

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine

The Wines of the Valencian Region



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The New Spanish Varietals: Extra-Virgin Olive Oils

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A weekend of peace, far away from the daily grind Something you fantasize about? How does a quiet hideaway with vineyard views and superb wine in the heart of La Rioja sound? We take you there with our new series Bodegas & Hotels, starting in this issue. Then we travel south-eastwards to find out more about the new wave wines of the Valencian Community, where the movers and shakers are re-embracing local tradition, albeit with the application of 21st century know-how.

And for know-how in the life-style department, few places can rival Seville, believe me. We observe an established gastronomic ritual that takes us around the city, tasting its classic yet always amazing tapas as we go.

Still in Andalusia, we visit its avocado plantations. Thanks to the Spanish, this originally Aztec fruit was known in what was already old Europe over five centuries ago. However, it has only been grown intensively in Spain for the last thirty years or so. Today, Spain exports over 50,000 tonnes of avocados a year, 50% of which go to France.

And our beloved olive oil? We haven't touched on the subject for the last two years, but there's news from that front, especially about varietal oils: producers, restaurateurs, scientists, sommeliers—yes, that's right!—tell you more.

We round off our itinerary with a visit to the 'cathedrals' of Jerez - a *copita* drunk in the cool of these magnificent sherry wineries is just what we need.

Our next issue will feature another tapa tour, more Bodegas & Hotels and wine-related architecture

Join us!

Cathy Boirac

Editor-in-chief



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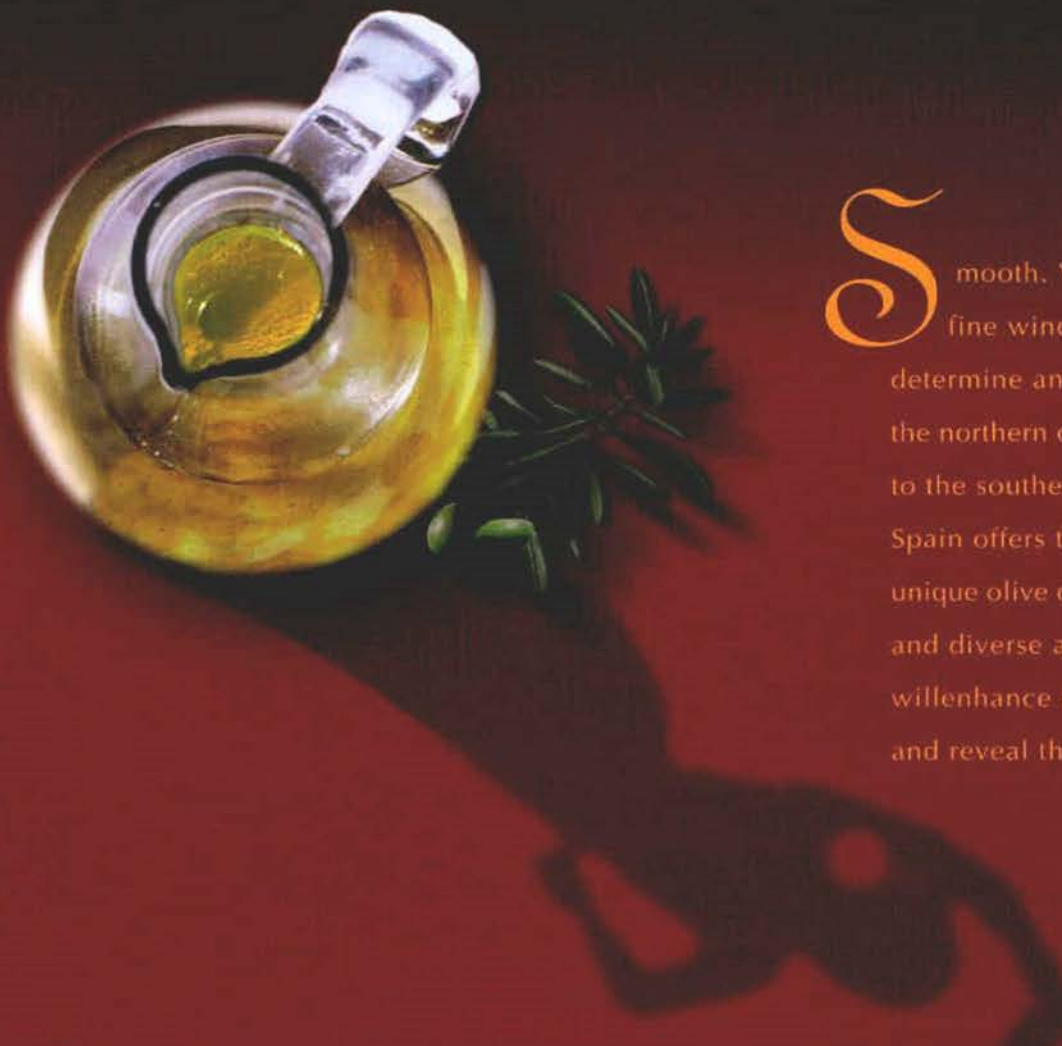
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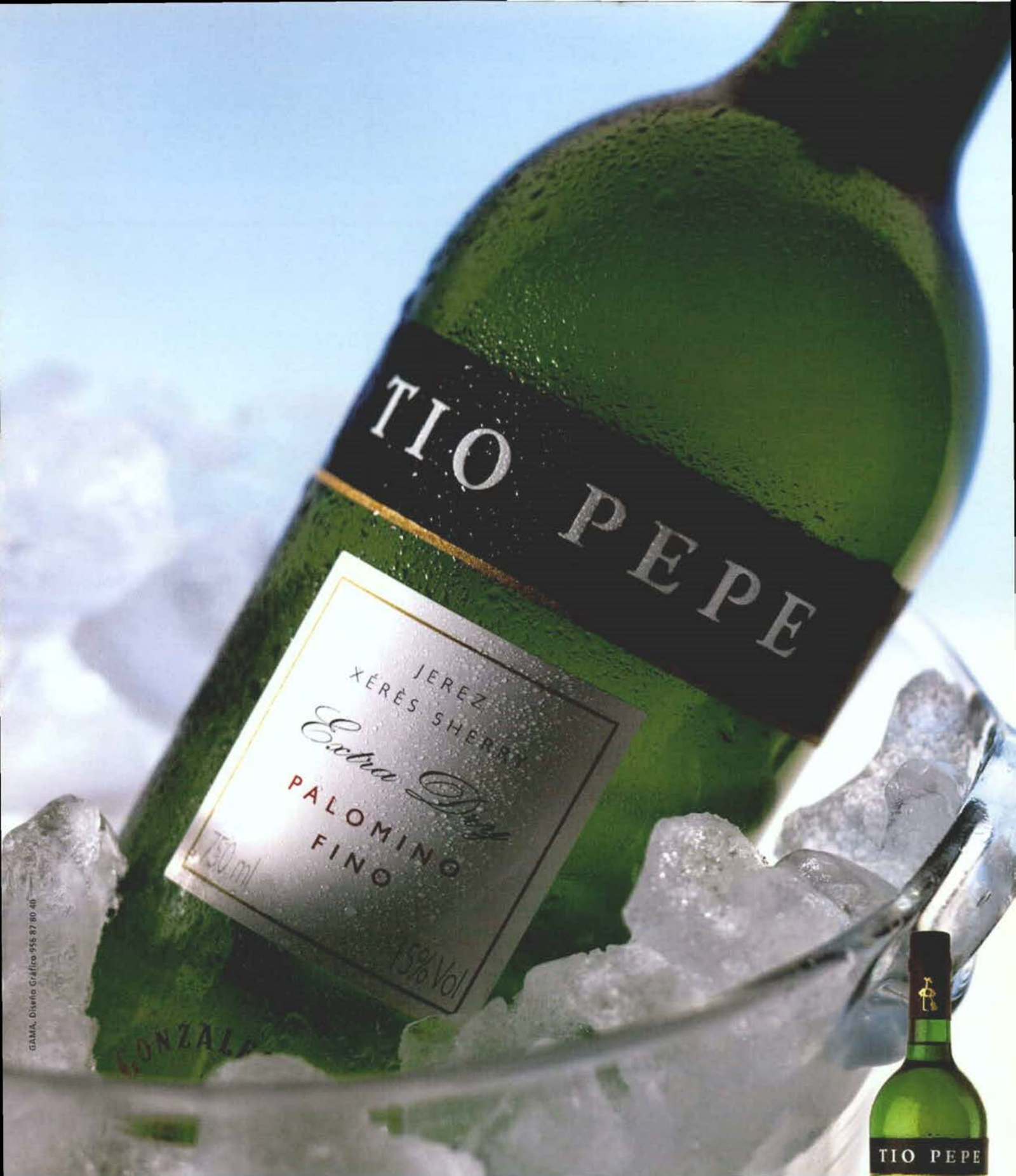
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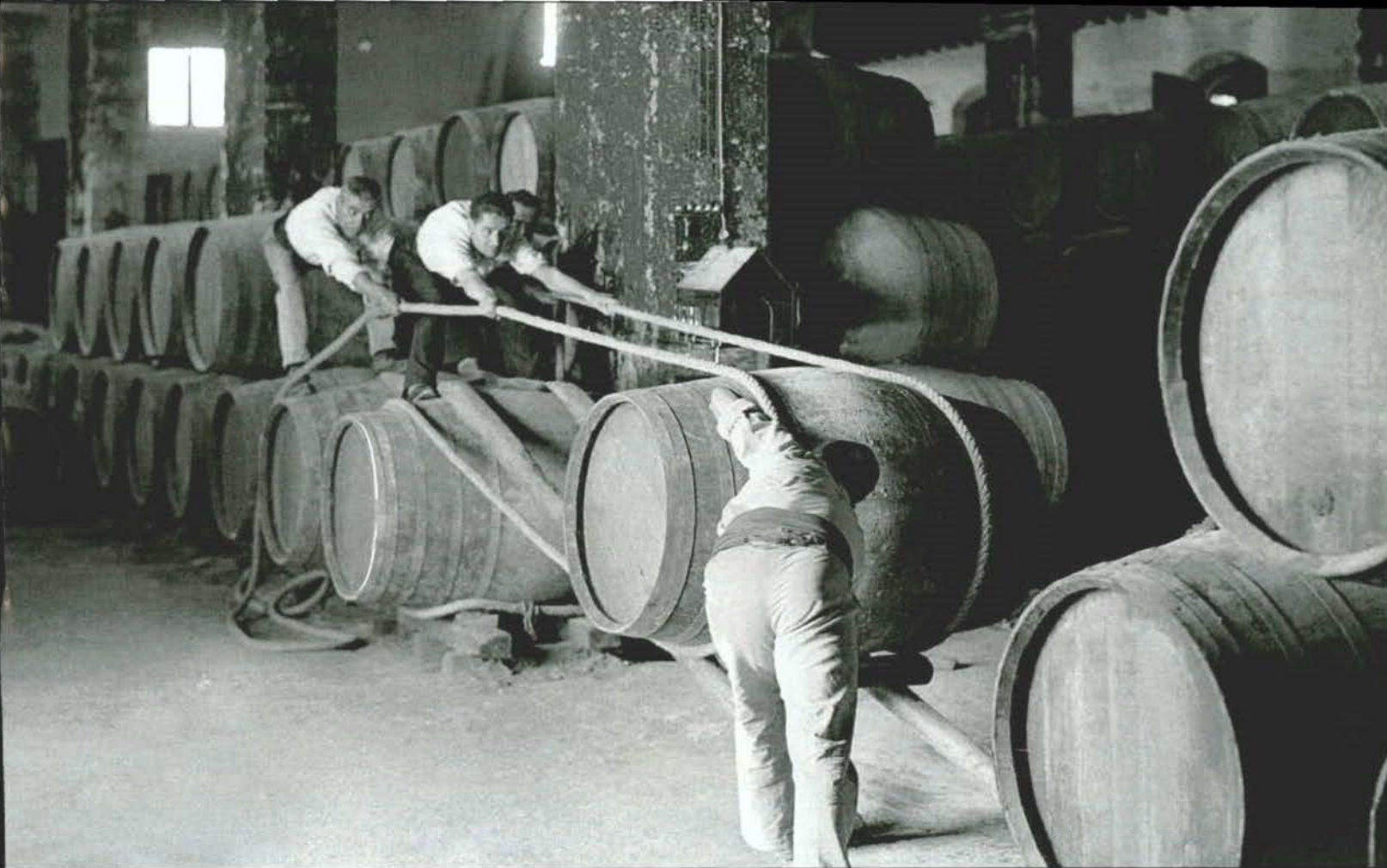
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Extra-Virgin

OILS

The long story of Spanish olive-oil making has taken an unexpected new twist. Botanists, chemists, oil-makers and chefs have slowly worked their way back to focus on the oil's natural starting point—the fruit itself. A handful of olive varieties producing premier oils made their name in the 1990s, but the focus is now much wider and the mood is more experimental. New denominations of origin, adventurous oil-makers and prizewinning oils have highlighted a dozen lesser-known native varieties—and the experts say there are more for us to discover. Some of this new generation of oils identified by the olive varieties from which they are made derive from just one variety. Others carefully balance two or three varietal oils to give a finely tuned tasting profile. How, then, do we learn to make the most of them? We talk here to the scientists, tasters and producers who are defining and making the new varietals—and to cooks and sommeliers who are playing with their potential.

The New Spanish
Varietals

OLIVE



TEXT
VICKY HAYWARD

"We have always had olive oil in Spain," says chef and teacher Luis Irizar, a founding father of today's Basque cuisine. "But in the last 40 years our understanding of it has been revolutionized."

Irizar tells the story of the quiet revolution he has observed. "For much of past century olive oil was a rustic product, often made without any sense of the varieties used. During post-war rationing we had limited quantities of uniform oil, often refined. Then came tourism and the discovery that olive oil was healthy. Olives became a valuable crop, the growers invested in making good oil, and we began discovering regions and varieties. Now we have a world-class product—and we are learning not to take it for granted."

Spain's awareness of the value of its olive groves came late, but it is growing fast. Signs of the times are the rise in Spanish consumption of extra-virgin olive oils last year by an estimated 14% and the range of 40 to 60 different native extra-virgins on offer in Madrid's trio of olive-oil boutiques and elsewhere. Ranging from deep green to



light gold in color, these oils are identified by the producers' name, their region of origin and, increasingly, the variety—or different varieties—from which they are made.

Distinguished in this way from oils labelled only with geographical provenance or simply as generic extra-virgin oil, these varietal oils, like their better know counterparts in wine, are designed around clearly identifiable flavor notes and aromas that set them apart from the less identifiable flavors of oils blended from many varieties.

Some varietal names may ring a bell on your taste buds—Arbequina, Picual, Cornicabra and Hojiblanca—but others are new discoveries, even for Spanish oil-lovers. Lechin de Sevilla from Cadiz, Manzanilla Cacereña from Extremadura, and Verdial de Huevar from Huelva are a few names just beginning to make waves. The differences between these varieties are complex and not yet fully understood, but thanks to clear distinctions of aroma and flavor they are already transforming our understanding of olive oil.



Lateral Thinking: Wines & Oils

The quickest shorthand for understanding varietal oils is via the parallel with wines. Recently, for example, writing in *Foods from Spain* magazine, Sam Gugino of *The Wine Spectator* compared Jaen's "assertively grassy" Picual oils to the Loire Valley's Sauvignon Blanc wines. Scientists support the tasting parallel. Marino Uceda is an agronomist whose team characterizes varietal oils at Venta del Llano in Mengibar, Jaen, the oldest olive-oil research station in Spain that is now run by the Andalusian government. Uceda breaks the term 'fruity' into eighteen different flavor-notes, marking down separately nettle, blackberry, mint, acorn, fig tree, banana, raspberry and tomato. By the way, leaf, fruit and plant are different notes—as well as the more familiar apple and new-mown grass. As this kind of analysis catches on—(see *The Tasters* p. 22)—a

sense of what 'variety' means in the context of olive oils begins to sink in. Underlying this is another parallel between the emergence of the new Spanish wines and oils. The romantic vision of old-fashioned picking and pressing still lingers on, but modern stainless-steel technology has been key to drawing out both grapes' and olives' aromas and tastes with new precision and clarity. "The speed of pressing after harvesting has enabled a leap in quality," explains 'flying' olive oil-maker Gerardo Jimenez Luque, who composes half a dozen Andalusian oils for export clients. "The freshness of the pressed olive allows the oil to keep its subtleties of flavor and aroma." However, there are caveats to the comparisons with wine. One, extra-virgin olive oils never improve with age. Quite the opposite. Some superb oils start to wane within weeks of pressing—and this stability, or lack of it, is largely a varietal matter (see *Identifying the New*

Varietals, p. 27). On a more positive note, there is no reason for oil to be stale if pressed from the previous year's crop and kept cool in a dark place. Uceda, a guru in his field, swears by freezing olive oil to keep it fresh with all its sensorial qualities intact—and notes that avant-garde chefs are trying this too. Two, an extra-virgin olive oil's quality is relative to its uses—and there are many of them. Reach for a fragrant, fruity oil to serve over wood-grilled asparagus; but pick one with a much bigger flavor that survives chilling in *gazpacho*; and for deep-frying at high temperatures, the priority is a super-stable oil. That is a very simplified sketch of the choices chefs make when they choose which extra-virgin oils to use. "The old idea that there can be one olive oil for everything just cannot be," says world-renowned Catalan chef Ferran Adrià. "We need one for raw use, another for frying, another for sauces, another for the hotplate,

and so on." And that, of course, brings us back to variety—the single greatest differentiating factor between premier oils.

The Varietal Jigsaw

Another way of understanding where the new Spanish varieties are coming from—and where they will go in the future—is to study the planting map of today's olive groves (see p. 20) and what they offer.

"The most characteristic fact about the Spanish groves," wrote agronomist Miguel Ortega Nieto in a study published by Spain's Ministry of Agriculture in 1955, "is that each olive-growing region is planted with few varieties; and, in reference to this century's planting, with only one, as occurs with Picual (Jaen), Hojiblanca (Cordoba and Malaga), Cornicabra (Ciudad Real and Toledo)."

In fact, the jigsaw map of planting is more complicated than that, breaking down into two-dozen varietal blocks. What is unusual about it is that they range from the vast—the biggest is Picual, covering 900,000 ha/222,390 acres—to the tiny, for example Pico Limon, which checks in at 4,000 ha/9,884 acres. Within each piece, one, or at the most two or three main varieties coexist, as in Cordoba's and Granada's sierras. How has this jigsaw come about? Why does it differ from the models of other Mediterranean countries where, generally speaking, either half a dozen (or more) varieties grow side by side, making separate harvesting and pressing difficult or just one or two commercially successful varieties from elsewhere have ousted less productive native ones in the last century?



One reason is Iberia's widely contrasting microclimates and terrain. For over two thousand years olive-farmers have been forced to select and adapt their stock to demanding growing circumstances.

"We've consistently observed more varieties in mountainous areas, where there are also more variations in soil and climate," says Professor Diego Barranco, pomologist at Cordoba University, who made Spain's pioneering 20-year prospectus of native olive varieties with his colleague, Professor Luis Rallo. How far these varieties go back in time has been shown by olive pits found in early Roman oil-presses around Antequera, in Malaga province. They turned out to come from a variety almost identical to Hojiblanca, which today occupies more than 95% of the province's groves. The Moslems propagated different varieties, such as Verdial de Velez Malaga, and a spurt of 18th-century commercial planting in Castile La Mancha spread Cornicabra, a hitherto local variety from Toledo, around the central

Flavor Versus Acidity: The End of A Myth

For many years olive oil's acidity—that is, the percentage of free oleic acid in an olive oil, as quoted on the label of each bottle—was believed to be an indicator of its tasting qualities. Back in the 1980s, however, scientists discovered there was no causal link between the two. Marino Uceda explains how the confusion arose. "Acidity does not affect flavor because the carbon molecules formed in the process are so large they are not perceptible in the mouth."

However, since acidity was closely associated with the presence of earth, mould and dirt, which provoked tasting defects as well as hydrolysis, it was taken as a general guideline to quality—and often still is, despite professional tasters' best efforts to persuade us otherwise. In reality, a superbly fruity extra-virgin oil produced in a warm, damper coastal climate might easily end up with higher acidity than a virgin or refined oil.

Now, EU labeling laws (see the relevant website address, p. 21, Legislation section for further details) are aiming to shift our mindset. From this coming autumn, when the maximum acidity for EU-produced extra-virgin oils drops from 1.0° to 0.8°, it no longer has to be quoted on the bottle's label. If it is, then it must be accompanied by a series of other precise information on chemical content—such as, for example, wax and peroxide levels—that will take the emphasis off acidity and give a very precise indicator of whether or not the bottle contains an extra-virgin oil.



THE OLIVE-OIL POTATO CHIP

When Mediterranean-flavored chips hit the mass market a couple of years ago, the old-fashioned Spanish olive-oil-fried chip seemed due for a revival—and now, indeed, new and old small producers from north to south are running to keep up with rising demand. San Jeronimo, which started life as a small *freiduria*, or chip frying-shop, in San Sebastian's old town in the late 1980s, is making 264,000 lbs of crisps a year and they are planning on doubling output by 2006 for the Basque market alone. Further south, Artesanos de Añaveja, a Sorian family company, have been frying home-grown potatoes since 1998 and also make organic chips. Production has tripled and they are now building a second factory. Both these companies fry with 70% extra-virgin olive oils and 30% blander refined olive pomace-oil. "Using only extra-virgin oil makes the flavor too strong," explains Jesus Mari Gallastegui, of San Jeronimo. "But we think it's important to stick to 100% olive oil because of its stability at high temperatures." Both companies use varietally identified oils: San Jeronimo uses Picual and Hojiblanca; Artesanos de Añaveja uses lighter-flavored Empeltre, Blanqueta and sometimes Arbequina oils. Further south, Jaen city's Casa Paco is a long-established star of the Andalusian chip-frying world. "My father, Paco, started out with a street-cart sixty years ago," says Francisco Espinosa Campos. The street-cart grew into a frying-shop and then into a modern purpose built factory. Today 4,500 lbs of potatoes are fried every working day.

Paco Jr. says the potatoes must be freshly peeled just before they drop into the olive oil. "Really fresh potatoes reduce to less than a third of the weight as they fry." Casa Paco uses half virgin and half refined oil, all of it from the local Picual olive, famed for its stability.

All three companies add only one other ingredient—salt—which shortens the shelf-life (three months). But that is not a problem: Casa Paco is expanding to keep up with southern Spanish demand and has export enquiries from as far as London and Paris; San Jeronimo already exports to Amsterdam and Biarritz. Artesanos de Añaveja has delayed export plans until it can meet domestic demand.

plains. Whether Arbequina arrived in Catalonia with the Knights Templar or the Duke of Medinaceli in the 18th century has not yet been sorted out, but in either case, it is a newer piece of the jigsaw.

Luckily this mosaic has remained intact due to the olive tree's long productive lifespan, its genetic stability and, in past centuries, the isolation of many oil-producing areas.

Alongside this there were few commercial pressures to rein in a natural leaning towards diversity. As the eminent historian Raymond Carr famously joked, Spain has as many chorizos as it has Virgins—and, as it turns out, as it has olive varieties. Barranco's and Rallo's nationwide prospectus, which was finished in 1994, identified 262 varieties nationwide and, among them, the 26 principal commercial varieties dominating the map.

