have a more exotic aura, evoking foreign places: cockles, razor shell clams, squid in its own ink, and other sea creatures which are so popular among Galicians themselves. You'd think it would be difficult to get consumers abroad to try such delicacies for the first time, but here Bernardo Alfageme has powerful allies in the millions of foreign tourists who visit Spain each year. They invariably become addicted to the Spanish tradition of *tapas*–among which preserved seafood figures prominently–and will jump at the chance of enjoying the same sort of treats back at home.

Says Rodríguez Calvo: "We have found that consumers in France and Germany, for example, are wild about our mussels, squid, and octopus." Sardines, anchovies, clams, mussels… these are flavors which, thanks to Bernardo Alfageme, Spain can share with the rest of the world.

Canned fish started out as a way to preserve the fish's qualities over a long time, allowing its storage for months or years, but today, people buy canned seafood because they like the flavor.

***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 of Spain.*

Federico Paternina S.A.
The Return of a Classic

Text
Charo Alonso Rubio

Translation
Mark Little

When Basque entrepreneur Marcos Eguizábal embarked on a new winemaking venture in 1984, at age 65, he was not only facing a personal challenge. He was taking charge of a Spanish wine legend with a century of history.
That legend can trace its origins back to 1896 when Federico Paternina Josué founded the winery in the small town of Ollauri in the Rioja Alta, northern Spain, starting with three cellars holding some one thousand casks of American oak for aging, and a number of wood vats for fermenting and storage, with a capacity of approximately 500,000 liters. In a few years the business expanded with the purchase of the Cooperativa de los Sindicatos Agrícolas Católicos winery in Haro. Production increased and the labels from Paternina became household names in Spain, a byword for the concept of quality. But it would be from the 1940s that Paternina lived its golden age. At that time, with a solidly established reputation at home, they started exporting to markets in Europe and America.

Yet clouds were forming on the Spanish wine-making horizon. With the changing times, new investors and a succession of new owners primarily interested in the bottom line threatened the identity and credibility of the winery. In 1973, the winery was taken over by the Rumasa holding group, which put the accent on increasing production, and the reputation of its products suffered the consequences. Following the expropriation in 1983 of Rumasa, Paternina was once again a winery in search of an owner. That's when Eguizábal, who had cherished the dream of getting involved with wine making all his life, entered the scene.
His aim was to return Paternina to the glory it had enjoyed of old. It was no easy task.
"When I came into the winery it was totally discredited," recalls Eguizábal. "For six or seven years I had to visit all the former clients. I would go to restaurants and often the owners would chide me. 'What have you brought now? Are you selling lemonade?' I would tell them: 'Here's the wine. If there's a bad bottle, just give it back and I'll replace it.' Under the circumstances I had to throw out around 40,000 cases."

But gradually, care in the production and persistence paid off. "People started to recognize that the wine had changed, that it was once again a wine of superior quality," says Eguizábal.
This was helped by a massive investment plan, started in 1990, aimed at modernizing the winery and incorporating the latest technology. Eguizábal is especially proud of Paternina's new bottling line, considered one of the best in Europe.
"I sought out the most modern technology, traveling to Italy and France," says Eguizábal. "We installed a bottling line with a capacity for 12,000 bottles an hour, which detects any defects in the bottle, and turns back any bottles that aren't completely filled."
This process of renewal extended to the winery's casks, most of which were 180-liter barrels which had

The unique combination of tradition and technology has given rise to a classic Rioja.

to be discarded because they had originally been used for sherry and were therefore ill suited to the sort of classic Rioja Eguizábal sought. They were gradually replaced with casks of white American oak holding 225 liters. "In addition," continues Eguizábal, "we had to remodel the Banda Azul nave: we had to raise the roof and isolate it all so that the wine would enjoy the perfect environment. Our idea is to store up to 50,000 casks in this nave, which is 12,000 square meters (128,000 square feet)." As it is, some 35,000 casks already repose silently on metal racks.

Today, the Paternina winery in Haro is one of the largest in Europe, covering nearly 92,902 square meters (1 million square feet) including buildings, courtyards, and the adjoining vineyard. This facility houses the entire production process, which is carefully controlled in every detail from the arrival of the grapes to the labeling of the bottles. The aging of the *Gran Reserva* wines, however, takes place elsewhere, in a cellar which is more evocative of Paternina's origins. Excavated out of the living rock in Ollauri, it is popularly known as "the Cathedral of Wine." The oldest part, graced by Mozarab-style arches, dates from the end of the 16th century. This silent and hallowed underground space holds nearly four million bottles of wine, and among those who have filed past its endless rows of bottles was Ernest Hemingway, a regular visitor to Ollauri during the 1950s.

It is a unique combination of tradition and technology which has given rise to this classic from the Rioja wine region.

"Paternina is faithful to the historical heritage which backs it," says Carlos Estecha, the winery's enologist. "Above all we make the classic, traditional Rioja wines to which the market is accustomed. On the other hand, the winery does not neglect research into new-style wines, seeking new structures, different color intensities, experimenting with other grape varieties and other types of oak. The proof is Clos Paternina, which we brought out a couple of years ago and which has been a great success, especially in the export market."

Diversified Activities

With his Rioja wines once again well positioned on the market, Marcos Eguizábal decided to diversify the company's activities. The purchase of several historical wineries in Jerez, including the prestigious Marqués del Mérito and Díez Hermanos, led to the creation of a new division within Paternina, under the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry y Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda Denomination of Origin. To this was added, shortly afterward, the Ribera del Duero division, with a new label, Marqués de Valparaíso, for which

Paternina built a winery in Quintana del Pidio (Burgos province) at a cost of nearly US$ 3.488 million (4 million euros). With 1,900 square meters (20,451 square feet), it has a capacity for one million liters in 1,500 casks.
"We now have a full range of wines," says the Rioja entrepreneur. "We have been waiting since the 1995-96 campaign, storing them, aging them, and we are convinced they will be the sensation of the Ribera del Duero."
In spite of this spectacular growth, Eguizábal personally controls every aspect of the wine-making process and the distribution of the products, from the cultivation of the vineyard and aging of the wine to its marketing. An efficient distribution network covers 80 percent of Spain with wines from the three D.O. regions, in addition to preserved delicacies such as asparagus and *piquillo* peppers which complement the wine range.
And once the house was set in order, it was time to focus on the international markets. The winery was changing, and Paternina has made sure that its foreign clients became aware of this. According to Carlos Latas, Paternina's export director: "Rioja wines are gaining in popularity and Paternina is one of those taking the lead, thanks to the efforts carried out in the last decade as regards to quality."
During that time, the international expansion strategy has been clear: a slow and steady progress. "We work with importers or agents, depending on the market, and we seek exclusivity. The idea is to grow little by little, to make sure we make the right moves every step of the way (how the wines are displayed, how they are promoted, follow-up research...) and we have managed to achieve very encouraging sales targets," says Latas. Currently the principal markets are in Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), "we have good importers in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia and even in wine-making countries such as Argentina and Brazil," adds Latas. The winery's progress has been recognized with numerous awards. The latest major international recognition reaped by Paternina was the selection of its aged red Banda de Oro as the house wine in the Spanish Pavilion restaurant at the Universal Exposition in Hannover. In addition, within the wine list, the visitor had the chance to try other of the company's products, such as Paternina Reserva, Pedro Ximénez Vieja Solera, Brandy de Jerez Conde de los Andes, Licor de Brandy Conde de los Andes, and the solera and reserva sherries of Marqués del Mérito. Each new achievement inspires them to continue improving.
"We want to reinforce our presence on the American market because Paternina enjoys a good reputation there, and then we will focus on the Asian market, although this will take a bit more time. The consumer habits there are different. They drink other beverages such as rice wine and beer, but there is a new generation, a large young population attracted by western culture of which wine is an important aspect" says the export director. "I'm

Following a period of crisis, this centennial winery once again is betting on the quality which has always distinguished its wines. Innovation and technology are the new tools with which they plan to reconquer the international market.

convinced that within a few years drinkers in Japan, Taiwan, and even China will also start to enjoy our wines."

Betting on the Future

"It's true that companies linked to the traditional economic sectors, such as ours, are often neglected by shareholders in the stock markets. There is so much volatility surrounding the demand for shares in telecoms and new technology, that the traditional companies are almost forgotten" reflects Carlos Eguizábal. Nevertheless, this did not discourage Federico Paternina S.A. from launching itself on the stock market in September 1998, with a share offer covering 27 percent of its capital.

Paternina has also bet on the incorporation of the latest information and communications technology. One pet project is e-commerce. "We are designing a virtual shop which will sell our Club Paternina products. We want to pamper the relationship between the members of the club and the winery," says Eguizábal.

All because, as Carlos Eguizábal points out, "vocation must come before business." Vocation and dedication have turned Paternina into what it is today, a classic backed by more than one century of wine-making history.

Charo Alonso Rubio *is a journalist specialized in foreign trade. She worked with the Spanish the newspaper* El Mundo *and now writes for* El Exportador *published by ICEX.*

Photo credits on page 200.

1 euro = 0,8720 US$

Matters of Import. Part 2

SOUTHERN SUN *In Northern Glasses*

One good way of finding out how Spanish wines are received and perceived abroad is to talk to the people that import them. They keep a constant eye on consumer requirements and tastes, and make their selections from the wineries and brands most adept at meeting these demands. Their hands-on knowledge of the international wine scene also gives them the power to influence patterns of consumption and "make" the wines they opt for.

In this new three-part series, each article will focus on different markets with a view to identifying the image enjoyed by Spanish wine outside Spain itself, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how its future prospects are looking. Wine importers are a fount of valuable information, of which our selection represents just a small sample.

TEXT
FLEMMING HVELPLUND

TRANSLATION
SUSANA FERNÁNDEZ

The Rioja Revolution in Denmark

Spanish wines are doing well in Denmark. In less than ten years the market share has tripled, and at present Spain is placed in a clear second position after France. The increase has taken place in a very dynamic market, which is constantly growing.

Denmark is the non-wine-producing country in the world that has the highest consumption of wine per capita. Since Denmark joined the European Community, the consumption has increased from approximately seven liters to over 30 liters.

During this period, Spanish wine has played different roles. At the beginning we mostly considered it to be a simple "holiday wine," which reminded us of the good times spent on the Spanish coast. We did not place heavy demands on it but we did not expect much either.

The quality concept came in the middle of the 1970s, following what can be called the "Rioja revolution." Until then some specialty shops might have had a dusty bottle of Rioja wine. However, in less than a year the shops were filled up with Rioja wines. All the important bodegas were represented having several hundred different wines in all. And suddenly the Danes were the largest customers for Rioja. The consumers quickly learned all the possibilities Spanish wines offered and concepts such as *Crianza*, *Reserva* and *Gran* Reserva (see Glossary on page 199) became common wine expressions.

Nothing similar has happened ever since. Many have subsequently tried to analyze the cause of the sudden success of Rioja wines, and different results have been put forward. I think that it is quite simple: the taste was sensationally different from the one that was traditionally placed on the table. The good taste was genuine and people felt they got something for their money. As simple as that. The seal of approval, which consumers had so far considered a French affair, did now also apply to Spanish wines.

Torres diligently followed up on that and at the same time showed the face of "the person behind the wine." And he made consumers understand that the fact that great wines were produced outside the classical French regions was not an "accident."

Miguel Torres has undoubtedly contributed to the fact that Spanish wines have the Danish consumer's positive seal of approval. He has made drinking Spanish wines acceptable.

Jens Peter Lund
"I believe that Spanish wines will continue their success."

The Present Situation

Especially, during the last four to five years, Spanish wines have strongly and visibly created their image through offers in supermarkets, but neither Rioja nor Torres have benefitted from this increased sale. The focus has moved south to La Mancha, the huge plateau of Don Quixote's and to the Levante. Purchasers have been chased down due to the skyrocketing of prices in the northern wine regions. Here in the central region, they can find what they are looking for: Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva wines at prices that make everything look like a pure wine paradise. The consumers cannot see the difference. The correct things are stated on the labels and there is also a net of gold thread on the bottle. The taste is international. Nevertheless, it has a Spanish touch. The consumers reacted as if it was the same product only at half the price. At present these wines contribute to the success of Spanish wines in Denmark. And it is unlikely that this situation will change for the time being.

This means that the usual customers of Rioja, Navarra, and Penedés have decreased dramatically and these three regions will have to look for new customers, who are to be found just around the corner. They are customers with a considerable purchasing power who until now have only been interested in Bordeaux wine in the broad middle group. But they are ready to cross the Pyrenees in their search for interesting alternatives. The competition for this group of customers is fierce. The overseas countries try intensely to win their favor.

The situation of the best Spanish wines from the prestigious bodegas is very much comparable with the situation of French wines. Much is being written and said about them but not many of them are sold. Nevertheless, they are important because they serve as a locomotive for the more available part of the supply.

The Future

Jens Peter Lund, purchasing manager at Dansk Supermarket, which distributes 25 percent of the wine sales in Denmark through the department

store Bilka, and the supermarket chains Føtex and NETTO, is a pragmatist and acts accordingly. He always has to keep up with the trends of the big world of wine and find out what customers want, and do business where he gets his money's worth. Precisely that attitude has placed Spanish wines in such an outstanding position in the Danish market. However, this also means that one must always be aware that price and quality are judged in an international perspective and that one can quickly lose his position if the others are better. Mr. Lund believes that the Spanish producers solely will decide the future. They will be the first to notice if anything goes wrong. That can quickly be seen from the order book. And that applies to all. "One example is Rioja of which Denmark has always been one of the best and most loyal customers. But consumers have fled due to the high prices. Nevertheless, I believe that Spanish wines will continue their success. The large and varied supply, the increasing quality level, and a good understanding of the market trends give Spain a natural place on the Danish wine shelves. But I am worried that the prices have been increasing for three years in succession at the same time as more and more hectares of production are grown in overseas countries, which will lead to a decline in prices. The limit of what can be accepted has been reached."

People talk about a typical Spanish taste. That is easier to recognize than to describe. A bit soft, slightly spicy and vanilla-like cigar box. Full-bodied, with a certain good taste which only mature wines obtain. It is not the type of wine the new generation is looking for. They go for young, fresh wine with a fruity taste. Jens Peter Lund thinks that this development will not be detrimental to Spanish wines. He believes that the Spanish winegrowers will adapt to the customers' wishes. "That is how it is done today. There are customers for all styles and

Flemming Ærø
"It is the wine in the glass and its price that will be decisive in the future."

there will always be many customers for a well-cared-for, mature wine."

Grape Varieties

Spanish wines have reached their present strong position without using two widely used parameters such as D.O.s and grape variety. The bodegas, brands, and maturing category dominate the consumers' opinion of Spanish wines. For instance, many consider Rioja to be a type of wine and not a wine region. And not until recently have consumers understood what Tempranillo was.
Generally, consumers do not know much about D.O.s and generally it must be added that it is also difficult to explain the meaning of the Spanish system. If D.O.C. is the best, then it is acceptable to include Rioja in that category, but what about Priorato and Ribera del Duero? They obviously should be included, just to mention a few. And *cava*, which is one of the wines that most Danes know, also gives rise to confusion, because of the different provenance in spite of the same denomination as Cava.
Most Spanish wines are sold without the customers being interested in which region they come from. This gives you food for thought and it can be confirmed by the fact that there has been a great shift from the north to the south of Spain.
Even in circles where there is a special interest in Spanish wines, there are not many who want to talk about grape varieties. Tempranillo is considered to be a concept of quality. But customers start recognizing it as it is: Spain's big, blue grape, which is used in some of the most excellent wines in the world. People have started learning all its "cover names," which are used in the different Spanish regions. Perhaps it is a waste of time because we experience that more and more producers replace the "cover name" with Tempranillo.
Tempranillo will undoubtedly occupy a strong position in the future. But from a commercial point of view, no other local Spanish grape variety will develop in the same way.

Brands and Image

Flemming Ærø is a product manager at Vingården. His duties include the purchasing and marketing of wines from Spain, Chile, Argentina, and Australia. Vingården has become part of the Marli Group, which is the most important wine and spirits group in Scandinavia. Their customers are supermarkets, specialty shops, and restaurants. Their concept is brands and we have asked Flemming Ærø about Spanish wine brands.
"Very few brands are firmly consolidated. Danish consumers are generally not very loyal to particular products or brands. Most people know the names such as Torres, Campo Viejo, Siglo, Faustino, and Marqués de Riscal. But no Spanish brand is so well consolidated that considerable price increases would not make consumers look for something else. Consumers do not remember the names of most Spanish wines that are sold. It is the price, the age–for example Reserva–or a net of gold thread which made consumers buy the wines in the first place. That is a serious problem for Spain because if other countries can offer something similar only a bit cheaper, the consumers will change over to that without further consideration. It is the wine in the glass and its price that will be the decisive factors in the future."
What image do Spanish wines have in Denmark?
Thanks to a very positive wine press in Denmark, Spanish wines are doing much better now than a couple of years ago. However, there is still a third of all Danes who for one reason or another would not dream of buying Spanish wines. It might be due to a bad experience in the past, but it could also be because of mere impotence, as people have chosen to consider France to be the only possibility.
Generally the image of Spanish wines is quite good. It has not been created by image advertisements

but by the wine in the glass. When it is good, the consumers are happy and satisfied and they buy it again. It is as easy as that. You get quality for money when buying Spanish wines and you could not wish for a better image.

The Spanish Wine Boom

One of the many new wine importers who sees the many possibilities of Spanish wines is Martin Damm Hansen. His company is called Vino Tinto. It is a niche business mainly with Spanish wines. Martin speaks Spanish and often travels to Spain to find new "stars." We have asked him what he thinks about the Spanish "wine boom." "The success has been created by the relation between price and quality which overshadows the rest. It is so easy to understand that it is easy to tell people about it. The taste pleases the Danish palate. Even cheap wines have a body and softness that we like. You can taste the "sun" which ripens the grapes even in less good years. This means that you rarely have bad experiences with Spanish wines.

Martin Damm Hansen

"Spain is the wine producing country that has the largest potential."

The sun also gives the wine a high alcohol content and thus a greater glycerine content and softer tannins. There is a large variety in all price categories and the wines are ready to be enjoyed here and now. That is what customers want. They buy them to drink and enjoy them and not to let them be."
Martin Damm Hansen also believes that the efforts made by the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Copenhagen have been of the greatest importance for the success of Spanish wines in Denmark. "The Commercial Office undoubtedly works very efficiently and in a very goal-oriented way, and all the promotion activities have helped us on our way. This has given us, the importers, the chance to follow all the actual possibilities that there are and has given our customers and consumers many good taste experiences. This has helped to confirm to many people that Spain is the wine producing country that has the largest potential." We have only seen the beginning.

***Flemming Hvelplund** has followed wine development very closely in the Danish market for more than 40 years. He is a busy lecturer and writes a weekly article on wine in* Erhvervsbladet *and the women's magazine* Alt for damerne. *He is the author of the most widely read book on wine in Denmark and he travels at least three months a year in the world of wine.*

TEXT
JÜRGEN MATHÄSS

TRANSLATION
SYNONYME

An Array of Tastes for German Palates

Over one million hectoliters of Spanish wine are imported yearly, representing approximately ten percent of all German wine imports and making Germany one of the most important customers of Spanish vintners. Specialized importers have been active on the market for a number of years. They have excellent knowledge of Spanish wines and the German market, and are very familiar with the tastes of German wine lovers.

On the most important questions concerning the reputation and the outlook for Spanish wines on the German market, the German importers generally agree, with slight differences of opinion on minor details. They know what consumers want and some have been active on the market for decades. There are, however, great differences in terms of how they approach the German market. Some importers have a rich selection of Spanish wines on exclusive contract, for example Ardau in Troisdorf (North-Rhein Westphalia) or Vinos Castellanos in Nuremberg. They operate throughout Germany and sell exclusively to the professional clientele, namely restaurants and specialized stores. Others have specialized in mail-order sales, in sales to grocery stores, or have limited their activity to certain regions. Some companies serve all the various sales channels in the multifaceted German market, while others offer not only wine, but Spanish food as well and thus have often acquired significant regional market positions. When asked about their market experience, the importers cite the love of Spain, the friendly vacation land with a very agreeable life style, as an important selling point for Spanish wines. The variety of the offer with such original and unmistakable wines is also noted by one and all. Consumers today are much more interested in Spain, its culture, and life style, than they were ten years ago.

One of the first companies to specialize in Spanish wines many years ago was VinEspa. The company manager, Siddika Michiels, brings up a number of other points in favor of Spanish wines, notably the taste. "Spanish wines are lighter and more pleasing to drink than Italian wines, for example. That explains why, in the beginning, most of the people in favor of Spanish wines knew and loved Spain. But in the past few years though, a large number of other people knowledgeable about wine have joined the ranks, because of the prices in other regions, for example, the Piedmont and Bordeaux." Unfortunately, the demand produced its effect on Spanish wines as well and they have become more expensive. That is why VinEspa subsequently lost the business of many restaurants. On the other hand, many wines from virtually unknown regions now sell much better, even white wines, from Rueda, for example. For many years, Spanish white wine did not have a particularly good reputation in Germany, the home of Riesling wines. That has since changed because increasing numbers of white wines from Rueda, Rías Baixas, or Penedés have earned good reviews in wine tastings.

Siddika Michiels
"Spanish wines are lighter and more pleasing to drink than Italian wines."

All the importers have, however, also noted less positive changes in the image of Spanish wines. Until a few years ago, Rioja and similar wines, even the high-quality brands, were considered particularly inexpensive. Many customers chose them as an alternative to wines from other regions. But significant price increases over the past years in the most well-known regions, particularly in Rioja, have changed the situation, reports Andreas Fürbach from the Ardau company in Troisdorf. "Most consumers have their eye on Rioja and Ribera del Duero wines. When they see the jump in prices there, they think all Spanish wines have become more expensive and do not necessarily perceive the earlier price advantage. For the most part, they are not particularly brand oriented, with the exception of cava and sherry. Some producers, however, such as Pesquera or Berberana, have a true brand image. Customers are just beginning to become aware of the fact that there are still excellent and inexpensive wines from other Spanish regions." Ardau is certainly the largest German importer specialized in Spanish wine. In light of his company's success, marketing manager Fürbach has every reason to be pleased with developments on the German market. "For the foreseeable future, Spanish wine should continue to do well in Germany, on the condition, however, that the prices remain stable, because the most important sales criterion for consumers is still the price in relation to the quality."
Isabel del Olmo is of the same opinion. "Spanish wine is at a tricky point in its history right now because no one knows what is going to happen with prices. If they continue to climb, then Spain will lose a number of its current advantages." With her husband Peter Hilgard, she has many years of experience with their Frankfurt-based company La Vinería. In their mail-order business, she is confronted daily with questions from consumers and notes that many people are still critically uninformed. Consumers are

Isabel del Olmo
"Spanish wine is at a tricky point in its history right now."

aware that Spain has many specific types of grapes, but the only one a few Germans can name is the Tempranillo. The same is true for the D.O. (Denominación de Origen) system. Customers know that it is reserved for high-quality wines, similar to the A.O.C. in France and the D.O.C. in Italy. They also know that a Reserva is a better wine. But other than that, they are lost. Isabel del Olmo sums up the situation, "Certain D.O.s, such as Rioja or Navarra, are known by name, but more as a generic type than as a D.O."
The Spanish regions have, of course, gone to quite some effort to make their wines better known in Germany. But the financial resources available for such a large market with 80 million consumers are relatively small in comparison with ad campaigns for major products. The importers are divided in their judgements concerning the effects of the ICEX advertising. Andreas Fürbach notes that, "Ribera del Duero benefitted considerably, as did Navarra for a time. Overall, it can be said that the ad campaigns do arouse the curiosity of the commercial sector, and sometimes even that of consumers." Some experts, such as Max Stadler from Stuttgart who is also a specialized importer for wine resellers, are less favorable. "Sometimes, the results of the ad campaigns are not satisfactory because there is not much general advertising for Spanish wines and not enough cooperation between the various regions in Spain."
Among German importers, the fairly recent company Taberner Carsi has opted for a rather special market niche. The company has specialized in a small number of brands and concentrated on a particular market segment where it sees excellent opportunities. Distribution manager Harald Westermeier thinks that in spite of the enormous price increases over the last years, Spain still offers high-quality wines that cost less than in France or Italy. In hip gastronomic circles, some wines in the mid-price range have become absolute cult objects, Spain is "in." Among consumers, there are

Andreas Fürbach
"Producers such as Pesquera or Berberana have a true brand image."

Joachim Buchta
"Spain can satisfy consumers' thirst for novel wines still to be discovered."

Harald Westermeier
"Spain still offers high-quality wines that cost less than in France or Italy."

growing groups of people who are specifically looking for Spanish wines. However, an even faster growing consumer segment is on the lookout for a reasonable alternative to wines from Bordeaux and Tuscany, and in this respect the price in relation to the quality is still an important factor. These are the consumers Taberner Carsi wants to supply with high-end wines. According to Westermeier, Spanish wines have a very bright future. "There is no holding back Spain, particularly for quality and top-quality wines." Joachim Buchta is also relatively new in the wine business. A few years ago, he founded Vinos Castellanos and, similar to others, started off working with quality wines. Today, he thinks Spain is in a situation with positive and negative factors. On the one hand, it can satisfy consumers' thirst for novel wines still to be discovered, but on the other, novel wines are by definition not well known. The country's strong points therefore lie in the vast array of regional differences that are better perceived in Spain than in other countries. That is why the local grape varieties are also important for consumers, unfortunately, customers are not at all informed. In most cases, people think Spain means Rioja and they expect the same taste from all Spanish wines. Buchta also thinks that there are many growth opportunities because the market share of Spanish wines is not yet very big. Similar to his colleagues, he is of the opinion that future developments will depend heavily on the evolution in prices. It was the strong and very fast price increases in the main regions, Rioja and Ribera del Duero, that people did not appreciate, the actual price was not really the problem. Another important factor will be further progress toward higher quality in the lesser known regions and clear, strong interest in the German market on the part of Spanish producers. Buchta organizes a number of his own events and wine tastings with his customers and has noted that German consumers want to see and hear a "real vintner" from time to time. Of course, specialized importers are not the only ones to bring Spanish wines to wine shops and consumers in general. The major distribution chains also import wine. To say nothing of the large import companies and smaller specialized distributors that import wine from around the world, including Spanish wines. But the initial, ground-breaking work in many cases was done by the specialized importers. Generally speaking, the importers are convinced of the quality of Spanish wines. What they criticize is the mentality of their suppliers, many of whom never look beyond their own borders. According to the importers, what they need is a recognizable Spanish identity with original, unmistakable, and highly traditional wines. But they also need modern marketing that is actively encouraged and supported not only by the Denomination of Origin authorities and ICEX, but also by the producers. When that happens, German consumers will be all the happier to open a good bottle of Spanish wine.

Jürgen Mathäss *is an economist. He worked from 1985 to 1992 as editor-in-chief of the professional wine magazine* Weinwirtschaft *and has since been an independent wine journalist and marketing consultant. He is currently the editor-in-chief of the German edition of* VINUM.

TEXT
GÖRAN SANDBERG

Sweet Success in Sweden

To say that Spanish wines have been a success in Sweden is clearly an understatement. It is actually more like an explosion. Every third bottle that is sold on the Swedish market is from Spain. And if we consider only the red wine, it is practically every second bottle.

Sweden is considered by producers all over the world to be a very important test market for wines. There is a great variety in the monopoly shops, the consciousness about wine is very high and almost two thirds of all Swedes drink wine regularly.
The Swedes turned to wine when the tourist trips to the Mediterranean countries started in the 1960's. And while wine drinking has decreased in wine-producing countries, it has increased in Sweden.
In 1994, the Swedish state-owned import monopoly came to an end and the former marketing agents became importers. Today, Sweden has around 400 importers and a few very successful. We met four of the most important importers of Spanish wine in Sweden.
Robert Montgomerie is President of Domaine Wine & Spirits AB. He has worked with wine imports for ten years before starting his company in 1998. Domaine is already one of the 15 biggest importers in Sweden with special emphasis on quality rather than quantity and on Spain. Robert tries to work only with a limited number of producers. Spanish imports are Marqués de Cáceres, Bodega Miguel Merino, Valtravieso, Felix Solis, and Bodegas Ochoa.
"The advantage of Spanish wines," says Robert, "is that they offer a soft, round style with vanilla tones. No harsh tannins and no pronounced acidity. And that appeals to the Swedish customer! The new tendency to look for fruitier wines has not really caught on in the general market yet."
But Robert also has things to say about the price level: "There is a price problem. The price/quality ratio has been a key factor for the growth and success of Spanish wines in Sweden. But that is not the case any longer. The price increases, especially for Rioja and Ribera del Duero, have led to a substantial decrease in sales, and many wines will disappear from the Swedish market!"
"The Swedes are price conscious," Robert continues. "Yet they look for a wine that is familiar. That is why a surprisingly large number of consumers stick to their beloved Rioja wines in spite of the steep price increases. However the latest price jumps have been too severe."
The capacity of Spanish wine to match food is one of the success factors. In Swedish restaurants, the popularity of *tapas* and Latin-American cuisine is increasing, the trend is headed by Mathias Dahlgren, Bocuse d'Or winner and owner of Stockholm star restaurant Bon Lloc. "Combining food and wine is popular in Sweden," says Robert. "But up till now that might have been a disadvantage for Spanish wines, since Spanish cuisine has been less known in Sweden than the Italian or French."
Montgomerie believes that Spanish wine on a whole is very well known to the Swedish public: "I would say that in our country

Robert Montgomerie
"In our country you have perhaps the best penetration of any market outside Spain."

Janåke Johansson
"A classic red Rioja comes very close to the optimal Swedish taste."

you have perhaps the best penetration of any market outside Spain! Probably the average consumer is unaware of most Spanish grape varietals. There is some recognition of Tempranillo, mostly due to the fact that the name Tempranillo is often included in the brand name.
When asking about the Spanish D.O. system, Robert Montgomerie smiles. "The general rules of the D.O.s are not known. But Rioja is so well known that there are consumers who believe that the word Rioja is Spanish for red wine!"
Janåke Johansson is executive vice president of Vinhuset Bibendum AB, the third largest importer of wine in Sweden. Janåke is known all over the country and was appointed Wine Personality of the year 1998 by the magazine *Vin & Mat* (Wine & Food). For 25 years, he was in managing positions with Systembolaget, the Swedish retail monopoly. Bibendum sells their products directly or through Pripps, Sweden's largest brewery. The business idea is to combine prestige wines with volume. Bibendum is the representative in Sweden of Vega Sicilia, Alion, Bodegas Alejandro Fernández, Faustino Martínez, Roda, Costers de Siurana, Clos Mogador,

Can Rafols del Caus, Albet i Noya Castell d'Age, Bocopa, Emilio Lustau, and J&F Lurton.
"Spanish wines are very well established in Sweden, especially Rioja," Janåke says. "The image is high when it regards red wine. The whites are more or less anonymous. People know how the Spanish red wines taste and a classic red Rioja comes very close to the optimal Swedish taste. The Swede likes his wine deep red in color, full and generous, with certain but not exaggerated tannins. And surely some oak character. A white wine should be clean, fresh and fruity. It may have some oaky character, but not necessarily. It must be dry, but not too crisply dry." Janåke continues: "The great disadvantage, of course, are the recent price increases which have forced consumers to switch from classical quality districts like Rioja, Penedés and Ribera del Duero to cheaper wines from La Mancha and other districts. When the consumers drink low-priced Gran Reservas and Reservas from those areas it is a great risk that they get disappointed and leave Spain for wines from other countries. The status of Reserva and Gran Reserva is undermined and will apparently soon stand for nothing at all. A very dangerous path to thread. On the other hand Spain has a great future if prices get lower. You have to be realistic and count on a diminished total volume. But you have a great future in the prestige segment, even if the prices have also gone up too much there!"
Ove Fondberg is President of Fondberg & Co. AB, Sweden's largest private wine importer. Only Vin & Sprit, the state-owned former wholesale monopoly, is larger. Fondberg & Co. is run by the Fondberg family and was founded in 1975. Fondberg & Co. is Sweden's largest supplier of Spanish wines. Producers include Bodegas Olarra, Bodegas Los Llanos, Bodegas Príncipe de Viana, Bodegas Los Tinos, Bodegas Señorio de Nava, Viños de León, Rainiera Pérez Martin, and Cavas Masachs.
"Spanish wines are popular wines that suit almost everybody, even people who are not regular wine drinkers," says Ove Fond-

berg. "They give very good value for money. Easy-to-drink red wines, not very tannic, rounded, with a hint of oak and vanilla."
"Spanish wines generally are really very familiar to the Swedes. A market share for red wine of about 50 percent is proof of that."
The general image of Spanish wines are very good in Sweden, Ove Fondberg states. One expression that comes back is "good value for money." But talking about prices, Ove reacts: "Look at the development for Rioja during last year! The relation between price and quality is extremely important. And even if the consumer chooses to stay with Spanish wines when prices go up, he looks for other alternatives! The customer also pays much attention to the packaging and to the words Reserva and Gran Reserva. This tells him that he deals with quality wines! Spanish wines still have a bright future in Sweden!"
Johan Hermansson is pres-

Ove Fondberg

"They are easy-to-drink red wines, not very tannic, rounded, with a hint of oak an vanilla."

Johan Hermansson

"I cannot see any disadvantages for Spain as far as quality is concerned."

ident of Hermansson & Co. Wine Merchant and responsible for producer contacts within the family-owned firm, established in 1994. The company's focus is on a limited number of producers, and confidence based on long-term agreements. Hermansson & Co. has a large Spanish portfolio, including producers Bodega Pirineos, Bodegas Piedemonte, Castillo de Maluenda, Viña Ijalba, Bodega Inviosa, Bodegas de Crianza de la Castilla La Vieja, and Vilariño Cambados.

"The Swedish consumers are well acquainted with wines from Spain," says Johan Hermansson. The Swedes like the style of Spanish wines. You can say that the dominant position of Spanish wines makes it "easier" to succeed with a new launch compared to wines from a lesser known country. And I cannot see any disadvantages for Spain compared to other countries as far as quality is concerned. But the speculation in grape prices that we have seen lately worries me," says Johan Hermansson. "I am thinking primarily of D.O. wines. From the second half of 1999 we have seen big dips in Rioja sales. Navarra and other D.O.s seem to follow Rioja in the decline. If the quality is not raised at the same pace as the prices are, it will no doubt be difficult to sell D.O. wines in larger volumes."

"Spain is synonymous with Tempranillo and Viura. But a problem for the consumer is all the synonyms to these grapes. The consumer has not the faintest idea that Ull de llebre is the same grape as Tempranillo and that Macabeo and Viura are the same. The Swedish consumer knows of D.O.s such as Rioja, Navarra, Penedés, Valdepeñas, La Mancha, and Jerez. But the words that really mean something to the Swede are Reserva and Gran Reserva!"

Hermansson participates in all sorts of activities, both for specific countries and more general ones. But the most important way to reach the consumer is *Grapevine*, their own newsletter, a medium they work hard to develop.

"Spain is very well regarded as a wine country, but unfortunately for Spain and other countries, I think that when the consumers want to buy a really fine wine, it will be a French one! Spanish wines certainly have a bright future in Sweden, no doubt, but the large increases we have seen in D.O. wine prices will leave a vacuum which will be filled by wines in the lower price range. This is where Vino de la Tierra comes into the picture and we will certainly see a lot of these wines in Sweden within the next few years. The Swedes will probably drink as much Spanish wine as before but not so much of D.O. quality!"

***Göran Sandberg** is a wine critic for* Bon Appétit Magazine *and former information director of* Vin & Sprit AB. *He also writes for* World of Wine News *and other magazines and has contributed to the encyclopedia* A World of Wine.

Photo credits on page 200.

INLAND SPAIN

This second part of our series exploring the cuisines of Spain focuses on the interior of the Peninsula–inland Spain. This blanket term covers Autonomous Communities as diverse as Castile-León, La Rioja, Navarre, Aragon, Madrid, Castile-La Mancha, and Extremadura, all of which share the common denominator of not having a sea coast. They also share a continental climate, albeit with the variations naturally associated with terrains as varied as the highlands of the Pyrenees and León, the rich lowlands along the many rivers that flow through this huge territorial expanse, and the plains of La Mancha and Extremadura.

Pablo Picasso
(1881-1973)

The famous Málaga-born artist was a great bullfighting aficionado. Here is his dedication of this work, titled *Toritos fritos* (Little Fried Bulls), to his friend the bullfight impresario Paco Muñoz, to mark the birth of Muñoz's son:

"Here I send you, dear Paco, a good dish of little fried bulls so that young Currito can eat them on his Saint's Day with a good glass of Valdepeñas wine and a jug of Priorat. As you can see, I remember. Cannes, February 2, 1957."

He gave a copy of the work, shown here, to his friend and barber Eugenio Arias, who shared with Picasso his enthusiasm for bullfights. Arias's private collection, with more than 60 works, is on display in a museum in his birthplace, Buitrago de Lozoya, a small village in the sierra of Madrid.

The Cuisines of Spain. Part 2

TEXT
LOURDES PLANA

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD

This is history-steeped Spain, early seat of the kingdoms which would later combine into the Spanish nation, and from which customs, rites, and cuisines still survive. Fundamental to these cuisines are variations on the theme of a hearty stew containing pulses, vegetables, and meat: these are all descendants of the curiously named *olla podrida*, which translated literally means "rotten pot." No one is sure about how the name originated: it has been suggested that it is a corruption of olla *poderosa*–a "powerful" rather than "rotten" pot, because of the many ingredients it contains, or that the word "podrida" means not so much "rotten" as "overdone," since the ingredients are cooked for so long.

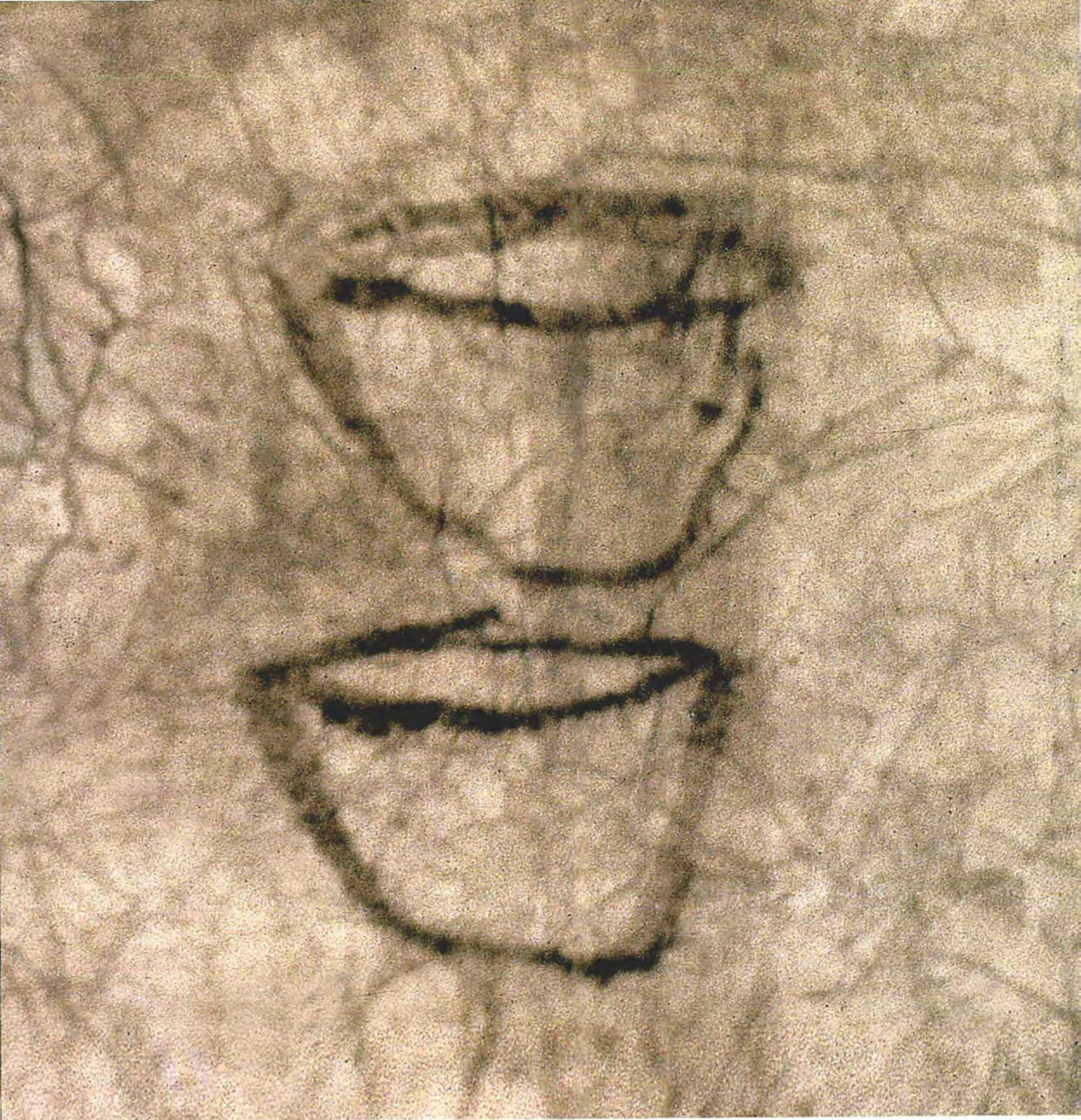
The importance of lamb and suckling pig, especially in roast form, in the cuisine of this central area of the Peninsula have earned it the title of *la España que asa*–the (part of) Spain that roasts. Pork butchery, or charcuterie, also plays an important role and has a specific character in these inland areas which are home to that aristocrat of pigs, the *cerdo ibérico*. Salt cod is the most widely eaten fish, but river catches such as trout, barbel, and crayfish all appear frequently in the traditional culinary repertoires.

