SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine

Chillida-Leku

Canarian Banana

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The Cuisines of Spain

The Mediterranean & the Canary Islands

52

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Dear Readers,

Who'd have thought it? The latest edition of France's standard dictionary, the *Petit Robert,* includes *vinaigre de xérès* among several examples illustrating the meaning of the word *vinaigre*. Sherry vinegar, underestimated even in its country of origin for far too long, has certainly made it in France. Have you discovered it yet?

We also feature another edible treat, bananas–fruit of the Canary Islands, the Hesperides of the Ancient World, and one that Eve clearly didn't know about. Was the Garden of Eden perhaps in the Mediterranean? The last chapter in our Cuisines of Spain series takes us to the country's Mediterranean regions, with a brief Atlantic detour to the Canaries. We hope it introduces you to further hidden treasures of the sort of Spanish cuisine that paella-eating package tourists never discover.

This issue also rounds off two other series. The last of our businesses that span centuries specialize in some of the Spain's most classic products: olive oil, charcuterie, and sherry wines, and our final art and food trip visits the Basque Country, a region whose origins are lost in the mists of time and extend, some believe, as far as the Urals. Meanwhile, Tom Burns claims that in Spain the home patch–the *patria chica*–is a huge influence on attitudes to food. Have a good read!

Cathy Boirac *Editor–in–chief*

CONTENTS

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SPAIN GOURMETOUR JANUARY - APRIL 2001 No.52

Editorial 1

Business Watch

The Art of Aging Successfully. Part 3 Spanning Centuries 16

Matters of Import. Part 3 Wine Hot Spots: The Netherlands and the United Kingdom 24

Colors

The Cuisines of Spain. Part 3. The Mediterranean & the Canary Islands 32

Around & About

A Taste for Art. Part 5 Chillida-Leku: A Sculptor's Place 62

Wines

Ribera del Guadiana: A D.O. for the New Century 68

Food Basics

Freckled Fruit: The Comeback of the Canarian Banana 76

Sherry Vinegar: A Taste of Class 88

10 Recipes 95

Colophon

Eating in Spain. Part 3 The Big Questions: Why 110

Regular Features

Books: Lasting Impressions 115

Foreign Affairs 119

Plaza Mayor 121

Exporters 124

Ad Index 126

Spain Overseas 128

Glossary 147

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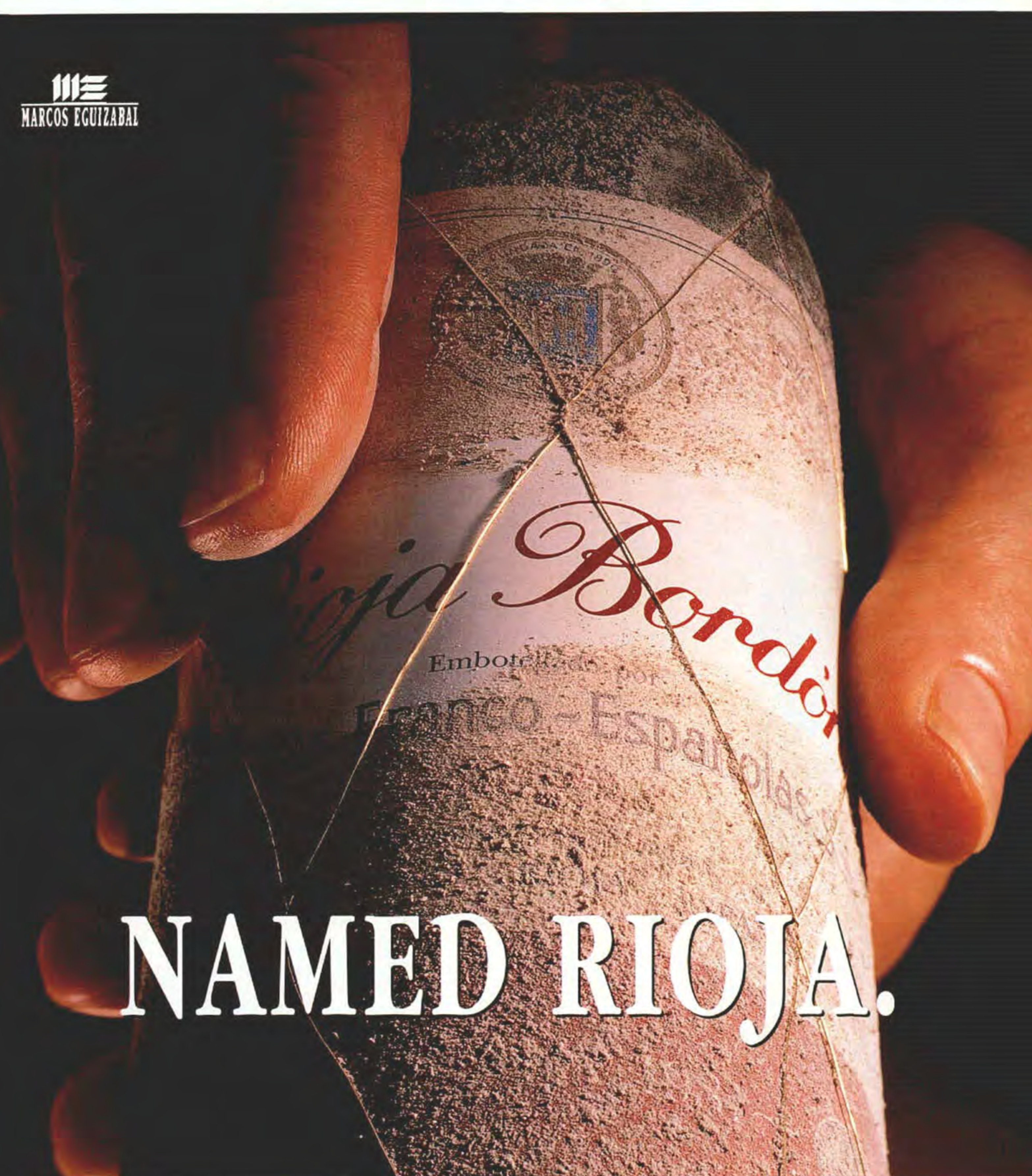

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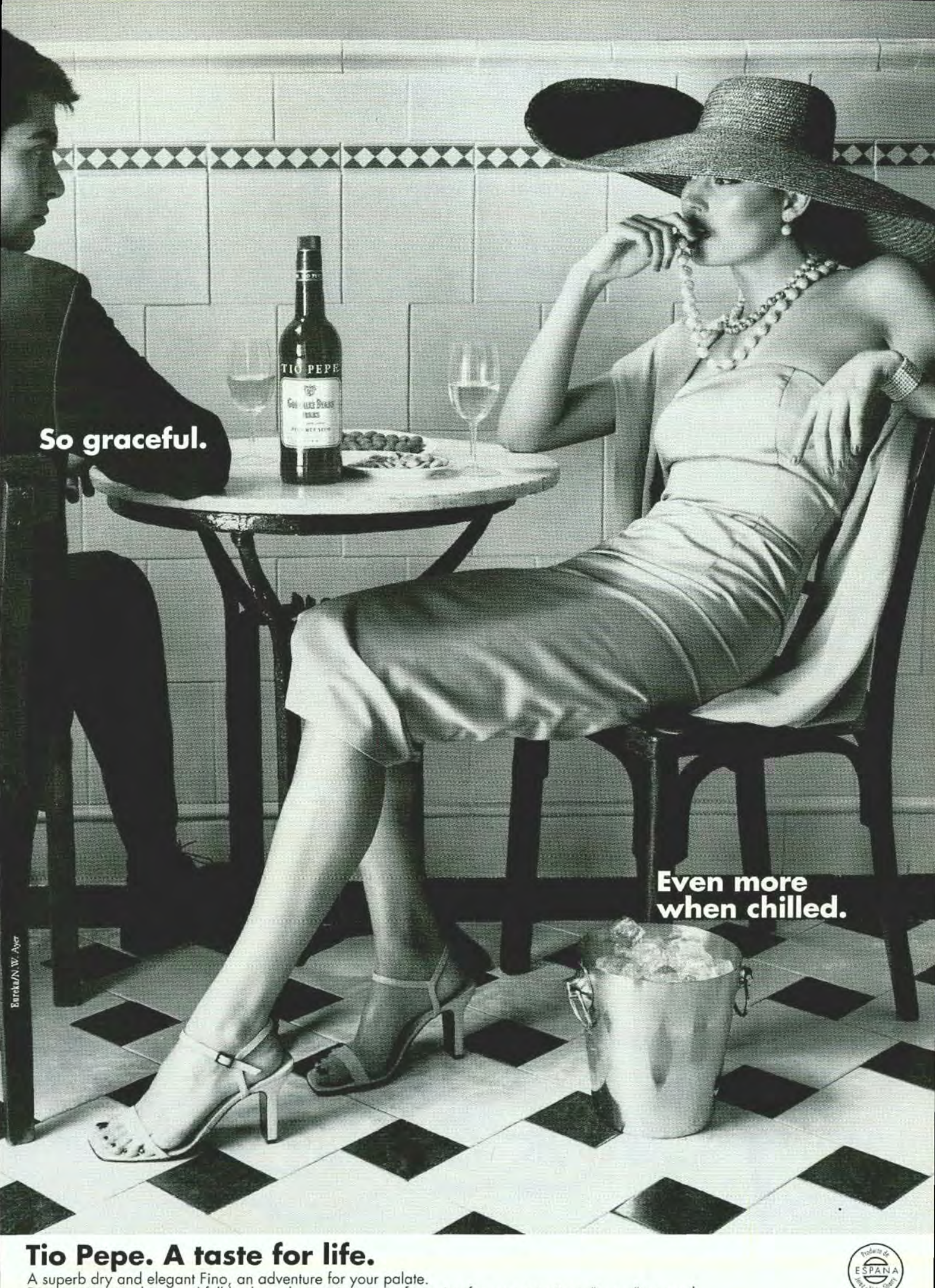
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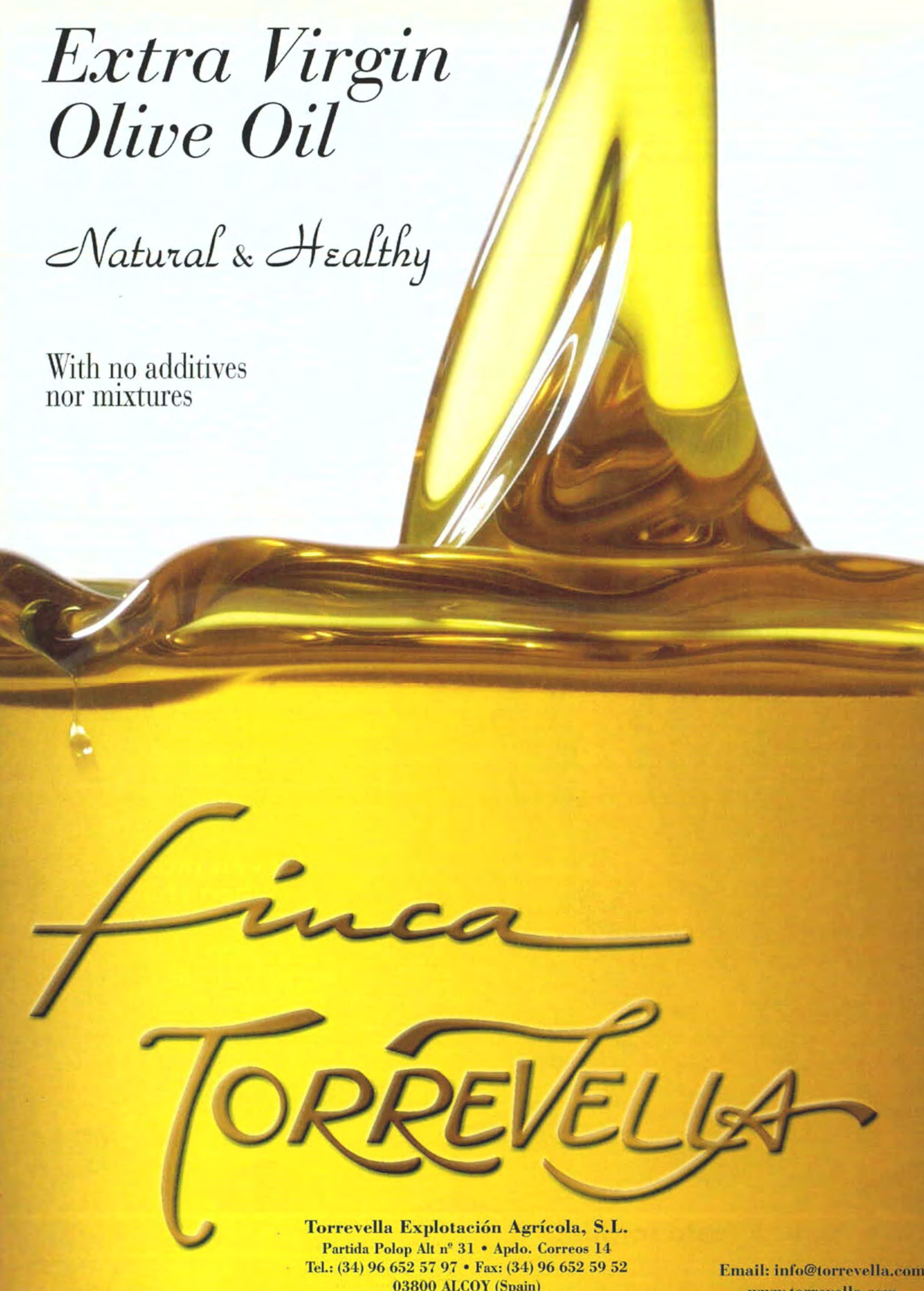
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The Art of Aging Successfully. *Part 3*

ARNAL BALLESTER

SPANNING CENTURIES

"Quality." It's a word that comes up often when talking to the people in charge of running companies which have been in business for more than a century. It is a common factor in all the firms we've featured in our ongoing series on Spanish companies whose origins go back to the 19th century, or even earlier, but which continue to be counted among the top of their class in the 21st.
Without ensuring the quality of their product, they all agree, they could never have survived this long.
"Specialization" is another key ingredient for success. By concentrating on what they've always done best, these companies have positioned themselves as benchmarks in their chosen field.
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they all agree that success over the generations involves combining a certain conservative spirit, in that they must never lose sight of the aims set forth by the preceding generations, with the creativity and imagination required to deal with the demands of an ever-changing, ever-expanding world market.
The three companies featured in this issue, each involved in a different segment of the Spanish food trade, all share these underlying virtues: quality, specialization, respect for the past... and vision for the future.

Text
Mark Little

Casa Riera Ordeix: Sausages with a Very Good Address

In the first decades of the 20th century the Plaza de los Mártires in Vic, a prosperous farming town 40 miles north of Barcelona, was the venue for a lively pig market, the Mercat dels Porcs, held every Saturday. Early photographs show the farmers from the surrounding countryside crowding the square, accompanied by their prize porkers, in a scene rich in colorful rustic ambience. They don't hold the pig market in the square anymore. The action has shifted to Vic's huge, modern livestock exchange. This Catalan town is the pork capital of Spain: at any given moment, there are one million pigs fattening on the Vic region's farms. So what is it with the pigs? you're probably asking at this point. The answer is to be found in three words that may be a mouthful for English speakers but which to any self-respecting Spanish gourmet sound like music to the ear: "*salchichón de Vic*," the super sausage from Catalonia

To learn the secret of what sets this particular sausage in a class of its own, you must go to number 14 on Plaza de los Mártires. From the outside it looks like a normal, five-story town house. The simple initials "C.R.O." mark the door, above which there is a tile plaque depicting saints Llucià and Marcià, the martyrs in honor of whom the square is named. There's nothing to indicate this isn't a normal residence, but step inside and you find that the inhabitants of this particular address are thousands of sausages, hanging from the rafters in the top floors–like stalactites in some mysterious cave, in the words of one Spanish writer–to gently cure in the brisk mountain air of Vic.

This is where Casa Riera Ordeix produces some of the most select sausages in the world. Little has changed here since the Riera family started making sausages in 1852. In the mid-19th century Pau Riera would head out to the country with his mule to buy foodstuffs from local farmers which he would later sell in the town and down on the coast. The most popular items were the country sausages that each Catalan farmer would make following the annual pig slaughter in winter. Sausages were basically a way for the family to store pork over a long period, but there was always some to spare for selling to Pau Riera and other dealers.

Eventually it occurred to Pau and his father, Josep Riera, to start making sausages themselves. Thus was born the salchichón de Vic. By the 1920s there were a score of producers. It's said that King Alfonso XIII, whenever he visited Vic, would invariably make three stops: one to call on the bishop, one to pray at the cathedral, and one to visit a Vic sausage maker. The renowned French chef Paul Bocuse was among the other illustrious figures to fall under the spell of the salchichón de Vic, which one British writer described as "the Rolls Royce of the sausage kingdom."

The Brisk Mountain Air

So what is the secret of Vic's sausages? A lot of it has to do with the climate. Vic lies in a depression, at 484 meters (1,580 feet) altitude, where the air is cool and a soft mist often lies over the land. It is protected by the dry winds of the north, which would harden the hanging sausages, or the damp winds from the sea, which could cause them to spoil. This allows Casa Riera Ordeix's sausages to undergo the exceptionally long curing and aging period which gives them their distinctive, authentic flavor. The sausages have natural casings–the pig's intestine–and the only additives are salt and pepper.

"I believe the key to our company's success has been to stick to what we do best, without trying to expand into other fields," says Joaquim Comella Riera, son of the current director and member of the sixth generation in the family saga. Indeed, Casa Riera Ordeix continues to make the single item it set out to produce a century and a half ago, although nowadays the sausages come in different sizes (from around 300 grams/10 1/2 ounces) to nearly a kilo and a half/ 3 pounds 5 oz) and four years ago they started making *fuet*, a smaller sausage which is cured for a shorter period.

While other companies in the region have branched out into other pork products and have adopted a more industrial approach to sausage making, Casa

Casa Riera Ordeix produces some of the most select sausages in the world since 1852.

Riera Ordeix continues to bet on the craftsmanlike quality of their sausages. Being a small family concern, where executive decisions are taken over the dinner table, enables them to continue in this line. Annual production is just over 50 tons. To ensure the superior quality of their salchichón, they use pork from pampered pigs raised on their own farms. Casa Riera Ordeix cultivates a purposely old-fashioned image. "Our sausages are hand wrapped in paper with labeling that has barely changed over the years," says Joaquim Comella. "It really stands out at the outlets, and it conveys that handcrafted seal that goes into our sausage making. It's our way of telling the consumer that this is indeed something special." But taking a conservative approach to their business does not mean ignoring the facts of modern food business. Casa Riera Ordeix is continually looking for ways to improve their products. For the last two years they have been working with the University of Vic to carry out research aimed at adapting the sausages to changing modern tastes in a way that doesn't compromise the original quality of the sausage or the traditional methods used to make it. Export is another area on which Casa Riera Ordeix is banking for continued success in the future. They started to export in 1992, being among the first Spanish companies to comply with rigorous European Union regulations concerning sausages. Exports now account for around five percent of sales, but Joaquim Comella is convinced this is where the company will see its biggest growth. On the other hand, he feels there's no need to rush things.

"We believe in a slow and steady approach to the international market," he says. Emphasizing the exclusive nature of Vic's sausages, the company is targeting specialty outlets, first starting with restaurants, then selling through delicatessens and high-end retailers such as Harrods or Fortnum and Mason in Great Britain.

The principal customers are the U.K., France, Belgium, and Sweden, and Joaquim Comella reckons there is great potential among discerning gourmets in the U.S. and Japan. Thanks to this flavor-packed treat, more and more people around the world are getting to hear about that magic place called Vic.

Sánchez Romate Hermanos: As Good As It Gets

When ancient map makers depicted the Strait of Gibraltar–the mythical Pillars of Hercules–they marked it with the words "*non plus ultra*," the point beyond which mariners dare not venture. Later the phrase came to mean the upper limit, the peak, the max.

And what better way to describe a spirit which embodies all the finest qualities of Brandy de Jerez?

Rich, elegant and warming to the body and the spirit, this aristocratic tipple, Cardenal Mendoza Non Plus Ultra, slowly matures in three dozen seasoned oak butts in the dark cellars at the Sánchez Romate Hermanos winery in Jerez de la Frontera, along with its equally distinguished younger brothers. In other cellars nearby, yet more rows of venerable oak butts contain the winery's sherries, from crisp, dry fino to velvety sweet Pedro Ximénez.

Time seems to have stood still in these hallowed, silent spaces where you can sense the generations of experience that go into aging the wines and brandies for which the Andalusian town of Jerez is famous around the world. Among the oldest bodegas in Jerez, the Sánchez Romate winery was founded in 1781 by Juan Sánchez de la Torre, an entrepreneur and patron of the arts who came to Jerez from northern Spain. For generation after generation his successors produced fine wines, but by mid-20th century the company seemed to have run its course and was on the verge of bankruptcy. It was then that a group of friends in Jerez stepped in to buy what by then was something of a local institution and save it from disappearing. To signal their commitment to the quality which had always distinguished Sánchez Romate's products, the new owners kept the name and the original determination of the winery's founders: to concentrate solely on making superior wines and spirits.

Being a relatively small company compared to the giants of the sherry trade, all along the Sánchez Romate has focused on pampering its products, ensuring that they sell by their own merits. It is a policy which has paid off in terms of prestige, loyal customers, and the admiration of connoisseurs. It has also won them an enthusiastic following beyond Spain's borders. Sánchez Romate exports to some 26 countries around the world, and 80 percent of the total production of their Cardenal Mendoza brandy goes to the foreign market.

The Sánchez Romate cellars are in the center of Jerez, right next door to the *Atalaya*, a palace which houses the town's curious clock museum (the peacocks which strut around the palace's gardens occasionally escape to wander among the winery's casks). The company has steadfastly refused to sell this valuable real estate and move their operations outside the town, as many other bodegas have done.

"If Jerez were to lose the wine cellars in its center, part of its soul would be lost," says Anunciación Rivelott Ortiz, Sánchez Romate's publicity manager. "Jerez would become just another modern city."

That conservative approach applies to their wine making, from the careful selection of grapes–Palomino and Pedro Ximénez grapes grown on the chalky Albariza soil of the Jerez vineyards–to the time-tested *criadera* and *solera* system (see Glossary on page 147) used to blend different vintages to achieve a wine which combines the depth of age with the freshness of youth.

Dressed for the Occasion

One feature that distinguishes the winery's products is their elegant presentation. Two years ago, they decided that wines of such stature deserved to be dressed for the occasion, and they introduced sleek bottles of striking modern design which, like

the contents, are a veritable work of art. Particular attention is afforded to those really special sherries, the *Vinos de Sacristía*–wines from the centenary soleras, once reserved for a privileged few–which are sold in attractive half-liter bottles that accent their unique character.

The company is particularly proud of its amontillado–that elegant, amber-colored sherry which combines the crispness of a fino and the aged distinction of an oloroso–but what Sánchez Romate is best known for is its Cardenal Mendoza Brandy de Jerez, which they've been making for more than a century.

In 1887 the family started to produce brandy in limited quantities for their own personal consumption and for their friends, but it wasn't long before buyers and dealers were queuing up for bottles. Now brandy accounts for two thirds of the winery's business. It is named Cardenal Mendoza after a key figure in Spanish history, advisor to Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand and patron of the discoverer, Christopher Columbus.

Brandy de Jerez starts life as a clear spirit distilled from grapes. Distilling has been known in Jerez since Moorish times, but it was in the second half of the 19th century that the Jerez wine makers came across the method of aging wine spirits in butts that had previously been used for sherry wine, so that the oak slowly imparts that extra character to the enclosed spirits.

For Cardenal Mendoza, the spirits are first aged for two years in butts which have previously contained sweet Pedro Ximénez sherry. After that, the brandy undergoes a solera and criadera system similar to that used for sherry, in which the younger brandies are gradually blended with the spirits from older butts to ultimately acquire that complexity of aromas, flavors, and nuances which are the unique sign of a true Brandy de Jerez. The aging period for the classic Cardenal Mendoza is 15 years, and double that for the Cardenal Mendoza Carta Real. In the case of Cardenal Mendoza Non Plus Ultra, of which barely 1,000 bottles are released each year, the brandy will contain blends of more than 50 years of age.

But even here in the venerated world of brandy there is room for innovation. Sánchez Romate is excited about its latest product, launched at the end of 2000, and a first in Jerez: called *Uno en mil*, or "One-in-a-Thousand," it is a single-barrel brandy. That is, rather then being blended with the brandies from other butts, this is a spirit that comes from just one selected cask. It is the mission of enologist Ricardo Real, accompanied by the cellar master to carefully sample the finished brandy, butt by butt, and select which ones deserve to be enshrined for bottling as a single-barrel brandy. Each one is unique, unrepeatable, special... and a fitting tribute to more than a century of fine craftsmanship.

In 1887 the family started to produce brandy for their own consumption and for their friends.

Grupo Ybarra: The Secret of the "Y"

Few people in Spain would relate the Basques–those dwellers of windswept coasts and misty valleys of northern Spain–with a fiery Andalusian fiesta, swirling flamenco dancers, and proud horsemen on prancing horses.

Yet the biggest fiesta of them all, the April Fair in Seville, was started by a Basque.

On the other hand, José María de Ybarra was no ordinary man. An entrepreneur from Bilbao, he came to Seville in the middle of the 19th century. His business ventures encompassed many fields, from shipping to agriculture. He was also a prominent figure in Seville social circles, a patron of the arts, a benefactor of hospitals and he served as mayor, thanks to all of which he was named Count of Ybarra. In 1847, he and a Catalan, Narciso Bonaplata, decided to ask permission from the Queen of Spain to organize a major livestock fair in Seville.

In Dos Hermanas, a town 17 km (10 miles) south of Seville, in the offices of the olive oil company Ybarra founded more than a century and a half ago, there is a large oil painting which shows the first edition of the fair. Although sheep and cows are in evidence, there is already an indication that festive fun was just as important at this particular event as trading livestock. Eventually the annual gathering evolved into the April Fair of Seville, the mother of all fiestas, to which the *Sevillanos* devote themselves heart and soul each spring.

The olive oil company that Ybarra founded in 1846, now run by the fifth and sixth generation of the family, has proven just as durable. Say "Ybarra" to any Spaniard, and they will immediately think of olive oil, pickled olives, mayonnaise...

Although today the company produces a wide range of labels, and each year introduces new products, they are all connected to the original core business: food and, more specifically, olives, the healthful key ingredient in the Mediterranean diet. Being consistent with the original concept is part of their strategy. Another is constantly promoting the name, in order to ensure instant brand recognition. Their slogan is "the secret is in the Y," which has become a catch phrase in Spain.

"We place a lot of importance on ensuring that the consumer identifies the name with the care for quality which has always been the underlying principle of our business strategy," says Tristán Ybarra, the export manager.

At first, Ybarra was devoted exclusively to olives–in particular the Manzanilla variety which flourishes in the Seville region–sold both as pickled treats and pressed as olive oil. As early as 1870 they made sure to be one step ahead of the competition, by installing Spain's most advanced olive oil refinery and packaging line, which allowed them to gain a leading position on the Spanish market and increase exports.

It was in the middle of the 20th century that they began to branch out into other, albeit related fields, starting first with their mayonnaise. They are now one of the leading mayonnaise brands on the domestic market, and in 1998 launched their popular mayonnaise made with 100 percent olive oil, the first of its kind, recalling the rich flavors of traditional Spanish homemade *mayonesa*.

As early as 1870, Ybarra installed Spain's most advanced olive oil refinery and packaging line.

The diversification of their activities has continued, especially since the mid-1990s, the idea being that in years when certain products are less successful for whatever reason, other products are there to take up the slack. Mayonnaise was just the first in a line of sauces which now includes everything from ketchup to béarnaise. There is also a range of vinegars.

"The idea was to expand from being a processor of olives into becoming a full-fledged food group," says Tristán Ybarra. "This approach has allowed the firm to survive during the slow years, and to continue to grow during the good years."

The latest major development was the introduction of a line of preserved vegetables, focusing on specialty produce such as artichokes, cardoons, garlic shoots, or beets plus various salads, marketed under the La Hacienda de Ybarra label.

Today, the Ybarra group encompasses three companies–Aceites Ybarra, Aceitunas Ybarra, and Hijos de Ybarra–each dealing with a specific segment of the group's activity. Their plant in Dos Hermanas is the production center for their olive oil, while in the neighboring province of Huelva a second plant specializes in the range of pickled olives. The vegetable department is based in Navarre, in the north of Spain, for this region is the source of some of the finest farm produce in the country.

Consumers abroad, too, are familiar with the famous "Y." Due to the founder's connections with shipping and trade, from the start much of the company's activity was geared to the export market, starting with regions with close trade and cultural ties with Spain, such as Latin America, and spreading to other, new markets. Today, Ybarra is present in nearly 60 countries, with exports accounting for around 20 percent of sales, and Tristán Ybarra sees great potential for future growth, both in established markets and in new ones such as China. Olive oil is the top selling item abroad, followed by olives and vinegar.

With constant research into new products, with the establishment of their own streamlined distribution network to reduce delivery times, with the introduction of online trading for wholesale clients, with the launching of special lines aimed at the restaurant and hotel trade, Ybarra is yet another prime example of a Spanish firm which draws on more than a century of past experience to secure a bright future.

Mark Little *is an American-born freelance journalist based in southern Spain. The editor of the www.spainview.com Web site, he contributes to publications and travel guides of Spain.*

Photo credits on page 148.

Matters of Import. Part 3

WINE HOT SPOTS

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.

This third part of our series with a view to identifying the image enjoyed by Spanish wine outside of Spain itself, takes us to its mainmarkets: Netherlands and the United Kingdom. As in the past two issues, our selection of wine importers necessarily represents just a small, but valuable sample.