Scientists in the Groves

The second, modern chapter of varietal oil making is precisely that of the scientists who have been explor-



For over two thousand years olive-farmers have been forced to select and adapt their stock to demanding growing circumstances.

ing the groves and mapping them with new accuracy. Later this year this body of works will become more widely known when it is published as a compendium entitled *Elaiografia Hispanica*. A two-book opus magnum, it will include a catalogue of the varieties identified by Barranco and Rallo plus the findings from 20 follow-on research projects based on comparative growing trials. "Before the prospectus there was enormous confusion," explains Barranco. "Picual, for example, was known under 20 different local names that were thought by the growers to be identical varieties, and two dozen identifiably different varieties were called Manzanilla. Sorting out that confusion was a starting point for working seriously with varietal oils."

The results of the prospectus are still being fine-tuned via analysis of DNA leaf-extracts, molecular markers and detailed studies of Andalusia, Catalonia and the Valencian region. But in a very real way, unusually, the fruits of this research have already reached us in the new oils. The scientific characterization of varieties by the Venta del Llano team headed by

Marino Uceda, combined with new growing guidelines resulting from growing trials, has underpinned the producers' confidence in making the changes necessary in the groves and the olive mills to launch new extra-virgin varietal oils. And such is the importance of the Spanish olive-oil business today—an estimated 12 million trees have been planted in the last decade alone—that the results have been quick to reach us. To give one specific example, research into the effect of drought on Picual olives has encouraged the introduction of low-level irrigation and planting in new areas, and this in turn has helped to produce less bitter, peppery oils, and that in turn is producing new 'composed' oils with Picual. To give another very widespread example, research into differing optimum moments for harvesting and the negative effect of oxidation on flavor and aroma has led to much greater precision and care in the timing of picking, pressing and decantation, and it is now routine for each varietal oil to be stored separately.

It is this modern chapter of scientific work that explains why we are dis-



covering varietal oils now, and why there is a new experimental mood among producers.

Single-Variety Oils

"Today, I'd advise anyone learning about olive oil to begin with single-variety oils," says Jean Pierre Vandelle, chef-proprietor of El Olivo, who introduced Spain's first restaurant olive-oil trolley a decade ago in Madrid. "It is the best way to learn to typify oils."

To the five classic single-varietals backed up by denomination of ori-



gin (DO) quality control—Picual, Arbequina, Cornicabra, Empeltre and Manzanilla Cacerena—one can now add half a dozen other oils. The best known of these, but still not defined as a DO, is Hojiblanca, compared by Sam Gugino to the Chardonnay grape for its multitude of flowery and fruity flavor notes. Less well known are Lechin de Sevilla, the main variety in the Sierra de Cadiz, Andalusia's newest DO growing area (incidentally, one of Vandelle's favorites) and Morisca, from Extremadura, which gives magnificent, dense, very fruity, largely cooperative-produced oils. Manzanilla de Sevilla is another oil on the move. Known worldwide as a fat table olive, its green varietal oil is increasingly sought after. Single-variety Picudo, a key flavor in Baena's and Priego de Cordoba's structured oils, also occasionally now finds its way on to the market and is being snapped up by discerning chefs. Another group of oils is being made with the classics planted outside their traditional growing areas. Arbequina gives excellent oils in Mallorca, Navarre, the Valencian region and right around Andalusia (indeed, these southern oils have even picked up Catalan prizes in blind tastings), while Picual, now grown in Almeria and Huelva as well as further afield, is giving really surprising results. "Picual seems to shift its character more than Arbequina in new habitats," comments Juan

Ramon Izquierdo, who runs the Ministry of Agriculture's tasting jury for its prizes (see *The Tasters*, p 22). Two other names for the future are Pico Limon, only identified a decade ago. Its oil is eulogized by scientists and tasters who know it—they compare it to an Arbequina, but with more complex fruit. Another future star is likely to be Serrana de Espadan, from Castellon, north of Valencia, which has been produced

as a single-variety oil for well over a century, but is only now being bottled on home ground.

Classic and New 'Composed' Oils

The second family of varietal oils, which the experts say will win us over in the long term, is the very high quality 'composed' oils—known by the French as *'assemblages'* and by Spanish experts as *'aceites compuestos'* although still often called *'coupages'* by the Anglo Saxons. Here, the parallels with wine come through again. Gonzalez Byass and Marques de Griñon, two prestigious bodegas, have opted to produce complex composed oils with high quality one-off blends designed to balance aroma, taste and stability. Then there are much older, classic 'composed' Spanish oils for us to appreciate afresh: the sweet, well-structured oils from Baena and Priego de Cordoba, made with Picudo, Hojiblanca and Picual—for which a high quality blend might be 50%, 30% and 20% respectively—and the oils from Axarquia or the Sierra de Tejada, just behind Malaga, which use equal quantities of two varieties, Nevadillo Blanco and Verdial de Velez Malaga. In this bracket, watch out too for oils from new DOs Montes de Granada and Mallorca, which allow for composed oils made with differing personal approaches.

In 1868, the Botanist Colmeiro drew a series of more than 80 watercolors showing some of the different olives grown in Spain. This collection was shown in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Fair of that year.



Another group of oils reveal the modern qualities of Picual, Spain's most widely planted olive. In fact there are many oils out there with a dose of Picual to stabilize them—since the EU's definition of a monovarietal requires only 50% of the oil to come from the named variety, stable Picual often helps make up the balance. Increasingly, though, it is quoted and identified with pride. Last year, for example, virtually unknown oils made from Verdial de Huevar and Picual from Andalusia's western-most province, Huelva, and from Hojiblanca, Picual and Manzanilla oils, grown near Estepa, Seville, were awarded two of the Ministry of Agriculture's three prizes after a blind tasting of nearly 200 oils.

It is significant, too, that the new Marques de Griñon oil is a three-way estate-bottled hybrid of Picual, Arbequina and Manzanilla de Sevilla planted in Castile La Mancha, well away from their traditional growing areas. It is a combination that few would have predicted, but we may soon refer to it as a pioneering classic.

Oil Futures

As the planting map has been changing in the last ten years, commercially successful Spanish varieties have been biting into the old map. Will this threaten local varieties? Those in the business think not.

"The opposite should happen," comments Marino Uceda. "Local varieties

should become more profitable once their quality is wider known." Pico Limon, Serrana de Espadan and Morisca, for example, have already risen in price per liter in the last few years. The planned European reforms towards subsidizing growers per tree, rather than their productivity, will also help these old varieties, often growing in marginal areas. The current market also suggests varietal oils have only just begun to

show their scope. Boxed sets of single-variety oils are multiplying—there is even one tasting set of ten baby bottles—and so, too, are products incorporating specific oils: Navarre's El Bordon chorizo preserved in 100% extra-virgin Empelre olive oil; luxury preserved Ramon Peña anchovy fillets with 20% of Hojiblanca and Picual extra-virgin oil; Sarriegui, Dandy and Casa Paco olive-oil fried potato chips (see box p. 16); and new up market mayonnaises and vinaigrettes are just a few examples. As the health importance of cooking with olive oil becomes wider known (see *Spain Gourmetour* no. 50), these products are likely to multiply. To a certain extent, it seems that we are already becoming more exploratory in our tastes, carried along by our taste buds from gentle to more fully flavored oils. Chefs and sommeliers admit they are just beginning to research these new oils' possibilities (see *The Chefs and The Sommeliers*, pp. 24 and 23). "Our students taste 20 extra-virgin oils early in their training," says Luis Irizar. "It's as fundamental to understand them as it is for a chef to know wines, but it still needs a lot of study." A new symposium on cooking with olive oil to be held in Jaen province this spring will encourage the exchange of traditional and avant-garde techniques (see *Foodie's Corner* p. 112). "Tastes in different markets are moving towards oils with personality with extraordinary speed," com-



ments Gerardo Jimenez Luque. "Initially, people say they are taken aback by the number of varieties, but what is really surprising is that they have been so little known until today given the size and age of the groves."

Finally there is the intriguing possibility that a genuinely new Spanish varietal will appear during the next decade. Barranco's and Rallo's team at the University of Cordoba have speeded up traditional selection techniques to create a hybrid of Picual, Arbequina and Italian Frantoia, designed not only for flavor and aroma but also for 21st-century disease-resistant growing and mechanical harvesting. Barranco says the prospects are looking good. What would the new variety be called if it happens? "We are thinking of an old-fashioned Andalusian name like Guadalquivir," he says, in reference to the river that has inspired poets and flamenco singers for centuries. "After all, it's not every day that you come up with a new variety." How's that for understatement?

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Recipes on page 97, Exporters on page 116 and Photo Credits on page 136



- Yellow: Picual
- Light Orange: Cornicabra
- Orange: Hojiblanca
- Dark Orange: Lechin de Sevilla
- Pink: Manzanilla de Sevilla
- Light Purple: Morisca
- Dark Purple: Empeltre
- Grey: Arbequina
- Light Blue: Manzanilla Cacereña
- Blue: Farga
- Green: Lechin Granada
- Dark Green: Verdial Huevar
- Red: Gordal Sevillana
- Light Red: Verdial Badajoz
- Brown: Morrut
- Olive Green: Sevillena
- Dark Green: Castellana
- Yellow-Green: Verdial Vélez-Málaga
- Yellow: Aloreña
- Light Blue: Blanqueta
- Pink: Villalonga
- Light Green: Changlot Real
- Dark Green: Alfafara

Source: Diego Barranco, Córdoba University



WEBSITES

General information

www.asoliva.es

ASOLIVA (Spanish Association of Olive Oil Exporters) website. The site offers structured information on the following: general information about the Association, legislation, tasting procedures and oil quality criteria, Spanish varieties and Designations of Origin, recipes and member details (English, Spanish)

www.oliva.net

Website of the Foundation for the Promotion and Development of Olive Groves and Olive Oil. The site offers information on the Expoliva fair, the international olive oil Symposium, promotional campaigns and research projects. It includes data on the evolution of prices (Spanish)

Oil and gastronomy

www.sabormediterraneo.com/aceites/index.htm

Site given over to Mediterranean cuisine. The oil section offers information on different qualities of olive oil, aromas and flavors, the main Spanish olive varieties and a tasting glossary. (Spanish)

www.tertuliaonline.com

TertuliaOnline website. This is the official site of the Friends of Spanish Olive in Australia. It provides information on tasting, oil varieties, health and oil, cul-

tural matters, competitions, recipes and the "ask Justo" Q&A column, where chef Justo del Amo answers subscribers' culinary questions. (English)

66.9.187.163/oliveoilfs/34Tasting_E.htm

Spanish Olive Oil site developed by ICEX and ASOLIVA. The site provides a tasting guide describing the main olive varieties, their characteristics, flavor and aroma terminology, and useful tips. (English, Spanish)

www.azeite.com.br

Olive Oil from Spain website developed for the Brazilian market by ICEX and ASOLIVA. It includes a guide to the main olive oil varieties and their characteristics, recipes, interesting news items, promotions and a list of exporters. (Portuguese)

www.asoliva-jp.com

Olive Oil from Spain website developed for the Japanese market by ICEX and ASOLIVA. It provides information on Spanish oils, the characteristics of the different varieties, olive oil's contribution to good health, and various recipes. (Japanese)

Institutions

www.ig.csic.es/principa.htm

Website of the *Instituto de la Grasa de Sevilla* (Seville Oils Institute). The site gives pride of place to olive oil and the table olive. It offers information on the institution and abundant scientific references to research and projects involving olive oil. (English, Spanish)

Legislation

europa.eu.int/eurlex/en/search/search_oj.html

Council Regulation (EC) No 1513/2001 of 23 July 2001 amending Regulation 136/66 EEC and (EC) No 1638/98 as regards the extension of the assistance regime and the olive oil quality strategy. Official Journal L 201 26 July 2001 (English, Spanish)

Companies

www.patatasdeanavieja.com

Patatas Añavieja website, providing information on the company, its ecological products and the production process. The site includes a video on potato production (English, Spanish)

www.patatasanjeronimo.com

Patatas San Jeronimo website, providing information on the company, its raw materials, products and production processes (Basque, English, French, Spanish)



Gerardo Jiménez

The Tasters

While the traditional olive-oil tasting system developed in the 1970s remains vital for the worldwide classification of olive oils, many scientists, tasters and chefs want to place more importance on tasting oils' positive attributes.

"We need to move on," says **Marino Uceda**, the agricultural researcher who has spent 25 years characterizing varietal oils for the Spanish denomination of origin (DO) system. "Instead of tasting olive oils only to pick out their defects, we also need to taste them for their positive sensorial attributes."

Now, to try and help spread the practice of oil-tasting so it becomes as familiar as wine-tasting wines, he has adapted his team's tasting sheet and user-friendly software has been incorporated so it can be used worldwide off the web (www.oliva.net/mcvs.100). Overall assessments of complexity, harmony and persistence are included at the end of the tasting after the individual positive qualities for each oil.

Juan Ramón Izquierdo, who leads the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture's jury for its prestigious annual prizes, has also been trying to encourage the idea of quality tasting and diversity. Unusually, the prizes are based around that idea. "We have three categories—for oils made from bitter, sweet or ripe fruit," he explains. "There has been a definite development towards more distinct oils thanks to the new attention paid to monovarietals and to more adventurousness composed oils."

Distinct Fruitier Oils

"I have always seen tasting as a fundamental part of making good olive oils," says **Gerardo Jiménez**, 'flying' oil-maker who works between Seville and Cordoba. He is an expert in composing oils in which two, three or more varieties are balanced to bring out the best of each one. "Now its importance is finally coming to be recognized. Every year one needs to vary the balance of composed oils depending on the harvest."

From a different perspective, French-born chef **Jean-Pierre Vandelle**—also an olive farmer—has watched the development of tasting since 1990, when he introduced Spain's first restaurant olive-oil trolley at El Olivo, in Madrid. He chooses up to 60 different extra-virgin olive oils each year according to the season's results. "The palette in flavors was always wide here in Spain, but the new pressing machinery has allowed much greater precision in pulling out each oil's subtleties," he says. Many of El Olivo's clients taste the different oils with their meals. "We sometimes serve plain fish with four very different oils—two from the north and two from the south. Any more than that and people get confused."

Tasting at Home

To try tasting at home, he suggests a simple technique. "You can taste in a small, narrow tumbler which allows the oil's full aroma to rise if you cup your hands around the glass to warm the oil. Then suck in a little oil as if you were tasting wine, aerating it and moving it around your mouth." A slice of green apple, a bread cube and a drink of water help to clean the palate between oils. For professional tasters' marks, you can click into Uceda's tasting sheet, feed in your results and check the results for each oil.

The Sommeliers

Custodio Zamarra



Taking the wine and food critics' vocabulary one step further, sommeliers are beginning to think about how to match oils with wines—although they do so with caution.

"The subject is a subjective one," says **Custodio Zamarra**, the much-respected sommelier at **Zalacaín**, Spain's first ever three-star restaurant. "Only a decade ago the oils with least flavor were generally considered the best—now we are re-assessing."

Personal Matches

Zamarra, a native of Toledo, still helps out with the annual olive harvest at his family's farm. "The Cornicabra oils I grew up with are wonderful over salads and with fruity wines from La Mancha or Ribera del Duero. I like Cordoba's structured, balanced Picudo-based oils with balsamic Mediterranean wines—Jumilla, Priorato and so on." What, then, about assertive Picual? "Its slight bitterness and olive flavor is so interesting, but it needs thought. It sits well with a red wine with wood-softened tannins—say, a classic Rioja—that helps balance asstringency. With a fish dish using Picual, I like a Rueda Verdejo, which has dried fruit and almond notes. But these are personal views." **Ruth Cottomeo**, 28, one of Madrid's youngest sommeliers working at Michelin-starred restaurant **El Chaflán**, mentions two other variables. "One is the food's serving temperature since it clearly affects flavor and aroma, and the other is the age of the olive oil, since it evolves very quickly."

She pairs warm dishes dressed only with olive oil "with young, fresh red wines with plenty of fruit or with a bottle of pink cava with some body and structure." Another tip: "fresh, fruity reds work well with foods cooked in a dense, fruity oil—they help cut the unctuousness, and make the oil friendlier."

Then there are the sommeliers who have come to know one oil particularly well. For over a decade **José Antonio Polo**, of **Atrio**, in Cáceres, has been recommending wines to go with Toño Pérez's dishes highlighting Manzanilla Cacereña (see p. 00) "The best wines to put with extra-virgin olive oils are, for me, young wines, and preferably varietals. For the very fruity Manzanilla Cacereña oil from the 2002-2003 season I'd suggest a red Ekus 2000 from Bodegas Santa María. With Empeltre, a sweet almond oil but with bitter notes, I'd serve Borsao Primicia Garnacha de Monte 2002 (from DOP Campo de Borja)."

Dish by Dish

Finally, the family team led by chef **Joan Roca** at **El Celler de Can Roca** is beginning to analyze the flavor notes of wine and oil in cooking. "The parallel between the subtleties in wines and oils has become clear since there has been a more serious approach to oil making," says Joan. He cites a series of dishes to which **Josep Roca**, Can Roca's sommelier,

links wines. "We make a confit of milk-fed lamb with a Picual oil—it contrasts well with the mild garlic emulsion we serve with the lamb." For this, Josep suggests a barrel-matured red wine with tannins and plenty of glycerin, such as a Ribera del Duero, "meaty but silky to compensate for the peppery strength of the oil."

A second dish is a salt-cod confit made using Hojiblanca oil, served with cream of goat's cheese and spinach. Josep responds: "A warm, structured white Garnacha that has acquired subtlety from brief time on wood would make your mouth work, like the dish's ingredients—say a Priorato or Ampurdan. A fino's light bitterness and satin would work well too."

Next, clams served with a bergamot mousseline and a mandarin emulsion made using a 100% Arbequina — "these oils work very well with reduced fruit juices", says Joan. Josep adds without hesitation, "A white wine with good acidity and a floral note—an Albariño." Finally, comes a monkfish with *romesco* bread and almonds, finished off with drops of Verdial de Malaga, "for its freshness and sweetness", explains Joan. Josep: "I would play with whites with greenish vegetable notes—so I'd opt for a Verdejo varietal, a Rueda Superior." Food—and wine and oil—for thought.

The Chefs

“The essential point,” says master Basque chef Luis Irizar “is how to delineate the flavors of a dish rather than take away from them. We need to ask which oil goes with which ingredient and what is the oil’s function in the dish?” We asked a broad spectrum of Spanish chefs for their views and ideas for native varietal oils—here are their generously given replies.

Ferran Adrià of **El Bulli** agrees with Irizar. When Adrià began to sauce his main dishes with vinaigrettes and oil-heightened essences in the late 1980s, olive oil was rarely given resonance in Spanish ‘alta cocina’. He then went on to experiment with aromatized oils, separated ‘*aceites cortados*’—or literally curdled oils—and, more recently, chilled olive oils. Where to next? “We need documentation to study which oil we need for which use,” he says. “Personally I like gentle oils, I don’t like bitter ones—but there’s the question of whether you are using a spoonful or a drop.”

“Even for traditional Basque cooking,” says **Irizar**, “one needs three to four oils on hand for various uses. For example, I would use a heat-resistant Picual or Empeltre for frying baby squid, but for salt-cod *al pil pil* you need an oil like Hojiblanca that emulsifies well and has plenty of color and flavor.”

For delicate mushroom carpaccios he recommends Arbequinas and for braised game Picual or Empeltre or Cornicabra—the latter, he says, also works well in Spanish desserts and sweet pastries. “When it comes to green salad, it is very much a question of taste.”

Deep Southern Flavors

In Andalusia, the flavors of extra-virgin oil shift from one province to the next. “In Jaen, Picual imprints a directness on all our cooking,” says **Juanito**, chef-proprietor of **Juanito**, a traditional culinary landmark just outside Ubeda. He lists a few popular dishes. “Roasted red peppers with partridge, fried potatoes with egg (*patatas a lo pobre con huevo*), partridge in *escabeche*, fried lamb and deep-fried sweet pasties stuffed with pumpkin jam.” Frying here is done entirely in Picual extra-virgin oil, in deep-sided pans—its secrets deserve an article to themselves.

Further south, in Malaga, **José Carlos García Ortiz**, at Michelin-starred **Café de Paris** (see *Spain Gourmetour* no. 54) explains how he uses local Hojiblanca. “It’s very adaptable as a varietal oil—you can use it raw or cooked at lower or higher temperatures. I buy it directly from producers and ask for an oil without a pronounced flavor. We use it in mayonnaise, too—I like a little background bitterness.” Two praised dishes on recent menus have been local large red shrimp with sautéed

vegetables, pesto and squid stock; and a Piquillo pepper gazpacho. He also uses an Arbequina composed oil for desserts.

In Seville, **Juan Robles** of **Casa Robles**, a popular classic, uses Picual and Hojiblanca varietal oils, but also likes local Manzanilla, “one of the finest oils for salads and sauces,” and keeps Arbequina and Cornicabra on hand. “I like them all—I cannot help it.” He recommends simple toasts as one of the best ways for tasting different oils—he serves one with plain tuna fillet and another with thick gazpacho and shavings of cured ham, finishing both off with oil.

Working with Local Oils

In the other regions, chefs concentrate on the possibilities of local varietal oils.

Catalan chef **Carme Rusalleda**, from **Sant Pau**, near Barcelona, explains, “Five years ago I discovered a prudent, elegant Arbequina oil from the coastal area of Siurana DO that I find I can work with all the time.

I use it raw and in all my cooking—I can fry artichokes or carrot leaves in it, make a salt-cod confit or a truffled

Isaac Salaberria



Ferran Adrià



Quique Dacosta



Pedro Subijana



olive oil. The greenest early-season oil we hold back for salads. We also serve a very green Arbequina oil from my father's grove on the table with bread at the beginning of the meal."

Santi Santimaría, of three starred Michelin **Can Fabes**, uses Arbequina oils consistently in vinaigrettes. "My own taste is for oils which taste of green fruit, of grass. At the moment I like to replace the vinegar with another ingredient—for example, we have semolina with truffles and a meat-glaze vinaigrette."

"Cornicabra remains my base oil," comments **Manuel de la Osa**, whose inventiveness at **Las Rejas**, La Mancha's flagship kitchen, has inspired many younger chefs. "It is gentle and pleasant, but has that deep flavor for traditional Castilian dishes. A traditional use would be a thick potato purée with garlic, oil and salt-cod (*ajovarriero*) and a modern one would be an emulsion of sautéed garlic, *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) and oil stirred into a cold garlic soup."

In Alicante province **Enrique Dacosta**, of **El Poblet** (see *Spain Gourmetour* no. 54), uses two local single-variety oils. "Blanqueta is excellent to give body and flavor when

you want to use a little oil—say, poured over griddled fish, or as a truffle oil with root vegetables. Villalonga is a gentler oil which never competes with other flavors—I use it in an orange vinaigrette and add it at the end of cooking to a delicate moist rice with shrimp. Dishes starting with a *sofrito* (a basic sauce with tomatoes, onion, garlic and olive oil) can carry a much fruitier oil, like a Picual."

In western Extremadura, **Toño Pérez**, chef and co-proprietor of **Atrio**, has worked extensively around Manzanilla Cacerreña's sweet "banana and walnut" overtones. One recent dish is a hazelnut, truffle-oil soy sauce and balsamic vinaigrette served with briefly seared foie gras, and another is a vanilla oil served drizzled over *Torta de Casar* cheese spooned over dried nuts, topped with *Torta* ice-cream and laced with a thin sideline of homemade quince purée.