Inland Spain is also where the country's most extensive wine-growing areas are to be found, including its best known and oldest Denominations of Origin–Rioja, Cariñena, La Mancha, Ribera del Duero…

Fernando Sánchez Calderón
(1951)

Right: When he was twenty Sánchez Calderón painted in the throbbing city of Madrid. Now he prefers to have his studio in the more tranquil urban environment of Valladolid, his home town in the heart of the Castilla-León region. *Mosaico*, 1988.

The Autonomous Community of Castile-León has adopted the combined names of two ancient kingdoms which were historically in constant conflict. Today, the label designates a geographical and political unit made up of the provinces of Ávila, Burgos, León, Palencia, Salamanca, Segovia, Soria, Valladolid, and Zamora.



INLAND
SPAIN
CASTILE-LEÓN

A complete menu with the *cocido maragato*,a Léon speciality and its desserts,custard and sponge cake.

The history of this territory is one of continuous warfare, first during the Reconquest (a period of Spanish history lasting from the 8th century to the 15th, during which the Christian forces struggled unceasingly to wrest Spanish territory back from the Arab invaders), and later among the monarchs and noblemen of Castile itself. In consequence, this whole area is richly endowed with strategically positioned castles and fortresses, countless churches and monasteries, and "monumental" towns with fine palaces, cathedrals, and civic buildings in diverse architectural styles, so that to explore around here is hugely informative in terms of art and history.

Castile occupies a plateau bounded by various mountain ranges–the Montes de León, the Picos de Europa, the Cordillera Cantábrica, the Montes de Oca, the sierras of La Demanda, Guadarrama, and Gredos–and is traversed from east to west by the mighty river Duero so that patches of semidesert alternate with leafy valleys and fertile river flats.

The very names of some districts of Castile–Tierra de Pan, Tierra de Campos, Tierra de Vino–are indicative of its traditional crops: cereals–especially wheat–peppers, garlic, potatoes, pulses, apples, chestnuts, and vines in quantity. The range of pulses cultivated is wide and varied, specialties including large broad beans known as *judiones* from La Granja, chickpeas from Fuentesaúco, lentils from Villalta, butter beans from Los Juarros and La Bañeza, and two Denominación Específica (D.E.) products (see Glossary on page199): Barco de Ávila green beans, and La Armuña lentils. These pulses provide the basic ingredients for countless soups and stews, two of which stand out–one for historical reasons and the other for curiosity value. Olla podrida, mentioned earlier as the original model for many subsequent one-pot dishes such as *cocidos*, *potajes*, and *pucheros*, is an ancestral recipe which appears in identical form in two 16th-century cookbooks. The basic ingredients are chickpeas, vegetables (carrots, cabbage, turnips), and various kinds of meat (chicken, pigeon, pheasant, pork, beef, lamb), depending on availability and affordability, which are all simmered slowly together: women could put the pot on the fire before going off to work in the fields and leave it on all day. One descendant, cocido, is traditionally served in separate "courses," starting with the broth, going on to the vegetables and pulses, and ending up with the meats. In the León specialty known as cocido *maragato*, the ingredients are the classic ones but the courses are served in reverse order, finishing up with the broth. Locals say that this is to fill up any space left by the first two courses, though another explanation refers back to the Peninsular War and suggests that the Napoleonic troops occupying the area opted to eat the more substantial parts first in case they were attacked before the meal was over.

Livestock rearing is an ancient tradition in Castile-León: herdsmen's associations existed here as early as the 5th-8th centuries, when this part of the Peninsula was under Visigothic rule. These associations became increasingly important, culminating in the Middle Ages with the constitu-

Alcázar de Segovia, a true fairytale castle.

tion of the powerful and influential guild known as "La Mesta" which, in addition to producing spectacular growth in Spain's livestock numbers, was also the moving force behind a thriving wool trade with the rest of Europe. It was eventually dissolved in 1836 (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 48). Churra sheep, Sanabria cows, Castile-León lambs, Salamanca Morucha cows, Ávila heifer calves (the meat of these latter three being Denominación Específica products) are some of the breeds raised here. Lamb–the younger the better–and suckling pig (known variously as *tostón*, *cochinillo*, or *lechón*) are roasted by skilled cooks in the large wood-fired adobe ovens typically found in this area's restaurants, and are served crisp and golden on the outside and pink and tender within. Charcuterie is another important local specialty, given the region's excellent first ingredients and its cold, dry climate which is ideal for curing meat (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 28). A major contributor to this category is the Ibérico pig (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33) bred on the *dehesa* pastures of Salamanca (this pig will feature again in Extremadura and, in the next chapter, in Andalusia). Ibérico cured ham, *chorizo*, and loin are of superb quality: those produced in Guijuelo (Salamanca) come with a Denominación de Origen (D.O.), and the area also has many other non-Ibérico pork products, some also with a D.O., which are equally excellent. Top products include chorizos from Cantimpalos (Segovia)–these have a D.O.–and from Villarcayo and Belorado (Burgos); Burgos *morcillas* (blood sausages, or black puddings, containing rice and onion); and *botillo*

Medieval walls encircle the city of Ávila.

berciano from León (a local pork product made up of ribs, tail, and backbone–all still quite meaty, seasoned with oregano, paprika, and garlic, is first boiled and then smoke-dried). Another local classic in this general category, though not actually a pork product, is *cecina*–lean beef or venison cured either by maceration, salting, or smoking. Leonese cured beef is a D.E. product (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47).

This inland area is hunting and shooting territory, and game is varied and plentiful, particularly small game such as hare, rabbit, partridge, quail, and the like, which are usually cooked with butter beans and vegetables *a la cazadora* (hunter-style), or *en escabeche* (soused).

Despite the fact that its rivers yield only eels, perch, crayfish, and trout (all excellent from León's turbulent rivers), fish dishes play a surprisingly important role in the culinary repertoire of Castile. The explanation is to be found in the fact that Castile lies on the ancient muleteer route to Galicia, and since time immemorial has enjoyed fresh conger, sea bream, monkfish, and hake carried there by the *arrieros*. Food of all types was transported on oxen the length and breadth of the Peninsula by these equivalents of today's transport companies, many of whom originated from La Maragatería (León). In the course of their continuous comings and goings, the arrieros transplanted products and ways of doing things from one region to another, and are held largely responsible for having made such enthusiastic fish eaters of the inhabitants of inland Spain. Their name lives on in various dishes: salt cod, sea bream, and cauliflower can all be cooked in the style known as *al ajo* arriero, which denotes the involvement of garlic and oil.

Desserts, and particularly sweets–some, though not all, convent-made–feature largely in every one of Castile-León's constituent provinces. Here are just a few of the best known ones: *mantecadas* (very buttery individual sponge cakes) from Astorga (León) and Soria; *nicanores* from Boñar and *los lazos de San Guillermo* (very light puff pastries dusted in icing sugar), both from León province; *bollo maimón* (a ring-shaped light sponge cake traditionally served at local weddings) from Zamora and Salamanca; *yemas* (egg-yolk candies), very popular throughout the region, though the most prestigious ones come from Ávila and Almazán (Soria); *hojuelas* (oil-fried batter biscuits served with honey), a Valladolid specialty.

Octavio Colís
(1948)

Elogio del vino y los cinco sentidos. El tacto. (1996). "In praise of wine and the five senses. The sense of touch" reflects the homeland of Colís, the Rioja region, where life revolves around wine making.

The River Ebro flows through La Rioja, as it does through Aragon. This important waterway was the route by which the Iberians, Celts, Romans, and Arabs penetrated into the interior from the Mediterranean.

INLAND
SPAIN

LA RIOJA

Great expanses of vineyards cover La Rioja, whose wines are exported all over the world.

In the most mountainous parts of La Rioja are the sources of seven tributaries of the Ebro, one of which is the River Oja, or *río Oja*, from which the region takes its name.
La Rioja's rich history is closely interwoven with that of the nearby kingdoms of Navarre and Aragon. The countless monasteries that once existed here sowed the seeds of culture and learning, and one of the area's greatest claims to fame is "the cradle of Castilian language," on the basis of a document inscribed at the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla in the year 964, known nowadays as "Codex 64." This was a Latin dictionary of 20,000 words organized alphabetically from A to Z, in the margins of which appear some comments written by the monastic copyists in the language of the vernacular speech of the time, providing the first extant examples of Hispanic Romance.

The classic *menestra*, a vegetable medley based on the superb produce grown in La Rioja.

On the fertile plain alongside the River Ebro, superb fruit and vegetables are grown, and these provide the very essence of the local cuisine. A classic example are *menestras*, medleys of vegetables such as artichokes, green beans, Swiss chard, cauliflower, peas, carrots, initially boiled separately then tossed together with diced serrano ham and olive oil for further cooking. One variant on this theme incorporates lamb, and another, also delicious, requires the boiled vegetables then be dipped in flour and egg and fried. Another great favorite in this region are the fresh pinto beans known as *pochas* harvested at the end of the summer when their pods are starting to rot. The fresh beans are usually cooked in a casserole as an *estofado*, most famously in combination with quail, the shooting season for which starts just as the beans are ready for picking.
Riojan chorizo is delicious and slightly piquant, imparting a very characteristic zing to dishes in which it is involved: it is a key ingredient in the trademark dish *patatas a la riojana* (Riojan-style potatoes) (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36). Other classics include tiny lamb and kid chops grilled over vine shoots (a byproduct of vine pruning); river crayfish in tomato sauce; and salt cod, bonito, and pork tenderloin can all be cooked a la riojana, which is to say with peppers and tomatoes. La Rioja shares with Navarre and Aragon a taste for offal: favorites include lamb's or kid's head, split and oven roasted; tripe; sweetbreads; *embuchados* (known as *fardalejos* or *madejas* in Aragon, these are lamb or kid intestines rolled up and fried); a Logroño dish called *cachuela* (known as *fricajea* or *patorrillo* in Navarre, made with pig's liver and other offal)–these give some idea of the range. Sweets and desserts here include mantecadas *de almendra* (almond sponges), *milhojas* (puff pastries filled with confectioner's custard) and *trenzas de yema* (braided egg-yolk sweets) from Logroño.

THE INLAND LARDER

The olive groves of inland Spain are not particularly extensive but play an important role in its local economies. Excellent olive oils are made in Bajo Aragón (from Empeltre olives), in the Toledo and Alcaraz sierras of Castile-La Mancha, and in Los Navalmorales.
The pulses produced in these Autonomous Communities keep much of the rest of Spain supplied with lentils, beans, and chickpeas.
Recent years have seen a growth in commercial duck farming in Vera del Bidasoa (Navarre), the product being one of the best on the Spanish market (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 34).
Many types of cheese are made from the milk derived from the fine sheep reared in all the inland Communities. Navarre produces: Urbasa-Andía, Aralar, Ulzama, Roncal (a D.O. cheese) and Idiazábal (which shares a D.O. with the Basque Country–see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 18, 21, and 48). From La Rioja comes Camerano; from Aragon: Hecho, Ansó, Radiquero, Bispe, Samper de Calanda, Albarracín, and Tronchón. The goats, cows, and sheep of Castile-León give very notable cheeses: they include curd cheeses Burgos, Pata de Mula, and Villalón; blues Picón and Posada de Valdeón, and others such as Tiétar, Peñafiel, Castellanos, Zamorano (a D.O. cheese), and León. Authentic Manchego cheese, another D.O. product, is made from the milk of Manchega sheep and can be eaten semi-cured, cured, or preserved in olive oil or fat (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 17).

Extremadura, with its large flocks of sheep and goats, is one of Spain's most prolific cheese-producing areas in terms of variety. D.O. cheeses La Serena (from Badajoz) and Torta del Casar (from Cáceres) are the most famous (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 31), but there are many, many different kinds–Ibores, Siberia, goat's milk *quesaíllas*–all of which can be tasted at the big cheese fair held every Spring in the attractive town of Trujillo.
Inland charcuterie is also excellent, good examples being cured hams and sausages from D.O.s Guijuelo (Salamanca), Dehesa de Extremadura, and Teruel, and top quality cured beef (*cecina*) from León.
D.O. honey from La Alcarria (Guadalajara), marzipan from Sonseca (Toledo), handmade sweets from the convents of Castile and Extremadura, *castañas de mazapán* (candy covered marzipan) from Huesca, chocolate covered crystallized fruits from Aragon, *guirlache*-type *turrón* (bars of caramelized sugar embedded with almonds) from Zaragoza, *yemas de Santa Teresa* (egg yolk candies) from Ávila, *ponche segoviano* (sponge cake with confectioner's custard and marzipan) from Segovia, *nicanores de Boñar* from León, *almendras garrapiñadas* (toffee-coated almonds) are just a few examples of the huge range of traditional confectionery made and eaten in inland Spain.

Jesús Basiano
(1889-1966)

Right: Between Impressionism and Expressionism, Basiano portrayed the varied landscape of his homeland, from the Pyrenees to the banks of the Ebro river, which earned him the sobriquet of "El Pintor de Navarra - the Painter of Navarre". *Salinas de oro*, 1925.

In the 14th century, the ancient kingdom of Navarre extended beyond the Pyrenees, and its court was among the most cultivated and refined in the Peninsula. We know this from numerous contemporary chronicles which, among other information, provide accounts of the variety and abundance of the foodstuffs served at its tables.

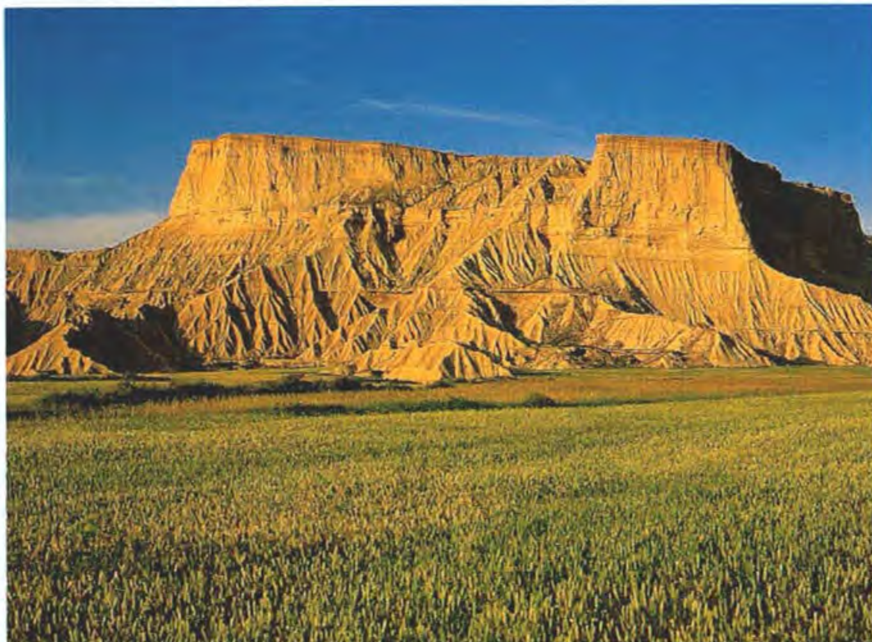
INLAND
SPAIN

NAVARRE

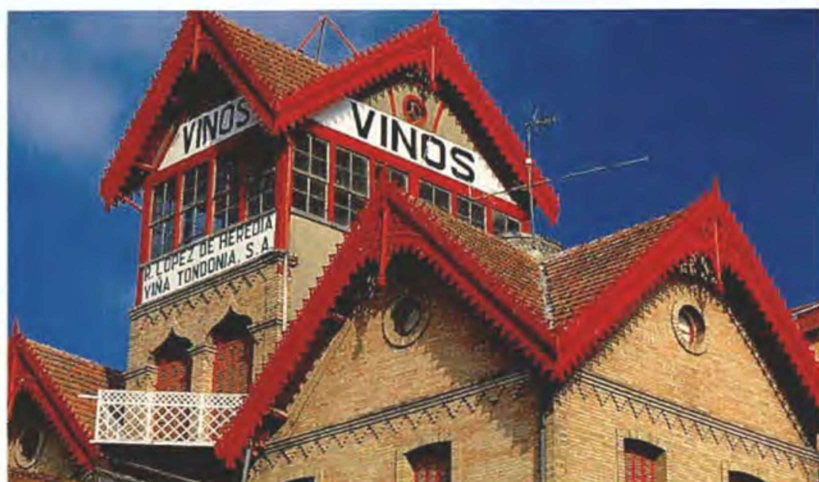
A recipe book entitled *El cocinero religioso* (The Monastic Cook), written in the late 17th century by an Augustinian monk from Pamplona under the *nom de plume* of "Antonio Salsete," confirms these accounts. The Pyrenean area of Navarre is the habitat of wild boar, roe deer, partridge, and wood pigeon, these last particularly plentiful at the frontier point of Echalar in the beautiful Baztán Valley through which they pass during their annual flight from the cold European winter (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36). The crystalline rivers of the Pyrenees yield trout which, stuffed with cured ham and fried *a la navarra*, are a classic local dish.

Navarre's river plain produces excellent fruit and vegetables, top products including cherries from Milagro, artichokes and lettuce hearts from Tudela, garlic from Falces, pinto beans from Sangüesa, Navarre asparagus (a D.E. product), and *piquillo* peppers from Lodosa (a D.O. product). These small, slightly piquant, peppers are roasted over an open flame then peeled and artisan-bottled: they are eaten in salads, as a side vegetable or, most usually, stuffed. Nowadays they appear in cutting edge cuisine with all sorts of interesting stuffing–salt cod, hake, prawns, baby squid, meat, asparagus, blood sausage... (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45). Other typically Navarrese dishes include *migas de pan de Ujué* (a savory dish whose bulk is supplied by croutons of country bread), fried or stewed frogs' legs, *estofado de toro* (the bull-meat stew traditionally served after Pamplona's San Fermín bull-runs, so beloved by Ernest Hemingway), and wild mushrooms in various guises. Local livestock provides quality mutton, lamb, and pork. Lamb features in *cochifrito* (fried with sweet paprika and other spices), in a meaty version of the vegetable medley menestra, and in *chilindrón* (with a sauce of tomatoes and peppers). Local charcuterie includes the famous *chistorra* (a long thin chorizo type sausage which is fried and eaten hot either just as it is, or in a baguette sandwich or with fried eggs) and the popular chorizo de Pamplona, whose special feature is its finely minced meat. Specific to this region is the *gorrín estellés*, a piglet obtained by crossing a wild boar with a domestic pig, which makes a delicious roast. Milk obtained from transhumant flocks of Lacha and Rasa sheep is used to make renowned cheeses and *cuajadas* (junkets). Cuajada is a popular local dessert and is made in a wooden vessel called a *kaiku* in which the milk is set by dropping in a searingly hot stone.

Like its neighbors La Rioja and Aragon, Navarre produces a wide variety of excellent vegetables.

The South of Navarre is a very dry region.


WINES AND PACHARÁN



Some of the wineries in La Rioja, such as López de Heredia, are more than a century old.

Castile-León is one of Spain's leading Autonomous Communities for its number of wine growing Denominations of Origin: Bierzo (León province), Cigales (between Valladolid and Palencia), Ribera del Duero (Burgos, Valladolid, Soria, and Segovia), Rueda (mostly in Valladolid with small areas in Ávila and Segovia), Toro (Zamora), other historically renowned ones such as Cebreros, and Arribes del Duero.

Spain's flagship wine D.O. is La Rioja, which is divided into three zones: La Rioja Alavesa (discussed earlier in the series in connection with the Basque Country) which produces 25 percent of the denomination's wine, La Rioja Alta which produces 43 percent, and La Rioja Baja, between La Rioja and Navarre, which produces the remaining 32 percent. Along with Jerez, it is one of Spain's most famous and firmly established D.O.s in terms of international recognition.

The woods of Navarre are a plentiful source of not only wild fungi but also of sloes (*pacharanes*, or *arañones*). These dark red fruits macerated in dry aniseed liqueur produce the famous Pacharán Navarro. Originally made to a domestic recipe as a digestive, this is now a D.E. product (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 4). Equally typical of this area, though much less well known is Patxaka or Sagarminek, made by macerating crab apples, again in anise.

Navarre's wine-making reputation was initially founded on its excellent rosés, but today its whites and reds have caught up and D.O. Navarra has come to signify quality across the board.

There are five D.O. winegrowing areas in Aragon: Cariñena, Calatayud, Campo de Borja, and Somontano. Because of their high alcohol content, Cariñena wines used to be systematically exported to Bordeaux for blending with French wines.

Production areas Arganda, Navalcarnero, and San Martín de Valdeiglesias are grouped together under the D.O. Vinos de Madrid. Predominantly wines for drinking young, whites are made with Malvar, Airén, and Jaén grapes, and reds with Tinto Fino or Tempranillo and Garnacha, as well as other varieties currently common to all D.O.s.

With over 600,000 hectares (nearly a million and a half acres) under vine, Castile-La Mancha is the biggest wine-producing area in the world, its vast expanse embracing five D.O.s: La Mancha, Valdepeñas, Almansa, Mondéjar-Sacedón, Méntrida, and part of Jumilla (which it shares with Murcia). Predominant grape varieties are Airén (the majority) and Cencibel for whites, and Garnacha, Tinto Madrid and, especially, Cencibel for rosés and reds.

There is significant wine production in Extremadura, and it is making rapid advances in both quality and quantity: varieties grown here are Garnacha, Tempranillo, Macabeo, Cabernet Sauvignon. As well as wines of the traditional local type known as *pitarras* (which take their name from the earthenware vessels in which they are made), Extremadura produces whites, reds (young, *crianza* and *reserva*), sparkling wines and *cavas*.

INLAND
SPAIN

ARAGON

José Manuel Broto
(1949)

Left: A lyrical abstraction based on warm, earthy colors and lines which meander across the canvas characterizes the work of this painter from Aragon, now based in Paris, who in 1995 received the National Visual Art Prize. *Globo rojo*, 1987.

Aragon is one of the great historic regions of Spain. This former condado, or county, was elevated to kingdom status on the death of Sancho III of Navarre in 1035. In 1150, the heiress to the kingdom of Aragon, Doña Petronila, was married to Ramón Berenguer IV, count of Barcelona and ruler of Catalonia, thus extending Aragon's influence well beyond its natural frontiers, including Mediterranean territories.

Its ambit encompassed Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Naples, the Roussillon, and Sardinia, and the Duchies of Athens and Neopatria. The marriage in 1479 of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile–the Catholic Monarchs–united the countries of the Aragonese crown with Castile, and the Spanish nation as we now know it began to take shape.

Geographically, Aragon is divided into three clearly differentiated zones which virtually correspond to its three constituent provinces. The Pyrenean area and the Somontanos, at the foot of the mountains north of Huesca; the Ebro basin, in which areas of semidesert, Los Monegros, alternate with lush, fertile plains beside the Ebro, its tributaries and the irrigation canals which crisscross it; and finally the Iberian System with its mountains, declivities, and very diverse crops, extending into part of the province of Zaragoza and across the wild countryside of Teruel.

Like La Rioja and Navarre, Aragon produces a wide variety of excellent fruit and vegetables. Tomatoes, *artichokes*, green beans, *asparagus*, cardoons, turnips, cabbages, broccoli, beetroot, mangetout peas, and *borage* are grown there. Borage, something of a specialty vegetable in the rest of Spain and Europe, was introduced by the Arabs, and in Aragon it is boiled with potatoes and served with a little of its cooking liquor and a splash of local virgin olive oil. Borage leaves coated in batter, fried, and sprinkled with sugar are called *crespillos* and eaten for dessert.

The Pyrenees offer a combination of spectacular mountain scenery and graceful medieval churches.

Aragon is also an olive oil producing area, its olive-growing areas being El Somontano, Bajo Cinca, La Litera, and Bajo Aragón. This last is the source of one of Spain's very finest oils–smooth, fruity, and slightly sweet–and almost the whole production is sold on the export market. Aragonese black olives (known there as *olivas*, as opposed to *aceitunas*), are particularly good for dry preserving.

The saffron grown in specific areas of Teruel province and the truffles in Graus (Huesca) and in the Teruel area of the Maestrazgo fetch high prices and are consequently important to those areas' local economy.

Fruit growing is another of the region's resources: cherries, apples, figs, peaches, and almonds are important ingredients in stews, desserts, and confectionery, whose recipes and methodology keep ancestral Hispano-Judaeo-Arabic traditions alive.

The outstanding product of Aragonese livestock rearing is the *ternasco*, lamb fed on its mother's milk for a few days longer than usual: this is a D.E. product (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38). It is served as a roast with potatoes, in stews, or fried, and all parts of the animal are used–head, shanks, intestines, brains, and even tail. The tails of young female lambs lopped at mating time are cooked and known as "mountain asparagus."

Local pork is also excellent, especially in the form of charcuterie.

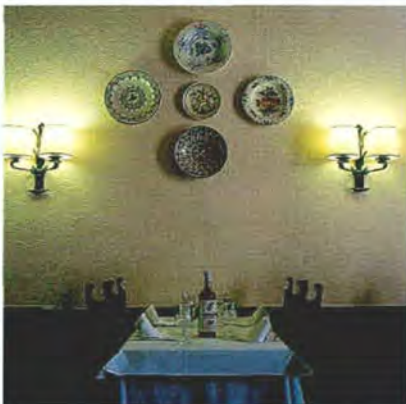
Sausages such as morcilla de arroz (blood sausage with rice incorporat-

Asparagus, artichokes, cardoons, mangetout peas....all kind of vegetables are grown in Aragon.

San Juan de la Peña is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in the area.

ed into the filling), *bolos*, *tortetas*, and *longanizas* (white chorizo) contain aniseed, cinnamon, and other spices, dried fruit, and nuts, which give them a slightly sweet, exotic zing which perfectly reflects the absorption of eastern influences into the native culture. Various cuts of pork are preserved in oil, thus making them available to the cook all

La Taberna del Entremuro, a restaurant serving the traditional recipes of Aragon.



year round. Cured ham from the chilly mountain areas of Teruel is a D.O. product: tender, aromatic and very slightly salted, it has a wonderful flavor.

Game birds and animals play an important part in Aragon's traditional recipes: classics include chicken prepared al chilindrón (namely, with tomatoes, red peppers, and cured ham); partridge soused or cooked with cabbage; wild boar and *sarrio* (wild Pyrenean goat) in the Ordesa style.

Trout, eel, and barbel are fished in the local rivers and lakes, and salted fish such as sardines, conger and, particularly, cod, feature in many delicious local dishes.

The people of Aragon are known for their sweet tooth, and this is reflected in their desserts and sweets: *tortas de alma* (puff pastries filled with pumpkin paste), *pan de higos* (pressed dried figs), *almojábanas* (super-light choux pastries), *jaqueses* (cakes thinly frosted with almond cream and topped with slivered almonds), *trenzas de Almudévar* (puff pastries with walnuts, raisins and icing sugar) again reveal the obvious influence of Arab and Jewish sweet-making traditions noted earlier.

INLAND SPAIN

MADRID

Francisco Bores
(1898-1972)

Madrid-born Bores was a member of the Spanish Ultraismo movement before moving to Paris, where he lived from 1925. Simple lines and large masses of color characterize his work. *Naturaleza muerta sobre la pared*, 1927.

Located at the geographical center of Spain, there is more to Madrid than just a metropolitan city and national capital. The territory surrounding the city is a mosaic of different kinds of landscape.

La Bola restaurant in Madrid, wellknown for its *cocido*.

Madrid province encompasses mountains (the Sierra de Guadarrama), unirrigated farmland, pastureland (mainly used for raising fighting bulls), fertile plains (in the basins formed by the Alberche, Manzanares, Lozoya, Guadarrama, Tagus, Henares, and Jarama rivers), olive groves, and vineyards.
Although its cultivated fields have gradually been encroached upon by advancing industrialization and urban expansion, major crops are still grown of cauliflowers, cabbages, artichokes, asparagus, and strawberries. Perico asparagus and strawberries from Aranjuez, which have always been the luxury items of Madrid's market garden products, are grown on a smaller scale.
Until Philip II opted to make it the capital of his kingdom in the 16th century, Madrid was just an ordinary town. Once it became the seat of the court, however, people flocked there from all parts of Spain, many of them to set up inns and eating houses. All brought with them the foods of their home area, and in the process of adapting them to the La Mancha style proper to the town, laid the foundations of a Madrilenian cuisine at once specific and eclectic. Madrid's quintessentially classic dish is cocido, for many centuries the daily fare for all walks of society. Cooked all in the same pot, this would either be served up as one plateful, or separated into three courses–the broth, followed by the chickpeas and vegetables, followed by the different meats, served with or without tomato sauce, and sometimes preceded by an entrée of eggs, fish, or meat, depending on how well off you were.
Other traditional dishes include a hearty soup of chickpeas, spinach, salt cod, and chopped hard-boiled egg known as *potaje de vigilia* (this "abstinence soup" contains no meat, and is therefore suitable fare for the Roman Catholic calendar's "abstinence days"); *lombarda de San Isidro* (a red cabbage dish); roast lamb and suckling pig; *gallina en pepitoria* (chicken cooked in a sauce thickened with ground almonds and hard-boiled egg yolk, and colored and flavored with saffron); *callos a la madrileña* (tripe, chorizo, and morcilla in a pimenton sauce). The legendary quantities of fish and other seafood consumed in the capital every day have earned the landlocked city the ironic title of "Spain's biggest fishing port." Some idea of the scale of consumption can be gained from the fact that sales of fish and seafood (fresh and frozen) in Mercamadrid, the central market which supplies the Autonomous Community of Madrid plus the odd neighboring province, averaged around 750 tons per day in 1999.
Desserts, sweets, and baked goods are often evocative of Madrid's summer night *verbenas*, outdoor fiestas with entertainments and dancing, at which stalls sell traditional sweet snacks such as *rosquillas de la tía Javiera* (Aunt Javiera's cakes: these come as *tontas* or *listas*, "silly" or

"clever," according to the topping), *churros* (flour and water dough piped into hot oil and deep fried), *porras* (fatter versions of churros), *picatostes* (sugared fried bread) *mojicones* (sponge cakes)–a whole range of confectionery intended for dipping into thick, comforting hot chocolate prepared *a la española*. Then there are *bartolillos* (light fried puff pastries filled with confectioner's custard or candied pumpkin), *buñuelos de viento* (little lightweight doughnuts, deep fried, with various fillings), *huesos de santos* ("saints' bones"–marzipan sweets filled with egg-yolk, sweet potato, coconut, and other fillings, and made to mark All Saints' Day) and honey-soaked *torrijas* (French toast), made to celebrate Holy Week.

Puerta de Alcalá, symbol of the Spanish capital.

Cocido madrileño, Madrid's quintessentially classic dish.

INLAND
SPAIN

CASTILE-LA MANCHA

Benjamín Palencia
(1900-1980)

Entirely self-taught, as a young man Palencia traveled through Europe and the U.S. to familiarize himself with the works of other painters. Although a friend of Braque and Matisse, it was the Italian masters, Giotto in particular, who most impressed this landscape painter from La Mancha. *Naturaleza muerta,* 1930.

Encompassing Toledo, Ciudad Real, Cuenca, Albacete, and Guadalajara, Castile-La Mancha is one of the Peninsula's biggest Autonomous Communities. The name La Mancha derives from the Arabic Almanchara, which means "flat, dry land."

Above: *Tiznao* or *Atascaburras*
Below: Bodegas Manzaneque in El Bonillo

Yet La Mancha also has hills (the Montes de Toledo, which constitute one of the country's biggest hunting reserves), lakes (in Ruidera), and marshes and wetlands (in Tablas de Daimiel National Park, one of Europe's most important ecological reserves). Archaeological remains found there date the history of the region back to the Paleolithic period, and also indicate that it was occupied for a long period by the Romans and later by the Arabs until being recaptured by the Christian forces at the Battle of Tolosa in 1212. Toledo, the Community's capital, which possesses valuable remains from all these periods, attests to the mutual tolerance which existed among Jews, Muslims, and Christians, as discussed in Part I of The Cuisines of Spain.

This region's cuisine is very varied, as one might expect from an area so extensive and growing such a diversity of crops. As well as cereals, particularly wheat (once ground by Don Quixote's famous windmills), Castile-La Mancha produces the vegetables capitalized on in such delicious dishes such as *asadillo* (made from tomatoes and peppers) and *pisto manchego* (a ratatouille-like dish of eggplants (aubergines), tomatoes, marrow, and pepper, a descendant of the Arab *alboronia*). Local specialties include tiny eggplants from Almagro, which are sold pickled in water, oil, and spices; garlic from Las Pedroñeras (known as the "garlic capital"); chickpeas (Toledo's are particularly good); kidney beans from La Alcarria; and lentils from Cuenca and Albacete.

The "Hanging Houses" in Cuenca.

But the most specialized local product is saffron which, as seen earlier, is also produced in Teruel. Top quality saffron is designated "Calidad Mancha," and indeed La Mancha provides ideal growing conditions. The high prices fetched by this spice reflect the fact that the pistils have to be cut by hand from 70,000 flowers to obtain 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of saffron fronds. "Stripping the flowers," as the operation is called in the trade, has to be done at high speed (there are even competitive events at the Saffron Festival held in Consuegra). Though saffron is used for its characteristic aroma and color in dishes all over the world, the most famous is, perhaps, *paella* (see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 6, 35, and 43).

Dishes incorporating *migas* (this literally means "crumbs," though they are often in fact sizable chunks of bread) occur in all parts of Spain where there is a shepherding tradition. The La Mancha version, migas manchegas, uses stale bread broken up into pieces, soaked in water, and

Saffron fields in Consuegra.

Preparing the fronds for the toasting.

Mancha quality saffron.

then cooked slowly with garlic and suet or fat. Bread is also a key ingredient in another ancestral dish, mentioned in Don Quixote–gazpacho manchego, or gazpacho *galiano*, a stew containing various sorts of meat, both farmyard and game such as hare, pigeon, rabbit, and La Mancha's famous and plentiful red partridge. These are simmered in water with appropriate seasonings until the meat comes away from the bone, and the liquor is thickened with galianos, flat cakes of unleavened bread which also serve as dish and spoon. Various meats and liver are used to make a flavorful local paté known as *morteruelo*. As one might expect in a region where the raw material is plentiful, Castile-La Mancha has lots of traditional game dishes: partridge are soused, or cooked with beans in Guadalajara, or made into stews; a Ciudad Real rabbit dish called *tojunto* (all together) is so called because all the raw ingredients are put into the pot at the same time; kid and lamb are eaten roast, or in a casserole with saffron, or minced and wrapped in cabbage leaves, or in *calderetas* (stews with potatoes), or fried as chops, or as *zarajos* (intestines rolled up and secured with vine shoots). *Atascaburras* (mule-stopper) or *tiznao*, is a dense, uncompromising brandade of boiled potato and flaked salt cod, pounded to a thick paste in a mortar with virgin olive oil. In Albacete, this is traditionally eaten to mark the first snowfall of winter. A similar, but lighter, dish is the local version of *bacalao* al ajo arriero (the muleteers' legacy again).

Among the most interesting local desserts are the wafer-thin fritters *flores* manchegas and *hojuelas* made in the Sierra de Albacete; mantecados (buttery sponge cakes), *melindres de Yepes* (sugarcoated doughnuts), *sequillos* (little shortbread cakes), *bizcochos borrachos* (syrup and alcohol-soaked sponge cakes); *miguelitos* (delicate puff pastry biscuits); *alajú* (an almond, honey, and fig sweet whose Arabic name means "gift of the gods") (see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 5 and 34).

Bodega Los Llanos in Valdepeñas.

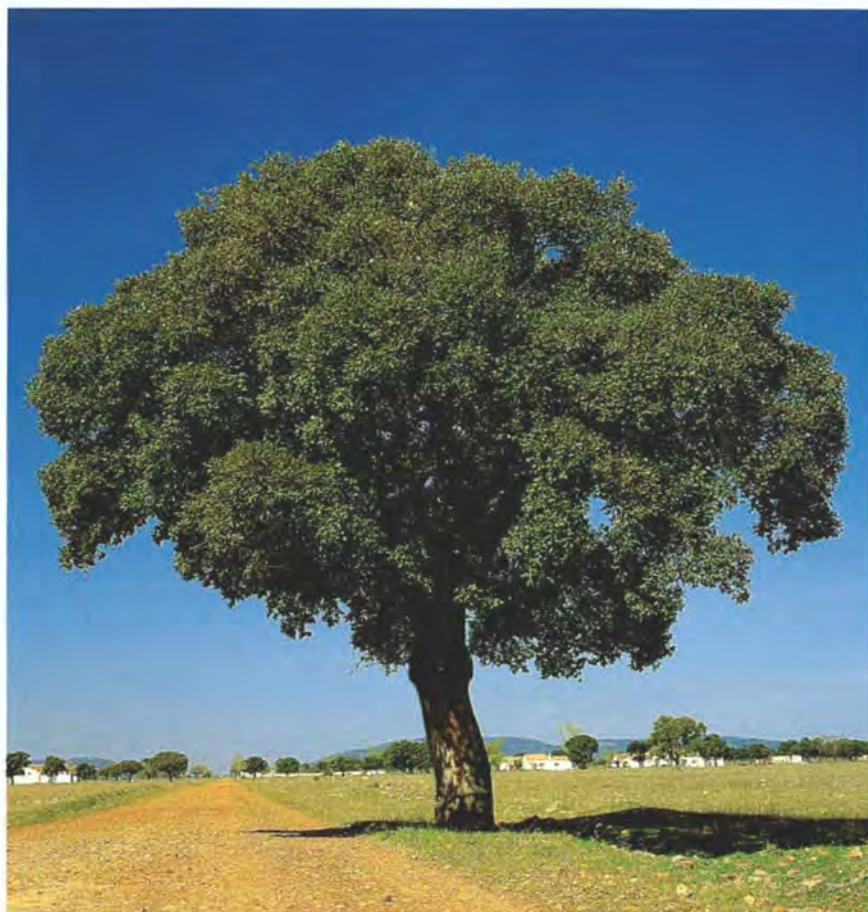
Godofredo Ortega Muñoz
(1905-1982)

Seeking spontaneity and simplicity, Ortega Muñoz dealt mainly in still lifes and the characters and landscapes of his home region, Extremadura, as in the olive groves in his *Olivares*, (1964).

Extremadura played a vital role in the discovery of the Americas insofar as it was the native land of nearly 600 conquistadors. Today it is a part of Spain well worth exploring for its wealth of historic sites and buildings: the incomparable walled town of Cáceres, Trujillo with its castle and mansions, the fine, aristocratic town of Plasencia, and the marvelous Roman ruins of Mérida are enduringly impressive.

INLAND
SPAIN

EXTREMADURA



The Dehesa de Extremadura with a beautiful holm-oak providing acorns.

Thanks to the rivers Tagus and Guadiana, reservoirs at Gabriel, Galán, and Alcántara, and irrigation systems extending through a large part of Badajoz province, this region has access to enough water to make it one of the most fertile in Spain. Fruit and vegetables of all kinds are grown on the banks of the rivers Tiétar and Jerte. Tender, green wild asparagus, and white truffles (slightly less aromatic than their darker relations) are used in local specialty versions of *revueltos* and *tortillas*–scrambled egg and omelette dishes. Extremadura's famous pimenton (sweet paprika made from dried, ground peppers–see *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 40 and 46) gives a characteristic touch to local dishes and sausages. Tomatoes and peppers are used to make the classic gazpacho, but here other versions are also occur such as gazpacho *blanco*, made with egg, bread, garlic, pennyroyal, oil, water, and chopped apple and croutons; gazpacho *verde*, made with wild asparagus; and gazpacho de ajo blanco, made with garlic, almonds, oil, and water. There are also meat and game versions reminiscent of La Mancha, for this is another area of extensive hunting reserves. Consequently, this area, too, has many local game recipes, the most famous being *perdices al estilo de Alcántara* (partridge in the Alcántara style) for which the birds are stuffed with duck liver and truffles. All dishes bearing the suffix "in the Alcántara style" supposedly originate from a recipe book plundered during the Peninsular War from the monastery of the Extremaduran town of that name by General Junot, leader of the Napoleonic troops, and subsequently made popular in France by his wife, who served them at her banquets. Extremadura's pastureland is the natural habitat of that noble beast, the cerdo Ibérico. These free range pigs walk considerable distances around the hilly countryside in search of the acorns on which they feed. This activity stretches their leg muscles and allows fat to filter through, thus creating the basic material for the excellent cured Ibérico ham and a whole range of allied charcuterie produced under the auspices of the D.O. Dehesa de Extremadura. Pork features in classic local dishes such as *prueba* (marinaded sausage meat); cachuela (casseroled pig's liver); pig's trotters in tomato sauce, and many, many more. Top meat dishes are the famous cochifrito and caldereta stews of lamb or kid. The local rivers, lakes, and reservoirs yield as wide a range of freshwater fish–tench, barbel, bogue, trout, and carp–as anywhere in Spain, and these are made full use of in the local cuisine. Extremaduran melons, Don Benito watermelons, pears, figs, prickly pears, raspberries, strawberries, and D.O. cherries from the Jerte Valley (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 19) keep Spain's fruit shops plentifully supplied for much of the year. Fruit features importantly in many dessert

The "Star Arch" in the old quarter of Cáceres.

The Iberian pig roams freely around the countryside.

Cherryblossoms in the Jerte-Valley.

dishes such as melon, grapefruit, apple, and tomato sweets, and cherry, date, chestnut, and walnut tarts. There is also quite a range of traditional sweets, cakes, and biscuits such as *perrunillas* (biscuits made with pork lard, flour, and sugar) ring-shaped *roscas*, *piñonates* (fried finger-shaped biscuits flavored with anise), *paciencias* (tiny sponge-mixture biscuits), and *hojaldres* (millefeuilles) to be bought at the *torno*, the little swiveling panel in the convent door, of Extremadura's many closed orders.

Lourdes Plana *is a* journalist: *her work appears throughout the media, and she also edits* Restauradores *magazine.*

See Recipes on page 141 and photo credits on page 200.

Curing thousands of delicious hams in perfectly controlled temperature conditions.

Selected Restaurants

This is a small, personal, and therefore subjective, selection of some of the restaurants that best typify each of the Autonomous Communities featured in this part of the series. Suffice it to say that the list is far from exhaustive.