MARIA ALCOBRE

TEXT
RENÉ VAN HEUSDEN

Spanish Wines Perform Well in the Netherlands

Over the last ten, fifteen years, Spanish wines have built up a very strong position in the Dutch market. This market is known for its tough character. Competitive pricing is always an issue. Dutch wine consumers as well as wine buyers are not impressed by ratings. They focus instead on value for money. On the other hand, the Dutch are open minded. And they read the groundbreaking books on Spanish wines written by Hubrecht Duijker. These are some of the reasons why Spain could become a major player. However, at the moment Spain is facing more and more competition. What will be the future?

From Aldi to Amstel

I spoke with three highly profiled personalities in the Dutch wine trade, who are all involved with the import of wines from Spain. Trini Balust, born in Catalonia, is one of the leading specialists in Spanish wines in the Netherlands. In the mid 80's she started to import wines from her native country as a hobby. Nowadays, her fast growing, Amsterdam-based company has an exclusively Spanish portfolio with over a hundred wines. Cava Barcelona sells to retailers and restaurants. Louis Kat is the owner of Wijnkoperij Okhuysen in Haarlem. His company enjoys an excellent reputation both for its style and quality. Okhuysen is a traditional importer that sells to restaurants and private consumers. For many years the portfolio was almost exclusively French, but recently Kat has been surprisingly successful with Spanish wines from relatively unknown regions. Eddie de Boer is founder and CEO of Vinites. This is also a Haarlem-based company. In the early days De Boer worked with wines from Italy and Spain only, hence the name Vinites. Nowadays the portfolio includes wines from many other countries, but Spain is still an important element of it. As a wholesaler, De Boer deals with a broad range of clients, from discounter Aldi to the Michelin starred restaurant of the famous Amstel Hotel. Spanish wines are represented in every segment of the Dutch market!

Trini Balust
"Once people discover how well Spanish wines match food, they love them."

Eddie de Boer
"Many producers have not been aware of the importance of a healthy price quality ratio."

Still Undiscovered Diversity

As different as their backgrounds may be, all these three importers agree on some key issues: most Spanish wines still offer value for money, consumer-friendly accessibility and an increasing diversity in flavors. This diversity should be a main asset. Trini Balust and Eddie de Boer both point out that when they started their businesses in the 80's, Spanish quality wine was virtually unknown, with the exception of Jerez and Rioja. These wines are still references for Spanish wine in general, though nowadays many more D.O.s are represented. Still, a lot of them are familiar names for insiders only. Therefore, the time has come to show more than just a few well-known names such as Rioja. According to Balust, Spain has an incredible variety to offer. She likes to follow her own personal taste and not the mainstream trends. "I'm excited about the developments in Spain itself. I have noticed that producers compare and taste their own wines with those from other regions and countries. This open-mindedness has led to an increasing number of sophisticated top wines in several regions. It is the message that Spain has to communicate to its foreign markets." She is also convinced that people will be prepared to pay a bit more for these wines. It is just a matter of education. "Once people discover how well Spanish wines match food, they love them." Wine lists all around the country confirm this. Dutch restaurateurs have started taking

Spanish wines seriously. Some constructive critical notes come from Eddie de Boer. This "Dutch Italian" likes Spain a lot but he prefers Italy and France to Spain, simply because these countries offer an even greater diversity. Having said this, at the same time he is convinced of Spain's still underdeveloped potential. He knows what he is talking about. De Boer was a pioneer in introducing modern style Rioja wines and wines from once completely obscure regions such as Almansa. For the last two years, he has been concerned about the Spanish marketing strategy. "Too many producers have not been aware of the importance of a healthy price quality ratio in the Dutch market, especially in supermarkets." He criticizes the dramatic price increase in Rioja and, even more, the fact that regions felt the need to follow this bad example. "Let's hope that this is not the way people want to be taken seriously." He blames the Riojans for being arrogant, the others for being short sighted. His analysis is to the point. The price increases have led to a serious reaction. Imports dropped significantly in 1999, especially for Rioja, and South Africa took over Spain's position as the number two behind France. A clear signal?

A Matter of Style

I spoke with Francophile Louis Kat about Spanish wines over lunch in an elegant restaurant named Chapeau! The owner, who is a member of "Les Jeunes Restaurateurs," made us taste several of his own and Kat's favorite Spanish wines. Great food wines,

Louis Kat
"Ribera del Duero and Toro are wines with lots of personality. It's worth investing in these kinds of wine."

indeed. Why did Kat ever decide to explore Spain? "Initially I went to northern Spain to find affordable alternatives to French white wines that had become too expensive." He was not only excited about the hospitality he found there, but also about the wines. Wines like Rueda and Valdeorras. "We started with only a few hundred cases and didn't know whether we could sell them at all. Now they are our best selling wines with thousands of cases. They show lots of character and originality." Reds started to attract his attention too, especially the ones from regions like Ribera del Duero and Toro. "Wines with lots of personality. It's worth investing in this kind of wine. In the beginning you have to be patient and explain to the customers what they can expect. You have to make them curious. Sooner or later they will get the taste." Interestingly, all my interview partners quote Rueda as a shining example of a region that has managed to combine modern technology with local flavor, plus a reasonable price level. In this context they also refer to Somontano, another "new" region with a very good image in the Dutch market. Despite the aforementioned pricing issues, they are quite optimistic about the position of Spanish wines. De Boer thinks that Spain's wine industry has a very solid structure. He also signals the rise of small independent producers, which creates more diversity and competition. Balust, Kat, and De Boer are not against international grape varieties in Spanish vineyards, but it is not necessarily what they are looking for. Everyone agrees: Spain's basic strength lies in its own grapes. And how about the use of oak? Moderation please! Louis Kat decided to ask his producer in Penedés to reduce the amount of oak in one of his wines. He got exactly what he asked for, tailor made.

__René van Heusden__ is one of the leading wine writers in the Netherlands. He contributes to several specialized magazines, including Perswijn, Adfundum *and* Horeca Journal, *as well as Internet sites, including that of the Dutch Wine Information Center. In 1999 he published his first book,* Klare wijn, klare taal. *Since 1990 he has been a regular visitor to wine regions all over Spain.*

TEXT
CHARLOTTE HEY

Stable Prices in the U.K.

Spain's profile in the U.K. has improved greatly over the past twenty years. Gone are the days of cheap brands flooding the market. New Spanish regions and small producer names are gaining recognition across the shelves of the land. But total market share has been falling and Spanish exporters are having to look at the market with fresh eyes. We talked to three of the U.K.'s leading Spanish importers and got their views.

Over the past two years the situation for Spanish wines in the U.K. market has taken a downward turn. The impact of strategic marketing and big investment in promotion has meant that New World producing countries such as Australia, Chile, and Argentina have stolen market share from the Old World. But Spain is not alone in its plight: the French, Italian, and Germans are suffering too. "In my opinion Chile and Australia have stolen the march not just on Spain but on all of the European countries," states Kevin McAlindon of Direct Wine Supplies, Belfast and winner of the U.K. Spanish Wine Merchant of the Year 2000. "Out of all of them I think that Spain is standing up the best." And he is not alone in his belief. As Manuel Moreno, managing director of Moreno Wines in London says, "Spain has the diversity of regions, climates, soils, and microclimates. It has the different varieties that offer what the consumer is starting to look for." He continues, "It has a plethora of styles to offer and it has the capacity to produce volume wines that can provide the British market with the value for money wines it is demanding." McAlindon adds, "I often use the words of Miguel Torres–Spain is the New World in the Old World–and I believe it really is. As a country it really has some fantastic potential and the offer is ever changing with so many luminaries arriving on the scene. When driving through Spain I never know what gem I am going to find, from small growers in Rioja offering value for money to new wines from unknown regions."

The U.K. wine market is often dubbed as one of the most competitive in the world. It is certainly spoiled for choice. So much so that John Hawes of Laymont & Shaw, one of the U.K.'s oldest Spanish importers, based in Cornwall believes that the consumer "is less and less concerned with what re-

John Hawes
"The British consumer wants quality wine and at a stable price."

Manuel Moreno
"The Spanish producer in general is not keeping in touch with consumer desires."

gion or country a wine comes from and more bothered about the style of the packaging, the wine in the bottle, and whether it is on sale." Hawes believes that the future for Spanish wines lies in re-emphasizing its quality. "Quality of wine is what matters; the Spanish cause is not helped by the appearance of poor quality wines on the market from leading regions like Rioja," he continues, "the British consumer wants quality wine and at a stable price."

New World vs. Old World

This is where the problem lies in terms of its competitors in the U.K. New World producing countries have been able to offer stability of price for the past three years. This coupled with strong marketing plans means that New World nations continue to beat the Old World nations across the board.
As Manuel Moreno points out, "The New World producing countries have changed the perspective of

both the buyer and the consumer in the U.K. In my opinion, the Spanish producer in general is not keeping in touch with consumer desires. As a result Spain's total market share has fallen behind." And he has a point: the general feeling among the trade is that Spain has not been delivering the price stability and marketing budgets that this market now demands. As a result we have to ask the question–can Spain regain the market share it has lost? Moreno has very clear views about this, "Yes, of course we can. But we have to prove to the buyers and the consumers that we can produce better and more competitively priced wines, consistently. It's all right making good wines but we have to make sure they are competitively priced." John Hawes agrees, "The New World countries have been able to provide continuous price stability and the recent Spanish price hikes that have been seen in this market has meant that listings have been lost and volume has been hit."
The popularity that Spanish wines experienced during the nineties is now at an end, but as Moreno states, "It is not a totally grim picture. The situation is so much better than it was 20 years ago. You can see that in the figures. Yes, we have reached a peak and we still have a lot further to go to raise our image, but I know that Spain has the raw material to do it." Kevin McAlindon feels that as a Spanish specialist his job is to influence the consumer. "I have to be there to teach them about Spanish wines and lead them in their buying choice. I do not think that the consumer actually knows what they are looking for when buying any wines. As a salesman I

have to make the most of any window of opportunity that may present itself for Spain."
John Hawes is firm in his belief that boundaries no longer exist in the consumers mind. "Countries like Australia, California, and Chile have succeeded in making grape varieties the key to consumer recognition. The Spanish D.O.s have done a good job thus far in setting a minimum quality standard but they are now in danger of becoming too restrictive." Hawes believes that "for any European country to compete on the same level with New World producing nations the most important factors in the future will be good quality wines at a sensible price."

Kevin McAlindon
"Spain is the New World in the Old World."

Despite the prolonged efforts of Spanish producers to build the profile of lesser known regions, consumer recognition of Spanish regions remains firmly rooted with Rioja and Cava. "Ask any consumer to name a Spanish wine region and nine out of ten will say Rioja," states Moreno. "Rioja and Cava have been important in setting the standard but really the consumer is not aware of any other regions." That is not to say, however, that new regions or varieties do not have the potential to help build up Spain's market share in the future. As Kevin McAlindon points out, "Spain offers from top quality Albariños to value for money quaffing reds from La Mancha. The potential is vast but consumers are not aware of the choice from Spain."

Redefinition

The consensus among the trade is that Spain's great unique selling point to be found in its red wines is Tempranillo: a quality grape variety with a great potential. At the moment the market is dominated by wines made solely from or with Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Although Tempranillo cannot compete at the same level, "Tempranillo is gaining recognition," as John Hawes says, "and is setting a bench mark as a native quality variety." Moreno agrees "Tempranillo will never be the international powerhouse that Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon is, but the styles that Tempranillo offers are varied and," he concludes, "it is proving a great blending component–Cabernet/Tempranillo blends are giving some stunning results across Spain."

There is no denying that Spanish wines are reaching a period of redefinition in the U.K. market. Some would say that the picture is not so bright in a market that seems to be more price sensitive and more competitive by the day. But, pessimists beware. Spain has the natural resources to produce quality

wines at the right price. Image is the key and although some navel gazing may be required in the short term as Manuel Moreno concludes, "The future is uncertain but there is potential. It's going to be a hard fight. The resources are there and when it comes to Spain there's no doubt it will be exciting."

Charlotte Hey is publishing director for the U.K.'s leading wine trade publication Harpers Wine & Spirit Weekly.

Photo credits on page 148.

THE MEDITERRANEAN & THE CANARY ISLANDS

TEXT
LOURDES PLANA

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD

The many countries grouped around the Mediterranean Sea (the very word means "between lands") all share common cultural origins. The quality of light, the blue of sea and sky, and the climate typical of the Mediterranean all seem to bestow a particular character on the peoples that inhabit its shores. Half of Spain's coastline is lapped by the

The Cuisines of Spain. Part 3

Mediterranean, from the Catalan Pyrenees on the border with France, as far as Andalusia. The Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Valencia, Murcia, and Andalusia all belong in this Mediterranean chapter. So, by virtue of climate and lifestyle, do the Canary Islands, despite their Atlantic location.

In this chapter, we start in the north and work southward exploring the best foodstuffs produced in these areas of Spain: their gastronomic borders are sometimes less distinct than their geographical ones since the primary ingredients used are often the same, and the way they are treated very similar from area to area.

Joan Miró
(1893-1983)

This luminous drawing by Miró is a detail from a poster he created for a tourism promotion campaign for Mallorca, the island where he lived for many years and where much of his varied body of work is on display. Miró established his own language of shapes and colors in paintings, ceramics, engravings and even tapestries.

Salvador Dalí
(1904-1989)

Although Dalí's participation in the surrealism movement was brief, he is considered by much of the general public as the quintessential surrealist artist. *La Cesta del Pan* (The Basket of Bread), 1929, is one of his most representative works.

It was via the Mediterranean that the Greeks and Romans first arrived in the Iberian Peninsula, penetrating inland along the River Iber (the modern-day Ebro), whose name they adopted for the country they designated Ibérica.

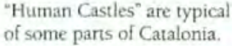
Catalonia is made up of the provinces of Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida, and Girona.

CATALONIA

THE
MEDITERRANEAN
& THE CANARY ISLANDS

Gaudí's *Sagrada Familia* and Llobregat Falls, Sierra Cadi-Moixero, Barcelona.

The territories of Girona and the County of Barcelona were possessions of the French Crown from the 8th-9th centuries. Later (as chronicled in the chapter covering Aragon), the marriage between Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona, and Doña Petronila of Aragon united Barcelona once and for all with the Peninsula's inland territories. As if echoing its topographical characteristics, mountainous and rugged in the north, flat and dry inland, and with a gentler climate and landscape on the coast, the cuisine of Catalonia could be said to fall into three clearly differentiated categories: a mountain cuisine, substantial and aromatic, reminiscent of French cuisine just across the border; an inland cuisine, austere and understated, and very similar in style to that of Aragon; and a coastal cuisine, imaginative, elaborate and very Mediterranean. What all three have in common, though is their repertoire of four basic sauces: *picada*, *all i oli*, *sofrito*, and *samfaina*.

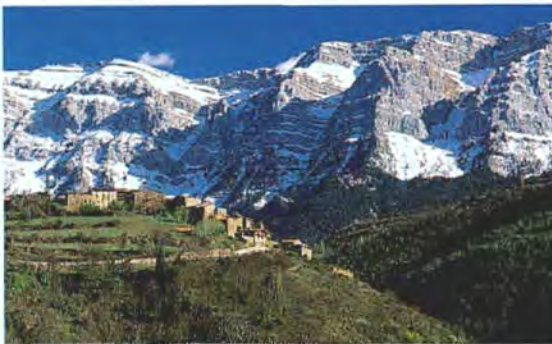


"Human Castles" are typical of some parts of Catalonia.

A picada is a thick paste of almonds or hazelnuts, garlic, toasted bread, and olive oil pounded by pestle and mortar: it provides the basis for sauces, meat stews, soups, and fish dishes.
All i oli is an emulsion of garlic and olive oil, usually enriched by the addition of egg yolk: it is served as an accompaniment to grilled meat, snails, fish, and noodle and rice dishes.
A sofrito is made with onion, tomato, and aromatic herbs gently cooked in olive oil: it is the point of departure for almost all stew and hotpot type dishes and also provides the basis for other sauces.
The fourth of these basic sauces, samfaina, (known as *pisto* in other parts of Spain) is essentially a sofrito incorporating eggplant (aubergine), tomato, onion, zucchini (courgette), and capsicum: it is used both as a garnish and as the basis for other sauces.
The range of primary ingredients produced in Catalonia is vast and of exceptionally high quality. The produce from its *huertas*, as the fruit and vegetable growing areas are known, has an excellent reputation both in Spain and abroad: broad beans, peas, eggplants, tomatoes, artichokes (particularly from El Maresme, not far from Barcelona), and fruit from Lérida: pears (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45), apples, cherries, figs–are prime examples. Lérida and Tarragona provinces produce extra quality virgin olive oils which rank among Spain's best over all: they include oils with Denomination of Origin status (see Glossary on page 147). from Siurana (in Tarragona) and Les Garrigues (in Lérida). Nuts and dried fruits, which are produced there in quantity, are essentials of both the cuisine and economy of Catalonia (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 51).

Decorative detail in Besalú, Girona.

Chicken with *samfaina* vegetable sauce



La Cerdanya, in the Catalan Pyrenees.

Fish, both plentiful and varied, provides the basis of its coastal cuisine and the Catalans are unrivaled in the breadth of their repertoire of recipes using the many species caught along this coast.

Anchovies from La Escala (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38) are a famous delicacy, as are prawns from Rosas, and red mullet, sole, cuttlefish, and lobster from all along this coast.

The mountains of Catalonia are rich in game large and small, and they are also the source of enormous quantities of wild fungi. The Catalans are Spain's most enthusiastic mushroom foragers (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 45) and out of their enthusiasm has emerged a delicious, seasonal, natural cuisine which is increasingly spreading to other regions.

The Catalans' skill at making use of the whole slaughtered pig is part of a long tradition and deserves special mention, since their charcuterie is considered to be among the best in the country. Specialties include *butifarras* (sausages which are cooked not cured or just cured very lightly, and which come in various versions: white, black, with rice, and extra spicy "*butifarras de perol,*" intended "for the pot," or for stewing); *salchichones* (salami-type sausages), fat round *bisbes*, and very thin versions of salchichón known as *fuets*.

Lamb, rabbit, and game birds, particularly wild duck, make up the rest of this region's meat resources. Game birds are often eaten stuffed with fresh and dried fruits, this sweet-savory combination, medieval in origin, being a great favorite here. Good examples include duck with pears, lobster with chocolate, cod with honey, and chicken with caramel.

Another characteristic peculiar to Catalan cuisine is dishes that combine meat and fish. This type of combination (called "*mar y montaña*" in Spanish, the equivalent of "surf and turf") is found particularly in the Ampurdán, an area which straddles the foothills of the Pyrenees and the coast: chicken with lobster is the local classic.

Pine nuts, almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts (D.O. hazels are grown in Reus) are all prominent ingredients in local traditional sweets and desserts such as *panellets* (little almond, yam, and pine nut cakes, traditionally made for All Saints' Day) and *carquinyols* (crisp almond biscuits). But there are other delicious ones, too, such as pizza-like *cocas*, which can be sweet or savory, cream puffs known as *lionesas*, *crema catalana* (thick custard topped with crisp caramel), *mille-feuille* pastries, and the famous *monas de Pascua*, the (usually chocolate) novelties that godparents give their godchildren at Easter. These can range from traditional eggs and bunnies to edible works of art when Catalonia's master *patissiers* give their imagination free rein.

Joaquín Sorolla (right)
(1863-1923)

Valencia-born Sorolla masterfully captured the quality of Mediterranean light. Landscapes and human figures were his central themes, depicted on a multitude of works including this detail of *Vendimiando* (Grape Harvest),1914. With more than 2,200 oil paintings to his credit, he was the most prolific of Spanish painters.

The Autonomous Community of Valencia is made up of three provinces: Castellón de la Plana, Valencia, and Alicante, and its topography includes mountainous areas, dry and arid areas, splendid coasts, and fertile fruit and vegetable growing *huertas*.

THE
MEDITERRANEAN
& THE CANARY ISLANDS

VALENCIA

Rice fields in Valencia's La Albufera.

The fact that the Valencian Community and Murcia are described in popular lore as the "market gardens of Spain" is not attributable to their rainfall, which is very scarce, but rather to an irrigation system composed of channels, water wheels, and underground cisterns which they inherited from the Arabs. Capitalizing effectively on this ancestral method of irrigation is so important to the economic well being of its small farmers that a curious institution, unique in the world and dating from the 14th century, still survives in Valencia. This is the *Tribunal de Aguas*–the "Water Court"–whose function is to monitor good practice in everything to do with irrigation. The seven popularly elected "judges" who make up the bench–one for each main channel tapped off the region's major river, the Turia–meet every Tuesday in the open air at the entrance porch of Valencia Cathedral where they resolve any problems raised with them according to established rules.

The water that is so vital to the huertas is equally vital to the Spanish Levante's most typical crop: rice (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 50). Unsurprisingly, this is an area of expert rice cooks and a vast repertoire of rice dishes. They use ingredients from the huerta (vegetables and pulses), the countryside (rabbit, snails, pork, and chicken), from the Albufera, the

El Huerto del Cura palm grove in Elche, Alicante.

great freshwater lagoon alongside the Mediterranean (duck) and, of course, the sea (fish and seafood). These rice dishes can be "dry" (paellas and oven-baked dishes) or "wet" (with fish, meat, or vegetables). But although the range is wide and interesting, it is the *arroz en paella*, or paella valenciana that has become known the world over. The word "paella" actually refers to the two-handled shallow metal pan in which it is cooked–reminiscent of the Roman *patella* in which offerings were made to the gods.

Paella, now a world-famous dish.

Another local specialty, and one which newcomers to Valencia find surprising, is *fideua*, a noodle and fish dish which, given the similarity in preparation method, is clearly a close relative of these many rice dishes.

Fruit and vegetables are this region's biggest economic resource: tomatoes, eggplants, capsicums, broad beans, peaches, apricots, loquats from Callosa d'en Sarria (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38), bagged dessert grapes from Vinalopó (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37), Alicante mountain cherries (these last three are all D.O. products) and above all citrus fruits. Superb quality oranges, mandarins, and lemons are exported from Valencia all over the world.

Fish and seafood are another important economic factor, and include monkfish, gilthead, bonito and red mullet, incomparable king prawns from Vinaroz, striped prawns from Denia, *dátiles de mar* (date mussels) from Peñíscola, some of which are unique to the Mediterranean. This fish catalogue should also include *anguila* (eel), a river species eaten only in this region and in Galicia: cooked in different ways: with rice, chicken, green beans, or saffron, and

Valencia has an abundance of all sorts of citrus fruit.

Valencia's La Albufera, a large fresh-water lagoon by the edge of the Mediterranean.

especially with garlic and *pimentón* (sweet paprika), it is a key ingredient in a dish known as *all i pebre* (the name means "garlic and pepper"). As in other regions of Spain, the pig is the most important animal reared for food in Valencia, and it produces good charcuterie.

Valencians love sweet things: almond-based *almendrados*, sweet cocas, *tortas*, *arnadís* (pumpkin cakes), and *turrones* prove the point. Alicante challenges Catalonia, Valencia, and Italy in claiming to be the inventor of turrón, the delicious nougat-like sweet made of almonds, honey, and sugar. Two main types are made: *turrón duro*, or *turrón de Alicante* (a hard type, made by amalgamating whole almonds with sugar and honey), and *turrón blando*, or *turrón de Jijona* (a soft type for which the almonds are ground up before mixing with the sugar and honey), both D.E. products (see Glossary on page 147).

Horchata, a refreshing milky drink obtained by crushing chufas (earth almonds, or tiger nuts) (Valencian chufas are a D.O. product) and ice creams are two other favorite local indulgences.

MURCIA

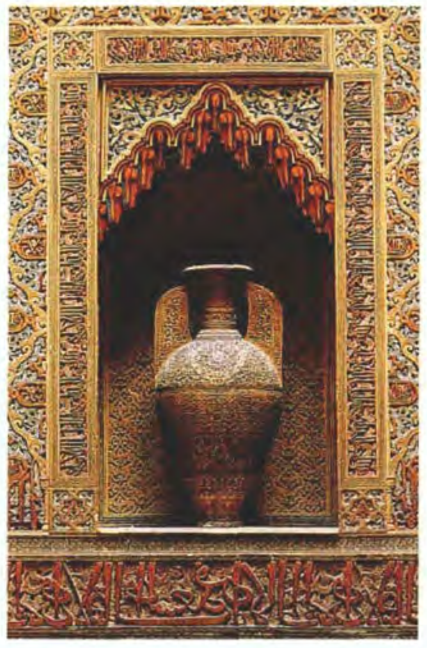
THE MEDITERRANEAN & THE CANARY ISLANDS

Murcia lies south of the Valencian Region and, as mentioned earlier, is Spain's other "market garden." The abundant output of its fertile huertas is sold in both fresh and preserved form on the home and foreign markets, and provides its major source of revenue.

Ramón Gaya
(1910)

Originally a cubist artist, Murcia-born Ramón Gaya headed for exile in Mexico in 1939 following the Spanish Civil War. From there he went to Italy and in the 1970s returned to Spain. He is a great admirer of the Spanish classic artists, whom he honors in many of his works, such as this detail from *Homenaje al niño de las uvas de Murillo* (Homage to Murillo's Boy with Grapes),1998.

Murcian cuisine deploys its fresh vegetables in salads, *zarangollo* (a zucchini and onion version of pisto), and rice dishes. Murcian rice from Calasparra, a D.O. product, provides the basis of one of the region's classic dishes: *arroz en caldero* (rice in a pot), which is a close relation of *arroz abanda*. Though the former is a "dry" rice dish and the latter a "wet" one, the rice is cooked in fish stock in both cases, and the fish from which the stock was obtained is served as a second course accompanied by a garlic and oil sauce. What gives this dish its characteristic flavor are gray mullet (the Mar Menor's signature fish) and dried *ñora* peppers, another lovely Murcian product.
Other typical regional dishes are the *"guiso de trigo"* a wheat stew with potato, chickpeas, vegetables and, of course, wheat, hearty chickpea soups, and meat pies, these last–very finely rolled puff pastry filled with meat–bearing a striking resemblance to Moroccan *pastelas*. In a sense, Murcia has two seas, the Mediterranean and the shallow coastal salt lagoon known as the Mar Menor, and both are rich sources of fish and seafood, including prawns, sea bass, gilthead, gray mullet, horse mackerel, tuna, and *melva* (bullet tuna, or frigate mackerel). Fish farming is also an important local industry.
The fact that there are many salt-flats in this part of Spain has resulted in local ways of using salt, such as cooking fish. Fish baked inside an impenetrable carapace of coarse salt retain all their sea-fresh flavor. Similarly, salted foodstuffs such as mullet roe and various tuna-derived products have been traditional here since the time of the Romans, who set up many factories along the coast to produce their famous fishy condiment, *garum*.
Local desserts include *cordiales* (little cakes made of almonds, eggs, sugar, lemon peel, and shredded pumpkin), *yemas de Caravaca* (candy coated egg yolks), *tocino de cielo* (a very dense, sweet custard containing lots of egg yolk). Rather more extraordinary are the local *paparajotes*–lemon leaves dipped in a batter of flour, water, milk, eggs, sugar, and cinnamon and then fried. Only the aromatic batter is eaten.



Murcia's Casino.
Vineyards at the Agapito Rico estate in Jumilla.
Rice field in Calasparra.

THE MEDITERRANEAN LARDER

Spain's Mediterranean zone produces an amazing range of cheeses. Catalonia's best-known ones are cow's milk cheeses from the Valle de Arán, Selva, and Collsacabra; sheep's milk Tupí (from the Pyrenees) and Serrat; and goat's milk Montsec, Garrotxa, and Mató. Soft cheeses include Brossat and Brull, this latter a curd cheese. The Valencian region produces Servilleta (which takes its name and shape from the cloth in which it is tied and drained), Blanquet, Puzol or Cassoleta, Alicante, Brull, and Cervera.

There is abundant livestock in Andalusia which consequently produces many types of cheese: goat's cheeses from the Alpujarras include Doña Mencía, Aracena, and Sierra Morena; Grazalema is a sheep's milk cheese from Los Pedroches, while Ronda is made from a mixture of goat's and cow's milk. In addition to the famous D.O. Mahón, the Balearics produce other less well-known but equally interesting cheeses: cow's milk Llombards, characterized by its red rind colored with *pimentón*; Ibicenco from Ibiza is made with mixed sheep's and goat's milk, and Formentor (from Formentera) with sheep's milk alone.

The Canary Islands' cheese industry is one of the biggest in Spain in terms of variety and quality, and their inhabitants are among the nation's biggest cheese eaters. The range includes smoked cheeses from La Gomera, La Palma, and Hierro; Majorero cheese from Fuerteventura, which has a characteristic golden to red colored coating, thanks to the *gofio* or pimentón used to rub it; fresh and soft cheeses include Flor and Santa María de Guía from Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife; Lanzarote produces Conejero, whose rind is spread with pork lard and pimentón during maturation.

Catalonia's sausages, renowned for quality, come in many guises but the most noteworthy are probably *butifarras catalanas* (uncured sausages, which come in both black and white versions), *bisbes* (plump blood sausages), and *salchichones de Vic* (salami-type cured sausages). Hams and sausages derived from *Ibérico* pigs raised in Huelva's Sierra de Aracena and in the Los Pedroches Valley in Andalusia are considered the tops by Spaniards.

Majorcan *sobrasada*, a D.O. product, is one of the most delicious and unusual charcuterie products in Spain's considerable range.