Aromatized Oils

Such aromatized oils are a world to themselves. At last year's San Sebastian gastronomy congress (see box p. 90), Catalan restaurateur **Carlos Gaig**, of **Gaig**, advised mak-

ing truffle oil by hanging a truffle, attached by thread, over a very mild oil in an enclosed jar (the effect is much greater than immersing the truffle) and **Gerhard Schwaiger**, of **Tristan** in Mallorca, suggested drying black olives in the oven and powdering them as the basis for flavoring a fruity olive oil.

Alicia Ríos, ex-restaurateur and olive oil taster, is an expert with aromatized oils. "I take geography as the base of my approach—what is natural to the oil? I would aromatize an oil from Castile with dried herbs; a Catalan oil with vegetables from the kitchen-garden; and a Valencian oil with local thyme, a touch of bay leaf, fennel and marine salt." She uses Picual or Empeltre to preserve dried olives from their respective regions and to extend the life of fresh herbs such as mint and basil. Sweet oils infused with exotic spices—ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, red pepper, for example—work well, she says, added to a homemade fruit sorbet. If she is keeping the oil for longer than two weeks, she pounds the spices (without salt) in a small bottle and prepares a very concentrated oil, then removes the flavoring ingredients and keeps the essential oil for diluting later.

Luis Irizar



José Carlos García Ortiz



Jean-Pierre Vandelle



Andoni Aduriz



Avant-Garde Basque Ideas

The Basque chefs have proved especially creative in coming up with new ideas, perhaps because they have no tradition of local oils.

Martín Berasategui came up with his olive oil ice cream in the late 1990s and now **Pedro Subijana**, of **Akelare**, has come up with olive-oil pearls. Olive oil emulsified with agar-agar is left to set and scooped out into tiny globes, currently served with sea bass. "I wanted to avoid the standard puddle on a plate. The chemist Hervé suggested emulsifying oil with proteins other than egg yolk. Experimenting, we let an agar-agar emulsion cool." So far, he has used Picual and Arbequina oils.

The Guggenheim's chef **Josean Martínez** (just 23 years old) says he mixes southern oils and butter for roasting, but, to use raw, he likes olive oils that are "sweet enough to drink like a fruit juice." The best oils, he thinks, are yet to come—but, for the time being, he plays off the underlying flavor notes of Arbequina with root vegetables—yucca (bitter), yam (peppery) and sweet potato (sweet)—served with fish and a wild mushroom stock.

With characteristic modesty **Andoni Aduriz** of **Mugaritz** (see *Spain Gourmetour* no. 53) comments, "I don't have a lot of olive oil culture, I've been to various tastings but the subtleties are so delicate I have a lot more to learn. I am crazy about one thing—sautéing shellfish in olive oil,

the effect on the aromas is incredible. Generally I prefer sweet oils, Arbequina and Empeltre, but that is partly because they go well with the more bitter green vegetables I tend to cook. If I made a dish with sweet almonds, for example, I would like to try the stronger, more peppery note of some of the southern oils."

Experimental Sweet Things

Then there is a new chapter of olive oil desserts. **Albert Adrià**, Ferran's young brother, **El Bulli's** dessert chef, comments, "I'd bracket olive oil with cured ham. I mean that respect for the product is the starting point." "We want to show raw olive oil off to its best advantage, either as a main ingredient or as a vehicle," agrees **Oriol Balaguer**, who set up his **Estudio de Chocolate y Pastelería** in Barcelona last year after seven years at **El Bulli**.

Both of them grew up with Arbequina, the main choice currently for sweet things. Albert's first experiment was a sweet oregano oil to serve with fresh white cheese and raspberries back in 1994. In 2000, he began to use frozen olive oil. "We served it with a lemon sorbet with caramel and basil, and another year with an orange and tomato seed salad served with caramelized yogurt. Another idea I've been testing is an almond sponge soaked in olive oil." Two examples from Oriol Balaguer's repertoire are a crunchy dark chocolate filled with a liquid olive-oil cen-

ter and an orange sorbet served on a small lake of oil garnished with two gelatins—one made with honey, the other with Pedro Ximenez—and salt flakes. "The salt enhances the oil and the sorbet, and bridges the flavors." He also serves an Arbequina sponge with mandarin sorbet and a sweet almond soup. "It is not just a question of flavor," he adds. "The olive oil gives the sponge a very different color and texture." He has also made it with Picual and Hojiblanca.

Chefs elsewhere are also trying Arbequina desserts. Inspired by traditional Andalusian cooking, **Isaac Salaberría** at **Fagollaga** (see *Spain Gourmetour* no. 53) has been experimenting with olive oils and citric acids in both savory and sweet dishes. Currently he's serving a chocolate and goat's cheese dessert with olive oil in an orange cream sauce. And **José Carlos García Ortiz**, in Malaga, uses a composed Arbequina oil for his spiced sweet bread soaked in olive oil and served with chocolate ice cream.



Identifying the New Varietals

How can you describe Spain's varietal oils? Marino Uceda and his team at Venta del Llano, the research station in Mengibar, Jaen, have been working on serious taste profiles for each oil by doing tastings during a minimum of seven to eight years with mid-scale harvests in which the oils' true tasting characteristics show through. Here are their tasting notes, plus recent statistics on planting extension in 2002.





ARBEQUINA "... characterized by fluidity and extraordinary fragrance...this is a very fruity oil, with light flavors of apple, green grass, little bitterness or pepperiness, and considerable sweetness. In the mouth this is a gentle and very fluid oil with specific attributes of green almond, and the flavor of recently mown grass." (Note: also pickled as table olives. Producers emphasize Arbequina's varying character according to time of harvesting and freshness.) Low to middle stability. Planting: 91,000 ha/ 224,861 acres Catalonia, Andalusia, Navarre.



BLANQUETA "... characterized by fluidity and intense fruitiness combined with a good aroma... This is a very fruity oil, with light flavors of apple, grassy greenness, slight bitterness and more notable pepperiness. In the mouth it is very fluid, which, together with its light astringency and characteristic almond flavor, combined with fig and wood overtones, clearly defines its tasting profile." Low stability. Planting: 17,000 ha/42,007 acres Valencia region.



CORNICABRA "... a sensorial tasting profile with personality. This is a fruity and fragrant oil, with gentle green, bitter and peppery overtones. Barely astringent, it is gentle to taste. Light almond flavor. Among its qualities it is worth noting its ability to match well with other monovarietal oils." Very high stability. Planting: 269,000 ha/664,699 acres Castile La Mancha, Valencia region.



EMPELTRE "...characterized by its fluidity and fragrance... this is a very fruity oil with light flavors of green apple, a balance of bitter and peppery overtones; gentle and sweet, it has a clear flavor of ripe almonds that give it a very clearly defined personality." (Note: also dried and salted for table olives.) Middle stability. Planting: 72,000 ha/177,912 acres Aragon, Balearic Islands, Catalonia.



HOJIBLANCA "... very pronounced tasting characteristics... This is a fruity oil with light flavors of apple, grassy green, a little bitterness although sometimes peppery and sweet. In the mouth it is a gentle with a flavor of ripe almonds." Producers emphasize that it can exhibit a multitude of flavors. Middle stability. Planting: 276,000 ha/659,757 acres Andalusia.



LECHIN DE SEVILLA "... shows organoleptic characteristics of great personality... This is an intensely fruity oil in which the presence of green, bitter and peppery attributes stand out. Not very astringent and gentle to the taste. Light almond flavor." Middle stability. Planting: 51,000 ha/126,021 acres Andalusia.



MANZANILLA CACERENA "An intense aroma and fruit flavor of olives, green apple and banana, with an absence of bitterness and slightly peppery." (Note: also pickled as table olives.) High stability. Planting: 64,000 ha/222,300acre) Extremadura, Castile Leon.



MORRUT "... characterized by its fragrance... This is a very fruity oil, with a light taste of green apple, a little bitter and slightly peppery, smooth, and with a clear taste of green almonds, which gives the oil a marked personality." Middle to high stability. Planting: 28,000 ha/69,188 acres Catalonia, Valencia region



PICUAL "... presents a strong personality, showing specific sensorial details which make it easily identifiable among varietal olive oils... This is a fruity, fragrant oil with positive attributes of bitterness, pepper and astringency which soften with time. Fig and young wood stand out as specific attributes that lend great personality." Very high stability. Planting: 90,000 ha/222,390 acres Andalusia, Castile, Catalonia, Valencia region.



PICUDO "... characterized by its fluidity, green fruit and fragrance... This is a very fruity oil with a light taste of green apple and leaf green balancing bitterness and pepperiness, a light taste of ripe almonds and fresh wood, which gives it a very defined personality." Low to middle stability. Planting: 35,000 ha/86,485 acres Andalusia



VERDIAL DE HUEVAR "...characterized by a good level of fruit together with an excellent fragrance... This is a very fruity oil with a light taste of apple, some green, between leaf and grass, bitter and peppery. In the mouth it is a somewhat light oil which, together with its mid-level astringency and its characteristic flavor of green almonds, wood, fig and mint, clearly define its sensorial profile." Planting: 20,000 ha/49,420 acres Andalusia.

MANZANILLA DE SEVILLA "Dark green, with an intense flavor of olives, very fruity, with peppery and bitter notes, and a flavor of green almonds." (Note: this variety is largely used for making table olives, but some monovarietal oils are now reaching the market.) Planting: 95,000 ha/234,745 acres Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile La Mancha.

MORISCA "...a fluid, agreeable, fresh harmonious oil. Its intense fruit may vary from green grass to apple depending on the moment of harvest or the fruit's ripeness, but it reflects an unusual balance." Middle to high stability. Planting: 74,000 ha/158,144 acres Extremadura.

PICOLIMON "...Characterized by its fluidity and fruitiness with tastes of olive, green apple and banana, with optimum ripeness, and almost imperceptible bitterness or peppiness." Planting: 4,000 ha/9,884 acres Andalusia.

SEVILLENCA (also known as SERRANA DE ESPADAN) "...characterized by the taste of the olive fruit... This is a very fruity oil with a light taste of green apple, a little bitter and somewhat peppery, also somewhat astringent but with a sweet and gentle flavor. It has a clear taste of ripe almonds, something of wood and banana, which gives it a very defined personality." Low to middle stability. Planting: 26,000 ha/64,246 acres Catalonia, Valencia region.

SOURCES: Tasting notes *Aceites de Oliva Virgenes Extra – Calidad y Diversidad*, ed. Marino Uceda Ojeda, Estacion de Olivicultura y Elaiotecnía Venta del Llano, Jaen; with the exception of Manzanilla Cacereña, (Sierra de Gata-Hurdes DO); Manzanilla de Sevilla y Picolimón (Brigida Jiménez, Centro de Investigación y Formación Agraria, Cabra, Cordoba); Morisca (Sociedad Cooperativa Virgen de la Estrella, Santos de Maimona.

Planting extension and siting: *Elaiografía Hispanica*, 2003 (forthcoming), ed. Luis Rallo and Diego Barranco, Universidad de Cordoba.

Further notes on some of these varieties appear in *Spain Gourmetour* no. 39, pp 52-59; no. 42, pp 62-70 and no. 54, pp. 24-45.





Nestled in

WINE

Leaves

A visit to the best-known wine region in Spain is always worth the trip, but the pleasure is intensified when, after succumbing to the Dionysian temptation of a wine tasting session in your hotel's cellar, you can fall straight into the arms of Morpheus. We stayed at the hotel La Antigua Bodega de Don Cosme Palacio, of Bodegas Palacio in Laguardia, and at the wine cellar and hotel Viña Villabuena, in Villabuena de Álava, and were inspired by the beauty of the scenery and spoiled by the fine Rioja cuisine. Our journey was further enriched by the history, the wine culture and the historical artistic monuments of the Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa.



Rioja



TEXT
BETTINA KRÜCKEN

TRANSLATION
SYNONYME

The landscape of the Rioja wine region in northern Spain is primarily marked by the course of the Ebro, the mighty river of Spain. Once there, it becomes quite obvious why the designation of origin was subdivided into three subareas; The Rioja Alavesa, which actually belongs to the Basque administrative region, lies along the northern bank of the Ebro at the foot of the Cantabrian coastal range and is characterized by barren clay-lime soil, ideal for vine-growing.

Dispersed throughout the landscape are hills crowned with fortresses, churches and villages, and meandering roadways befit the terrain. In the Rioja Alta, south of the Ebro, the scenery is quite different. The landscape is broad and open, bordered on the south only by the Sierra de la Demanda mountain range, whose foothills cut the landscape into valleys. The soil here has a rich red-brown color, clearly indicating a clay soil with considerable iron content, and fewer vineyards are to be found along the slopes. The Rioja Baja, further downstream, is also characterized by extensive plains of fertile alluvial soil. The best perspective over all three subregions is without doubt from atop the church tower of San Juan Bautista in Laguardia, which can be climbed, however, only with the permission of the resident priests.

La Antigua Bodega de Don Cosme Palacio

Our first stop is outside the medieval city walls of Laguardia, on the road towards Elciego: the "Old Winery of Don Cosme Palacio," founded in 1894. The building was erected in the style typical of the region, with stone blocks and rough-hewn stones. In 1990, after many additions, renovations and a period of 20 years during which it layed dormant, it was transformed into a hotel, fortunately returned to its original architectural style. Wine production is now carried out in the adjacent modern building so that the Old Winery could be dedicated entirely to the hotel. The majority of the edifice, such as the old wine depots for example, has been left practically unaltered, and merely painted on the outside—Basque painter Juan José Novella worked with motifs from mythology and allegories on the theme of wine—or partially dedicated to other purposes: one of the old cement depots has been renovated and is now used as a restroom for the El Lagar de Baco wine bar. In the cellar, you also find the historical bottle stockroom with the oldest vintages of the winery, the former barrel stockroom with hundreds of old barriques and, in a separate niche, the bottle stockroom for the *Club de amigos de Bodegas Palacio*, where bottles are kept for special clients who claim one of the 350 numbered barrels in the modern Bodega as their own, and receive the Cosme Palacio y Hermanos wine delivered directly once bottled. Where a couple of centuries ago the grapes were brought in, you

will now find a delightfully bright and friendly room with comfortable sofas and chairs, where a guest can relax with a glass of wine from one of the many Spanish wine regions. Because the hotel was built on a slope, from the main entrance it looks as if the building has only two stories, although it really has three. There is no sign of the above-mentioned cellar from the front; you will find the hotel reception here on the ground level, as well as the first ten rooms, which are all named after the best-known national and international grape varieties. There is a Riesling room, a Sangiovese and a Zinfandel room and, of course, a Tempranillo room, which is the largest, in keeping with the importance of this grape in Rioja DOPCa. All the rooms are furnished differently, with the utmost taste and attention to detail: the beautifully printed fabrics are welcoming, and the contrast between the weathered stone walls on the window façade and the tapestried side walls make for an interesting eye-catcher.

R E S T A U R A N T E C H A U R R E N

At the foot of the snow-capped Sierra de la Demanda, in the little village and skiing center Ezcaray, you will find one of the best restaurants in the Rioja: the Hotel and Restaurant Echaurren, which Francis Paniego (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 54) has built into a local empire over the last few years. His mother, Marisa, from whom Francis learned both the joy of cooking as well as the basics of the finer culinary arts, originally ran the restaurant, widely known for its outstanding traditional cooking. But Francis went yet a step further last December: right next door to the established Echaurren he opened the new, elegant El Portal and furnished it with the cream of the crop—the best linen tablecloth, precious white china, cutlery, glasses and, not least, the menu fashioned to the most modern designer standards, all of which enhance the enjoyment of the culinary creations served. The large, centrally-placed kitchen is, as it has always been, the neural center of both restaurants—it is from here that Francis directs his regiment.

We decided on the degustation menu to get an overview of the new cooking at El Portal. Deploy your napkin, ready taste buds, and charge!

We begin with four aperitifs: *hortaliza tierna con polvo de panceta* (tender vegetables sprinkled with bacon powder); *Empanadilla de lechecillas* (empanadilla with lamb's cheek filling), *Nuestra croqueta* (a house-specialty croquette) and *La patita de cordero en cuchara* ("lamb's feet" on a spoon).

A between-course palate cleanser: *Suero de tomate con manzana verde* (clear tomato extract with green apple).

We go on with small portions: *Pequeño búcaro de hongos* (small mushroom barquette); *Carpaccio de patata y trufa* (potato and truffle carpaccio); *Ravioli de gambas y tomate con ajo blanco* (shrimp and tomato ravioli with ajo blanco—a very light garlic-almond cream); *Cigala salteada sobre virutas y gele de jamón con crema de alcachofas y almendras* (sautéed emperor shrimp in ham jelly with almond curls and artichoke sauce); *Pure de patata con hongos, foie gras y un cordón de jugo de carne* (potato puree with cep mushrooms, foie gras and a streak of gravy); *Merluza confitada a 45 ° sobre pimientos asados y sopa de arroz* (hake glazed at 45°C on roasted paprika and rice soup); *Lasagna de rabo y champiñón silvestre con manzana asada* (oxtail lasagna with wild mushrooms and roasted apple).

Now we approach the sweet end: *Granizado de melocotón con zurracapote y palito de canela* (peach sorbet with zurracapote liqueur and cinnamon rolls). And to finish, a *Tosta templada con queso de Cameros, manzana reineta y helado de miel* (warm cameros cheese mini-toast canapé with reineta apple and honey ice cream).

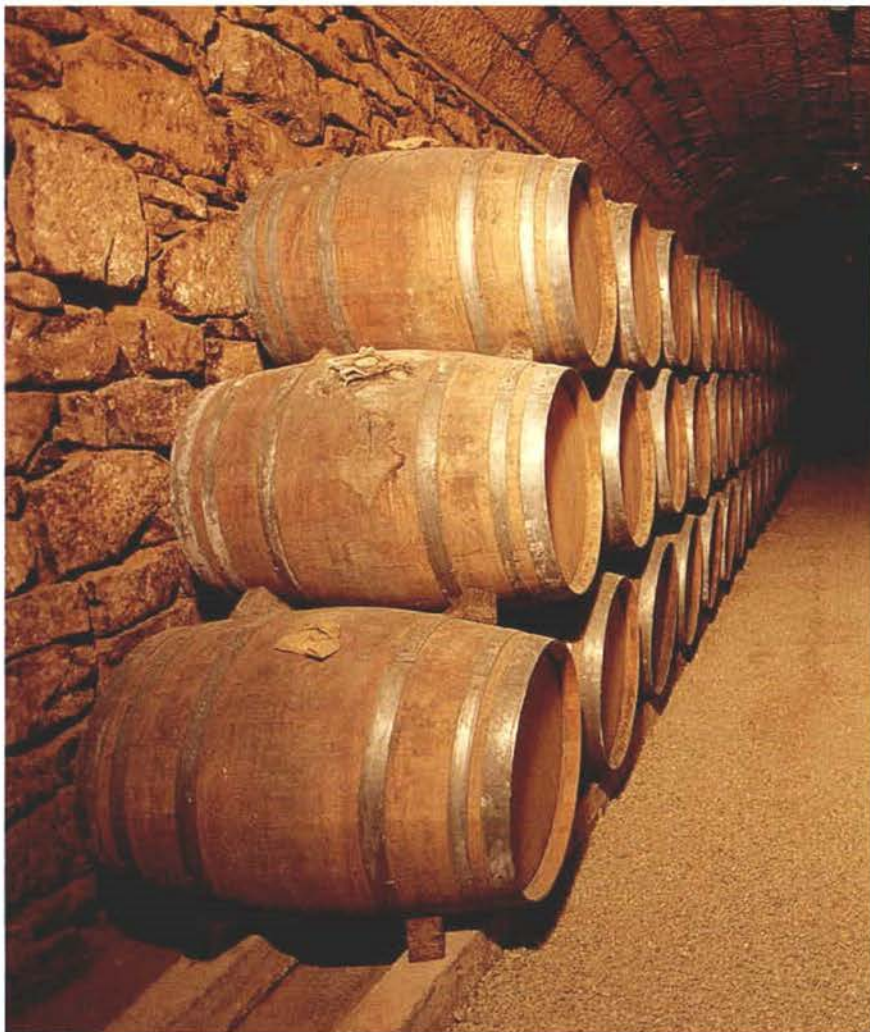
Are you ready to dine? You'd better reserve a table with Francis at once!



A specially extensive breakfast buffet is served on weekends in a magnificent, light-filled wintergarden directly connected to the restaurant's large banquet room. The restaurant also comes highly recommended—the menu changes with the season to guarantee the absolute freshness of the regional specialties. Its wine list includes all the house wines, from the white oak-aged Regio, which gives the clear libation Regio its unique aroma, to the wonderful flowery-fruity young red, Milflores, the Gloriosos Crianza, Reserva or Gran Reserva (Glossary, page 135), the flagship of the Bodega, or the Reserva Especial, a red from selected grapes of the winery's oldest vines and several other wines produced in the adjacent modern *bodega*. The new winery is open to all interested visitors (box, page 43), while the old winery is accessible only to the hotel guests.

Bodega Viña Villabuena

The second hotel on our journey belongs to the Viña Villabuena winery, in Villabuena de Álava, about a 20-minute trip from Laguardia. The winery and hotel are part of the Zaldiaran empire, led by gastronome and football fan Gonzalo Antón (he is also president of the Football Club Alavés), who also manages two highly respected restaurants in Miranda de Ebro and Vitoria. Wine production is in this case a relatively recent enterprise, but no less discriminating—quite on the contrary. The bodega has existed since 1987, while the hotel and restaurant first started business in 1992.



Lalo Antón, the owner's son, guided us with great knowledge and charm despite his young age through the modern winery facilities and showed us the various parts of the bodega: the area in which the Crianzas and Reservas mature in 10,000 American and French barrels, and the so-called "upper" area in which the wines Viña Izadi Selección and Viña Izadi Expresión are stocked in oak barrels from several French provenances.

The latter is the result of the cooperation of Mariano García (formerly oenologist for Vega Sicilia and currently in charge of Bodegas Mauro) and, together with the Selección, shows the adaptation to the new trends in Rioja winemaking. The grapes for the Expresión come from selected old vines; the Selección is a coupage of grapes from various vineyards. Although the winery does not, as of yet, have its own vineyards, they hold two-year contracts with several growers, giving them control over a 178 ha/440 acres harvest. The bodega's restaurant is the younger sibling of the Zaldiaran group mentioned above, where the National Congress of Creative Cuisine has been held for 14 years and which, in the year 2000, received a prize awarded by the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy. The menu of classic Rioja specialties is suitable for any group, small or large.

Besides the clubrooms with a beautiful (and tuned) grand piano and a sitting room, the winery also runs a small hotel with eleven double rooms, accessible from the restaurant across a large terrace. A guest can relax here in spacious rooms furnished in soft, bright colors and decorated with antique pictures with classical motifs. Some of the rooms



have a small balcony providing a view of the bodega and the hill-strewn landscape.

Laguardia

La Rioja is a region that has been occupied since prehistoric times, as proven by excavations in the village of La Hoya and a total of 85 Neolithic graves in the vicinity of Laguardia. About 3,400 years ago, during the late Iron Age and early Bronze Age, humans already lived here in somewhat comfortable houses protecting them from the cold northwest wind in winter. The geographic situation and its natural resources appeared to be quite favorable here, since the settlement endured over many centuries and, after total destruction from hostile attack and fire, would be rebuilt again and updated. About 4 ha/10 acres of land were surrounded by a defensive wall within which there was pastureland as well as housing. The excavation site and a small museum with a reconstructed ancestral house and a complete model of the village illustrate how humans lived and conducted trade here during the Bronze Age.