Castile-León

Mesón Cándido
Plaza Azoguejo 5, Segovia
Tel: (34) 921 425 911
Trout, roast suckling pig, enormous La Granja broad beans *(judiones)* stewed with charcuterie.

Mesón Duque
Cervantes 12, Segovia
Tel: (34) 921 462 487
Roast suckling pig and baby lamb, and a new take on traditional dishes.

Maroto
Paseo Espolón 20, Soria
Tel: (34) 975 224 086
Potatoes with interesting fillings such as truffles, chorizo, wild mushrooms.

Hostal Landa
Km 236 on the Madrid-Irún highway, Burgos
Tel: (34) 947 206 343
Warm sweetbread salad; casseroled pigeon.

Casa Ojeda
Vitoria 8, Burgos
Tel: (34) 947 206 440
Knuckle of veal with its jus; salad of partridge and ceps.

Mesón de la Villa
Rodríguez de Valcárcel 3, Aranda de Duero (Burgos)
Tel: (34) 947 501 025
Reputed to serve the best roast lamb in the area.

Vivaldi
Platerías 4, León
Tel: (34) 987 260 760
Traditional Leonese cuisine.

Mesón Maruja
Castrillo de los Polvazares, León
Tel: (34) 987 691 045
Famous for its typically Leonese *cocido maragato.*

Mesón Panero
Marina Escobar 1, Valladolid
Tel: (34) 983 301 673
Traditional dishes, stuffed peppers, venison.

Madrid

La Bola
Guillermo Roland 1, Madrid
Tel: (34) 915 476 930
Classic Madrid-style *cocido* is served in this restaurant-cum-*taberna.*

Casa Lucio
Cava Baja 35, Madrid
Tel: (34) 913 653 252
Excellent for fish and egg dishes.

Casa Paco
Puerta Cerrada 11, Madrid
Tel: (34) 913 663 166
Another very traditional local restaurant serving prime meat and Madrid-style cocido.

Navarre

Rodero
Emilio Arrieta 3, Pamplona
Tel: (34) 948 211 217
Fungi-stuffed pigs' trotters served with savoy cabbage and black pudding garnish; marinaded monkfish with sautéed vegetables; truffle-aromatized salad of asparagus and clams with vinaigrette.

Maher
La Ribera 19, Cintruénigo
Tel: (34) 948 811 150
This old road-house restaurant has been completely revamped and updated. Partridge paté in marinade gelée with celery: mille-feuilles of onion and smoked *panceta* interleaved with fungi and pork snout.

La Rioja

El Cachetero
Laurel 3, Logroño
Tel: (34) 941 228 463
Vegetable *menestra;* pigs' trotters stuffed with paté de foie gras and served with Swiss chard sauce.

Echaurren
Héroes del Alcázar 2, Ezcaray
Tel: (34) 941 354 047
Slices of cod cooked *al pil-pil*; *potaje* of chickpeas, monkfish, and clams; croquettes; homemade meat balls.

Terete
Lucrecia Arana 17, Haro
Tel: (34) 941 310 023
Menestra (vegetable medley); asparagus; kid; potatoes *a la riojana.*

Aragon

Venta del Sotón
Tarragona-San Sebastián Highway Km 227, Huesca
Tel: (34) 974 270 241
Traditional Aragonese cuisine with very acceptable innovative touches. Roast ternasco lamb with *patatas a lo pobre* (Spain's equivalent of Lyonnaise potatoes); peach in maderized wine served with basil cream.

La Venta de El Cachirulo
Logroño autovía Km 1.5, Zaragoza
Tel: (34) 976 460 146
Swiss chard stalks with sweetbreads and chickpeas; young lamb and chicken *al chilindrón* (in a sauce of tomatoes, peppers, onions, and garlic).

Meseguer
Avenida del Maestrazgo 9, Alcañiz, Teruel
Tel: (34) 978 831 002
Excellent traditional vegetable dishes, and particularly good soused game.

Castile-La Mancha

El Corregidor
Jerónimo Cevallos 2, Almagro, Ciudad Real
Tel: (34) 926 860 648
Manchego cheese salad with black olive vinaigrette; pigeon with herb crust.

Mesón Casas Colgadas
Canónigos (no number), Cuenca
Tel: (34) 969 224 352
Eggplants stuffed with river crayfish; roast baby lamb.

Las Rejas
Avenida de Brasil (no number), Las Pedroñeras,Cuenca)
Tel: (34) 967 161 089
Updated Manchegan cuisine: salt cod with truffles, spinach, and cheese; pigeon with wild mushrooms and *galianos* (unleavened bread).

Asador Adolfo
Granada 6, Toledo
Tel: (34) 925 227 321
A restaurant right in the heart of old Toledo: *dorada* (gilthead) baked with Daimiel *pisto* and young garlic; loin of lamb.

Extremadura

Atrio
Avenida de España 30, Cáceres
Tel: (34) 927 242 928
Macerated Ibérico pork loin; roast merino lamb; white truffles.

Mesón de la Troya
Plaza Mayor 10, Trujillo (Cáceres)
Tel: (34) 927 321 364
Traditional Extremaduran cuisine: *prix fixe* menu.

WEB SITES

Castile-León

Rural Tourism
Castile-León Regional Govenment's official page promoting tourism within the region covers information about its constituent provinces, museums, fiestas, castles, gastronomy, accommodation, leisure activities, tourist routes etc.
www.jcyl.es/jcyl/cict/dgt/svit/turismo/

The Regional Government of Castile-León's institutional Web site
Gives information about its own different functions and provides access to further information via its various departments.
www.jcyl.es/

Virtual Castile-León
Language: Spanish
A site packed with information (history, culture, fiestas, gastronomy) about many of the region's centers of population and places of interest.
www.castillayleon.com/

Castile-La Mancha

Tourism
Language: Spanish
Castile-La Mancha's official Web site gives information about routes, towns of touristic interest, fiestas, rural tourism associations, central reservation services, etc.
www.jccm.es/default.htm

Inside Castile-León: Rural Tourism
Language: Spanish
Includes information about rural tourism in attractive settings in Guadalajara Province (the northern Sierra and southern part of the province), upland Cuenca, and the Cuenca Province areas of La Mancha Alta and La Alcarria.
www.comarcasdeinterior.com/

Madrid

Getting to Know Madrid
Language: Spanish, English, German
The Community of Madrid's institutional Web site promotes tourism both in the capital (city itineraries are suggested) and in the region as a whole (Alcalá de Henares, Aranjuez, Chinchón, San Lorenzo del Escorial, etc.). Covers rural tourism information, too.
www.comadrid.es/ecoyempleo/tematico/con_mad/entrada.htm

Madrid's Sierra Norte
Language: Spanish
Useful for planning short rural weekends away and longer stays, this site gives in-depth information about the resources and services available in the Sierra Norte (including the precise location of its towns and villages), places of interest, history, surroundings, and local fiestas and events.
www.sierranorte.com/

La Rioja

Rioja Routes
Language: Spanish
The Regional Government's Web page features an interactive map showing routes of touristic and cultural interest: Wine Routes, the Dinosaur Route, the Santiago Pilgrimage Route, and the Monasteries Route.
www.larioja.org/turismo/

The Regional Government's institutional Web site
is an excellent source of information about the region from points of view such as the economic, social, cultural, and environmental.
www.larioja.org/

The Culture of La Rioja
Language: Spanish
A site designed to parallel an exhibition entitled La Rioja Tierra Abierta, aimed at bringing its history alive: the region's early inhabitants, its medieval saints, copyists, poets, and knights, the cream of the its artistic output over the centuries, and the sounds of early Castilian.
www.tierra-abierta.com/

Rural Tourism Guide
Language: Spanish
A site that tells you all you need to know for a visit to La Rioja: where to stay, eat, see, and buy arts and crafts, and find countryside activities.
www.riojainternet.com/altura/index.html

Aragon

Tourism in Aragon
Language: Spanish
The Aragon Regional Government's official Web site incorporates a link to full tourist information about the region. It gives a long and comprehensive accommodation list, details of its various tourist offices, and an external link with several Web pages about tourism in Aragon.
www.aragob.es/culytur/turismo.htm

The Aragon Regional Government's institutional Web site
Is very informative about the economic, cultural, social, historical aspects of the region.
www.aragob.es/

Tourism, Heritage, and Nature
Language: Spanish
The cultural life and natural environment of Aragon are well covered by this site which details festivals, areas of natural interest, culture parks, and the like.
www.aragon.net/aragon/web/espanya/turi.htm

Navarre

Navarre: You'll Be Back
Language: Spanish, English, Basque
This official regional Web site designed to promote tourism gives lots of information about its constituent areas.
www.cfnavarra.es/turismonavarra/

The Navarre Regional Government's official Web site
provides further information, such as a useful guide to the region, museums directory, etc.
www.cfnavarra.es

Come to Navarre
Language: Spanish
An excellent resource for planning a trip around Navarre, with information about accommodation and activities, shopping, and route suggestions.
www.turismo.navarra.com

Extremadura

Extremadura, Naturally
Language: Spanish, English, German, Portuguese, French
This Regional Government site includes guides to tourism in Extremadura; weekend routes; spas; gastronomic routes; regional holidays of interest to tourists; historical-artistic routes; museums.
www.turismoextremadura.com

The Extremaduran Regional Government Official Web site
provides supplementary information.
www.juntaex.es

Gastronomic Routes Through Extremadura
Language: Spanish
Structured around the region's most representative local food products (Iberian ham, cheeses…), this page suggests itineraries which combine culinary, historical, and traditional interests for visitors.
www.extremadura.com/rutas_gastronomicas

The Hermitage of San Bartolomé in the Pyrenees.

Vineyards of Vega Sicilia in the Ribera del Duero D.O.

A Taste for Art. Part 4

TRIANGLE

In the Heart of the

CAAM, CENTRO ATLÁNTICO DE ARTE MODERNO

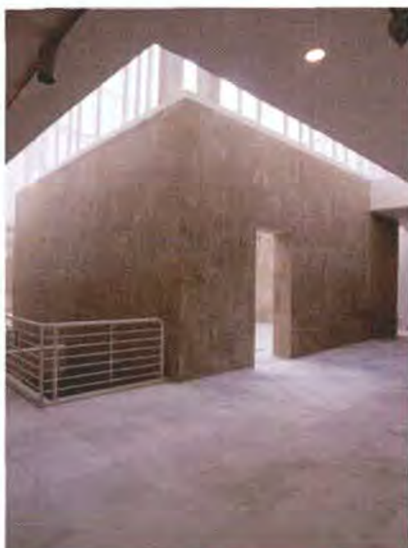
Join us for another in our series of art and food trips, taking in some of the best museums in Spain–mainly museums of contemporary art–which stand out not only for their content but also as buildings in themselves. Some are understated, others spectacular, but all house examples of the most avant garde art produced in Spain and the rest of the world. And recognizing that man doesn't live by art alone, we also visit the best places to eat in each town on our itinerary. This issue will take us to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the CAAM, the Atlantic Center for Modern Art, designed by the late Madrilenian architect Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza.

CENTRO ATLÁNTICO DE ARTE MODERNO / ICEX

My friend Paco, whom I met many years ago in Germany, always struck me as being somewhat "different" than all the other Spaniards I later met in Madrid and elsewhere throughout the Iberian Peninsula. It was not only his crazy demeanor (!), but also something about his appearance that I could not quite put my finger on. It was just some months ago, when I saw the painting by Canarian artist Felo Monzón at the CAAM in Las Palmas, that I recognized Paco's features in the painted faces. A very appealing mix of African, Spanish, and South American influences.

TEXT
BETTINA KRÜCKEN
TRANSLATION
SYNONYME

The Canary Islands, far out in the Atlantic Ocean off the African coast, have always been the point of intersection between three continents, Africa, Europe, and South America. The first inhabitants of the Canaries, the Guanches, a sturdy and robust people with light hair and skin, probably originated in North Africa. Following the colonization of the islands at the end of the 1400s, the people mixed as Spaniards married Canarian women. The islands became the last stop-off for explorers and Conquistadors before the great Atlantic crossing to South America, the last place to stock up before heading off into the unknown. Many New World settlers boarded ship here and some returned to the islands in later years or later generations, bringing with them a wealth of goods and new lifestyles. The specialties of Latin America still exist today and are manifest in the language. This cultural melting pot at the point of intersection between the three continents is not only reflected in the faces of the *canariones,* the local cuisine, or the colonial architecture of Canarian houses, it has also become the leitmotif for the CAAM. The exhibitions, seminars, and presentations deal with the art and even more particularly with the cultural interlinking of the peoples in the Old and New Worlds, brought together by the Atlantic. Even the logo of the center expresses this idea with two adjacent triangles united by a wavy blue line. With a bit of imagination, one can also say that the museum penthouse is also represented by the logo. The penthouse is a glass, M-shaped construction on the CAAM roof terrace that serves as a cafeteria. The brilliant M can be seen from the ocean, right next to the tower of the Las Palmas cathedral, when one approaches the city by boat. From high up on the roof ter-



The well of lights is reaching all the way to the basement.

race, we will follow the sunlight down into the building, as it penetrates through an ingenious transparent ring circling the former inner courtyard, all the way down to the basement and into the very heart of the museum.

Transparent

The ground plan of the CAAM retained, for the most part, that of a traditional Canarian patrician house. Around a central inner courtyard, the living quarters are traditionally arranged on two floors, with a circular gallery on the upper floor linking the rooms. Because it was forbidden to alter the original façade of the house, dating from the 1700s, the window openings had to be maintained and, theoretically, the number of floors as well. To create more showrooms and office space, a radical change in the central vertical structure was required. Sáenz de Oiza virtually eliminated the entire heart of the building around the central courtyard with his well of light reaching all the way to the basement and mastered the changes in height between the five levels (basement, first, second, and third floors, and the penthouse) with staircases and catwalks made of metal grating that let the light filter down from above, so that the center of the museum feels like a ship sailing through the cultures of three continents.

On entering the CAAM, one walks through a vestibule and over a gangplank spanning the well of light to a square room made of lava stone. The room, the former inner courtyard, opens upwards and also on the sides starting on the level of the second upper floor and is covered only by the penthouse, a full nine meters above. The roof is supported by thin, white iron columns and pilasters, forming the central "cage" whose transparency offers startling glimpses into the exhibition rooms from an array of perspectives. With the light showing us the way, we arrive in the basement directly under the cage, in front of a giant, empty block of lava stone with two doorways, not opposite each other, cut into the block. Inside, the visitor, suddenly all alone, the only item on exhibit, comes into contact with the very soul of the museum and perhaps even his own. Here, Man is a part of the cosmos, an object inside the work of art that is the architecture.

Thanks to the mass of tourists that visit the Canary Islands year round, one may find virtually every type of cooking, including some that does not merit the name gastronomy. Fortunately, that is not our subject here. Rather, we will speak of true Canarian cuisine characterized by its simplicity and the highly refined use of herbs and spices. There are varieties of vegetables here that are not grown on the Spanish mainland. Canarian tomatoes are smaller, rounder, and sweeter, similar to the potatoes *(papas bonitas)* used to make the famous *papas arrugadas*. Then come the delicious sauces *(mojo)* in either the spicy variety *mojo picón, rojo,* or *canario,* or *mojo verde,* made with mild peppers. Another specialty, that already existed before the Spaniards arrived, is *gofio,* grain that is roasted before it is ground, primarily wheat, corn, and traditionally, barley, but also rye, rice, and even chickpeas. The flour itself is pretty insipid, but it takes on the taste of other ingredients particularly well, which is why it is used in many recipes. Traditionally, Canarian children take a sweet ball of it to school to eat during playtime.

Anyone wishing to eat in real Canarian style cannot go wrong at the El Cucharón restaurant, in the Calle del Reloj in the center of Las Palmas. Chef and owner José González offers not only tastefully decorated surroundings, but also many delicacies drawn from the vast Canarian cuisine that he creatively presents in a variety of manners, while maintaining their traditional character.

A meal may comprise Canarian cheese (de Guía from Gran Canaria or Majorero from Fuerteventura) or *ropa vieja de pichón* (strictly the meat from a Canarian stew made, in our case, with young doves) as the entree, *cherne en salsa de millo* (sea bass with the house sauce made of capers, olives, chives, parsley, and sweet corn) as the main dish and for dessert, a semi-chilled gofio sponge cake with *ron miel* (rum honey) that is sure to put the cultural tourist back on his feet with new strength and pleasure on his travels in the Canaries.

El Cucharón
Reloj, 2
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Tel.: (34) 928 333 296

Expansion and Exhibitions

The needs and many activities of the museum, ranging from the numerous exhibitions to restoration of objects in the museum workshop, debates, seminars, accumulation of documentation in the library, and continuous enhancements to the collection over the years, made it necessary to find more space. In the Barrio de la Vegueta, severe limitations are placed on the height of buildings to preserve the character of the city. Consequently, the only possibility was to expand horizontally. Four and a half years after the inauguration of the CAAM in 1989, the adjacent building on the left was also remodeled according to the plans laid by Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza and connected to the main building. The second building contains a few showrooms, but primarily offices and storerooms, plus the restoration workshop on the second floor. Since 1998, another expansion plan is in the works, this time in the adjacent house to the right of the main building. At the end of this year, this building will become the definitive home to the museum's own art collection. With this new space, the CAAM will comprise a total of over 7,000 square meters (75,348 square feet) of floor space.

This past July, Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza, aged 81, died but his children and successors have continued his work. Oiza, a bold, frequently criticized inventor and charismatic teacher, inspired generations of Spanish architects. His best-known student, today professor of architecture at Harvard University, Rafael Moneo, the architect of the National

Museum for Roman Art in Mérida (See *Spain Gourmetour* No. 47), among other projects, remembers him as a "unique person, formidably intelligent and insatiably curious, as well as remarkably rigorous and demanding." Just a few buildings in Madrid suffice to make evident his radical and eclectic style. Entrevías (1956), an example for rational subsidized housing, Torres Blancas (1968), a masterpiece of Spanish organic architecture, or the Banco Bilbao Vizcaya office building built in 1981, which according to Kenneth Frampton, is "one of the most elegant towers built in the 1900s." Starting in the beginning of the 1980s, Sáenz de Oiza initiated and conducted new research projects dealing with the many functions of buildings in urban settings at the scientific faculty of Córdoba University.

Old and New World

On leaving the museum, we look up and behold the façades in the street. They are among the oldest in the entire city and house number 13 in Los Balcones Street, the newest addition to the museum, in fact has the oldest original façade in Las Palmas. We are in the heart of the La Vegueta Quarter, surrounding the Santa Ana cathedral, where the first houses in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria were built at the end of the 1400s. From here, the city spread farther north to the Triana Quarter. As soon as one steps out of the museum, one passes from the modern settings created by Sáenz de Oiza to a colonial past that is particularly prevalent in this quarter and perceptible throughout the city. Wonderful balconies with carved wood balustrades may be observed on many old houses and even the newer buildings have frequently maintained the architectonic features that may be found in virtually all of the older cites in South America. For those interested in the era of the explorers or the original inhabitants, the wonderful Casa de Colón, the Museo Canario or the Nestor Museum in Pueblo Canario are absolute musts.

***Bettina Krücken** has worked since 1994 as coordinator and writer for* Spain Gourmetour.

WEB SITES

Program for Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Language: Spanish
This site provides a veritable mine of information on which to base any cultural program in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, including a list of art galleries, museums, theaters, and cultural centers, as well as useful links to museums, foundations, and libraries both in Spain and abroad.
www.mundo-canario.com/cultura/

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Other Items

Language: Spanish
Visit this site to learn more about the city's main attractions, including museums, cathedrals, squares, etc. The site provides an excellent guide for visitors to this part of the Canary Islands.
www.aruga.com/lpas.htm

White Spain

SKIING

HIGHLAND IBERIA

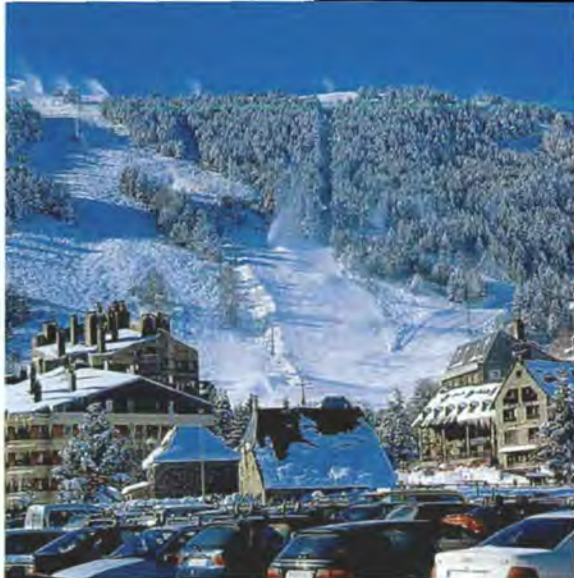
Skiing in Spain only begins on the slopes; Iberia's geographical, historical and cultural resources make the snow merely the tip of the iceberg. Beaches, vineyards, museums, and two thousand years of art and architecture from Romanesque chapels to Moorish mosques are all within easy reach of the remotest peaks and slopes, while thermal baths, hearty mountain cuisine, and torrid discos conspire to warm après-ski hours.

ARCHIVO CENTURSA - SIERRA NEVADA / ICEX

Baqueira Beret

TEXT
GEORGE SEMLER

That Spain's mean altitude is only surpassed on the European continent by that of Switzerland is always a surprise, even to Iberians themselves. The 700 meter- (2,300 foot-) high plateau that covers most of the Peninsula is largely responsible for this statistic, but the Pyrenees, the Sierra Nevada, and the Picos de Europa (in the Cantabrian Mountains) are the main reasons that Spain, nearly completely surrounded by coastline, is largely a highland country. For Spain's finest winter sport, the Pyrenean Val d'Aran's Baqueira Beret or the Sierra Nevada's station can keep enthusiasts immersed in snowy pursuits for nearly half the year.
Even more surprising is that there is plenty of skiing beyond these main cordilleras. La Rioja's Sierra de la Demanda and Teruel's Sierra del Beceite (both in the Sistema Ibérico), to take two examples, also offer skiing from December to March, while the Sierra de Guadarrama (in the Sistema Central) just outside of Madrid provides a chance to ski in fresh powder in the morning, watch a January bullfight at Valdemorillo after a late lunch at one of the town's popular taverns, and still catch the opera and a late *sopa de ajo* (garlic soup) in town.
Spain's most distinctive skiing opportunities invariably seem to have much to do with the assortment of unlikely events and activities compatible with days on the slopes.
Springtime in northern Catalonia's Cerdanya valley offers a chance to ski the morning at any of two dozen resorts in either Spain, France, or Andorra; play 18 holes of golf in the afternoon at either Fontanals or at the Reial Club de Golf de la Cerdanya; and still squeeze in a few evening hours of fly-fishing on the upper Segre, one of Europe's premier trout streams. La Molina, Spain's first ski resort, opened in 1925, now guarantees artificial snow a mere two and half hours by train from Barcelona, while neighboring Masella offers wilder and tougher heights and natural snow.
Nearby Andorra has some of the Pyrenees' highest and snowiest reaches at Pas de la Casa and Grau Roig, while Ordino-Arcalis, Arinsal and Soldeu-el Tarter are not far behind. The new gondola ski lift connecting Ordino and Grau Roig conveniently eliminates road time along the often crowded valley floor, while Caldea, the thermal spa at Escaldes, can offer everything from mud treatments to acupuncture to natural hot sulfuric baths. Meanwhile, when not exploring upper Andorra on skis, shopping in the duty-free shops, browsing through the co-principality's superb Romanesque chapels and bridges, or looking for some of the most beautiful *orris* (stone shepherds' huts) in the Pyrenees provides lots to do.
The Vallter 2000 ski resort above Camprodon and Setcases is built into a glacial cirque reaching a height of 2,874 m (9,400 ft). Ski touring be-



Baqueira Beret

tween Vallter and the Col de Nuria is one of the most spectacular traverses in the Pyrenees, a gently undulating glide along the crest with France to the north, Spain to the south, herds of isards skipping through the upper meadows and snow partridge nesting in the rocks along the way. From Ulldeter, on very clear days, there are views east from the top all the way to the Mediterranean at the Bay of Roses on the Costa Brava. In addition, Vallter, for all its glacial loftiness, is just ninety minutes through the Capsacosta tunnel from a seaside *paella* on the Costa Brava, the Dalí Museums at Figueres or Cadaqués or, for that matter, an evening concert at Barcelona's Art Nouveau Palau de la Música Catalana.

Ski & Romanesque

Around Camprodón, there are unforgettable villages to visit: Rocabruna, a hamlet of immaculate Pyrenean stone at the source of the crystalline River Beget; or the village of Beget, one of Catalonia's prettiest, some three dozen eccentric stone houses with heavy wooden doors. Graceful stone bridges span the trout-infested stream below, while the 11th-century Romanesque church of Sant Cristófol is known for its diminutive bell tower and a famous 12th century two meter (six foot) polychrome Majestat wood carving of Christ.

Skiing Boí-Taüll an hour south of Vall d'Aran (see box) offers an opportunity to inspect the finest matched set of Romanesque chapels and churches in the Pyrenees and probably the world. A town of narrow streets and tight mountain design–wooden balconies, steep slate roofs–Taüll's ski resort at the head of the Sant Nicolau Valley is reached only after passing the three-naved Romanesque church of Sant Climent, built in 1123, home of the famed Pantocrator, by the "Master of Taüll," now in Barcelona's Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in 1922 for restoration, safekeeping, and display, replicas of the originals having been placed in Sant Climent.

Thermal springs, both wild and commercial, offer another sensual off-piste option throughout the Pyrenees. Slithering into a steaming stone bath of pungent sulfur as the sun sets, or even better, with a snowflake or two hissing into the water, is one of the après-ski delights available from the Cerdanya to Andorra to Caldes de Boí, Baños de Tredòs, Benasque, Panticosa, or Sierra Nevada's Lanjarón.

Above Jaca, the usually snow-covered ski resorts of Astún and Candanchú at Somport, so-named from the Latin Summus Portus, the highest Roman mountain pass over the Pyrenees, provide some of the Peninsula's coldest and snowiest climate. Just south, at the village of Canfranc, the now abandoned international railroad depot begun in 1882 by Spanish King Alfonso XII, is one of the most remarkable sights in the Pyrenees: a structure that could be at home on the Parisian Place de la Concorde empty and quietly disintegrating along the banks of the river Aragón. Modeled after the Prague train station in a grandiose hybrid of Belle Epoque and Art Nouveau, the luxurious marble and inlaid wood ornamentation hulks over a 222 meter (728 foot) quai that was practically never used after its 1928 Hispano-French inauguration jointly presided over by Spain's King Alfonso XIII and French President Gaston Doumergue.

Jaca's Olympic-sized ice rink, opened in 1971, has been the most constant venue for Spain's figure skating and ice hockey events, with some of the world's top teachers, coaches, and players giving classes, running clinics, and holding international events over the last thirty years. Jaca's Winter Games of the Pyrenees, ever since the initial edition in 1973, has drawn skaters and hockey teams from as far away as Finland and Canada, while the ice palaces of Vielha, Andorra, and Puigcerdà have also held world and Spanish championships. Sessions open to the public offer ice skating as a welcome option for evenings or during periods of inclement weather.

Sierra Nevada

Off the Beaten Track

Cross-country skiing is becoming more and more popular in Spain, with resorts specializing in Nordic skiing scattered throughout the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa. Even dogsled racing is catching on with the Iberian Iditarod, Pirene, preparing for its fifth edition racing from Panticosa in the Upper Aragonese Pyrenees to La Molina in the Cerdanya valley.

West of Jaca, near the source of the River Osia, the Lizara cross-country ski area occupies a flat expanse between the Aragüés and Jasa valleys where you ski past 3,000-year-old megalithic dolmens scattered across the flatland along with the traditional *labati* (huts used for hay or for sheltering livestock).

Farther west, the Valle de Ansó is Aragon's western limit. Rich in fauna including mountain goats and wild boar, the Ansó Valley follows the Veral River up to Zuriza and its three cross-country ski areas, the Pistas de Linza. Nearby is Navarre's highest point, the 2,421 meter (8,000 foot) Mesa de los Tres Reyes (Plateau of the Three Kings), named for the kings of Aragon, Navarre, and Castile whose 11th-century kingdoms all came to a corner where they could meet without leaving their respective realms.

Ski touring, climbing on skins with detachable heel bindings and descending through virgin snow is another contender for the fit and the lionhearted, with the trek above Benasque and its Cerler ski resort across the glacier to the 3,404 meter (11,150 foot) Aneto, the highest peak in the Pyrenees, the most challenging climb of all. The ski station at Nuria, one of Spain's first, is another favorite launching spot for ski trekkers who, after a railroad connection from Barcelona's Plaça Catalunya and a cogwheel train lift from Ribas, scale the Col de Nuria and either traverse to the Refugio de Ulldeter to the east or descend north into France's Eyne valley where Le Petit Train Jaune at Bolquère reconnects with the La Tour de Carol-Puigcerdà-Barcelona line.

Skiing Spain never fails to provide quirky combinations, such as La Rioja's Valdezcaray ski slopes and the wine cellars of Haro just thirty minutes north providing a handy after-ski warm up on the region's fine *crianzas* (see Glossary on page 199). On the north side of the Ebro, the Álava wineries at Elciego and Laguardia offer even heartier brews, while Bilbao and the gleaming titanium Guggenheim museum are just another hour west.

Skiing in Al-Andalus

That Morocco's Rif mountain range continues, though interrupted by the Strait of Gibraltar, into Andalusia's Sierra Nevada may make it seem less surprising to ski within sight of the coast of North Africa, but the views on a clear morning from the 3,398 meter (11,145 foot) Veleta peak over the Alpujarras and across the Mediterranean never fail to provide a powerful geographical rush for those lucky enough to catch it when the light is right and the "dark continent" looms to the south.

Sierra Nevada offers skiing from December to May, with a special snowboarding circuit, floodlit night slopes, and après-ski sun and swimming in the Mediterranean an hour away. Spain's best equipped ski station and the site of the 1996 World Alpine ski championships, the Sierra Nevada has become an international rendezvous point for the snowboarding culture, with an Escuela de Surfing, free access to all runs, as well as a special "snow park" for snowboarders. Just as nearby Tarifa is a world windsurfing capital, Sierra Nevada, with its preponderantly spring snow and sunny climate, is touted as a snowboarder's paradise. The same peripatetic surfing tribe, in fact, is known to move freely between Tarifa and Sierra Nevada, An-

dalusia's answer to Southern California's surfing boom of the 60's.
With an ever-increasing popularity among Northern Europeans attracted by the cosmopolitan combination of winter sport with subtropical sun, sand, and the culture and cuisine of Andalusia, Sierra Nevada is Spain and Europe's southernmost skiing option, an eclectic phenomenon with an endless range of entirely non-winter attractions. Combination ski and golfing trips are becoming increasingly popular, offering mornings in powder snow and afternoons on the grassy fairways of some of the

Sierra Nevada

WEB SITES

ATUDEM

Language: Spanish
This is the site of the Tourism Association of Ski and Mountain Resorts (Asociación Turística de Estaciones de Esquí y Montaña–ATUDEM). It offers all sorts of information on the 27 member resorts: location, pistes, prices, etc. as well as direct access to the sites of each of the member resorts.
www.cenoclap.es/skispain/

Guide to the Pyrenees of Catalonia

Languages: Spanish, Catalan
This site enables virtual travelers to find out about the different areas of the Pyrenees that fall within Catalonia. Click on the district you are interested in to receive full information on its history, fauna and flora, towns of interest, gastronomy, etc.
www.goldenweb.es/PIRINEW/

Green Tourism in Huesca

Languages: English, French, German, Spanish
Green Tourism is a new style of alternative, rural, and ecological tourism in the Pyrenees of Aragon, with suggestions for accommodation and leisure activities. Its Web site offers interesting possibilities for activities in the snow, for hunters and fishermen, for lovers of art and history, etc.
www.dphuesca.es/turismo/index.html

ACEM

Languages: Spanish, Catalan
The site of the Catalan Association of Ski Resorts and Mountain Activities (Asociación Catalana de Estaciones de Esquí y Actividades de Montaña–ACEM) offers information on the activities available for its members in the different ski resorts as well as the latest weather, snow reports, etc.
www.acem-cat.com/index1.html

Sierra Nevada

Language: Spanish
Full information on skiing in winter and on other activities for when there is no snow–mountain biking, climbing, trekking. Also accommodation, restaurants, roads, etc.
www.sierranevadaski.com

world's top golf courses. The only ski station in the world with a cultural metropolis of Granada's quality under half an hour from the snow, the Sierra Nevada's appeal as a ski resort is closely connected to the city and its stunningly intricate Alhambra palace, one of the crowning glories of Al-Andalus, the eight-century Moorish (Almoravid and Almohad) empire that dominated the Iberian Peninsula between the 8th and 15th centuries, and now Unesco's World Heritage.

VALL D'ARAN

At Catalonia's northwestern corner, the Vall d'Aran lies above the main Pyrenean axis and opens north into the plains of Aquitania. The only Atlantic valley in the Pyrenees, the Vall d'Aran is drained by the Garonne, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean north of Bordeaux. The 48 km (30 mile) drive from the Bonaigua Pass to the Pont del Rei border with France follows the riverbed through what France somewhat protectively refers to as the Haute Garonne (Upper Garonne) valley.
The valley's Atlantic personality is apparent in its moist and frigid climate as well as in its language: the 6,000 inhabitants speak Aranés, a dialect of Gascon French derived from the Occitanian language group understood, though not without difficulty, by speakers of Catalan and French.
Neither as wide as the Cerdanya nor as narrow and steep as Andorra, the Vall d'Aran's clusters of iron-gray slate roofs, the lush vegetation and distinctive dormer windows all contribute to this geographic and cultural pocket that fate and circumstance have conspired to wash up on the Spanish side of the border.
Vielha (Viella, in Spanish), the capital of the Vall d'Aran, is a vigorous hub vitally involved in the Aranese movement to defend and reconstruct the valley's architectural, institutional, and linguistic heritage through the Conselh Generau d'Aran.
The Baqueira-Beret Estación de Esquí (Baqueira-Beret Ski Station), visited annually by King Juan Carlos I and the royal family, offers Catalonia's most varied and reliable skiing. Baqueira-Beret's 52 pistes cover a wide range of terrain and difficulty, from the gentle open slopes of Beret to the more vertical runs in Baqueira. The Bonaigua area is a mixture of steep and gently descending ski trails offering some of the longest and

Born and educated in the United States, writer and journalist ***George Semler*** *has lived in Spain over the last 30 years. During that time he has written on Spain, the Pyrenees, France, North Africa, and the Mediterranean region for the* International Herald Tribune, *the* Los Angeles Times, Forbes, *and* Saveur *as well as publishing his own walking guides to Madrid and Barcelona. Semler is presently working on a book about the Pyrenees.*

Photo credits on page 200

most varied runs in the Pyrenees, from forest tracks to open hillsides or jagged drops through rocky chutes and ravines.

The internationally FIS (Federation Internationale de Ski)-classified super-giant slalom run in Beret is Baqueira-Beret's star attraction, while the Hotel Pirene runs carefully guided helicopter outings to the surroundings peaks of Pincela, Areño, Parros, Mall de Boulard, Pedescals, and Bassibe, among others, according to snow conditions. With a dozen restaurants and four children's areas scattered through the ski runs, you're never far from a bracing bowl of one thing or another, while the thermal baths at Tredós are just 4 km (2.4 miles) away.

Browsing through the tiny villages clinging to the slopes over the Garonne will reveal beautiful places as vertical Escunhau with its stairway alleys, Arties with its Parador Gaspar de Portolà in the house of the founder of the Spanish colony of California, Gessa with its 16th-century houses, and Salardú, known for its arcaded central square and its lofty fortified bell tower, or the tiny village of Unha perched on a high promontory.

The Joeu Valley, above the town of Les Bordes, is the crowning curio of Vall d'Aran hydraulics. One of the two main sources of the Garonne, the Joeu River, appears to rise at Artiga de Lin in the Vall d'Aran's Joeu Valley, where it cascades down the Barrancs waterfalls to the Garonne. On July 19, 1931, speleologist Norbert Casteret proved, by dumping 60 kg (27 lbs) of colorant into a mysterious cavern in neighboring Aragon, that this "spring" was actually glacier runoff from the Maladeta massif in the next valley to the southwest. The glacier melt cascades into a massive crater, els Aïgualluts, and reappears 4 km (2.4 miles) northeast at Uelhs deth Joeu (Eyes of Jupiter, in Aranés, so-named for the Roman deity's association with the heavens, weather, rainfall, and agriculture), where it flows north toward the Garonne and, eventually, the Atlantic.

Dining in Vielha may begins either in nearby Arties at the much-celebrated Cal'Irene (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 21) or in Vielha itself at Era Mola, also known as Restaurante Gustavo y María José. This restored stable with heavy, hand-hewn wooden beams and gleaming white walls serves typical Aranese cuisine such as the restorative and powerful *olha aranesa*, a meat, vegetable, legume, and pasta soup ideally conceived for this North Atlantic Pyrenean valley. Known for its wide range of inventive interpretations of local ingredients from lamb to wild mushrooms prepared with French overtones, the *comfit d'anec* (duck stewed with apple) and *magret d'anec* (breast of duck cooked in *carradetas*, local wild mushrooms) are favorites.

For lodging in Baqueira, the 30-room, 30 apartment Tryp Royal Tanau remains supreme. This luxurious hotel 7 km (4 miles) east of Salardú has its own lifts directly up to the slopes and all conceivable comforts, facilities, and amenities from indoor and outdoor jacuzzis, heated pools, saunas, Turkish baths, hydromassage, and ultraviolet tanning lamps, as well as an excellent bar and restaurant. The top skiing hotel in the Pyrenees and the sole five-star establishment in the Vall d'Aran, this is the top choice for resting up between trips to the frozen heights.

For a more rustic environment, the Val de Ruda in Baqueira is a typical Aranés house composed of wood and stone under a slate roof. It is just 200 m (200 yards) from the slopes and provides a cozy context of pine and oak-beamed warmth for après-ski and dinner.

Sierra Nevada

Pyrenées

Astún/Candanchú

These are two neighboring resorts that have recently joined up for commercial purposes so the same ski pass can be used for both. Plenty of good snow. The season ticket also covers the French resorts of Artouste and Gourette.
Max. altitude: 2,300 meters (7,544 feet)–Astún; 2,400 metros (7,872 feet)–Candanchú
Min. altitude: 1,700 meters (5,576 feet)–Astún; 1,560 meters (5,116 feet)–Candanchú
Ski lifts: 31. Capacity for skiers/hour: 40,020
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 100/111 km (69 miles). Snow board (half pipe): 1. Cross-country trails: 39 km (24.2 miles)
Number of artificial snow guns: 250
Hotel beds in the resort: 520 (Astún) and 1,820 (Candanchú)
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 10,253
Tel: 974 373 088 (Astún) and 974 373 194 (Candanchú)
www.astun.com
www.candanchu.com
astun@astun.com
inf@candanchu.com

Baqueira/Beret

The largest resort in the Spanish Pyrenees, it has pistes for all tastes with fast, modern ski lifts and quality restaurants and hotels which are a permanent attraction for famous names, including the Spanish royal family.
Max. altitude: 2,510 meters (8,232 feet)
Min. altitude: 1,500 meters (4,920 feet)
Ski lifts: 27. Capacity for skiers/hour: 39,667
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 53/86 km (53,4 miles). Snow board (half pipe): 1. Cross-country trails: 7 km (4.4 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 503
Hotel beds in the resort: 3,124
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 7,668
Tel: 973 645 062
www.baqueira.es
baqueira@baqueira.es

Boí Taüll

This small resort, which has only been open for ten years, has a young, fun loving, lively atmosphere. It has plenty of snow that is treated well. The Boí valley offers plenty of interest for tourists and the large, easy pistes make this the ideal place for family skiing.
Max. altitude: 2,750 meters (9,020 feet)
Min. altitude: 2,020 meters (6,625 feet)
Ski lifts: 15. Capacity for skiers/hour: 13,830
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 41/43.3 km (27 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 121
Hotel beds in the resort: 1,376
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 3,379
Tel: 973 696 044
www.boitaullresort.es
boi@boitaullresort.es

Cerler

The second highest resort in the whole of the Pyrenees with a wonderful landscape and views of the Aneto and Maladeta peaks. Very good-quality powder snow. Close by is Benasque, a welcoming town that has become an essential meeting point for mountaineers.
Max. altitude: 2,630 meters (8,625 feet)
Min. altitude: 1,500 meters (4,920 feet)
Ski lifts: 16. Capacity for skiers/hour: 18,022
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 38/45 km (28 miles). Cross-country trails: 25 km (15.5 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 197
Hotel beds in the resort: 490
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 4,235
Tel: 974 551 012
www.cerler.com
fdvb@cerler.com

Formigal

This resort offers high-quality pistes for medium-standard skiing as well as interesting descents for experts. Outstanding customer services and plenty going on after dark. The ski pass can also be used in Panticosa, Gourette, and Artouste.
Max. altitude: 2,250 meters (7,380 feet)
Min. altitude: 1,510 meters (4,952 feet)
Ski lifts: 23. Capacity for skiers/hour: 22,229
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 53/56.7 km (35.2 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 109
Hotel beds in the resort: 1,383
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 4,974
Tel: 974 490 000 or 974 441 100
www.formigal.com
fsa@formigal.com

MAIN SKI RESORTS IN SPAIN

La Molina

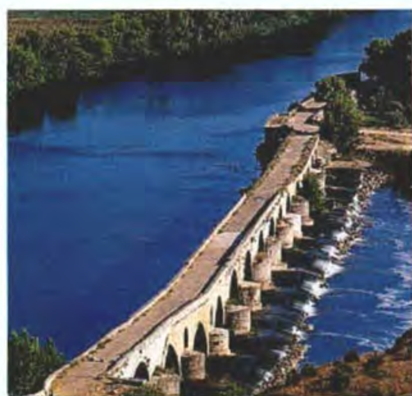
This is the oldest skiing resort in Spain, opened over 50 years ago.
Max. altitude: 2,445 m (8,019 ft)
Min. altitude: 1,700 m (5,576 ft)
Ski lifts: 13. Capacity for skiers/hour: 15,850
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 31/44 km (27.3 miles). Snow board (half pipe): 1. Cross-country trails: 3 km (2 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 326
Hotel beds in the resort: 2,060
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 4,470
Tel: 972 892 031/76
www.lamolina.com
lamolina@lamolina.com

Sierra Nevada

The mild, sunny winters in this resort, the highest in Spain, and its international renown after the World Skiing Championships of 1996 have made it one of the favorite destinations for Spanish and European skiers. The ski lifts are modern and there is a piste for nighttime skiing. Enjoyment is guaranteed.
Max. altitude: 3,300 meters (10,824 feet)
Min. altitude: 2,100 meters (6,888 feet)
Ski lifts: 19. Capacity for skiers/hour: 31,965
Pistes and kilometers to ski: 45/61.4 km (38 miles). Snow board (half pipe): 1. Cross-country trail: 4 km (2.5 miles)
Artificial snow guns: 266
Hotel beds in the resort: 3,625
Hotel beds in the surrounding area (up to 35 km/22 miles): 512
Tel: 958 249 100
www.sierranevadaski.com
cetursa@globalnet.es

Source: Asociación Turística de Estaciones de Esquí y Montaña (ATUDEM) and Turespaña.