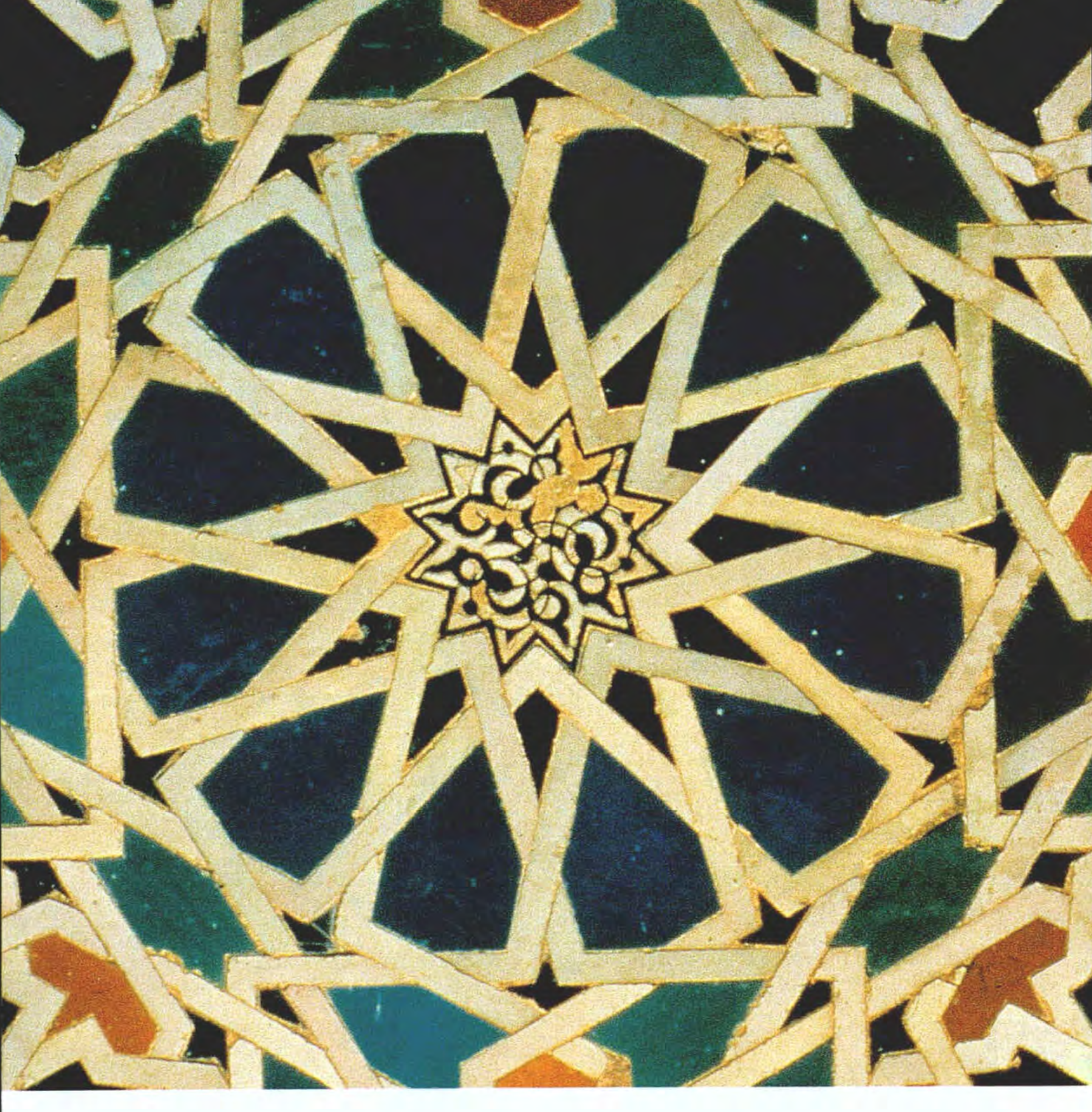
Spain's Mediterranean olive oils include the Catalan Siurana (from Tarragona) and Les Garrigues (from Lérida); both are D.O. oils and are made primarily from smooth, fruity-flavored Arbequina olives. Top Andalusian oils include Sierra Mágina and Sierra del Segura from Jaén, and Baena and Priego de Córdoba from Córdoba, all of them D.O. oils made predominantly from Picual and Picudo olives.

Mediterranean sweets must include Alicante and Jijona *turrones*, worthy of special mention for their superb quality, though there are countless other types of equally delicious variants on the turrón theme. Featherlight *ensaimadas* from the Balearics are one of Spain's best-known and most widely traveled pastries: visitors to the islands can rarely resist buying the giant ones sold at the airport (packed in trademark faceted boxes) on the way home.

Pablo Picasso
(1881-1973)

Picasso, the most representative and influential exponent of contemporary art, was born in the luminous Mediterranean city of Málaga. In his large body of work there are numerous still lifes, such as this *Fruitera,* 1917.

Situated as it is in the far south of the Iberian Peninsula, Andalusia served for many centuries as a stepping stone between two continents–Africa and Europe–and consequently became something of a cultural and racial melting pot.



ANDALUSIA

THE MEDITERRANEAN & THE CANARY ISLANDS

First came the Tartessians (1000-500 B.C.) followed by the Phoenicians, who introduced the vine, the exploitation of salt flats, and the manufacture of salted foodstuffs. Later still came the Carthaginians, who introduced the chickpea as a crop, destined to become a staple of Spanish gastronomy. The Romans brought with them olive growing, and the Arabs irrigation, new products from the East, and skills which transformed small cultivated plots into productive huertas in which they grew artichokes, eggplants, lemons and bitter oranges, sugar cane, and many cooking spices... caraway, saffron, coriander, cumin... thereby transforming the Peninsula's gastronomic repertoire.

Andalusia is made up of eight provinces. Three of these are inland–Jaén (which means caravan crossing in Arabic), Seville, the city known to the ancient Romans as "Hispalis," and Córdoba, upon which the passage through Spain of Romans, Jews, and Arabs have left an indelible imprint. The five remaining provinces are coastal, being, from east to west, Almería (an area of contrasting landscapes which range from desert to lush, and including Spain's most extensive hothouse plantations); Granada, unique in its incomparable juxtaposition of mountains and sea; Málaga, known the world over for its Costa del Sol, but nonetheless charged with history; Cádiz (the Phoenicians called it Gadir), with its long, and still uncrowded, beaches; and finally Huelva, which borders on Portugal, and contains Europe's largest nature reserve, the Coto de Doñana.

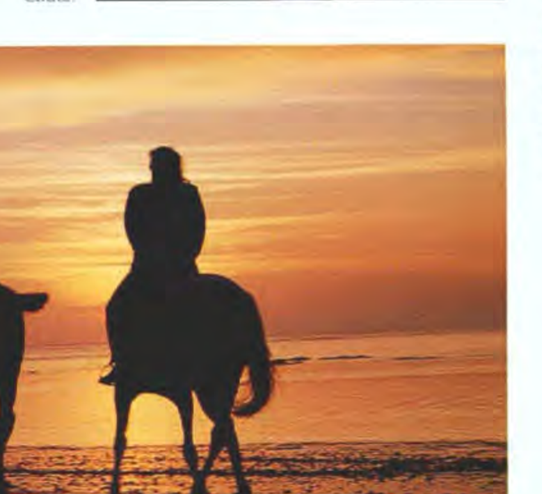
Such diversity of landscape, crops, and ecosystems represents a copious larder and generates a vast culinary repertoire. Gazpacho–tomato-less before the discovery of America; *salmorejo*, a similar recipe though denser in texture and served with chunks of hard boiled egg and cured ham; *ajo blanco*, another cold soup made with almonds, garlic, and white grapes; artichokes poached in Montilla Moriles wine; *pipirrana* salad of lettuce, tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber, and tuna; *habas con hierbabuena* (broad beans with mint, whose recipe actually includes artichoke, lettuce, onion, salt belly pork as well). Then there is a vast range of sturdy stews, soups and hot pots which incorporate vegetables and pulses: the *menudo gitano* version features tripe and chickpeas; *olla gitana* which includes all kind of vegetables and also pears; *olla de San Antón* is made with dried beans; the Eastertime *potaje de Semana Santa* uses chickpeas, white beans, and salt cod. Olive oil features importantly in all these stews as it does in all Andalusian cuisine, for it is one of this part of Spain's great resources. More and more oil mills are being equipped with cutting edge technology, and the results are reflected in olive oils of impeccable quality, increasingly earning of Denomination of Origin status: Baena and Priego de Córdoba in Córdoba, and Sierra de Segura and Sierra Magina in Jaén, for example.

Olive oil is also a key feature of the popular *fritura andaluza*, quite simply an assortment of super-fresh fish and seafood–anchovies, prawns, baby cuttlefish, *acedía* (wedge sole), squid–dipped in flour and expertly fried in olive oil. Andalusia can call on a huge variety of marine species, which are cooked in countless different ways: stewed–*cazón* (dogfish or tope shark), monkfish, porgy, bonito, horse mackerel, swordfish, gilthead; grilled–prawns, king prawns, and shrimp; skewered and cooked over an open fire–sardines and anchovies are the classics for this method, the skewers being stuck vertically into the coals so that the fish cook without touching the flame; *en escabeche* (fried, then cooled and marinated), or simply boiled–the ideal method

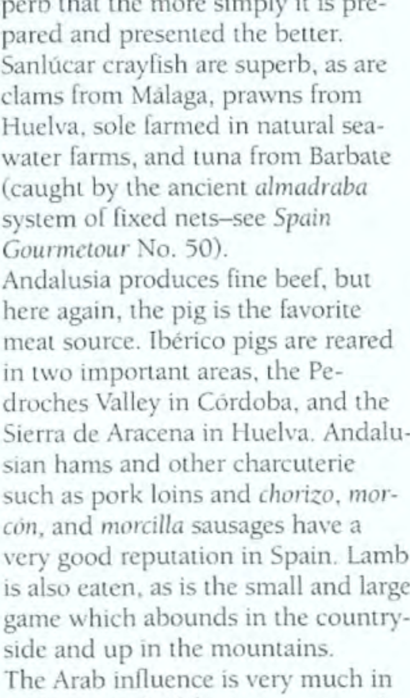
The Córdoba Mosque.

Bodegas Barbadillo winery in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz.

Olives from Baena, Córdoba.



A beach in the province of Cádiz.



for seafood whose quality is so superb that the more simply it is prepared and presented the better. Sanlúcar crayfish are superb, as are clams from Málaga, prawns from Huelva, sole farmed in natural seawater farms, and tuna from Barbate (caught by the ancient *almadraba* system of fixed nets–see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 50).

Andalusia produces fine beef, but here again, the pig is the favorite meat source. Ibérico pigs are reared in two important areas, the Pedroches Valley in Córdoba, and the Sierra de Aracena in Huelva. Andalusian hams and other charcuterie such as pork loins and *chorizo*, *morcón*, and *morcilla* sausages have a very good reputation in Spain. Lamb is also eaten, as is the small and large game which abounds in the countryside and up in the mountains.

The Arab influence is very much in evidence in Andalusian sweets and desserts, which not only constitute one of the widest repertoires in the whole of Spain but have also best preserved their ancient recipes. The region's many convents and monasteries can be thanked for this (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 43): they supplement their income by selling traditional sweets made on the premises. The egg yolks which are such a vital ingredient in most of the traditional recipes have been, traditionally, supplied free by the *bodegueros* in wine-growing areas who still clarify their wines with egg white. *Tocinillos* (dense egg yolk and sugar custards); *yemas de San Leandro* (egg yolks with syrup); *mantecados* (crumbly biscuits made with pork lard); *alfajores* (similar but less dense biscuits, again made with pork lard and aromatized with anise, coconut, or lemon); and of course the huge variety of traditional marzipan sweets.

Despite certain claims that there is no such thing as Andalusian gastronomy, as we have seen, the people of this region live on a lot more than their famous *tapas* and aperitifs. But in culinary terms, they are undeniably best known as the inventors of Spain's national fast food, the tapa. In 19th-century Andalusia, waiters would serve glasses of wine covered by a slice of ham, chorizo, or cheese to protect it from flies (*tapar* means to cover, or protect). A rival explanation suggests that these little snacks "covered" an empty stomach until the next meal. Both explanations seem reasonable.

THE
MEDITERRANEAN
& THE CANARY ISLANDS

THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

The Balearic archipelago lies in the Mediterranean, east of the Iberian Peninsula, and is made up of the islands of Majorca, Menorca, Ibiza, Formentera, and Cabrera. Because of their strategically favorable location, these islands served throughout history as stopping places for traders and sailors.

Llorenç Pons
(1965)

Born in Menorca, one of the Balearic Islands, Llorenç Pons is a self-taught artist of the abstract style, as in this untitled work of 1997, a mixed-media rendition on paper.

They were ports of call for the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, and Vikings before the conquest of Majorca in 1229 (the other islands followed a few years later) by Jaime I of Aragon, known as "El Conquistador." Subsequently, the island of Menorca was again to come under foreign rule, spending seventy years as a British possession and five more under the French Crown, before definitively becoming Spanish territory in the 18th century.

For centuries, the islands lived almost exclusively by trade until the discovery of America shifted the focus of attention to the Atlantic. The inhabitants of the Balearics then concentrated on their own resources and became farmers, their principal crops being almonds, olives, fruit and vegetables, and the rest of their diet being provided by pigs, wild rabbit, hare and partridge from the countryside, and fish.

Their cuisine is based on the vegetables–tomatoes, eggplants, capsicum, and onions–grown in their huertas and which are cooked in combination with olive oil in unmistakably Mediterranean dishes. The islands' famous "dry soups" or *bollidas*, in which the broth is absorbed by chunks of country bread, *tumbet* (a layered version of pisto made with eggplant, zucchini, capsicum, tomato, and potato), and eggplants stuffed with meat are good examples of this.

The islands' rice dishes are generally of the "wet" variety, and are eaten with the products of the *matanza* (the pig slaughtering at the beginning of winter), when they are known as *arros de matances*, and with chicken, salt cod, and rabbit.

Coast of Mallorca.

The coca is another typical feature of Balearic cuisine, and one which it shares with neighboring Catalonia: the island cocas come topped with vegetables, sardines, or sausage, for example, while sweet versions incorporate dried fruit, nuts, and sugar.

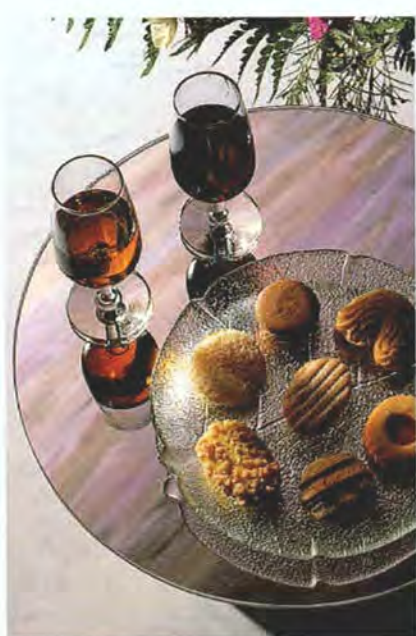
The Balearics' fish repertoire is the classic Mediterranean one: red mullet, gilthead, dentex, skate, grouper, sea bass, serviola, and lluisa (native to these shores). All these are used to make, for example, *bullit de peix* (fish stew), *burrida de ratjada*–a liquid soup made with skate and almonds, and a delicious lobster soup known as *caldereta de langosta*. Fish dishes are often served with a *salsa mahonesa* (mayonnaise) which some historians derive from the Menorcan city of Mahón.

Livestock in the Balearics includes Mahón cows, from whose milk the well-known D.O. smoked Mahón cheese is made, Menorcan sheep and, of course, pigs. The Balearic Black pig–very much in the minority compared with Whites–receives supplementary feed in the form of almonds and figs which give its meat a very characteristic flavor. This is used for making charcuterie such as *longanizas*, butifarras, black *butifarrones*, and *blanquetas* (all types of cooked, and sometimes cured, sausages with varying ingredients and spicy seasonings). But the most typical item of Balearic charcuterie is *sobrasada*, a smooth paste composed of lean meat, salt belly pork, and pimentón stuffed into a skin and used as an ingredient in *ensaimadas* (see below), cocas, with lamb, in rice dishes, with eggs (in the Sóller style) or, supremely, spread on toast, drizzled with honey, and browned quickly under the grill.

Balearic sweets and desserts often involve almonds, and include turrón, *crespells* (baked biscuits made with pork lard), *flaós* (tarts of curd cheese flavored with mint), and the islands' internationally famous ensaimadas. These feather-light coiled buns made of a flour, pork lard, and sugar dough are usually served sprinkled with icing sugar, but more complicated versions can include fillings such as candied shredded pumpkin, almond paste, and even sobrasada.

W I N E S

Vines have been cultivated in Catalonia for the last 2,000 years: the ancient Greeks and Romans were particularly keen on the wines of Tarragona. Today, Catalonia produces eight D.O. still wines: Alella, Ampurdán-Costa Brava, Costers del Segre Priorat, Penedés, Terra-Alta, Pla de Bages, Conca del Barberá, and Tarragona.
Catalonia is also the area with the longest established tradition of *cava* making (cavas are sparkling wines made in Spain by the traditional method). Produced predominantly in Catalonia, cava has achieved an international reputation and now occupies second place in the world for production of this type of sparkling wine.
The Valencian region produces *fondillón alicantino*, a sweet wine which was famous throughout the world during the Renaissance period (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 24) thanks, perhaps, to its ability to survive sea voyages unscathed. This region also has three wine D.Os: Alicante, Utiel Requena, and Valencia.
Murcia has two wine D.Os: Yecla and Jumilla–whose territory also extends into Albacete–which produce considerable quantities of quality wines of various types, and the newly designated D.O. of Bullas. Wine making in both Valencia and Murcia has undergone major changes, with the last two or three years seeing the emergence, or reemergence, of top quality bodegas producing very attractive wines made both from native varieties, such as Monastrell, and brought-in varieties.
There are four wine D.Os in Andalusia: the world famous Jerez-Xeres-Sherry and Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda, which covers fino, manzanilla, oloroso, and amontillado sherries; Córdoba's Montilla Moriles, which similarly covers finos, amontillados, olorosos, palos cortados, and Pedro Ximénez; D.O. Condado de Huelva, source of predominantly white wines, and D.O. Málaga, source of internationally known sweet wines.
The Balearics' wine production is, quantitatively speaking, token, and is based almost exclusively in the Binissalem area of Majorca. However, there was a time when Majorcan wines, among them the now defunct sweet *malvasía*, were highly regarded. In Mahón, the British legacy lives on in the form of good quality gin production, while Ibiza is known for its herb liqueurs.
Historically, the Canary Islands were also a source of highly desirable sweet malvasías (mentioned as "malmsey" in the works of both Shakespeare and Walter Scott). Nowadays, however, the islands' wine producers have opted for modernity, achieving standards in just ten years that have resulted in eight areas being given D.O. status: Abona, El Hierro, Lanzarote, La Palma, Tacoronte-Acentejo, Valle de Güimar, Valle de la Orotava, and Ycoden-Daute-Isora.



THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Garden of the Hesperides, the Elysian Isles, Atlantis, the Fortunate Islands... these are just some of the names by which the poets and historians of ancient Greece and Rome knew the archipelago we know today as the Canary Islands.

César Manrique
(1920-1992)

Lanzarote, the volcanic island in the Canaries, was both birthplace and inspiration for César Manrique. He always strove to ensure that his work, whether painting, sculpture, architectural design, was integrated into the natural environment of his island, as can be seen in the volcanic texture of this 1955 painting, *Africa* (fragment).

Mount Teide on the island of Tenerife.

Situated about 100 km (62 miles) off the coast of Africa, they were described by Pliny and Ptolemy as the last point of the known world, thereby fueling their mythological status. Their aboriginal inhabitants, the Guanches–a very tall, white-skinned people–became subjects of the Spanish Crown during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs in the 15th century. The Canary Islands provided Christopher Columbus with his last stopping place on familiar territory before tackling the *Mar Tenebroso*–the Sea of Obscurity–as the Atlantic Ocean was then known. It was from these islands, too, that the first seedlings of banana and sugar cane plants were sent off to the American Continent where they subsequently thrived.

The original Guanche diet–poor and almost exclusively vegetarian–was enriched by the Andalusian, Portuguese, African, and Latin American influences to which the islands' strategic position laid them open. Based on cereals and pulses, its basic dishes were–and still are–*farangollo* (a sort of polenta, made of maize flour), *gofio*, and stews. Gofio, which is reminiscent of North African couscous, or even Roman polenta albeit much more finely textured, is made by mixing toasted barley flour with water, stock, or milk and it can serve either as the main farinaceous component of a meal, as bread, or as a garnish, served with vegetables, meat, or fish dishes. Nowadays, it is made of maize, millet, and even chickpeas. Potajes, or stews, constitute one of the staples of Canary Island cuisine, so they come in many varieties and are very different from their mainland counterparts–they can feature, for example, watercress, lentils, beans, hedge mustard, fennel, sweet corn... Potatoes, known as *papas* in the Canaries, where more than twenty varieties are grown, are of fine quality and are especially suitable for making *papas arrugadas*–wrinkled potatoes–which are boiled in their skins with lots of salt and served alongside many dishes. Potatoes from Tacoronte, in Tenerife, are considered to be the top Canary potatoes.

Mojos are another island specialty. These are sauces made with garlic, salt, vinegar, chili pepper, olive oil, water, red or green peppers, and colored red by the use of pimentón, green by parsley or coriander, or yellow by saffron. Mojos provide the necessary moisture for papas and fish in many guises.

As well as their famous tomatoes, the Canary Islands also produce bananas (see article on page 76), figs, avocados, watermelons, melons, grapes, apples, pears, guavas, mangos, pineapples... Some of these–tomatoes and bananas primarily–are vital to the Islands' economy and there is a long tradition of exports to the mainland and the rest of Europe. The fish caught in abundance off the nearby Sahara Bank provided one of the mainstays of the islanders' diet. Horned blenny, white sea bream, and dentex are all native species of fish, and are generally served *sancochados*–boiled in the Latin American manner and served with mojos and papas.

Meat was scarce in the islands until relatively recently, and it now tends to feature in the form of *cocidos*. Cocidos are stews which are almost medieval in their elaborate composition, often including six or seven different

Papaw on the island of La Gomera.

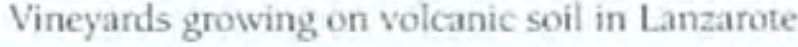
sorts of meat as well as pulses and vegetables. Kid meat and pork are local favorites.

Charcuterie does not play an important part in the repertoire: there are soft, spreadable chorizos reminiscent of Majorcan sobrasada, and sweet morcillas (blood sausages) which incorporate chestnuts, sweet potato, almonds and raisins.

Local desserts include *quesadillas*, (a sort of cheese cake) traditional to the island of Hierro), *bienmesabe* (cakes made with almonds, eggs, and sugar), *huevos moles* (egg yolk and syrup sweets; a version of turrón made with gofio, *picarrañas* (maize flour buns), honeyed yam, and *raspaduras palmeras* (biscuits made with wheat gofio, almonds, lemon rind, and honey).

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

Photo credits on page 148.
Recipes on page 95.


Vineyards growing on volcanic soil in Lanzarote.

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.

Andalusia

El Churrasco
Romero 16, Córdoba
Tel: (34) 957 290 819
White almond gazpacho; oxtail; *fritura de pescado* (assorted fried fish); "floating islands" (meringue and custard dessert).

El Faro
San Félix15, Cádiz
Tel: (34) 956 211 068
Good seafood and the freshest of fresh fish

Adolfo
Paseo Marítimo Pablo Ruiz Picasso 12, Málaga
Tel: (34) 952 601 914
Seafood-based dishes; line-caught baby squid cooked in ink and stuffed with prawn and cured ham; fish and seafood stew with saffron

Casa Robles
Álvarez Quintero 58, Seville
Tel: (34) 954 213 150
Andalusian cheeses; sea bream cooked with sherry vinegar; homemade desserts

La Ruta del Veleta
Carretera. Sierra Nevada 136, Granada
Tel: (34) 958 486 134
Lobster salad; sirloin beef steak with wild mushroom jus

Balearic Islands

Koldo Royo
Avda. Gabriel Roca 3, Palma de Majorca
Tel: (34) 971 732 435
The Basque who runs this restaurant has adapted the cuisine of his native region to local island produce

Plat d'or
Vinagrella s/n, Son Vida, Palma de Majorca
Tel: (34) 971 799 999
Locally caught fish and baby squid

Miramar
Avenida Mateo Bosch 22, Port d'Andratx, Majorca
Tel: (34) 971 671 617
A good choice of rice dishes, especially seafood ones

Tristán
Puerto Portals Nous, Palma de Majorca
Tel: (34) 971 675 547
Excellent for fish across the board

Ca Nálfredo
Paseo de Vara de Rey 16, Ibiza
Tel: (34) 971 311 274
Calderetas (fish stews) and *arroz negro* (rice with squid)

Casa Pilar
Forn 61, Menorca
Tel: (34) 971 366 817
Locally caught fish; gilthead, sea bream; free range chicken *en escabeche* (soused)

Canary Islands

El Pescador
Marina 81, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Tel: (34) 928 365 557
Sautéed pinto beans; *carajacas*, a liver stew; *ropa vieja* made with pigeon (a stew in the Latin American style); grouper with millet sauce; *farangollo*

El Coto de Antonio
General Goded 13, Santa Cruz de Tenerife
Tel: (34) 922 272 105
Salt cod salad with *papas negras* ("black" potatoes); grouper casserole

Catalonia

Ca L'Isidre
Les Flors 12, Barcelona
Tel: (34) 934 411 139
Classic Catalan cuisine: baby octopus sautéed with garlic and parsley; tripe cooked with chickpeas; pigs' trotters

Jaume de Provenza
Provenza 88, Barcelona
Tel: (34) 934 300 029
Sole with morel mushrooms; pork cheek

Pasadís d'en Pep
Plaza Palau 2, Barcelona
Tel: (34) 933 191 921
A port-side restaurant with an engagingly informal atmosphere: good for freshly caught fish; seafood stew; lots of interesting dishes to taste in *tapa*-sized portions

El Céller de Can Roca
Carretera de Taialá 40, Girona
Tel: (34) 872 22 157
Salt cod with truffle

Can Bosch
Rambla Jaume I 19, Cambrils
Tarragona
Tel: (34) 977 360 019
Espardenyes, (sea cucumber); monkfish with crab and wild mushroom sauce; clam risotto

La Pérgola
Paseo de Ronda 123, Lérida
Tel: (34) 973 238 237
Baby broad beans cooked with cured ham; pigs' trotters with lobster and snails; sea bass with *calçots* (ember-cooked spring onions)

Valencian Region

Nou Manolín
Villegas 3, Alicante
Tel: (34) 965 200 368
Local rice dishes; salmon steak salad; *leche frita* (fried custard dessert). This restaurant has a particularly good wine list

Piripi
Oscar Esplá 30, Alicante
Tel: (34) 965 227 940
Known particularly for lobster paella and vegetable paella; excellent fish. Outstandingly good snacks in the bar

El Poblet
Carretera de las Marismas Km 2,5, Denia
Tel: (34) 965 784 179
Excellent for fish; delicious "wet" rice with cuttlefish and mushrooms

La Tasca del Puerto
Avenida del Puerto 13, El Grao, Castellón
Tel: (34) 964 284 481
Scrambled egg laced with sea urchin; lovely "wet" rice dishes and oven-baked fish

Albacar
Sorni 35, Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 951 005
Fideos negros (noodles cooked with squid ink); red mullet dressed with sea-urchin flavored vinaigrette

La Pepica
Paseo Neptuno 6, Valencia
Tel: (34) 963 710 366
Known for seafood paellas and rice dishes in general

Murcia

El Rincón de Pepe
Apóstoles 34, Murcia
Tel: (34) 968 212 239
This restaurant specializes in fish and seafood; the Mazarrón grouper is particularly good

WEB SITES

Andalusia

Andalusian Gastronomy
Languages: English, Spanish
Although the portal www.andalucia.com offers plenty of interest, this page focuses on gastronomy as an essential part of Andalusian culture not to be missed by visitors. The large size of the Andalusian Community and its varied produce make this an area of great gastronomic potential.
www.andalucia.com/gastronomy/home.htm

There's Only One Andalusia
Languages: English, French, German, Spanish
This is the official Web site for Andalusian tourism promoted by the Autonomous Government of Andalusia. Not only does it give full information on tourism but it also enables visitors to make hotel bookings direct.
www.andalucia.org

Rural Tourism in Andalusia
Languages: English, Spanish
This site suggests ten possible routes through Andalusia, describing the history and settings of some of the most noteworthy towns and villages along the way.
www.altur.com/esp/rural/index.htm

Balearic Islands

A Guide to Tourism in the Balearic Islands
Languages: English, German, Spanish
This address gives a full and very useful compilation of tourism facilities in the Balearic Islands, from how to rent a four-wheel-drive vehicle to the best spots for underwater diving. Also included is rural tourism which continues to be an attractive possibility.
www.baleares.com/tourist.guide/index.htm

Tourism Links for the Balearic Government
Languages: English, German, Spanish
Through this Web site, the Autonomous Government of the Balearic Islands helps potential visitors organize their stay, with full information on accommodation, travel agencies, etc. and virtual guides to the many possible destinations.
www.caib.es/govern/links/eturis3.htm

The Cuisine of the Balearic Islands
Language: Spanish
The cuisine of the Balearic Islands focuses on seafood and vegetables, but also includes recipes using poultry. Many of the suggestions here are worth a try.
www.recetario.com/recetario/regional/baleares.htm

Canary Islands

Ingredients from the Canaries
Languages: English, Spanish
An interesting portal with essential information on the cuisine of the Canaries, from local products to recipes for typical dishes, as well as discussion groups, a wine section, etc.
www.cocinacanaria.com/home.html

Products from the Canaries
Language: Spanish
This site was set up by the Canary Government with a view to promoting knowledge and consumption of Canary produce.
www.productos-canarios.com/

Situr–System for Information on Tourism in the Canary Islands
Languages: English, Spanish
SITUR is a tourism portal that was set up by the Technological Institute of the Canaries offering data provided by local organizations and associations of tourism entrepreneurs. It gives up-to-date details on tourism and accommodation facilities.
www.situr.org/

Traditional Recipes from the Canary Islands
Language: Spanish
The key to Canary cooking is simplicity in both the preparation and the ingredients, and the fact that these recipes are provided by the locals guarantees their authenticity.
www.guiatenerife.com/recetario/

Catalonia

Rural Tourism in Catalonia
Languages: English, French, Spanish
Both of these addresses invite browsers to visit the rural areas of Catalonia and come into close contact with nature. The "turismerural.com" page also gives an interesting visual guide to rural tourism in Catalonia.
www.agronet.org/agroturisme/
www.turismerural.com/paginHTM/indexE.htm

Catalonian Tourism Data Base
Languages: English, Spanish
Turistex is a data base created by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia to provide full information for possible visitors. Data is classified by type, and ranges from spas to rural accommodation.
www.gencat.es/turistex/eindex.htm

Murcia

The Official Tourism Web Site for the Region of Murcia
Languages: English, Spanish
This page on the Web site for the Autonomous Government of Murcia describes the main points of interest for tourism in the region. Information is classified according to type (rural, sun and sand, etc.) and links up with a data base on accommodation facilities.
www.murcia-turismo.com/

Local Tourism Guides
Language: Spanish
For those looking for details on towns and rural areas in the region of Murcia, these sites not only offer details on accommodation of all types but also provide information on each specific area and its potential for visitors.
www.lorca.net/
clientes.larural.es/migumoli/
www.aguilas.org/
web.yecla.org/

Valencia

Castellón Tourism Board
Language: Spanish
Set up by the Tourism Board for the Province of Castellón, this site gives information ranging from hotels and accommodation in the different towns to the main features of the local cuisine.
www.castellon-costaazahar.com

The Gastronomy of Alicante
Language: Spanish
After an introduction to the main characteristics of Alicante gastronomy, this site gives the addresses of a number of Alicante restaurateurs and restaurants.