The location continued to benefit from favorable conditions throughout the centuries, allowing medieval Laguardia to become a flourishing little town, the most important of the Rioja Alavesa. The city, surrounded by an almost completely preserved wall, was founded in the 13th Century by Sancho VII the Strong and sits atop one of the many hills in the Rioja Alavesa. It offers so many sights worth seeing that once you have passed through one of the five gates (there were originally only four), you will need a complete day, if not two, to be able to fully enjoy all there is to explore.

At the *Plaza Mayor* (the main square and marketplace) with the new (19th Century) and old (16th Century) town hall, you will find a time-worn table on which are the length and weight standards used for settling disputes between merchants of yore. The San Juan Bautista church offers a magnificent organ from the 17th Century. Also of interest is the house where the "Fable Teller" (*El Fabulista*) Félix María Sánchez Samaniego (1745–1801) was born and where the tourist bureau can now be found, as well as the charming El Collado walkway, which winds around the outside of the wall, but an absolute must-see is the Santa María de los Reyes church (12th–15th Century). Here you will find the crown jewel of Laguardia: the polychrome portal from the 14th century. Since a porch was built in the 16th Century to protect the portal from harmful environmental effects (which at the time simply meant bad weather), the second polychroming from the 17th Century remains to this day in exceptional condition and the figures continue to



WEBSITES

PDOCa

www.riojawine.com

The official website for the Rioja Designation of Origin. It gives information on the Regulatory Council, the history of Rioja wines, the legislation governing them, growing areas, grape varieties, wine types and bodegas. Also an on-line service with the latest news and statistics, and links with the Rioja Documentation Centre. (English, French, German, Spanish)

Companies

www.habarcelo.es

The website of Hijos de Antonio Barceló, the owners of Bodegas Palacio, giving information on their wineries, wines and the Cosme Palacio hotel (facilities, nearby tourism routes, prices and bookings). (English, Spanish)

www.izadi.com

The Bodegas Viña Villabuena's website with information on the winery and its wines as well as the location, facilities and philosophy of the Villabuena Hotel. (English, Spanish)

www.toprural.com/ficha/index.cfm/idp/01/ids/792.htm

Toprural website with practical information on the Señorío de las Viñas hotel and on possible activities in the surrounding area, with a selection of opinions from former guests. (English, French, German, Spanish)

Tourism

www.alavaturismo.com

The Álava council here offers a map showing each of the districts in the province of Álava and giving tourism information in the following categories: art, wineries, sports, nature tourism, golf, historic routes and parks. Interesting links. (Basque, English, Spanish)

www.laguardia-alava.com

The Laguardia town council web site, with information on the town—its history, artistic and cultural heritage—and tourism routes, the world of wine and useful services for tourists. (Basque, English, French, German, Spanish)

www.larioja.org/turismo

The website of the official Rioja Tourism Council. General information on the Autonomous Region of La Rioja, and tourism information under the headings of tourism routes, cultural heritage, nature, wine and gastronomy, rural tourism, active tourism and festivals. The site also offers access to information on hotels and restaurants.

www.riojainternet.com/briones/indice.htm

Website on the town of Briones with information on its history, its monuments and its Medieval Festival. (Spanish)

www.ezcaray.org

The Ezcaray town council website explaining how to get there and giving information on its history, monuments and festivals. The tourism section includes a guide to accommodation and restaurants, skiing facilities and many routes. (Spanish)

www.haro.org

The Haro town council website with information on the local geography, history, art, festivals and gastronomy as well as a restaurant and hotel guide. (English, Spanish)

www.logroo.org/pub/turismo/espanol/home.htm

The Logroño town council website with information on the town's history, and suggested historic and shopping routes, leisure activities and entertainments and addresses of interest. (English, French, German, Spanish)

www.valvanera.com/sanmillan.htm

The Yuso Monastery website with information on the monastery and on the Augustine order that runs it. Links with the monastery library and the San Millán de la Cogolla Foundation. (Spanish)

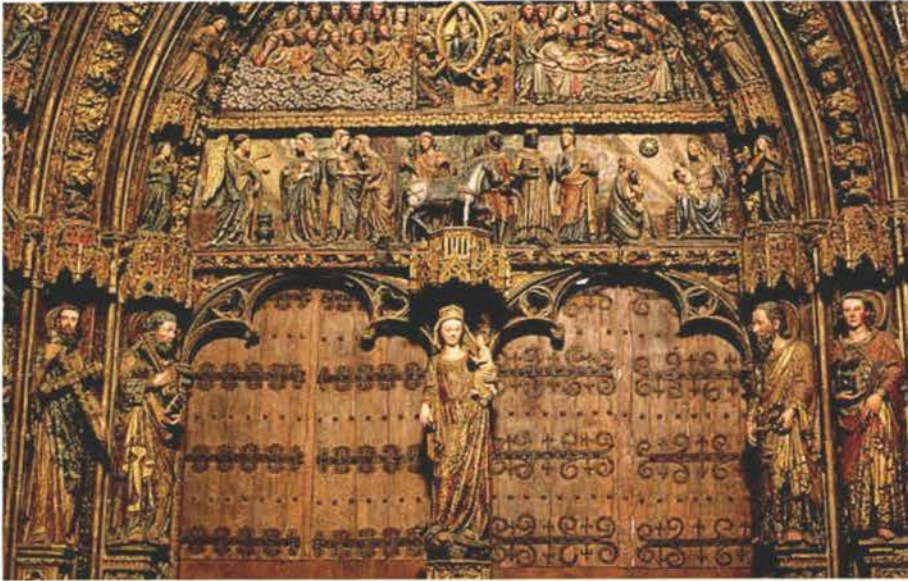
www.lacalzada.com/portal/index.htm

Website for the town council of Santo Domingo de la Calzada, with information on the town's history, heritage, leisure activities and gastronomy. It includes a guide to local hotels, restaurants and rural accommodation. (Spanish)

www.sanvicentedelasonsierra.org

Information on the location, history, art, gastronomy, festivals and surroundings of San Vicente de la Sonsierra, with several suggestions for tourism routes in the area and an interesting album of photos. (Spanish)



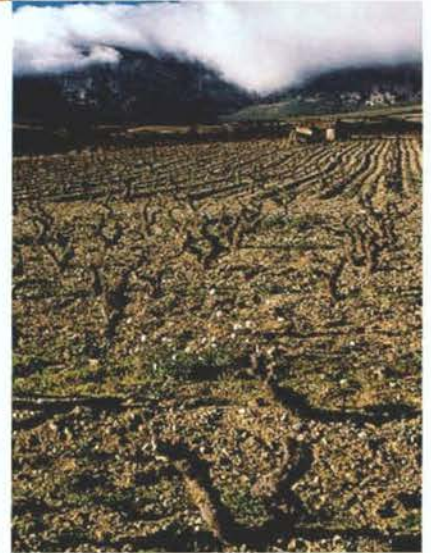


convey their powerful message. In the center is the Virgin with the Child, to whom the church is also dedicated. In the tympanum we see scenes from Mary's life, death and Assumption, portrayed in the so-called *Mandorla*, and her Coronation in heaven. On the sides are the Twelve Apostles, some of whom are depicted with unique attributes: for example, Bartholomew is the only one wearing shoes, which protect him from the devil chained to his feet, and Philip is portrayed with fish and bread to recall the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The intrados contain illustrations of plants, representing the crops cultivated in the region, but no vines appear, as is usually the case in many altarpieces and portals. There is a solution to this enigma that provides evidence that the vine was not always cultivated in the Rioja in as large a quantity as today; the significance of depicting wine grapes on the pillars of an altarpiece or in a portal changed along the course of the centuries. In the Gothic style, in which the portal of Santa María de los Reyes was sculpted, the portrayal of wine grapes indicated the local cultivation of wine, while it was only in the Baroque period that it became common for grapes to symbolize the Eucharist.

Wine Culture

Today, however, the grape appears to have asserted itself in the local agriculture; at least it is said in Laguardia that every house here has its own cellar. The entire city within the walls is totally underburrowed with more than 300 caverns, due to the fact that about a 1,000 years ago there were constant border disputes here in the north between the kingdoms of Navarre and Castile, and the population sought protection by excavating ventilated caverns and connecting tunnels beneath their houses where they could hide.

These caverns were in part later reinforced with masonry but in some places you will find only moist earth above your head. It is for this reason that automobile traffic is forbidden within the walls of Laguardia—cars stay outside. One of these caverns is open to visitors and houses a small winery, called *El Fabulista* due to its location, in part under the house of Samaniego. The current owner, Eusebio Santamaría, has set up a small wine museum in the adjacent house, where he also produces and elaborates his own wine using traditional methods. A visit to the underground barrel storeroom can also include a tasting of his wines.



A wine museum of a very different sort is to be found beyond the walls: Villa Lucía is a place where visitors must rely on all five of their senses. At first, you find yourself in a darkened room, shortly to be transported directly into the Rioja countryside: the wind bears the aromas of red fruits, the sun warms the room, and you experience the seasons in the vineyard through projection screens and display cases. You proceed to become acquainted with the various varieties of grapes, which hang from old vines and are illuminated when the corresponding button is pressed. The whole museum is designed to be



San Vicente de la Sonsierra

fairly didactic and diverse; for example, by stepping into a giant cut-out wooden barrel you can smell, hear and see the stages of alcohol fermentation, or you can put yourself to the test and try to guess which aroma is wafting from each of twenty different Plexiglas containers. The correct answer out of three possibilities is marked by an indicator light. You can enjoy the same competitive spirit with your sense of taste. Moving on, you come to a reconstruction of an old laboratory, where it smells strongly of strange and moldy aromas. In addition to these entertaining and informative activities, Villa Lucía has a library dedicated to wine, tasting rooms where courses are offered, and a botanical garden with herbs and various grape varieties where you can simply relax over a glass of wine.

Landscape and Gastronomy

Besides wine, Rioja also offers many other cultural treasures that are worth visiting to complete the impression of this diverse and historical region. We recommend a tour starting at Laguardia and heading in the direction of Haro, which takes us along the A-124 through Párganos, Samaniego, Ábalos, San Vicente de la Sonsierra—from here we also make a small side trip to Briones—past Labastida toward Haro, then continuing southward towards Santo Domingo de la Calzada—from here yet another side trip, this time to Ezcaray to eat (box, page 43)—and then onto the N-120 towards Nájera—with side trips to the cloisters at Yuso and Suso—and Cenicero, where we finally head back north through Elciego to Laguardia.

Barely having started on the main road to Haro, we come across the impressively beautiful Bodega Ysios, which was designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, and completed in 2001. The vista with the Sierra de Cantabria mountain range as a backdrop is breathtaking. But we press on—already in the first village, in Párganos, there is good reason to stop, at least if you happen to drop by at lunch or dinner time: the new restaurant of Héctor Orive, a student of Juan Mari Arzak, offers outstanding modern and creative food combined with the best wines of the region. Reinvigorated, we carry on and enjoy the magnificent view from this lofty road, which lays the Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Alta at your feet.

We make a stop in Samaniego to see the Palacio de Samaniego, an 18th

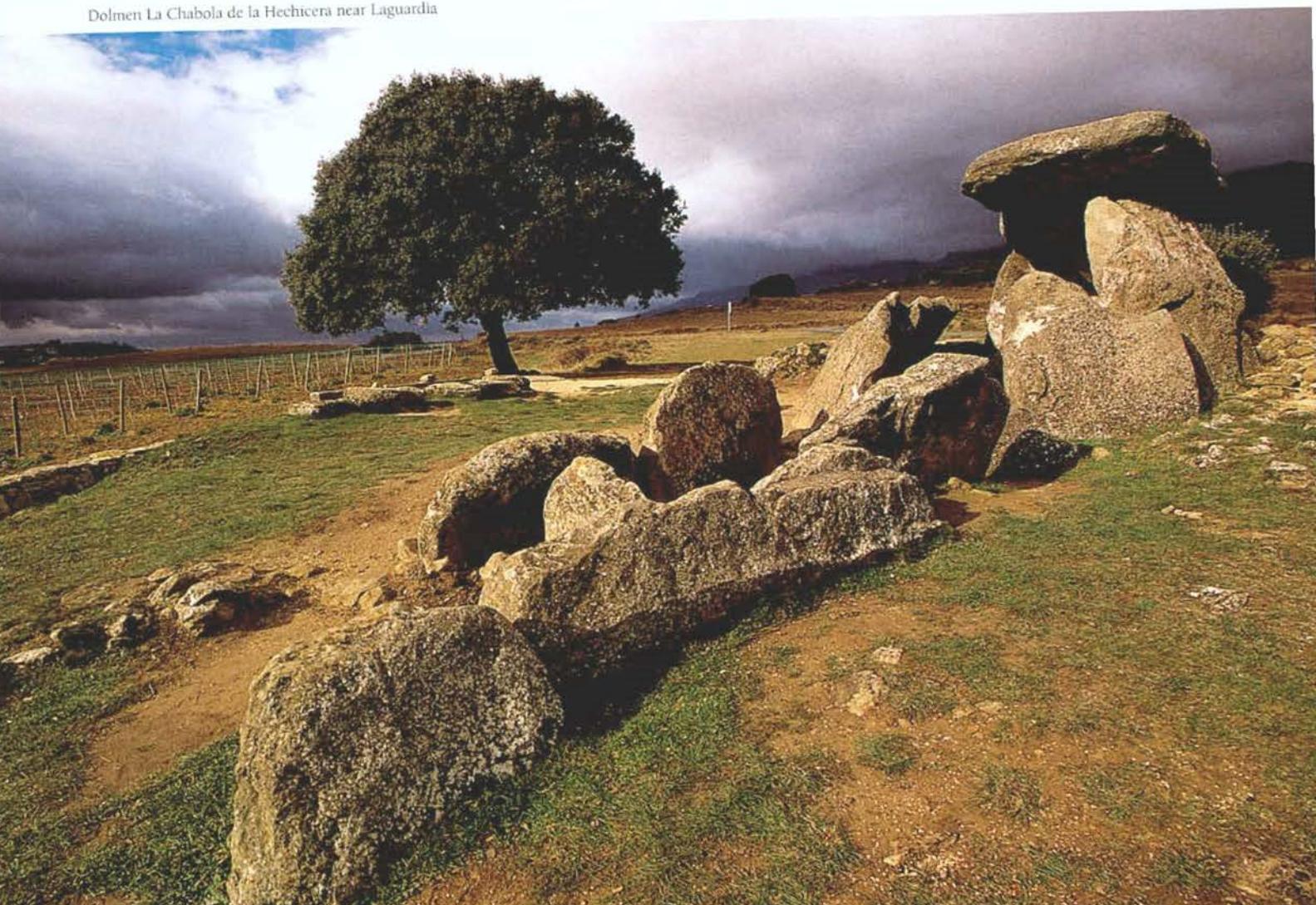
SEÑORÍO DE LAS VIÑAS

During our trip we also visited a third winery, which runs a small rustic hotel. Surrounded by its own vineyard, it lies in the small village of Laserna, on the way between Laguardia and Logroño, right at the village entrance. Upon our late arrival we received a friendly greeting from their pet hound, Toni, and the atmosphere with owners Concha López de Aguilera, Javier Viteri and their children Juan Carlos, Rebecca and Erika is very casual. In a large dining and entertainment room, we had a light dinner accompanied by the young red house wine. The carbonic maceration typical of the Rioja Alavesa pro-

duced this wine, predominantly fresh and fruity with a clear acidic backbone. The five simple rooms are painted in bright colors and furnished with matching fabrics. Each has its own bath or shower as well as an incomparable view over the vineyard. In summer, you will find an extra attraction here, as the house has a reasonably large swimming pool in the garden. The next morning, we took a tour of the winery facilities with its stainless-steel tanks and 500 barrels of French and American oak. The Viteri family have been winemakers for many generations now, with 35 ha/87 acres of their own vineyards stocked with Tempranillo, Graciano,

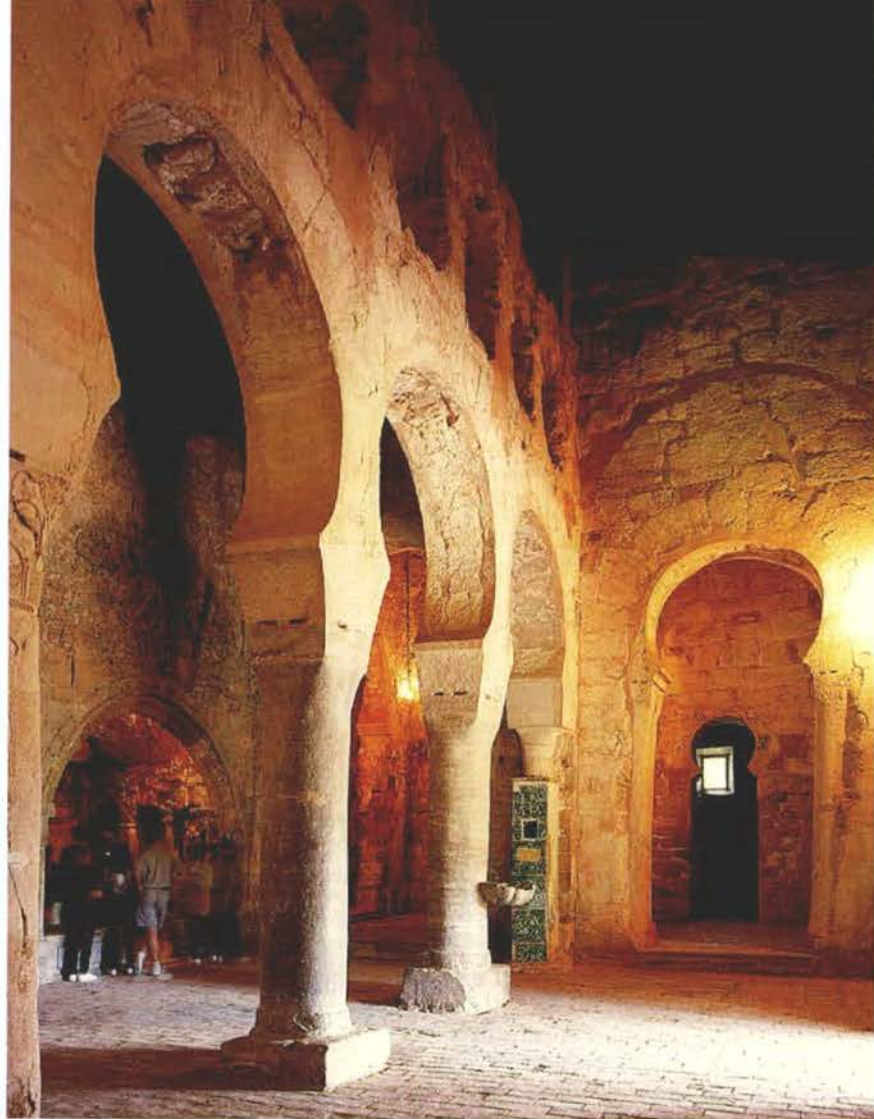
Mazuelo and Viura varieties. In 1990, Javier decided to finally found their own bodega with modern technology, to which they added a hotel service five years later, also in the same house. Under the direction of Juan Carlos, they now offer traditional reds from mixtures of Tempranillo and Mazuelo: the young Señorío de las Viñas, the like-named Crianza aged 16 months in barrels, as well as the Reservas Monte La Mesa with 85% Tempranillo and 15% Mazuelo, and the Sellado from 100% Tempranillo. Whites and rosés are also produced in smaller quantities from purchased grapes.

Dolmen La Chabola de la Hechicera near Laguardia



Century manor house with over 200 years of experiences lived within its walls. For a while it belonged to the Church and housed the local priest; much later it became a theater and was even used as a cinema until it finally is owned by the province of Álava and was totally restored. For the last five years, however, it has been under the care of Ana Amillano and Jon Ugalde, a young couple who have made it their task to manage a fine restaurant and splendid hotel with great dedication and exceptional taste. Jon comes from the Basque province of Guipúzcoa and is a master of modern Basque cooking, which he interprets with creativity and finesse. Ana has furnished the rooms individually, one as charming as the next—ideal for spending a romantic weekend in a manorial setting. Sanañiego itself is a friendly little village where you will find many beautiful 18th Century houses and the Asunción Church, which houses a simple, lovely Madonna.

Our next stop is San Vicente de la Sonsierra, which can be seen from afar while on the highway, since it was found to be an ideal border lookout, atop one of the many hills. The view from the old castle on the highest spot of San Vicente clarifies doubts as to why the masters of Navarre and Castilla (and later the Rioja) were constantly battling here: at the foot of the castle, against a vertical rock drop-off, the Ebro flows, majestic, perpetually forming the boundary between the two kingdoms. Nowadays, the (border) traffic flows without great difficulty over a medieval and a modern bridge connecting San Vicente with Briones, which is likewise entrenched atop an apposing hill. Both villages warrant a



Monastery of Suso

stroll through their old centers and a visit to their main churches, where you can sense their former status as fortresses. In San Vicente, we stopped off at the Casa Toni restaurant. In a large and somewhat noisy dining room, the proprietors have not exactly distinguished themselves through exquisite taste in decoration, and the service leaves room for improvement in speed and hospitality, but the food, and the desserts in particular, were really good. The menu offers creativity combined with freshness and quality. Some of the desserts had to be ordered along with the main course since they required considerable preparation, but it was well worth it. The small hazelnut cakes with cinnamon ice cream was worth a small sin. In Haro, the capital of the wine region, you will find a variety of traditional and modern bodegas to visit, especially in the district around the

old railway station. We, however, are searching for other cultural landmarks. In Casalarreina and Santo Domingo de la Calzada, we come across two of the most important stations on the Way of St. James (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 53). These are two towns where an overnight stay, in Santo Domingo's Parador-Hotel for example, is unquestionably justified in order to study more closely the local churches, *plazas*, history and legends. We continue our journey through the Rioja Alta following the Way of St. James, which takes us by Nájera. Here you can visit the magnificent Santa María La Real cloister, but you can also stop off at the cloisters of Yuso and Suso in San Millán de la Cogolla or the cloister of Cañas, stylistically the purest Cistercian cloister in the Rioja. The Romans introduced vine growing to the Rioja, but further propagation and improvement in growing methods only



Top and bottom: Hotel La Antigua
Bodega de Don Cosme Palacio

began with the medieval cloisters. In Cenicero, another center with numerous bodegas, we turn north in order to pass by the site of another designer-bodega in Elciego, half-way back to Laguardia: here you will find the hyper-modern winery of Marqués de Riscal designed by Frank Gehry, to which we will certainly pay a visit on our next visit to Rioja.

Bettina Krücken is coordinator for Spain Gourmetour and is responsible for the magazine's wine topics.