A NEW STAR ON THE DUERO



D.O. Toro

Nestled in an open, softly rolling landscape highly typical of central Spain, is the small town of Toro in the secluded western part of Castile. The beautiful old section of the town and the collegiate church in its magnificent setting with a spectacular view over the Duero (a.k.a. Douro) valley invite travelers to a welcome rest on the road to the provincial capital Zamora. The inhabitants are friendly and life here would seem to be calm and unhurried. Nothing would suggest that Toro is the new buzzword on the Spanish wine scene.

JAVIER VÁZQUEZ

T
DO

Towards the end of the Middle Ages all quality red wines in Spain were judged in comparison with the color, body and aroma of Toro reds.

TEXT
DAVID SCHWARZWÄLDER

TRANSLATION
SYNONYME

We should have known. This thought has fluttered through the mind of many a Spanish vintner over the past year as the small *Denominación de Origen* (D.O.) (see Glossary on page 199) in western Castile sprang into the spotlights. It has been present in every major media and any discussion on wine necessarily deals at some point with the vast potential of the D.O. near the Portuguese border. It must be said, Toro is certainly not a newcomer in the history of Spanish wine.

The Zamora province is recognized as one of the oldest wine-growing regions in the heart of the Iberian Peninsula and grapes were already planted here in pre-Roman times. As early as the beginning of the Middle Ages, the wines from Toro were famous and widely appreciated. The pilgrims on the road to Santiago drank the full-bodied wine because of the strengthening effect it produced. In 1208, Alfons IV, the King of León, gave large tracts of wine land around Toro as a gift to the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, to cover the needs of the clergy.

Even toward the end of the Middle Ages, at a time when Castilian white wines had long been the favorites of the throne, the only red wines admitted at the royal court were from Toro. All other quality red wines in the entire country were judged in comparison with the body, the color, and aroma of these wines. In the 1900s, the region again flourished as large quantities of wine were exported to France where the phylloxera malady had struck. Hard times finally came to the region when the national wheat agency was created to ease a very difficult food-supply situation in the country, with a major shift in land use from vineyards to grain throughout all of Spain as a result. The later reorganization of agricultural lands did the rest. Where over 35,000 hectare (86,485 acres) of vineyards had once stood, fields of corn reached to the horizon. Barely 5,000 hectares (12,355 acres) were still in existence in the 1970s.

Timid New Steps

That is not to say anyone really missed the wine. Due to their crude heaviness, Toro wines earned quite a bad reputation over the past centuries. The vinification techniques used by many small wineries, where the wine was stored in chestnut barrels in primitive cellars, had barely changed over the centuries. With very few exceptions, the wines came across as impure, heavy, and biting. Certainly no one ever imagined that the main vine variety in the region, the Tinta de Toro, could produce anything else. In fact, the wines avoided their ultimate downfall for a single reason, their particular value on the wine market. Due to their intense color and tremendous alcohol content, they were used, primarily by producers of table wine in northern Spain, to fill out thinner wines with more body. For a while, there was practically no more wine marketed under the Toro name.

The renaissance was brought about by a single man. Manuel Fariña, who as the son of a vintner had dealt with the Tinta de Toro variety all his life, placed his bets right from the start on the local vines. Initial speculation on how to revive the vineyards had looked into restructuring the remaining vines and planting non-local varieties. But Fariña, convinced

that the local vines had the potential, stood steadfastly by the Tinta de Toro and resisted efforts to pave the way for an invasion of Cabernet & Co. His vision of what had to be done was both simple and clear. The first priority was to reduce the alcohol content, increase the acidity, and replace the dull, impure odor with a fresh, clean fruit scent. To start with, he moved the harvest season up from October to September, so that the grapes no longer arrived in the cellars overripe and with an enormous alcohol content. The second, equally important step was to install steel tanks on his own premises. The grapes could now finally ferment under carefully controlled temperature conditions, which was a decisive factor in obtaining the fresh, clean taste given the very high temperatures still prevalent in September. His ideas were rapidly adopted by the small number of active wineries, in other words by the cooperatives. In some of the cooperatives, a certain form of entrepreneurship was already budding, but the missing element was the technical know-how and the visionary ideas that only Manuel Fariña had. The small number of producers quickly understood, on seeing the highly persuasive results of the revolutionary vintner, that the Tinta de Toro clearly represented the best solution for the region. Consequently, the area held on to its ancient character that turned out to be the indispensable condition for the stunning boom in business that the area is now experiencing. Recognition of the region as a Denominación de Origen was at that time, however, still years away. The final granting of the D.O. occurred only in 1987, with of course Fariña

Mariano García

as president. With the exception of the two large cooperatives in the two wine centers of the region, Morales de Toro and Toro, there was still very little involvement on the part of the producers. The poor reputation was very hard to shake off and the willingness to invest correspondingly low. For this reason, Manuel focused on exports because outside of Spain, there was absolutely no prejudice against the name, and the

wines thus found a new sales channel. Ever so slowly, a small number of Castilian vintners decided the time had come to stand by their product and started to market bottled wine. This was the case of the wine-producing family Frutos Villar and, later, wine expert Wenceslao Gil. Wences, as he is known in wine circles, had already worked in virtually all Castilian wine-growing regions and the fact that a renowned, highly competent expert came out in favor of Toro wines was a further encouragement to the local vintners. Throughout the area, a number of bulk-wine producers finally decided to shift a part of their production to bottled wines. Slowly but surely, the number of wineries producing bottled wine increased during the 1990s and has reached 15 by the year 2000.

The yields in this arid soil are relatively low.

Toro benefits from a supply of sunshine unmatched in central Spain.

The price for the wine has doubled.

Arid Soil and Ungrafted Vines

The land around Toro is situated between 620 and 750 meters (2,034-2,460 feet) altitude in softly rolling hills. Vines and grain fields alternate to form a patchwork so characteristic of the Castilian landscape. Here and there, poplars and pine trees catch the eye. The Toro D.O. comprises twelve townships in the Zamora province, covering some 60,000 hectares (148,260 acres) of not entirely useable agricultural land. In addition, to the west, are three townships in the Valladolid province with a further 7,000 hectares (17,297 acres). The majority of the 3,384 registered hectares (8,361.86 acres) of wine-growing land are located in the Zamora province. Yellowish-brown and reddish tones dominate in the sandy soil positioned on top of a chalky substratum and shot through with feldspathic sandstone. The soil is so dry and barren that the phylloxera could not take hold. Practically all the old vines, which constitute the true wealth of the D.O., have not been grafted. The yields in such arid soil are of course relatively low. The source of water is the Duero, which makes a sharp turn just before entering the Zamora province and then flows from east to west through the Toro wine-growing areas.

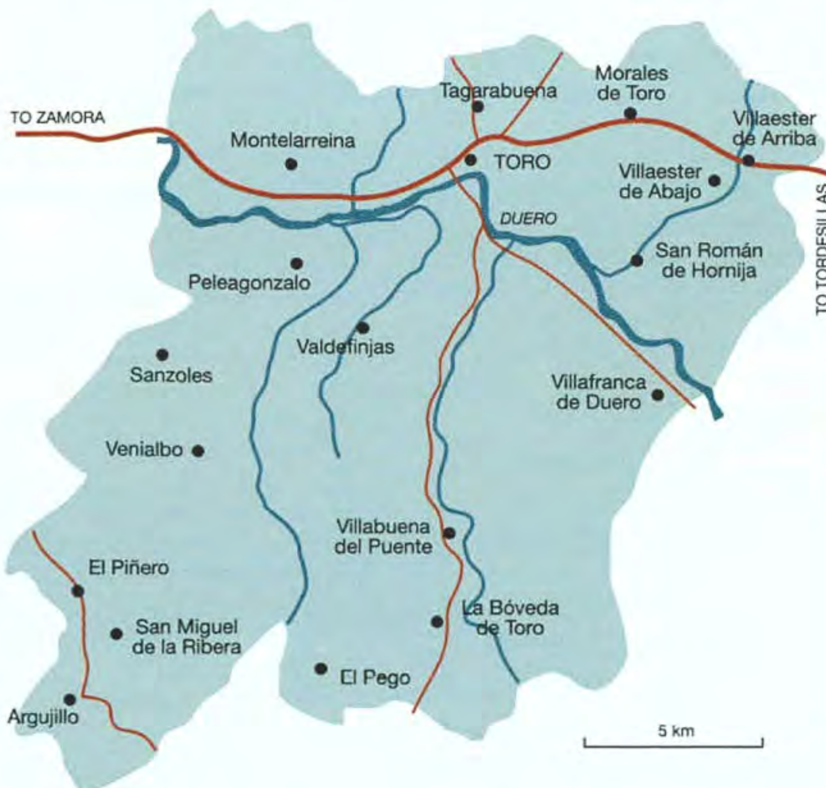
In addition to the poor soil, the weather conditions are exceptional and set the D.O. apart from the normal Castilian climate. With between 2,600 and 3,000 hours of sunshine per year, the area around Toro is not far from the figures typically found in regions such as Andalusia. If the region were not quite so big, it could be termed a microclimate. Castilians, who must contend with long winters (compared to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula), say that "here, the cold leaves earlier." This provides the vines with a significantly longer growing season than that found, for example, in the neighboring Ribera del Duero, with the most consistent harvests in all of Castile as a result. The variety of vines grown here in fact needs only 2,100 hours of sunshine per year. The region therefore benefits from a reserve supply of sunshine unmatched in all of central Spain. This is clearly one of the decisive advantages that the D.O. can play on, in addition to its star grape, the Tinta de Toro. This variety is in fact simply a close cousin of the Tempranillo, a mutant that has adapted to the extreme conditions found in the area. The grape itself is only mid-sized, that is to say somewhat smaller than its famous cousin, and it has a thicker skin. The color is dark blue bordering on black. The flesh is shot through with small red veins and when pressed, the extract and tannin content are extremely high. The bouquet of the wine contains distinct notes of blackberries

Practically none of the old vines have been grafted.

Alejandro Fernández

Manuel Fariña

and ripe cherries, and many producers have commented that the fruit taste of the Tinta de Toro is not as pronounced as that of the Tempranillo. That notwithstanding, the Tinta de Toro has a number of other advantages to offer, notably its highly developed, uniquely strong yet uncommonly soft and sweet tannin. Also, its very full-bodied character, often accompanied by a touch of bitterness, makes itself felt in the nose and during the aftertaste. This strong character ceases to be quite so surprising when one takes into account the strikingly dark color of the wine. In the excellent year 1999, this variety represented eight of the 13.2 million kilograms harvested. The red Garnacha and the white varieties Malvasía and Verdejo are also authorized.



Toro Gold Diggers

The central point, around which everything else in the Toro D.O. revolves, is of course the Tinta de Toro. Over the past two years, it has produced a magnetizing effect on vintners all over Spain. The list of newcomers in the region is virtually a "Who's Who" of the Spanish wine sector. However, the vast potential of the variety is not the only decisive element in the current run on Toro. The second, highly attractive factor lies in the many old vineyards, most of which were planted over 40 years ago and some well over 70 years ago. The goal for most of the newcomers is not bulk, but rather to produce small quantities of exceptionally strong and full-bodied, yet modern wines, similar to those in recent years from Priorato, that were immediately acclaimed by an astonished

international wine sector. In light of the avalanche of money currently being invested in the region, it has in the meantime become very clear that the existing vines will not be sufficient for everyone. The cooperatives also have a say in the matter, because they control just over half of the overall growing areas. The result is an absolute rush to plant that will, in but a few years, double the number of currently planted hectares. The price for the wines has doubled and a hectare of vineyard now costs over ten times as much as it did only three years ago. On the one hand, the local vintners are proud to have been catapulted to center stage of the Spanish wine scene in such a short time, but on the other, they are worried about the steep jump in prices. The prominent newcomers, with their prestigious names, may well be in a position to obtain high prices for their Toro wines, the less known local producers will probably have a much more difficult time.
The current boom started very inconspicuously, as the world-renowned Vega Sicilia winery, under the cover of absolute secrecy and via their former wine expert, began to buy land in the area. The basic procedure of first purchasing the necessary vineyards, before going on to the actual building of the cellar installations, was copied by most of the later newcomers. Bodegas Mauro, which started up its activities in the area at practically the same time as Vega Sicilia, bought up old Tinta de Toro vineyards, as did the two Rioja wineries Sierra Cantabria and Bodegas Primicia. From the neighboring regions Rueda and Ribera del Duero, such experienced vintners as Antonio Sanz, the two

WEB SITES

Toro D.O. Regulatory Council

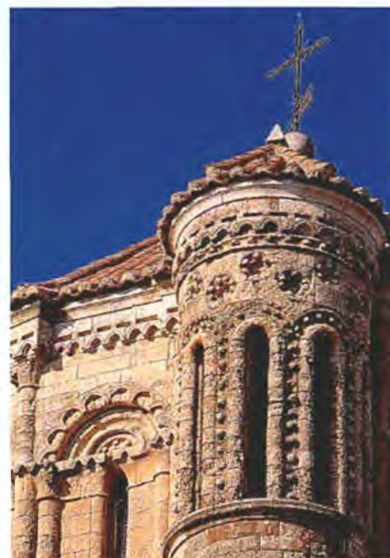
Language: Spanish
The Toro D.O. Regulatory Council (Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Toro) is the body responsible for guaranteeing the quality of the region's wines. The Council has created a Web site containing detailed information on a wide range of topics from grape varieties and types of wine, through the production and aging processes, to the characteristics of the wines. The site also carries a list of registered bodegas with links to their Web pages, information on the Toro D.O. Regulatory Council itself, and news items.
www.losvinosdetoro.com/

Zamora Tourist Board

Language: Spanish
The Zamora Tourist Board has created this Web site to promote tourism in the region. The site offers information on outdoor tourism, cultural activities, fiestas, regional food and specialties, tourist routes, etc. The food section gives pride of place to the excellent wines produced in the Toro Region.
www.zamoradipu.es/patronato/patronato.htm

Toro City Council

Language: Spanish
The Toro city council has set up a site providing a wide range of information covering the city, the local economy and business, and the main fiestas. The important Toro wine region has a section to itself with information on both the Toro D.O. Regulatory Council and on the wines and vintages themselves.
www.helcom.es/ayuntoro/



Colegiata of Toro

Zamora City Council

Language: Spanish, English
The official Web site of the Zamora city council not only provides municipal information but also contains a link called "Visit Zamora," which offers extensive information on the city and its environs, housing, restaurants, local specialties, tourist routes, etc.
http://ayto-zamora.com/

winemakers Victoria Benavides and Victoria Pariente, known as the two Victorias, the Lurton couple, and Explotaciones Valduero all set off in search of the best sites. Even a Scottish investor residing in the Bahamas bought up a magnificent finca with old vines. Today, all the bodegas are either in the process of building or have already finished their installations. Only Alejandro Fernández, the father of Tinto Pesquera, again went his own way and purchased a superb vineyard with a spectacular cellar carved out of a cliff near Fuentessaúco, somewhat outside of the D.O. borders. With the exception of the Peñalba López family from Torremilanos in the Ribera del Duero D.O., he was the only one to buy existing buildings to house his winery.

To date, not much has been seen of the many golden eggs that the famous goose is supposed to lay, though the few wines already on the market have aroused highly optimistic expectations. The first vintage of the San Román from Mauro and Elías Mora wines, produced by the two Victorias, was not even marketed under the Toro D.O. name, though there is absolutely no doubt as to the outstanding quality of the wines. The winery installations were simply not yet ready and the Tinta de Toro wines had to be processed outside the D.O. zone. The same holds for the Toro wines produced by vintners Antonio and Ricardo Sanz. Before the end of the year though, Sobreño, the product of Bodegas Primicia, Valpiculata from Juan Pablo Peñalba, and Estancia Piedra from Grant Stein, the Scotsman, will be available and presented to the critical public. All three

The city of Toro is rich in historical buildings.

wines are young wines with a short time in oak barrels, unofficially called semi-*crianzas* or media crianzas. What differentiates the newcomers and the old, established pioneers, such as Manuel Fariña and Wences Gil? Apart from longer experience in the field, not much. On the contrary, they are united in the desire to produce a great wine from a remarkable vine variety with impressive potential that still lies dormant behind the scenes and is just starting to make a name for itself, the Tinta de Toro.

David Schwarzwälder *splits his time between Salamanca and Alsace, and has worked for the past eleven years as a journalist covering Spanish wines and food.*

See Exporters on page 181 and photo credits on page 200.

The soil is dry and barren

Types of Wine in Spain

WE DO IT OUR WAY

As the Romans used to say, "variatio delectat"–roughly, "variety is the spice of life." And as far as wine is concerned, few countries can offer such an amazing variety of different styles as Spain. With thousands of years of experi-

ence at making wines to the delight of generation upon generation of enthusiasts, techniques have evolved over the centuries to give rise to uniquely Spanish wines and wine-making methods which are still in use today, such as the complex system of *soleras* and *criaderas* used to produce sherry. These age-old traditions exist side by side with the latest enological advances that further enrich the Spanish wine-making scene.

Text
Bartolomé Sánchez

Translation
Mark Little

Generoso Wines

If Andalusia's *vinos generosos* (fortified wines) didn't exist, they'd have to be invented. The most famous examples are the splendid sherries, the wine against which all other Andalusian wines are measured, aged in the great "Cathedral Cellars" of the Jerez region. Sherries and other Andalusian generosos are aged following a unique blending system, the ingredients of which are a good measure of Andalusian ingenuity and the experience accumulated over more than three thousand years of wine making, plus a dash of good fortune. To this we must add the fair climate, the unique makeup of the soil, and the complex character of the Palomino grape, a variety which gives great wines here alone, in its native land.

An Organic Aging Process

What is known as *"crianza bajo velo"* or *"en flor"* is a genuinely Spanish wine-making method, used for aging the finos, manzanillas, and amontillados which are important members within the extended family of fortified wines and which was developed in Andalusia, with a little help from Mother Nature. The velo (veil) or flor is a layer of living yeasts which forms on the surface of the wine in the barrel. These living organisms play a major role in defining the character of these wines. The process is extremely complex and delicate, and makes such wines more sensitive to variations in the climate than any other.

The finest grape musts, those which promise the most delicate aromas, are selected to make the crisp, dry finos and manzanillas. For the floating cap of yeast to develop, it is crucial that the wines reach an alcohol content of 15 percent. This high level of alcohol is obtained naturally in the Montilla-Moriles Denomination of Origin (D.O.) in Córdoba, thanks to the very high sugar content of the local grape, the Pedro Ximénez. Elsewhere, in Jerez and in the Condado de Huelva, the winemaker must resort to fortifying the wine with grape spirits to reach the desired alcohol level. The resulting blend is aged in American oak *botas*, or butts, large barrels holding 500-550 liters each. It is important that the butts are made of well seasoned, old wood. They are filled to five sixths, leaving a pocket of air to allow the yeasts to develop on the exposed surface of the wine. The yeasts start to appear within a few days, eventually forming a floating layer around two centimeters (three quarters of an inch) thick, its color varying between cream white to a light toasted hue. The microorganisms that constitute the flor include bacteria and yeasts of different types, although in general the predominant strain is a yeast of the *Saccharomyces* genus, the same one that precipitates the fermentation of the must.

The wine's aromas and character are completely transformed, for the yeasts seal the wine off from the air and ferment any sugar remaining in the must, resulting in what are the driest wines in the world. A small portion of the alcohol is converted into aldehyde, and its reaction with the other substances in the wine gives rise to the typical, sharp yet refined aromas. This painstaking process culminates with the ingenious aging method of fractional blending known as the solera and criadera system (see Glossary page 199).

Soleras and Criaderas

With the solera system there are no single vintages. The wines resulting from each harvest are blended with previous vintages until they result in

a wine of consistent quality.
The method calls for several rows of botas. The bottom row of butts is the solera (because it is close to the *"suelo,"* the cellar floor), which contains the oldest blend. The row immediately above is known as the first criadera (nursery), and above that are the second, third, and fourth criaderas, and often there are more.
The wine destined for bottling is taken from the solera. Only a small portion of the butt's content is drawn off (about a third a year, taken in two sessions) thus ensuring that the basic structure of the remaining wine is intact.
This process is called the *saca*. The wine is homogenized in a tank, then clarified, filtered, and bottled. Meanwhile, the solera butts are topped off with the blend from the first criadera, which in turn is topped off with the younger blend from the second criadera, and so on to the top row, which is filled with the most recent wines, from another row of casks called *sobretablas*. This method, ideal for ensuring a final product of uniform quality, is used for most fortified wines, both those aged under the veil of yeast (finos or manzanillas) and those which undergo an oxidative aging (oloroso, palo cortado, cream, sweet wines), as well as amontillado, a wine which combines the two methods. The exquisite result of this miracle of Nature can be experienced by sampling wines such as the manzanilla from Antonio Barbadillo, or finos such as La Ina or the classic Tío Pepe.
To make the rich oloroso wines, those grape musts which show the most body are chosen and fortified to 18 percent alcohol to prevent the flor yeasts from developing. The higher alcohol kills off these microorganisms, so no floating cap forms. The butts are filled completely and placed in the warmest part of the wine cellar to induce a faster aging of the wine. Here, the object is to encourage the wine's oxidation. After going through the criadera and solera blending process, the result is a wine of an attractive mahogany color, with great structure and complexity heralded by a rich range of aromas. An excellent example is the Solera AOS from Osborne.
For its part, amontillado is one of the most complex and characterful wines in the world, the result of an intricate process. Amontillado starts life as a fino, undergoing an initial aging process under a layer of flor yeasts. But at a carefully-timed moment, the alcohol level of the wine is increased to 18 percent. As a consequence, the flor dies off and the wine continues to age under an oxidative process, exposed to air, as for an oloroso. In addition, the wine is blended following the solera and criadera method. Throughout the process, the aging wine is still referred to as *"mosto"* (must) until it reaches its full maturity: that is, once it has run through the entire gamut of criaderas to reach the solera. The result includes wines of an unmatchable quality, such as the Amontillado del Duque, worthy of being counted among the truly great wines of the world.

Sweet Wines

Grapes spread out on esparto mats for the elaboration of Pedro Ximénez.

Pedro Ximénez

Come September the vineyards of Andalusia are a hive of activity. But the scene here is different from that of other vineyards, for much of the work revolves around preparing the paseros, the raisin beds, an essential aspect of producing one of the most original wines in the world: sweet Pedro Ximénez, named after the grape variety originally grown, it is said, from cuttings of vines from the Rhine brought to Andalusia centuries ago by a soldier in the Spanish army. The grape bunches are spread out in the sun on esparto mats. Every day the bunches are carefully turned to ensure an even toasting in the hot southern Spanish sun, until they are practically raisins. The aim is to reduce the liquid content of the grape, so that the resulting must will contain more than 300 grams of sugar per liter. When the grapes reach the desired degree of sweetness, they are crushed and, before fermentation starts, fortified to nine percent alcohol. The resulting must is called *vino tierno,* tender wine. Next, the alcohol level is increased progressively to 16-18 percent and the wine is matured following the solera and criadera system. Magnificent examples of this wine from the Montilla-Moriles Denominación de Origen region include Alvear 1830 (of which barely 600 bottles a year are made), Toro Albalá, and Gracia Hermanos.

Fondillón

Fondillón is a rare jewel, a true relic of a wine. Although the origins of this wine go back much earlier, it was from the 15th century on that it enjoyed its golden age, and its fame did not decline until the beginning of the 20th century. According to tradition this is the first wine to travel around the world, for it was loaded on the *Victoria,* the ship that first circumnavigated the globe on the expedition started by Magallanes and concluded by Juan Sebastián Elcano. Fondillón is a sweet red from Alicante on the eastern coast of Spain, made with extremely ripe Monastrell grapes. It is a wine with an almost legendary aura, and in the past curative properties were attributed to it. King Louis XIV of France was among its greatest enthusiasts. Because of its high alcohol content Fondillón was the perfect wine for taking on long journeys, for it could withstand rough sea voyages without spoiling, and for this reason the British Navy incorporated it into their mariners' rations, thus spreading its fame throughout the British Empire.

There are numerous theories regarding the origin of Fondillón, although the likeliest is that it started out as a cask reserved by the winemakers for their personal use. Each year they'd top off the cask with wine made with grapes from the oldest vines.

Monastrell is the only variety authorized for making Fondillón, which is now covered by the Alicante Denomination of Origin. The grapes are harvested when they are extremely ripe, and the resulting wine, due to the high concentration of sugars, reaches 16 to 18 percent alcohol, and even then there is enough unfermented, residual sugar left over to lend the wine considerable sweetness. The wine is aged for a minimum of eight years in oak casks, following a system which is very similar to the criaderas and solera method of southern Spain.

One of the best known Fondillóns is made by Bodegas Brotons, a small family winery which still has Monastrell vines descended from rootstock which were unaffected by the phylloxera plague of the 19th century.

Moscatel

The eastern coast of Spain is also famous for its sweet moscatels, produced in the north of Alicante province and in Valencia. Generally these wines are made with must from Muscat of Alexandria grapes which is *apagado*, with the addition of alcohol to a level of 15 percent. This way, fermentation does not start and the wine retains all its original sugar content. But there are winemakers like Felipe Gutiérrez de la Vega who follow a much more complex and meticulous approach. They start with Muscat of Alexandria must which is fermented in new casks of fresh American oak. When they deem that the desired level of residual sugar remains, they halt fermentation by gradually fortifying the must with wine spirits. Approximately a year of further aging in the cask produces one of the best of Spain's sweet wines: Casta Diva.

But the craft of the winemakers does not end there. Some, like Camilo Castilla, in Navarre, blend wines resulting from different aging processes. His star product is a liqueur wine, 80 percent of which has been aged in wooden vats holding 7,000 liters. The remaining 20 percent is placed in glass demijohns holding 60 liters each and left out in the open, exposed to the elements, for three years. Finally the two are blended together in 400-liter barrels, from which a small portion is drawn off for bottling. Other noteworthy moscatels from Navarre include those produced by Chivite and Ochoa.

Old Techniques, New Applications

Carbonic Maceration

The carbonic maceration method typical of the Rioja Alavesa region follows an age-old formula. They've been making wine in this beautiful land since time immemorial, long before the use of Bordeaux style was introduced. These days most Rioja wine is vinified in stainless steel tanks, but some of the old vats of stone are still used for the carbonic maceration method. These vats hold around 25 tons of grapes, which are placed in whole bunches, stems and all. The sheer weight of this mass of grapes is enough to cause the skin of some of the berries to rupture, releasing the juice and sparking an alcohol fermentation due to the action of the yeasts. In these conditions the fermenting process produces an environment rich in carbon dioxide, which affects the berries that remain whole. As the cells are deprived of oxygen to obtain energy, they resort to an enzyme which precipitates within the berry itself the same process that yeasts produce in fermenting must, giving an additional degree or two of alcohol.

Around ten days after this process starts, a violet-colored foam begins to form on the surface of the mass of grape bunches, signaling the perfect moment for the *pisa o media vuelta,* when gentle pressure is applied to extract the must. As there is still a quantity of sugar left in the must, fermenting will continue but without the skins.

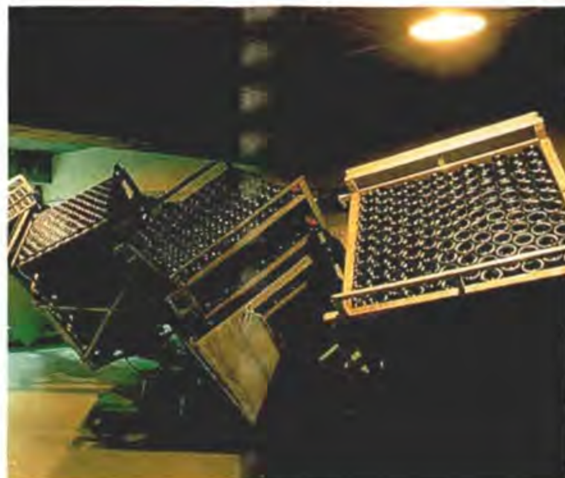
The ingenuity of the winemakers in improving on this classic technique knows no bounds. One of the most inquisitive, Fernando Remírez de Ganuza, divides the grape bunches by separating the upper shoulders from the tips. These last are destined for the carbonic maceration method, for which he has devised an enormous canvas balloon for crushing the grapes, filled with warm water to match the temperature of the fermenting grape mass so as not to interrupt the fermentation. The result is a truly splendid and original wine, although it is one of the most expensive on the market because these wines are made principally with the Tempranillo variety and are therefore a luxury, using as they do the grape which goes into the great aged reservas of Rioja. They are wines packed with the primary aromas of the fruit, offering satisfying nuances of blackberries, blueberries, and licorice. On the other hand, these young wines lose their character over time, so are best enjoyed when they are young and fresh.

Cask-Fermented Whites

Alongside the ancient wine-making methods there are modern wines made following the latest enological research. The practice of fermenting white wines in oak casks has become widespread in Spain. There are excellent examples in Galicia, where the technique has produced wines that do justice to the magnificent Albariño variety. There is also a superb cask-fermented white, Guitián from Bodegas A Tapada, made with the Godello grape, the indigenous variety of Valdeorras, as well as magnificent wines from Rueda made with the local Verdejo grape. In Extremadura, the Cayetana, a grape which few believed could give even a palatable young wine, has been used to obtain superb cask-fermented whites.

The wine made with the Garnacha Blanca grape of the Priorat and surrounding area in the province of Tarragona is an almost miraculous product. Then there is the proliferation of Chardonnay whites, which can now be found in many Spanish wine regions. On a more exotic note we can mention the Canary Island wines made with the Listán Blanco grape. This cask-fermenting method has also been successfully applied to

Cava and Sparkling Wines



Mechanized system of bottle rotation "gyropalette"

the Viura grape in Rioja, Catalonia, La Mancha, Aragon, and Madrid. With slight variations, the method followed in the various regions is similar. It starts with a clean, balanced grape must. As the 225-liter cask is a smaller fermenting environment than the standard tank, the fermentation temperature is much lower, and the process slower. Every day the fermenting wine undergoes a *battonnage* (stirring the wine to upset the settled lees so that they lend more aromas and body). The secondary, malolactic fermentation also takes place in the cask and later the wine will remain in the wood from four to six months, depending on the sturdiness of the variety. This process lends complexity to the resulting wine, bypassing the oxidative process which comes with longer cask aging, as the yeasts present in the must will soak up what oxygen seeps into the casks. One interesting variation on the theme is to blend cask-fermented wine with a percentage of wine fermented in stainless steel, thus combining the primary freshness of the variety with the complexity lent by the wood. A wonderful example is Veigadares, from the Rías Baixas Denomination of Origin.

The vast majority of Spanish sparkling wine is made following the traditional method, which gives the best quality, although not all these wines can carry the designation "cava" on the label. Cava is a product which was recognized with the maximum category by the European Union in 1989: it is officially designated as a *"Vino Espumoso de Calidad Producido en una Región Determinada"*–quality sparkling wine produced in a given region–and its statutes function as those for a Denomination of Origin. However, the cava designation applies to a number of scattered areas in Spain and, due to the considerable distance between the different territories authorized to make it, the characteristics of the soil and climate vary.
The statutes apply to the varieties allowed for producing cava, which only can be made with the white Xarel.lo, Macabeo, Parellada, Malvasía of Rioja, and Chardonnay. The red varieties Garnacha y Monastrell are also allowed, and the regulatory board is considering including the Pinot Noir as an authorized grape for cava.
The statutes also define the geographic areas where cava is produced, which include Catalonia, Álava, Navarre, Aragón, Valencia, Extremadura, and one township in the province of Burgos. Other Spanish sparkling wines made with the traditional fermentation method–that is, with a second fermentation taking place in the bottle–are generally covered by the Denomination of Origin of the region to which the winery belongs. Thus the Vinos de Madrid, Rueda, La Mancha, and Lanzarote D.O.s all allow for sparkling wines made following the traditional method. The main difference between cava and other Spanish sparkling wines is that these last may incorporate other grape varieties. In Rueda, the Bodegas Los Curros and Antonio Sanz wineries make sparkling wine with the local Verdejo grape, on the Canary Island of Lanzarote Bodegas El Grifo uses Malvasía, and in the Condado de Huelva in Andalusia, the Cooperativa de Almonte relies on their local grape, the Zalema. Sparkling wines from La Mancha and Madrid are generally made with the Viura or Macabeo.
Such a wide choice only goes to confirm our initial thought, that variety is the spice of life. It all lends more attraction to the great wine-making landscape of Spain.

***Bartolomé Sánchez** is editor of the specialized wine magazines* Vinum and Mi Vino.

See photo credits on page 200.

Almonds and hazelnuts (better known as filberts in the U.S.), adapted since time immemorial to the climate of the Spanish Mediterranean basin, are still as popular today as they were centuries ago for their intense, pleasant flavor, the energy they provide, and the fact that they are good for us.

JUAN MANUEL SANZ / ICEX

ENERGY FIX

TEXT
EVA R. NARANJO

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD

In his novel *El manuscrito carmesí* (The Crimson Manuscript) Antonio Gala, one of Spain's most popular contemporary writers, describes Abd al-Rahman III, founder of the Caliphate of Córdoba in 929, as being so moved by his lover Azahara's nostalgic longing for snow, that he had a bank of almond trees planted within sight of her apartments. Since almond trees come into bloom before the end of winter, she was able to look out onto an apparently snow-covered landscape. "Seeing that fragrant whiteness, Azahara understood each year that proofs of love can be infinite. And she wept with happiness..."

Almond trees blossom in mid-February, and this lovely foretaste of Spring which transforms the rural or mountain landscape is, with good reason, an image which occurs again and again throughout the history of literature. So, indeed, do mentions of their fruit, the almond. Classical writers, both Greek and Roman, refer to them frequently; they also appear in Medieval recipe books and pharmacological treatises; and they are mentioned in the Bible. As far as we know, people have been eating almonds since the dawn of civilization. About five years ago, archaeological excavations of a site in Eastern Turkey dating back 10,000 years revealed evidence of a settled society whose economy had been based not on agriculture but on harvesting almond and pistachio nuts. Research into this site has led some scientists to believe that the first prehistoric civilizations probably ate nuts rather than cereals as their dietary staple. The fact that nuts grow on trees made them a more reliable source of food from year to year than other types of plants less resistant to bad weather and more susceptible to damage by animals and blights. Nuts were also easily stored for long periods, so that food stocks need never run out.

Ancient Commodity

In Spain, both the consumption and production of this excellent foodstuff date back a very long way. Domingo Román, general director of the Spanish Almond and Hazel Exporters Group, ALMENDRAVE, explains that although almonds and hazelnuts derive originally from the Near East and Asia, they have been grown in the Iberian Peninsula since time immemorial, so that by today a wide range of native varieties exists. As might be expected, these nuts are also an ingredient in countless traditional dishes (see box).

According to Román, the Spanish have been producing and exporting almonds and hazelnuts "forever." Indeed, after the discovery of the Americas, it was the Spanish who introduced almonds, among

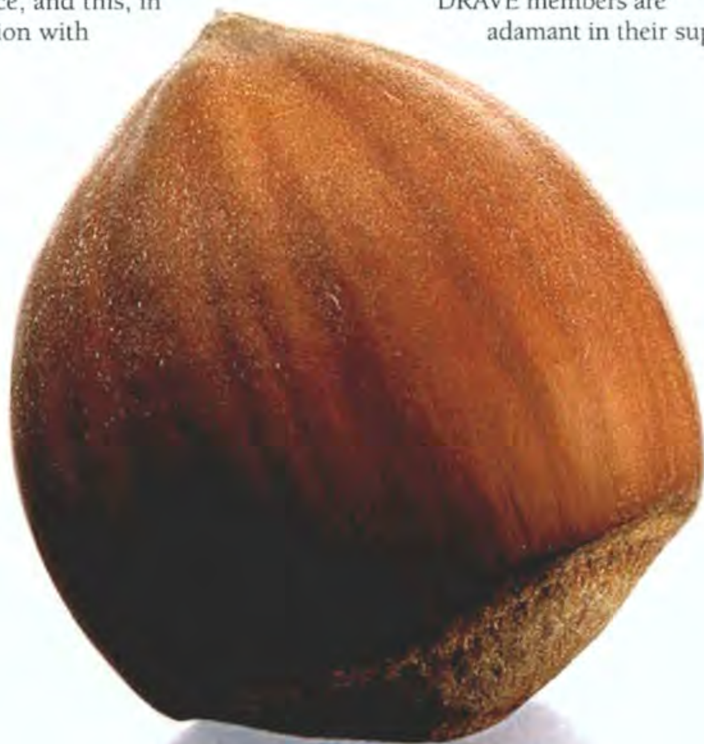
other plants, to the New World. A letter sent by Christopher Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Monarchs, on the other side of the Atlantic, requests that he be sent raisins, almonds, honey, and rice, all of which, he says "should have come in great quantities and only came in small and that which did come is already consumed and spent." The flavor and nutritive and health-giving properties of nuts were recognized even then, making them a valuable commodity which could be readily traded for other goods. Although Spain is also a producer of other nuts, including chestnuts, walnuts, pine kernels, and pistachios, by far the best known and most commercially significant are almonds and hazelnuts, both in terms of planted area (639,000 and 32,500 hectares/1,580,000 and 80,300 acres, respectively) and of volume of trade. Currently, Spain is the leading producer of almonds in Europe and second in the world, after the U.S.; it is the fourth producer in the world of hazelnuts, after the U.S., Italy, and Turkey.

Sorting Shells

There are countless almond groves, mostly small in size and unirrigated, some located in mountainous areas, throughout the Mediterranean Levante region of eastern Spain, from Aragon to northern Andalusia, and in the Balearic Islands. Despite the fact that productivity is much higher when plantations are extensive and irrigated (1,100 kilos per hectare/968 lb per acre when irrigated compared with 400 kilos per hectare/352 lb per acre when unirrigated), Spanish almonds are of exceptional quality, thanks mainly to their higher oil content. This makes them juicier and smoother and gives them a more intense flavor, so that they are ideal as an aperitif snack, peeled or unpeeled, fresh, fried or salted, for use in cakemaking, and by the confectionery industry.

The almonds grown in the United States are generally "papershell" or "softshell" varieties, with shells that are light, porous, and crackable between the teeth. This type is also grown with very good results in such areas of Spain as Tarragona, its main commercial advantage being that it gives more kernels per unshelled kilo harvested. In other words, it gives a higher yield and less wastage. This is reflected in the price, and this, in combination with the fact that this type of nut contains less oil, explains María José Llopis, manager of Almendras Llopis, means that it is in high demand from the industry where it is filleted, flaked, chopped, or cut into "vermicelli" for use in making and decorating sweets and ice creams, for example.

The more typically Spanish almond, however, usually has a hard, woody shell which keeps the seed in good condition both on the tree and during and after harvesting, providing it with natural protection against such hazards as parasitic attack, damage from herbicides, or rough handling. In light of increasing concerns over ensuring standards and guaranteeing the quality of foodstuffs, ALMENDRAVE members are adamant in their sup-



port of the hard-shelled almond for the extra security and confidence it offers consumers.

Queen of Almonds

Among the native varieties of almond, there are three outstanding ones: Marcona, Largueta, and Planeta. By far the most highly regarded, and the most expensive, is Marcona, justifiably known as the "queen of almonds." Because of its round shape, smooth whiteness, and incomparably sweet, delicate taste, it is in consistent demand as an ingredient in top quality or Denomination of Origin *turrones* explains the director of Almendras Llopis. This is confirmed by Joan Fortuny of the industrial department of the major Spanish nut company, Borges (see

OLEIC ACID CAPSULES

Nuts are a basic element of the Mediterranean diet, and come into the category that it is recommended that we eat on a daily basis, like bread, rice, pasta, fruit, and vegetables, right at the base of the nutritional pyramid. In countries such as Spain, where the Mediterranean diet has always been the norm, there is a long tradition of eating these oily seeds, with their minimal water content, often for medicinal purposes. For example, almonds are thought to exert a relaxing effect and to enhance intellectual activity, while hazelnuts are good for the skin, nails, and hair. Many beliefs of this sort have been confirmed by current scientific studies, some of which have gone still further in demonstrating the health benefits of nuts, particularly because of their high unsaturated fat content and their protein, vegetable fiber, vitamin E, and mineral content. Each gram of fat represents nine calories (like alcohol, fat is one of the most calorie-packed substances), with the result that many people are quick to eliminate them from their diet, often with the aim of losing weight. But this is not the way to go about it for the body needs to take in at least 80 grams of fat a day to function properly.