Guide to Tourism in the Valencian Community
Languages: English, French, German, Spanish
This is the official site for the Government of the Valencian Community. It gives full information on the tourism facilities available in the Community, arranged according to type–sea and sand, nature, etc.
www.comunidad-valenciana.com/

The Cuisine of Valencia
Although this page forms part of the above site, we mention it as being of special interest for lovers of good food.
www.comunidad-valenciana.com/ingles/NUEVO/vacaciones/cocina/cocina.htm

Doñana, Europe's greatest nature reserve

Barcelona's Port Vell

A Taste for Art. *Part 5*

CHILLIDA

A SCULPTOR'S PLACE

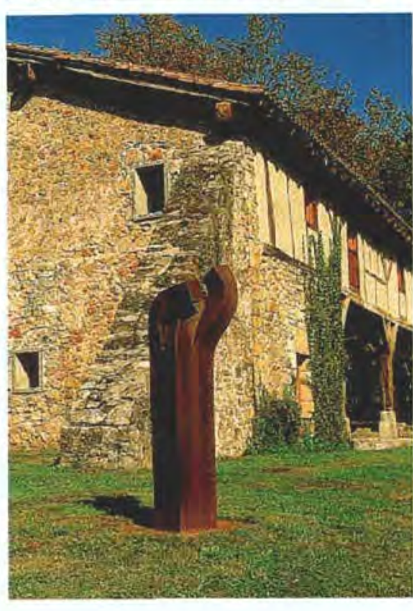
Join us for the last of our art and food trips, taking in some of the best museums in Spain–mainly museums of contemporary art–which stand out not only for their content but also as buildings in themselves. Some are understated, others spectacular, but all house examples of the most avant garde art produced 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. We round off our series with a visit to the Chillida-Leku Museum, just outside San Sebastián.

The centuries-old oak beams in the Zabalaga farmstead share space with the alabaster, iron and granite of Chillida's work. In the background, one of the artist's characteristic "*gravitaciones*" hangs from the wall.

TEXT
SONIA ORTEGA

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD

Dotted around the grounds of the 16th-century country manor are the sculptures created by the artist over several decades.



Hernani is a little town some 10 km (6 miles) from San Sebastián, in the Basque Country, northern Spain. This is where sculptor Eduardo Chillida settled in 1951 after spending three years in France, a period when he produced his first sculptures, in plaster. His house in Hernani stood opposite a forge, and it was there, almost by accident, that he first became aware of the plastic potential of iron and where he first worked the tough but malleable material now so characteristic of his work.

Today, the town is also the site of Chillida-Leku, the 16th century house and grounds which constitute the combined sculpture park and museum where both the man and his work have found their rightful place in the world. Chillida explains it thus: "I strongly believe that we all come from somewhere, and I think this is of vital importance. The ideal situation would be for us to have our roots in one place but for our branches to extend worldwide, so that we recognize the value of the ideas of other cultures. Anywhere at all can be an ideal place as long as it suits you, and here in the Basque Country is where I feel myself to be in my proper place." He could hardly state his credo more clearly.

The Basque word *leku* means place or space, so the museum which houses the work of this universally relevant Basque sculptor translates as "Chillida's Place" or "Chillida's Space." Chillida-Leku is Chillida's vision made real, an environment in which art works, landscape, and architecture fuse together as naturally as the materials of his imposing iron and steel sculptures.

Its focus is Zabalaga, a 16th-century country house which the Chillida family bought as a ruin and has since restored sympathetically. It took 12 years to convert the ruined stone and timber house they bought in 1983 into what we see today. Architect Joaquín Montero and Chillida worked together on the project whose intention was not to restore the house to its original function but rather to treat it as a sculpture in itself, emptying the interior and letting in space and light. Working slowly and using only artisan methods, they have exposed its mighty oak beams completely, creating the effect of the timbers of a vast ship or a gigantic tree. This is more than just an art exhibition area: it is another of Chillida's "sculptural spaces," in the same category as his *Elogio de horizonte* in Gijón, and his proposed project to hollow out Tindaya mountain on the island of Fuerteventura. The house and park contain works that Chillida himself has chosen to retain over the years with a view to exhibiting them eventually in his home territory. In the course of 17 years, more than 40 large scale sculptures, mostly iron and granite pieces (some of them enormous–

Looking for Light, in steel, is for sheer size the most spectacular of the Chillida-Leku sculptures. The Chillida's pose next to the work.

Looking Light I, for example), have been installed in the museum's 12 hectares (30 acres) of splendidly wooded grounds. Some of them will stay at Chillida-Leku only long enough to acquire a weathered patina before being transferred to the locations for which they were specifically created, though the majority are permanently positioned.

The interior of the old house contains a hundred or so small and large scale pieces ranging from his first works in plaster and early pieces in iron, through works in alabaster, granite, steel, and terra-cotta, to drawings and *gravitaciones*–collages on paper or felt in which images are superimposed so that they acquire volume. The exhibits on the main, lower floor are illuminated by natural light which floods in through a huge window, filling the space and gilding the rough stone walls hung with the contrasting textures of felt gravitaciones. The exhibits on this floor are medium and large-scale pieces representative of the last 20 years of the sculptor's work.

A fine wooden staircase leads to the upper floor, which is divided into three rooms. The first of these, organized chronologically, contains the plaster sculptures–Forma y Torso (*Form and Torso*)–made in Paris between 1948 and 1951, and the iron pieces cast in Hernani after Chillida's return from France. This is when we start to recognize the Chillida we

Arco de la libertad (Arch of Freedom), in steel, created in 1993.

G A S T R O N O M Y

Fagollaga: Choice Cuisine

A little road leading out of Hernani follows the course of the River Oria through the town's industrial outskirts and into the wooded countryside beyond. Just before a bend in the road stands an unpretentious, white-fronted country house: this is Fagollaga (a Basque name meaning "place of many beech trees"), which Isaac Salaberría's great grandmother established as a restaurant where she served traditional, popular Basque cuisine back in 1904. Some of her classics, beautifully executed, are still on her great grandson's menu today.

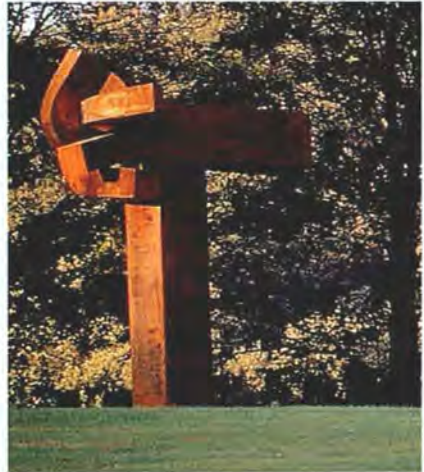
Excellent though they are, however, these are not the chief gastronomic attraction at Fagollaga: the cuisine that typifies it today is characterized by its imaginative approach and technical skill, fine ingredients being allowed to speak for themselves in a quest for very specific, pure, pronounced flavors.

Still only 30, Isaac Salaberría is considered one of the most talented new generation chefs–he was chosen Cook of the Year by *Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía* restaurant guide in 1999. He is already famous for his way of "deconstructing" dishes, serving sauces separately, often in little ladles, so that it is up to the diner whether to follow the house suggestions or decide for himself what to combine with what. His *salmonete con crema de almendra tierna y jugo de regaliz y azafrán* (red mullet with fresh almond cream and licorice and saffron sauce) and *foie gras a la plancha sobre jugo de pollo escabechado, puré de maíz y sorbete de piña* (grilled foie gras with *jus* of soused chicken, creamed sweet corn and pineapple sorbet) convey the spirit of this approach.

More traditional flavors emerge in a supremely delicate and aromatic *charlota de patas de cerdo* (charlotte of pig's trotters, potato slices, herbs, and sesame) and the delicious marriage of fresh pasta and spider crab meat in *lasagna de txangurro*. The same creativity shows in desserts such as *jugo de pera con ensalada de tomate y helado cremoso de yogur* (pear juice with a salad of tomato and yogurt ice cream) or *crema de arroz con leche con gelée de fresas, cava y ruibarbo con sorbete de cacao* (creamed rice pudding with strawberry, cava, and rhubarb *gelée* and cocoa sorbet). There's a lot of artistry in the food at Fagollaga–the perfect place to eat after a visit to Chillida Leku.

Restaurante Fagollaga
Carretera de Goizueta
20120 Hernani
Guipúzcoa
Tel: (34) 943 550 031

Lotura XXXII (Connection XXXII), in steel, one of Chillida's favorite materials.



know, working in metal. All these works are accompanied by contemporary drawings.

The next room contains projects for public pieces, some of them subsequently realized on a monumental scale and others which never came to fruition. They attest to Chillida's ongoing commitment to public sculpture. Alongside the projects are several alabaster sculptures dating from the 1960s, a large terra-cotta and oxidized copper mural, and a series of quintessentially Chillidan drawings of hands. Still on the upper floor, a glass door leads to a section designated *El Chillida Más Íntimo* (The More Intimate Chillida). Here we find the more delicate works–smaller scale terra-cottas which have served as maquettes for various granite sculptures, and paper gravitaciones in which we see Chillida incorporating volume into drawing for the first time, combining line with built-up layers and cutouts.

The Grounds

The exterior appearance of the house has been kept faithful to the original, including its coat of arms. It gives immediately onto a vast meadow (it comes as no surprise to learn that "Zabalaga" means wide field in Basque), while higher ground behind is wooded with beeches, oaks, magnolias, poplars, and chestnut trees. Sculptures have been excitingly placed throughout the grounds, some out in the open, others in little clearings among the trees, their location seemingly completely natural, as if they had grown where they stand, art and nature in a symbiotic relationship that is a key characteristic of Chillida's work. Chillida-Leku, is run by the Chillida family with Kosme de Barañano (director of Valencia's IVAM–see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 48) as artistic consultant. Its facilities include a comprehensive library on Eduardo Chillida (to be expanded to include a newspaper and periodical archive), an archive, and a film auditorium. The films shown provide an opportunity to see the artist at work and to appreciate his range: from the sheer strength required to work in iron to the delicacy of his "more intimate" gravitaciones. One includes a sequence based on a phrase written on paper by Chillida which states: "One line can unite the world; one line can divide it. Drawing is beautiful and awesome." Above all, it is the beauty that comes across at Chillida-Leku.

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

Photo credits on page 148.

WEB SITES

Languages: English, Spanish
This is the main page of the site on Eduardo Chillida and covers the essential points of his biography and his most emblematic works. It is also the site for Chillida Leku.
www.eduardo-chillida.com/en_ie_museo.htm

Art forum

Language: Spanish
One of the sections on this site is "Cátedra" in which writers of prestige discuss the work of a specific artist. This is the address for the article on Chillida Leku.
www.forodearte.com/catedra/chillidaleku.htm

Hispanart

Language: Spanish
Hispanart is a portal on art comprising both general sections and others that center on a specific subject and artist. One of these special sections is devoted to Chillida Leku and is structured as a guide to the different parts of the museum.
www.hispanart.com/Chillida/museo.htm

Regional Council of Guipuzcoa

Languages: English, French, Spanish
This page within the Regional Council's site gives comprehensive information on tourism in the province with suggestions for routes and visits, as well as links to town council sites.
www.gipuzkoa.net/turismo/

Rural Tourism in the Basque Country

Languages: English, Spanish
This page gives information on accommodation in Basque farmhouses with prices.
www.encomix.es/nekazal

RIBERA DEL GUADIANA

A D.O. FOR THE NEW CENTURY

Extremadura is perhaps the Spanish region that has seen the most ups-and-downs in its wine-making history. Without going back to such distant times as the Roman, Visigothic, or Arab occupations which left many indications of their viticultural and wine-making activities in the area, if we are to understand the people of Extremadura, especially the local wine makers, geographical, historical, and social factors need to be considered.

TAVO ACUÑA

Although the area under vines is 216.1 acres, only 30.6 acres of these are registered with the Regulatory Council.

The small wine museum of Bodegas Medina e Hijos and their oldest barrels are located in the quiet town of Zafra.

TEXT
ANA RAMÍREZ

TRANSLATION
JENNY MCDONALD

This autonomous community borders to the north with Castile-León, to the east with Castile-La Mancha, to the south with Andalusia and to the west with Portugal. The rivers Tagus and Guadiana and a number of their tributaries flow through it, giving it a wide variety of soils and natural resources. The two provinces forming it are Badajoz and Cáceres, and the total area under vines is 87,450 hectares (216.1 acres). The most outstanding characteristics of wine production in Extremadura are the large number of municipal districts involved (a total of 124) and the diversity of climates and soils within them. The soils are granitic and clay, and the temperate, continental climate is influenced by the Atlantic ocean, with droughts and extreme temperatures during much of the spring and summer. Vineyards therefore tend to be on high ground, about 600 meters (1,968 feet) above sea level. A wide range of varieties are grown, both imported and native–Alarije, Borba, Cayetana, Pardina, Montúa, Macabeo, Parellada, Chardonnay, Pedro Ximénez, Verdejo, and Malvar for white wines, and Garnacha, Tempranillo, Bobal, Cabernet Sauvignon, Graciano Mazuela, Merlot, Monastrell, and Syrah for red wines. All this points to the great potential of this area which, until recently, was just that, largely unexploited potential.

This part of Spain was the birthplace of many of the conquistadors–Hernán Cortés, Pizarro, Núñez de Balboa, Alvarado. After "conquering" the New World, they were quick to introduce the wines of Cáceres and Trujillo and soon started vine cultivation on the American continent. In fact, the very first stocks planted in the 15th century came from Extremadura. A glorious past, but only in the 19th century did the wines of this region start to move towards those of today's D.O. Ribera del Guadiana.

Development began in the district of Tierra de Barros, leading the way for the rest of the region. At the start of the twentieth century, this district already had a Viticultural and Enological Station in its capital, Almendralejo, which was then, and still is, the center of gravity for all activities in Extremadura's wine sector. This station was set up with the aim of representing local interests and improving the quality of local wines. However, its good intentions came to nothing with the arrival in the area of producers of brandies and fortified wines coming from other parts of Spain. These required alcohol and their priority was to obtain low-cost wines with a high alcohol content. This situation was made even worse in the fifties and sixties when the Comisión de Compras de Excedentes de Vino (Surplus Wine Purchasing Committee) set minimum prices for the alcohol in wines,

A great part of the traditional white varieties in Ribera del Guadiana are going to be replaced for red ones.

The crianza cellars of Bodegas Inviosa in Almendralejo.

that is, the higher the alcohol content, the better the price. This had drastic effects on the quality and reputation of Extremaduran wines. Not only did it lead to a sharp increase of the surface area under vines but it also damaged another age-old crop–olives. The policy was, to say the least, shortsighted.

Recovering Lost Time

But gradually, thanks to the efforts of a few local wine producers, this emphasis on cheap alcohol was turned round and the focus was placed on quality, with special care being given to the actual vines and with the introduction of a range of enological and technological innovations, more in line with market demand. Some of those involved were Marcelino Díaz from Inviosa, Aniceto Mesías from the winery of the same name (both in Almendralejo, Badajoz), and Antonio Ruiz of Bodegas Ruiz Torres in Cañamero, Cáceres.

"We have always focused on quality," says Marcelino. "By the time the D.O. was finally granted, Inviosa had already done the hardest part–we were producing quality wines and we were selling them. When I joined this bodega in 1977, with wine experience from the agronomic point of view, I decided restructuring was necessary so that we could concentrate on red *crianza* wines which did not exist at the time in Almendralejo. This enabled us to achieve outstanding quality and greatly improved our potential."

Aniceto Mesías is more critical. He states, "I've been trying to show people, and I've been saying this for thirty-five years, that we were not doing things right in Extremadura. It used to be easier to sell bulk wines, producing them with little care or cleanliness. But now it's time to clean up our act, both physically and mentally. The land is an important asset because it gives quantity but we need to apply technology to produce quality. Today our products are good and we can hold our heads high. It is essential for quality to be the main priority." And Antonio Ruiz says about Cañamero, "Since 1974, we have changed the whole concept of production to tie in with market demands, with the focus on a normal alcohol content and getting away from the previous cloudy wines. We have extended our vineyards and have introduced leading-edge technology mainly to develop crianza wines."

After many years of edging their way onto the market and making known the quality and personality of Extremaduran wines, the D.O. Ribera del Guadiana was finally recognized in 1999 for six wine-producing districts–Cañamero, Montánchez, Ribera Alta, Ribera Baja, Tierra de Barros, and Matanegra. Though young in years, this D.O. knows how difficult it was for the bodegas to refloat their activities and enhance their image. Thus it did not initially set standards but only stipulated that the natural elements should lead to an acceptable level of quality in the products of all

six districts which, while disperse, had in common certain viticultural practices (such as the varieties and cultivation methods used) and enological factors (production and aging methods), as well as the name under which they had traditionally been sold on the market, that is, as wines from Extremadura (*Vinos de la Tierra de Extremadura*).

But although the area under vines is 87,450 hectares (216.1 acres), only 12,409 (30.6 acres) of these are registered with the Regulatory Council. In 2000 only 35 wineries of a total of 93 covered by the D.O. produced D.O. wine. Some clarification of this low level of uptake can be obtained from conversation with the producers.

One of the easiest cases to understand is that of Explotaciones Agroindustriales in Badajoz, a winery with activities in both Extremadura and Catalonia. This is because its current owner, Gaspar Santos Sampelayo, a dynamic exchange broker much involved in the world of wine, works between Badajoz and Barcelona. He made contact years ago with some of the main wine makers in Catalonia and eventually took on Joan Milá as enologist. His vineyard is in the Tierra de Barros district and although his bodega is covered by the Regulatory Council, its Viña Jara wine cannot bear the D.O. label because it is bottled in Catalonia. His son, Gaspar Santos, states, "As long as this situation stands, we will never have the D.O. In the medium or long term we are planning to bring in changes so that we can do our bottling here, including a special aging hall, but a large investment is required. It is true that many people prefer to buy wines with a D.O. label so we are certainly at a disadvantage but, on the other hand, you should just try our wine and see what you think."

Antonio Medina of Bodegas Medina

Viña Extremeña, with its owner Alfonso Schlegel, is one of the biggest wineries in the area.

Gaspar Santos

Marcelino Díaz

Bodegas las Granadas Coronadas.

e Hijos in Puebla de Sancho Pérez, Badajoz, sees things differently. "We are waiting for the D.O. to be better consolidated on the Spanish wine scene. We think our brands already have a fairly good position on the market. And anyway, some of our wines couldn't be covered by the D.O. because many of the grapes we use come from outside the D.O. area." Today the winery produces just one brand under the Ribera del Guadiana D.O. label. The situation is the same for Viña Extremeña from Almendralejo, a winery that is active on the international scene. Its manager, Alfonso Schlegel Iglesias, has radically transformed not only the image of its wines but also its quality parameters, an obsession with him. He considers it important that the D.O. should exist because it provides backing and great commercial opportunities. For the time being, only one of this bodega's wines has the D.O. label but the idea is to produce one or two new brands to carry the Ribera del Guadiana label.
Meanwhile, they have placed their bets on an alternative way of guaranteeing their wines, namely, the ISO 9002 quality certificate.
Other producers feel there is no point in waiting for the D.O. to become consolidated and prefer to be a part of it from the start. Luis Miguel Calleja, the enologist for the San Marcos cooperative in Almendralejo, considers that the D.O. is essential for entering the markets for bottled

WEB SITES

The Internet Guide to the Wines of Spain

Languages: English, Spanish
This site lists some of the bodegas that produce wines in the D.O. Ribera del Guadiana. In some cases there are links giving additional information.
www.filewine.es/english/rivera_del_guadiana.htm

Federación Española de Asociaciones de Enólogos

Language: Spanish
The Spanish Federation of Associations of Enologists allows browsers to consult the magazine *Enólogos* which, in its tourism section, combines information on the wines produced in a specific area with information for visitors to the region, in this case, Extremadura.
www.enologo.com/revista/n1/turismo.html

Tourism and Gastronomy in Extremadura

Language: Spanish
This portal for Extremadura provides information on accommodation and rural tourism. Its tourism and gastronomic routes are useful for planning a weekend visit.
www.extremadura.com/turismo/

www.extremadura.com/rutas_gastronomicas/rutas/jamon/index.html

www.extremadura.com/rutas_gastronomicas/rutas/vinos/index.html

www.extremadura.com/ocio/fiestasit/

Guide to the Wines of Extremadura

Languages: English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish
This site was set up by the Council for Finance, Industry, and Tourism of the Government of Extremadura. It gives information on the characteristics, growing areas and producers of local wines, both with and without a D.O.
www.juntaex.es/consejerias/eic/consejos/vinos/home.html

Extremadura, the Last Paradise

Languages: English, German, Spanish
Adenex is an environmental association that encourages us to explore a selection of tourism routes in Extremadura, seeing its flora and fauna at first hand.
www.bme.es/adenex/paraiso.html

BLACK PIGS AND MERINO SHEEP

Nobody on a wine tour of Extremadura should overlook the region's culinary delights, especially the cheese and ham. This was our aim when we set out to explore the mysteries of the Torta del Casar and the cured Iberian hams of the Dehesa de Extremadura with the intention of visiting the small, family businesses, Hermanos Pajuelo in the village of Almoharín and Casa Bautista in Montánchez.

Hidden away in the folds of the Sierra de Montánchez at almost 3,000 feet (900 meters) above sea level is the idyllic little village of the same name. Just before we reached Montánchez, we happened to meet one of the four-legged inhabitants wandering along the road apparently without a care in the world, as if he wanted to make clear that we had entered the realm of the black pig. This superb specimen of the Iberian pig trotted around quite happily all by himself, tucking into the grasses and acorns to be found in abundance by the roadside. After this enjoyable meeting, we stepped into the little factory of Casa Bautista to inspect the destiny in store for our "welcoming committee's" extremities.

The Bautista family has been curing hams for over four decades and every year produces around 10,000 hams from both black Iberian and white pigs for sale in the Spanish market. The fresh hams, either from the family's own herds or bought in from other local producers, are delivered to the factory in winter, weighed and cured in rough sea salt for around a week, before being washed, rubbed and shaped by hand. The hams are then hung in the temperature controlled drying room or *secadero* for 30 days, where the two-year process of curing begins. After one month, the hams are moved to the *secadero natural*, where they are allowed to "sweat" in the high summer temperatures. In these conditions, the gradually melting fat penetrates the muscle fibers of the ham. Finally, at the end of the first year, the hams are again moved to the bodega where temperatures are cooler in summer and milder in winter to mature fully and become worthy of the Denomination of Origin Dehesa de Extremadura seal of approval.

On leaving the village, we again met our curly-tailed friend happily grazing on the verge. For the moment he has "saved his bacon" and escaped the butcher's knife.

Torta del Casar Cheese

Our second visit is to the little cheese factory run by the brothers Santiago and Ignacio Pajuelo Bautista in Almoharín, not far from Montánchez. Here, the raw milk from the brothers' flock of some 1,300 merino sheep is used all year round to produce the exquisite Torta del Casar cheese, which should be awarded its own Denomination of Origin seal this year. With the help of three employees the brothers make the cheeses in two weights (half kilo and one kilo/1 lb 2 oz and 2 lb), producing 30,000 cheeses last year.

This is a unique soft cheese with a natural rind. When properly matured, only gentle pressure is needed to open the *torta* (literally "pie"), revealing the delicate cheese inside, which is soft enough to spread. In Spain, Torta del Casar is served whole, the top of the rind is removed

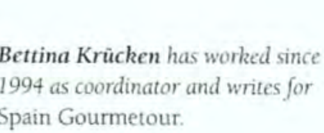
like a lid and the delicious cheese is simply scooped out.

The raw milk is heated to a temperature of between 26 and 28°C (78 and 82°F) and fermented with natural rennet. The curd is then pressed, formed, put in brine and left to mature for 70 to 80 days. During ripening, the individual cheeses are carefully scraped by hand three times to ensure that the bacteria cultures on the natural rind don't get of hand. Hygiene is the golden rule of raw milk cheese making, and you can taste it in the final product.

Santiago enthusiastically initiates us into the secrets of his little factory, while telling us of the success of his product at the Trujillo cheese fair–a yearly held major event for connoisseurs–ever since the first cheeses were entered back in 1997. In 2000, his cheeses won first prize for the fourth time. The cheese is also being sold in the Gourmet Shop of Spain's leading department store, El Corte Inglés, ever since production started in 1997, and is exported to the United States.

Our short trip finally brought us to Zafra in the south of Extremadura, where we booked into the Parador, the former ducal palace of the pow-

erful Feria family. The small town of Zafra lies near to the Vía de la Plata, a major route linking Mérida (Extremadura) and Astorga (León) since Roman times. It became an important marketplace in the 13th century, and this heritage is still to be seen in the town's civil and religious buildings, including the former Alcázar or citadel (now the Parador), the Convento de la Cruz (today's town hall), Santa María del Valle monasteries, and the two pretty market places (Plaza Chica and Plaza Grande). After a long day whetting our appetites by learning about the local delicacies, we were finally able to settle down in the Barbacana Restaurant, under the shadow of the old town walls, to do justice to the regional produce and enjoy the local Zafra wine.



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

The storks of Extremadura feel at home on any church tower.

Bodegas Viña Extremeña.

wines, especially for exports. "At present the situation is rather delicate because the plan is very ambitious and problems were inevitable, but if we have the support of all the wineries, I think we should eventually have a strong and much-respected D.O. Dolores Morenas, the owner of Bodegas Dolores Morenas de los Santos in Maimona, Badajoz explains, "The D.O. on the label gives added prestige. The Council is working hard for the future of the Extremaduran wines and in the long term it will be in everyone's interests to be in it rather than outside it." This opinion is shared by José María Cancho, the owner of Bodegas Las Granadas in Herguijuela, Cáceres and a long-standing member of the hotels and catering sector, "People ask for a D.O. wine and, in the end, it's the consumer who sets the standards and who creates the demand. Our wines are working very well in both the domestic and foreign markets, to the extent that we cannot produce enough because our winery is small and practically all the product is sold in advance."
The wines of Extremadura have clearly shown a marked improvement over the last decade. The mistakes of earlier years are a thing of the past and both growers and producers have learnt from them. But the task has just begun. Enthusiasm and a concern to do things well are now the formula for a young but well-grounded D.O., and the brands currently on the market are a representative sample of the renaissance of a region that has a firm commitment to both its vineyards and its wines.

Ana Ramirez is a journalist and worked for different Spanish publications like La Etiqueta del Marco Real, Vinos de España *and* Sobremesa. *At present she is editor for* Mi Vino.

Photo credits on page 148.
Exporters on page 124.

Freckled Fruit

CANARIAN

"This fruit is delicious to eat as a dessert, it has a rich taste of strawberry and peach," explained Hédiard, owner of the Parisian gourmet-boutique in his 1889 catalogue. "The skin is taken off with the fingers and then you bite the fruit itself." His description of the banana's taste, then

MIGUEL SARRÓ

BANANA

such a novelty even for his sophisticated customers, may sound like poetic license, but it is an accurate description of a ripe Canarian *plátano*. Small and golden skinned, speckled with little black spots, its pale yellow flesh is intensely fruity and carries a heady tropical aroma.

TEXT
VICKY HAYWARD

Carefully packed in straw-filled crates or paper parcels and shipped by steamboat to British, French, and German ports, it found its way around Europe in the first half of the last century, opening up what has since become the world's most lucrative banana market. Then, from the 1960s onwards, like the bulbous sun-ripened tomato or the small, tart, eating apple, it began to be eased out of European shops and supermarkets by larger, cheaper, spotlessly uniform bananas from further afield. But after a Spanish nationwide survey last year found that 80 percent of buyers prefer to pay extra for the smaller, more expensive plátano with the luscious taste described by Hédiard, it is poised to make a comeback around Europe. What is it, then, that sets the Canarian plátano apart from the everyday banana? Smaller than average, curvy and rounded, the flesh is less fibrous or astringent than its larger Central American cousin and, when properly ripened, it has a perfumed aroma matching its fruity taste. Tomás Zerolo, from Tenerife, analyzed the overall effect this way in a small pamphlet published in 1905, "... it is sweet with a light acidity, a taste which, combined with the select aroma, is a blend of the American pineapple, the peach and a sense of dissolving firmness."