Photo Credits on page 136

USEFUL DATA

Bodegas with Hotel:

Bodegas Palacio

Crta. de Elciego, s/n
01300 Laguardia (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 621 195
Fax: (34) 945 600 210
antiguabodega@cosmepalacio.com
The Hotel is closed from December 24th - January 12th
Bodega Visiting Times: Tuesday-Sunday, at 12:30 and 13:30
The Hotel offers wine-tasting courses on the weekend

Bodegas Viña Villabuena

Herrería Travesía 2, nº 5
01307 Villabuena de Álava (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 609 086
Fax: (34) 945 609 261
izadi@izadi.com
www.izadi.com

The Hotel is closed from January 1st - 15th and August 1st - 15th
Bodega Visiting Hours: by appointment

Bodegas Señorío de las Viñas

C./Mayor, s/n
01308 Laserna (Álava)
Tel/Fax: (34) 945 621 110
Country guesthouse with swimming pool

Recommended Restaurants:

In Laguardia:

Marixa

Sancho Abarca, 8
01300 Laguardia (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 600 165
Fax: (34) 945 600 202
HOTELMARIXA@terra.es

Posada Mayor de Migueloa

Mayor de Migueloa, 20
01300 Laguardia
Tel: (34) 945 621 175
Fax: (34) 945 621 022

In Párganos:

Héctor Orive

Gasteiz, 8
01307 Párganos (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 600 715

In Samaniego:

Palacio de Samaniego

C./ Constitución, 12
01307 Samaniego (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 609 151
Fax: (34) 945 609 157
Recepcion@palaciosamaniego.com
The restaurant is only open on weekends

In San Vicente de la Sonsierra:

Casa Toni

Zumalacárregui, 27
26338 San Vicente de la Sonsierra
(La Rioja)
Tel: (34) 941 334 001

In Ezcaray:

Echaurren

Héroes del Alcázar, 2
26280 Ezcaray (La Rioja)
Tel: (34) 941 354 047
Fax: (34) 941 427 133
info@echaurren.com
www.echaurren.com

Wine Museums:

Bodega El Fabulista

Plaza San Juan
01300 Laguardia (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 621 192
Fax: (34) 945 600 110
BFABULISTA@theznet.com
Tours: at 11:30, 13:00, 17:30 and 19:00

Villa Lucía

Crta. de Logroño, s/n
01300 Laguardia (Álava)
Tel: (34) 945 600 032
Fax: (34) 945 600 108
museo@villa-lucia.com
www.villa-lucia.com



Looking ahead

Set between Catalonia and Murcia, two dynamic regions that pioneered Spain's 'new wines', lies the eastern strip that completes Spain's Mediterranean wine map. Competitiveness is one of this area's strongest weapons, but it also claims some of the best wines in Spain and new companies are opening up there and are rapidly finding a place for themselves along the cutting edge. The wines currently coming out of the Valencian region are emblematic of a new phase in the renovation process currently transforming Spanish wine. High production regions, such as Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha and the Valencian region that form a central belt, are pushing modernization of their wines a little bit further and, arguably, constitute one of Europe's most competitive wine producing areas. Both for their tradition and their commercial structure, Valencia's wineries occupy a privileged position.



Text
Andrés Proensa

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Hawys Pritchard

Photos
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The Wines of the

VALENCIAN

Region

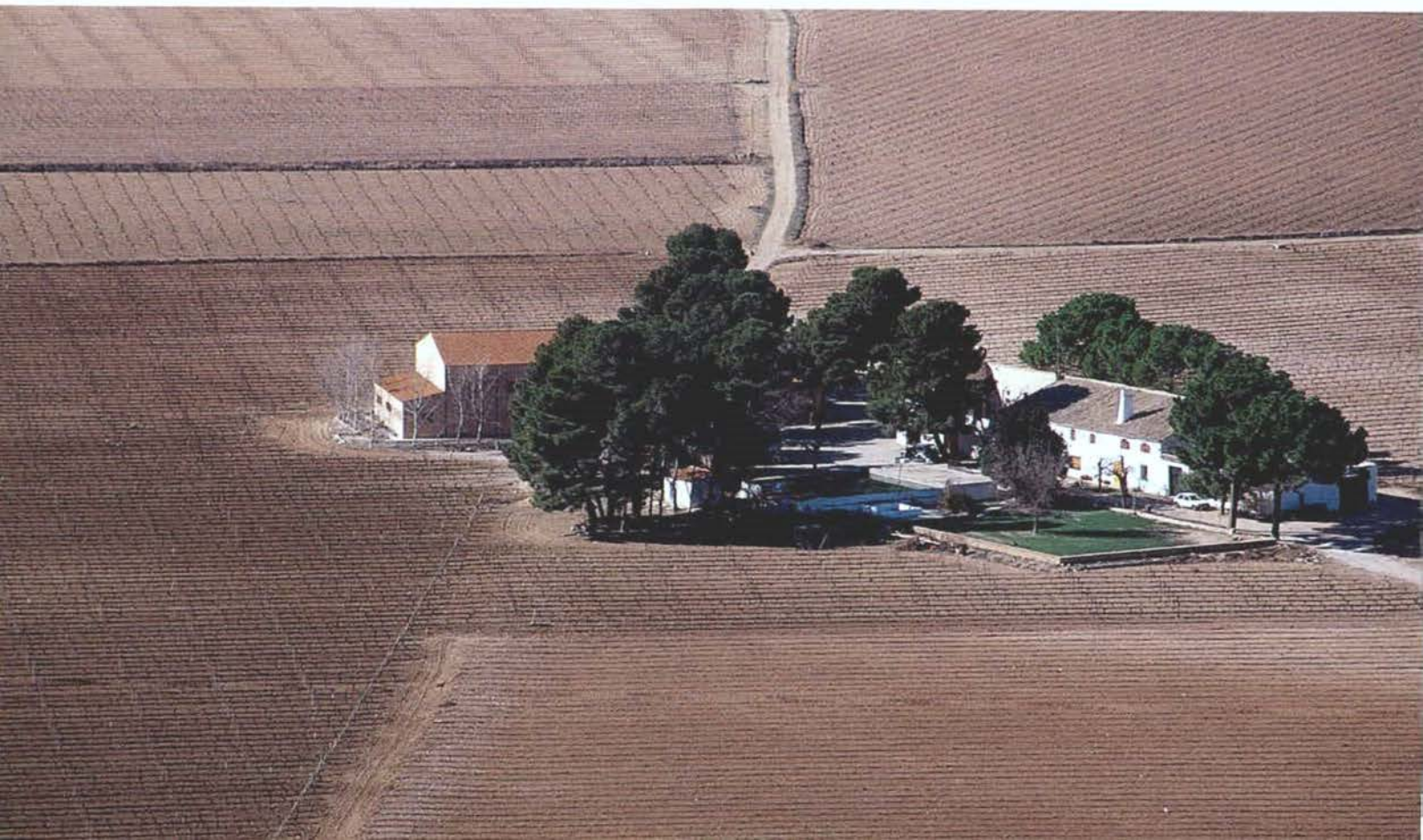




Some of the big, internationally known names of Spanish wine are to be found in the Valencian region. These highly export-orientated companies originally had their headquarters in El Grao de Valencia (the seaport area of Valencia city, the regional capital), one of Europe's most important wine-trading ports. Such companies as Gandia Pla, Augusto Egli, Schenk and its subsidiary Murviedo, Cherubino Valsangiacomo, and others were originally established there and went on to play a role fundamental to Spanish wine exports throughout the 20th century. They are currently taking a proactive approach to the challenge posed by the commercial clout of New World wines.



Valencia's most traditional wineries were pioneers when it came to renewing their plant and reorienting their output. Not many firms enjoyed the benefits of such a close-up view of the international wine market as the historic Grao de Valencia companies, and they were consequently better equipped than most to judge which ways the world wine trade would turn from the 1980s on. Veterans of the bulk wine trade, they opted to highlight their bottled wines, lines of which they had been producing for years and which were much better known abroad than in the Spanish—even the Valencian—marketplace.



A Move Inland

Winery modernization coincided with the need to leave the old dockland premises. One by one, the big El Grao companies abandoned their old locations. Rather than heading for one of the industrial estates around Valencia city, they chose instead to move closer to the producing areas, particularly Utiel-Requena, a predominantly red wine producing region.

What came into being as a result was some of Spain's most modern, best-equipped bodegas, already on a par with the most advanced in the country in the 1980s and early 1990s. They were developing more modern wines, too, though still steering a

predominantly conventional course clearly designed with a view to competing in the tussle for the moderately priced segment of the market. In consequence, the wines of the Valencian region acquired a reputation as one of the best value for money deals in Europe. However, the corollary was that they found their natural outlet in the hypermarkets and big stores of much of Central Europe and Britain, achieving only a small presence in the hospitality industry and specialist wine shops.

Though they were also getting closer to the vineyards, at least physically, the old order of things prevailed at first and the big firms opted not to acquire their own but to continue

buying grapes from local growers, some of whom owned sizeable vineyards, or wine from the cooperatives in the age-old way.

Return of the Natives

Despite having moved closer to the vineyards, the leading bodegas of Utiel-Requena, Valencia, and to some degree, Alicante, initially cold-shouldered them. Indeed, their attitude in this regard could best be described as passive, for they did little to further experimentation with native grape varieties (Monastrell in the south, Bobal in Valencia province, white varieties Merseguera and



WEB SITES

General information

www.mapya.es/aliment/pags/vinos/vinodeno.asp

Website of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. When a PDO wine is selected, the site offers a map of the Designation of Origin, the appropriate legislation, types of grape, types of wine, ageing process and addresses. (Spanish).

PDO

www.encis.net/vinovalencia

The official website of the Valencia Protected Designation of Origin, giving information about the Regulatory Council, the wineries registered, the growing areas, grape varieties, vinification processes and sales and harvest statistics. (English, French, Spanish).

www.reservaycata.com/espanol/areas_produccion/arp3.htm

www.reservaycata.com/ingles/producing_areas/par3.htm

On this site, the Reserva y Cata wine retailers offer a brief article on wines from the Alicante Designation of Origin, covering their history, growing area, climate, types of grape and vinification process. (English, Spanish)

www.crd0-utiellrequena.org

Website of the Regulatory Council for the Utiel-Requena Designation of Origin with data on local growing and climate conditions, the local wine-growing history and heritage, grape varieties, wine types and the wine museum. It also includes statistics on production and exports. (Spanish)

Companies

www.bocopa.com

The Bodegas Bocopa site with information on its history, vineyards and best-known wines. (English, French, Spanish)

elmundovino.elmundo.es/elmundovino/des_bodega.html?param=1479

El Mundo Vino here offers brief information on Celler del Roure. (Spanish)

www.bodegasbermell.com

This is the website of CVCRE (Compañía Vinícola del Campo de Requena) with information on the winery, vineyards and wines. (Spanish)

www.gandiawines.com

The Gandia Plá's website with information on the company history, its vineyards and its wines, classified under table wines, young wines, varietals, crianza wines and reserva wines. (Danish, English, French, Spanish)

elmundovino.elmundo.es/elmundovino/des_bodega.html?param=214

El Mundo Vino here offers brief information on Bodegas Gutiérrez de la Vega. (Spanish)

www.reservaycata.com/ingles/wineries/news_1231.htm

www.reservaycata.com/espanol/bodegas/bo30.htm

This site offers some background to the history and wines of Bodegas Mendoza. (English, Spanish)

www.enrique-mendoza.de

Website of Bodegas Mendoza (German)

elmundovino.elmundo.es/elmundovino/des_bodega.html?param=864

El Mundo Vino here offers brief data on Bodegas Palmera—its history, vineyards and wines. (Spanish)

elmundovino.elmundo.es/elmundovino/des_bodega.html?param=1311

El Mundo Vino website with brief data on Bodegas Los Pinos (Spanish)

www.salvadorpoveda.com

Website of Bodegas Salvador Poveda with the history of the winery and tasting notes on their best wines. (English, German, Spanish)



www.schenk-wine.com

The Schenk group website with information on each of their subsidiaries—vineyards, wineries, distribution channels. (English, French)

www.schenk-wine.com/en_brands.html

The Schenk group's website with tasting notes on some of their Murviedro wines—Murviedro cava, crianza noble and Las Lomas Tempranillo. (English, French)

www.torreoria.com

Bodegas Torre Oria's website. It includes information on the winery's 100 years of history and the Dominio del Derramador vineyards, as well as tasting notes on its wines and cavas. (English, Spanish)

elmundovino.elmundo.es/elmundovino/des_bodega.html?param=1539

El Mundo Vino website, with brief details on Virasa Vinícola. (Spanish)



Moscatel, and a few other less frequently found ones), which were looked on as a good source of color (Monastrell) or yield (Bobal), but not as possessing any outstanding virtues.

Having recognized the need to upgrade their wine, they turned to foreign varieties for the raw material. This resulted in the introduction of various types of Tempranillo and 'in' French grapes, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, but also Chardonnay and even Sauvignon Blanc, right up to the quite recent arrival of must-have variety Syrah. Research with local varieties was forgotten about in the meantime. This was symptomatic not only of the secondary role that the bodegas attributed to viticulture as compared with viniculture technique, but also of their historical links with international markets in which wines made from these French varieties from all over the world were jostling for position. This began to change in the late

1990s, when the more aware companies, those with a finger more firmly on the pulse of current events, began to look at what they had closer to home. Influences from the north (the avant-garde areas of Catalonia) and south (Jumilla's new golden age) were a contributory factor: both are areas which recognize the vital role played by the vineyard in wine quality and both had done a lot of successful work with native varieties, creating wines of considerable status and personality.

A few of the old El Grao bodegas started buying vineyards and creating modern plantations, some of them spectacular, as in the case of Bodegas Gandia on their Hoya de Cadenas estate, and other major projects launched recently by investors from outside traditional winegrowing circles. Firms with a long history in each of the areas, such as Torre Oria and Compañia Vinicola del Campo de Requena in Utiel-Requena, the classic Alicante bodegas (Primitivo

Quiles, Salvador Poveda, et al) and the most lively of the cooperatives, were doing the same.

New 'Auteur' Wineries

In this changing panorama, there was little in the way of new initiatives apart from the activities of the big bodegas. Exceptions occurred in Alicante, in the form of Bodegas Gutierrez de la Vega, a company with a new take on classic sweet Moscatels, and, especially, Bodegas E. Mendoza (see *Spain Gourmetour* No 57), source of the Valencian region's best wines for many years, though primarily French variety based. In addition to some magnificent wines, the main contribution that Pepe Mendoza, oenologist at this little family bodega in Alicante, can be said to have made is the adoption of a philosophy new to this area that involves close vineyard



control and vinification and maturation in tune with the characteristics of both areas and grapes.

Pepe Mendoza is open to new wine-world influences and could be said to represent the southward projection of the techniques and philosophies which gave impetus to the cutting-edge bodegas of Priorato and, in their wake, the most on-the-ball companies of all the regions of Catalonia and Spain's Mediterranean coast, including the Balearic Islands. Their effect is palpable in some of the most interesting initiatives to have emerged in the region over the last few years.

Oenologist Sara Perez Ovejero (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 55), a member of the family that owns Clos Martinet in PDO Priorato (Glossary page 135), has been instrumental in setting up two outstanding, brand new additions to Valencian wines: Bodega Mustiguillo, in the Utiel-Requena area (though its wines are non-PDO), and Celler del Roure, in the

south of PDO Valencia. These two family firms share the common traits of having young management and being vineyard aware, with particular attention being given to local varieties. The fact that neither has a family tradition of vine growing or wine-making is a trait they share with Pepe Mendoza, who comes from a family of shopkeepers with a supermarket near Benidorm.

Toni Sarrion, who heads Bodega Mustiguillo, is the son of a La Mancha public works contractor who bought the land on which this winery stands in 1970, maintaining part of the vineyard and selling the grapes to other local wineries. This is something of a renegade winery as regards to both tradition—in deciding to do without the Designation of Origin—and the avant-garde—in not promoting old vineyards. What Toni Sarrion thinks important is rescuing old, high quality vineyards that were allowed to fall into disuse during the quest for high yields, and reinstating

Bobal, to the extent of creating new plantations. The wines he presented in October 2002 are the best expression of this typical inland Valencia variety in the marketplace today. Another company, established even more recently, is working along similar lines. Celler Roure was set up in the southern part of PDO Valencia by Pablo Calatayud, son of a furniture maker from Moixent. This bodega is very close to the Vinalopo valley, PDO Alicante's traditional red wine producing area, set into the northern slopes of the eastern altiplano, which is where the PDO's of Jumilla, Yecla and Almansa also lie. This is Monastrell country, and Monastrell is what Pablo Calatayud works with. He is also determined to reinstate Mando, an interesting red variety with a long tradition in this area, specifically in the Alhorines Valley, known in PDO Valencia terminology as the Clariano sub zone. Close by, in Pinoso, is the El Sequé estate acquired in 1999 by a company



formed by Agapito Rico, progenitor of PDO Jumilla reds Carchelo and Canalizo, and Juan Carlos Lopez de la Calle, head of Artadi in PDO Ca. Rioja. Both are figures of some stature in the Spanish wine world and they have created one of the Valencian region's best bodegas, producing wines which, with barely two years' presence in the marketplace, rank among Spain's best Mediterranean wines.

New Quality Wines

These modest initiatives, family wineries producing 'auteur' wines, have set an example that others are following. Outstanding among these is the arrival in Alicante from Rioja of Telmo Rodriguez (a member of the family that owns Rioja's Remelluri), whose team makes wines in various wine growing areas. In PDO Valencia, the best is to be found around Fontanars, in the south, in the form of wines such as those produced by Dani Belda and Heretat de Tavernes (interesting wines, though they would be well advised to slough off certain commercial traits), and Dominio los Pinos, a Swiss company headed by a Peruvian (this was the second winery in Spain to produce organic wines, after Albet i Noya of PDO Penedes y Cava).

There is a lot more going on in Utiel-Requena, generally regarded as the Valencian region's hidden treasure. Worthy of special mention are Sanfir red, sole product of Casa del Pinar, a little company set up by Philip John Diment and his wife Ana Castillo, owners of a Spanish restaurant in London. Others of interest include Arras de Bobal, made by David Exposito in Pagos del Molino, and Labor de Almadeque and L'Angelet by Bodegas Palmera, established by German Heiner Sauer. Others, due to present their first wines in 2003, include Emilio Clemente in Requena, a winery set up under the consultancy of Ignacio de Miguel, maker of Dehesa del Carrizal (Montes de Toledo). Meanwhile, the traditional companies are also launching new initiatives. Bodegas Gandia set the pace with its famous Ceremonia, and its peers have followed suit, with Cerro Bercial being brought out by Virasa Vinicola, Coronilla by Bodegas Schenk, Los Claustros by Torre Oriá, Sybarus by Torroja, and the new-style Vera de Estena reserve by Compañia Vinicola del Campo de Requena, where Felix Martinez is aiming to give the Bobal grape precedence over Cabernet Sauvignon.



Three Areas, Three Directions

All this new activity reflects the situation in the Valencian region with its three Designations of Origin, each pursuing a different course. PDO Valencia seems to be leaning towards specializing in classic, sweet Moscatels. There are exceptions to this tendency in sub zones Alto Turia, an area which produces white wines made from Merseguera (another native variety worthy of further research), and Clariano, the red wine area mentioned earlier.

Overall, vine growing is declining in PDO Valencia, whose ambit lies close to the coast. Currently, it is permitted to bring in from PDO Utiel-Requena up to 30% of the grapes it needs for making red wines. This could be seen as a harbinger of a

long-entertained scheme to create one single designation of origin for all the Valencian region's vineyards. Utiel-Requena is where most of the action is, and has recently been 'discovered' by Spanish wine writers. After many years of depending on foreign grape varieties to update its wines, it is now proactively reinstating Bobal, a characteristic variety of this inland zone and nearby areas: central PDO Valencia to the east, and PDO Manchuela (in Castile-La Mancha) to the west. Long thought useful for little more than rosés and light reds, it is turning out to have tremendous potential when properly cultivated with production being kept in check.

PDO Alicante, meanwhile, is moving more slowly. Most of the classic companies are sticking to their traditional guns, with the addition of the oc-

casional commercial high-flier, such as Bocopa's Marina Alta. Alicante has two production zones: Marina Alta, on the coast of northern Alicante province (near tourist magnets such as Benidorm, Altea and Villajoyosa), which is a sweet Moscatel producing area, and the Vinalopo Valley, its traditional red producing area, categorized as part of 'Monastrell country', in the south. This area has high hopes of producing interesting new wines based on this typically Mediterranean variety, with possible contributions from other varieties such as Syrah and Petit Verdot. There is tremendous enthusiasm throughout the region for modernizing structures and updating wines. In this regard, Valencian winemakers are adopting the philosophy that has motivated Spanish wine in general for the last fifteen years. However,



the almost unanimous concern with keeping prices within competitive parameters is a trait peculiar to this region. As an objective, this is something like squaring the circle: raising quality calls for limiting production in vineyards originally designed to give the high yields demanded by a long-established commercial structure. Creating specialty wines that offer personality and high quality at attractive prices is the challenge that the Valencian region faces in the immediate future.

Andres Proensa is a journalist who specializes in writing about wine.

Exporters on page 116





AVOCADOS



An Aztec Legacy on the Costa del Sol

Among the many fruits and vegetables that the Spaniards brought back from the New World and quickly became a staple in our diets, the avocado has been slow to catch on. Yet, as a food product that is exceptionally well suited to a modern lifestyle, today nothing can stop the avocado's meteoric rise. As the single large-scale producer in Europe, Spain and particularly its southernmost coast are playing an ever-increasing role as a supplier of high quality avocados to a growing number of consumers throughout the European continent.

Sheltered by the Cordillera Penibetica (Andalusian Mountain Range) on one side and the soothing Mediterranean on the other, the Costa del Sol features a microclimate that is not only the delight of a year-round stream of tourists from all over the world, but makes it a niche for tropical and sub-tropical plant cultivation. Mangos, litchis, macadamia nuts, cherimoyas (see Spain Gourmetour no. 34), but above all avocados are doing exceptionally well. Where formerly sugar cane, grapes and almonds were grown, now tall avocado trees with their dark green perennial foliage embellish the gradually rising slopes of the surrounding mountains, a sure sign of a bright future for the Spanish avocado.



TEXT
ANKE VAN WIJCK

This green pear- or egg-shaped fruit with its leathery skin, large single seed, and silky content is no longer solely available at specialty stores, as it was a couple of decades ago but is already a familiar sight on the shelves of supermarkets everywhere. "It is a paste that is very similar to butter and has an excellent taste," wrote Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, chronicler to the Spanish conquerors, in 1526. It took almost 500 years, but thanks to a growing exposure to foreign products, increasing health awareness and much word-of-mouth promotion, consumers are finding out for themselves about the avocado's remarkable gastronomic, health-promoting, and practical properties that prompted David Fairchild (1869-1954), a prominent American botanist, to call it "the veritable fruit of paradise." Although botanically the avocado is a fruit, it distinguishes itself from other fruits in regard to its very low sugar content and acidity, and its high percentage of oil and protein. No wonder that the avocado is widely thought of as a vegetable. It is gen-

erally assumed that the fruit originated in Mexico from where it spread to South America long before the arrival of the Spaniards. The result is that about 500 varieties of this species are known. As cousins of the bay leaf and cinnamon tree, they belong to the laurel family and are subsumed under the botanical name *Persea Americana*.

As early as 1653, father Bernabe Cobo was the first to catalogue the three main stocks, namely the Mexican, the Antillean and the Guatemalan. These categories are still in use today. Yet, since the beginning of the past century, when the first attempts at large scale avocado production were undertaken in California, a reduced amount of hybrids with select qualities are now on the market to suit both specific growing conditions and consumer demands. Among them, a variety called Hass is the absolute winner and in Spain, as practically everywhere else, constitutes between 80 and 100% of crops. It is the hardiest and also widely considered the tastiest. Other varieties like

Bacon, Fuerte, Reed or Pinkerton, the so-called "smooth-green" varieties, are grown as wind-cutting hedges, to facilitate pollination, and to stretch the period of harvesting as some can be picked before and others after Hass is harvested.