A better approach would be to consume the "right" fats, substituting saturated fats (meat, milk, coconut, and palm oils) with unsaturated or, even better, mono-unsaturated ones or oleic acid (olive oil, almonds, hazelnuts, fish) which as well as reducing LDL cholesterol, associated with cardiovascular disease, does not modify, or even augment, HDL-type cholesterol, known as "good" cholesterol because of the protection it provides.

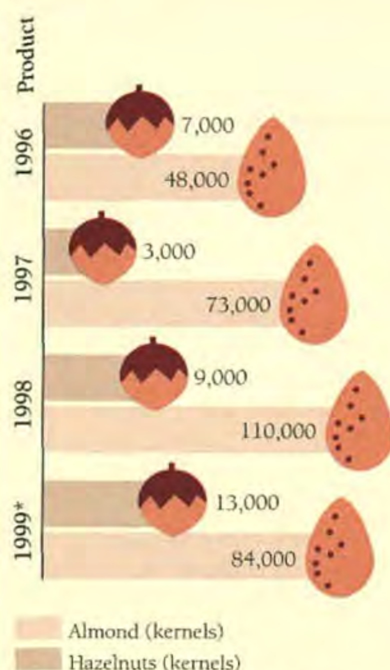
Dr. Luís Masana, president of the scientific committee of the Nucis Foundation (an institution devoted to researching and disseminating information about the nutritional and dietary characteristics of nuts) and chairman of the Faculty of Medicine at Catalonia's Rovira i Virgili University, points out that "nuts such as almonds and hazelnuts are the equivalent of natural "olive oil" capsules in that 50 percent of their weight is oleic acid."

The damaging buildup of fat on artery walls does not depend only on their plasma concentration, but also on their capacity for oxidation. Mono-unsaturated fatty acids are resistant to oxidation, and this makes it more difficult for them to become trapped on the vascular wall. Furthermore, "nuts contain significant quantities of vitamin E, the main natural lipid antioxidant, and this increases the contribution they make to cardiovascular health," explains Dr. Masana.

And finally, consider this: eating nuts as part of your daily diet ought not to be fattening since they tend to make you feel full.

Spain Gourmetour No. 43), who adds that, in peeled, fried, and slightly salted form, Marcona is also the "snack" nut of choice.
The Largueta variety has a very characteristic elongated shape. The fact that it ripens late increases the risk of losing harvests to frost, but it does on the other hand possess organoleptic properties that impress the gourmet palate, according to our informants at Borges. In Spain, this variety is usually used for aperitif nuts, toasted in their skins, while in other countries such as Italy and Germany, where it is also in high demand, it is usually used peeled as an ingredient by the confectionery industry for making sugared and candied almonds. It is also used in almond chocolate bars, often so thin that the nuts have to be very carefully selected for size to achieve the best results, explains Gerard Pont, head of marketing at Borges' Nut Division.
Planeta, a long, flat nut grown in quantity in the Alicante area and, in María José Llopis' opinion, arguably the sweetest, is also a suitable variety for sugared almonds. However, Domingo Román explains that while these three Mediterranean varieties are the most important ones, there are other less well-known ones, such as the Mallorca variety, which he describes as "very sweet and pleasant on the palate." "The Mallorca variety doesn't have an equivalent market presence because it doesn't look as good and isn't as big as the others," adds ALMENDRAVE's director. "Nor is it uniform: there are so many botanical varieties of almond, such a rich genetic pool, in the island of Mallorca that it is impossible to tell them apart and they are all sold under the same name."

Spain's Production of Almonds and Hazelnuts (in tons)



Almond (kernels)
Hazelnuts (kernels)

Source: Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Foods.
*Estimated.

Main Countries to Which Spain Exports Almonds and Hazelnuts

Country	€ (millions)	US$ (millions)
Germany	63	54.9
France & Monaco	31.2	27.2
Italy	28.9	25.2
Netherlands	10.3	8.9
Belgium	8.3	7.2

Source: ICEX database
1 euro=0.8720 US$

Spanish Exports of Almonds and Hazelnuts

Year	€ (millions)	US$ (millions)	Tons
1999	171.7	149.1	50,724
1998	202.1	176.2	47,668
1997	240.6	209.8	52,419

Source: ICEX database
1 euro=0.8720 US$

Catalan Hazelnuts

Spain's hazelnuts are a curious phenomenon, for although it is one of the leading producing countries in the world, production is so geographically concentrated that it would, strictly speaking, be more accurate to speak of a producing province. Around 88 percent of the total quantity of hazelnuts grown in Spain come from Tarragona Province, and more particularly one of its districts, Reus, from which Spain's only Denomination of Origin for hazelnuts takes its name.
Almost half of Spain's hazel plantations are irrigated, the rest–a slightly larger area–being dry farmed. As with almonds, there is a significant difference in production between one type of terrain and the other (1,165 kilos per hectare/1,025 lb per acre when irrigated as against 490 kilos per hectare/430 lb per acre when unirrigated). The nuts ripen between August and September, and the period of highest demand occurs around Christmas time. Hazelnuts are eaten as an aperitif snack either in their skins or skinned, hand toasted or fried, though they are also used as a basic ingredient in turrones, sweets, and ice creams, and even in the manufacture of edible oils and soaps and cosmetics.
The most common variety in Spain is Negreta which generally measures just under two centimeters (0.78 inches) in diameter in the shell and whose pleasantly sweet taste seems particularly concentrated. The Avellana de Reus Denomination of Origin, whose jurisdiction covers 21,000 hectares (51,900 acres) of hazel plantations in the Catalan districts of Baix Camp,

A VERY TRADITIONAL MIX

A high proportion of the almonds and hazelnuts which remain within the Spanish market is taken up by the *turrón* industry, a sector which in combination with the Christmas confectionery sector reaches annual production figures of 36,500 tons, worth 37 billion pesetas (204 million euros/178 million U.S. dollars). By responding to consumer requirements with new products such as sugarless turrons and a wide range of chocolate varieties, it has succeeded in keeping its share of the Spanish market high while increasing its presence on foreign markets. Traditional turrón, a legacy from the Arabs, is a paste made by cooking honey, sugars, and egg whites, adding peeled and toasted almonds, then shaping it into a rectangular or circular block. The qualification Denominación Específica (see Glossary on p. 199) Turrón de Alicante y de Jijona applies to the two types of turrón produced in the municipality of Jijona, in Alicante Province, and is a guarantee that it has been artisan made using high quality primary ingredients in specific quantities: for Jijona type turrón these are a minimum of ten percent pure honey and 52 percent almonds (this type contains no egg white and the almonds are ground up so that it is light brown, oily, and very soft and sweet). Alicante-type turrón (pale, containing visible whole, or almost whole, almonds, and covered in rice paper) must contain a minimum of 46 percent almonds, this proportion increasing for the *"suprema"* quality version. Though almonds are the star ingredient in the Denominación Específica Turrón de Alicante y de Jijona, other related types (not covered by the Denomination) are also made which use different nuts such as hazelnuts, pine kernels, and peanuts. A similar product, which can be either almond- or hazelnut-based, is made in the municipality of Agramunt in the Catalan province of Lérida, its authenticity being guaranteed by the designation Indicación Geográfica Protegida Turrón de Agramunt.

Alt Camp, Tarragonès, Priorat, Conca de Barberà, and Terra Alta, includes this variety, but other varieties–Pauetet, Gironell, Morella, and Culplá–are also grown there. In all cases, their nutritive composition is required to include 15.5 percent proteins, 62.2 percent lipids, 15.5 percent glucides, and only 6.3 percent water.

Making Improvements

Despite all the above, the nut sector is currently undergoing a transformation. In recent years, under the auspices of EU-subsidized Quality and Commercialization Improvement Plans for shell fruits such as almonds and hazelnuts, "important varietal changes have been brought about in Spain, with the aim of substituting early flowering varieties with other, later flowering, ones. To a significant degree, this has succeeded in eliminating frost damage during flowering, which used to undermine the production capacity of many growing areas," explains Borges' Joan Fortuny.

This used to be a major problem in the case of almonds, comparable with the lack of bees for pollination which is still left to nature, and insufficient rainfall, observes Domingo Román, director of ALMENDRAVE: "Almond blossoms are usually the first to appear, which is why we call them the herald of Spring. But the serious disadvantage of this is that there is a very high risk of frost in the first half of February. All it takes is one, two, or three hours of hard frost in just one day for the flowers to freeze, and for the fruit to be lost." Research has been conducted by

public and private institutions all over Spain into the florescence of almond trees in a bid to find solutions for growers, and late-flowering varieties have already been planted in some places. Joan Fortuny explains that in part this has meant "replacing Marcona and Largueta trees with other, more productive and less frost sensitive, varieties which have not yet been commercially categorized but come under the general 'common varieties' heading." Meanwhile, to keep pace with growing international demand, especially from European customers, for ecologically sound products, this type of regime is gradually being introduced into Spain's almond and hazel groves. For the moment, organic almonds are to be found in Andalusia and Aragon, among other regions, and there are organic hazelnuts in Catalonia, as one might expect, though production, which is in the hands of small farmers and cooperatives, is patchy as yet.

Eva R. Navarro is a journalist whose specialty is foreign trade. She is a regular contributor to Spain Gourmetour.

Photo credits on page 200.
See Recipes on page 141 and Exporters on page 181.

WEB SITES

ALMENDRAVE
Language: Spanish
The Web site of the Spanish Almond and Hazel Exporters Association (ALMENDRAVE), the main group in the sector, gives general information about the almond, hazelnut, and pine kernel sector in Spain. It includes data relating to all three products (volume of production in Spain, varieties, characteristics, etc.) and a list of its member companies.
www.mcnet.es/almendrave/mchome.html

Consejo Regulador de Jijona y Turrón de Alicante
Language: Spanish, English
The Web site of the Regulatory Council of the Denominación Específica Jijona y Turrón de Alicante gives information about the origins, definition, manufacturing process, etc. of this type of turrón.
www.jijona.com/index1.html

Hazelnut and Almond Exporters' Group
Language: Spanish
The Web site of Grupo Exportador de Avellana y Almendra (Hazelnut and Almond Exporters' Group), from Reus, Tarragona, gives copious information about these two (and other) nuts, including product definition and classification, and various relevant articles of a technical nature.
www.fut.es/~grexaval/grsp00.html

ALMONDS AND HAZELNUTS IN SPANISH CUISINE

Text: **Lourdes March**

Truly representative of the Mediterranean diet, Spanish cuisine is the end result of thousands of years of ingenuity in using available ingredients–nuts, for example–in many ways to produce good food. Almonds and hazelnuts are a good example. These are most frequently eaten whole–toasted or fried–as aperitifs, or ground up–in countless recipes for soups, sauces, stuffings, fish and meat dishes and, especially, confectionery.

In the Mediterranean area of Spain, particularly in Catalonia, there are many dishes in which these nuts feature as a major ingredient. One interesting case is the thickening and aromatizing agent known as *picada*, which is used to contribute density and body to various recipes. It consists of toasted almonds and hazelnuts or other nuts, garlic, toasted or fried bread, olive oil, aromatic herbs and spices all crushed and amalgamated together using a pestle and mortar. The resulting thick paste is usually dissolved in, or thinned by adding, liquid: wine, muscatel, meat or fish stock, water, depending on what the dish calls for. The picada is generally added to, say, a fish, meat or vegetable stew in the last ten to fifteen minutes of cooking so that it modifies the flavor, color, and texture of the sauce without too much of its essence being lost to evaporation.

A variant of this Catalan sauce, *romesco*, is made with hazelnuts (and the small red hot peppers from which it takes its name) and is used for both meat and fish dishes.

Almonds are an indispensable ingredient in soups and starters right across the board of Spanish cuisine: well-known examples include *ajo blanco* (a cold soup made with almonds, water, olive oil, and garlic all blended to a very fine consistency and served with green grapes) and *sopa de almendras* (a sweet soup made with almonds, sugar, and bread and eaten for dessert at Christmas). Almonds are also an ingredient in *sopas serranas* (meat stock to which a paste of fried almonds, fried bread, garlic, and parsley is added, along with little chunks of ham and chicken breast), and *sopa de rape* (monkfish soup). *Tortilla con salsa* is a dish with many variants, but in the Priorato area of Catalonia where it is a local classic, this egg and white bean omelet is cut into triangles and infused briefly in a tomato and onion sauce thickened with a classic almond and hazel picada before serving. *Arroz magro* is a Catalan risotto to which, when the rice first starts to simmer, a picada of almonds, parsley, garlic, anchovies, and grated cheese is added.

In main course dishes, recipes that are essentially fish cooked in sauce often feature almonds and hazelnuts: *rape a la marinera* (monkfish with assorted seafood), *rape al romesco* (monkfish with romesco), *suquet de peix* (Catalan fish stew), *calamares rellenos* (stuffed squid), *anguila con salsa* (stewed eel), *bacalao con* romesco (cod with romesco) and the classic *mar y montaña* (a fish and meat stew whose Spanish name means the equivalent of "surf and turf") are all examples. In La Rioja, trout is served with (as opposed to cooked in) an almond sauce.

Similarly, many beef, lamb, pork, fowl, and game dishes incorporate almonds or hazelnuts: meat stews or *estofados* and recipes using pig's or lamb's trotters are examples. *Gallina en pepitoria* is a classic chicken dish, whose sauce is thickened with a picada of almonds and hard-boiled egg yolks and aromatized with saffron) and there are variants all over Spain using turkey, goose, duck, rabbit, and hare.

But it is in Spanish desserts and confectionery, often associated with special feast days, that almonds and hazelnuts are the true protagonists. No Spanish household is without the traditional Jijona and Alicante *turrones*, *guirlache* (a dark turrón made with caramelized sugar), marzipan sweets, and sugared almonds at Christmas.

Regional traditional Christmas sweetmeats include the Canary Island cakes known as *truchas de Navidad* (Christmas trouts), *salsa de Nadal* in the Balearic islands, *alfajores* (flour, lard, and almond cakes) in Andalusia and sopa de almendras (almond soup) in Madrid.

To mark All Saints' Day in November, sweetmeats known as *panellets* appear in cake shops all over Catalonia, while *huesos de santo* ("saint's bones") serve the same purpose in the rest of Spain. Both are marzipan (almond and sugar) sweets with fillings such as egg yolk, sweet potato, or coconut.

Even in areas like northern Spain where no nuts are grown, they still feature as a key ingredient in cakes and confectionery: Galicia's famous *tarta de Santiago* and Asturias' *carbayones* are both almond based. *Mantecados* and *almendrados* (cakes made with almonds, flour, and lard or olive oil, and sometimes eggs), almond milk, ice creams, countless local sweets... All these reflect the way in which almonds and hazelnuts permeate the entire Spanish culinary repertoire.

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THE ONION HARVEST

Text
Vicky Hayward

Spaniards are passionate onion eaters. At the last count, in 1997, with an average consumption per head of nearly 7 1/2 kilos, they ate two-thirds of the national harvest. At around a million tons, it is the largest in western Europe. The harvest, beginning in early spring, moves across the country, reaching its height on the plains of Castile-La Mancha in late August. The fieldworkers start at daybreak to avoid the midday heat, moving in a tight group against the flat skylines, bent double as they work their way up the long lines of onions drying on the windswept fields. Onion skins rustle around their ankles as they scoop the big, coppery, globe-shaped bulbs into wide-mouthed buckets. Called the Grano de Oro, or Golden Nugget, famed for its sweet juiciness, an essential but rarely praised ingredient in so many European kitchens, it is generally known simply as the Spanish onion. But behind that simple tag are several dozen varieties, each with a different character. Here we give the lowdown on them and explain how the work of growers, scientists, and fieldworkers has shaped the harvest.

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Spaniards were not always such passionate onion eaters, but curiously that may be the clue to their quality today. Friar Juan of Pineda, for example, the 16th-century historian, issued dire warnings that were typical of the time about the effects of eating onions. In large quantities, he said, they would cause headaches, stomach damage, bad eyesight, and even madness as their humors rose slowly to the brain. He allowed, however, that in small quantities, cooked with oil and vinegar, onions could expel bad humors. Hence, perhaps, Spain's most noted medieval onion recipe, Ruperto de Nola's 15th-century pottage: the onions were salted to lose their pungent juices, then squeezed dry, "boyled" in pork fat or olive oil and finished off with sweet white wine and a splash of vinegar to serve alongside game.

This medieval Spanish prejudice, so different from the Egyptians', Romans', and contemporary northern Europeans' love of onions, was in part inherited from the Muslims who ruled swathes of Spain for seven centuries. Since perfumed breath was a requirement of Islam, eating raw onions, garlic, and leeks was strictly forbidden and cooked or pickled onions were used discreetly as a seasoning.

But the onion's other problem, then as at many other times, was that it was looked down on as food for the poor. If expensive, imported, sweet-smelling spices were exclusive luxuries for the wealthy, then earthy, homegrown aromatics like the onion were definitely the food of the common man and woman. Luis Lobera de Ávila, Charles V's doctor, gave the game away in *El Banquete de Nobles Caballeros* (Banquet of Noble Gentlemen, 1530) when he ended his chapter on the onion family dismissively, "And because they are the food more of coarse and country people than of noble men, I shall go no further..." Social pretension was ever the downfall of good eating.

The Power of Flavor

But that still left a vast, unrecorded majority of people to enjoy onions and other similar earthly pleasures. In Cervantes' *El Quijote*, Sancho speaks for them: "And still, if I tell the truth, the flavor of what I eat in my corner, albeit bread and onion, without affectations or deference, is far better than the turkeys of other tables at which I must by obligation eat slowly and drink little..."

One of the onion's attractions was, of course, its intense flavor, especially in meatless dishes. When the heroine of Francisco Delicado's novel *La Lozana Andaluza* (1528) swaps cooking tips with her mother, it turns out that on fastdays "the cooking pot without an onion is like a wedding without a tambourine." In other words, like a party without music. Unthinkable in fiesta-loving Spain. Perhaps that is why nuns and monks also ignored all the doctors' warnings. "Onions are chosen from the 1st of September to Saint Michael's day," wrote Elena Requejo in 1292 in a rare account of monastic eating in San Salvador, an Aragonese monastery in Zaragoza. Monks also gave Spaniards some of the first widely published onion recipes. In his popular book *Nuevo Arte de Cocina* (New Art of Cookery, 1745) lay friar Juan de Altamiras, a self-taught cook, suggested two Lenten recipes: onions stuffed with lettuce, or sautéed in breadcrumbs. Perhaps he was tired of fussy eaters. He finished off his second recipe by warning readers that "...if, prepared in this way, you still cannot eat the onion, I do not know how to help you do so." Navarrese monk Antonio Salsete, the author of *El Cocinero Religioso* (The Religious Cook), gave two more recipes with meat twenty years later: meat-stuffed onions and *carnero encebollado*, literally "onioned" stewing mutton, both still eaten today.

But for a large chunk of the population, there was never any meat except on the odd feast day. For them onions were even more essential. "*A falta de polla, pan y cebolla*," (when you have no hen, then bread and onion), ran one proverb, which in turn became a statement of the dignity in poverty. "*Piuttoso mangio pani e cipolla...*" (I would rather eat bread and onions...) runs one Italian proverb while Spaniards quip laconically about getting by with what you've got, "*con pan y cebolla...*" (*with bread and onions...*).

Out of ingenious economy grew many great dishes. One modern example is the Asturian stuffed onion. Originally a cheap postwar everyday dish originally served stuffed with

A GOURMET GUIDE TO SPANISH ONIONS

Babosa (Early Valencian White): Sweet and juicy, hence its Spanish name, meaning dribbly, this is the earliest native variety (May to June) grown on the mainland. Valencian in origin, greenish white in color, shaped like a slightly flattened beach ball, it is rated by gourmets as a mild salad onion. Hybrids include the Superbosa.

Blanca Grande de Fuentes (Fuentes Large White): Originally from Fuentes de Ebro, this gigantic, super-sweet, white, Aragonese late summer onion is sold with a Regional Quality Label. Grown on smallholdings in the Ebro valley, the 1999 harvest was only 1,500 tons, but planting is spreading to supply rising demand. Almost entirely eaten raw.

Blanca de Lleida (Late Lleida White): These second-year green onions, *calçots*, from Tarragona province, are resprouted underground to keep their flesh white and tender. A famed local specialty, now sold under a Calçots de Valls Regional Quality Label, twenty million are eaten locally between November and April every year.

Grano (Valencian Export or Late Valencian): The most widely planted variety, a perfect globe with yellowy-gold flesh wrapped by coppery outer skins. Sweet but with a slight bite, excellent fried, stuffed, or sliced in rings, it is especially rich in vitamins. Keeps for up to five months from harvesting (July to September). Recas is a variant with firmer flesh and more bite.

Lanzarote: Round with a straw-yellow skin and sweet flavor, these dry-farmed Canarian onions' sweetness and keeping qualities are very good raw in salads or alongside dishes. Grown under a fine layer of volcanic or other sand, they keep well and were widely exported until ten years ago. They have been ousted by vines and tourism.

Liébana: A round, reddish brown, slow growing late onion native to Cantabria's Bedoya and Esanos valleys. Harvested in October and sold in strings in local markets, it is used fresh for making charcuterie and salads.

Liria: The sweetest of all Spanish onions, this Valencian variety is named after the town at the center of its original growing area. Similar to the Babosa, it is rounder, has a harder golden skin, and is harvested from June to mid July. Especially good in salads or simply boiled.

Morada de Amposta (Amposta Purple): One of Spain's best sweet red onions, with a purplish skin and flesh, related to other native red varieties like the Morada de Zalla, Roja de Molina (Murcian) and pinkish Colorada de Figueras (Catalonia). Mainly eaten in Catalonia and the Canaries.

A PASSION FOR ONIONS

Sometimes onions emerge from their background role to take the lead as the main ingredient. Here are a few such dishes for onion lovers.

***Cebollas al horno* (whole baked onions):** Try Aragon's onions baked for an hour in their skins, the tops cut open and olive oil dribbled over the flesh.
***Cebolla asada* (onions braised in olive oil):** Josep Lladonosa i Giró gives this recipe in his *Gran Libro de la Cocina Catalana*. Braise skinned and trimmed onion quarters over low heat with 2/3 oil and 1/3 water (for 5 onions allow 200 ml/7 fl oz of oil) until the onions are golden, softened, and glossy with reduced pan juices. Deliciously sweet.
***Cebollas rellenas* (stuffed onions):** In Asturias large onions, hollowed out and filled with minced beef or flaked tuna fish, are baked till tender (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 50). For vegetarians a Valencian rice stuffing or a Menorcan one with chopped onion and eggplant (aubergine) bound with tomato comfit are good.
***Higado encebollado* (sautéed calves' liver with onion):** Sauté plenty of onion in olive oil, add the liver and just enough white wine to cover. In Catalonia this is thickened with breadcrumbs and ground almonds.
***Ensalada Aragonesa* (Aragonese onion salad):** Crescent-shaped slices of sweet white onion are arranged like flower petals around a generous handful of salt-dried black Empeltre olives. Dress with olive oil and salt.

***Hervido Valenciano* (Valencian boiled vegetables):** Boil together in salted water sliced green beans, onions, and potatoes–both the latter skinned and cut into chunks–and serve them well drained with olive oil, vinegar and, if you like, very finely chopped garlic.
***Zarangollo* (Murcian sautéed onion and zucchini):** Simply wonderful: braise over very low heat 2 kg/4 1/2 lb of finely sliced onions, and 1 kg/2 1/4 lb of cubed zucchini (courgettes) in 1/2 liter/17 fl oz of olive oil, with a little salt, garlic, and oregano.

whatever came to hand from tortilla to bread, it became a specialty with tuna or meat stuffing after the arrival of prosperity and for the last ten years it's celebrated with a public holiday and fiesta at El Entregó, a small mining village, where crowds flock in to eat 10,000 kilos of stuffed onions.
But on a far wider basis, the easygoing onion also worked its way into everyday cooking right around the country. One need only quote a few of the most famous regional dishes–Valencian *paella*, Galician *empanada* or pie, Manchego *pisto* or *ratatuille*, Andalusian *gazpacho*, and Catalan *sofregit* or *samfaina* (minced onion fried slowly with tomato and garlic)–to realize that although one rarely hears anyone singing the praises of the humble onion, it is one of the Spanish kitchen's most basic ingredients today.

The Roots of Diversity

As the onion made its way into valleys and sierras, market gardens and vegetable patches, so it adapted to Spain's ecosystems and different soils and climates, acquiring a different character in each place as it settled in over decades or centuries. New varieties arrived in waves. Andalusian writer Columela, in 42 A.D., mentioned those from Pompeii, Cyprus (the bunching onion), Ascalón (the shallot) and "the simple one from the country of the Marsis," a Wesphalian tribe. The Visigoths, great onion eaters, brought more northern varieties and the Muslims brought mild varieties, small pickling onions and chives, many originally from India.

Seed selection also played a part. "Onion varieties are never consistent," explains Vicente Castell, a research agronomist working in the Valencian government station at Moncadá. He has spent twelve years collecting onion samples from right around Spain, especially in isolated areas of self-sufficient growers, for the national seed bank. "Through selection you can more or less pick a round, red, white, sweet, or juicy onion."

While Mediterranean growers generally selected for size, Spaniards particularly sought sweetness, trying to get away from the stronger varieties that had given them a bad reputation in medieval times. The 16th-century agriculturalist Alonso de Herrera told growers that pungent onions were "more humorous to the brain" and could be avoided by various techniques, especially growing in the right soil. The climate was on the growers' side in their search for sweetness: since the onion is photosensitive, the long hours of unbroken sunlight helped full ripening and the accumulation of natural sugars. So, too, were the agricultural techniques learned from the Muslims, whose irrigation channels, left intact in Valencia and other areas under Aragonese rule, provided the small but vital doses of water to keep the top inch or two of soil with enough moisture for the onion's shallow roots.

In modern times onions have also been selected for their commercial qualities, but often using age-old methods. The famous recent example is the Recas, a subtype of the Grano named after the Toledo village where it was produced by a grower between the 1950s and 1960s: he saved the best bulbs from each year's harvest, replanted them to allow them to flower and harvested the umbrella-like seedheads as an improved source of seed. Finally, in the late 1960s, he sold the rights to an Aragonese seed company. From there, the Recas went on to become the most widely planted type of Grano grown commercially today.

Farmhouse Onions

The end result is today's wealth of native varieties, many of them grown semi-artesanally in farmhouses and smallholdings for sale in the locality or region. Remarkably, they make up 13 percent of onions eaten by Spaniards (Ministry of Agriculture, 1999) and often command higher prices than better known varieties because of their eating qualities. Each of these onions has a markedly different character. The giant white Fuentes onions from Aragon, grown in the Ebro valley, are so sweet they are generally eaten raw; purplish-red Liébana onions from Cantabria's mountain valleys are sold in strings for sausage making; Lanzarote's sweet yellow-skinned "rabbit onions," the earliest harvested in Spain, are still exported in small quantities as salad onions; and, in Galicia, Sansenxo's Chata onions, traditionally sold to sailors and fishermen late every summer, have huge, flattened bulbs the size of a fist.

Four more varieties come from Catalonia's plains: mottled pink Figueres onions, the tear-shaped Viguetana from Vic, deep red Amposta onions and, most famously, Valls' *calçots*, second-year onions resprouted under mounded earth to keep them white and tender. First grown by a local farmer in the 1880s, they have become a local specialty, char-grilled and eaten washed down with glugs

THE MEDICINAL ONION

Called by Luis Lobera de Ávila "the peasants' remedy," the onion has been used for centuries in folk medicine: raw, to disinfect water, combat cholera and the plague; to make onion and honey poultices for burns and abscesses; to macerate in wine to break up kidney stones, eliminate toxins, and fight off flu; and, boiled or baked, as a cure for insomnia. In the Valencian countryside, many older people still eat a boiled onion every evening. "*Cebolla bullida alarga la vida...*" *Boiled onion lengthens life, they say.*

Doctors are now beginning to understand what gives the onion its multipurpose powers. Two sulphur compounds called allyl disulfate and crotonic aldehyde combine to give the onion's pungent smell and flavor and to make you cry; they are also a natural microbicide and antiseptic effective against staphylococcus, parasites, and for neutralizing and destroying toxins. A third compound, cycloallin, is the same anticoagulant found in garlic which helps to dissolve internal blood clots and to prevent coronary thrombosis.

But, unlike garlic, the onion is also very rich in mineral salts (not destroyed by cooking), some vitamins, and forms of glucose which are directly assimilated into the bloodstream. Among the mineral salts the high levels of phosphorus help to enrich red blood cells, ensure fluid balance, and regularize glandular activity. The high Vitamin A and C content explain the onion's reputation for fighting respiratory illnesses; the Vitamin B and calcium act as a relaxant against insomnia; and the silica content has led the Cancer Institute of Bethesda (U.S.A.) to cite the onion as an anticarcinogenic. An onion-rich diet can help diabetes with sugar balance.
Most surprisingly of all, perhaps, the cooked onion is an excellent natural medicine for delicate stomachs. Its phosphorus content helps balance intestinal flora; a natural form of insulin contained by the onion stimulates gastric juices and helps digest proteins, while the sulphur compounds help combat infections and eliminate toxins.

Per kilo/2.2 pounds:

320 Kcal
12.5 g protein
80-85 g carbohydrates
800-890 g water

Vitamins

Vitamin A 50 mcg
Vitamin B1 0.3-0.6 mg
Vitamin B2 0.3 mg
Niacin (B group) 2 mg
Vitamin C 100-240 mg
Vitamin E 3 mg

Mineral Salts

Calcium 310-350 mg
Iron 30-50 mg
Magnesium 110-115 mg
Phosphorus 360 mg
Potassium 1.5-2-5 g
Sodium 20 mg
Zinc 14 mg
Sulphur 1.04 g

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, *La Alimentación en España*, 1998; Colección de Semillas de Cebolla, 2000.

of wine, standing up at one of Spain's great gastronomic rituals called the *calçotada*. Around that has grown a local industry: the 20 million calçots grown each year provide Tarragona province with an important cash crop.

Further south down the Mediterranean coast is Valencia, for centuries the heartland of Spanish onion-growing. In the late 14th century, Francesc Eiximinis, author of the *Regiment de la Cosa Pública*, described the city's market-gardens, called l'Horta, "as abundant in very beautiful and good vegetables, such as all lineages of... garlics, onions, scallions, leeks..."

It was here, and in other growing pockets around Valencia city, that today's main commercial varieties emerged from local ones, selected over hundreds of years: the early Babosa, a short-day or overwintering onion harvested from April to mid-June; the mid-season Liria, from the town of the same name, harvested from June to July; and finally, the Grano, a long-day or late-season variety with exceptional keeping qualities, harvested from August through to October.

The Onion Trade

It was in the mid-19th century that the Valencian onion trade boomed worldwide around the Grano's exceptional keeping qualities and big globe shape. Each village in the densely farmed growing areas specialized in one variety as a way of avoiding seasonal pests and disease spreading. Many of them, such as Benaguasil, which still boasts an onion on its town shield, lived en-

Traditional onion fields and storage shelter (no longer in use) in the Valencian Community, late 50's.

tirely off the onion harvest. Men and women had different specified roles in the fieldwork, harvesting and drying, sorting and packing.

The onions would then make the short journey by cart or train to the ports and the much longer sea journey to northern Europe or the Americas in homemade 70-kilo (154-lb) wooden crates. By 1917, some 190,000 tons of onions were being shipped every year from small and large ports along the Valencian coastline. Long after the harvest finished the onion stocks were stored close to the fields in *ceberas*, or onion houses, some of which still stand today. Narrow, steeply tiled storage barns, just wide and high enough to walk into, with slatted wooden walls and bamboo shelves for stacking the onions, guaranteed the ventilation needed for the onions to keep well through the winter. That, in turn, was fundamental to keep prices stable through the longest possible season.

It was during this period that today's onion trade began to take shape. Over three-quarters of exports went to the United Kingdom, which then shipped onions on to its colonies around the world. Today, it remains the single biggest buyer of Spanish onions and its taste for large, firm cooking onions, sweet with a slight bite, still dominates growing patterns. Many of the old growing areas have disappeared, the onions replaced by more profitable citrus fruit. But in l'Horta the small-scale onion farmers have survived. The city has taken great bites out of the patchwork of fields which grew around the Muslim irrigation system, but every furrow here is groomed with pride. Vicent Martí is one such grower, farming just 2.5 hectares (6 acres), a

substantial holding. He grows spring Monquelino onions, a subtype of the Babosa, sweet and juicy, selecting his own seed from plants grown in the mountains. This, together with balanced crop rotation, the variety's adaptation to the fine, sandy, organically rich soil, and careful harvesting–he turns the onions as they dry before gathering them in–is one of the keys to avoiding pests and fungus. Vicent's case suggests there may still be a future for today's small growers. He is a certified organic grower, exporting his annual crop to Germany. There, as elsewhere, the market for old-fashioned quality and the revival of interest in different onion varieties–red-skinned, white skinned, or tender young salad onions sold with their green stalks–is growing all the time.

A Change of Scale

In the last twenty years, the onion trade has been through a dramatic change of scale. With a national crop of a million tons a year, onions are Spain's third largest vegetable export after tomatoes and potatoes. The neat fields in Valencia are now tiny pockets compared to the wide-horizoned farms growing Grano onions in Andalusia and Castile-La Mancha, where the long hours of sunshine–2,686 hours a year–help to guarantee the crop's winning sweetness.

Today everything revolves around the attempt to link the different crops in one seamless season stretching through as many months as possible. Starting in February in Seville and Almería, the harvest moves steadily northwards across the country, variety by variety, to reach its close with the final fields of Grano in late October. But the growing cycle and harvesting have changed little. Three months after sowing, the seedlings are planted out in fields where potatoes, green beans, peas and other naturally fertilizing vegetables are grown in rotation with the onions. Sprinkler or drip irrigation keeps the soil's surface moist once the spring rains are over; the weeds may or may not be cleared, depending on each farmer's approach. In the final weeks, the onion bulbs swell into huge eggs embedded in the earth. When they are completely ripe and growing has stopped, they are gently uprooted mechanically and left to lose their damp for anything from three days to two weeks; or, if the harvest is threatened by rain or hail–its biggest enemy–the shoots are lopped off and a few days later the bulbs are uprooted before the fieldworkers move in to work up the long lines of drying onions.

Large-scale farming has brought its own advantages. Castile-La Mancha's chalky soils and dry meseta climate are ideal for growing onions: the clinging topsoil holds the moisture while the dryness keeps mildew and botritis to a minimum. The big fields have also allowed automatic irrigation and mechanization to cut backbreaking work and costs. Yields per hectare are rising–for example, by five percent in the last five years–thanks to im-

proved field care, which has allowed the total growing area to shrink by a quarter since it reached its peak, nearly 40,000 hectares (98,000 acres), in 1974.

The slatted wooden ceberas have also become quaint relics of the past, slowly ousted in the last few decades by giant mechanized warehouses which can process over a hundred tons every day. In the early days of the Grano harvest, the onions fly through the warehouses in less than a day. Roughly cleaned, sized, topped and tailed by machine, then hand-selected again, they are resized by calibrators and packed into large bags of 5-25 kilograms (11-56 pounds) or, increasingly, small net bags, tubes, bags, and boxes that are loaded into waiting trucks and driven off to reach northern European supermarkets within 48 hours of harvesting. Later in the season, as stocks accumulate, the onions will be stored in the warehouses, either in automated state-of-the-art cooled warehouses with controlled humidity and chilled temperatures or, more often, ventilated by winter winds. Only big ones go for export. Little onions stay at home.

A New Balance

The old community of the onion world has also changed again. Once there was the grower who also sold at local markets; then, for a century, the grower, packer, and exporter worked alongside one another in the

THE ONION LULLABIES

Murcian shepherd and poet Miguel Hernández's starkly beautiful poem, Nanas de la Cebolla (1939) has grown with time to become one of Spain's most famous elegies to the dignity of suffering. Hernández wrote the poem from prison in response to a letter from Josefina, his wife, saying she only had onions to eat. "The smell of onion you eat reaches me here," he wrote back, "And my son must be indignant that he breast feeds and drinks onion juice instead of milk." In the same envelope he enclosed this poem, entitled *"Lullaby to my Son."* Three years later Hernández, sentenced to death, died in his prison cell. It was another sixteen years before the poem was finally published under the title *The Onion Lullabies.*

La cebolla es escarcha
cerrada y pobre:
escarcha de tus días
y de mis noches.
Hambre y cebolla,
hielo negro y escarcha
grande y redonda,
En la cuna del hambre
Mi niño estaba.
Con sangre de cebolla
Se amamantaba.
Pero tu sangre,
Escarchada de azúcar,
Cebolla y hambre.

The onion is frost
closed and poor:
frost of your days
and of my nights.
Hunger and onion,
Black ice and frost,
Big and round,
In the cradle of hunger
Lay my child.
With onion blood
he suckled.
And your blood,
frosted with sugar,
onion and hunger.

Miguel Hernández

Cancionero y Romancero
de Ausencias, 1939

same locality; twenty years ago, they began to merge in the single figure of the large wholesaler-grower, also buying from farmers, to juggle orders and prices at home and abroad. But more often than not they have grown out of the old structure: the top ten exporters, handling between 8,000 and 20,000 tons of onions each a year, are still from Valencia, and their warehouses are still there. Today, though, the human chain has also extended. While small farmhouse growers still do their own seed selection, larger growers rely on the work of research laboratories and greenhouses where biologists and plantsmen are continually testing new hybrids of the basic varieties, usually for greater resistance to disease or a shift of season. Over the next ten years these hybrids, especially of tender Babosa onions, are expected to represent over 80 percent of the commercial crop.

As a balance to that, the researchers are also preserving and cataloguing the diversity accumulated during the last thousand years. Vicente Castell's team at Moncada have now collected, cleaned and classified samples from over 135 varieties and subtypes of onion, which are stored in walk-in coolers like giant spice cupboards in the Center for Conservation and Improvement of Valencian Agrodiversity at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia.

What, then, is the future use of the samples? "Today there's a western push towards uniformity," comments Vicente Castell. "Many fine minority varieties are beginning to disappear. Multinational seed companies, for example, don't sell our native varieties. But they need to be maintained to preserve their genetic qualities: we will need their resistance to illness or to climate, their sweetness, size, and smell that have been developed over hundreds of years to shape new hybrids.

Meanwhile, the round of the year continues. Vicente Martí is preparing to sow the seeds for his spring Monquelino crop, dropping the tiny black seeds through a sieve-like bucket, while the harvesters work their way back and forth through the vast Castilian onion fields, followed by a lorry, the skins rustling around their ankles in the autumn wind.

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WEB SITES

Asociación de Cosecheros y Exportadores de Cebollas
Language: Spanish
The Spanish Association of Onion Growers and Exporters (Asociación de Cosecheros y Exportadores de Cebollas–ACEC) brings together 50 producers and cooperatives. This Web site gives a list of members with links to some of their individual sites.
www.ediho.es/acec/

Get my GOAT

A Spanish proverb reminds us that to show gratitude is to show good breeding. My aim in this article is to make my readers more aware of the debt of gratitude that mankind in general, and Spaniards in particular, owe to the humble goat. The data, observations, and anecdotes that follow are intended to throw a new light on this prodigious yet humble ruminant, euphemistically known as "the poor man's cow," perhaps for its capacity, unparalleled among ruminants, for making the best of scarcity, aridity, even abject poverty, while providing superb milk and cheeses in return. It is my firm belief that, as this new millennium advances, we shall witness goat cheeses emerging from the oblivion and lack of interest that shroud them at present to take their place on the heights of Olympus where they rightly belong.

TEXT
MARIANO SANZ

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD

How often have we cheese lovers been transported to a state of bliss by the comforting palatal richness and subtle aromas of one of the many superb cheeses made from goat's milk? Yet, honestly, how often have we given even a passing thought to the complex circumstances that lie behind the creation of such sensory pleasure? We are all too apt to forget that every traditional artisan-made cheese, and our enjoyment of it, are the end result of an elaborate harmony achieved between landscape, flock, and herdsman.

Share with me now some assorted goat lore: on the universal principle that "we love what we know," I hope it helps towards a new appreciation of the goat cheeses of Spain.