The Sources of Flavor

In part the plátano's taste is a question of variety. When commercial planting began in lush pockets of Gran Canaria and northern Tenerife in the late 19th century, the growers chose the Pequeña Enana, or Dwarf Cavendish, a squat wind-resistant banana brought back from southern China by explorers and botanists who had already taken it to exotic northern European greenhouses. It adapted perfectly to the islands' subtropical climate, and has become closely identified with the islands, which are now the variety's main growing area worldwide. More recently a related variety within a different subgroup of the same genus, the Gran Enana–literally Large Dwarf, has also been planted to satisfy the modern taste for larger fruit. Grown in the islands' potassium-rich volcanic soils and cool, mild, breezy climate, both types have exceptionally high levels of sugar and the fruit acids which develop during the long ripening cycle of five to six months. It is the balance between these two which converts into such satisfyingly intense sweetness.

Equally important is the fruit's ripeness. "Quite simply the Canarian plátano is riper, fresher, and sweeter because it has been picked later," says Victor Galán, director of the Department of Tropical Fruit Research at the Instituto Canario de Investigación Agraria (Canarian Institute of Agricultural Research). Since the Canarian crop does not have to face an endurance test in chilled storage, unlike bananas crossing the Atlantic, it can be picked much later, at the right moment for ripeness rather than resistance. Contrary to popular myth, the banana does start ripening before it is picked. The flesh should have finished filling out the skin and the ingredients for the final sweetness should all be there by the time it is cut off the stalk. Hence the local subtleties of ripeness: in the islands you can eat fruit when it is round but

green, sweet and lemony; or *pintón*, meaning half-ripe, with its freckles appearing; or *dulce*, when it is completely sweet and creamy.

A Pattern of Islands

But the plátano's character is also shaped by the islands' terrain and way of life. The groves, called *plataneras*, cover a quarter of the islands' irrigated farming land on Tenerife, La Palma, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, El Hierro, and Fuerteventura, producing an average annual crop of 400,000 tons worth an estimated 192,981 US$ (210,350 euros), around 30 percent of the Canaries' agricultural income according to the region's own statistics.

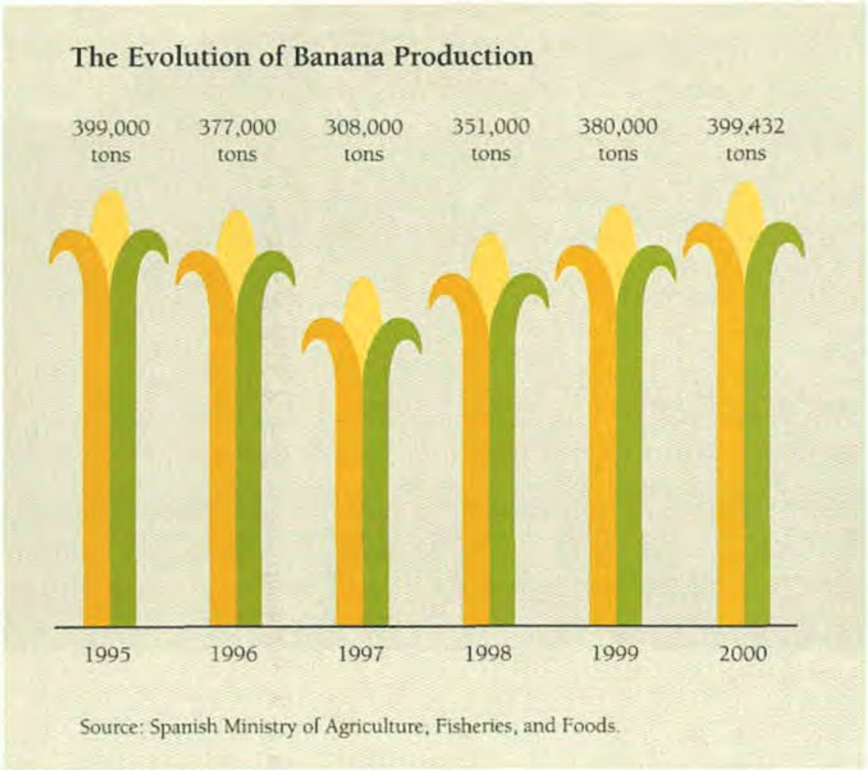
On a human scale, however, this is the land of God's small acre. The 11,000 growers' plots, planted at various times during the century, cover a total of only 8,649 hectares (21,371 acres) measured out in old fashioned *fanegadas* (5,400 square meters/6,458 square yards). Many are smaller than a hectare (2.471 acres) and are farmed singlehandedly. Growing costs–clearing the land, laying the meter-thick layer of topsoil over the volcanic rock below, buying the irrigation water, and paying for labor–are high. The system survives thanks only to the exceptional productivity, which, at some 25 tons of fruit per fanegada of land–and that figure is still rising–is the highest in the world.

How, then, do growers achieve this? "No two plátano groves are the same," says Juan Cabrera, an agricultural engineer who is a plátano specialist at the Canarian Institute of Agricultural Research. "There are so many microclimates here within each island and each farm, so many different land, water, and wind factors that the solutions for each grower to produce the best quality plátanos are quite different."

Tradition: The Eye for Detail

Lorenzo Guerra, known as Melo, has just one fanegada of gently sloping land at Los Llanos, on the balmy southern tip of La Palma, one of the prime growing areas planted at the end of the last century. He inherited a typical small plátano grove: that is, the land, 750 Dwarf Cavendish plants, now a century old, a water tank, and shares in a privately owned water company which mines water pockets in the mountains. Now in his seventies, Melo works in the grove from first light till dusk. He uses many techniques introduced via agricultural research in the last twenty years: perforated plastic bags tied around each bunch of ripening plátanos to protect the skins, automatic irrigation rather than old fashioned flooding, and, for the last ten years, a fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium to replace manure from his own cow. But the work remains labor intensive. Melo tracks what is happening on each of the trees even before the baby green fruits appear sheathed by the blood red petals of the banana flower. Sometimes in winter the leaves need to be cut open to help the flower break through–an operation known as giving the plant a cesarian–and, a month after flowering, the small white blossoms at the end of each fruit must be dead-headed. Awkward bunches are propped away from the main stem by wooden crutches, new leaves are tied on to protect them against the wind and the shoot which will grow into next year's fruiting stem, known as *el hijo* or the child, is chosen among the suckers growing from the base of the plant. Finally, five to six months after the fruit has appeared, Melo's family will help him cut it off the tree, wrap it in bubble plastic and carry it to a small shed where a pickup truck lined with blankets will take it to the

Protected by thick "blankets" to prevent bruising, the banana bunches are taken from the plantation to the cooperatives



packers. From the time it arrives there–for cutting into smaller bunches or hands, washing and grading, packing into box trays, and loading into chilled container trucks–it is only four or five days before it reaches the Spanish buyer.

Experiment: Adapting Old Ways

At the other end of the scale Rudolfo Sicilia Batista produces a thousand tons of plátanos on a 30-fanegadas (16.2 hectares/40 acres) plot at San Miguel on the windy southern tip of Tenerife. His tall plants–Gran Enana and other varieties–rustle within a giant net shadehouse designed to protect them from wind, salt, unexpected falls in temperature, and leaf evaporation. Few of the leaves are torn or fringed by the wind. Wide aisles allow tractors to travel between the trees, drip irrigation keeps water use to a minimum and a small packing plant in the middle of the grove minimizes bruising to the fruit before it is boxed up. In the middle of the grove, rounding a corner, we suddenly come upon a penned flock of smooth-skinned local Pelibuey sheep munching on fresh green and dead brown banana leaves. Their manure is turned into compost and dug back into the soil along with an alkaline organic treatment, while the meat is sold to restaurants and other customers.

"Livestock and crops have always gone together in the islands," Rudolfo explains, "I've adapted that way of doing things to modern growing methods to produce the kind of fruit people want to today." He hopes to register for organic production within two years.

Most growers fall somewhere between Melo's traditionalism and Rudolfo's pioneering methods. Drip irrigation is found in 80 percent of groves, shadehouses cover nearly a third of them, and leaf and soil analysis are slowly coming in alongside mechanization. But tradition weighs strong. The growers in La Gomera still use old fashioned flooding irrigation, the abrupt terraces carved into La Palma's steep hillsides have to be worked entirely by hand and growers on all islands still believe open-air growing gives the best quality fruit.

Fifteen years of specialized agricultural research has played a vital role in bringing change. At the experimental farm in Cueva del Polvo, in southern Tenerife, the Canarian Institute of Agricultural Research keeps a collection of 42 different plátano varieties. Some, like Gran Enana, were imported and kept in quarantine here before being planted. Others are spontaneous mutations found on the islands: Gruesa, for example, found on La Palma in 1992, was test run here and then reproduced at a laboratory for in vitro cultivation of disease-free stock. Today the laboratory, partly owned by the regional government, sells 700,000 plátano plants every year.

Wind is the banana tree's worst enemy. The trees must be given protection in open areas such as this plantation on the island of La Palma.

Size Is Not Everything

At first glance the extreme fragmentation of land, microclimate, and growing methods does not seem to make economic sense. It is further accentuated by small-scale business organization: the growers, grouped in two dozen different producers' associations, send their fruit to 120 packing plants scattered through the six islands. The stems are hung on large cable-hung hooks, disinfected and sorted in cold water baths to stop any unnecessary bruising before being shipped off to the distributors, who pay varying prices fixed by individual deals with the growers. Curiously, though the small-scale way of doing things has turned out to have certain advantages. Clearly the most important is the year-round production allowed by so many different microclimates, vital in the market for fresh fruit today. But apart from this, it has produced diversity, flexibility, job creation–over 35,000 people are said to work directly or indirectly with *plátanos*–and a certain healthy local rivalry.

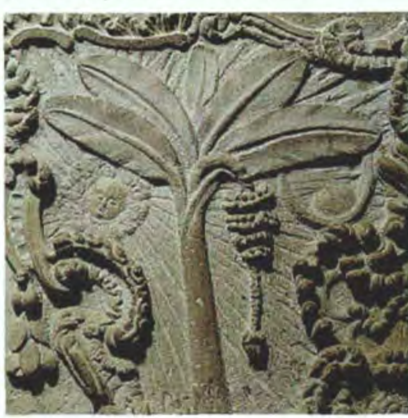
"Canarian growers are very proud of their produce," comments Enrique Álvarez, managing director of Asprocan, the umbrella collective growers' organization formed in 1995. "They don't talk about a good or bad crop–they talk about each stem of fruit, comparing it to their neighbor's. Sometimes all that is missing is a name for each plant." In the 1990s, that growers' pride and friendly rivalry has turned out to be useful in another way, helping to foster independent initiatives to ensure survival in the face of competition from the Latin American banana. Asprocan made two key moves: they invested heavily in establishing the *plátano's* identity as a healthy gourmet fruit, cute precisely because it is not quite perfect, small and freckled, and they patented the name "Plátano de Canarias" to avoid bootleg produce.

Lateral Thinking

But most strategies originated as private companies' independent initiatives aimed at reopening new overseas markets. Hardly surprising: it is the growers who best remember the plátano's selling power before the 1960s. Such was its reputation in England that it could command up to triple the price of a Costa Rican or Jamaican banana. And so great was the volume of trade through the Port of London that it gave its name to Canary Wharf. No wonder the banana had become a symbol of the good life: "Yes, we have no bananas," ran the famous Edwardian music hall song used as a slogan by the

How exactly the banana reached the Canary Islands we do not know, but it seems likely that it was taken there both by Portuguese sailors en route from Africa and by early settlers from the Spanish mainland, where it had been planted without much success in Al Andalus. By then, the banana had already been traveling west for Asia for some two thousand years and various varieties among the 400 we know today must have been widely planted in the Arab world and Africa. In the late 18th century Humboldt found three types in the islands, both small, sweet, eating bananas and cooking plantains, which were used by stone carvers as their model for a wonderfully naïve relief of a banana plant in the baroque church at La Orotava. They may have been using it to evoke the Garden of Eden. Only thirty years earlier, Linnaeus had given the cooking banana the name *Musa paradisiaca*, or fruit from paradise, a distant echo of ancient Asian traditions that it was a gift from the gods and of later Christian suggestions–fairly obviously symbolic–that it, rather than the apple, was the fruit Eve offered Adam. It was from the Canaries, too, so often a staging post between the Old and New World, that the banana made the hop to Latin America in the hands of a missionary, friar Tomás de Berlanga, who in 1516 carried plants with him from Gran Canaria to Santo Domingo. Whether or not Berlanga was later made Bishop of Panama for his foresight is unclear, but certainly the banana, planted there by native peoples and African slaves, as well as the Spanish settlers, became a staple Latin American foodstuff with spectacular speed. Today the cooking or French plantain, eaten as a starchy vegetable in growing areas, still makes up around half of the world's banana crop while the sweet banana continues its long migration, now as a cash crop shipped to the northern markets where it was unknown till the end of the last century.

Bas relief shows a banana tree in the church of La Concepción in Orotava, Tenerife.



unemployed in Belfast in 1932. But London was quickly overtaken as a destination for shipments by Hamburg and the French ports. In 1930s France, it was the plátano which made the banana chic. Josephine Baker scandalized Parisian audiences wearing an erotic banana miniskirt and posters proclaimed the Canarian banana as "La Meilleure, La Plus Parfumée!"

It is in these markets, where memories of the plátano still linger, that growers believe their fruit can make a mark again, but this time around with a different identity. The largest producers' association, COPLACA, a union of cooperatives founded in the 1970s and handling a third of the Canarian crop, is planning to open up a small year-round quality market in northern Europe in alliance with Fyffes, the islands' oldest shipper, which began sending plátanos to London in the 1870s. Another consortium of four producers' associations, Platania, is already exporting small quantities to Germany and is now working with an English retailer planning to launch a range of fruit with extra flavor.

Behind those moves, hundreds of small growers are shifting their growing patterns. Gran Enana, the most appropriate variety to open up some export markets because its size is similar to that of the Central American banana, has now spread to cover 2,500 hectares (6,177 acres), just under a third of the growing area. Other new varieties–the streaked red banana, the *topocho verde* (a green cooking banana), and the small apple-banana–have all been planted commercially with a view to finding niche markets for fruit with a difference.

Banana production on the Canary Islands reached 400,000 tons in 2000

Alongside that, organic growing is finally taking off after a decade or two of trial and error. Again, nature is on the Canarian growers' side: all plátanos are relatively pesticide free thanks to the cool dry climate. Nonetheless, organic growing is not easy, cutting productivity by half and requiring shadehouses, annual replanting of all banana trees, green manuring with sweet potato plants and mounds of compost ploughed in to compensate for fertilizer. The resulting fruit is smaller than the usual Canarian plátano but with a great flavor and creamy texture. This year, for the first time, three large growers are switching to organic growing, a clear sign of the times as the European organic market diversifies and expands.

Nature or Nurture

Other ideas are designed around getting the plátano's flavor to hit home in a new way. In part it's simply overdue recognition that the plátano is a very fragile fruit. It may look as if it comes in its biodegradable wrapper, but it needs gentle handling more like a peach or strawberry if you are going to enjoy it as if it had just been picked.

One major research project bringing together Canarian growers, packers and scientist has been looking into harvesting, packing, and transport to see how that can be done. One part follows through agricultural engineer Eladio Hernández's discovery that harvesting just a little earlier, when the fruit is a few centimeters smaller but still fully rounded out, will leave it with more rather than less sugar, and that it can keep that added taste and travel with less bruises for a full two weeks after picking. Alongside that, the fruit is being wrapped in permeable bags with a modified atmosphere to stabilize the moisture and hold down levels of ethylene, the fruit's own natural ripening gas. And finally there are the new space age plastic pod wrappings to carry the fruit home so it can resist all the knocks and blows of a trip to the supermarket.

On the other hand, there are new plátano products appearing which seem designed to stretch your brain about the limits of what you can do with a banana. What they have in common is venture capital from Canarian growers and new technology to do away with additives. One, invented by local businessman Jaime Breixer, is an ingenious, low-calorie, additive-free, lightly set pudding

TAKE FOUR COOKS

Until the 1990s, *plátanos* usually came just two ways in the Canaries, either in *arroz a la cubana*, a Latin American dish brought back by Canarian emigrants with fried eggs and bananas served with rice and fresh tomato sauce, or flambéed in brandy as a pudding. "Well done, they are exquisite," says Carlos Gamonal, chef and owner of Michelin-starred restaurant Mesón El Drago in Tenerife for the past twenty years. "But there is a lot more you can do with a properly ripened plátano."
He ripens his on the stem, wrapped in a blanket in a cool corner of his restaurant kitchen. "They've got to have the little black spots and then be as firm or soft as you need for each dish." His dishes show the influence of his French training: a banana *tarte tatin* made with firm fruit served with a lemon-flavored *crème anglaise* and a banana charlotte with layers of soft banana, sponge, and vanilla cream.

Young chefs in Tenerife are trying more modern ideas. "There is still a lot of experimenting to be done," says Jesús González, "but it's clear that the plátano's natural sweetness can give you fantastic flavor contrasts." At El Duende, close to the groves of Orotava Valley where his father is a grower, he serves a string of inventive dishes: banana risotto, chicken in a spiced honey and banana crust, slivered banana and goat's cheese, and fried banana ice cream. "And banana puddings are great to set off a good dessert wine," he adds. Jorge Garcí Martín of La Casa del Vino also mixes in Latin American ideas: local fish wrapped and baked in banana leaves or served with a banana and ginger sauce. "It's not just the sweetness, he says, but also the creamy texture that makes it a great ingredient."
And finally, the dishes of the past are also making a comeback. At El Jable, in southern Tenerife, Matías Suarez is reviving old recipes like green plátanos boiled with salted fish, semi-ripe ones used to substitute potatoes in a Spanish omelette, and fully ripe ones mashed into a lemony banana cream served with guava. Simple but delicious.

BANANA POLITICS

"Calamitous times are these," wrote Captain Pérez in 1917 after his boat with its cargo of *plátanos* had been sunk by two torpedoes from a German submarine. The boat had been bought by the Canarian farmers' unions the year before in the hopes of acquiring independence from overseas events, but in fact the growers have never managed to avoid being buffeted by political or economic storms. The First World War brought prices crashing to a fifth of their 1914 level and sparked a wave of emigration from the islands to Latin America; the Wall Street Crash of 1929 shook the European market again; the British, French and Italian tariffs of the 1930s, designed to protect their colonial producers, virtually closed those markets; trade with the mainland virtually ground to a halt during the Spanish Civil War and, finally, the outbreak of the Second World War ended exports to Sweden and Germany overnight. In the second half of the century economic rivalry replaced political conflict. When Chancellor Adenauer insisted on Germany's right to tax-free banana imports from Central American countries in the 1957 Treaty of Rome, he sowed the seeds for today's heated debate between the "dollar banana" producers–the North American multinationals producing in Central America–who want unrestricted access to the European market and the "eurobanana" growers in the Canaries, Madeira, the ex-French colonies, and the British Commonwealth. In the end, as a new market emerges for fair-trade fruit with flavor and guaranteed growing methods, it may be that the fate of the growers is decided by the buyers themselves rather than the politicians or economists.

which comes molded in miniature banana-shaped plastic pots; the everyday size is just a mouthful or two while the larger one provides exactly the same nutrition as a whole banana. And, it has to be said, it really does taste of a plátano but at the same time slips down in a few seconds. The second idea is a semi-dried whole banana that emerges chewy but soft after a blast of hot air in a French-designed oven usually used for prunes. Given a coating of sesame seeds or chocolate, it is going to be sold as a portable, healthy sweet snack that gives a blast of energy. These New Wave lazy ways into a plátano for those without the energy to peel one promise to be the first of a new generation. Roll on the banana hot dog.

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

Photo credits on page 148.
Recipes on page 95.
Exporters on page124.

WEB SITES

Banana Labels from the Canaries

Language: Spanish
This site is an unexpected location for the labels used by the different trading organizations for bananas from the Canaries.
www.geocities.com/NapaValley/1706/main.htm

Recipes with Bananas

Language: Spanish
The following addresses give recipes and ideas about how to use bananas from the Canaries in delicious main dishes and desserts. The contributions come from some of Spain's best-known chefs.

www.koldoroyo.es/recetas/postres/postres_de_restaurante/3206/

www.pacifico.com.mx/articulos/recetas/adriana4.htm

www.karlosnet.com/General/receta.jsp?c=522

www.karlosnet.com/General/receta.jsp?c=316

Banana Cooperatives in the Canaries

Language: Spanish
The following are the addresses of some of the cooperatives that grow and distribute bananas in the Canaries. In some cases, information is given on the growing areas and methods used.

Cooperativas Unidas de La Palma (CUPALMA)
www.cupalma.com/pag/frame-cup.htm

Cooperativa platanera de La Palma (COPLACA)
www.atreyu.nu/coisba/coplaca.htm

Bonana
www.bonana.com

Bananas from the Canaries

Language: Spanish
The site set up by the Canary Government's Council for Agriculture, Cattle, Fishing, and Food includes a page on the banana sector in the Canaries with statistics, a list of companies, history, nutritional content, etc.
www.productos-canarios.com/es/platanos.htm

Sherry Vinegar

A TOUCH OF CLASS

If you want a great vinegar, you need a great wine to start with. And if that wine is sherry, you have one of the world's classiest condiments, one which with careful aging reaches sublime heights. Just a few drops will take any dish to a higher level, transforming ordinary fare into a gourmet treat. In its Vinagre de Jerez, Spain can boast of having one of the best vinegars in the world, one which is now protected by its own Denomination of Origin.

ANTONIO GIRBES / SOBREMESA

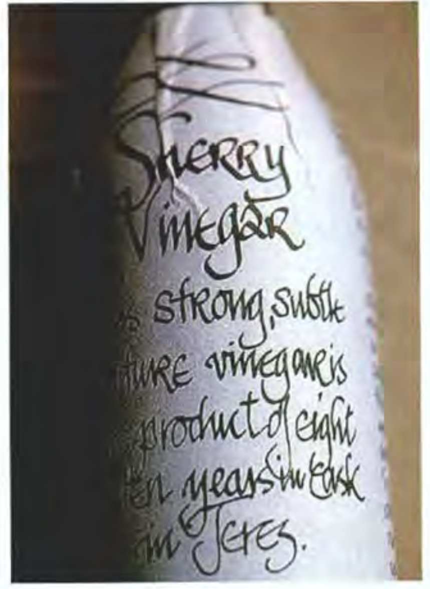
VINAGRE
RESERVA
25 AÑOS

TEXT
PAZ IVISON

TRANSLATION
MARK LITTLE

Times are changing for the better in many fields, including the culinary world, to the delight of gourmets around the world. One example of this is the recent approval of the D.O. Vinagre de Jerez, which officially confers on this condiment the luxury status it has always deserved. It is a unique product, capable of bringing forth aromas and flavors which recall the extraordinary wines of its homeland, in particular the range of very old oloroso and amontillado sherries.

I had the good fortune to have been born and to have grown up in Jerez, where vinegar was always known to be–albeit "unofficially"–something wonderfully delicious. The cellar masters would seek out that exceptional oak butt which would be treasured, but which was kept a secret from outsiders: the butts which had "spoiled," its wine–an old amontillado, for instance–having turned to vinegar. The *jerezanos* knew, for example, that the old Díez Hermanos winery had one of the best vinegar *soleras* in town, as did Valdespino. The comparative excellence of the vinegar from one winery as compared to its neighboring bodega was a topic of discussion behind closed doors. No self-respecting jerezano could envision a gazpacho or a salad without the lively and complex aroma of sherry vinegar. All the wine makers–from González Byass and Domecq to Williams & Humbert, Sánchez Romate, Osborne–had magnificent vinegars, but they were never bottled for sale.



These vinegars brightened up many a salad in my childhood, but they remained a closely-guarded secret shared only among jerezanos. Only the friends and relatives of the wine makers had access to this sublime condiment. Meanwhile, shops in Jerez in those days would stock commercial brands of vinegar of questionable origin and unquestionably inferior quality.

I remember that the great film maker Orson Welles, who was in Jerez on several occasions as a guest of the Domecq family (which had an extraordinary private stock of vinegar), was one of the best promoters of the excellence of sherry vinegar. At every possible occasion Welles, who knew a thing or two about fine food, would proclaim its qualities to anybody who cared to listen.

"No salad is good unless it is dressed with vinegar from Jerez," he would say. "No vinegar can compare to it."

An Unsung Hero

I have many classic books on sherry, and I have not found a single reference to sherry vinegar in any of them. This goes to show how vinegar was relegated to the status of wayward child in the sherry wineries. Not even Manuel González Gordon–Marqués de Bonanza and author of that masterpiece titled Jerez-Xerez-Sherish–mentions vinegar as such. Only in Chapter 5 does he refer to *acetificación* or *picado* (spoilage) of wine, as a defect. It is obvious that the wine makers of Jerez were ashamed of this byproduct, which was kept hidden in the depth of a barrel and which only left the winery by the back door.

I have never been able to understand this official contempt. Historically, vinegar has been considered an almost magical product. The Roman doctors recommended a bit of vinegar mixed with water as the best thirst quencher. Not to mention, for example, the passion that Cleopatra felt for vinegar. The Egyptian queen and Mark Anthony once made a bet, to see who could spend the greatest amount of money on a meal, offering the most expensive and sophisticated ingredients of the time. Cleopatra won hands down: aware of the properties of vinegar, she dissolved a magnificent pearl in a cup of vinegar and offered it to Mark Anthony to drink, thus winning by points. And for centuries, while Jerez hid its vinegars in shame, the Italians boasted of their Modena vinegar.

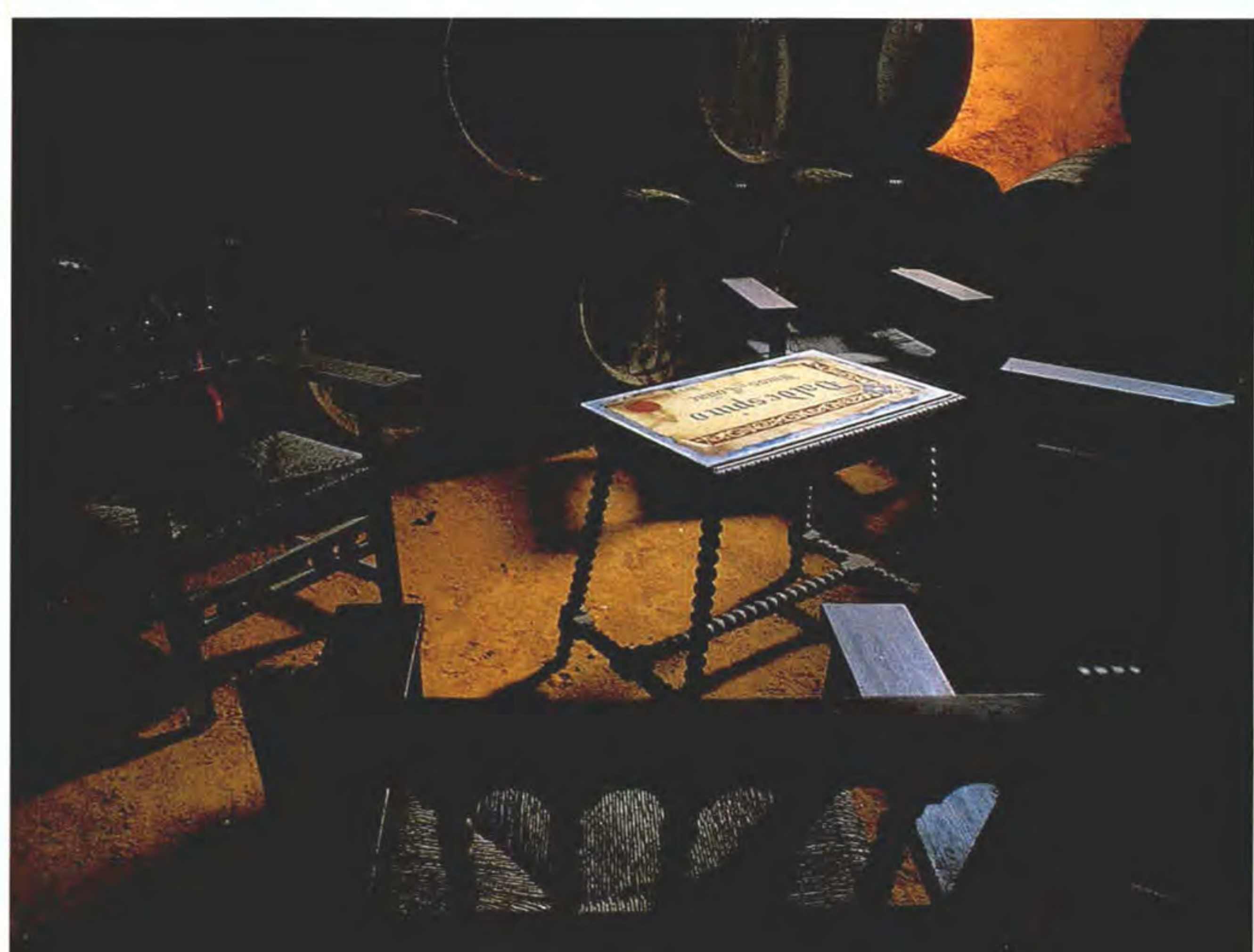
An Early Pioneer

Fortunately things started to change in the last quarter of the 20th century and sherry vinegar began to appear on the shop shelves, both in Spain and abroad. José Paez Lobato, who bottles vinegar under the label Capirete, remembers the first commercially available sherry vinegar

well: his father, Francisco Páez Sánchez, was a true pioneer, for it was he who first marketed Jerez vinegar in labeled bottles. "It was in 1933 when my father introduced bottles of vinegar on the local and national market, with a rudimentary label bearing the simple words 'Vinegar from Jerez' and his name," recalls Páez Lobato.

The pioneer's son has continued with the business, transforming it into one of the leading producers in the area. For the last 20 years the company has exported to Germany, France, the U.S., Switzerland. Their vinegars are all of the *Reserva* category, that is, with a minimum aging of two years. Their star product is Gran Capirete, with 50 years of aging, followed by the twenty- and eight-year old Capiretes. They come in four bottle sizes: 250 ml, 375 ml, 500 ml, 750 ml. The name Capirete refers to the estate where they have their own vineyards, producing the sherry wine which is the raw material for their vinegar.