There seems to be general consensus as to the outstanding taste and texture of the Hass, but not everybody agrees. In Germany for example, there is a clear predilection for the Fuerte.

"The French definitely prefer the Hass, but we can send them any type. Yet in Germany, its rugged skin that gradually turns brown while it ripens somehow turns people off. They prefer the more even, bright green skin of the Fuerte and also like its large size better," explains Mariana Lorbach, who handles the German clients at Frutas Montosa in Velez-Malaga, one of the largest avocado export firms.

The longer the Hass remains on the tree, which as we will later see can be for many months, the higher its oil content and therefore the nuttier its flavor. Additionally as the seed of

the Hass is smaller, it has a higher proportion of flesh. On the contrary the Fuerte and the other "smooth-green" varieties taste more watery and fruity and have a larger seed. Weight also matters. It is expressed in calibers and is not wholly related to size but also to the percentage of oil that the fruit contains.

"The Swiss for example," says Jose Maria Cuadrado, the commercial manager at the firm Procama in Motril (Granada), "only order caliber 14 to 16, while the Germans prefer the larger caliber 10 to 12." In France, this would be 16 to 20. (8 1/2-10 1/2 oz, 10 1/2 oz-1 lib and 6 1/2- 9 1/2 oz respectively)

An Everybody's Dream

While in Spain avocados are also grown on the Canary Islands and in some other areas on the Mediterranean coast, over 95% of total production comes from Granada and Malaga with the latter holding the lion's share of 75%. As it becomes readily clear to the keen eye, on the shores of the beautiful and mild Costa del Sol, urbanism and agriculture encroach upon each other rather flagrantly. Plantations of both intensive and extensively grown produce at times run right up to the very wall of apartment buildings, and many a plot of majestic trees has given way to yet another golf course. "Avocados like to live where people do. They are rather fussy: not too warm, not too cold and a sufficient quantity of good quality water," says Jose Maria Hermoso, an agronomist who since 1972 has been carrying out trials with tropical fruits, especially

avocados, at the experimental station La Mayora belonging to the CSIC, Scientific Research Institute in Algarrobo (Malaga). That said, the avocado is everybody's dream fruit. With well-drained soil, a dependable supply of good quality water and maximum temperatures between -2 and 35°/28 and 95°F, conditions that are but very rarely a problem on the Costa del Sol, the avocado is little demanding. It requires no tilling, only light pruning, little fertilization and it is not at all prone to plagues. "For a farmer there is no better crop

than the avocado," says Jose Burgos who is in charge of the locally famous Rancho Antillano, one of the earliest large avocado plantations in the area.

But what probably is the avocado's greatest advantage is the fact that, even fully grown, the fruit can be left on the tree without deteriorating for a considerable amount of time. For the Hass, this means to up to six or seven months. "The tree is like a natural depot," says Juanjo Viñas, an erstwhile commodity trader who now tends his avocado plantation

MORE THAN JUST AVOCADOS

One of the main ancillary activities to tropical plant cultivation is of course the nursery. In view of the optimal conditions and growing potential of the Costa del Sol, where according to the agronomist Hermoso, from the experimental station La Mayora, 700-800 ha/ 1,700-2,000 acres are planted each year, the area is home to two of the world's eight cloning nurseries, namely Viveros Blanco and Viveros Brokaw. The latter, as a sister company of Brokaw Nurseries, one of the largest in California, brought U.S. rootstocks and the latest grafting technologies to the area. Saturnino Blanco, who had worked with Roger Magdhal, the pre-eminent instigator of large-scale avocado cultivation worldwide, founded the former in 1974. Blanco belongs to that small group of believers who in the early 1970s vied for a profitable avocado production on the Costa del Sol and succeeded! Although still 75% of young trees proceed from seeds, the use of the more expensive cloned seedlings is on the rise as the



technique facilitates the use of rootstocks resistant to soil related problems and allows for a more uniform and dependable growing pattern. Both nurseries export young plants to countries like Portugal, Italy, Turkey, Morocco or Lebanon. Viveros Blanco participates in a European Community project to provide Lebanon with 2,000 cloned seedlings.

WEBSITES

Crop Growing

www.infoagro.com/frutas/frutas_tropicales/aguacate.htm#inicio

The Infoagro website provides a guide to avocado growing and abundant, well-structured information, including climate and soil requirements, cultivation, pruning, harvesting, planting frames, irrigation, fertilization and pests (Spanish).

Experimental and subtropical fruit growing centers in Spain

www.eelm.csic.es

La Mayora experimental facility website. It offers information concerning the structure of the center, research teams, on-line projects and staff. The site allows library consultation (English, Spanish)

www.cajarural.com/rurales/3023/pdf/chi_rimoyo.pdf

The site contains a pdf format report on subtropical fruit growing ventures prepared by the Caja Rural Granada technical office in 2001. (Spanish)

www.eumedia.es/articulos/vr/hortofrut/136frutsubtrop.html

La fruticultura subtropical en la Costa del Sol: especies y cultivares. This is an article by the staff of La Mayora Experimental Facility (Malaga), the CSIC and La Nacla Experimental Estate describing the experience of subtropical fruit growing over the last thirty years. (Spanish)

World Avocado Congress

www.congresomundialaguacate.org

Web site of the 5th World Avocado Congress (Granada-Malaga, 19-24 October 2003). The site provides general information concerning the congress, the venue, reservations, program, hotels, communications, trade fairs and sponsors. (English, Spanish)



Companies

www.balconeuropa.com

Balcon de Europa website, containing information on the firm and its products in two categories (fresh and ecological produce). It includes recipes (English, French, German, Spanish)

www.ecohal.com

ECOHAL's site provides details on products, prices and companies in the Almeria horticultural sector. (Spanish)

www.frutasmontosa.com

The Frutas Montosa website contains information on the company, its products, cultivation and harvesting processes, consumer tips, distribution networks, nutritional issues and a number of recipes for avocado. (English, French, German, Spanish)

www.sat2803.com

SAT Trops site, providing information on the company and its products. It includes recipes (English, French, Spanish)

overlooking the whitewashed town of Salobreña (Granada). Of course, this peculiarity is to the delight of both farmers and buyers.

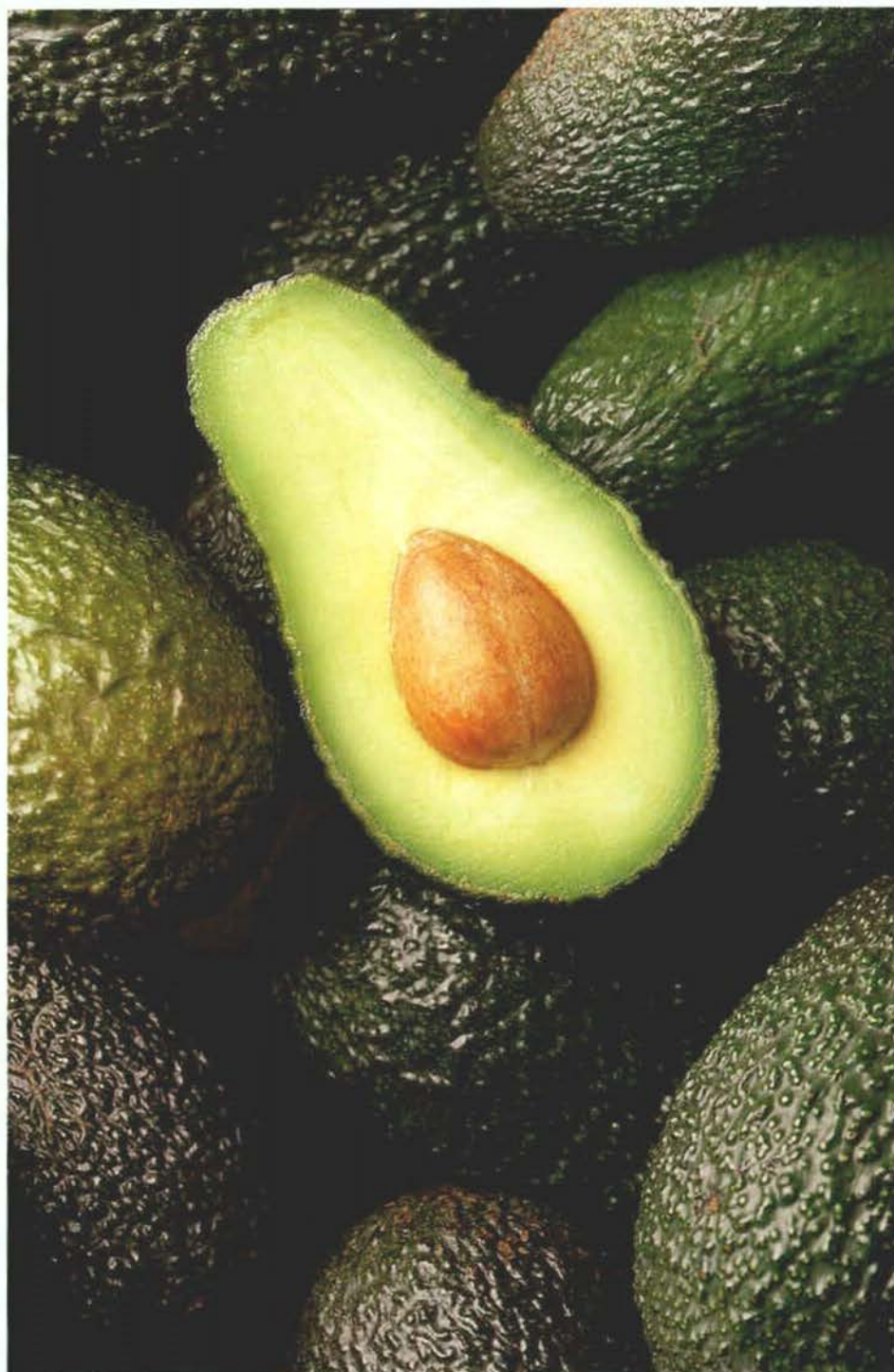
"We can pick them as needed in our warehouse," explains Antonio Ruiz, an avocado buyer for Frutas Montosa. Ruiz scouts daily the surrounding farms for the best quality avocados and keeps an eye on harvesting. Here again the avocado behaves like no other fruit or vegetable. As it ripens off the tree, it can be picked hard as a rock, suffering minimal damage. Harvesting avocados is an unhurried operation carried out in small groups of frequently family members (the average size of orchards is about 3 ha/7.4 acres). Avocados within easy reach are handpicked, often by women; those at mid-height are gently pulled off with a hook, their fall cushioned by a thick layer of fallen leaves which also provide excellent organic matter. The fruits in the crown, to avoid unnecessary bruising, are cut off with a V-shaped device on a long pole to which a small pouch is attached that can collect three or four pieces. But the avocado's fame does not end here. Antonio García, a second generation auctioneer and wholesaler in Motril (Granada), explains how easy post-harvesting manipulation of avocados is, especially the Hass with its rugged skin. Pre-refrigerated for some days to temporarily slow down the ripening process, the still rock-hard fruits are simply washed with drinking water and a touch of chloride, sorted for weight and packed according to the specific demands of each client. Then, by refrigerated truck they will reach even the farthest client in Europe within 48 hours. And here lies, according to

Carlos Rojo of ECOHAL (Association of Fruits and Vegetables Producers and Traders) in Malaga, Spain's greatest advantage on its competitors from outside Europe. Over this relatively short time span, the fruit will have barely changed condition. Actual ripening will start on the supermarket shelves or even better at home where it will gradually develop its characteristic creaminess and optimal flavor.

Myths and Facts

"It nourisheth and strengtheneth the body" wrote the British royal physician W. Hughes after a visit to Jamaica in the late 17th century while praising the avocado as "one of the most rare and pleasant fruits of the island." Even though the fruit had reached Jamaica, apparently echoes of its legendary properties had not. Or perhaps his master, Charles II, was to be kept in the dark. Yet up to what extent the avocado was considered nourishing and strengthening, had been made clear by an earlier Spanish colleague. Francisco Hernandez, a physician to Spain's King Philip II (1527-1598), had no qualms in writing to his majesty: "The fruit is warm and pleasant to the palate. The Spaniards call it *aguacate*. It tastes not bad at all and requires no maintenance, it is creamy and moist and greatly arouses venereal appetite because it heightens semen."

But did Hernandez and the troops find out for themselves? Or was it that the Spaniards were deeply impressed by the Aztec name and myth of the avocado's aphrodisiac properties? *Ahuacacuahuitl* or testicle tree was its name in Nuahtl (Aztec) and



still today in Spain it is called aguacate, of which the name *avocado* is derived. It seems that in those days the Church did not favorably look upon consumption of avocados. And, as Julian Diaz Robledo narrates in his *Historia del aguacate* (History of the Avocado), in the 1920s when young Wilson Popenoe, a famous author, botanist and expert in tropical fruits, planned to carry out a trial with a fortnight diet exclusively on avocados, his Mexican landlady asked him politely to leave, out of fear for her reputation and that of her two teenage daughters. Myths aside, there is more and more scientific evidence that corroborates

the empirical findings of early consumers regarding the invigorating and health promoting qualities of the avocado. Also nutrition-wise the avocado can claim quite some superlatives. Reportedly in the 1960s, the prominent expert in cereal nutrition, John H. Kellogg stated "of all edible fruits, it stands pre-eminent as a source of concentrated nutriment adapted to human use. For purity, wholesomeness, ease of digestibility, and adaptation to human needs, it has none that can fill its place." Indeed scientists everywhere are adamantly trying to erase the "butter pear's" undeserved reputation as a fatty food and advocate for its many

health-promoting properties that even make the avocado, according to Dr. Robert Bergh of the University of California, "a superior first solid food for babies." Besides being highly digestible, the avocado is known to be nutrient dense. As compared to other fruits, it not only contains high quality protein and scores very well in, for example, vitamin E, C and beta-carotene, but it is also high in potassium, a key-factor in stroke prevention. And even though the avocado's fat content may reach up to 30%, its composition is comparable to that of the much-praised olive oil and thus is assumed to have a beneficial effect on cholesterol levels.



Dr. Mario Alvisouri's (General Hospital, Mexico City) advice "an avocado a day keeps a stroke at bay," comes as no surprise, especially in Mexico where the yearly avocado consumption of 15.4 pounds per capita is by far the world's highest.

A Product of the Future

France, with a consumption of 2.6 pounds per person is leader in Europe. "Some twenty five years ago Israel picked France as a target country to introduce their avocados because of its reputed accessibility to

FIFTH WORLD AVOCADO CONGRESS

Under the auspices of the International Avocado Society and with the firm support of the Andalusian government, several municipalities and numerous local sponsors, Spain will host the Fifth World Avocado Congress to be held in Torremolinos (Malaga) from October 19 to 24, 2003. If during the Fourth Congress, that took place in Mexico in 1999, Spain turned out to be the successful candidate to organize the next, it was thanks to the recognized level of its research institutions and production facilities. Attendance is estimated at 700 participants from some 30 avoca-

do producing and avocado importing countries worldwide. Simultaneously, Expoferia will be held as an ideal platform for Spanish producers and manufacturers to show the latest techniques both in cultivation and in post-harvesting and transformation procedures. The purpose of the Fifth World Avocado Congress is to bring together researchers, producers, and traders in order to exchange experiences, learn about the latest technological advances, and to discuss and coordinate new domestic and global market strategies and perspectives. Ecological production will be high on the agenda.



different gastronomic experiences," explains Julian Diaz Robledo, author and a pioneer in tropical plant cultivation. Now Spain is also reaping the fruits of this successful campaign, as almost 50% of its avocado exports go to France. Next are Britain and Germany, followed by most other European countries and farther destinations such as Dubai or Thailand. Total exports for the 2001-2002 season were around 50,000 tons and prospects are excellent.

"The avocado is a product of the future because of its profitability," explains Enrique Colilles, the general manager of SAT Trops, a large cooperative in Velez-Malaga, the Mecca of avocado country. This is why Spanish avocado producers have made it their goal to offer optimal quality and to meet and improve on all European quality standards. They are increasingly joining efforts and seek involvement from the government, farmers' associations, research institutes, and other representative organizations.

Export companies are now fully computerized and each grower is assigned his own code to better trace the produce. Additionally, in-house teams of agronomists assist farmers in optimizing their efforts. Constant interaction is key. "Our main objective is that our growers be competitive," explains Ignacio Escobar, who runs the experimental station "La Nacla" in Motril (Granada), and an open-house advice facility for local farmers.

"In any event," says Benjamin Fauli, a horticultural expert at ASAJA (Association of Young Farmers) in Malaga, "typically avocado growers here are quite knowledgeable. Pioneers in the 1970s, they know

how to do their homework." To assist them, an association like ECO-HAL in Malaga, which is backed by 15 fruit trading companies and comprises some 7,000 growers, offers financial, entrepreneurial, and legal advice and provides different level courses. As it is, the avocado, like few other products, naturally meets the standards for sustainable agriculture. Yet because of growing demand, there is also an increasing awareness as to the relevance of ecological production. The issue features prominently on the agenda of the upcoming V World Avocado Congress, to be held on the Costal del Sol in October this year (see box page 61). Ready to offer their European clients the very best, producers also aim at boosting domestic consumption. They are aware that, like in France, a "breakthrough," a greater receptiveness to non-traditional foods and a wider recognition of the avocado's versatility are needed.

A Healthy Fast Food

It is the general experience that the first bite of avocado, because it is rather unique, may be somewhat confusing. But characteristically, once tasted, the avocado arouses enough interest to repeat the experience again and again, not lastly because of its great versatility and simplicity. Precisely because of its nutritious properties, the avocado can be considered a light meal in and of itself and a handy one for that matter. Dr. Farre, from La Mayora Experimental Station explains: "The avocado is the food *par excellence* for our modern society. People come home from work and don't feel like

cooking. So why not open up an avocado and savor it in front of the TV or take one to the office as a lunch-snack? If it's a Hass you can even eat it right out of your hand."

Indeed an avocado is great just halved, sprinkled with a little salt and scooped out of the skin, but it offers much more than that. From a simple salad ingredient and the ubiquitous *guacamole* to an avocado-soufflé like the one served at the restaurant Tropical in Motril, the avocado offers an endless array of creative possibilities. And while wonderful in hearty dishes and combining excellently with seafood, it also allows for great desserts, ice creams and delicious drinks.

For many people, the avocado rings a bell only because of *guacamole*. Equally of Aztec origin, today *guacamole* is served as a dip throughout the world. Initiatives in this sense are also being noticed on the Costa del Sol. The Chilean Luis Bravo, as a chef in Göteborg (Sweden) had noticed both the increasing demand for *guacamole* and the scarcity of supply. He started his own processing operation and imported fresh avocado from the firm Balcon de Europa in Velez-Malaga. Together they realized that it would be far more profitable to manufacture the product close to the source. And together in 2000 they founded Avomix. The firm is now exporting all over Europe not only frozen *guacamole*, avocado halves, chunks and paste, but uses the summer months when supply of avocados is halted to prepare several types of salsa, the natural complement of *guacamole*.

The growth in avocado production in Andalusia has also spurred an interest in the extraction of avocado

oil, as of old a coveted ingredient in cosmetics. Rafael Arroyo of Almuñécar (Granada) last year obtained official certification to produce, and is already in advanced talks with several importers in Europe. Solar protection, insect repellent, scar remedy, and hydration are but a few of the terms that engross the list of the avocado oil's beneficial cosmetic characteristics. Little doubt remains that the avocado is a uniquely all-round product and that Spain as the sole large-scale producer in Europe is in a position to assume a prominent role.



Anke van Wijck is a sociologist and has a master in gastronomy from Boston University. Her articles have appeared in the Boston Globe.

Recipes page 91 and Exporters page 116

All you need to know in order to savor an avocado in its prime

Fortunately, not all types of avocado or all of one type are harvested simultaneously. "Right now I serve mostly Fuerte," said Juan Jose Tirado in early December. With his two brothers, he runs the restaurant Tropical in Motril (Granada). Dr. Farre Massip, one of Spain's foremost avocado experts and a self-confessed avocado aficionado goes further. "In November you would choose a large size Fuerte because it would surely be mature, but in June you would opt for a rather small sized Hass, because a large fruit might be overly ripe. A small Hass in June is a real treat," he says.

But as not everybody is in a position to reach this level of sophistication, the safest way is to always buy your avocados hard as a rock and with the skin turning slightly matte. It means that they have suffered a minimum of bruises and that they have not been picked too early. If you want avocados to ripen fast, wrap them, without exerting pressure, in a piece of newspaper together with an apple. (Ethylene

released by the apple will enhance the ripening process). Otherwise just leave them at room temperature. Only the Hass will gradually turn dark while it ripens. To find out if they are ready to eat, gently touch them in different places. They should be soft, but still firm. At this point, store those you do not need for immediate use in the refrigerator (aprox. 6°C/42°F). It will slow down (but not halt) the ripening process considerably. Once cut open, immediately sprinkle with lemon juice to avoid darkening because of oxidation. To that same purpose, tuck plastic wrap as tightly against the pulp as possible for storage. You can freeze avocados halved, in chunks, as paste, or processed (e.g. guacamole), previously removing the seed. "But," warns Julian Diaz Robledo, "never freeze the whole fruit." He also advises to never cook avocado, as it will turn bitter.



Tasting Tapas in Seville



MAGIC

MOUThEfuLS

Its interpretation of food as an essentially social phenomenon is what makes Seville one of the supreme exponents of the *tapa*. It has created an art form with rules and ingredients all its own. Eating tapas is an integral part of everyday life here, and one that nourishes not only the physical person but human relationships, too. Tapas recipes are redolent of the several cultures that have left their gastronomic mark on this city down the centuries, from the Romans' taste for sausages to the Arabs' refined use of spices. The result is a stratified cuisine, Mediterranean in character, whose style is now being updated (be it in 'auteur' restaurants or at public get-togethers such as the Feria de la Tapa) while still remaining true to its defining flamenco spirit.

Text
Ana G. Vitienes

Translation
Hawys Pritchard

Photos
Fernando Madariaga/ICEX



The religious processions which take place in Seville during Holy Week, the city's big Spring festival, follow a set route punctuated by stops, symbolic of the *via crucis*, or Way of the Cross. In a lightweight gastronomic equivalent, this pattern is echoed on a daily basis in the routes and itineraries of one of Seville's essential rituals: *el tapeo*, or eating tapas. Though the verb '*tapear*' (to eat tapas) had to wait until last year's edition to gain inclusion in the Spanish Royal Academy's dictionary, it is something that has been going on every day in *tabernas*, *mesones*, family-run cafés and chic restaurants since the 19th century. Over a century later, these little helpings of food served as an accompaniment to the *fino*, *oloroso* and *amontillado* wines of southern Spain now constitute not just a repertoire of dishes but a whole culinary genre with flavors all its own. Like *el duende*, the moving spirit said



to inspire flamenco, el tapeo is part of Seville's specific character, as much a facet of the city's vivacity and zest for life as its sunshine or the Sevillano's gift of gab. This is a city whose inhabitants take long evening strolls through Maria Luisa Park, and enjoy the emblematic shape of the Cathedral from the other side of the River Guadalquivir. It's all part of the same approach to life.

In Andalusia, whose local idiom loves a diminutive, el tapeo becomes *el tapiño*. Essayist and philosopher Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) once spoke of 'the permanent spectacle that is Seville'. *El tapiño* is part of that spectacle, enacted daily in the little whitewashed alleys of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, the orange-tree lined avenues around the Maestranza bullring, and in the shadow of the imposing Torre del Oro, all of which provide the picturesque backdrop to a creative, stimulating approach to food.