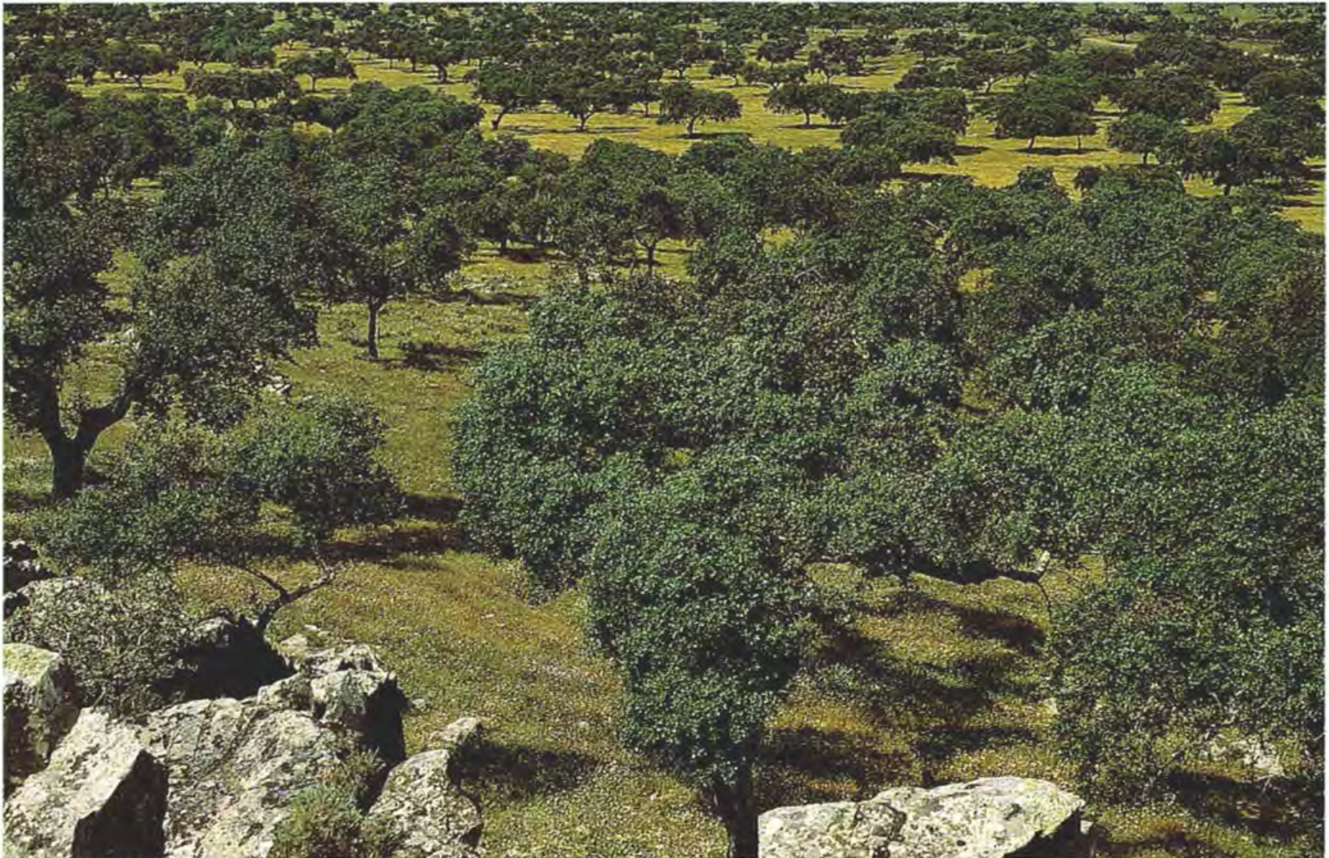
Goat Lore

Let's start with Amalthea, the first named she-goat on record. It was she, according to Greek mythology, that suckled the mighty Zeus, for which she and her two kids were rewarded with their own place among the constellations. Furthermore, hers was the hide used to protect the shield of the belligerent goddess Athenea, and it was one of her horns, brimming with fruits (the famous Cornucopia, or Horn of Plenty), that was presented as a token of survival to the nymphs, those benign mythical beings who served as wet nurses to infant gods, and extended their protection over girls, fertility, Nature, woods, and mountains. How eloquent this symbolism is of the respect and gratitude for the many benefits–milk, meat, hide, hair, manure, energy...–that goats provided to a peasant society with scarce resources inhabiting a forbidding landscape at the dawn of human culture.

With the arrival of Romanization, and perhaps also with the spread of Christianity, the symbolism changes radically from positive to negative: the devil, ultimate expression of evil, is represented in the guise of a male goat, while the sheep emerges as an archetypal image of docility and gregariousness and acquires symbolic religious significance.

From this period on, up until the end of the 18th century, the goat in Spain remained in virtual oblivion, a creature associated with the poorest, peasant class, while the well-off went over entirely to keeping cattle and sheep (albeit with the occasional goat to provide milk and cheese for everyday sustenance). Transhumant flocks of sheep traveled all over mainland Spain as they moved from lowland winter pastures to highland summer ones, leaving many traces of an extraordinary shepherding (and cheese making) culture in their wake, and meanwhile giving rise to a powerful economic structure based on the excellent wool and fine meat of the merino sheep and lambs, products which were favored by royalty and conferred great benefits on the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.

But at the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th, what had been oblivion turned into a relentless war against goats, during which time it came to be depicted as the most harmful of the ruminants, and even accused of destroying the vegetation and causing the degradation of some areas of the Spanish landscape. Goats were indeed made scapegoats, bearing the blame for an abrasive forestry management policy which, in its quest for more and more wood, banished flocks of goats from their last redouts in the mountains and woodlands.



The Extremaduran pasturelands are the habitat of the Verata and Serrana goats.

Today, at the dawn of a new millennium, such approaches are thankfully changing: even the most determined reforesters now acknowledge that had they been more percipient in their management of the goat flocks, the forest fires which take such a destructive hold every summer would not be wreaking such devastation as they currently do.

The Grazing Gourmet

In Mesopotamia, between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, the goat was the first ruminant species to play a part in mankind's survival on Earth. Goats can live in very difficult terrain, where sheep and, particularly, cows would find survival impossible. They are a sort of animal Jeep, with the added advantage of being able to transform scarce food and a tough environment into fresh milk and succulent meat. Important though that capacity is, however, what really distinguishes the goat from the other ruminants are its feeding habits: the goat has a very highly developed sense of sight, smell, and taste, being able to differentiate between sweet, salty, acidic, and bitter tastes. It finds bitter tastes more acceptable than any other domesticated ruminant, which makes a wider range of plant species available to it. A true sybarite, it readily discerns between various stages of plant growth, not surprisingly preferring shoots and the tenderer, juicier parts of plants as well as aromatic species.

On your travels in highland or lowland Spain, you are sure to have seen goats reared up on their back legs browsing on the new branches and leaves of trees and young shrubs. This is the way that goats feed 90 percent of the time, while not disdaining ground-level vegetation, needless to say.

It is hardly surprising, then, that goat's milk varies in character, especially in its subtler aspects and aromas, quite apart from other specific factors, such as its higher proportion of tiny fat

Local goat cheeses have regained ground and have been rescued from extinction. The next challenge is to achieve for them the prestige they deserve.

globules, making it much more digestible, which is why it is recommended for children and the elderly. All this indicates that we are dealing with a ruminant that is intelligent, not very gregarious, noncommittal, and freedom loving, which prefers to graze without invading another individual's space, and requires very careful, professional handling. This probably explains why it has been the victim of such discrimination… The official number of goats in Spain is over three million head, located mainly in the central and southern regions of the Peninsula and in the Canary Islands, making Spain the second goat's milk-producing country in Europe, after Greece.

Murciana, Granadina (officially classified together as Murciano-Granadina), Malagueña, Verata, Retinta, Canaria, Florida Andaluza, and countless other less clearly classifiable breeds generically known as "Serranas" (Highland), are distributed throughout Spain's many mountain chains with their abundant scrubland and woods, and constitute the roll of honor of our national flock.

Spain's Goat Cheeses

Goat cheeses do not feature among the world's most famous cheeses, but nor are they the least well regarded. Goat cheeses and their evolution have to be considered in the light of each country's geoclimatic conditions, traditional processes, and how importantly goats have featured in their livestock-related economy in the recent past.

In Spain, goat's milk has been a constant in whole areas of Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha, Levante, and the Canary Islands, having been consumed there for centuries as the only milk available for feeding children and old people. Goat's milk was unavailable in northern Spain, on the other hand, cow's milk being used there instead, except in cases where farmers had incorporated a goat or two into their herds.

The Murciano-Granadina's coat is shiny black and mahogany in color, giving it a characteristic noble, elegant appearance.

In Spain, goat's milk has been a constant in whole areas of Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha, Levante, and the Canary Islands.

As a general rule, cheese was made by goatherds after the flocks had been let out of the fold; otherwise, it was made by the women of the house for family consumption or for selling at the local fair.
With the emergence in the 19th century of wholesalers, finishers, and maturers, wider markets were opened up for Spanish goat cheese. Around 1950, when industrial cheese making became larger-scale, goat's milk came to be used more as a contributory ingredient in popular cheeses made from a blend of cow's, sheep's, and goat's milk. Production of genuine, traditional, local goat cheeses made at artisan level gradually stopped, dooming them to extinction.
Thanks to the movement to recuperate traditional cheese making in general, which came into being in Spain in the early Eighties, and in which I am proud to have played an active part, local goat cheeses have regained ground and have been rescued from extinction. The next challenge is to achieve for them the prestige they deserve, still far from adequately recognized.
To give you some idea of the importance of goat cheeses in Spain, 30 percent of the country's most traditional Spanish cheeses involve goat's milk.
Let's finish up with a look at Spain's four most important breeds of goat from the point of view of milk production and the most significant cheeses derived from them.

The Flirtatious Nanny

The Malagueña she-goat has a reddish coat and is one of the highest milk yielders of the Spanish breeds; this very prolific and unruly breed is currently protected by the Asociación Española de Criadores de Cabra Malagueña (Spanish Association of Malagueña Goat Breeders) with a view to controlling and improving the species.
The Malagueña is appreciated both for her milk and her kids which, be-

Rondeño cheese, from the Malagueña goat.

ing fine boned and very muscular, give meat that fetches high prices. It used to be common not so long ago in the villages of Málaga and even in the town itself, to see Malagueña goats being herded through the streets in the early morning, their spherical udders engorged with milk. The goatherd would milk them in front of his customers who would come out to meet him from their doorways, can in hand, for a *cuartillo* of fresh goat's milk.

In addition to selling milk directly to the customer, the goatherds of the Ronda highlands made their own cheese for eating at home or, occasionally, for sale. They would milk the goat in the fold and immediately add rennet (obtained from a kid) to curdle the milk. An hour or so later, with the curd just set, they would break it up with their hands and, little by little, tip it out into the plaited esparto grass mold, on the work table. Having extracted the whey, they would salt the cheese by rubbing both faces with dry salt then leave it to air in a cool place. It was either eaten immediately or left to mature in a suitable place–natural caves, for example–for four to six months. They were judged to be ready for eating when they looked attractively waxy and gave off a tempting aroma. They are still made in this way by small artisan cheese makers today.

The mature cheeses–creamy, slightly piquant and very aromatic are rarely to be found in the markets: few survive long enough since they are so appealing when fresh.

Goat in Mourning

The Murciano-Granadina breed is the result of the official linking of two great Spanish milk-producing breeds: Murciana and Granadina which, though having a common origin, have evolved differently, giving rise to different animals in two distinct areas: Levante and Eastern Andalusia. The southern Spanish breeds possess a distinct advantage over the Central European breeds insofar as they do not undergo periods of complete sexual inactivity. This means that the breeder can achieve several births a year, making it easier to plan year-round milk production.

The Murciano-Granadina's coat is shiny black and mahogany in color, giving it a characteristic noble, elegant appearance: its milk yield is high, easily topping 500 liters per lactation over 240 days, which places it among the top milk yielding breeds in the world.

Goat cheeses have been made throughout southeastern Spain since time began, following the classic method for fresh cheese: mature cheese is eaten less frequently.

I still remember with pleasure a farm breakfast eaten with an old goat-keeping friend in Levante who, chatting as he cooked, prepared me a sauté of vegetables and fresh cheese in extra virgin olive oil that was quintessentially Mediterranean.

Queso de Murcia al vino (Murcia

Ibores cheese, from the Serrana-Verata goat, in Extremadura.

Majorero cheese, from the Majorera goat, in the Canary Islands.

cheese with wine) became popular in the Eighties as a variant on the traditional Murciano cheese, largely because of its visual appeal. The cheese is treated during maturation with the local red wine, which is characteristically high in tannins and dry extract. This imparts a particular aroma to the cheese and turns its rind violet purple, which when cut looks particularly pleasing against the typically pure goat's milk white of the interior. Both Murcia cheese and Murcia al vino are currently covered by a Denomination of Origin.

Lady of the Volcano

Goats collectively designated "Canaria" today are animals which, while presenting common characteristics, show differences from island to island and even from area to area within those islands.
The origin of these goats is rather vague, chiefly because of the commercial importance that the Canaries acquired as a stopping place on the voyage to the Americas during the Discovery and subsequent colonization (it was the Spanish that introduced the first goats to the American continent).
Named breeds within the Canaria grouping are Palmera, Tenerife, and Majorera, this latter being the source of Majorero cheese on Fuerteventura Island. This is a breed whose coat varies, which yields a lot of milk, and inhabits the forbidding volcanic areas of Fuerteventura. It also breeds prolifically, being sexually active throughout the year. Because of their insular environment, all the Canaria breeds have been officially declared brucellosis-free.
Majorero and Palmero are the largest in size of all the cheeses made in Spain, sometimes weighing over seven kilograms (15 pounds) per cheese. In the days of family-scale cheese making, natural rennet obtained from suckling kids was used to curdle the milk in all parts of the island

Murcia cheese with wine, from the Murciano-Granadina goats.

GET MY GOAT

Murciano-Granadina
Murcia cheese and Murcia cheese with wine

Serrano-Verata
Ibores cheese

Majorera
Majorero cheese

Malagueña
Ronda cheese

where cheese was made. The curd was cut up manually then poured into a mold made of plaited palm leaves which left a perfect imprint around the cheese's circumference. They were then aired, salted by hand, and traditionally eaten fresh, a few being set aside for maturing during the months of peak production. To prevent deterioration as they aged, they were coated with oil, sweet paprika and *gofio* (toasted maize, wheat, or barley flour, traditionally eaten in the Canary Islands, mixed with other salty or sweet food). This is still the method followed by artisan cheese makers today.

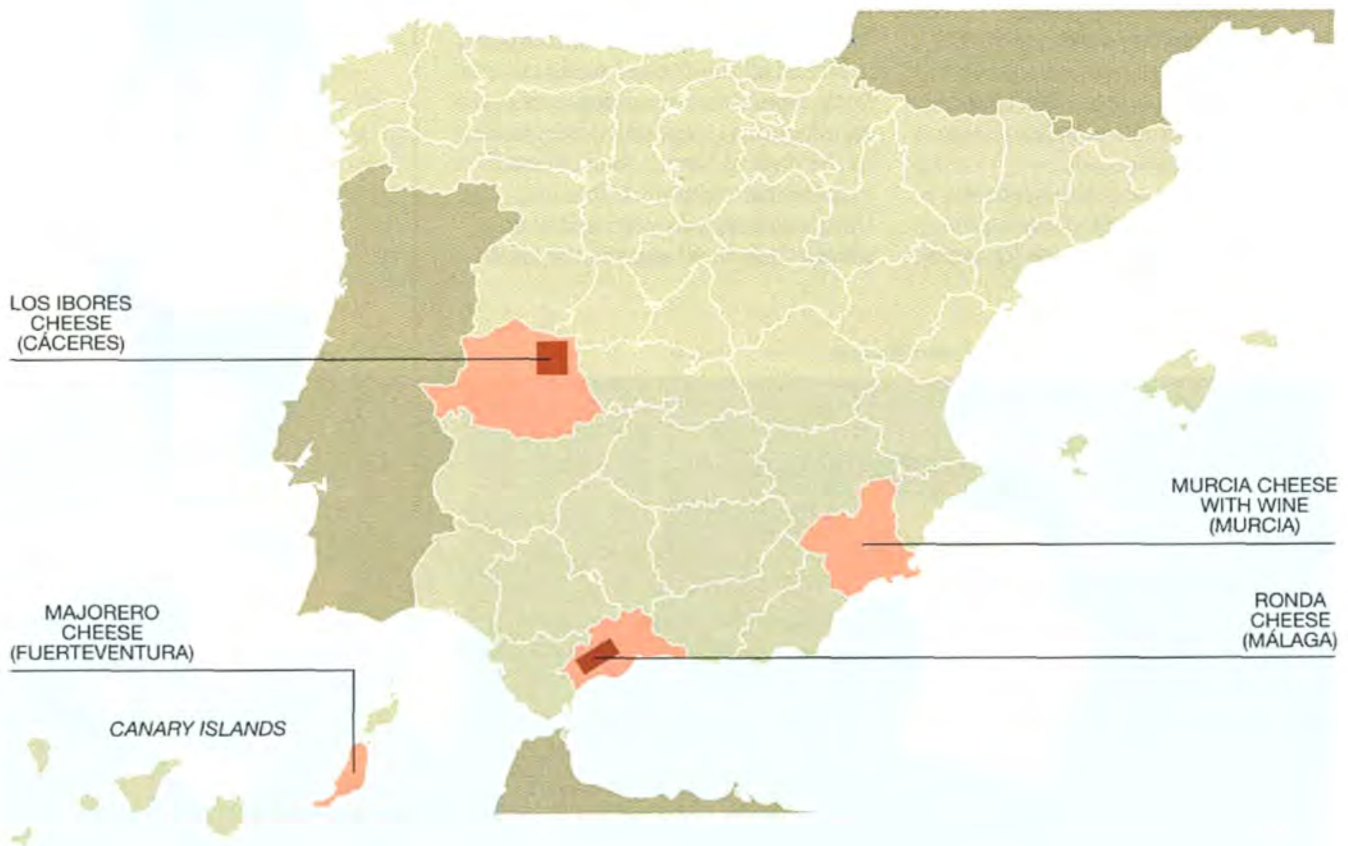
In my opinion, matured Majorero cheese with its freshness, subtle "goat" flavor, and creamy texture plays a vital role in the process of learning to love enzymatic goat cheeses. Not for nothing was this the first Spanish goat cheese to enjoy the distinction of a Denomination of Origin.

Princesses of Pastureland

To create the milk-producing characteristics exhibited today by the goats of the Extremadura pasturelands, the Serrana she-goat was ancestrally crossed with the Verata male goat. The descendants now hold sway in the north of Cáceres, the province with the largest goat population in Spain.

Both strains have dark coats with bands of various colors running the length of the body, and they boast a fine set of horns.

Unlike the southern breeds, these have distinct breeding seasons, posing a problem for cheese production since it means that milk is very scarce from August to November. Los Ibores cheese used to be made by the goatherds when they migrated to the highland areas of the



Guadalupe and Villuercas sierras in search of fresh, juicy pasture for their livestock.
Using great branches of broom, the goatherds would build a hut over a mountain brook, covering the floor with more broom then spreading it with ferns on top of which they would place their cheeses. The water running immediately below created just the cool, moist atmosphere they needed.
Both up in the sierras and in the domestic environment, makers of this cheese used rennet obtained from a suckling kid and, occasionally, vegetable rennet (Cynara cardunculus). The curd having been cut up, was poured into vine or fig wood molds then pressed to the right size (about 1 kilo/2 lbs), then salt was rubbed into the two faces. These cheeses would either be eaten fresh, or preserved in earthenware crocks full of highly acidic olive oil. They would be ready for eating 6-12 months later, presenting a piquant flavor with hints of olive oil and a creamy texture, much loved by habitués.
These days, Los Ibores cheese is available on the market with either a natural rind or a paprika-treated one; this is another cheese whose authenticity is guaranteed by a Denomination of Origin.
Let me finish with a quotation from a man after my own heart, Italian statesman Baron Sonnino (1847-1922), who made a major study of the political, economic, and social life of Sicily, with particular emphasis on its peasantry. His words are a distillation of respect and affection for the goat:"Men keep goats in those parts of the world where there are poor people. The peasant's hut is where this animal really shows its worth. His companion in poverty, it becomes the poor man's friend and helps supply his needs; making do with coarse food itself, it yields a fine one in return for the family with which it lives as if it were a part. Sometimes, it gives its teat to the newborn child whose mother, made weak by the lack of basic necessities, cannot feed it. How is it, then, that despite all this, in many provinces harsh, cruel laws exist against these animals, who offer such comfort to the unfortunate?"
Such kindly animals do not deserve to have been treated with such disdain; they are worthy of respect and a special place in our hearts.

The Majorera goat, on the volcanic Fuerteventura Island is a breed whose coat varies.

Mariano Sanz Pech, *generally acknowledged as one of the leading authorities on Spanish cheese, is an agronomist and food scientist whose special interest in the cheese sector dates from 1969. Former president of the Consorcio de los Quesos Tradicionales de España (Consortium of the Traditional Cheeses of Spain) he is currently president of the Asociación de Promoción de los Quesos de España (Association for Promoting Artisan Cheeses).*
Photo credits on page 200.

See page 141 for Recipes and page 181 for Exporters

SUMMER MEMORIES FROM A GOAT BOY

Manuel, the goat boy of yesterday, today.

As I closed the gate behind me in the fence around Manuel's pastureland holding, with its ancient evergreen oaks, at the foot of the Sierra de Las Villuercas in eastern Cáceres (Extremadura), the rosy glow of the evening sky promised another Extremaduran scorcher tomorrow. My head was still full of the sound of Manuel's cheery voice; he is nearly eighty now, and I had been moved by his memories of a childhood in which goats, poverty, and hardship all loomed large. From our tranquil pastureland vantage point, sitting at an old millstone that does duty as a table, we looked across at the forbidding mountain landscape while Manuel reminisced about his experiences as a child goatherd–a goat boy–reminiscences that would doubtless ring true for many hundreds of goat boys who have lived up in the wild terrain of Spain's sierras. Manuel was born to one of the poor families inhabiting the supremely beautiful Sierra de La Villuercas who, in Manuel's own words "didn't have everything, but didn't want for anything either."

Manuel took on his first duties at the age of five when his father put him in charge of a breeding mare; he had just turned nine years old when he started work as a goatherd–the job he still does today–responsible for a flock of 105 Serrana goats.

During the long winter months, Manuel would lead his goats off in search of pasture not far from the fold, keen to find sunlit areas to alleviate the cold of the sierra. At dawn and dusk, Manuel milked the goats which, even after feeding their kids, still yielded enough milk for the house and for making cheese.

By early June the nearer pastures would be frazzled by the sun, and nine year old Manuel and three or four other young goat boys of about his own age, their heads barely visible above the flock, would set off on the hazardous mission of transferring the flocks to the highest reaches of the neighboring territories in search of fresh pasture.

A mule carrying a basic survival kit, 600 powerfully horned Serrana goats, four or five mastiff dogs fitted with huge, iron-pronged collars to protect them against attack by wolves, and five goat boys, were led by a *mayoral,* who, though not yet eighteen, could already call on a wealth of experience acquired during his own years as a goat boy. They would set off all together from their mountainside hamlet, hoping to return safe and sound and with equipment and livestock intact at the beginning of October, by which time cold and rain would be making the higher mountain slopes distinctly inhospitable.

The *mayoral* would decide where to make camp each evening, choosing sheltered spots into which the goats could be neatly rounded up so that an eye could be kept on them all, and where the night would be kinder on the boys with just one blanket each to protect them from the night dew.

To make things worse, the goat boys could not sleep close together because of the wolves which still roamed the mountains in large numbers in those days, ever ready to challenge their inhabitants for the scant resources available. The mayoral would therefore allocate positions from which the boys could keep watch for wolves and take appropriate action to prevent their first dispersing the goats and then killing as many as they could.

If nothing untoward had happened during the night, the goats would be milked at dawn after feeding their

kids, and the milk would be used for making cheese and for the boys' own food. When the sun was high in the sky, they would set about making their midday meal, the eternal *sopa cana* (white-haired soup) as the goat boys called it. This consisted of chunks of bread in goat's milk slightly diluted with a little water from a mountain stream, to which they added some of the tomatoes, onions, and peppers which were carried in the mule's saddlebags and replenished once a week when a family member climbed up to where they were to take away the cheeses the boys had made and check that all was well.

At nightfall, before spreading out their blankets, they would drink a bowl of goat's milk with bread (a clear case of the nature of a dish being changed by the order of its components).

There was no time off on Sundays or holidays, with the exception of the feast days of the Virgen de Agosto and Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. On those two occasions, someone would take their place on the mountain to allow the boys a bit of fun at the village fiestas down below, albeit only for an afternoon and a night, for they had to take over the flock again at dawn.

They were held up by fugitive resistance fighters and underwent many other frightening experiences, but they also enjoyed themselves as children will, and witnessed the disappearance of the last wolves from the sierra...

Manuel suffers from many ailments these days, but he is serene in his nostalgia for those summer companions who all gradually went their separate ways. He remembers them as friends with whom he shared intense experiences–pleasure, fear, suffering–in his childhood years. Together with Manuel, they represent the final chapter in a wonderful story of anonymous heros, handing down to us a veritable treatise on the goatherding culture of the sierras for which I feel particularly proud and grateful and to which, at least in some measure, I am also an heir.

Manuel, nearly eighty today, still works as a goatherd.

WEB SITES

Cheeses from Spain

Language: English and Spanish
The Web page of The Spanish Commercial Office in New York contains extensive information on 26 Spanish cheeses and more basic information on at least fifty others. It includes details on elaboration methods, recipes, their conservation and presentation, where to buy them, maps, etc. This site is indispensable for anyone wishing to learn about Spanish cheeses.
www.cheesefromspain.com

Los Ibores and Villuercas

Language: Spanish
If you want to find out more about the towns and villages of the Los Ibores area, which gives its name to Extremadura's well-known cheese, this is the Web site for you. It suggests an exploratory route and gives information about local customs, traditions, places of natural beauty, and accommodation.
www.abaforum.es/pibarra/caceres-turismo/fribores.htm

Majorero Cheese

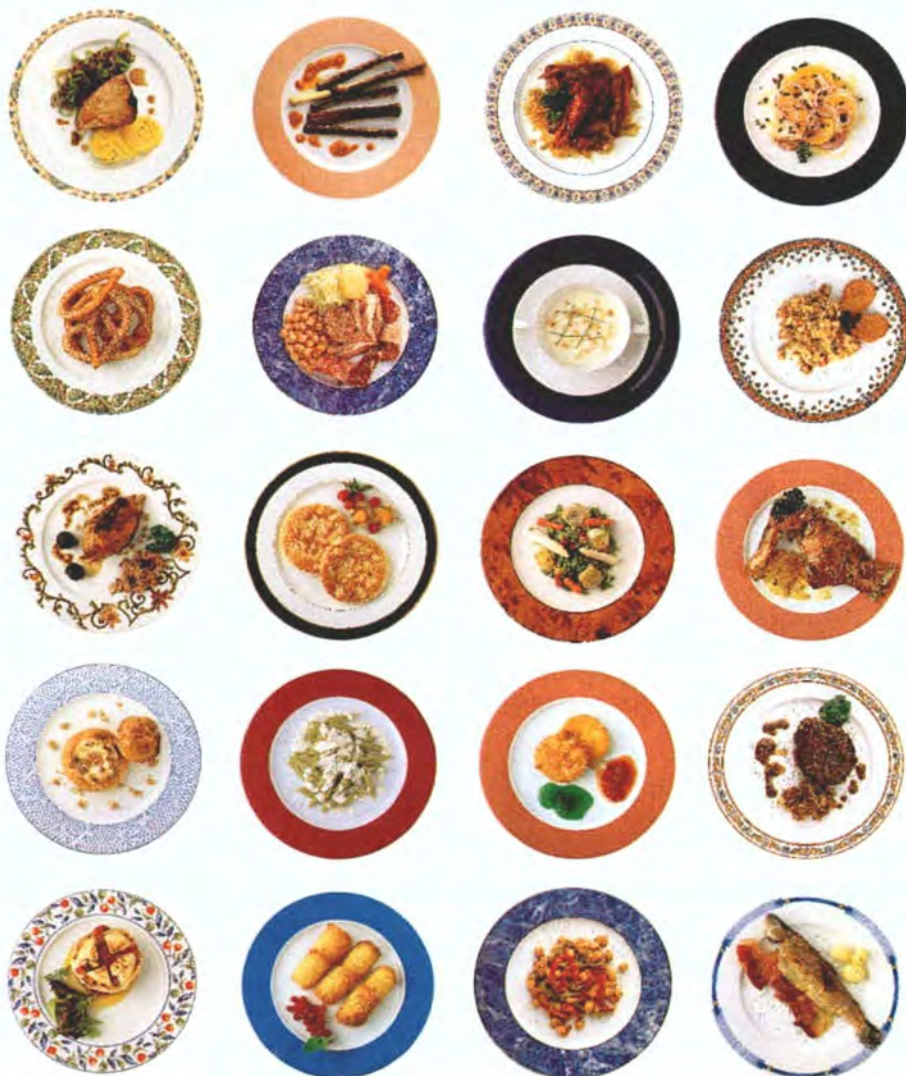
Language: Spanish
This Web site of the Canary Island Regional Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Foods provides full information about the quality categories of Canary Island products, including Majorero cheese.
www.productos-canarios.com/

Trujillo Cheese Fair

Language: Spanish
This site has been created by the Town Council of Trujillo (Extremadura) to provide continuity for the fair that has been held in the town every year since 1986, bringing together a wide range of Spanish cheeses, including Extremadura's Ibores.
www.feriadelqueso.com/

The Guadalupe and Villuerca sierras, where the Serrana-Verata goats graze

20 RECIPES



Food Editor María Jesús Gil de Antuñano
Photos Ángel Robledo/ICEX

River Crabs in a Spicy Sauce

A simple dish that makes a good start to an informal meal, preferably in the open air, served with good Castilian bread to dip in the sauce. The rivers in the province of Burgos used to have a plentiful supply of crabs which children caught by attracting them with a red rag. A few years ago supplies diminished and were replaced with large, more insipid, imported crabs. Today the native crabs are back. They are small but full of taste.

Preparation: 1 hour
Cooking time: 30 min
Serves 4:

- 1 kg river crabs (2 lb 4 oz)
- 1 medium-sized onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 4 ripe tomatoes
- 15 g bread crumbs (1/2 oz)
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 1 tbsp cayenne pepper
- 1 glass of brandy
- 1 dl white wine (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 1 dl fish stock (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- Salt, pepper, parsley

Wash the crabs and gut by breaking the middle fin of the tail and pulling. Heat the oil in an earthenware dish big enough to hold the crabs and the sauce. Sauté the crabs with the dish covered until they turn red. Remove and fry the chopped onion and garlic until golden then add the blanched, peeled, and chopped tomatoes. Lower the heat and fry for 10 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and a teaspoon of sugar if the tomato is too acid and sprinkle with the bread crumbs.

Mix and add the cayenne pepper, crabs and brandy. When hot, flambé then add the wine and stock and simmer for 15 minutes. Serve from the dish sprinkled with chopped parsley.

Recommended wine:
A red D.O. Ribera del Duero, made from Tinta del País grapes. Its fresh fruit aromas will round off the flavors of the spicy crab sauce.

Maragato Stew

This succulent stew is typical of the Maragatería district to the northwest of Astorga close to the mountains of León. The story goes that, unlike elsewhere in Spain, the locals used to serve the soup at the end of the meal in case they were attacked by the Moors and had to give it a miss, so that they would at least have eaten the most nourishing part of the meal–the meat, chickpeas, and vegetables.

Preparation: 30 min (plus soaking time)
Cooking time: 3 hours
Serves 10:

- 300 g cured pork shoulder (10 oz)
- 300 g cured and dried beef (*cecina*) (10 oz)
- 500 g beef shank (1 lb 2 oz)
- One front quarter of a stewing hen
- 1 pig's ear
- 100 g salt pork (3 1/2 oz)
- 2 *chorizos*
- 4 small potatoes
- 500 g cabbage (1 lb 2 oz)
- 400 g chickpeas (14 oz)
- 1 leek
- 2 carrots
- Salt, parsley
- 300 g vermicelli (10oz)

Dumplings:

- 3 eggs
- Bread crumbs
- 50 g serrano ham (2 oz)
- Chorizo from the stew
- 1 clove garlic
- Salt
- 1 stewing hen liver bought separately

Soak the pork, the ear, and the chickpeas for 12 hours. Place the meats in a large pot, add water and cook for 15 minutes. Add the stewing hen, the chickpeas tied up in a net, the washed and chopped potatoes, carrots and leeks, the parsley, and the whole *chorizo*. Simmer for about 2 1/2 hours and, when nearly done, season with salt.

Finely chop the cabbage, wash and cook in salted boiling water with the pork shoulder until soft.

Dumplings: Beat the eggs, season and add the chopped liver, ham, chorizo, and garlic. Add bread crumbs to make a paste and shape into large dumplings. Coat in bread crumbs and boil in the stock.

When everything is cooked, strain off the stock and cook the noodles in it.

Serve all the meat first, then the vegetables with the chickpeas, and finally the noodle soup.

Recommended wine:

A young rosé from the D.O. Bierzo made from Mencía grapes which are left to macerate with the ripe skins for a few hours to give a strong but fresh, fruity aroma which will counter any greasiness in the dish.

Duelos y Quebrantos

Soak the lamb's brains in warm water for 30 minutes. Remove the skins and veins and cook for 5 minutes in salted boiling water with the onion and bay leaf. Drain and cut into pieces. Dice the pork, the ham, and the peeled chorizo. Heat the pork in a frying pan with no oil over a gentle flame so that it releases some of its fat. When reduced to half, increase the heat, add the pieces of ham and chorizo and fry together. Then add the pieces of brain.
Beat the eggs until frothy then add to the frying pan stirring constantly over a gentle heat or over a pan of boiling water so that they set evenly. As soon as the eggs are cooked, transfer to an earthenware dish, sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve with slices of fried bread. There is no need to add salt because the pork and ham are salty enough but taste for salt half way through cooking just in case.

Recommended wine: Although wine does not generally go well with egg dishes, in this case the predominant flavors are the chorizo and the ham so a good partner would be a red 1998 D.O. La Mancha made of Cencibel grapes. This has a fresh, clean aroma of red berries and will mitigate the strong flavors of the pork ingredients.

Mentioned by Cervantes in the opening lines of Don Quixote de la Mancha, "*duelos y quebrantos* on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays…," it is usually translated into English as "hash," losing the charm of the Spanish which literally means "sorrow and sadness." Essentially it is eggs scrambled with the staple supplies of a kitchen in La Mancha–salt pork, ham, chorizo, brains–a meal in itself.

Preparation: 15 min (plus time to soak the brains)
Cooking: 15 min
Serves 4:

- 100 g streaky salt pork (3 1/2 oz)
- 100 g serrano ham (3 1/2 oz)
- 100 g chorizo (3 1/2 oz)
- 100 g lamb's brains (3 1/2 oz)
- 1/2 onion
- 1/2 bay leaf
- 8 eggs
- Parsley, salt
- Fried bread

Churros

Bring the salted water to a boil in a high-sided pot. When it starts to boil, pour in all the flour and mix with a wooden spatula over the heat until a consistent, even dough is formed. Remove from the heat and continue to work the dough with the same spatula. When completely smooth, fill the *churrera,* a large tin or brass syringe that has a variety of nozzles and several handles to grip it while pressing the dough through.
Heat the oil to 190ºC (374ºF) in a large frying pan and drop in strips of dough forming loops. Cook as many as will fit without touching each other. After 3-4 minutes, when golden, remove with a slotted spoon or a spike and leave to drain in a colander or on kitchen paper. Serve hot, sprinkled with sugar if desired.

Recommended wine:
Churros are dipped in hot, thick chocolate or milky coffee at breakfast or in the afternoon, but at festival time and in the early hours, the locals accompany them with a glass of eau-de-vie or brandy.

Although churros are by no means exclusive to Madrid, they may have originated here. No open-air festival would be complete without its *churrería* stall, or at least a hawker wearing white cuffs and carrying a basket of freshly-fried fritters. They are long thin strips of fluted dough fried to form loops. If thicker and straight, they are called *porras,* and if in the shape of a ring or a hollow ball, *buñuelos.*

Preparation: 20 min
Cooking: 5 min
Serves 8:
- 1/2 liter water (17 fl oz)
- 250 g sieved flour (9 oz)
- 5 g salt (1/4 oz)
- Plenty of oil for frying

Rioja Vegetable Medley

All the Ebro valley is famed for its vegetable crops, and La Rioja, which is watered by Ebro tributaries–the Najerilla, Tregua, Leza, Zidacos, Tirón, Alhama, and the Oja which gave it its name (Rio-Oja)–not only has excellent vegetables but knows how to bring out the best in them. The Rioja vegetable medley should be moist but not too liquid. There are differing opinions about how to make it. Some think the vegetables should be lightly sautéed with a little fried onion and ham, whereas others add a little flour and some of the vegetable cooking water to the onion before sautéeing the vegetables. Sometimes the artichokes, Swiss chard stalks, and even the spears of asparagus are coated in batter and fried. We have chosen the version in which everything goes in raw and is served in a light golden sauce.

Preparation: 1 hour
Cooking: 45 min
Serves 4:

- 8 small French onions
- 150 g baby carrots (5 oz)
- 2 leeks
- 250 g shelled peas (9 oz)
- 12 canned white asparagus spears
- 250 g green beans (9 oz)
- 4 artichokes
- 100 g serrano ham (3 1/2 oz)
- 1 dl oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 10 g flour (1/2 oz)
- Salt

Wash and cut the beans into pieces and boil in salted water for 7 minutes. Cook the peas for 10 minutes and the artichokes for 12 minutes. Drain and set aside, also keeping the cooking water. Blanch and peel the onions and gently fry in the oil together with the leeks cut in rings, the scraped carrots, and the diced ham. Sprinkle with flour, then add the vegetable cooking water, cover and cook for 20 minutes, occasionally shaking to prevent sticking. Add the green beans, peas, artichokes, and asparagus. Bring to a boil and serve hot. Whatever vegetables are in season can be used and, out of season, substitute with frozen vegetables.

Recommended wine:
A white crianza D.O. Rioja, made from Viura grapes. This wine has an intense aroma of creamy oak that allows it to stand on its own against the asparagus which tends to be a bad partner for wine.

Shoulder of Baby Lamb

Make a cut at the joints of the shoulders so they can be bent to fit on the plates. Season on both sides. Crush the garlic cloves with the parsley and sea salt, add the oil and brush the mixture over the meat. Peel the potatoes, wash and cut into rings 2 cm thick. Place in an oiled earthenware dish and place the lamb on top. Cook in the oven at 175°C (347°F) for 45-50 minutes, basting every 10 minutes with the cooking juices. When half cooked, turn the shoulders over so the skin side faces upwards. Ten minutes before the end, raise the temperature to 200°C (392°F) so the skin turns golden. Serve with the potatoes.

Recommended wine:
A 1997 crianza D.O. Somontano, made of a blend of Tempranillo, Moristel, and Cabernet Sauvignon. With its fresh, fruity aroma and its creamy, ripe fruit taste, this wine which is both clean and fresh will temper the strength of the garlic while not diminishing the delicate flavor of the lamb.

In Aragon, when people talk of eating meat, what they are referring to is tender, suckling or very, very young lamb. Sheep raising is a traditional activity in Aragon, its wool being traditionally much appreciated in France and amongst traders in the port of Amsterdam who were especially keen to purchase the fine wool from Albarracín. The quality and flavor of Aragon lamb is ensured by the good local grazing.

Preparation: 15 min
Cooking: 45-50 min
Serves 4:

- 4 shoulders of baby lamb
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/ 4 fl oz)
- 1 kg potatoes (2 lb 3 oz)
- 2 cloves garlic
- Parsley
- Salt

Trout Navarre Style

Straight from the river, trout are delicious and bear little comparison with those from fish farms. With river trout, the bigger the better, but with farmed trout, the smallest have the finest flavor and are most similar to wild trout. To make genuine Navarre-style trout, the fish should first be macerated with chopped onion, red wine, pepper, a bay leaf, a pinch of thyme, rosemary, and mint for about 2 hours, then cooked in the marinade with a splash of oil and salt. The marinade is then strained and bound with 2 egg yolks to make a sauce. The following recipe, popularly known as Navarre-style trout, is really "trout with ham."

Preparation: 10 min
Cooking: 20 min
Serves: 4

- 4 trout
- 5 slices ham
- Flour for coating
- Oil for frying
- New potatoes

Clean the trout, gut and wash under the tap with sea salt to remove any slimyness. Season with pepper and leave to drain. Fry a slice of ham in an oval frying pan with the oil, then remove. Dust the trout with flour, shake off any surplus flour and place a slice of ham inside each. Fry over a medium heat in the ham-flavored oil (3-4 minutes on each side). Drain on kitchen paper and serve with steamed new potatoes in their skins.

Recommended wine:
A raspberry colored, 100 percent Garnacha rosé wine from the D.O. Navarra, with a fruity, clean aroma of blackberries and strawberries. This will bring out the flavor of the trout without smothering it.

Pheasant Alcántara Style

Draw the pheasant without removing the feathers and hang for 3 days in a cool, airy place for it to mature so that the flesh will be more tender and juicy. Then remove the feathers, singe the skin, wash and dry. Cut the neck, leaving some skin so it can be tied up. Remove the wishbone and the sternum and season with salt and pepper inside and out. If the truffles are fresh, cook 4 in some of the sherry and set aside. (If canned, this is not necessary). Wash the giblets, cut into pieces, season and sauté gently in half the oil. When browned, purée. (This is easy to do in a Thermomix, a blender that cooks while it chops). Add the cooked, chopped truffles. Fill the pheasant with this mixture then sew up and truss. Place in a container with the sherry and leave to marinate for 3 days.
Drain, season, and roast in the oven at 180°C (356°F) for 30 minutes with the rest of the oil. Baste every 10 minutes with the cooking juices and turn after 15 minutes. When golden, check that the flesh is tender even if the juice is still pink. While the bird is roasting, reduce the marinade by boiling it down with the whole truffles. Add it to the cooking pan 10 minutes before the end of the cooking time. Serve the pheasant with the sauce and the whole truffles.

Recommended wine:
This is a very special dish in which the sherry plays an essential part. It must therefore be matched with an excellent wine such as a red '96 Reserva from the D.O. Ribera del Duero which by the end of 2000 should be at its peak. This wine is made from Tinto Fino grapes and is aged in oak so it has a full, mature flavor with a hint of toast, ripe dates, and plum jam.

Tradition has it that this recipe comes from the library of the Benedictine monastery in Alcántara which was sacked in 1807 by French troops under General Junot, Duke of Abrantes. The grenadiers rolled up the monks' manuscripts and used them as cartridges for their rifles but the one containing this recipe was saved because General Junot sent it to his wife, Laura. It eventually became a popular way of cooking partridge, pheasant, or woodcock. We achieved excellent results using an oloroso sherry instead of port and fewer truffles than in the original recipe.