As sherry vinegar gained ground, soon other companies were starting up in Jerez devoted exclusively to selling vinegars, rather than treating it as a sideline to wine making. This is the case of Fernando Terry Galarza, who started the Vinagres de Yema S.L. company in 1993, with aging cellars in Jerez and in El Puerto de Santa María. Its labels, Bota Vieja, Roble Viejo, Cepa Vieja and Viña Vieja, are present all over the world. The company exports a million liters (219,974 gallons) of vinegar a year, its principal customer being France. In the words of Fernando Terry himself, some of their vinegars are made without acetifying the young wines. "We allow ourselves the luxury of produc-



Good vinegar is a potent flavor enhancer to bring out the true taste of raw ingredients.

ing soleras in the old fashioned way, and we even have our *sacristía* (that Jerez *sancta sanctorum* where the finest products are enshrined) in the first cellar we bought, O'Neale. Here we keep butts whose vinegars, given the great age of their solera–more than a hundred years–can even be drunk straight. They are that delicious."

It's worth pointing out at this stage that there are two ways of making sherry vinegar. The most common method nowadays is to provoke the acetification of young wine of the year just after it stopped fermentation, and then age the resulting vinegar in the *criadera* butts for the period the cellar master deems appropriate, respecting the minimum time of two years stipulated by the Regulatory Council. The second method, the one Fernando Terry calls "the old fashioned way," is the one that occurred naturally in the sherry cellars when a butt containing wine was "picado"–that is, "spoiled"–and turned to vinegar. These vinegars can be very old and are, without doubt, the finest. They can also be used as the *madre*–the mother of vinegar–to make younger vinegars.

The French Client

In my own culinary travels around the world I was able to see the prestige that sherry vinegar was acquiring, especially in France, that culinary empire. On a visit to Paul Bocuse's kitchen (although these days he may have been surpassed by other great chefs, we mustn't forget he was the great gastronomic revolutionary of his time and that his Lyon restaurant still holds, after 35 years, three Michelin stars) I noticed with pride that there was a bottle of Jerez vinegar, from Domecq, kept close at hand. By all appearances the bottle was used frequently, as common and indispensable as salt. I remarked on this to the master of *nouvelle cuisine* and he assured me that it was an extraordinary product which he used in salads and pan sauces. He added that reduced with a Pedro Ximénez wine, it makes a sublime pan gravy.

For quite a few years now the González Byass winery has marketed its excellent vinegars on the international market, with the top restaurants of Paris, including the Ritz, among its clients.

The winery's production manager, Javier Sanz de Álvaro, a chemist and enologist who trained in the University of Bordeaux, told me the vinegars sold under the González Byass label are always aged much longer than the two years stipulated by the regulations applying to Reserva vinegars. González Byass maintains five soleras for vinegars, each with four *escalas* (rows) and here the vinegar from different vintages is blended following the traditional criadera and solera (see Glossary on page 147) method used for sherry wine. The butts are kept half open inside the cellar, not out of doors as was often done to speed up the oxygenation process.

"We believe the criadera and solera method enhances the vinegar greatly, as it allows a very beneficial, steady oxidation. To ensure its quality, we do not force it in any way. It is a slow process. We can say that all our vinegars are at least five years old."

For some years now González Byass has also been producing Pedro Ximénez vinegar for the high-end Hacienda de Bracamonte label, with the peculiarity that the vinegar in this case ages in butts which previously contained this extraordinary sweet wine.

The Regulatory Council

For about one year now, Vinagre de Jerez has had its own Denomination of Origin. Its Regulatory Council is the same as that which oversees the

SHERRY VINEGAR IN THE KITCHEN

Juan Mari Arzak, the renowned chef-owner of the Arzak restaurant in San Sebastián, awarded with three Michelin stars, is passionate about sherry vinegar, which he uses in many ways in the kitchen: "I consider it the best vinegar in the world. I got to know it in France, in the Troisgros restaurant, back in 1975. I remember it well because it was a unique experience. I had no idea there could be something like this. As I recall, it came from the Domecq winery. When I returned to San Sebastián, I asked their agents here for a supply, but they had none. So I contacted the winery in Jerez directly. They sent it to me in half bottles."
Once Arzak had secured a stock of the precious liquid, he made what he considers his finest vinaigrette, mixing sherry vinegar with the juices of truffles which he had previously obtained by marinating black truffles in peanut oil.
Arzak uses sherry vinegar often because he believes that all sauces, hot or cold, should have that touch of acidity conferred by the king of vinegars. "It enhances the flavors and enlivens the dish." he says. He even uses it in desserts: "In caramel, for instance."
This exquisite condiment is present in many dishes which appear on his menu, for example loin of roe deer with unleavened bread and sherry vinegar, or the cocoa base with star anise and iced sherry vinegar.
Fernando Córdoba, chef owner of El Faro del Puerto, near El Puerto de Santa María and the chief exponent of haute cuisine in the Jerez region, uses this condiment in many of his preparations, not only cold dishes. Depending on the dish, he chooses an aged or a younger vinegar. For example, for marinades he prefers the younger type. He uses the older vinegar, the best, to achieve exquisite sweet and sour pan sauces, adding Pedro Ximénez wine to the pan to obtain a juice of the consistency of light caramel, to which he adds a spoonful of sherry vinegar. "When I use it to dress any cold dish, I like to stir it well with oil, just before seasoning the dish, rather than applying it directly." Good vinegar, like salt, is a potent flavor enhancer to bring out the true taste of raw ingredients, and like salt it should be used sparingly

Juan Mari Arzak
and his daughter Elena

Jerez-Xérès-Sherry and Manzanilla de Sanlúcar wine D.O.s, for in the words of its president, Luis García Ruiz: "The three products share the same origin: the grapes grown in the vineyards in the Marco de Jerez, for sherry vinegar can only be made from sherry wines."

The regulations of the Council were modified, establishing two new registries for producers of sherry vinegar, introducing the adequate controls over the product, from the grape to the cellar, and creating a numbered generic back label for all the lots of bottles, in order to provide the consumer with a guarantee of this product's unique character.

The regulations envision two types of vinegar, depending on its age. The first, called simply Vinagre de Jerez–although this in itself is a grand title–is aged for at least six months in casks of American oak. The second type is Vinagre de Jerez Reserva, for which at least two years of aging is required.

In any case, the stipulated aging periods, as the president points out, are usually surpassed. "The sherry bodegas age their vinegars for much longer," he says. "Perhaps in the future there will be the possibility of creating new official categories for vinegars of exceptional age, just as we have done for sherry wines of more than 20 and 30 years."

While the vinegars of Jerez can be made following the traditional method of criaderas and soleras, there is also the possibility of using static aging, that is, without blending vinegars of different vintages.

One of the significant features of these excellent vinegars is their residual alcohol, of which the rules allow up to three percent. It is a characteristic which aptly points to the vinegar's noble origin, for we mustn't forget that this extraordinary condiment holds within its essence the memory of the sherry it once was.

Paz Ivison *is a journalist and writer specializing in gastronomy. She won the National Gastronomy Award in 2000. A subdirector of Club de Gourmets, she was born in Jerez de la Frontera and currently lives in Madrid.*

Photo credits on page 148.
Exporters on page 124.
Recipes on page 95.

RECIPES

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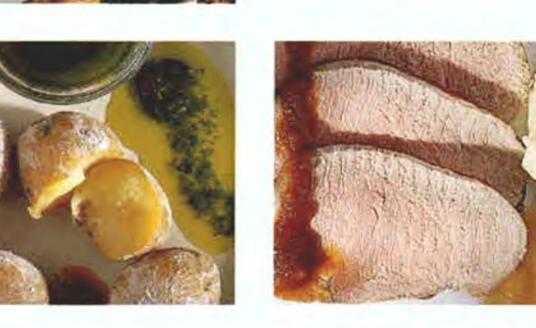

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Coca de Trompó

Cooking in the Balearic Islands has been influenced by a succession of different cultures. After the Reconquest, the Arab influence was gradually muted by that of peninsular Spain. Then came the English, followed by the French from the island of Menorca, which also has its own distinguishing characteristics. The Balearic inhabitants have a special inclination for vegetables. This can be seen in their *cocas* which are similar to pizzas–thin and crispy dough, usually in a rectangular shape, almost always made with lard and often covered solely with vegetables. Lard–called *saim*–has pride of place in Mallorca and is the basis for the famous local *ensaimadas,* a spiral-shaped bun. Here, however, we use olive oil.

Preparation: 1 hour
Cooking: 20 minutes
Serves 4-6:
Dough:
- 350-400 g flour (12-13 oz)
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 1 dl water (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 55 g sugar (2 oz)
- 2 eggs
- 5 g baking power (1/4 oz)
- A pinch of salt

Trompó topping:
- 2 large onions
- 2 cloves garlic
- 4 green peppers
- 4 large, firm tomatoes
- 0.5 dl olive oil (3 tbsp/2 fl oz)
- Salt

Dough: Mix the baking powder with the flour. Beat the eggs with the oil, water, sugar, and salt and gradually add to the flour, first mixing them in with a wooden spoon then by hand to give a soft dough. Leave to stand in a cool place for half an hour. Flatten out the dough making it as thin as possible. Shape it into a rectangle, circle, or square forming a lip around the edge. Cover with the dressed topping and bake at 180°C (350°F) for 30 minutes. While still hot, drizzle with a little oil.

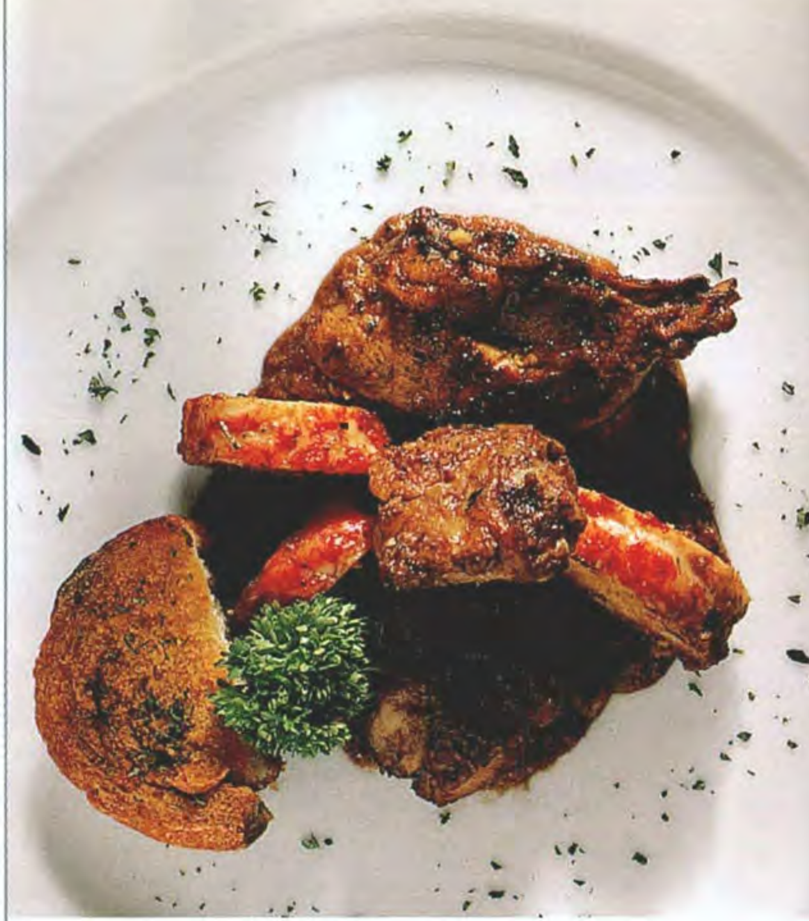
***Trompó* topping:** Peel the onions and slice into thin rings. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Wash the peppers, seed and cut into rings. Cut a cross in the tip of the tomatoes on the opposite end to the stems, blanch for 3 minutes in boiling water then peel and dice. Mix all the ingredients together, season with salt, dress with oil, and spread over the dough.

Recommended wine:
A white D.O. Binissalem, made from Prensal Blanc grapes, with aromas of ripe apple and hay. A full-tasting wine with a slightly creamy feel to it that will go well with both the vegetable topping and the base.

Catalonia's cuisine is straightforward and uses local ingredients in a straightforward way. Each area developed differently–the Costa Brava shows the maritime influence, the Pyrenees that of France, and the Tarragona and Ampurdán areas also have their own special dishes. Today the different trends have converged and Catalan cuisine now often puts coastal and inland produce together as in this chicken and lobster stew–a modern blend with a traditional sauce, the classic *picada* that has been passed down from generation to generation. The careful, varied fare of home cooking in Catalonia has now found a permanent place in the professional kitchens of hotels and restaurants where it is much appreciated by locals and tourists alike.

Preparation: 30 minutes
Cooking: 1 1/2 hours
Serves 4:

- 1 free-range chicken weighing 1 1/2 kg (3 lb), in pieces
- 1 lobster weighing 250 g (9 oz)
- 1 dl oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 1 large onion
- bouquet garni (bay leaf, thyme, oregano, parsley)
- 3 ripe tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 25 g flour (1 oz)
- 0.5 dl *rancio* wine (3 tbsp/2 fl oz)
- 0.5 dl *eau-de-vie* (3 tbsp/2 fl oz)
- 50 g roast almonds and hazelnuts (2 oz)
- 50 g chocolate (2 oz)
- 200 ml chicken stock (7 fl oz)
- Parsley, saffron, cinnamon, salt, pepper
- Fried bread as a garnish



Chicken with Lobster

Season the chicken with salt, pepper and a little cinnamon and brown quickly in half the oil. Add the peeled and chopped onion. When turning brown, add the peeled and chopped tomatoes and fry until any liquid has evaporated. Add the wine and eau-de-vie, cover and reduce for 15 minutes. Sprinkle over the flour and brown slightly then pour over the stock. Lower the heat and leave to simmer for 45 minutes. Cut the lobster into pieces from top to bottom leaving the shell on. Season and sauté over a high heat in a frying pan with the rest of the oil. Add to the pot. Roast the garlic cloves and saffron, then crush in the mortar with the almonds and hazelnuts, a few parsley leaves and the grated or chopped chocolate. Dilute with a little of the chicken sauce then add to the pot. Simmer until all the ingredients are cooked–about 15 minutes–and until there is neither too much nor too little sauce. Check for salt and pepper. Strain the sauce then pour over the chicken and lobster to serve. Garnish with slices of fried bread.

Recommended wine: This blend of chicken with lobster in a chocolate-flavored sauce requires a wine with character. Try a light red from the D.O. Penedés made of Tempranillo, grapes with a marked personality, or a white from the D.O. Terra Alta which is satisfying and smooth in the mouth but has the liveliness of ripe fruit flavors.

Fideuá

Stock: Heat the oil and brown the onion, the tomato cut in pieces, and the paprika. Sauté the fish bones and heads, the prawn shells and the fish, add the water and salt and boil for 20 minutes. Strain.

Fideuá: Wash the fish, cut into pieces and season. Do the same with the prawns. Heat the oil in a paella pan and fry the fish and prawns quickly. Set aside. In the remaining oil, fry the peeled garlic cloves then place in the mortar. Fry the peeled, chopped tomato, add the paprika and stir in the pasta. Pour in the stock, adding more salt if necessary. When the mixture comes to a boil, cook the pasta for 10 minutes. Crush the garlic with the parsley and add together with the fish, then cook for a further 5-7 minutes.

Recommended wine:

A young red D.O. Valencia, of Tempranillo grapes will make a fresh, fruity contrast for this rather rich dish. A young Rioja with similar characteristics would also be a good match.

To talk about Valencian cuisine is to talk about rice. But not all the local rice dishes are paella nor do Valencians eat nothing else but rice. The *fideuá* is said to have originated in Gandía or Denia when the cook of a fishing boat out at sea discovered too late that he had forgotten to bring rice on board. The onions and tomato were fried, the fish and shellfish ready, the fish stock was boiling but all he had was pasta… so in it went. The result went down well with his colleagues and this was how another national dish was born.

Preparation: 30 minutes
Cooking: 40 minutes

Serves 4:
Stock:
- 2 kg fish (scorpionfish, conger eel, or any small fish suitable for stock, including bones) (4 1/2 lb)
- 1 medium-sized onion
- 1 medium-sized tomato
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 5 g paprika (1/4 oz)
- Salt
- 1.5 l water (2 1/2 pt)

Fideuá:
- 400 g small hollow fideuá noodles (14 oz)
- 250 g large prawns (9 oz)
- 250 g monkfish (9 oz)
- 250 g cuttlefish or squid (9 oz)
- 1 large tomato
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 15 g parsley (1/2 oz)
- 5 g paprika (1/4 oz)

Wrinkled Potatoes with Mojo Picón and Mojo Verde

Potatoes: Dissolve the salt in the water and add the washed, unpeeled potatoes. Bring quickly to a boil and after boiling for 20 minutes, prick to see if they are soft. Drain off the water but leave the potatoes in the pot over the heat just until the skin dries off and is coated with a film of dry salt. Serve immediately in their skins with the mojos alongside.

Mojo picón: Crush the chili pepper and, when it has become a paste, add the other ingredients and crush together. Mix with the olive oil and add the vinegar (this can be done in an electric grinder).

Mojo verde or coriander mojo: Crush all the ingredients then dilute with the oil and vinegar (or use an electric grinder).

Recommended wine:

It is difficult to suggest an appropriate partner for a mojo sauce because of the strong ingredients–garlic, cumin, chili pepper, etc. But the potatoes serve to "clean" the palate so a good young white wine might be a good match. Try one made from Listán Blanco, from the D.O. Abona or Tacoronte-Acentejo.

The cooking of the Canaries is based on native ingredients but, as is to be expected, has been much influenced by its African neighbors and also features produce originally imported from both the Iberian Peninsula–wheat, oranges–and America–tomatoes and potatoes. The *mojos* are tremendously versatile sauces made with raw ingredients. When used to accompany boiled or fried fish, the fish is boiled quickly in the sauce. The potatoes of the Canaries–called *papas*, as opposed to the mainland Spanish *patatas*–are of excellent quality and what they call *papas bonitas*–pretty potatoes–are small and dark-skinned but of exquisite flavor when cooked as below.

Preparation: 30 minutes
Cooking: 20 minutes
Serves 4:

- 1 kg potatoes (if from the Canaries, the small "black" or "pretty" potatoes) (2 1/2 lb)
- 250 g salt (9 oz)
- 1 l water (1 1/2 pt)

Mojo picón:

- 3 cloves garlic
- 5 g cumin (1/4 oz)
- 1-2 green chili peppers in vinegar
- 5 g paprika (1/4 oz)
- 5 g salt (1/4 oz)
- 120 ml virgin olive oil (4 fl oz)
- 2 tbsp wine vinegar

Mojo verde or coriander sauce:

- 3 cloves garlic
- 5 g cumin (1/4 oz)
- a good bundle of coriander
- salt
- 120 ml virgin olive oil (4 fl oz)
- 3 tbsp vinegar

Soupy Rice

As with many other regions, Murcian cooking takes its inspiration from two sources–from the inland dishes of La Mancha, and from the produce of the coastal plains which is similar to that of the Valencian region. Rice is an essential part of this landscape and also figures largely in the cuisine of Alicante but, as we move south, it is treated differently. A much-favored addition to Murcian rice dishes are the *ñoras*, small dried peppers that give a special taste to this recipe.

Preparation: 30 minutes
Cooking: 35-40 minutes
Serves 4:

- 400 g rice (14 oz)
- 1 scorpionfish
- 2 red mullets
- 4 ñoras
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp fried tomato sauce (3 1/2 oz)
- Onion skins
- A few strands of saffron, salt, peppercorns
- 900-1,000 ml fish stock (1 1/2 pt-1 3/4 pt) made from the heads and bones of the fish
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- *Alioli* (garlic mayonnaise) as a garnish

Gut and wash the fish. Remove the heads. Heat the oil in a paella pan and fry the seeded ñoras and peeled garlic cloves until golden. Be careful not to burn the delicate ñoras. Remove and place in the mortar. In the same oil, fry the fish heads and bones. Remove and boil for 20 minutes with a few onion skins, salt, saffron, and pepper grains. Place the fish in a colander and insert in the boiling stock for 10 minutes. Remove and set aside, keeping warm. Lightly fry the rice in the oil in the paella pan. Add the tomato. Crush the ñoras and garlic in the mortar and dilute with a little stock then add to the pan and pour over the rest of the fish stock. Boil for 10 minutes, check for salt then simmer gently for 5-7 minutes. Check that the rice is cooked. Leave to stand for 10 minutes, covered if still slightly hard, uncovered if ready. Serve with the fish and the alioli.

Recommended wine:

A young red D.O. Jumilla made of Merlot grapes, with a toasty flavor matching that of the rice. Its warm fruitiness with vegetable notes should round off the dish well.

Gypsy Vegetable Stew

Soak the beans and chickpeas separately for eight hours. Cover the beans with the cold water and bring to a boil. When boiling, add the chickpeas and simmer for 2 1/2 hours. Add the trimmed and washed green beans, the pumpkin flesh and the peeled and quartered pears. Fry the bread and the peeled garlic clove then crush in the mortar with the almonds, saffron, and vinegar. Fry the chopped onion in the remaining oil until golden, add the paprika and peeled tomato and fry gently. Pour this mixture as well as the mortar ingredients into the stew, check for salt, bring to a boil again and serve very hot.

Recommended wine:
A light fresh and fruity white with a touch of acidity to balance the slight sweetness given to the stew by the pumpkin and pear.

Andalusia's best-known dish is gazpacho which is perhaps why people tend to think that no real cooking goes on here, with people just living on *tapas*, fried fish, and cold soups. All of these, of course, are excellent, as are the sweets and pastries of Moorish descent, but there are also wholesome dishes for chilly days, such as ox tail, the classic Andalusian stew which is served as a single dish, and this vegetable stew. A simple dish that contains no meat or bones, it makes a flavorsome and well-rounded meal, ideal for vegetarians.

Preparation: 20 minutes plus soaking time
Cooking: 2 1/2 hours
Serves 4:

- 350 g of chickpeas with white beans (12 oz)
- 250 g green beans (9 oz)
- 150 g pumpkin (5 oz)
- 3 pears
- 1 onion
- 2 ripe tomatoes
- 1 clove garlic
- 10 peeled, toasted almonds
- 1 small slice of bread
- 5 g sweet paprika (1/4 oz)
- A few strands of saffron
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 2.5 l water (3 1/2 pt/17 fl oz)
- Salt, pepper

Chocolate and Banana Cake

This classic cake, called in Spanish a *brazo de gitano* or gypsy's arm, is a very fine cake roll with a cream filling. In this case, the cake is a chocolate one, a delicious foil for the banana filling. The bananas from the Canaries are medium-sized with dark spots on their yellow skins. When picked at the perfect stage of ripeness, that is, fully grown but yellow, they are unrivaled.

Preparation: 20 minutes
Cooking: 7-8 minutes
Serves 6-8:
Cake:

- 4 eggs
- 100 g sugar (3 1/2 oz)
- 100 g flour (3 1/2 oz)
- 50 g bitter cocoa powder (1 3/4 oz)
- Grated lemon peel

Filling:

- 4 bananas
- 250 g beaten cream (8 fl oz)
- Lemon juice
- Pieces of chocolate

Decoration:

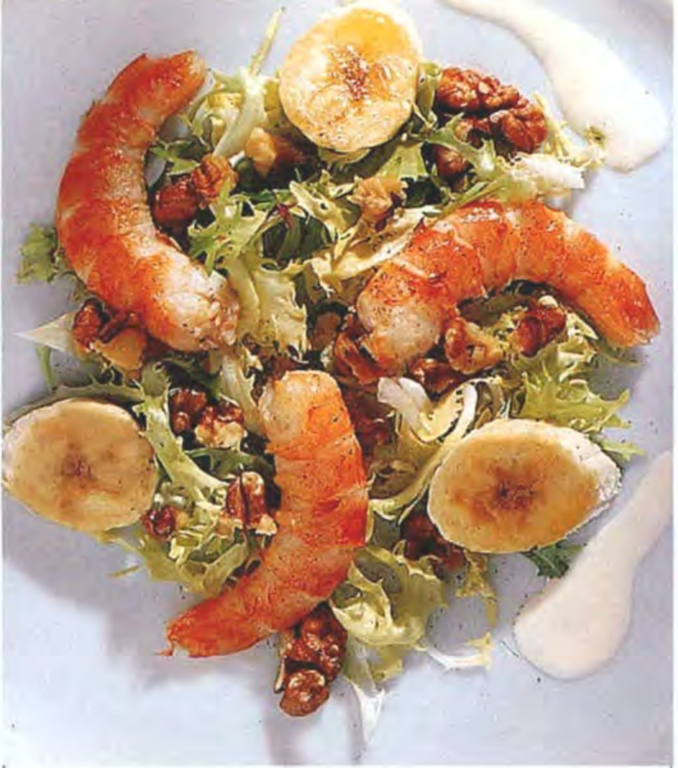
- Icing sugar
- Chocolate shavings

Cake: Beat the whole eggs with the sugar and the lemon rind with the electric beater until very frothy. Sieve the flour with the cocoa and fold in. Spread the mixture onto a greased and lined baking tin and bake at 175°C (347°F) for 7-8 minutes. Turn out while hot onto a moist cloth sprinkled with sugar and roll up to shape it. Unroll and spread with the filling. Roll up again. Cut the ends at an angle, sprinkle with icing sugar and just before serving, add chocolate shavings.

Filling: Mash the bananas with the lemon juice then add the cream and chocolate pieces.

Recommended wine:

A wine with character is required as chocolate is difficult to marry and the delicate perfume of the ripe bananas must not be overpowered. A good choice might be a red D.O. Jumilla made from Monastrell grapes. The notes of raisin, jam, and cooked fruit contrast with the dry tannins preventing any cloying sweetness.



Tenerife Salad

This is a fantasy salad based on bananas, an important component of the Tenerife economy, and prawns, or sometimes a white fish called *sama* similar to sea bass (in which case the fish is skinned, boned and filleted). The local escarole is sweet, not at all bitter, and is dressed with a mayonnaise diluted with orange juice and with pieces of walnut to provide a nutty texture. Any fish can be used. Monkfish would be good because of its firm flesh, in which case it would need to be lightly fried in a little oil and served warm on top of the cold salad.

Preparation: 20 minutes
Serves 4:
- 2 green bananas
- 1 orange
- 1 escarole
- 55 g peeled walnuts (2 oz)
- 250 g cooked prawns (9 oz)
- 1 large cup of thick mayonnaise
- Pepper, nutmeg

Wash the escarole and discard the greenest and toughest parts. Chop the rest. Peel the bananas and slice.
Peel the cooked prawns. Place a bed of escarole on each plate and arrange the banana slices and prawns on top then sprinkle with the chopped walnuts. Mix the orange juice into the mayonnaise, pour over the salad and season with pepper and nutmeg.

Recommended wine:
A bit of daring is required to partner a wine with a salad dressed in orange juice. A Malvasía from the D.O. Abona in Tenerife would be sweet but not too sweet and would offer subtle hints of mountain grass and slight fruitiness. Some of them have an excellent acidity alongside the pleasant bitterness that is typical of the variety.

Roast Pork with Sherry Vinegar

Tie the pork and place in an earthenware dish with the white wine, half the vinegar, the quartered onion, sliced carrots, bay leaf, a little thyme, the celery, garlic, and a large pinch of salt. Marinate under refrigeration for 24 hours, turning occasionally. Remove the meat, drain and dry. Brown all over in hot oil then add half the onion, the carrot, and the herbs from the marinade. Roast in the oven at 200°C (392°F) for 30 minutes, turning occasionally. Pour about 1 dl (6 tbsp) of the marinade over the meat and reduce for 10-15 minutes. Remove the meat and strain the sauce.

Caramelize the sugar, add the remaining vinegar and stir off the heat to blend then add this mixture to the sauce. Check the seasoning. Serve the pork sliced in its sauce with creamed potatoes and apple puree.

Recommended wine:

A young red D.O. Campo de Borja from the province of Zaragoza. The Garnacha and Tempranillo grapes give a very fruity nose and hints of berries, strawberries and good tannins without being too acid.

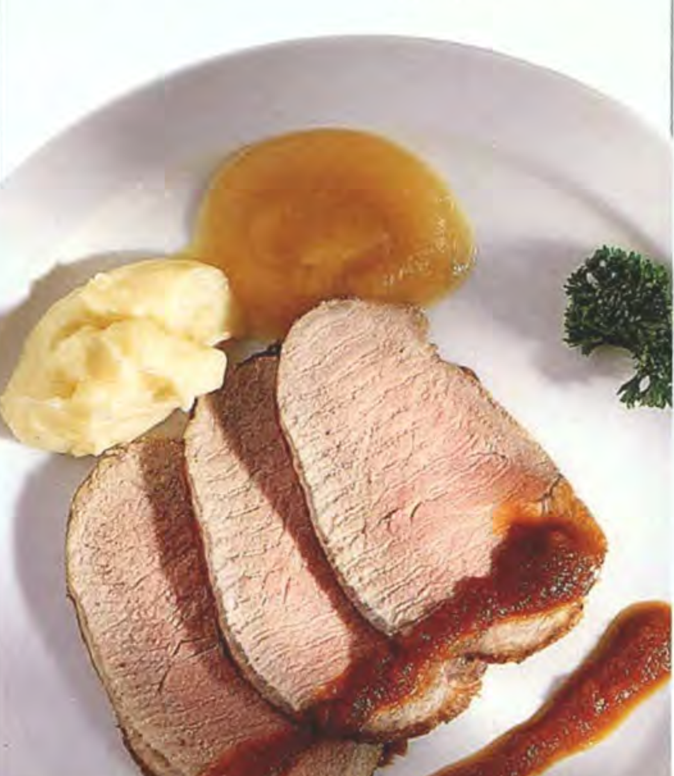
Pork is a fatty meat that gives best results when teamed with an acidic ingredient such as lemon juice or vinegar. In this case, the sherry vinegar not only tones down the richness of the meat but also adds an unusual aroma. There must be a large amount of marinade to cover the pork so some must be discarded when making the sauce. This is finished off with caramel, as in the classic recipe for duck with orange. The accompaniment of creamed potatoes and apple puree is recommended for soaking up the sauce.