As opposed to the superb primary ingredients used in other regions of Spain, Seville's tapas are the product of a subsistence economy that has had to rely heavily on creativity. Creating a new dish out of left over food is a skill that springs from humble origins, and it is in this kind of ingenuity that Andalusia's tapas originate. Croquettes made from yesterday's meat or salt-cod; chickpeas left over from *cocido* or stew perked up by the addition of spinach; left-over meat and streaky bacon served on toast to make *pringá*; yesterday's vegetables—artichokes, asparagus—stirred into scrambled eggs for delicious *revueltos*. 'Little' these dishes may be, but they exemplify clever combinations of culinary techniques and ingredients of diverse cultural origins.



Pavías de bacalao

Fried strips of salt cod in a flour and saffron batter.

Ingredients serves about 4: 300gr/10 oz salt cod, soaked to desalt and cut into strips; 300 gr/10 oz flour for coating (N.B: no egg); 1 sachet yeast or a slosh of beer; chopped parsley; saffron or turmeric; sunflower and olive oil.

Soak the saffron in a little hot water. Place the flour in a bowl with the chopped parsley, then add the yeast or beer and enough of the colored water to make a thin paste. Dip the fish strips in the paste and fry in the combined oils at a very high heat until crisp on the outside and puffed up inside. Serve immediately.

Try it at: El Rinconcillo, Gerona, 40. Tel: 954 22 31 83 (Map N°.1)

Pringá

Toast topped with various meats.

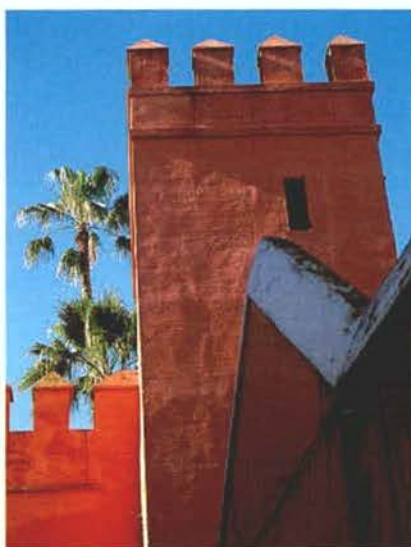
Ingredients serves about 4: 300 gr/10 oz assorted meats (as used in a Spanish cocido or stew—streaky bacon, chorizo, spicy black pudding); 100 gr/3 oz chicken breast; 100 gr/3 oz shin beef; 4 large slices bread; 2 large potatoes.

Peel and dice the potatoes, then place in a pan with the various meaty ingredients and a cupful of water and cook gently for 20 minutes until tender. Allow to cool, then break up the meats and gently mash the potatoes into them until amalgamated. Serve the mixture on a slice of fresh bread or toast.

Try it at: Bodega Antonio Romero, Antonio Diaz, 9, Arenal. Tel: 954 22 39 39 (Map N°.5)



Like *el duende*, the moving spirit said to inspire flamenco, *el tapeo* is part of Seville's specific character.



Mojamas de pescado

Pressed, salted and dried fish roe

Ingredients serves about 4: 200 gr/7 oz tuna or ling roe (ideally caught off Barbate in Cadiz Province); virgin olive oil

Slice the pressed roe very finely and drizzle with olive oil before serving.

You can also use smoked salt bonito loin or salt cod for this recipe.

Try it at: Bar A. Romero, Gamazo, 16. Tel: 954 21 05 85 (Map N°.4)

Cultural Eclecticism

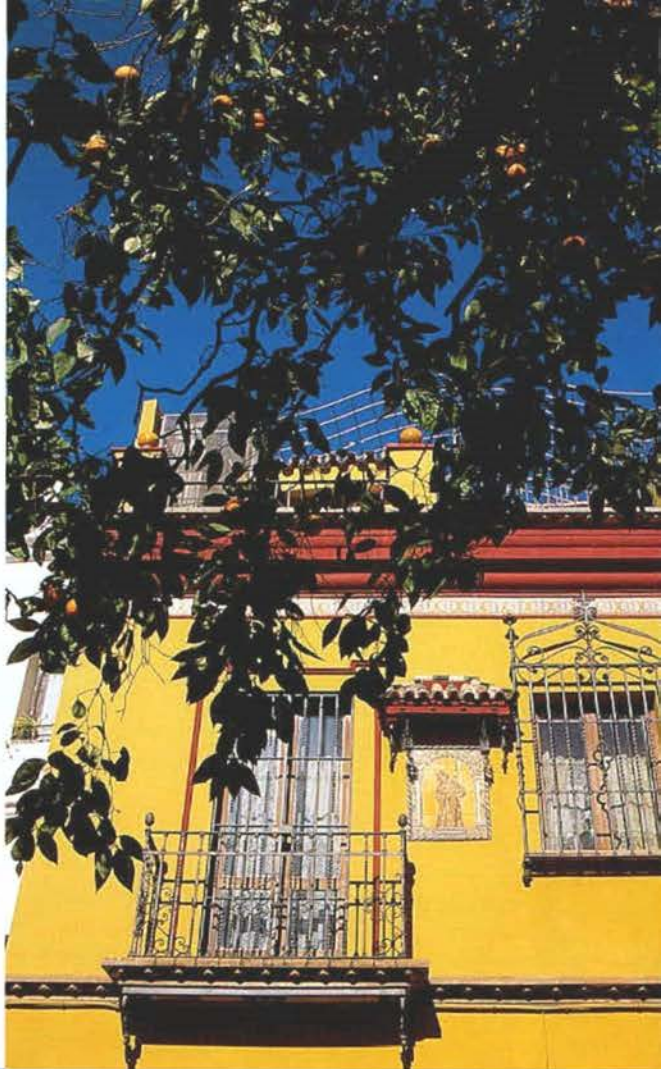
Literary travelers such as Dumas, Gautier and Mérimée, who defined Andalusian food in terms of elements such as garlic or oil, never approached it closely enough to appreciate the many cultural substrata on which Seville's fine cuisine is founded. This was better understood by Spanish writers and literati—Lope de Vega, Gongora, Francisco Delicado, Victor de la Serna...-who extolled its virtues down the ages. As capital of Andalusia, its socio-political importance over many centuries made it a confluence of three gastronomic cultures—Arab, Jewish and Roman, especially from the 8th–15th centuries,

the period when Al-Andalus was under Arab influence. Hispalis (as Seville was known to the Romans) absorbed their legacy through the introduction of ingredients such as citrus fruits and saffron, cooking methods which have evolved into marinades and brines for preserving foods, along with the processes of smoking, salting, drying and macerating. The Arabic-Andalusian, or Andalusí, stratum of this heritage in particular persists in dishes whose very names are evocative, such as *cordero a la miel* (lamb cooked with honey), or the sweet and sour *alboronia* (unmistakably Caliphatic in its combination of sugared quince pulp with eggplant, courgettes, peppers, tomatoes and onion in an olive oil *sofrito*). Any tapas route will provide examples of flavors of ancient and diverse origins, intertwined to create an eclectic gastronomic mesh that is quintessentially Andalusian. Consider, for example, *chacinas* (charcuterie), cured in the mountain areas of Jabugo and the Sierra de Aracena in a way that dates back to Greco-Roman cuisine; the inspired use of oriental spices such as cumin and *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) in sauces and fried foods; pressed fish-roe products; the use of chickpea flour for batter; and the profusion of ingredients such as *alcachofas* or *alcauciles* (artichokes), whose names in modern Spanish hark back to the Arab occupation of Spain. The 'archaeolo-



Nº 10

Any tapas route will provide examples of flavors of ancient and diverse origins, intertwined to create an eclectic gastronomic mesh that is quintessentially Andalusian.



gy* of such foods and food ways is explored at gastronomic study-days organized by institutions such as the *Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus*, concerned with Seville's cultural history, but they are also to be found all over the city as part of everyday life.

Methodology

Eating tapas in Seville isn't like going to lunch at a restaurant. A tapa outing is an event governed by a protocol of its own, of which walking about forms an integral part. Unlike in such overpopulated cities as Madrid and Barcelona, the route from one locale to the next to sample their specialties is covered at strolling pace. For the true *Sevilleno*, eating tapas at some of the city's 4,000 bars, mesones and tabernas is more than just an amusing way of having lunch or dinner. It is a ritual, carried out by a group of people—four is the ideal number—of which the eating part must take place standing at the bar (house specialties

SEVILLE TAPAS FROM NY



are rustled up in minutes as they chat amongst themselves). Though there is usually a list on display at each stopping place, customers prefer to hear what tapas are on offer that day from the waiter, who recites the list at high speed. This performance is known as *el pregón* (the proclamation), and can sometimes include more than 60 different alternatives. This means that you have to make your choice aurally, never visually. None of those ready-to-eat, still-life counter displays here that you find in other parts of Spain, especially the north, as in San Sebastian, for example (see *Spain Gourmetour* No 55). In Seville, cooked tapas, especially fried ones, are always made to order, leaving you to chat over your glass of wine with just the occasional marinated olive to keep you going until they are served, crisp and piping hot. The average tapa weighs some 2 1/2 oz, and the average tapa meal takes in about six per person, Sevillian lore requiring each to be eaten at a differ-

I have always considered Seville the quintessential tapas town. Tapas are an integral part of city life and are prepared with so much love, affection and pride that it is hard to imagine having anything but great tapas in Seville—and surely there are more bars per square foot in Seville than anywhere else on the planet. That said, I do, of course, have my favorite bars, and I return to them time and time again and dream of their tapas when far away in New York. My fondest memories of tapas in Seville go back some 20 years to a sweltering summer Sunday when my husband Luis and I decided to search Seville for the best tapas bars. We hailed a cab at the elegant Alfonso XIII hotel with no clear plan in mind, but our driver, Miguel Ruiz, immediately struck up a conversation (as taxi drivers are wont to do in Seville) and volunteered to show us his favorite tapas haunts—all across the Guadalquivir River in his Triana neighborhood that was once the fishermen's quarters. At each bar, crowded with families enjoying the out-of-doors, he locked his cab and joined us, as if we were old friends. Were it not for Miguel we might never have met Ruperto Blanco and his nephew Jose Manuel—or considered their modest bar worthy of a visit. And yet today it is the place we call home in Seville. Ruperto, prone to outbursts of heartrending fandangos (a type of flamenco music), is the very embodiment of Seville's joyous spirit and hospitality, and a visit to the city is unthinkable without satisfying our craving for Ruperto's fabulous fried almonds, cumin-scented spicy snails, *pringá*—a grilled sandwich of meats and sausage, exquisitely seasoned mini kabobs (*pincho moruno*), and our favorite, marinated grilled quail (its recipe is top secret). How could we ever forget another of Miguel's favorite bars, Sol y Sombra, where bullfight memorabilia was everywhere, a forest of hams hung from the rafters, sawdust littered the floor, flamenco music played, and a client wearing a Cordoban hat leaned on the



Sol y Sombra

bar sipping fino sherry and eating bits of beef tenderloin in sherry sauce and garlic shrimp flecked with ham. At Kiosco Las Flores we devoured tiny garlicky clams (*coquinas*), tasty cubes of *cazón en adobo* (marinated fried shark), and crisply fried shrimp. But perhaps for me there is nothing more evocative of the magic of Seville than sitting in the Plaza de los Venerables in the Santa Cruz quarter, enjoying lush Ibérico ham and pork loin at Casa Román and reliving the adventures of Don Juan, who, as the tale is told, plotted his conquests next door at the Hosteria del Laurel. I like to think he also found pleasure eating the very same tapas that captivate me today.
Sol y Sombra. Castilla, 151. Tel. 954 333 935
Kiosco Las Flores. Plaza del Altozano, Tel. 954 333 898
Casa Román. Plaza de los Venerables, 1. Tel. 954 228 483

Penelope Casas is the author of four cookbooks and a travel guide on Spain and her articles appear in *The New York Times* and other leading publications. She leads two tours to Spain every year.



Papas aliñás

A cold salad of boiled potatoes with chopped tomato, onion and green pepper dressing

Ingredients serves about 4: 1 kg/2 lb potatoes; 500 gr/1 lb semi-ripe tomatoes; 1 green pepper, 1 onion, salt, olive oil, garlic (optional) and vinegar.

Peel and boil the potatoes and cut them up into bite-sized pieces. Dice the tomatoes finely, cut the onion into thin wedges, and chop the green pepper finely. Mix them all together, then mix in the potatoes. Dress with olive oil, salt and finely chopped garlic to taste. The vegetable components of the dressing vary slightly, depending on where you find this tapa.

Try it at: Casa Cuesta, Callao, 3, Triana.

Tel: 954 33 33 35 (Map N°.7)



ent establishment. It is also the custom for group members to take it in turns to pay for a round, a practice known as *la convidá* (invitation). Occasionally, indeed inevitably, the conversation (which sticks to lightweight, everyday topics) will go on too long and someone will order '*que llenen!*' ('Fill 'em up!'), signaling another *convidá* and attendant discussion about whose turn it is. All in all, this leads to eating well but not to overeating. Sevillenos have a word for tapa outings that don't quite work, are repetitive or go on too long: *la pechá*. There's a favorite tapa for marking the end of the itinerary: *pringá* (chorizo, morcilla, tocino and other meats—typically the meaty in-



redients of a *cocido*—mashed and heaped on bread or toast). A phrase derived from the unwritten lore of the tapa world is the colloquial saying: '*de la pringá al café*' ('alter *pringá*, coffee').

Tapa Types

The huge range of possible *tapiños*—fried morsels, griddled meat and fish, cold ones, hot ones—has also generated a jargon specific to tapa culture. Some terms refer to style of presentation, such as *cazoletitas* (servings presented in tiny, usually earthenware, dishes), *pinchos* (tapas on cocktail sticks or little kebabs), *cucharada y paso atrás* (literally 'a spoonful and



step back—unusual for tapas, which generally come in individual helpings, this is a cooked dish to be shared among the group, using the same spoon in strict turn). But most of these vivid slang terms refer to specific recipes: *bienmesabe* (literally 'tastes good to me': soused fish, often fried), *flamenquin* (ham rolled up in pork, then battered and fried); *menudo* (beef tripe with chickpeas and mint); *caballito* (cured ham on fried bread); *aliñás* (dressed potatoes, beans or other vegetables); *pespà* (griddled swordfish); *puntillitas* (fried prawns or fish); *burgao* (the king of snails, which takes its name from the verb *burgar* or *hurgar*, meaning 'to poke about', which is what you have to do to get it out of its

shell. (See box p. 75); some dishes cooked in sauce are described as either '*en amarillo*' ('in yellow', i.e. colored with saffron), of which *albóndigas* (meatballs) would be one example, or '*en colorao*' (in red, i.e. colored with *pimentón*). Another interesting term in this specialized lexicon is the *pavía*, a little piece of fish in batter, so called because its golden color is reminiscent of a famous 19th century military uniform, and which takes the feminine article—*la pavía*—when made of hake, and the masculine—*el pavía*—, when made of cod. Other everyday favorites include *la cola de toro* (ox tail), *tagarinas* (cardoons) and *ortiguillas* (little sea anemones).

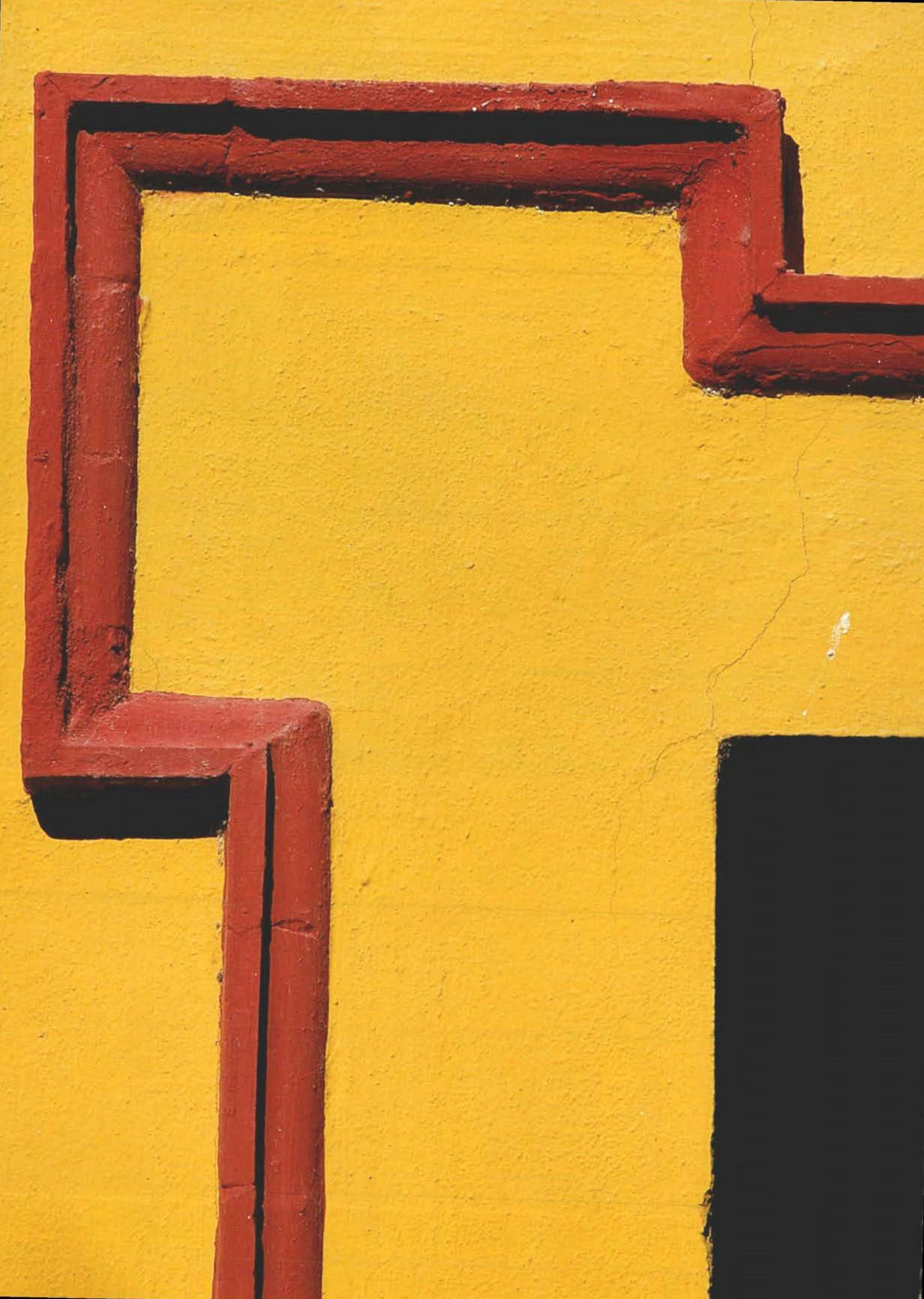
T O R E A D

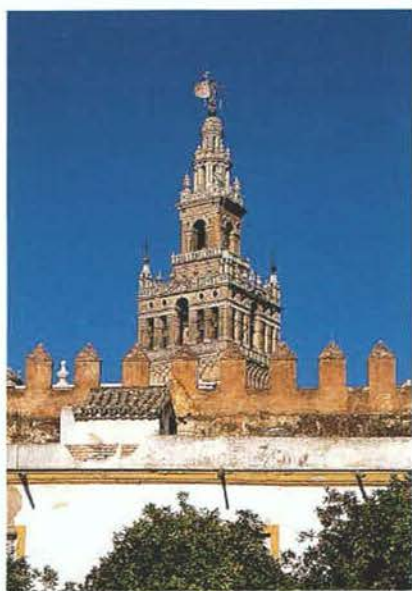
De tapa en tapa por Sevilla,
by J. Antonio Armendia.
Editorial Everest, 2003-02-11

De tapas por Sevilla,
by Juan Carlos Alonso
El País-Aguilar, 2001

Recetas de Sevilla,
by Eduardo López Domínguez
Consorcio Turismo de Sevilla, 2001

**La cocina del mestizaje: viaje por las
cazuelas de Murcia, Andalucía,
Extremadura y Canarias,**
by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán.
Ediciones B, 2002





But of all these, it is *las frituras* (fried morsels cooked in eggless batter and famously light, golden and flavor packed) that are the stars of Seville's tapa repertoire. Basque painter Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945) famously declared that 'in Seville, they even fry the breeze'. The irresistible smell of frituras guides the steps of many a tapa eater.

Recognition

This gastronomic *via crucis*, which winds its way through the *barrios* (districts) of El Arenal, La Alfalfa, Avenida, Sierpes, Santa Cruz and Triana, and even the less touristy La Macarena and Nervion, received no recognition as such until 1994, when the Andalusian Academy of Gastronomy organized the first fair in its honor, the *Feria de la Tapa*. Originally held in the old Plaza de Armas, the idea of assembling lots of specialties all in the same space went down unexpectedly well with the

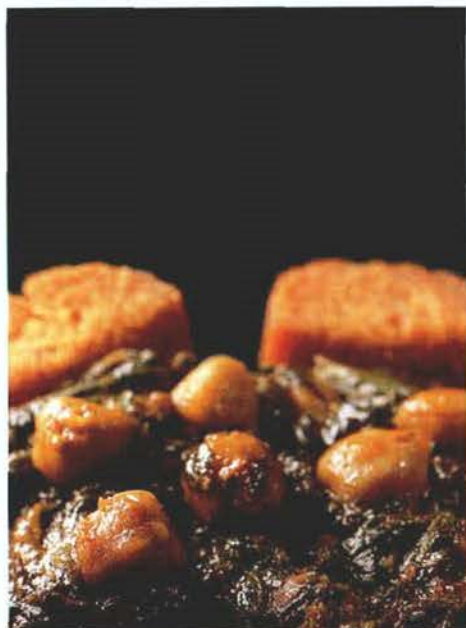
NOISY SNAILS

A strange breathy sound can be heard in springtime around Seville's Plaza de Alfalfa, starting up at dusk and going on well into the night. This characteristic sound emanates from people eating *caracoles* (snails), a favorite local tapa much in evidence in this district's 34 tapa locales that line streets thronged with lively eaters-out. At times, the sucking and chewing seems almost synchronized, creating a sort of rhythmic, sequential soundtrack. Sevillenos love this curious tapa's special sauce, spiced with cumin, coriander, cloves and pimentón that is sometimes slightly piquant. Neither flesh, fish nor fowl, snails enjoy the prestige of a sort of terrestrial seafood here. Aficionados can tell the variety of a snail at a glance by the stripes on its shell and its size. Several different varieties are eaten in Seville, such as the *blanquillo* and the *burgao*, sourced from southern regions like Almería, though the favorites are the ones from Lebrija, in Seville province itself. Pale colored and fine striped, they are eaten between April and June. Snails are still available outside that season in the form of *cabrillas*, which are larger and coarser-fleshed, mostly brought in from Morocco. The recipe that Jose

Romero Garrido prepares every day at Casa Antonio Los Caracoles follows his grandmother's recipe to the letter. It was she who first established this taberna's reputation for unbeatable *caracoles* 46 years ago. Nowadays, from spring on, they serve up to 200 pounds of this legendary family dish every day, always a heat-beating chilled beer on the side. The sometimes deafening noise produced by people eating *caracoles* is a sound that Romero knows very well indeed. As he explains, "Though the more refined use cocktail sticks, they taste best when you eat them with your fingers." The secret of his recipe is skimming the cooking snails punctiliously before saucing them, and the clever combination of spices in the sauce. That's what all the noise is about.