Preparation: 30 min (plus time for hanging and marinating)
Cooking: 30 min
Serves 4:
- 1 young pheasant
- 4-5 duck livers, depending on size
- 12 walnut-sized truffles (7 oz)
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/ 4 fl oz)
- 4 dl oloroso sherry (16 fl oz)
- Salt
- Ground pepper

Orange, Red Onion, and Salt Cod Salad

Soak the cod for 24 hours, changing the water three times. Drain then place in a pan of cold water to cook. As soon as it comes to a boil, remove from the heat and leave to cool in its cooking water. Break up into flakes. Peel the oranges, removing all the pith and the outside membranes. Then slice or separate into segments. Place in a glass or pottery bowl, alternating the orange slices or segments with the flakes of cod. Remove the outside leaves of the onions and slice thinly. Place on top of the oranges and cod. Drizzle the salad with virgin olive oil and leave to stand for a few minutes. Stone the black olives, cut into pieces and sprinkle over the top. Serve. If you do not wish to soak the cod, it can be cut into even-sized pieces and griddled. This way the salt separates from the flesh and is left behind on the griddle.

Recommended wine:
It is always difficult to recommend a wine for a salad and even more so for an orange salad because fruits in general and citrus fruits especially are not good partners for wine. In this case, we would recommend a Pedro Ximénez to tone down the sharpness of the oranges and the strong flavor of the cod.

This salad, of which there are a number of versions alternating spring onions with chopped or sliced onions and even sometimes including a handful of raisins soaked in orange juice, is typical of Córdoba and its region. The oranges can be cut in slices or segments but the membranes should always be removed.

Preparation: 30 min (plus time for soaking the salt cod)
Cooking: 1 min
Serves 4:

- 4 oranges
- 200 g salt cod (one thick fillet) (7 oz)
- 2 red onions
- 1.5 dl virgin olive oil (9 tbsp/6 fl oz)
- 100 g black olives (3 1/2 oz)

Char-grilled Calçots

Cut the roots of the *calçots* to loosen off any soil and arrange them in a line over the coals. Turn gradually so that they turn crisp on the outside and are cooked through inside. (In the kitchen, they can be cooked in an iron frying pan or a griddle pan.) Serve on hot tiles to keep in the heat with a bowl of *salbitxada* sauce.

Salbitxada sauce: Leave the *ñoras* to soak in warm water for half an hour. Grill the tomatoes and the garlic over the coals or in the oven then crush the garlic in the mortar with the mint, the hazelnuts, the seeded ñoras, and the bread soaked in vinegar. Once a paste has formed, add the tomatoes and continue to work until a fine sauce is made. Gradually add the oil then the pepper and salt.

The right way to eat calçots is to hold them from the top and pinch at the root to pull off the two outside layers which will probably have been charred by the coals. This reveals the white onion flesh which is dipped in the sauce then lifted high to the mouth. The traditional companion for a calçot meal is white *butifarra* sausage and char-grilled lamb chops.

Recommended wine:
A red wine from El Camp, D.O. Tarragona, made from 100 percent Tempranillo grapes, preferably served in a *porrón* (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 46) in keeping with the informal mood required for eating this somewhat messy but delicious relation of the onion.

Calçot is the name given to a type of spring onion grown mainly in the Alt Camp district of Tarragona, where the capital of Valls is famed for this gastronomic specialty. The onions are grilled over hot coals and served on hot ceramic tiles to keep them hot, usually with a sauce like a *romesco* that the locals call salbitxada.

Preparation: 10 min
Cooking: 30 min altogether
Serves 4:

- 5-6 dozen calçots
- Salbitxada:
- 12 ripe tomatoes
- 4 ñoras (dried, round red peppers)
- 50 g roasted almonds (2 oz)
- 7 cloves garlic
- 1 sprig of mint
- 2 dl oil (11 tbsp/8 fl oz)
- 2 slices bread
- 1/2 dl vinegar (3 tbsp/2 oz)
- Salt, pepper

Bonito with Onion

A typically Basque recipe that can be made with bonito or tuna. Tuna has darker flesh and is considered inferior to the lighter, more delicately-flavored bonito. Both have a number of different species and are members of the tunny family. The secret of this recipe is that the onion–with or without pepper because this recipe can be made only with onion–should be cooked so slowly that it almost caramelizes but without burning.

Preparation: 20 min
Cooking: 1 1/2 hours for the onion, 3 min for the bonito
Serves 4:

- 1 slice of bonito weighing 1 kg (2 1/4 lb)
- 4 onions
- 4 thin green peppers
- Salt
- 1 1/2 dl oil (9 tbsp/6 fl oz)

Peel the onion and slice finely. Wash the peppers, remove the stalk and seeds, and cut into strips. Heat the oil in a two-handled frying pan and fry the onion and pepper, seasoned and covered, over a gentle heat until tender and almost caramelized. (This can also be done in a covered pan in the microwave for 10 minutes at the maximum setting, finishing off the process over the heat.) Remove the skin and the bone from the center of the slice of bonito. Divide into two thick fillets, season and add to the onion and pepper mixture. Boil for one minute and serve. The bonito must be only just cooked to keep it moist.

Recommended wine:

A red D.O.C. Rioja made of Tempranillo grapes with a touch of Graciano and Mazuelo. The wine does not need to be a *crianza* but, although young, should have sufficient personality to accompany this dish in which the powerful flavor of the fish is neutralized by the sweet onion.

Sirloin Steaks with Stewed Onion and Sweet Mustard

Garnish: Thinly slice the onions and place in a microwave-proof container with the brown sugar, butter, mustard, vinegar, parsley, and salt. Cover and place in the microwave at the maximum setting for 7 minutes. Transfer to a frying pan and boil off any excess liquid. Keep warm. Before cutting the sirloin into medallions, tie string round it at 5 cm intervals to shape the meat, then cut between the ties. Heat the oil in an iron frying pan. When very hot, fry the meat–3 minutes on one side and 2 on the other. Set aside and dissolve any pan juices in the meat stock, lemon juice, and mustard. Pour the sauce into a hot dish and add the sirloin steaks. Brush the top of the steaks with a good layer of mustard, sprinkle with brown sugar and burn with a hot iron until caramelized. Serve with the stewed onions.

Recommended wine:
A young red from the D.O. Ribera del Duero, Tinto del País. The primary aroma of red berries will blend well with the pungency of the mustard and the strength of the glazed onions.

A modern dish in which sirloin medallions are coated with a light crust of mustard flavored with caramelized brown sugar and accompanied by a garnish of onion also stewed in brown sugar and mustard.

Preparation: 15 min
Cooking: 40 min.
Serves 4:
- 4 medallions of sirloin weighing 200 g each (9 oz)
- 1/2 dl oil (3 tbsp/2 fl oz)
- 60 g mustard (2 oz)
- 60 g brown sugar (2 oz)
- 1 dl concentrated meat stock (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- Lemon juice

Garnish:
- 2 onions
- 40 g brown sugar (1 1/2 oz)
- 25 g butter (1 oz)
- 30 ml vinegar (2 tbsp/2 fl oz)
- 25 g mustard (1 oz)
- Parsley, salt

Hazelnut Cream Soup

Roast the hazelnuts and chop. Set aside 2 tbsp and crush the others to a powder. Wash the leeks and onion and stew slowly in the oil (5 minutes in the microwave at the maximum setting). When soft, add the hazelnuts, fry lightly and cover with the stock. Cook for 10 minutes. Blend, then check for salt and add the cream. Serve in cups sprinkled with the chopped hazelnuts and chives.

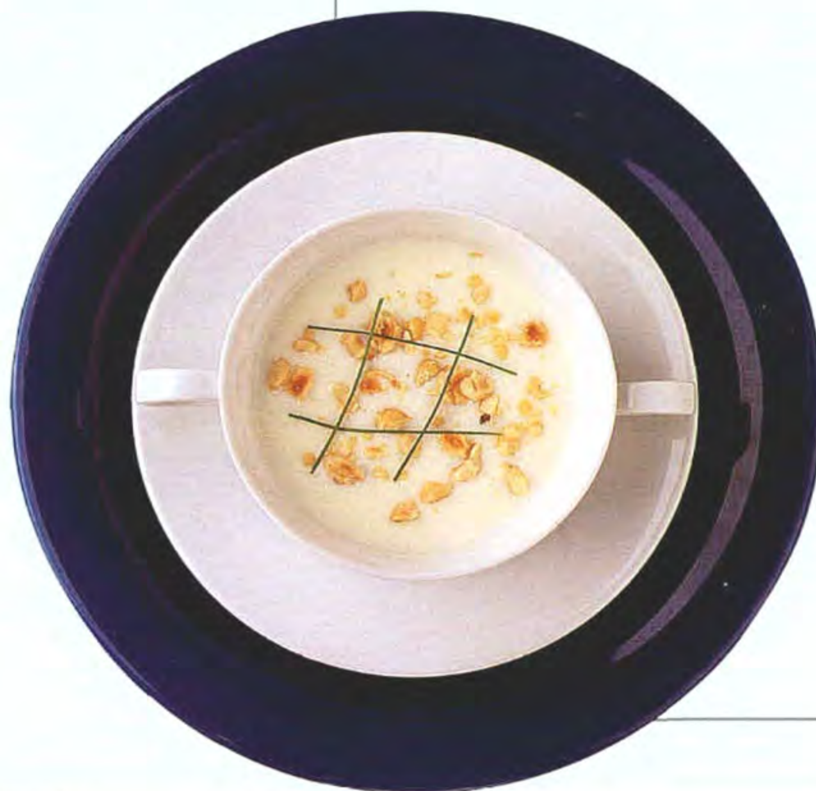
Recommended wine:

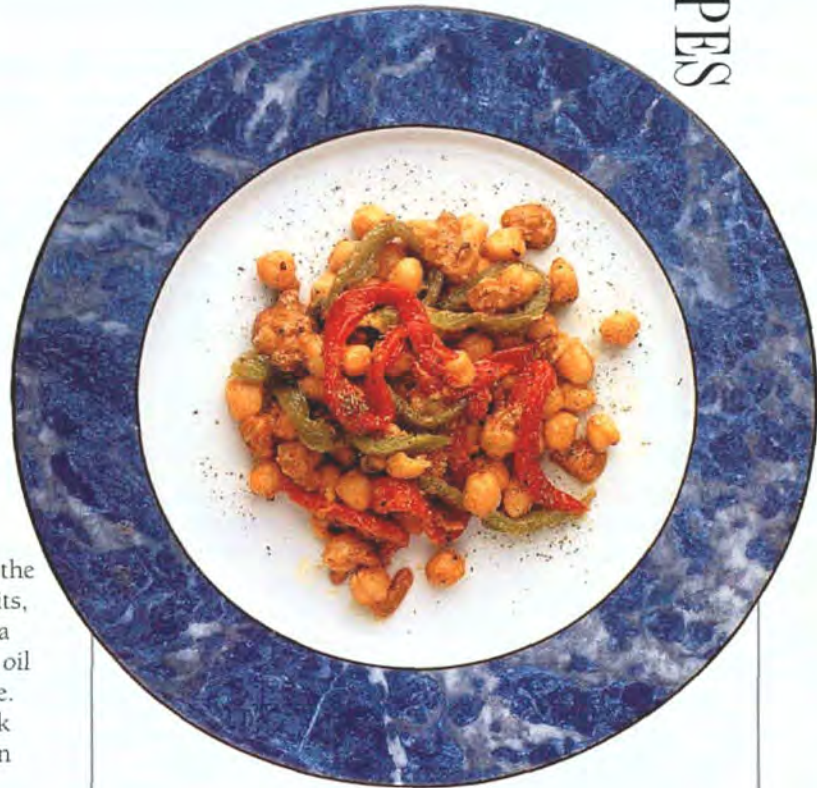
A white wine from the D.O. Alella and made of Chardonnay grapes will give a touch of sweetness and bring out the flavors of the cream soup.

A light starter with an original flavor. The smoothness of the cream contrasts with the texture of the chopped hazelnut garnish.

Preparation: 30 min
Cooking: 15 min
Serves 4:

- 1 l chicken stock (1 1/3 pt)
- 100 g hazelnuts (3 1/2 oz)
- 3 leeks
- 1/2 onion
- 6 tbsp oil (3 fl oz)
- Salt and pepper
- 4 tbsp single cream (2 fl oz)
- Chives and chopped hazelnuts for decoration





Chickpeas with Pepper Salad and Picada

Leave the chickpeas to soak overnight. Drain and simmer in boiling water with the onion, bay leaf, and pepper grains. After two hours, season with salt and continue cooking until soft. Wash the peppers, grease the skins, and roast in the oven for 40 minutes, turning occasionally. Remove and cover to make them sweat so the skins become loose. Peel and cut into strips, preserving any juices.

Picada: Lightly fry the cloves of garlic with the seeded red peppers, hazelnuts, and almonds. Transfer the mixture to the mortar and crush with the chopped parsley, biscuits, and a few crystals of sea salt. Gradually add the oil and mix to form a paste. Dilute with a little stock from the chickpeas then add the sauce to the chickpeas which should be just moist. If there is too much stock, drain it off. Add the strips of pepper and any juices. Check for seasoning and serve.

Recommended wine:

A red D.O. Priorato, made of Cariñena and Garnacha Tinta. The strong aroma of this wine should marry well with such a flavorsome dish and complement the sweet roast peppers with a touch of acidity.

In Catalonia, the picada is a necessary addition to many dishes. The ingredients vary but always include some type of nut such as almonds or hazelnuts along with garlic, parsley, saffron, pine nuts, biscuit, chocolate or even chicken livers, and a slice of bread. These are crushed in the mortar in a variety of combinations and give the main ingredient a very special flavor.

Preparation: 15 min
Cooking: 2 1/2 hours
Serves 4:

- 350-400 g chickpeas (12oz-14oz)
- 1 fleshy red pepper
- 2 green peppers
- 1 onion
- 1/2 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper

Picada:

- 2 cloves garlic
- 12 almonds
- 12 hazelnuts
- 2 ñoras (dried, round red peppers)
- 1 sprig parsley
- 2 biscuits
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- A few crystals of sea salt

Almond Snaps

These thin biscuits are usually served with coffee at the end of a meal but not as a dessert in their own right. The secret to perfect snaps is to spread the mixture very thinly so that, as it cooks, it takes on a lacelike appearance. As soon as they come out of the oven, they must be lifted off the baking tray and placed around a rolling pin or bottle. The idea is that they should look like the large ornamental combs that are used to hold the Spanish *mantilla* in place. They can be small but in restaurants one large one is usually placed at the center of the table for people to break pieces off.

Preparation: 1 hour
Cooking: 10 min
To make 1 kilo of snaps:

- 300 g flaked almonds (10 1/2 oz)
- 250 g sugar (9 oz)
- 75 g flour (2 1/2 oz)
- 250 g butter (9 oz)
- 5 whole eggs
- One small bag of vanilla-flavored sugar
- A pinch of salt

Mix the flour with the sugar, vanilla-flavored sugar, almonds and salt. Beat the whole eggs until fluffy and gradually fold into the flour mixture, lifting as you mix to keep as much air as possible in. Melt the butter and add to the mixture. Place small mounds of the mixture on a baking tray and flatten with a fork that you must continually dip in water. Place in the oven at 200ºC (392ºF) for 10 minutes. Remove, lift the snaps with a knife and place over the rolling pin. The snaps are cooked as soon as the outside edge changes color so it is important to spread them out evenly.

Recommended wine:
A Pedro Ximénez from the D.O. Montilla-Moriles or a muscatel or Málaga wine are the most usual wines for serving with desserts.

Almond Cakes

Grind the almonds in an electric grinder with a little sugar to prevent them from going oily. With an electric beater, beat the eggs with the rest of the sugar until light and fluffy. (If done by hand, first beat the yolks with the sugar, add the almonds, etc. and finally the egg whites beaten stiff.) Add the cinnamon and lemon zest then gently fold in the ground almonds. Grease and dust with flour 6-8 flat pans, fill them with the mixture and sprinkle with almond flakes. Bake at 180ºC (356ºF) for 15 minutes. Remove from the pans while hot and leave to cool.

Recommended wine:
An aged oloroso from the D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry. The sweet aroma and hint of nuts in this strong-flavored wine, which is neither too sweet nor too dry, brings out the almond flavor of the cakes.

The cakes and pastries made in Spanish convents are famous for their delicacy, the result of careful preparation and traditional methods. Many of the recipes, a legacy of the Arab presence in Spain, wisely combine almonds with honey and eggs and were brought to the convents by nuns who had learnt them in their homes. It is in the provinces of Seville and Granada that there are the most convents and where the products of their kitchens are most competitive with those on sale in the shops. The following recipe comes from a Granada convent and is said to be a secret but we happen to know it is included in a well-known publication.

Preparation: 30 min
Cooking: 15 min
Makes 6-8 cakes:

- 4 eggs
- 250 g raw peeled almonds (9 oz)
- 125 g sugar (4 oz)
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Cinnamon
- 50 g flaked almonds (2 oz)
- Butter and flour to grease the pans

Cheese-filled Loaf

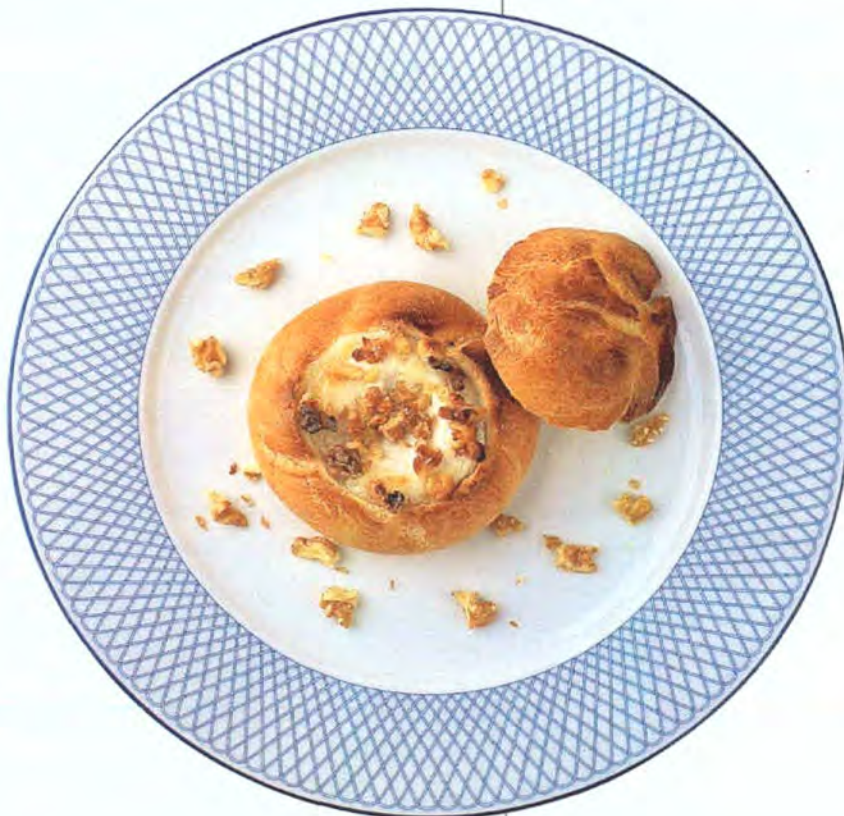
Choose a loaf with a high top. Cut a slice off the top horizontally to serve as a lid. Empty out the center of the loaf using a sharp knife to make room for the slice of cheese (without the rind). Place a few walnuts inside and cover with the bread lid. Bake at 200ºC (392ºF) for 15 minutes or until properly heated through so that the cheese is melting. Serve immediately.

Recommended wine:
It is always a problem to find the right partner for goats' milk cheese. We recommend a strong red wine from the D.O. Jumilla, made of Monastrell, Tempranillo, and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, having an intense aroma of ripe berries and a syrupy base that will go well with the creaminess of the cheese and the flavor of the walnuts.

This original aperitif, combining the delicious fragrance of hot bread, the creaminess of melting goats' milk cheese and the texture and flavor of walnuts, has the added advantage of being simple to prepare and to eat. Each person just cuts off a piece of bread and dips it in the cheese and walnut mixture in the middle.

Preparation: 10 min
Cooking: 10 min for a medium-sized loaf
Serves 8:

- 1 medium-sized loaf of bread
- 200 g Majorero de Fuerteventura cheese (6 oz)
- 40 g shelled walnuts (1 1/2 oz)



Fried Los Ibores Cheese with Red and Green Tomato Jams

Place the cheese in the freezer for 15 minutes.
Jams: Make a cross-shaped cut in the tomatoes at the opposite end to the stem, blanch for 5 minutes in boiling water then peel. Cut in half, squeeze out any excess water (with the seeds) then weigh the pulp of the green and red tomatoes separately. Place in the blender to make two separate pulps. Cook each in a different pan with the same weight of sugar, a splash of lemon juice and a few very fine strips of lemon rind. Simmer for about half an hour. The jams will be ready when a drop placed on a plate holds its shape. Remove the slices of cheese from the freezer. Dip into beaten egg and bread crumbs and fry in hot oil until golden. Serve the freshly-fried cheese with the cold jams and perhaps a salad.

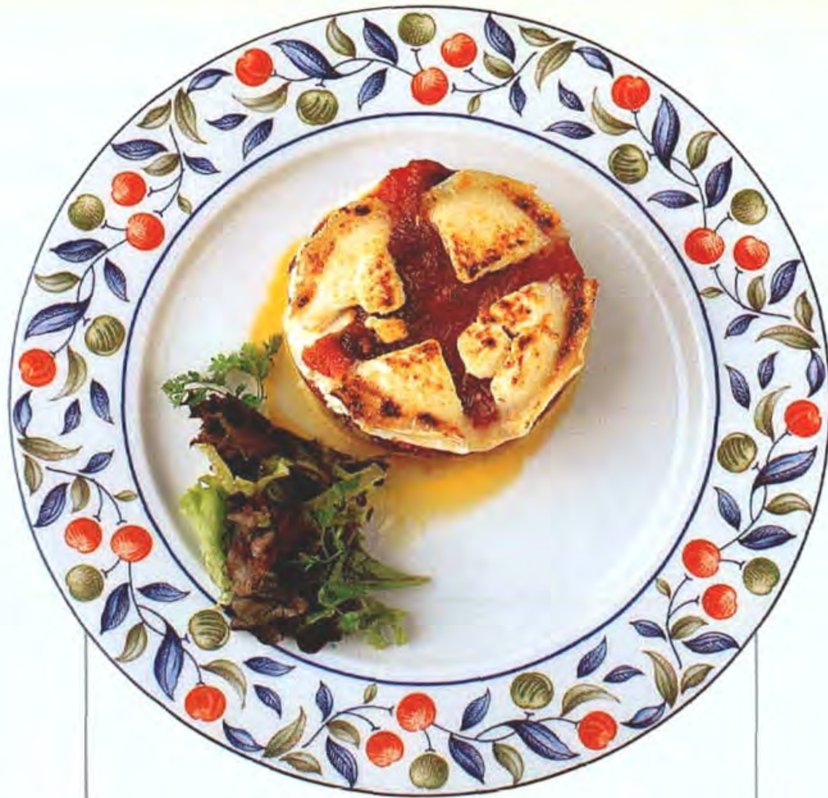
Recommended wine:
Again, there are not many wines that go well with goats' milk cheese but we have chosen a sweet wine from the D.O. Terra Alta with a fruity, fresh aroma. Such a young wine should liven up the cheese without overpowering its sharp flavor.

A surprising mixture: When fried, Los Ibores cheese becomes almost liquid inside. The tomato jams are not too sweet and make a very pleasant contrast with the cheese. The dish can be accompanied with a mixed salad of green and purplish leaves.

Preparation: 30 min
Cooking: 30 min plus the time for frying the cheese.

Serves 4:
- 8 slices of Los Ibores cheese
- 2 eggs
- Bread crumbs
- Plenty of oil for frying

Jams:
- 1/2 kg red tomatoes (1 lb 2 oz)
- 1/2 kg green tomatoes (1 lb 2 oz)
- The weight of the tomato pulp in sugar
- Lemon juice
- Lemon rind cut in fine julienne strips



Ronda Cheese Ring with Eggplant and Stewed Tomato

Drain the tomatoes and place in a saucepan with the sugar, oil, salt, and thyme. Simmer gently until any liquid has evaporated off and the tomatoes have become practically caramelized. Cut the eggplants in half and roast in the oven for 40 minutes. Scoop out the pulp and chop. Fry the chopped garlic in the oil then add the eggplant pulp. Place a ring on a baking tray. Inside it arrange the sliced stewed tomatoes, the eggplant pulp and the slices of cheese in alternate layers, finishing with a layer of cheese. Place in the oven for 15 minutes to brown, remove the ring and serve.

Recommended wine:
Since the cheese in this recipe blends with the other ingredients, it is easier to find the right match. Try a rosé from the D.O. Rioja. Its aroma of raspberries, freshness in the mouth, and slight acidity will round off the flavor of the stewed tomatoes.

A modern combination in which the juiciness and smooth texture of the eggplants (aubergines) contrasts with the sweetness of the tomatoes and blends with the melting creaminess of the cheese. The ingredients are placed inside a pastry ring on a baking tray in alternate layers then heated together until the cheese melts and the top has turned an appetizing golden-brown color.

Preparation: 45 min plus the time for stewing the tomatoes.
Cooking: 30 min
Serves 4:

- 1 kg eggplants (2 1/4 lb)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 dl oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 250 g Ronda cheese (9 oz)
- 12 canned whole plum tomatoes
- 150 g sugar (5 oz)
- 1 1/2 dl oil (9 tbsp/6 oz)
- Salt, thyme

Pasta with Three Goat Cheeses

Place a pan of water on the heat with a splash of oil and a tbsp of salt. When it boils, gradually add the pasta to prevent it from sticking together and cook over a moderate heat according to the instructions on the packet. As soon as it is *al dente,* drain and sprinkle with a little oil to keep the tubes loose. Mix with the sauce and serve.

Sauce: Cut the rind off the cheeses and dice. Add the cream or milk and a pinch of white pepper. Place in a thick-bottomed pan over a medium heat and stir constantly until the cheeses melt and form a smooth creamy sauce.

Recommended wine:
The cheese flavor here makes it practically impossible to find a suitable wine. We are inclined to recommend water but perhaps, in the last resort, a traditional muscatel wine from the D.O. Tarragona might go well and would certainly be in line with the latest culinary fashions.

A plate of pasta is a favorite with everyone. Hollow, ribbed pasta is the best for holding the sauce and green pasta is preferable, not only because the spinach flavor marries well with the cheeses but also to enhance the appearance of the dish. The blend of three types of goat's milk cheese is perfection itself.

Preparation: 15 min
Cooking: 30 min
Serves 4:
- 350 g green spinach pasta tubes (12 oz)
- A splash of oil
- Salt

Sauce:
- 75 g Majorero de Fuerteventura cheese (3 oz)
- 75 g Los Ibores cheese (3 oz)
- 75 g Murcia al vino cheese (3 oz)
- 2 dl single cream or full milk if a lighter sauce is wanted (8 fl oz)
- White pepper

HOW

THE BIG QUESTIONS

In the second article of his series on culinary customs in Spain, the author takes a personal look at how Spaniards wholeheartedly enjoy their food and turn a meal into a party.

Eating in Spain, whether in a restaurant, a countryside barbecue, or a *tapas* bar is a festive ritual for family and friends.

Text Tom Burns

Eating in Spain. Part 2

Bautista
(1955)

Side walk cafés, human environments and beach scenes are a prevailing theme in the works of this painter, who captures the color and liveliness of Valencia, his adopted city since childhood.

When we got to the restaurant, after two in the afternoon, there was no one there save for the waiters. This surprised me because there had been a lot of doubtful humming–"We might just be able to squeeze you in, sir," and other remarks in the same vein–when I had made the booking earlier in the day. Reservations and exact timings were essential because the restaurant was not just popular but, more importantly, because it almost exclusively served *paella* in all its myriad manifestations; rice, as we all know, cannot be kept waiting and you choose your paella when you make your booking.
The restaurant, which had been warmly recommended by local friends, was on the edge of the Albufera, the large inland lagoon and complex of rice paddy fields that lies close to Valencia, and we had been having an extraordinary ecological trip, boating around among the herons and egrets that nest in the lagoon's rushes, before lunch. We had hurried back from the bird-watching mini-cruise for the lunchtime appointment, only to find the restaurant as empty and silent as the Albufera's fabulous expanse of water. Then it turned out that we had been too punctual and were merely the first to arrive. The place was indeed fully booked. Within minutes the restaurant was filled to overflowing and the waiters were hovering around the tables balancing the paellas aloft as if they were flying saucers.

Decibel Levels

What struck us with the force of a thunder clap was the sudden noise. Once the hordes of diners had descended you could hardly hear yourself speak. So we started shouting to one another which was what every one else was doing.
There were a few tables for two (the four us were crammed into one of them) and most tables were occupied by groups of anything up to twelve. Some all-male groups looked to be formed by office workers who had sped out of Valencia for a long midweek lunch that was thinly disguised

as a business meeting. Other tables were occupied by entire families–it was the start of the holiday season–and presided over by the family patriarch who was inviting children and grandchildren to a regular treat. And between, mouthfuls of paella, they were all screaming at the top of their heads.

Astonished by the decibel level, my wife came up with the theory that the Valencianos were all partially deaf because the tens of thousands of fireworks that they let off year after year during their spectacular *Fallas* festival in March necessarily caused serious damage to their ear drums. "They are genetically noisy because every generation is blasted by more and more firecrackers and hears a little bit less," she informed our party. A second theory was that our fellow diners were merely enjoying themselves.

The counter argument insisted that, as naturally exuberant, impatient and expressive people, the Spaniards, in this case the effervescent Valencianos in the restaurant, were having a ball. They were not in the least bit bothered about letting everybody else know what a good time they were having. On every table half a dozen people seemed intent on telling their neighbors some funny story or other that absolutely everybody simply had to hear immediately. Since they were all telling their supposedly fascinating ribald tales at the same time, they had to shout to make themselves heard.

Sheer Enjoyment

The Fallas-induced deafness theory, attractive though it was, was eventually knocked down as we adjusted to the hullabaloo and more or less agreed, shouting of course, on the "everybody is just enjoying themselves" explanation. The winning argument was that every popular and well-run restaurant in Spain is, as a rule, extremely noisy although, in deference to my wife, it was acknowledged that this particular eatery on the banks of the Albufera lagoon earned the prize for being noisier than any other we could remember anywhere else in Spain. So far so good. But that was, clearly, not the end of it.

Once we had settled the issue of the shouting diners, it struck me that there was a follow up to the whole debate: there is something special about Spaniards and their approach to eating in the company of family and friends.

An old adage has it that "an Englishman eats to live and a Frenchman lives to eat." A Spaniard certainly belongs to the second category but there is more to it than that. A Spaniard not only lives to eat but thoroughly enjoys himself doing so. Eating in Spain is an entirely social and festive occasion. Food brings people together, large families and also all the friends which go towards creating a huge extended family; eating and partying are one and the same thing in Spain. It is as if America's Thanksgiving and Fourth of July were held at the same time, every weekend all year round.

Paella can be top notch, as it was in this particular Albufera restaurant which was so enthusiastically patronized by discriminating, albeit noisy, Valencianos. Quite rightly, Valencia claims this extraordinary rice dish as its heirloom. But paella is also standard fare across wide stretches of Spain where people invariably gather to eat together. Spanish men who declare themselves to be incapable of frying an egg take particular pride in their paella expertise. Go to any picnicking area outside a Spanish town, where the local authorities lay on stone built grills, firewood, and trash cans for the weekenders, and you will find the male of the family stacking up his paella ingredients–chicken, pork, rabbit, seafood, assorted vegetables, and beans, and anything else he intends to put into the paella pan–and carefully measuring the exact quantities of stock and rice.

Al Fresco Food

As the embers start to glow, the paella pan is joyfully placed on the grill and a celebration centered on food gets underway. It is *de rigueur* to applaud the cook when the rice has soaked up all the stock and nestles amid the paella's other ingredients.

The Basques are legendary for their serious knowledge and love of food and they lend a lot of festive ritual to their eating. Spain is a country with an outdoor lifestyle and the Basques are masters of the long al fresco lunch around a grill, around a *parrilla*, in a culinary celebration that is known as a *parrillada*. This is a feast that makes conventional barbecues in the backyard seem like a potato chips and peanuts aperitif given by a skinflint. The Basques are at it every weekend when the weather is good and they are acting out an ancestral practice because the parrillada is the direct descendent of the beachside charcoal fires on which local fishermen grilled the catch that they were unable to sell and of the roast lamb-

on-a-spit that the local shepherds perfected to keep body and soul together as they watched their flocks high above the Basque Country's verdant valleys.

Prime fare in a parrillada is an outsize veal chop called a *chuletón*–that, sometimes, has been previously marinated in olive oil, parsley, and garlic–and which would certainly satisfy at least two hungry and normal mortals. A normal chop is a mere *chuleta* and most Basques don't rate it. The chuletón gurgles and sizzles in the center of the grill while on the edges of the grill, or parrilla, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and other vegetables cook more gently, along with whole heads of garlic. Potatoes are nowadays wrapped in tinfoil (modernity has its uses) and buried among the embers. The garlic, when suitably softened, is pried out of its skin and either spread on bread or directly onto the chuletóns.

A lot of other top local produce can be, and is, slapped onto the parrilla–lamb cutlets, blue fish, especially sardines, spicy sausages, spare ribs, kidneys, and the rest–and all is accompanied by lashings of wine. A first-time attendant at the parrillada festivities which countless countryside restaurants stage in the Basque Country, and indeed right across northern Spain will, of course, be amazed by the deafening sound of happy people having a good time.

Calçots and Sauces

Catalonia also takes pride in communal barbecues that seem to have existed since around the time that fire was invented. Marinated chicken and, particularly, rabbit take the honors here, in place of the massive chops that the Basques invariably feed on, and vegetables rather than mere accompaniments form whole dishes in themselves. The green onion, an underrated vegetable in most places, is something of a star among Catalans who call it a *calçot*. The new green onions are celebrated in Spring with the *calçotada*, one of Catalonia's most endearing get togethers among families and friends. The calçots are blackened on the grill, peeled to reveal once more their whiteness and, juicy and still hot, dipped into Catalonia's famed sauces. Catalans are brilliant sauce makers and the best *salsas* are the pungent *alioli*, made by blending garlic and oil, and the pepper-based *romesco*. People then suck and chew (bibs are provided) and, between one calçot and the next one, generally party away

Thinking about such eating habits, what one ends up with is a naturally exuberant, impatient, and expressive people who, at the slightest opportunity, gather in a large circle round a campfire (or crowd a restaurant) to noisily swap stories and jokes in an intensely convivial atmosphere in which food is actively enjoyed.

Convivial Tapas

It strikes me that this is a throwback to more pastoral, stress-free times and that the celebratory essence of the occasion is as relevant now, and as obvious, as it was then. Paella picnickers, parrillada protagonists, and those who keep the calçots company mingle and wander around among an ever-widening circle of festive eaters and this indulgent reversal to rustic habits does have, thankfully, a modern urban projection–the tapa tradition.

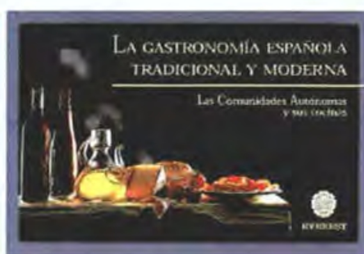
The way in which groups of people prop up bars to consume their food and the manner in which they walk about from tapa bar to tapa bar (each will have its specialties), nibbling, drinking, and endlessly chatting, is authentically Spanish.

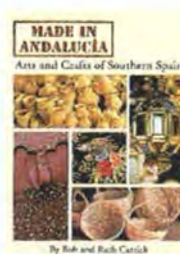
Tapa food in its infinite variety is delicious. Few things are more satisfying in the food department than to spear one tasty morsel sizzling on its platter after another with a toothpick, a small fork or, better still, to pick the delicacy directly with your fingers. But even better is the sheer enjoyment that is conjured up in a good tapa crawl. What happens is that you start off with a group of convivial friends and the group gets bigger and bigger as it moves around from one bar to another and the night wears on. It is yet another example of the all-embracing Spanish eating ritual, festive and unifying.

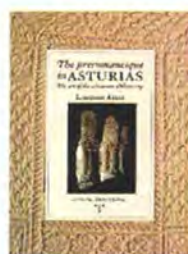
Tom Burns, *Madrid correspondent for the* Financial Times, *was born in London and has been a foreign correspondent in Spain for more than 20 years. He is the author of a trilogy on Spain's transition to democracy and his latest book,* Hispanomania, *is a critical account of the romantic view of Spain conjured up by American and British authors.*

Photo credits on page 200

LASTING IMPRESSIONS







There is a saying in the north of Spain that some people eat to live and others live to eat, but that overlooks another admirable group: those who live to cook. Modern Spanish life no longer fosters so many great home cooks, but it is producing a new breed of professional chefs who view their work as a vocation rather than a job.

Two new books reflect that. **Los genios del fuego** *(Geniuses of the Fire)* portrays ten ground-breaking Catalan chefs while **Gusto y gustos de Extremadura** *(The Taste and Flavors of Extremadura)* focuses on the work of just one chef, Toño Pérez from Atrio in Cáceres (see box). Given a wider context by historical essays and beautiful photos of landscapes, his dishes clearly state the key role a vocational cook can play in giving new life to a regional cuisine.

Los genios del fuego makes the same point with a broader view: Pau Arenós analyzes the cooking of world-famous Catalan chefs Ferrán Adriá and Santi Santamaria as well as eight others picked for their avant-garde, creative approach. The emphasis here is on psychology and philosophy in perceptive pen-portraits and five recipes chosen by each chef to represent his style. Yet this is not a pretentious book; the understated black and white photography, journalistic tone, recipe sketches, and the chefs themselves are grounded in everyday life, also one of the great qualities of Catalan cooking.

A third book, **La Gastronomía Española Tradicional y Moderna** *(Traditional and Modern Spanish Cooking)*, is a more basic factual compendium designed as a bilingual (Spanish and English) reference to promote gastronomic tourism in Spain. Each region is defined by a brief essay, a glimpse of its Parador hotels, one product, five popular dishes, and five chefs' recipes. The latter make the same point about the new strength of creative Spanish cooking.

Finally, two excellent books in English cover specialist areas in different regions in a user-friendly way. **Made in Andalucía** is a thoroughly researched guide to the region's artisanal craft workshops, arranged in different tours within each province, while **The Preromanesque in Asturias** is a unique illustrated academic work on the 9th century Asturian churches that have won a place in the history of architecture for their architectural style, originality, prodigious decoration, and wonderful state of preservation. This is the book to take with you on a visit to see them–a worthwhile detour even for those who live to eat.

Arts and Crafts of Southern Spain, Bob and Ruth Carrick, Santana Books; sales@santanabooks.com

La gastronomía española tradicional y moderna, Rafael Anson (ed), Turespaña and Everest, Fax: (34) 987 844 202

Los genios del fuego, Pau Arénos, Peninsula; www.peninsulaedi.com

The Preromanesque in Asturias, The Art of the Asturian Monarchy, Lorenzo Arias, Ediciones Trea S.L., www.asturnet.es/trea

In Brief

COOKING

101 Sociedades gastronómicas de Gipuzkoa *(101 Gastronomic Societies in Guipúzcoa)*. Each society gave the recipes for a three-course menu to the author, Pedro Martín; the brief informational sketches of each society are equally interesting (Ttarttalo, S.L.; www.ttarttalo.com).

Cocina típica española *(Traditional Local Spanish Cooking)*. Michelin-starred chef Koldo Royo's culinary eye makes this simple collection of 153 dishes a masterly anthology (Editorial Martínez Roca; sgomez@ediciones-martinezroca.es).

Creative Basque Cuisine, Traditional and Modern. José Luis Barrena presents his pick of winning recipes from the annual gastronomic Pil-Pil awards over the last five years, structuring them around the two-sided character of Basque professional cooking today (Editorial Pamiela; pamiela@abc.ibernet.com).

Donosti pintxo a pintxo *(Tapas of San Sebastián)*. Pedro Martín's best-selling cookbook is well summed-up by its subtitle: "More than 500 recipes by 150 chefs." Designed as a professional reference book rather than a glossy coffee-table volume, the photos are often useful as the recipes for recreating each tapa are a little vague. Available in Spanish and English (Ttarttalo S.L.; www.ttarttalo.com).

El agua en la cocina del futuro *(Water in Cooking for the Future)*. Sponsored by Vicky Catalán Water, this doesn't live up to the promise of its title, but the chefs' recipes, cocktails, medicinal information, and journalists' pieces make an unusual combination (Ediciones B; www.edicionesb.com).

El arte culinario del espárrago de Huétor-Tájar *(The Culinary Art of Huétor-Tájar Asparagus)*. Inspired by the creation of a denomination

Text
Vicky Hayward

for Granada's native asparagus in 1997, this promotional book includes unusual local recipes such as asparagus and clams in almond sauce (CRDE Espárrago de Huétor-Tájar; www.cap.junta-andalucia.es).

FOOD

El cerdo ibérico en el próximo milenio *(The Iberian Pig in the Next Millennium)*. Eduardo Laguna Sanz's compact but comprehensive handbook for professional pig rearers makes good reading for *jamón* fans, with chapters ranging from the breed's history to modern developments in rearing (Ediciones Mundi Prensa; www.mundiprensa.com).

Dulces y postres de Aragón *(Aragonese Sweets and Desserts)* A satisfyingly down-to-earth catalogue of some 200 Aragonese cakes, biscuits, candies, sweetbreads, and puddings from Aragon. Great testimony to the unsung glories of Spanish baking (Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza;comunicacion@ayto-zaragoza.es).

Gastroguía de la Costa Blanca *(Gastroguide to the Costa Blanca)*. A remarkably complete 300-page book on Alicante province's gastronomy with especially interesting essays on produce and fishing (Patronato Provincial de Turismo de la Costa Blanca; www.costablanca.org).

Guías Gourmetour 2000 *(Regional Gourmetour Guides)*. Regional spinoffs from Gourmetour's chunky annual guide to hotels and restaurants; these are perfect references for gourmets visiting different areas of Spain (Gourmets & Oceano; jram@gourmets.net).