Preparation: 30 minutes plus soaking time
Cooking: 50-55 minutes
Serves 4:

- 800 g loin of pork (1 1/2 lb)
- 500 ml white wine (17 fl oz)
- 200 ml sherry vinegar (7 fl oz)
- 1 large onion
- 250 g carrots (9 oz)
- 1 bay leaf
- Thyme
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 small celery stick
- Salt
- 1 dl olive oil (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- Peppercorns
- 80 g sugar (3 oz).

Garnish:

- Creamed potatoes and apple puree



Sweet and Sour Strawberries

Wash the strawberries, remove the stems, and cut in two if large. Dissolve the sugar in the water, add the clove, vanilla, cinnamon, and lemon rind. Boil for five minutes to get a very fragrant syrup, then add the vinegar. As soon as it comes back to a boil, add the strawberries and boil lightly then leave to cool in the syrup. Discard the lemon rind and carefully pour the strawberries into a bowl with the syrup.

Recommended wine:

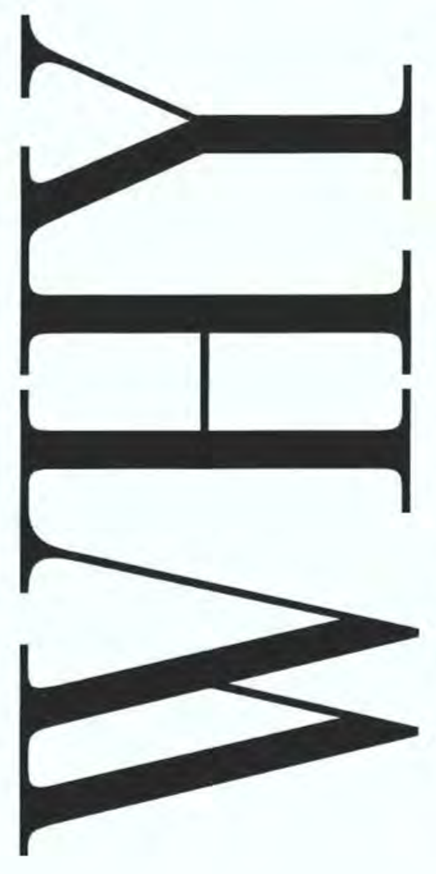
A young sweet Pedro Ximénez from the D.O. Montilla-Moriles with the characteristic touches of honey. This wine is dense and fruity in the mouth with raisin overtones and a slightly bitter finish.

Sherry vinegar is one of the jewels of the Jerez bodegas although for many years the vinegar produced was a much-guarded secret or was passed to other wineries because it was considered an inferior byproduct of wine. Today every care is taken over the production of sherry vinegar and there are some over 100 years old thanks to the *solera* aging system used, the same as for sherry wines. The vinegar in this recipe is added to an aromatic syrup in which the strawberries are lightly cooked, and brings out their flavor and color. The flavors can be enhanced still further by cooking the syrup for 10 minutes before inserting the strawberries.

Preparation: 20 minutes
Cooking: 8 minutes
Serves 8:

- 500 g large strawberries (1 lb 2 oz)
- 1 dl sherry vinegar (6 tbsp/4 fl oz)
- 250 ml water (8 fl oz)
- 250 g sugar (9 oz)
- 3 cloves
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 1 pod vanilla
- Rind of 1/2 lemon

Eating in Spain. *Part 3*



THE BIG QUESTIONS

In his previous two articles on culinary customs in Spain, the author took a personal look at what and where Spaniards eat and at how they wholeheartedly enjoy their food, turning a meal into a party. In this final article he draws on two well-established experts of the Spanish table to discuss why Spaniards are so intimately identified with their cuisine.

Text
Tom Burns

When enthusiasts of all, or at least most things Spanish sit down together to try and unlock the secrets of Spain, sooner or later the theory of the *patria chica* is produced and analyzed. Patria chica, literally the small fatherland or homeland, means the intimate location, the closed circle and space with which an individual identifies and forges bonds of loyalty because he/she feels wholly comfortable within it. Put your finger on the patria chica, where each and every Spaniard's personality is shaped, so the theory goes, and you will get under the skin of Spain.

This line of thought might not appear at first sight to have anything to do with a discussion about food and eating in Spain. I think, however, it might be very relevant to the whole topic. We are what we feel comfortable with and, in addition, we are what we eat; many of the clues we search for as we seek to unlock the secrets of Spain will be found in the larder and in the kitchen of a Spanish home and at the table where Spaniards sit down, intimately, to eat.

Intimate Surroundings

The patria chica is a throwback to classical times when the individual was loyal to the immediate surroundings of his birthplace, to his family, and to his social group. As befits a Mediterranean society that

HERNÁNDEZ PINA

was eminently rural until very recently, this antique process of identification, based on tribal ties, has persisted in Spain more than in most places. A Spaniard's bonds lie first and foremost with that intimate location and space–the patria chica–and they exist to a far lesser extent in the larger context of a nation and a state.

Spaniards are often said to be intensely individualistic and this is true enough. But they do form a tight circle within their immediate surroundings. It follows that eating in Spain reflects such a state of things. There is no such thing, in other words, as eating "in Spain." The point is that if you really want to unlock the secrets that envelope the Spanish larder, kitchen, and table you must begin by understanding that you are entering the world of the patria chica, of a succession of intimate surroundings where the people who grew up in them–eating what was close at hand and preparing such produce in the ways that tradition had handed down–feel comfortable.

This was what went through my mind when, rearranging books at home and trying to restore some sort of order to the large library on all sorts of Spanish topics that I have collected over the years, I came across two outstanding volumes on food and eating in Spain. One, *The Spanish Table*, is written by Marimar Torres, a Spaniard who lives in America, and the other, *Traditional Spanish Cooking*, is written by Janet Mendel, an American living in Spain. Neither author delves deeply into the theory of the patria chica–that is left to historians, to anthropologists, and to sociologists–but both are quite clearly aware of how relevant this theme, this intimate location and space, is to the subject that each of them, so expertly in each case, has in hand.

The Traditional Kitchen

"There is not one Spanish cuisine; there are many," writes Marimar Torres. "And they reflect the Spaniards' pride of regional identity and heritage, a legacy we are seeking to preserve with new enthusiasm in the Spain of today." Janet Mendel goes further and promptly acknowledges the "intimate surroundings" theory when she discusses the all-important regional feature and characteristic of traditional Spanish cooking: "Essentially it is the cooking of the patria chica, one's own village and immediate region, much of which has come down to us virtually unchanged."

Marimar Torres has settled in California, where she runs the American end of her family's far-flung wine business, but she is a Catalan, born and bred, and she readily admits to being "naturally happiest cooking the dishes of Catalonia, or Catalunya, my home region." It is quite understandably, and quite obviously, the cooking with which she feels most comfortable. She reminds her readers that Catalans have always expressed their strong sense of regional identity in their art, in their language, in their politics and in their lifestyle and she states, with self-evident pride (which is what a patria chica is all about), that Catalan cuisine is "one of the oldest, and most individual, in Spain." Growing up in Catalonia, the kitchen in her home was the domain of Rosalía, the family cook, and it was "an object of fascination."

Janet Mendel, who has settled in Andalusia, near Málaga, where she has deservedly gained a huge reputation as a profound connoisseur of Spanish food and eating customs, is quite lyrical when she evokes the traditional kitchen of her adopted country. She conjures up the image of the kitchens in the north and central plains of Spain that were "dominated by a hearth inside a great chimney" and where a cauldron set on a tripod over the embers "bubbles away from early morning." And also the image of the kitchens in the country *cortijos*, or farms, of southern Spain that normally occupy a building separate from the house. There, "pots of herbs and geraniums adorn a sunny windowsill and an unglazed water jug, beaded with droplets of water, keeps drinking water fresh and cool by evaporation."

Primary Ingredients

Marimar Torres starts off her list of primary ingredients in Catalan cooking mentioning olive oil, garlic, onions, and tomatoes and it strikes me that each and every Spanish region can claims these four primary ingredients. Slowly sautéed together in oil, the onions, garlic, and tomatoes (sometimes peppers are added)

create a *sofrito* which is known throughout the Mediterranean and forms the basis for endless dishes and sauces. Marimar Torres, nevertheless, enters her own Catalan patria chica when she adds nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, and pine nuts) to her list and also dried fruits, particularly prunes and raisins.

Growing up in the intimate surroundings of Catalonia–eating what was close at hand and preparing such produce in the ways that tradition had handed down–Catalans feel comfortable with dishes such as chicken with prunes and spinach with pine nuts and raisins. "In fact," writes Marimar Torres, "any dish prepared *a la catalana* is likely to contain pine nuts and raisins or prunes." She is dead right, of course. She could also add that you won't eat food prepared like that anywhere in Spain outside Catalonia, unless it is in the home or the restaurant of a Catalan who has stuck close to his or her roots.

In Janet Mendel's very traditional kitchens, with the hearth set inside a great chimney, you will find ropes of hanging sausages, drying in the fragrant wood smoke, and to one side of the hearth clay pots filled with lard or salted pork and jugs full of olive oil. In such a kitchen's airy pantry you will come across hunks of cured ham hanging from the roof beams, slabs of dry salt cod, dangling "like bats," as she neatly puts it, from pegs, strings of dried peppers and garlic braided into long strands and sacks of lentils and other pulses. Idealized, whimsical perhaps? No. I've been there and I know exactly what Janet Mendel is describing, although, obviously, you won't find them easily, but in almost remote villages.

The Olla Emblem

When you have a pantry and a hearth fire kitchen like that then you do not have to look any further to settle back into that intimate location, circle and space with which to identify and forge bonds of loyalty. The seasons, with their changing fruits and vegetables, will mark life's rhythms. There will be artichokes and broad beans in spring, melons, apricots and tomatoes in summer, sweet potatoes, quince and pumpkins in autumn, and oranges in winter which is also the season when pigs are slaughtered to provide hams and sausages for the whole year. You are in your patria chica; your home is your castle and the world is your oyster.

In the ancient traditional Spanish kitchen, the food that you had at hand went straight into the cauldron that was set on that ancient tripod which stands over the chimneys embers and was kept bubbling along merrily from early morning. The result was a sturdy meal-in-a-pot, cooked in an *olla*, a tall, pot-bellied pot, that Janet Mendel unerringly calls "the emblem of Spanish cooking." Updated in fuel and technology, into the pot still go ham bones and pulses which have been soaked overnight, beans or chickpeas, or indeed both, or lentils, and, after the pulses have simmered for a while in goes whatever meat is available, beef, mutton, chicken, rabbit, or a combination of them. Later whatever

vegetables that are at hand–cabbage, carrots, leeks, turnips, potatoes–are added and, finally, into the pot go the sausages, the spicy *chorizos* and the black pudding *morcillas*, that, in some country kitchens, still hang alongside the hearth fires from the roof beams.

The olla is undoubtedly the true emblem of Spanish cooking but everywhere in Spain the meal-in-a-pot will have different ingredients at different times of the year and, though more or less cooked in the same way (it is simplicity itself) this sturdy traditional dish goes under a different name according to the region. In Madrid, and most of central Spain, it is called *cocido*, Catalans know it as *escudella*, it generally answers to the name of *puchero* in Andalusia, in the south, and of *pote* in Galicia, in the northwest.

Timeless Food

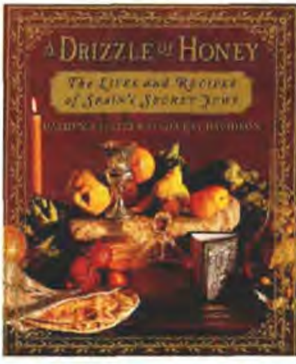
Safely installed in their intimate patria chica, Spaniards, for generation after generation, have been watching their hearth fire cauldrons billow out splendid odors. Such food, as Marimar Torres explains, is an important part of their heritage. In Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the book which tells you more about Spain and Spaniards than any other, there are several references to a meal-in-a-pot called *olla podrida*, literally "rotten pot." Janet Mendel reckons that the olla podrida was "the mother of all cocidos" and that it was probably so called because it had a some what "high" smell of old ham and beef bones and was cooked very gently until the meat was literally flaking away. Sancho Panza, Don Quixote's rustic and down-to-earth valet, said of such ollas that *"mientras más podridas son, mejor huelen,"* the more rotten the pot, the better the smell. I say Amen to that. But what I find extraordinary about twenty-first century Spain is that in addition to toasting such odorous sentiments in your mind and imagination you can grasp them with both hands, bring them from hand to mouth, and savor them. Far from destroying what is old, traditional, and authentic to Spain, in this case to eating in Spain, modernity has brought a new respect for the old larder, the old kitchen, and the old table. What is more, conservation and preservation do not require very much, certainly not reinvention; scratch Spain ever so slightly and it remains timeless.

Detouring, on a drive back to Madrid from Valencia through La Mancha, Don Quixote's stamping ground, I stopped at a very welcoming and wholly unpretentious village inn that had the sort of intimate, patria chica, feel to it that only a long period of time can create. There was an open, hearth fire kitchen, a tripod straddling the embers, and the olla, unchanged from Sancho Panza's days, smelt suitably "rotten." Was I about to unlock an ancestral Spanish secret? I didn't bother about it. I just felt hungry and very comfortable.

***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. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2001 New Year's Honors list for services to cultural relations between Spain and the United Kingdom.*

Photo credits on page 148.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS



Text
Vicky Hayward

Quite a few best-selling food books these days have nothing to do with recipe collections or wine guides. Novels, history books, travel memoirs, anthropology, popular science studies–and much more–are all bracketed within the category of food lover writing. Not that it is a new invention. Spain, for example, has a long tradition of writers ranging from novelists Azorín, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán to nonfiction authors Josep Pla, Julio Camba, Gregorio Marañón, and Faustino Cordón.

But in recent years there has been a definite spurt in publishers' interest. One good example is **Porcus, Puerco, Cerdo–El Cerdo en la Gastronomía Española** (Porcus, Pig, Pork–The Pig in Spanish Gastronomy). Antonio Gázquez Ortiz takes in history, pig-killing methods, and pork cookery, the nutritional debate over pork and finally a personal collection of recipes. The author's contagious enthusiasm lights up the text which contains a wealth of original ideas and information *(Alianza Editorial S.A., www.alianzaeditorial.es)*.

Another one-off original is a big, beautiful book entitled **Los Refranes del Vino y la Vid** (Wine and Vine Proverbs). Augusto Jurado spent nearly a decade researching 6,500 proverbs about wine and vineyards from a wide range of Castilian, Galician, and Catalan sources. The result is a unique and beautifully designed book published by the author, a good read not only for wine buffs but also for anyone in search of popular wisdom and native Spanish wit *(Comunicación Gráfica, captacyg@arrakis.es)*.

David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson's book, **A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews**, the first in English on the subject, is a really remarkable balance of food and history. Immaculately researched through Inquisition documents and other primary sources about the Jews after their forced conversion to Christianity, the text is hung like short stories and notes around a hundred recreated recipes and gives an easy insight into a fascinating subject *(St Martin's Press, www.stmartins.com)*.

Carlos V a la Mesa. Cocina y Alimentación en la España Renacentista (Charles V at Table. Cooking and Food in Renaissance Spain) is a much more general overview, but highly accessible account of Renaissance foods and table habits at the time of Charles V. Jacinto García rounds off his text with 80 recipes from aristocratic cookbooks of the time, updated for cooking today by a group of Toledan chefs *(Bremen Ediciones, bremen@ctv.es)*.

At first glance **Bread and Oil**, by Tomás Graves, is a book about one dish from Majorca–*pa amb oli*, or country bread eaten with oil drizzled over the top–but in fact Graves, who grew up and lives on the island, uses it to give us a slice of Majorcan life, with plenty of humor and realism, not too much romanticism, and useful practical information at the end *(Prospect Books, www.prospectbooks.co.uk)*.

Hispanomanía, by Tom Burns Marañón, is also a lighthearted antidote to the romanticism found in English language writing about Spain. Burns focuses in polished anecdotal style on a small group of 19th and 20th century figures who, he argues, projected their own images of Spain on to their varied writings based on their travels. Along the way he threads in his family's personal connections and amusing autobiographical episodes *(Plaza & Janés S.A., fax: (34) 933 660 449)*.

Finally PremioSlowFood is a modest but marvelous little book portraying the 16 candidates shortlisted for last year's SlowFoodAward given in recognition of work in defence of biodiversity within food systems. One of the candidates was Jesús Garzón Heyde, the Spanish environmentalist, who in 1992 began unfunded work to revive the Spanish shepherds' transhumance, but all the stories are fascinating and inspiring *(Slow Food Editore, info@slowfood.com)*.

In Brief

HOME COOKING

Cocina Andaluza (Cooking from Andalusia): Pablo Amate; **Cocina Cántabra** (Cooking from Cantabria): Javier Hernández de Sande; **Cocina Castellano Manchego** (Cooking from Castile La Mancha): Manuel de la Osa. The idea of boiling down each regional repertoire to just 30 recipes works surprising well in this series, especially as it turns up unexpected modern and country dishes. Andalusia, edited by Granadan journalist Pablo Amate, throws up some new

From the soil which has given life to fine Sherry, a unique range of vinegars has appeared, like the exclusive sweet Pedro Ximenez wine vinegar. Vinegar of noble stock, concentrating the finest flavours in an attractive bottle. Soul of Sherry...

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www.riojavina.es/surespana.htm

dishes made with subtropical fruits. Castile La Mancha's rustic cooking is lifted by chef Manuel de la Osa's eye, while Cantabria's, little known, includes great fish and game dishes (*Editorial Everest, comunicacion@everest.es*).

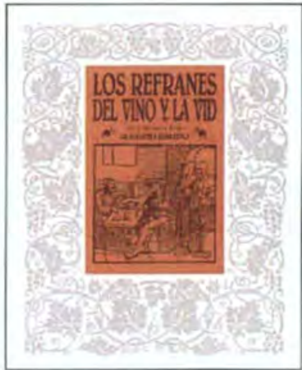
La Nueva Cocina de Angelita (New Cooking from Angelita). Angelita Alfaro became a best-selling author at the age of 50 with a book of unpretentious, simple recipes. Seven editions later she has written a new one with 300 more recipes for real life cooking with more creative touches but the same Riojan-Navarese roots (*Ttartalo, S.L. www.Ttarttalo@ttartalo.com*).

Repostería Monacal (Sweet Things from Convents). The Poor Clares not only give the lowdown on their famed cakes and biscuits, but also on their homemade puddings. There's a real charm to the nuns' own text about their convent and the recipes are a great mix (if not all easy), ranging from medieval fried flour biscuits to bitter chocolate ice cream (*Editorial Planeta, www.editorial.planeta.es*).

Restaurant Guides–The New Crop

The new year brings with it Spain's annual crop of gourmet guides: the latest edition of *Gourmetour*, a brick-like 1,700-page restaurant guide based on anonymous visits by inspectors and readers' comments, listing 900 eating places together with detailed commentary on hotels, food shops, bars, and tourist sights, arranged region by region; *Guía Campsa*, a larger format, ringbound guide sponsored by Spain's most important chain of gas stations, which is designed for the car traveler and combines a large-scale road atlas with brief restaurant, hotel, and tourist information; and *Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía*, in which Basque gourmet Rafael García Santos gives his pick of the country's best chefs, dishes, wines, and products. This year's *Gourmetour* holds no surprises–nine of the top ten restaurants are in the Basque Country and Catalonia–although there's an interesting choice of restaurant of the year, El Raco D'en Freixa in Barcelona. Inevitably, perhaps, the quality criteria for each region varies, but the choice of bars for *tapas* and drinks has been tightened up this year. As usual, *Guía Campsa* is a CD-ROM for journey-planning and there is the brief selection of restaurants in Andorra, Portugal, and France at the back of the book following the town-by-town listings. For dedicated gourmets, however, the entries remain sketchy. Finally, García Santos' 780-page book remains refreshingly personal and outspoken. Once you have worked out where you stand on his taste, it makes a remarkably good read and stimulus to more adventurous eating, both in restaurants and at home.

Gourmetour, Editorial Paladar, www.gourmets.net
Guía Campsa, Repsol, www.repsol.com
Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía, Editorial Destino, www.edestino.es



CHEFS & RESTAURANT COOKING

Agua. El Arte de Buen Comer (Water, the Art of Eating Well). A lushly designed, sponsored book placing water as a key ingredient in 120 recipes from top Spanish chefs, which are followed by short essays on health issues *(Ediciones B, www.edicionesb.com)*.

Cocina Mediterránea de Fin de Siglo (Fin-de-Siècle Mediterranean Cooking). Catalan chef Josep Fló's second book, a collection of 400 recipes, combines his own professional dishes–some almost surreal–with others designed for home cooking *(Editorial Planeta, www.editorial.planeta.es)*.

La Cocina de Andrés Madrigal (The Cooking of Andrés Madrigal). What counts here is not the historical prologue à la Ducasse –one of the author's maestros–or the general philosophizing, but this young madrileño chef's distinctive recipes which mix earthy, herby Mediterranean flavors and complex technique, photographed by Madrigal himself. A name to watch *(El País Aguilar, www.elpais-aguilar.es)*.

Recetas de Porcelana Creatividad en la Joven Cocina del Nuevo Milenio (Recipes from Porcelana. Creativity in Young Cooking for the New Millennium). Sponsored by Bidasoa, the Basque makers of table china, this book gives a short historical rundown on tableware and presents 60 young chefs, each with a short biography and dish. Although heavily slanted towards northern Spain, this is nonetheless a really useful survey of rising talent *(Bidasoa, www.pbidasoa.co)*.

OTHER FOOD BOOKS

Ayer y Hoy de la Gastronomía Madrileña (Madrid's Gastronomy Yesterday & Today). José del Corral's jaunty book, which includes a blow-by-blow history of *cocido*, first appeared in 1987 and remains invaluable as much for his ideas as his research into Madrid's cooking *(Ediciones La Librería, lalibreria @callejeromadrid.com)*.

El Gran Libro del Aceite de Oliva (The Big Olive Oil Book). Spain's olive oils reflect a growing awareness of the potential, like wine, in the different fruit varieties, vintages, and blends. José Carlos Capel has synthesized the new thinking for the general reader together with recipes from 58 well-known chefs. A sponsored but credible and beautifully photographed book *(SPAM Servicios, S.A., salseando21@ spamsa.com)*.

Enciclopedia del Aceite de Oliva (The Olive Oil Encyclopedia). Essential reference: a huge amount of knowledge is packed into this 415-page book, which covers every aspect from history and growing methods to tasting techniques, a worldwide geographical context, health, food, literature, and appendices of useful information, by Jesús Ávila Granados *(Planeta, www.editorial. planeta.es)*.

WINE

Guía Campsa de los Mejores Vinos de España (The Campsa Guide to the Best Spanish Wines).

Pasión de Familia

Since the XVIIth century, our family has tended its lands and pampered its vines with an unlimited faith. Each year we hand pick the finest grapes when they are at the peak of their maturity. With the most up-to-date vinification techniques, new French oak casks, patience and the experience from eleven generations we make our COLECCIÓN 125.

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BODEGAS JULIAN CHIVITE

It is the soil, climate and enviable position of its more than 160 hectares of vineyards in the Ebro valley that make the Señorio de Arinzano estate one of Spain's finest properties.

JULIAN CHIVITE AÑO 1647

BODEGAS JULIAN CHIVITE
DE PADRES A HIJOS DESDE 1647

Designed to accompany Campsa's annual restaurant guide, this glovebox-shaped book gives a selection of wines, each with brief notes and a grading, organized regionally by denomination *(Repsol, www.repsol.co)*.

Guía de Vinos Gourmets 2001(Gourmets Wine Guide 2001). Designed for professional and home use, the guide opens with a label-by-label guide to the 250 best wines of the year and covers another 3,000 wines, nearly half of them with tasting notes. Very useful detailed maps, careful background descriptions *(Editorial Paladar, gourmets@gourmets.net)*.

Guía Peñín de los Vinos de España 2001 (The Peñín Guide to Spanish Wine 2001). Exhaustive guide to 8,000 wines, half with tasting notes, by enologist José Peñín. He gives a personal overview of current trends in each growing area as well as a 100-page introduction *(Pi & Erre Ediciones, ediciones @pipi-erre.com)*.

Guía Vinos de D.O. Navarra Año 2000 (The Navarra D.O. Wine Guide 2001). Straightforward comprehensive guide to Navarrese bodegas including four wine routes and introductory background *(Consejo Regulador D.O. Navarra, fax: (34) 948 741 776)*.

La Guía de Oro de Los Vinos de España 2001 (The Gold Guide to Spanish Wines 2001). Andrés Proensa, respected for his independence, publishes this guide to his choice of Spain's 500 best wines, starting with "gold" wines–this year 75–and then running through 425 others, by bodega, with detailed tasting notes and insights along the way *(Naturaleza y Ambiente S.L., mundonatura @mundivia.e)*.

TRAVEL

El Camino de Santiago en Coche (The Santiago Pilgrimage Route by Car). A realistic practical handbook combining a general guide to the entire route with 21 excursions on foot along stretches chosen for their special interest *(Grupo Anaya, www.anayatouring.com)*.

El Sur de Soria (The South of Soria). Travel writer Jesús Ávila Granados gives 39 walking and driving routes through Soria's historic towns and villages, including hand-drawn routes as well as photos of architectural highlights of this little-known area of Spain *(Ediciones JD, S.L., edicionesjd@sct.ictnet.es)*.

La Ribera del Duero. Isabel Aizpún's condensed handbook for exploring the vineyards and historic sights of Ribera del Duero's vineyard country combines practical information with an interesting introduction on the area's history *(Editorial Laertes, laertes@jet.es)*.

Walking in Andalusia. A walker's dream pocket guide to 34 routes in Andalusia's natural parks by professional guide Guy Hunter-Watts, who gives detailed map sections, route notes, landscape photos, and practical addresses for each walk *(Ediciones Santana S.L., santana@net.es)*.

Wine Routes of Penedès and Catalonia. Australian wine writer Alan Young has turned out a chatty but very well-informed guide to the Catalan bodegas, with excellent introductory background texts on the history and physical factors that have shaped the vineyards, wines, and people who make them *(International Wine Academy, ayoung@sirius.com)*.

Also Received

Andalucía, John Noble and Susan Forsyth, *Lonely Planet Publications, www.lonelyplanet.com*

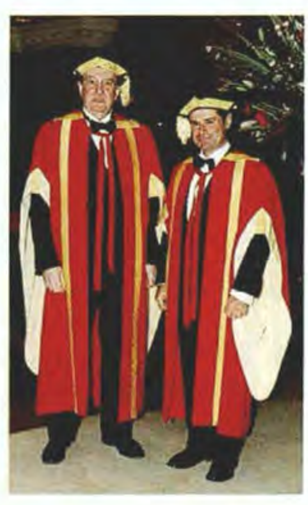
Guía de Turismo Activo de España (Guide to Spanish Action Tourism), *El País Aguilar, www.elpais-aguilar.es*

Guía de Turismo Activo en España (Guide to Action Tourism in Spain), *Geo-planeta, www.editorial.planeta.es*

Madrid, Damien Simonis, *Lonely Planet Publications, www.lonelyplanet.com*

Sevilla, Guías Caja Madrid, *El País Aguilar, www.elpais-aguilar.es*

FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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 January to April inclusive.

Australia and New Zealand

Apprentice Chef of the Year 2001: Working with New South Wales' TAFE colleges of further education, ASOLIVA and ICEX are sponsoring a Spanish Olive Oil Apprentice Chef of the Year award. Open to over 7,000 TAFE students of commercial cookery and catering, the competition involves creating a four-course menu which makes imaginative use of different varieties of Spanish olive oil, and submitting an essay. Selected finalists take part in a "cook-off" at one of the colleges. First prize is a two-week trip to Spain, taking in classes at top Spanish cookery schools, and visits to oil mills and wineries; runners up receive olive oil hampers and books on Spanish food. Conditions of entry available at www.tertuliaonline.es

Olive Oil Workshops: Five more Friends of Spanish Olive Oil-sponsored workshops aimed at educating the chefs of the future take place in March and April at TAFE colleges in Victoria, Queensland, and New South Wales. Retaining last year's successful format, sessions begin with olive oil tastings guided by an expert so that students become aware of the tastes and textures of different varieties of extra virgin olive oils. A Spanish chef then cooks with various types of olive oil, showing its uses at different temperatures and generally demonstrating its versatility.