Las rutas del olivo *(Routes through the Olive Groves)*. Juan Eslava Galán's light hearted account of a journey accompanying a Japanese business visitor through Jaen's vast olive groves has an educational bent, but its modest, richly illustrated format also captures the charm of everyday life (Soproargra, S.A.; Fax: (34) 953 280 643).

Trufa, truficultura y selvicultura trufera *(Truffles, Truffle Growing, and Truffle Growing in the Wild)*. This revised edition of a standard Spanish work by agronomist Reyna Domenech explains two approaches to growing the elusive truffle: in plantations or in the wild. It also includes a great photo of a 2-kg (4.5-pound) truffle dug up in Aragon (Ediciones Mundi-Prensa; www.mundiprensa.com).

World Food Spain. One in a new series inspired by a philosophy of coming at culture and travel through food and drink. Written by American writer Richard Sterling, it scores highly on its zippy text, contemporary design, and photos although it is tantalizingly brief–apart from the lengthy food aficionado dictionary at the back (Lonely Planet; www.lonelyplanet.com).

TRAVEL

Bosques con encanto *(Woods with Charm)*. Juan José Alonso gives the lowdown on 72 of Spain's most beautiful woodlands: he goes into each area's ecosystem in detail and gives all the relevant practical information on how to get the best enjoyment from a visit (El País Aguilar; www.elpais-aguilar.es).

Desfiladeros de España *(Spanish Gorges)*. A spiral-bound visual guide to 25 routes for those who like to walk on the wild side–literally, along cliff faces, through gorges, and above sheer drops. Each route is rounded

Gusto y gustos de Extremadura (The Taste and Flavors of Extremadura)

When Toño Pérez and José Antonio Polo began to think about writing a book, they wanted it to reflect the spirit of Atrio, the restaurant they opened in Cáceres, Extremadura, in 1986. "Restaurants like ours are not a business, they are a way of life," explains Pérez, a self-taught cook who took over as chef in 1993 and reshaped the menu around native cooking. "Spanish cooking at the moment is very dynamic and young, but with great roots and identity." Polo, who runs the dining room and an award-winning bodega of over 1,300 wines, explains their philosophy this way: "It is not so much the food and the wine as the idea of people sharing and enjoying it together." In the same spirit, they felt that the book should share Extremadura's little-known cooking with readers. Encouraged by their friend Duarte Pinto Coelho, the interior architect, Pérez reinterpreted Atrio's seasonal menu against the backdrop of the region's culinary history written by Marina Domecq and asked friend Tayo Acuña to photograph the recipes. The result is a visually beautiful, balanced, and useful book that won the Premio Nacional de Gastronomía in 1999. Pérez explains he is planning another book based on his own cooking style. How would he describe that? "Simple, direct, and questioning."

Is it still evolving? "Well, it's a question of sorting out the wheat from the chaff," replies Polo with a smile.

(Toño Pérez y Marina Domecq, Iberdrola y Caja de Extremadura; www.cajaextremadura.es)

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off by alternatives for the less adventurous and practicalities (El País Aguilar; www.elpais-aguilar.es).

La Ruta de La Plata a pie y en bicicleta *(The Silver Route on Foot and Bike)*. Highly visual and genuinely useful guidebook to the Roman road through Extremadura and Castile, which later became a southern variant of the Santiago pilgrimage route (El País Aguilar; www.elpais-aguilar.es).

Nuevo viaje de España: la vía del calatraveño *(New Journey through Spain: The Road of the Knights of Calatrava)*. A welcome reissue of Víctor de la Serna's 1930s literary travel classic originally written as journalistic despatches; here he visits La Mancha and Andalusia's coastline. Unfortunately his project to map all Spanish rural life in this way was never finished (Maeva; www.maeva.es).

WINE

El Rioja histórico *(Historic Rioja)*. A promotional history of the Rioja denomination, commissioned by the Consejo Regulador, this book is nonetheless a mine of information about Rioja's history since earliest times thanks to the academic editorial team led by José Luis Gómez Urdáñez, Professor of Modern History at the University of La Rioja (C.R.D.O.Ca. Rioja; www.riojawine.com).

The Wines and Landscapes of Spain. Jeremy Watson's overview of a journey round Spain's vineyards, illuminated by an expert eye for well-chosen specifics, makes today's complex wine map accessible to everyone. Eminently easy to read, it is illustrated by Murray Zanoni's evocative watercolors (Pavilion; www.pavilionbooks.co.uk).

OTHER

Las artesanías de España I. Zona septentrional *(Spain's Handicrafts I: The North)* The first of a planned three-volume series which will stand as the standard illustrated guide to Spain's handicrafts, written by historian and ethnologist Guadalupe González Hontoria (Ediciones del Serbal; www.ed-serbal.es).

Also Received

Cocina Aragonesa *(Aragonese Cooking)* by Antonio Beltrán and Cocina Navarra *(Navarrese Cooking)* by Angelita Alfaro, Everest; Fax: (34) 987 844 202.

Cuina tradicional de Castelló *(Traditional Cooking from Castelló)*, Joan Agustí i Vicent, Diputació de Castelló, Fax: (34) 964 359 553.

Guía y mapa de la naturaleza de España *(Atlas and Guide to Nature in Spain)*, Cosme Morillo, Anaya Touring Club; lroque@anaya.es

Las 4 estaciones de la gastronomía aragonesa *(The Four Seasons of Aragonese Gastronomy)*, José María Pisa (ed), Instituto Aragonés de Fomento; www.iaf.es

Los mejores cocineros (lo mejor de la gastronomía 2000) *(The Best Cooks)*, Rafael García Santos, Ediciones Destino, www.edestino.es

Los mejores vinos (lo mejor de la gastronomía 2000) *(The Best Wines)*, Rafael García Santos, Ediciones Destino; www.edestino.es

Rutas con encanto paso a paso, 55 nuevas propuestas *(55 New Routes with Charm, a Step-by-Step Guide)*, El País Aguilar; www.elpais-aguilar.es.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Compiled by
Hawys Pritchard

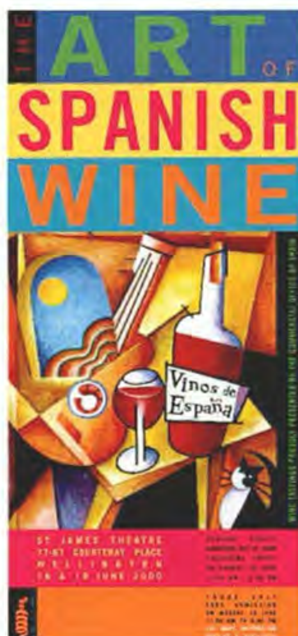
This issue's digest of events promoting Spanish food and drink backed by the Economic and Commercial Offices at the Embassies of Spain around the world covers the period May to December inclusive.

Australia and New Zealand

"The Art of Spanish Wine": Under this banner, Spain's Commercial Office hosted a comprehensive tasting of top Spanish wines at the St. James Theater, in the heart of Wellington's central business district, on 18 and 19 June. Presented by New Zealand importers of Spanish wines, the food–modern *tapas*–was prepared by Adelaide restaurateur Justo del Amo (known throughout Australasia for his presentations of Spanish cuisine and olive oil). Open to the general public as well as the food and wine trade, this event echoed the success of a similar tasting held in Auckland in 1999.

...and Food: "Art of España" was the title of a three week festival of Spanish gastronomy hosted by Brisbane's Carlton Crest Hotel and launched with a fiesta on 8 November. The hotel's restaurant, appropriately named Picasso's, served Spanish breakfast, lunch, and dinner during the event, with food and wine menus designed by chefs Justo del Amo (see above) and resident executive chef Michael Fletcher, and there were also cooking demonstrations at the Executive Chef and Black Pearl Epicure cookery schools. Tasting seminars at the Carlton Crest on November 8th (trade only, free), 9th and 10th, presented wines from all of Spain's wine regions in conjunction with gourmet foods. A prize draw offered a chance to win two return tickets to Spain.

On-line Tertulia: *Tertulia*, the Friends of Spanish Olive Oil newsletter published by the Spanish Commercial Office in Sydney to share infor-



mation about Spanish olive oil, culture, and modern cuisine, now has a Web site. Membership (free to all food lovers) provides access to articles, cooking tips, and seasonal recipes–join by registering your details at the Web site address:

www.tertuliaonline.com

Oiling the Informational Wheels: Sydney's Commercial Office of Spain is circulating further education colleges in New South Wales with a curriculum pack about olive oil (general info, varieties, tasting tips, usage guidelines, recipes...) designed as a resource manual for use by apprentice chefs in cookery schools. The manual will be presented at a series of olive oil workshops sponsored by *Tertulia* from November 2000 to March 2001.

buzon.oficial@sidney.ofcomes.mcx.es

Austria

Vievinum 2000: The second edition of Vienna's international wine festival was held at the Hofburg from 3-5 June of this year. Aimed principally at professional food afficionados, hoteliers, distributors, and importers of wine, sparkling wines, and brandies as well as the specialist press and well-informed members of the public, this is one of Austria's top international fairs. Two halls were devoted entirely to Spain: with 37 bodegas presenting 195 wines from 24 D.O.s, and eight Austrian importers presenting the Spanish wines they distribute, the Spanish presence was second only to that of the host country.

Everything (Spain Gourmetour included) for the Guest: ICEX took a stand again this year at the *Alles für den Gast* fair, held in Salzburg from 4-8 November. Attended by hospitality and catering professionals, this fair's product scope is wide. Spain focused on providing information about olive oil, charcuterie and *ibérico* cured ham, canned fish, wines, and *cavas*... Wine guides and copies of *Spain Gourmetour* were distributed into deserving hands.

Homage to Catalonia: Three Austrian wine and food writers joined a press trip to Catalonia from 3 to 8 June 2000 to visit the region's new D.O.s, currently engaging the interest of those in the know. Thirteen bodegas were visited in all, among D.O.s Priorato, Costers del Segre, Conca de Barberá, Alella, Plá de Bagés, and Tarragona.

New Territory: A visit to Andalusia and Extremadura from 13 to 18 November, taking in regional products such as the wines and vinegars of Montilla/Moriles, Tierra de Barros wines, aguardiente, pimenton (sweet paprika), La Serena cheese, charcuterie, canned and bottled vegetables, artisan-made sweets and honey, introduced Austrian food writers to a part of Spain as yet little-known back home.

buzon.oficial@viena.ofcomes.mcx.es

Canada

Northern Exposure: The tenth International Festival of Food and Wine at Banff Springs, Alberta, was dedicat-

Pedro Ximenez

Robles

When the time stop...

...Only some privilegeds will can delight it

AWARDS:
GOLD SALIMAT 2000
SILVER SALIMAT 1999
SILVER INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE 99 (Hong Kong)
BACCHUS GOLD 1998
SILVER WOLD WINE CHAMPIONSHIPS 98 (Chicago)
BACCHUS SILVER 1997
GOLD AWARDS ZARCILLO 1993
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ed to Spain this year (27-29 October). Entitled "Gourmet Tour of Spain" and organized with the cooperation of ICEX, Spain's Economic and Comercial Office in Toronto, and the Hotel CP in Banff Springs, this hugely successful event was held in an imposing castle setting with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop. Over 600 people, among them top food and wine journalists from all over Canada, importers, and members of the public, relished the chance to sample, discuss and learn more about many of Spain's top wine and food products. Imaginatively-staged events included tastings of some of Spain's finest reds, whites, cavas, and sherries (representing 20 bodegas), a tasting-cum-seminar featuring nine traditional Spanish cheeses presented by Mariano Sanz (cheese expert and president of the Association of Traditional Spanish Cheese Producers and Exporters), and a tasting of four superb olive oils, guided by Santiago Botas (and backed by ASOLIVA, the Olive Oil Exporters Association of Spain, and the IOOC, International Olive Oil Council). Visiting Spanish chefs Alex Mugica and Jose Luque brilliantly achieved their brief of communicating the richness and variety of Spain's regional cuisine in designing and cooking the Festival's lunches, tapas buffet, and gala dinner. What you might call a Gourmet Tour.

buzon.oficial@toronto.ofcomes.mcx.es

Denmark

Wonderful, Wonderful Copenhagen has access to lots of Spanish wine. A Rioja seminar and tasting organized in conjunction with the Danish Sommeliers Association at Le Sommelier restaurant on the 15th of August was led by Thomas Perry of the Rioja Winemakers and Exporters Group. In a competition to suggest food to match the wines tasted, seven sommeliers from various parts of Denmark were selected to join a wine trip to La Rioja from 13 to 17 September. Meanwhile, Navarre's exporters wooed the Danes with a presentation to the specialist press by wine journalist Flemming Hvelplund on 31 October, again at Le Sommelier restaurant, a special feature being the tasting of cask-fermented dry white Chardonnays from five different bodegas. This was followed up with tastings aimed at the trade and general public at the National Art Museum in Copenhagen on the 1st of November, and the Hotel Phoenix at Aalborg, Jutland, on 2 November.

Sparkling Company: From May to September, Cava's Year 2000 promotional campaign featured twice-weekly presentations of the wines of participating bodegas at the Promenaden and Glassalens Café restaurants in Copenhagen's Tivoli Park. Led by actor, variety star, and wine connoisseur Per Pallesen, each of these hugely popular events, which were aimed at the general public, drew a

crowd of 80-100 people. Professionals were catered for by the cava tasting at the Nimb restaurant, also in the Tivoli, on 22 November, led by Flemming Hvelplund.

Sherry Parties: Invited groups of Danish wine journalists visited Jerez de la Frontera from 28-31 May and 8-11 October, and three wine experts (Per Pallesen among them!) visited from 12-15 October.

Best of the Bunch: D.O. Campo de Borja's Día del Racimo festival, 5-8 September, was launched with a presentation and professional tasting of the wines of the D.O.'s three exporting bodegas at El Cachirulo restaurant in Zaragoza: five wine journalists and a major importer represented Denmark at this international event. Among other awards presented the following day in the picturesque setting of the 12th century Veruela Monastery, was that of Honorary Member of the D.O. Campo de Borja to Mr. John Bernhard, Danish Ambassador to Spain.

Exotic Parts: Danish food journalists formed part of the Scandinavian group that visited Valencia, Castellón, Málaga, the Costa de Granada, and Almería from 19-24 November to find out more about Spain's oranges, clementines, persimmons, and subtropical fruits.

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France

SIAL 2000: Paris' biennial international food fair, SIAL, is one of the sector's leading events worldwide, second only to ANUGA. At this year's fair, held from 22-26 October at the Villepinte Paris-Nord exhibition center, 20 km north of Paris, ICEX-backed exhibitors occupied six pavilions (one up on 1998), accounting for 250 of the 400 Spanish companies taking part. The products they presented included dairy products, drinks, frozen foods, charcuterie, and confectionery.

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Germany

Strictly Spanish: The Spanish Food and Drink Fair held every two years in Düsseldorf (on alternate years to Cologne's ANUGA) moved the venue for its 6th edition, on 20 June 2000, to the CCD-Stadthalle congress center. Originally conceived to provide an exclusively Spanish showcase for small- and medium-sized companies, the fair has come to represent a unique opportunity in Germany for both exhibitors and buyers. This year's venue change both raised the fair's professional profile and allowed for increased size and scope. of the 127 exhibitors, 110 were Spanish manufacturers and distributors, and the rest German importers, while the 300 or so visitors included representatives of specialist shops, multiple retailers, and the food and wine press. Ice cream and frozen foods were among new products featured. The Düsseldorf Spanish Commercial Office's trend spotters observed a growing interest in gourmet products and more companies offering an "ecological" range.

New Millennium, New Image: A new take on sherry (highlighting its versatility) was presented to the German media at press conferences in Hannover's Expo 2000 site on 11 and 12 July and in Frankfurt on the 20th of September, with guided tastings backing up the promotional message. This was reinforced

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by tastings and seminars between July and October in Munich, Cologne, Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart aimed at demonstrating sherry's scope and relevance to the 70 or so members of the wine trade, restaurateurs, and the specialist press present at each event. In the run-up to Christmas, between 4 and 21 December, sherry weeks were being featured throughout Munich's well-known Käfer delicatessen chain.

D.O.s Do Well: Enthusiastic response to mini fairs held earlier this year in Düsseldorf and Hamburg to promote the wines of La Mancha indicated a strong future for them on the German market, while equivalent events for Rueda wines in Berlin and Cologne on 13 and 14 June confirmed and consolidated their market share. Rías Baixas presentations to the trade and press in Hamburg, Munich, and Essen on the 10th, 12th, and 13th of July are being followed up by events in top restaurants all over Germany, and a similar program of restaurant events follows up the two Ribera del Duero mini fairs in Berlin and Mainz on 6 and 8 November.

Take a Drink, Have a Cigar...: Brandies de Jerez are staging tastings led by known German sommeliers in five branches of the smart Havanna Lounge chain of restaurants/smoking clubs in various parts of the country.

Cava Previews: This year's film in the annual sequence of cava preview parties for Spanish films is Saura's "Goya in Bordeaux."

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Italy

Pedigree Fruit: In late April and early May, Italy saw the first promotional campaign for Spain's D.O. loquats –*nísperos* in Spanish–from Callosa d'en Sarrià, carried out in collaboration with the Denomination's regulatory council. Italy is traditionally and by far the biggest market for loquats, buying almost 50 percent of Spain's total production. The campaign was aimed at consolidating the market and promoting exports still further.

CIBUS 2000: At Italy's biggest international food fair, a biennial event held this year from 4-8 May in Parma, 40 Spanish companies exhibited a wide range of products in the official pavilion.

Spanish Seminars: The Italian market and the role of Spanish food and wine products therein were studied at seminars conducted by an Italian consultant in Seville on 28 June, and Murcia on the 29th of June.

Northern Delights: Eight influential Italian food and wine writers visited northern Spain in mid-June to study the gastronomy of Galicia, Cantabria, and Asturias at first hand. Fieldwork involved sampling the regions'

traditional specialties such as local fresh fish, mussels and other seafood, canned Cantabrian anchovies, Cabrales cheese, Albariño wine, and cider.

Wine Web site: Log on to www.vinidispagna.com for the Milan office's Spanish wine Web site announced in last issue's Foreign Affairs.

e-mail: buzon.oficial@milan.ofcomes.mcx.es

Japan

Capacity Crowd: The Spanish wine and food tasting staged at the ANA Hotel in Osaka on 6 June was such a success that a follow up was staged later in the year. Eighteen Japanese importers of Spanish food (olives and olive oil, canned and bottled fish and vegetables, cured ham including ibérico, salt, cheese…) and wine (a wide range from Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Penedés, Jerez, Cava and many other D.O.s) combined forces for the first time in this joint event, to which restaurateurs, hoteliers, wine wholesalers, and retailers, importers and the press from all over Kansai were invited, some attending from as far afield as Gifu and Nagoya. While the Japanese public recognizes individual products such as wine, olive oil, and cured ham (a very successful recent import) as Spanish, the perception of Spanish food as such has hitherto been very limited. This joint event was conceived as an across-the-board showcase to remedy that, and exhibitors reported an excellent response from prospective customers. Would-be participants who could not be included in the oversubscribed Osaka event were given priority at the follow up–a repeat of the successful food and wine formula–at the Hotel Intercontinental in Tokyo Bay on 2 November, which featured 23 exhibitors and was attended by some 300 guests.

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United Kingdom

Focus on Food: The first ever trade fair devoted exclusively to Spanish food products was held in London on 5 and 6 July. Designed to showcase new or emerging products on the U.K. market, the event drew over 80 exhibitors–70 exporters and 10 major importers–who showed an enormous range. Visitors were able to sample olive oil, serrano and ibérico cured ham and charcuterie, Cantabrian anchovies, canned fish and seafood, *turrón*, sweets, chocolate, cheese, preserved fruits and vegetables, sherry vinegar, ready-made meals, potato chips and nuts, fruit juices, sauces, and seasonings… At the lunchtime buffet, further sampling opportunities included cured ham from the serrano and ibérico producers' consortia, with expert carving skills also on display. Visitors included buyers from the major British multiple re-

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Spreading the Word: The U.K. is an increasingly exciting market for Spanish food and, to spread the word still further, "Foods from Spain" is working on developing awareness among the hospitality industry. To this end, three one-day workshops led by top chefs from France, Britain, and New Zealand were held at Anton Mosimann's prestigious Academy in early September and attended by an audience of 40 chefs from all over the British Isles. Inspirational use of Spanish ingredients by Eric Deblonde of London's Four Seasons Hotel (e.g. spectacular canapés and dips using salt cod and *mojama*, salt cured tuna), Martin Lam of Ransome's Dock Restaurant (e.g. scallops with lentils and *chorizo*), and Peter Gordon of The Sugar Club Restaurant (e.g. roast duck breast with quince *alioli*) opened up whole new vistas.

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United States

Fancy That: The International Fancy Food & Confection Show is the U.S.'s leading marketplace for gourmet and specialty food and drink. The 46th Summer edition of the event this year, held in New York from 9 to 11 July, featured 2,000 exhibitors and attracted over 25,700 buyers from 75 different countries. The growing demand for Spanish products in the U.S. was reflected in the number of exhibitors in the Spanish pavilion–up to 62 this year. There is a winter edition of this show in San Francisco each January.

Spanish Lessons at the CIA: "The Flavors of Spain" four-day cooking course from 30 October to 2 November at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone's campus in St. Helena, California, was the sixth of these annual events jointly staged with "Foods from Spain, NY." Teachers this year were top Catalan chef Joan Serra, and London-based food writer María José Sevilla, working with Greystone's chef-instructor Lars Kronmark. The course included lectures, tastings, demonstrations, and hands-on production (using Spanish ingredients such as olive oil, cheese, *piquillo* peppers, serrano ham, olives, sherry vinegar, paprika, canned fish…) and was attended by 20 senior level chefs.

Creating a Taste for Spanish Food: Students at 35 selected professional cookery schools have been invited to take part in this year's annual contest organized by "Foods from Spain, NY" to create new recipes using specified Spanish ingredients (and discover more about them in the process): Grand Prize a two-week hands-on training program at the Culinary School of Manresa, near Barcelona, plus traveling expenses and $1,500 pocket money; the runner-up wins two round-trip tickets to Madrid or Barcelona and $1,000. Winners (judged by respected food world figures) to be announced by 20 December.

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PLAZA MAYOR

Wine, Trout, and May Flies in La Rioja

Text
George Semler

A star-studded cast of fly-fishers and wine lovers gathered in Viniegra de Abajo in La Rioja's upper Najerilla valley for the VI *Encuentro Internacional de Pesca de La Rioja* (Sixth International Fishing Get-Together of La Rioja) from the 21st to the 25th of June.

John Beer, the correspondent for the magazine *Trout and Salmon* from England, Antonio Pozzelini, Italian maestro of fishing rods, the Prince of Wales' fly-fishing tutor Scotsman, Ally Gowans, French *cervantista* and fly-fishing author Guy Roques, former *Trofeo* editor and host of the well-known outdoor television show "Seasons," Juan Delibes, and American singer-songwriter Sam Lardner, attended this angling and gastronomical summit which brought together food and fly-fishing experts from four continents and over half a dozen countries from South Africa to Canada.

The same limestone soil that has made La Rioja Spain's finest traditional wine-growing country also makes the river Najerilla a gin-clear chalk stream rich in marine vegetation and aquatic insects, crustaceans, and plentiful native trouts (*trutta fario*) to feast and fatten on them. Meanwhile, this distinguished gathering of fly fishers, between hours on the water and fly-tying sessions at Viniegra de Abajo's Venta de Goyo, feasted in turn on local La Rioja specialties from the fabled *caparrones de Anguiano con sus sacramentos* (small red kidney beans from the town of Anguiano stewed in *chorizo* sausage) to two brilliant interpretations of one of La Rioja's most emblematic dishes: *patatas a la riojana*. Other standouts included Venta de Goyo chef's *sopa de hongos* (wild mushroom soup), *sopa de ajo* (garlic soup) or his exquisite *ciervo con compotes de manzana y arandanos* (venison with apple and chestnut compotes and a sauce of selected wild berries), while the breakfast *ciruelo Claudia* plum marmelade may have won the gourmet gold medal for the entire get-together. A young *vino cosechero* from the well-accredited Uruñuelo vineyards flowed copiously throughout this culinary *tour de force*, preceded by the aperitive favorite at La Venta de Goyo, a light rosé from Florentino Martínez, and followed by *patxarán*, the Basque endrina-engendered liqueur that has made important progress, especially in Scotland, over the five previous editions of this unique event.

The closing banquet at Logroño's Bodegas Hispano-Francesas was highlighted by an excellent Rioja Bordon Reserva.

From the football miracle of the opening evening (Spain scored twice in extra time to qualify for the Eurocopa quarterfinals) to the wild pealing of the massive bells in the Catedral de la Redonda's twin baroque towers in Logroño to celebrate the Corpus Christi procession, the *Consejería de Turismo y Medio Ambiente* (Council of Tourism and Environment) menu of architecture, cuisine, natural resources, and riverine activity provided a dazzling synesthesia of sights, sounds, and smells.

Nájera's Santa María la Real and its Gothic *Claustro de los Caballeros* (Cloister of the Cavaliers) was the

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opening architectural gem, followed by Tricio's nearby San Miguel church with its assorted Roman pillars, and the Monasteries of Suso and Yuso in San Millan de la Cogolla, where Gonzalo de Berceo (12th century) first composed verse in the roman *paladino* Latin derivate that would become the Castilian tongue of over 150 million Spanish-speakers spread from the Mediterranean to the South China Sea.

Opening day on the Najerilla's lower beats at Bobadilla featured a luncheon pig roast and Luis Quesada's (a.k.a. "Tote") spectacular and nationally televised capture of a two-kilo rainbow trout taken on an artfully fished pheasant tail bead nymph directly below the main bridge over the Najerilla where nearly the entire company of anglers (including, notably, this one) had fished fruitlessly all morning.

The final fishing day on the upper Iregua river at Villanueva de Cameros offered a panoramic drive above the treeline through the Camero Nuevo range and the mountain pass at Peña Hincada to Villanueva de Cameros, followed by an equally spectacular sunset drive through the lower Iregua's singular landscape of wind and water-eroded peaks and cliffs on the way into Logroño for the final night.

After *tapas* and *crianzas* along the Calle del Laurel and a tour through the historic wine cellars at Bodegas Hispano-Francesas, it was all over but for the next morning's Corpus Cristi bell-ringing at la Catedral de la Redonda while impassive storks rode out the acoustic storm beneath their nests and ecclesiastical authorities paraded below.

__George Semler__ is a Barcelona-based journalist who writes about life around the Mediterranean for U.S. publications ranging from Saveur magazine *to the* Los Angeles Times.

Photo credits on page 200.

The Nobility of Wine in Jerez

Text
Eva R. Naranjo

Translation
Jenny MacDonald

As in 1998, in the spring of this year, the second International Salon of Noble, Fortified and Liqueur Wines–Vinoble–was held in Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz). The dates were 10 to 13 May and the venue was the Villavicencio Renaissance palace with its Arabian gardens. After the resounding success of the last edition, improvement was no easy task. Carlos Delgado, who is director of the Vinum specialist wine journal and commissioner of the fair, stated that this year's aims were to consolidate the fair and make it more international. Both were achieved, with approximately 5,000 participants from 98 producer areas, most of them in Europe (where the most emblematic of these wines are produced) but including Australia.

The increase in the number of exhibitors, about 20 percent more than the last edition, shows that this young but attractive fair is becoming an essential point of reference in the world of noble wines, while the varied countries of origin of exhibitors, including new countries such as Slovenia, Greece, Cyprus, and Australia, point to increased internationalization. This year new space had to be found for the exhibition because it had outgrown the palace. The idea of using the garden–with large stands in the cool, open spaces next to the water lily pond–was an undoubted success with both exhibitors and visitors because it gave an informal, festive atmosphere to the event, thanks also to the good weather that is characteristic of Andalusia at this time of year.

A Tasters' Paradise

The activities organized for the professionals present at Vinoble included tasting sessions held in an unusually attractive venue–the mosque next door. A similar ritual was followed each time whatever the task–tasting, among others, the Sacristía wines from Jerez and the Tokaj Aszú 6 Puttonyos from Hungary, distinguishing between the German Auslese and

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Eisweine wines or sampling the sweet muscatels from Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain as well as the Pedro Ximénez D.O. Montilla-Moriles from Córdoba.
Approximately one hundred of us sat at the tables laid out under the arches with the daylight filtering down from the high vaulted ceiling. To the accompaniment of a bubbling fountain, the experts, like imams in the mihrab, initiated us into the history and characteristics of each of these exquisite wines–first their appearance, then the olfactory aspects with a multitude of evocations and finally the tasting. A true delight for the senses.
Then in the Homenaje del Alcázar tower, the "Taste Laboratories" allowed participants to try for themselves a variety of wines in a relaxed and less formal atmosphere, comparing their qualities as partners for Iberian pork products, foie gras, goat's milk cheese, Mediterranean olives, egg yolk sweets, or even chocolate.
Naturally, this tasting program was in addition to visitors' individual tasting experiences as they walked round the stands in the gardens or through the exquisitely decorated rooms of the palace, in which the main presence was that of the bodegas and wines covered by the Regulating Council of the D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and D.O. Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda, the sponsor of the salon. The Council took the opportunity to announce a new official certification for its most vintage and highest-quality wines. The amontillados, olorosos, palos cortados, and Pedro Ximénez sherries obtaining this distinction will be able to include on their labels the terms "*más de 20 años*" or "*más de 30 años,*" guaranteeing their vintage.

Eva R. Naranjo *is a journalist specializing in foreign trade who collaborates with* Spain Gourmetour.

Photo credits on page 200.

Zingerman´s goes to Spain

Text
Ari Weinzweig

Once a year our training and consulting business, ZingTrain, puts together a week-long "culinary seminar on the road," where a group of about fifteen or so food lovers can have an exceptional "Zingerman's Experience in Europe." While most of the work we do at Zingerman's involves finding and bringing traditional foods to people in Ann Arbor, (and around the country through our mail order catalog and website), the idea behind these trips was that we would reverse that flow and bring the people to the food. This year, I'm happy to say that we took our trip to Spain. As a matter of fact, I'm actually writing this at about twenty thousand feet, en route from Madrid to the U.S. I suppose I could have waited a few weeks, but I wanted to get my thoughts down while the richness of the flavors and the personalities of the people behind the food, were still fully fresh in my mind.

That culinary Spain presents such a sensational palette of exceptional, exotic and enticing foods isn't really a new concept for us at Zingerman's. We've been actively working to get the word out about the great traditional foods of Spain, selling and promoting Spanish cheeses, hams, olives, oils, vinegars, rice, honey, fish and other fine foods since the mid-80s. Still, I return from this week long festival of fine foods with more enthusiasm than ever for just how much great food there is to be found in Spain.

In only one week it's of course impossible to cover the whole of Spain. In fact it would probably take a year, or even years, to come close to getting to know the key components of each of Spain's seventeen regions. On this trip we focused first on Catalonia, then drove over to Castile-La Mancha to take part in the annual saffron harvest. Here are a just a few of the highlights:

Catalan Olive Oil

We visited with two different producers; one from the coastal area near Tarragona, the other from further west, near Lleida. Both producers are working at on a relatively small scale, both are incredibly passionate about what they do, and both are a credit to the quality of Catalan oil. Both work with the unique Arbequina olives which contribute that soft, well rounded, rich butteriness that makes Catalan oil so unique and so versatile. There's a special sort of hint of green apple in the flavor that's unique to oils from this area. Yet, within that Catalan context each of the oils retains its distinctive flavor and aroma. I should add that we had, as they say in Spain, *"la suerte de las aceitunas,"* the luck of the olives. We arrived at the door of one producer's mill only hours after the first olives of the new season were put through the press, meaning that we had the chance to taste the bold, peppery, cloudy, spicy new oil straight from the separator. Speaking of oil, wherever we went in the area we ate lots of *pa amb tomaquet* –the traditional Catalan bread with tomato and olive oil. It appears in almost every home or restaurant setting, whether upscale or down to earth, rustic or refined. In any context it's one of the easiest ways to enjoy good Spanish olive oil.

Paella Perfection

Probably the most entertaining meal of the trip didn't come in an upscale restaurant. Instead it was a *paella,* cooked outdoors over an open wood fire looking out at the rice fields of the Ebro River delta. There we had the exceptional opportunity to eat, laugh, and learn with local growers who are, for good reason, very proud of their rice. The setting certainly added to our enjoyment. The area is a well-known bird refuge –every time I turned around I'd spot another crane or heron flapping its wide white wings. The paella itself was beautifully cooked with saffron sent over from our soon to be visited source in Castile-La Mancha. Ingredients included a wealth of local seafood (fresh shrimp, squid, cuttlefish, mussels, and *galeras* (an ancient crustacean unique to the area) as well chicken, duck, tomato, *pimentón* paprika from Murcia, fresh pork, and a generous dose of local extra virgin olive oil. And of course–the key to the paella–Ebro Delta rice. The paella was perfectly cooked–the rice was delicious, having soaked up all the flavors of the seafood and meat. I can guarantee that every member of the group will remember from here on out that the rice is the essential ingredient in any good paella, and that it's well worth buying better rice to attain paella perfection.

Anchovies from L'Escala

As a long time anchovy lover, I can quickly and unselfconsciously testify that these are amongst the best I've ever had. Prepared by hand in the vil-

lage of L'Escala on the coast about two hours north of Barcelona. The best of the bunch are the anchovies packed in salt which are the biggest, plumpest fish. They're cured for months with nothing but sea salt, then packed into additional sea salt to be shipped. Although Americans aren't very familiar with fish in this form, they're excellent and actually very easy to prepare. Simply remove the backbone and quickly rinse the fish under running water and they're ready to go. Meaty, full flavored, delicious and not at all salty. Most people in the area seem to eat them most often on toast that's been dressed with olive oil, crushed tomato and a little garlic. What could be easier?

Ibérico Ham

All I can say is "Wow!" Because it's as yet unavailable to us in the US, I make sure to eat as much of this amazing ham as possible whenever I'm in Spain. In fact I try to take some on the plane to eat on the way home. I'm particularly partial to that made from pigs that have been finished on a diet of acorns (known in Spain as *bellota*). Aside from eating it at every restaurant opportunity possible, we attended a special tasting of bellota ham and lomo (cured pork loin), put together for us by one Spain's best known producers. If you've never tasted Iberico bellota ham, all I can say is that it might be worth going to Spain for that alone. There is truly nothing else like it. The combination of the unique pig (the Ibérico), its special acorn laden diet, and the aging in mountain air yield a ham that's so rich, so well marbled with fat, so uniquely aromatic, that it stands head and shoulders above any other ham. I don't say that as a slight on the great hams available from Parma, San Daniele, etc. but only to give you an idea of just how special this ham can be. You have to taste it to believe it. Our group members will never forget it. Having heard about recent studies showing that regular consumption of Ibérico ham may lead to the reduction of one's cholesterol levels there's now even a health reason to eat as much as you can.

Traditional Cheeses

We had the opportunity to visit with one of Castile-La Mancha's artisan minded makers of Manchego cheese. We were also lucky enough to experience a wonderful cheese tasting put together for us by Mariano Sanz Pech, who has given enormous amounts of energy to preserving and protecting traditional Spanish cheeses for many years. The tasting included excellent DO Manchegos of varying ages, Mahón, Tetilla, a particularly good wheel of Canary Islands Majorero, to name just a few. Like almost everyone else who tries them for the first time, our tour members were blown away by how good these traditional Spanish cheeses are. But the enthusiasm isn't unique to novices–as someone who's tasted, studied and written about Spanish cheeses for years even I was impressed with how flavorful the cheeses of Spain are.

D.O. Saffron from Castile-La Mancha

For me our visit to the saffron harvest near the town of Consuegra in Castile-La Mancha was probably the single most energizing aspect of the trip. Perhaps

because I'd never been before I was struck by the enormous amount of work that goes into making the saffron. Saffron is anything but a mass-produced product. To the contrary, watching people bend over to pick one flower at a time from their small saffron patches. The "harvest" (if you can call something done on such a small scale a "harvest") takes place over about twenty days each fall. The plots must be visited daily because the saffron crocus opens only in the morning and stays open for only one day. The freshly picked flowers are brought back to home kitchens, where the three crimson colored stigma in each flower are taken out by hand, then toasted slowly and gently over low fires. The aroma of the saffron is sensational–something I'll never forget. And I'm intent on helping to get more of our customers to overcome the inflated fear of saffron's cost and get people to just use it–it's one of the easiest and (it's true) cost effective ways I know to transform your cooking into something special.

Final Food Thoughts

As I said, our brief one week excursion into fine foods of Spain earned us access to just a small segment of what's to be had on the Iberian Peninsula. The oils and vinegars of Andalusia, the incredible cuisine of the Basque country, the cheeses of northern Spain, the cooking of Galicia, the rice and paprika of Murcia, the many great bars and restaurants will have to wait for future trips. So much to see, so much to taste–I'm ready to turn around and go back for more.

Ari Weinzweig *is co-owner of Zingerman's in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and author of* Zingerman's Guide to Good Olive Oil, Zingerman's Guide to Good Vinegar, *and other books.*

Photo credits on page 200.

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EXPORTERS

The following list includes a selection of exporters. It is not intended as a comprehensive guide and, for space reasons, we cannot list all the companies devoted to export of the featured products. The information included is supplied by the individual sources.

Food Products

Almonds and Hazelnuts

An additional list of Spanish manufacturers can be consulted on Internet: www.icex.es/repertorios/menuprin.asp

For more information see page 186.

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alandi@intcoop.com

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info@zaral.com

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Goats' Milk Cheese

For more information see page 186.

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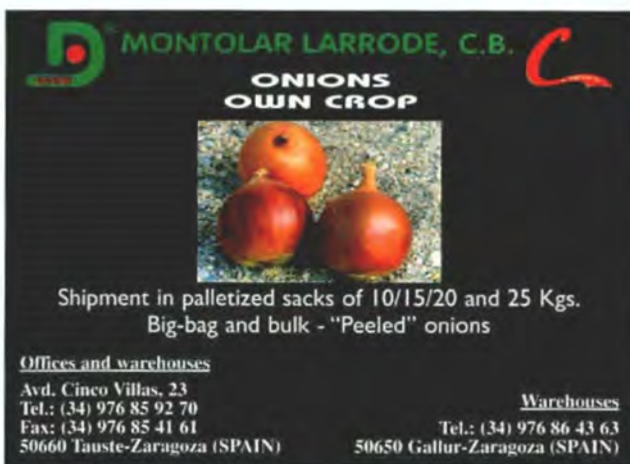

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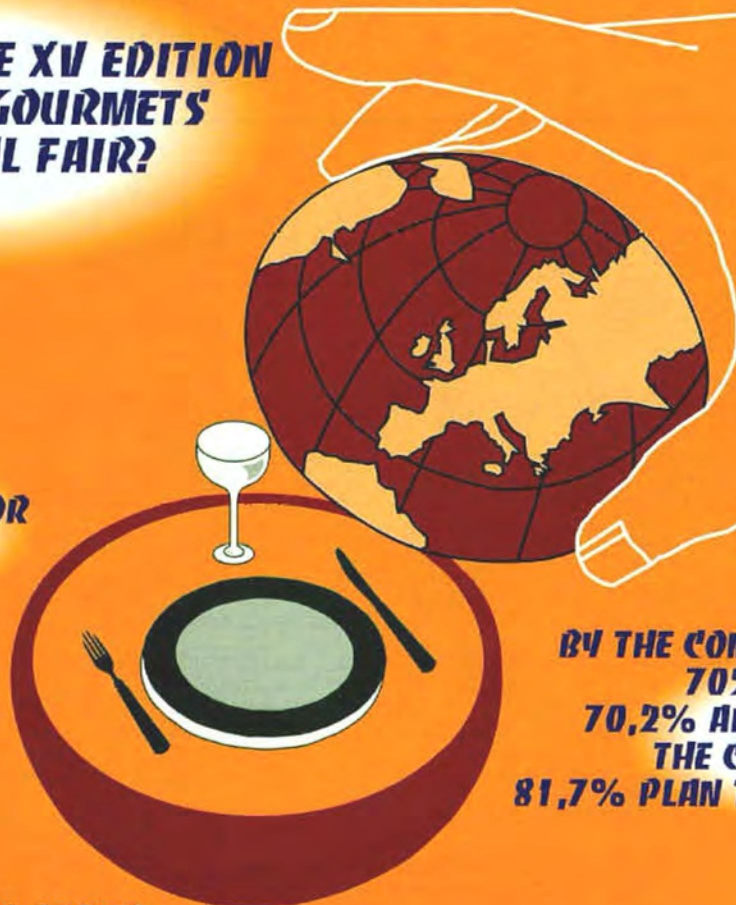

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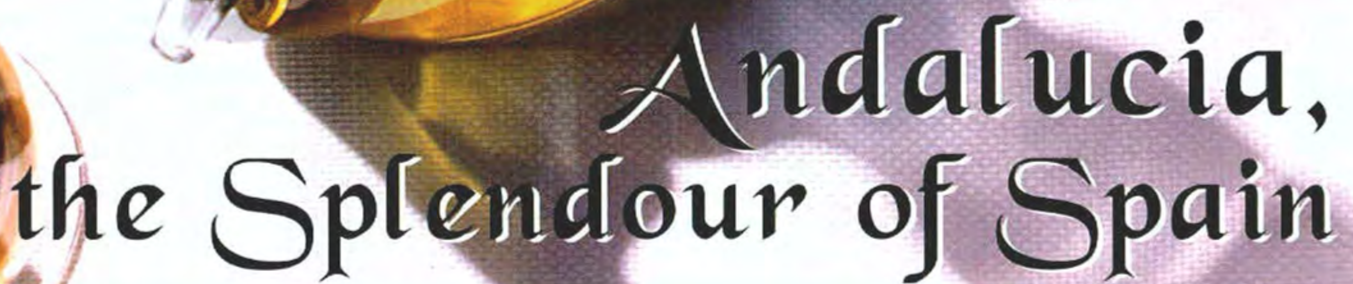

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GLOSSARY

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-León, 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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