Spain Gastro-tour: A group of food and wine writers from Australia and New Zealand will be exploring Galicia, Castile-León, and Castile-La Mancha in May, with visits to gourmet food producers (fish and seafood canners, artisan cheese makers, D.O. wineries in the Rías Baixas and Ribera del Duero, confectionery makers, olive oil mills…) A marvelous opportunity to compare regional culinary traditions and to take in some of Spain's wider cultural heritage.

buzon.official@sidney.ofcomes.mcx.es

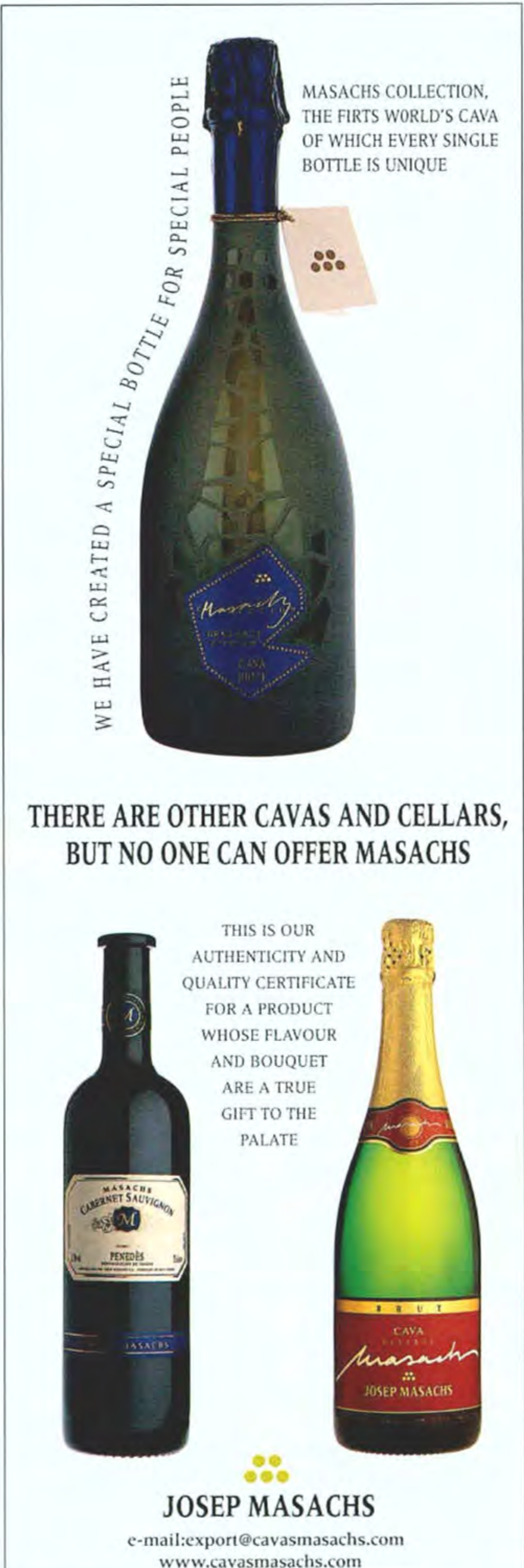
United Kingdom

Britain Sees Red… in the nicest possible way. An advertising and PR campaign to promote Canary Island tomatoes in the U.K. this recent winter was designed to reinforce the sunshine and flavor associations of this traditional import. Ads in the most widely read consumer magazines feature recipes designed to appeal to potential consumers during Britain's gray months, while specially tailored promotions at three of the U.K.'s top multiple retailers feature on-pack offers with chances to win holidays in the Canaries. PR activity aims at creating broader coverage, with information, recipes, and photographs being sent out to the major national newspapers, home, food, and lifestyle magazines, and the regional press.

Knights of Wine: The Gran Orden de Caballeros del Vino held its 17th investiture dinner at London's Four Seasons Hotel on 25 January. Founded by Wines from Spain in 1984, the GOCV recognizes outstanding achievement in promoting Spanish quality wines in the U.K. by members of the British and Spanish wine trades. Two new members were invested at this year's dinner: Javier Hidalgo of Vinícola Hidalgo S.A., and Phillip Diment, proprietor of Spanish restaurants in the U.K., including Mesón Don Felipe. The imaginative menu, designed and prepared by Four Seasons' executive chef, Eric Deblonde, was accompanied by seven quality wines from all over Spain, selected at a blind tasting by GOCV members.

Rioja Sous Chef Bursary 2001: The competition finals for this year's bursary at the Heart of England Salon Culinaire Live Theatre on 24 January formed part of Hospital-

Compiled by
Hawys Pritchard



ity Week at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre. Ten finalists engaged in a cook-off to produce three courses each matched with a Rioja wine. The judges (who included last year's winner Jerome Barbançon, now head chef at Brockencot Hall) took 45 minutes to decide on the winner. Peter Griffiths, heading the panel, declared the standard the highest ever. Glynn Purnell of Simpson's Restaurant (Michelin starred) in Kenilworth was eventually declared the winner: his prize includes a visit to Rioja's most prestigious vineyards and a week's work experience at a top restaurant in Spain.

Wines from Spain Trade Fair 2001: The 12th in this series of annual trade fairs at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London takes place on the 20th and 21st of March this year, with 85 stands representing wines, beers, and spirits from many regions of Spain. This fair is considered one of the most important events in the Spanish wine trade calendar and attracts major buyers and importers.

United States

(Michelin) Stars at Carnegie Hall: Santi Santamaria, revered Catalan chef and proprietor of the Racó de Can Fabes restaurant, topped the bill at Carnegie Hall on 27 February at an event orga-

nized by Foods from Spain New York. The invited audience of chefs, N.Y. city dignitaries and members of the food and wine press were presented with a degustation menu prepared by Sr. Santamaría who also addressed them on the subject of his personal food philosophy, Catalan cuisine (of which he is an indefatigable champion) and the state of Spanish cuisine in general. Santi Santamaría earned three Michelin stars in 1994 and was awarded the Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine by the Académie Internationale de Gastronomie in 1996 (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41). The event formed part of a Foods from Spain program to promote Spanish cuisine and ingredients in the U.S.

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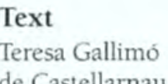
Culinary Congress in Vic



Text
Teresa Gallimó
de Castellarnau

Approximately 250 people, most of them professionals from the hotel and restaurant sector, attended the 2001 edition of the Forum Gastronómico held from 19 to 22 February in the "El Sucre" trade fair hall in the town of Vic (province of Barcelona). The master classes given by top-ranking chefs including Alain Passard, Carme Ruscadella, Joel Robuchon, Carles Gaig, or Albert Adrià were the main attraction of the 4-day congress.

Other activities were round tables, lectures, and tasting sessions as well as the Expo Forum, a trade fair of wines and select produce of interest in gourmet circles.

The Innoforum 2001 Awards for the best new products this year fell to three prestige companies. Gurmalia received the award for the most innovative concept for its *Caramelo de Fuet*. The prize for the most novel taste went to the cava vinegar produced by Agustí Torelló y Mata, and the award for the best packaging to Cerámica Industrial Mongatina.

Morning activities centered on the Master Classes which took place in what was called LA COCINA, a large hall with a modern kitchen equipped with all the latest technology and terraced seating as well as a large video screen so that spectators could see every detail of the culinary processes.

The star of day one was the truffle which was included in a variety of presentations by Carles Gaig, from Restaurante Gaig in Barcelona; Nando Jubany from Restaurante Can Jubany in Calldetenes, Barcelona; Toni Sala from Fonda Sala en Olost de Llusanes, Barcelona; and Angel Pascual from Restaurante Llusanes in Prats de Llusanes, Barcelona.

During the second day's session, Alain Passard from L'Arpège in Paris presented his *cuisine des sens*, receiving a warm welcome from his audience when he opened by saying, "I'm pleased to see in your eyes that you are lovers of cooking and good food." His cuisine firmly places the emphasis on color and texture, and he insisted that cooking with vegetable produce requires insight, loving care, and an additional touch of inspiration.

Carme Ruscadella from the Sant Pau restaurant in Sant Pol de Mar, Barcelona dealt on the third day with Mediterranean products. Her cheerful, straightforward personality and her

sensitivity came through as she expressed her philosophy while she cooked, namely, that the cook must bring out the essence of the texture and flavor of each food. She gave an explanation of her complete research into the different treatments of the cooking apple–the pulp, the juice, and the skin.

The great Joel Robuchon crowned the last session, dazzling all those present with his mastery. As he displayed his skill and unique style, he talked about the way in which foods can be transformed.

Master Classes and the Bulli Workshop

Afternoon activities focused on the Academy of Taste. During the first session, Roland Negro, the President of the truffle-growers association of Provence, José Antonio Muñoz, a cook and mycologist, and Consol Blanch, a doctor in organic chemistry from the University of Vic, analyzed the special characteristics of the truffle. Jean Luc Figueras from the eponymous restaurant in Barcelona, and Fermí Puig, of the Drolma restaurant in the Hotel Majestic, Barcelona, then gave demonstrations of their own ways of cooking with truffles.

During the afternoon session on February 20, when the theme was "Mediterranean produce," Stefano and Andrea Agostini from the Casa Vecia restaurant in Abano Terme in Padua, Italy, showed their skill at preparing and cooking pasta.

This was followed by a talk given by Dr. Joan Tous, the head of the "Catalonian Virgin Olive Oil Tasting Panel," on the importance of the first pressing and the conditions required and steps involved in assessing the organoleptic qualities of olive oil. Jaume Subirós from the Empordá hotel in Gerona spoke about Mediterranean products as used in the cuisine of the Ampurdan, northwest Catalonia, and Pere Bahí from the La Xicra restaurant in Palafrugell, Gerona gave a demonstration on how to make an excellent base for rice. A short talk was also given by Ferrán Adrià from the El Bulli restau-

The traditional serving way:

RED SWEET PEPPERS DEL PIQUILLO WITH GARLIC

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 PERSONS

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

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

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rant in Rosas, Gerona on the philosophy behind his culinary research center, the "Bulli Taller" or Bulli Workshop.

The topic of the third day was "Sweet Gastronomy" and the proceedings were led by Jordi Butrón from the restaurant Espai Sucre in Barcelona and Ramón Morato, the director and teacher of the training center run by the chocolate company, Chocovic (Vic), which sponsored the event. The surprise of the afternoon came from the brother of Ferrán, Albert Adrià. The title of his master class was "Water, a basic element, nine preparations for this neutral element, four variations and two gelatins." He demonstrated the research he is carrying out based on techniques, intuition, and thorough knowledge of the elements used.

Teresa Gallimó de Castellarnau is a specialist in gastronomy, wines, and cigars. She contributes regularly as a freelance writer to various Grupo Zeta publications, Sobremesa, *and the hotel and restaurant guides,* Lugares Divinos *and* Barcelona Divina, *amongst others.*

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

Bananas

Agrícola Guia-Galdar, Sdad. Coop. Ltda.
Tel: (34) 928 881 262
Fax: (34) 928 883 494

Agrícola Llanos de Sardina Sdad. Coop.
Tel: (34) 928 552 638
Fax: (34) 928 553 301

Agrupación de Sdades. Agrarias de Transf. Proplate
Tel: (34) 922 350 002/126
Fax: (34) 922 361 118

Cooperativas Unidas de La Palma
Tel: (34) 922 434 881/952
Fax: (34) 922 434 303

Europlátano, A.I.E.
Tel: (34) 922 401 083
Fax: (34) 922 401 099

Grupo Regional de Cooperativas Plataneras (COPLACA)
Tel: (34) 922 286 300
Fax: (34) 922 286 355

SAT Agresa
Tel: (34) 922 252 244 - 922 250 643
Fax: (34) 922 261 556

SAT Apro
Tel: (34) 922 534 000
Fax: (34) 922 290 136

SAT Bonana
Tel: (34) 922 214 233
Fax: (34) 922 214 648

SAT Costa Bañaderos
Tel: (34) 928 622 425
Fax: (34) 928 622 242

SAT Costa Caleta
Tel: (34) 928 882 100/200
Fax: (34) 928 883 050

SAT Frutas Proa
Tel: (34) 922 841 809
Fax: (34) 922 841 424

SAT Las Vegas de Arucas
Tel: (34) 928 600 123
Fax: (34) 928 605 723

SAT Lito
Tel: (34) 922 362 068
Fax: (34) 922 362 791

SAT Organización Platanera de La Palma
Tel: (34) 922 460 250
Fax: (34) 922 460 207

SAT Orovales
Tel: (34) 922 381 808
Fax: (34) 922 371 272

SAT Palmadrid
Tel: (34) 922 450 904
Fax: (34) 922 450 181

SAT Plátanos Taburiente
Tel: (34) 922 402 134/149
Fax: (34) 922 402 114

SAT Rosales Granados
Tel: (34) 928 601 982
Fax: (34) 928 605 894

SAT San Marcos Daute
Tel: (34) 922 841 342
Fax: (34) 922 841 389

Sociedad Coop. Agrícola Cosecheros de Tejina
Tel: (34) 922 540 460/615
Fax: (34) 922 540 353

Sociedad Coop. Agrícola San Lorenzo (COSLO)
Tel: (34) 922 734 043
Fax: (34) 922 732 789

Sociedad Coop. SAT Maycar
Tel/Fax: (34) 922 360 517

Sociedad Coop. del Campo San Sebastián
Tel: (34) 922 710 432
Fax: (34) 922 780 620

Source: Asprocan (Asociación de Organizaciones de Productores de Plátanos de Canarias/Association of Canarian Bananas Producers (Diana no se dónde poner la traducción de Organizaciones)
Tel: (34) 922 283 360/866
Fax: (34) 922 283 903

D.O. Sherry Vinegar

A. R. Valdespino, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 331 450
Fax: (34) 956 340 216

Bodegas Jesús Ferris M.C.B.
Tel: (34) 956 363 400
Fax: (34) 956 235 011

Bodegas Williams & Humbert, S.L.
Tel: (34) 956 353 410
Fax: (34) 956 353 408
williams@williams-humbert.com

Bodegas y Bebidas Sur de España
Tel: (34) 956 142 111
Fax: (34) 956 142 094

Delgado Zuleta, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 360 133
Fax: (34) 956 360 780
bodega@delgadozuleta.com

Exp. Vinagrera S.L. (Exvina)
Tel: (34) 956 306 404
Fax: (34) 956 307 111
exvina@arconet.es

Federico Paternina, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 186 112
Fax: (34) 956 303 500
merjer@fer.es

Garvey, B.V.
Tel: (34) 956 319 650
Fax: (34) 956 319 824

González Byass, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 357 000
Fax: (34) 956 332 089
lgonzalez@gonzalezbyass.es

Grupo Domecq
Tel: (34) 956 151 500
Fax: (34) 956 349 966
Pepa.perez.villagran@adsweu.com

José de Soto, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 31 96 50
Fax: (34) 956 320 638
atencionalcliente@grupogarvey.com

José Estévez, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 321 004
Fax: (34) 956 340 829
assa@realtesoro.com

José Páez Lobato
Tel: (34) 956 181 717
Fax: (34) 956 181 534
bodegas@paezmorilla.com

José Paés Morilla y Hnos.
Tel: (34) 956 181 717
Fax: (34) 956 181 534
bodegas@paezmorilla.com

M. Gil Luque, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 319 564
Fax: (34) 956 319 869
info@laguita.com

Sánchez Romate Hnos, S.A.
Tel: (34) 956 182 212
Fax: (34) 956 185 276
gerencia@romate.com

Videsan, S.L.
Tel: (34) 956 381 192
Fax: (34) 956 381 960

Vinagres de Yema, S.L.
Tel: (34) 956 480 658
Fax: (34) 956 482 360
vinagresdeyema@vinagresdeyema.es

Vinícola Hidalgo y Cía, S,L.
Tel: (34) 956 380 304
Fax: (34) 956 363 844
vinicolahidalgo@vinicola-hidalgo.es
www.vinicola-hidalgo.es

Regulatory Council:
Consejo Regulador D.O. Vinagre de Jerez
Tel: (34) 956 332 050
Fax: (34) 956 338 908
vinjerez@sherry.org

Source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Vinagre de Jerez

Wines

An additional list of Spanish manufacturers can be consulted on Internet: www.icex.es/repertorios/menuprin.asp For more information see page 128.

D.O. Ribera del Guadiana

Bodegas Antonia Ortiz Ciprián
Tel/Fax: (34) 924 665 877
romale@romale.com
www.romale.com

Bodegas Castelar, S.A.
Tel: (34) 924 533 073
Fax: (34) 924 533 493
castelar@arrakis.es

Bodegas Dolores Morenas, S.L.
Tel: (34) 924 544 158
Fax: (34) 924 572 342
dmorenas@doloresmorenas.com
www.doloresmorenas.com

Bodegas Inviosa
Tel: (34) 924 671 235
Fax: (34) 924 665 932
inviosa@coeba.es
www.coeba.es/inviosa

Bodegas J. Silva, S.L.
Tel/Fax: (34) 924 324 005

Bodegas Las Granadas, S.L.
Tel: (34) 927 321 250/251
Fax: (34) 927 321 300
granada@ctv.es

Bodegas Martínez Paiva, SAT
Tel: (34) 924 671 130
Fax: (34) 924 663 056
bodegas@depayva.com
www.depayva.com

Bodegas Miguel Angel Matamoro Toribio
Tel/Fax: (34) 924 551 431

Bodegas Pedro Cupido, C.B.
Tel: (34) 924 323 451
Fax: (34) 924 323 516
pcupido@vut-jntaex.es

Bodegas Santa Marta Virgen, Soc. Coop.
Tel: (34) 924 690 218
Fax: (34) 924 690 083
www.bodegas.s.martavirgen

Bodegas Ventura de Vega Arroyo
Tel: (34) 924 671 105 - 924 662 146
Fax: (34) 924 677 205
vegaesteban@vegaesteban.com
www.vegaesteban.com

Casimiro Toribio Boraita, C.B.
Tel: (34) 924 551 235
Fax: (34) 924 551 449
catobor@terra.es

Coop. C.A.V.E. San José
Tel: (34) 924 524 417/636
Fax: (34) 924 526 045
cavesanjose@ceme.es

Coop. Ntra. Sra. de la Cabeza
Tel: (34) 924 530 120
Fax: (34) 924 531 408

Exagravin, C.B.
Tel: (34) 924 248 135
Fax: (34) 924 261 820

Naturaleza Alimentaria
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Fax: (34) 924 389 108
naturalezaalimentaria@infonegocio.com

Soc. Coop. Olivareros
Tel: (34) 924 537 001
Fax: (34) 924 536 286
gerente@olivareros.com
www.olivareros.com

Soc. Coop. Montevirgen
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Fax: (34) 924 685 050

Soc. Coop. Ntra. Sra. de la Soledad
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nssoledad@oem.es

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palvarado@vinaoliva.es

Soc. Coop. San Isidro de Villafranca
Tel: (34) 924 524 136
Fax: (34) 924 524 020
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Fax: (34) 924 665 505
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Soc. Coop. Santa Mª Egipciaca
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Fax: (34) 924 693 270

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acoex@bme.es

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Source: Regulatory Council of D.O. Ribera del Guadiana

ADINDEX

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Page: 134

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Page: 11

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Page: 9

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Page: 13

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Page: 10

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Page: 137

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Page: 125

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Page: 127

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Page: 5

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Page: 117

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Page: 15

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Page: 118

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Page: 139

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Page: 123

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Page: 120

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Page: 138

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Page: 132

Casa Riera Ordeix, S.A.
Tel: (34) 938 893 034
Fax: (34) 938 893 159
cno@casa-riera-ordaix.com
www.casa-riera-ordeix.com
Page: 129

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infocm@cavasmasachs.com
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Page: 120

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Page: 122

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Page: 4

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Page: 146

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www.paternina.com
Page: 135

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feriavalencia.com
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Page: 123

Freixenet, S.A.
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Fax: (34) 938 183 611
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Page: 12

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Fax: (34) 956 357 040
ilopez@gonzalezbyass.es
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Page: 7

Grupo Gourmets
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Fax: (34) 915 48 71 33
jram@gourmets.net
Page: 130

Hispanoliva, S.A.
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hispanoliva@eurociber.es
Page: 133

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Page: 6

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mail@valcarcel-sa.es
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Page: 129

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exportación@mueloliva.es
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Page: 136

Proaliment - Jesús Navarro, S.A. (Carmencita)
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Fax: (34) 965 604 796
export@carmencita.com
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Page: 143

Rafael Salgado, S.A.
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export@rafaelsalgado.com
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Page: 14

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bodega@pradorey.com
Page: 133

Sánchez Romate, S.A.
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Fax: (34) 956 185 276
cmendoza@mx4.redestb.es
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Page: 142

The Sherry Institute of Spain
Tel: 020 7486 0101
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buzon.oficial@londres.ofcomes.mcx.es
Page: 145

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Page: 8

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Page: 116

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Page: 131

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Page: 141

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Page: 140

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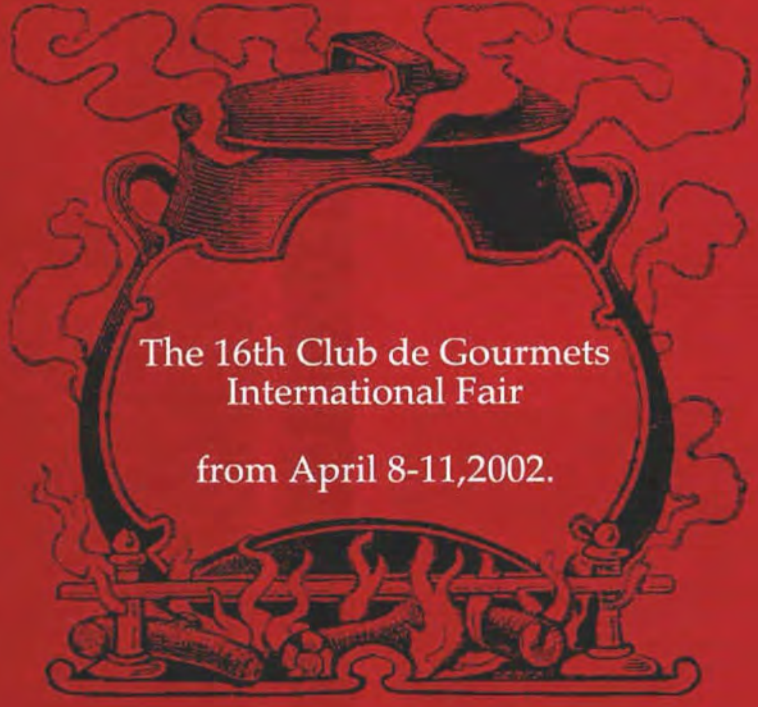

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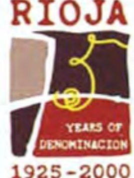

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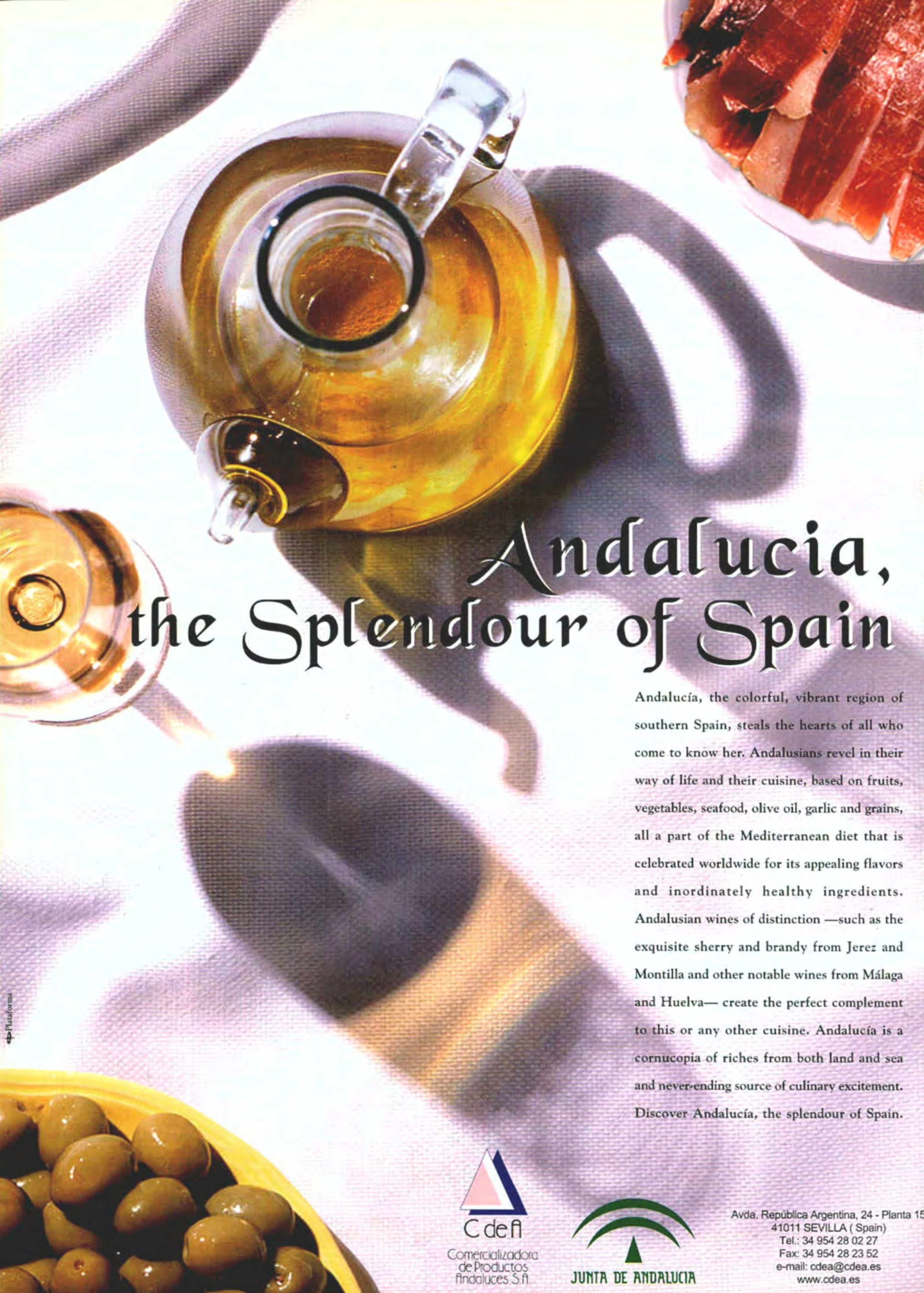
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GLOSSARY

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)

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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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Contents

p. 2 Jesús Uriarte

The Art of Aging Successfully

p. 16 Illustration: Arnal Ballester
p. 18-19 Casa Riera Ordeix
p. 20-21 Sánchez Romate Hermanos
p. 22-23 Grupo Ybarra

Matters of Import

p. 25 Illustration: María Alcobre
p. 27-31 Private

The Cuisines of Spain

p. 32 Top: José Benito Ruiz/ Nature & Travel; bottom: P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 32-33 Joan Miró, Poster (Fragment), © Successió Miró 2001
p. 34 Salvador Dalí, La cesta de pan, © Estado Español, Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, VEGAP, 2001
p. 35 Nelson Souto/ICEX
p. 36 Top to bottom: Rico-Ruiz/Nature & Travel; Rafael Delgado/Nature & Travel; Robert Royal
p. 37 Left to right: Diego Díaz/ICEX; A. de Benito/ Sobremesa; Rafael Delgado/ Nature & Travel
p. 38 Rico-Ruiz/Nature & Travel
p. 39 Joaquín Sorolla, Vendimiando, (Fragment), Museo Sorolla, VEGAP, 2001
p. 40 Top and bottom: Fernando Briones/ICEX; top right: ICEX
p. 41 Left: Turespaña/ICEX; right: Rico-Ruiz/Nature & Travel
p. 42 Carlos Moisés García
p. 43 Ramón Gaya, Homenaje al niño de la uvas de Murillo, (Fragment), Museo Ramón Gaya, Ayto. de Murcia
p. 44 Fernando Briones/ICEX
p. 45 A. de Benito/ICEX; stillife: Menchu Artime
p. 46 Pablo Picasso, Fruitera, (Fragment), Museu Picasso, © Photo Arxiu, Fotogràfic de Museus, Ajuntament de Barcelona, VEGAP, 2001
p. 47 Turespaña/ICEX
p. 48 Heinz Hebeisen/ICEX
p. 49 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 50 José Benito Ruiz/ Nature & Travel
p. 51 Llorenç Pons, Sin título, (Fragment), Private Collection
p. 52 Top: Pablo Neustadt/ Sobremesa; bottom: P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 53 A. de Benito/ICEX; stillife: Menchu Artime
p. 54 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 55 César Manrique, Africa, (Fragment), Fundación César Manrique, VEGAP, 2001
p. 56 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 57 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 58 A. de Benito/ICEX; stillife: Menchu Artime
p. 59 Félix Lorrio/ICEX
p. 61 Top: Carlos Fernández Bourgon; bottom: Rico-Ruiz/ Nature & Travel

A Taste for Art

p. 62 Jesús Uriarte
p. 64 Top to bottom: Museo Chillida Leku; G. Mezzacasa/ Museo Chillida Leku; Museo Chillida Leku
p. 65 Jesús Uriarte
p. 66 Top: G. Mezzacasa/Museo Chillida Leku; bottom: Tayo Acuña/ICEX
p. 67 G. Mezzacasa/Museo Chillida Leku

D.O. Ribera del Guadiana

p. 68 Tayo Acuña
p. 69 Tayo Acuña
p. 70 Germán Gallego/ Sobremesa
p. 71 Left, top and bottom: Tayo Acuña; right: Heinz Hebeisen
p. 72 Left to right: Tayo Acuña (1); Germán Gallego/ Sobremesa (3)
p. 73 Heinz Hebeisen
p. 74 Bettina Krücken
p. 75 Germán Gallego/Sobremesa

Canarian Banana

p. 76 Illustration: Miguel Sarró
p. 78 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 79 Top and mid: Pablo Neustadt/Sobremesa; bottom: Tayo Acuña
p. 80 Heinz Hebeisen
p. 81 P. Sancho-Mata/ICEX
p. 82 Heinz Hebeisen
p. 83 From the book: El buen gusto de España, Editorial El Viso
p. 84 Tayo Acuña
p. 85 Top: Heinz Hebeisen; bottom: Spanish Ministry of Agriculture/ICEX
p. 86-87 Pablo Neustadt/ Sobremesa

Sherry Vinegar

p. 88-91 Antonio Girbes/ Sobremesa
p. 92 A. de Benito/ICEX; stillife: Menchu Artime
p. 93 Mikel Alonso/Sobremesa
p. 94 Top: ICEX; bottom: Antonio Girbes/Sobremesa

Recipes

p. 95-109 A. de Benito/ICEX; except details p. 98, 99, 109: Angel Robledo/ICEX; Dishware:Cerámicas de Bidasoa, except page 100: IKEA and page 107: Irabia

Eating in Spain

p. 110 Hernández Pina
p. 113 A. de Benito/ICEX; stillife: Menchu Artime

Foreign Affairs

p. 119 ICEX
p. 120 Tayo Acuña/ICEX

Plaza Mayor

p. 121 Forum Gastronómico de Vic

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Erratum
In the last issue of Spain Gourmetour Octavio Colis' last name was mispelled. The correct spelling is Colis.

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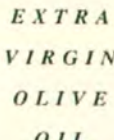

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