José Romero Garrido and his team at Casa Antonio



As opposed to the superb primary ingredients used in other regions of Spain, Seville's tapas are the product of a subsistence economy which has had to rely heavily on creativity.

Garbanzos con espinacas

Chickpeas and fresh greens

Ingredients serves about 4: 300 gr/10 oz cooked chickpeas; 1 kg/2lb fresh spinach;

2 slices fried bread; 1 onion; 1 head garlic; parsley; *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) and salt.

Boil the spinach in water with a pinch of salt. Drain well and set aside.

Using a pestle and mortar, crush the fried bread with two tablespoons of chickpeas to form a paste. Gently fry the peeled garlic and chopped onion until golden, then add a little *pimentón*, followed by the bread and chickpea paste, the drained spinach, the parsley and the remaining chickpeas. Check for salt, then allow to cook gently for 15 minutes. Serve warm.

Try it at: Casablanca,
Zaragoza, 20.
Tel: 954 22 24 98 (Map N°.6)



The little whitewashed alleys of the Barrio de Santa Cruz provide the picturesque backdrop to the creative, stimulating approach to food which is the tapeo.



public. The event has since grown to double its original number of collaborators, so that over 40 professional tapa cooks now get together in the Palacio de Congresos y Exposiciones exhibition center every February, creating an event that attracts thousands of tapa enthusiasts and professed foodies. The fair's high point is the investiture of award-winning cooks into the Order of the Tapa and their presentation with a giant fork and spoon. Rows of stalls provide opportunities to taste such traditional dishes as the legendary gazpacho and its close relation *ajoblanco* (cold almond soup with garlic, grapes, oil and water), and the elaborate *tortilla Sacromonte* (Ham omelet enriched with pig's or lamb's brains or sweetbreads), a dish originally from Granada. While the Feria de la Tapa is an annual event, Seville's restaurateurs play a major role in preserving authentic flavors on a daily basis. Professional cooks are seeking ways of pushing this gastronomic tradition forward and giving tapas a new edge. This is going on in restaurants both in the city center—Casablanca, la Taberna del Alabardero, Infanta are some examples—and in the suburbs,

WEB SITES

Tapas

www.atapear.com

A 'tapa culture' web site, full of information about the history of the tapa, a guide to over 1,500 establishments all over Spain, 200 recipes, advice on el tapeo, and a lexicon. (Spanish)

www.acraba.com/tapeandoporseville

The web site of a specialist publication (one of several) about the tapa locales of Seville and its province. It gives details of over 60 establishments organized by district. (Spanish)

www.elcomensal.com

A web site backed by the Asociación Empresarial de Hostelería de Seville (Seville hospitality industry's business association), about where to eat tapas, organized according to location and specialties. It provides a helpful map. (English, Spanish)

Tourism

www.andalucia.com

The Andalusian Tourist Office's web site gives information of use and interest to tourists about each of Andalusia's provinces, including maps and itineraries, hotels and tourist information offices. (English, Spanish)

www.turismoSeville.org

Seville Provincial Council's tourist web site gives information about tourist attractions and services in the province, including selected restaurant and accommodation listings. (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish)

www.turismo.Seville.org

The city of Seville's Tourism Consortium's web site provides information categorized as follows: what to visit, culture, accommodation, gastronomy and tapas, sports center, useful addresses. It also includes a section aimed at professionals in the tourist industry, and a press dossier in pdf format (English, German, Portuguese, Spanish)

most of the exponents being people with many years of experience in the professional kitchen.

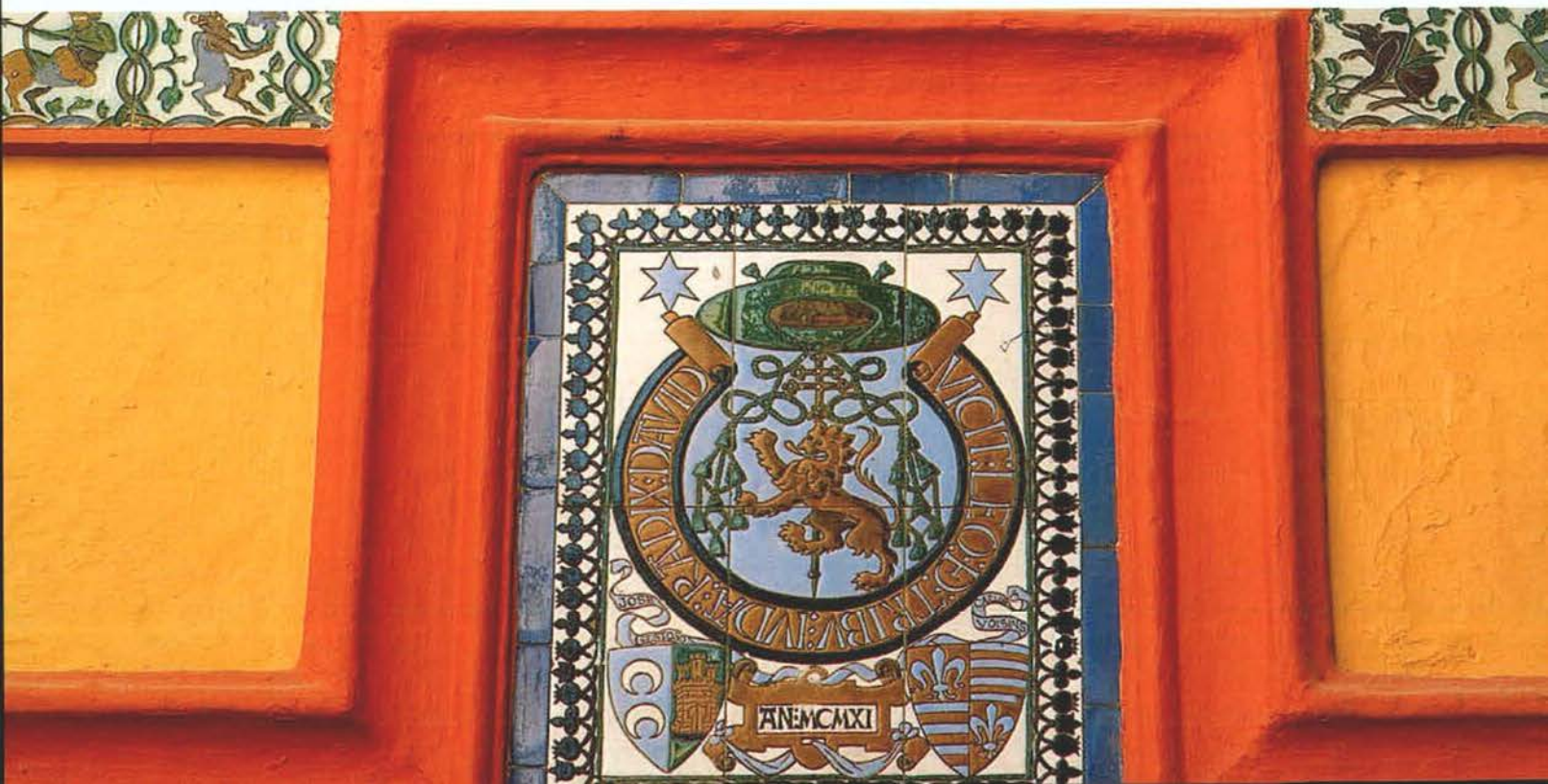
Enrique Becerra epitomizes the spirit of adventure that characterizes Seville's contemporary take on tapas. While remaining true to his family business' traditional base, the tradition in question being particularly Andalusí, his little tapas bar, barely 7 m/20 ft long, has become a place of pilgrimage. His *carrillada de puerco ibérico* (Ibérico pig's cheek), *chocos con alauçiles* (squid with artichokes), *albóndigas de cordero con hierbabuena* (lamb meatballs with mint), and *aliño de aguacate* (dressed avocado) are still redolent of the flavors of the past, yet there is no question but that they venture into new territory. His

restaurant, mentioned in several novels by Arturo Perez Reverte (*La piel del tambor* and *El oro del rey* among them), the latest recruit to Spain's Real Academia de la Lengua, changes its *pregón* daily, presenting contemporary reinterpretations of old convent and Arabic-Andalusian recipes. His latest groundbreaker is a combination of *menudo* (tripe, often cooked with chickpeas) and foie gras. He explains that he always takes a traditional classic as his starting point. "It may well be true that Seville's tapa cuisine emerged from the need to capitalize on cheap primary materials, but that's not something we feel we have to make a feature of. We are in competition with franchises and newcomers, so our

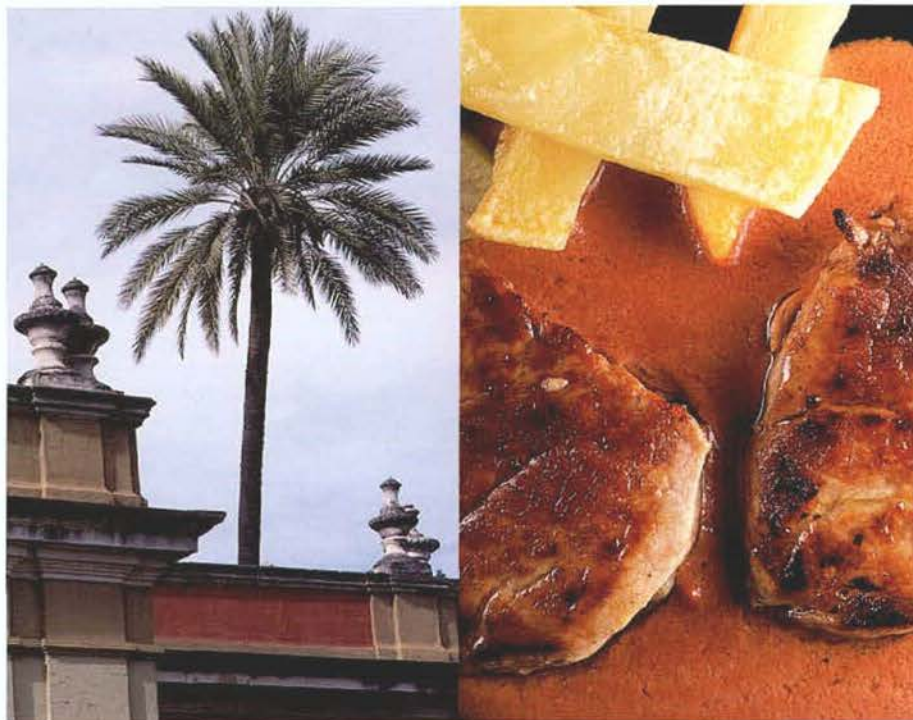
tapas have to be a quality product. There's an ongoing demand for the tapas the public have always known and loved, both in their original form and in evolved versions. Our customers decide for themselves what they want to eat—it's a case of market forces."

Ana G. Vitiñes is a journalist and author who specializes in travel and food. She is a regular contributor to the Spanish media, and is also a tourism and gastronomy marketing consultant.

Editor's note: We thank Enrique Becerra for his kind help in photographing these tapas.



'Little' these dishes may be, but they exemplify clever combinations of culinary techniques and ingredients of diverse cultural origins.



Punta de solomillo

Beef sirloin with garlic and white wine

Ingredients serves about 4: 4 sirloin steaks; 3 large cloves garlic; 1 wine-glass fino sherry, salt, olive oil.

Cut the steaks into bite-sized pieces and marinate them in salt and a chopped clove of garlic. Peel the remaining garlic cloves and cut into slivers, then cook them gently until golden in the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the meat, turn up the heat, and fry for two minutes. When the pieces are almost done, add the wine and allow the liquid to reduced slightly. Serve hot.

Try it at: Sol y Sombra, Castilla, 151, Triana. Tel: 954 33 39 35 (Map N°.8)

Cabrillas y caracoles

Local snails, served with a spicy, piquant sauce

Ingredients serves about 4: 1 kg/2 lb snails; 1 onion; 1 green pepper; 2 tomatoes; 2 cloves garlic; 2 thick slices of bread; cumin; white pepper; pimentón (both types—sweet and hot), nutmeg; fresh coriander; white wine (optional); olive oil; salt.

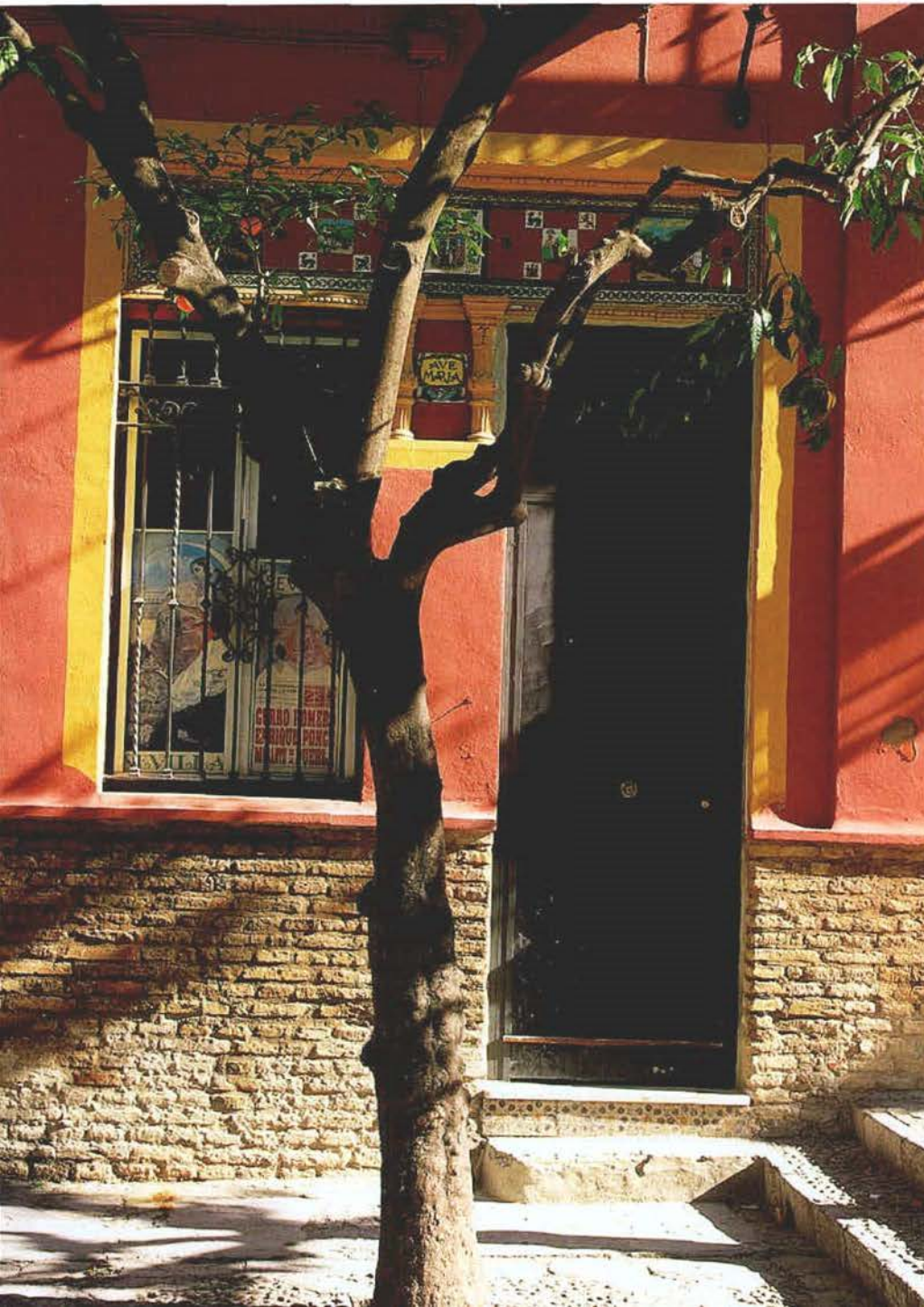
Wash the snails carefully and place in a pan with cold water to cover. Bring to a boil and skim off the scum, repeating the skimming process until no more is produced. Meanwhile, fry the garlic and the bread in the oil until golden, then remove from the frying pan and

set aside. To the same oil, add first the chopped green pepper and onion, then the roughly chopped tomatoes and the white wine, and cook gently for 10 minutes. Crush the fried bread and garlic together using a pestle and mortar, adding the spices to taste. Stir the resulting paste into the contents of the frying pan, then add this to the pot of snails. Serve hot.

Try it at: Casa Antonio Los Caracoles, Perez Galdos, 13, Alfalfa. Tel: 954 21 31 72 (Map N°.10)



Eating tapas in Seville isn't like going to lunch at a restaurant. A tapa outing is an event governed by a protocol of its own, of which walking about forms an integral part.



Seville's Essential Tapa Districts

Triana - Los Remedios

Between Isabel II and San Telmo bridges and stretching along the other side of the River Guadalquivir as far as Los Remedios (a modern residential area) is a tapas area that fewer tourists know about. The individual character of the locales and their specialties attracts a faithful following.

Los Cuevas

Virgen de las Huertas, 1. Tel: 954 27 80 42
Specialties: *alcachofas guisadas* (braised artichokes); *revuelto de tagarinas* (eggs scrambled with cardoons); *pimientos asados con melva* (roast peppers with bullet tuna); *espárragos con huevo cuajado* (asparagus in savory custard)

Casa Ruperto

Avda. San Cecilia, 2. Tel: 954 08 66 94
Specialties: *codornices en salsa* (quails in sauce), *cabrillas y caracoles* (assorted snails), *pringá* (sandwich or canapé of cocido meats)

Las Golondrinas

Antillano Campos, 26. Tel: 954 33 16 26
Specialties: *alliños* (dressed dishes) of *zanahorias* (carrots), *alcachofas* (artichokes), *berenjenas* (aubergines); *caballito de jamón* (cured ham on toast canapé)

La Albahaca

Pagés del Corro, 119. Tel: 954 27 41 63
Specialties: *merluza al perfume de romero* (rosemary-aromatised hake) *venado a la miel* (honeyed venison), *cazón en adobo* (marinated tope shark)

La Alfalfa

This little part of town, right next to La Judería, the old Jewish Quarter, and contained within the area between Señor de la Pasión, San Pedro and San Leandro Pilatos plazas, is dense with convents and noble houses, among which are venues regarded as ancestral sites by devotees of *el tapeo*, whom they attract in droves.



El Bacalao

Plaza Ponce de León, 15.

Tel: 954 21 66 70

Specialties: *bacalao con tomate* (salt cod in tomato sauce); *croquetas de bacalao* (salt cod croquettes) *tortillitas de bacalao* (salt-cod fritters)

El Refugio

Huelva, 5.

Specialties: *potaje de garbanzos* (chick-pea stew), *riñones al jerez* (kidneys cooked in sherry)

Becerrita

Recaredo, 9. Tel: 954 41 20 57

Specialties: *croquetas de cola de toro* (ox-tail croquettes); *ensaladilla de langostinos* (shrimp salad); *manos de cerdo estofados* (braised pig's trotters)

Quitapesares

Plaza Jerónimo de Córdoba, 3.

Tel: 954 22 93 85

Specialties: *chacinas* (charcuterie); *quesos* (cheeses)

Santa Cruz

This is Seville's most 'typical' quarter, famous for its delightful, plant-filled patios and picturesque alleyways. It is charged with literary and historical significance, whose flavor is an integral part of its classic, and inevitably tourist-attracting, tapas itinerary.

Hostería del Laurel

Plaza de los Venerables, 6.

Tel: 954 22 02 95

Specialties: *cola de toro* (oxtail), *chacinas de Huelva* (Huelva charcuterie); *fritura de pescados* (assorted fried fish)

Modesto

Cano y Cueto, 5. Tel: 954 68 11

Specialties: *punta de solomillo* (marinated sirloin steak pieces)

Las Teresas

Santa Teresa, 2. Tel: 954 21 30 69

Specialties: *Sangre encebollada* (black pudding in onion dressing); *pavías de merluza* (fried hake in batter); *croquetas de chorizo* (paprika sausage croquettes) *que-*



so con cabello de ángel (cheese with pumpkin compote)

La Judería

Cano y Cueto, 13. Tel: 954 41 20 52

Specialties: *pimientos rellenos* (stuffed peppers); *bacalao en aceite de oliva* (salt cod in olive oil)

Macarena - Miraflores

This popular tapas route, taking in good, traditional establishments, is focused on the famous church of La Macarena, and extends as far as the beginnings of the northern Seville barrios.

Yebra

Medalla Milagrosa, 13. Tel: 954 35 10 07

Specialties: *albóndigas* (meatballs) *corvina en salsa de gambas* (meagre in prawn sauce)

Bienmesabe

Macarena, 8.

Tel: 954 90 73 10

Specialties: *macarenito* (pork loin and cured ham); *bienmesabe* (marinated fish)

Chacinas

Pork charcuterie assortment

Ingredients serves about 4: 150 gr/5 oz serrano ham; 150 gr/5 oz cured pork loin; 100 gr/3 oz chorizo

Cut into thin, even slices and arrange as an assortment

Try it at: Casa Román, Plaza de los Venerables, 1. Tel: 954 22 84 83 (Map Nº.3)

It is *las frituras* (fried morsels cooked in eggless batter and famously light, golden and flavor packed) that are the stars of Seville's tapa repertoire.



Cazón en adobo

Fried tope shark in oregano marinade

Ingredients serves about 4: 400 gr/14 oz tope, diced; 3 cloves garlic, crushed; pinch of oregano; 2 bay leaves; sweet pimentón (paprika), wine vinegar, juice of half a lemon; semolina flour; salt; olive oil.

The day before you need this tapa, prepare a marinade of lemon juice, bay leaves, oregano, pimentón, salt and vinegar to taste and macerate the fish in it overnight. Just before serving, heat plenty of oil in a frying pan. Remove the fish from the marinade, shake off excess liquid, coat in semolina flour, and cook in the very hot oil until golden. Serve immediately. This recipe can also be made with swordfish.

Try it at: Bodega Góngora, Albareda, 5, Centro-Sierpes. Tel: 954 22 11 14 (Map N°.9)

El Esparragal

San Luis, 123.

Tel: 954 37 14 30

Specialties: *croquetas* (croquettes), *acedías* (plaice)

Bodegas San Lorenzo

Plaza de San Lorenzo, 7.

Tel: 954 38 15 58

Specialties: *bacalao con tomate* (salt cod in tomato sauce) *caña de lomo* (cured pork loin)

Avenida

This route through Seville's district of monuments and important buildings, including the Ayuntamiento (City Hall), and extending as far as the Maestranza bullring, is an essential: it takes in some of the best examples of traditional and creative tapas. With its dozens of not-to-be-missed ports of call, this is the perfect beginner's tapa route.

Enrique Becerra

Gamazo, 2.

Tel: 954 21 30 49

Specialties: *cazón con patatas* (tope shark with potatoes); *croquetas de rabo de toro* (oxtail croquettes)

La Flor de Toranzo

Casa Trifón, Jimios, 1.

Tel: 954 22 93 15

Specialties: *chacinas* (charcuterie) *tacos de bonito* (bonito chunks) *emparedado de roquefort y morcilla* (black pudding and Roquefort sandwich)

Bodeguita de Antonio Romero

Gamazo, 16.

Tel: 954 21 41 78

Specialties: *pringá* (sandwich or canapé of cocido meats); *mojama* (dried roe or tuna flesh, served in wafer-thin slices); *huevas de bacalao* (cod roe)

La Isla

Arfe, 25.

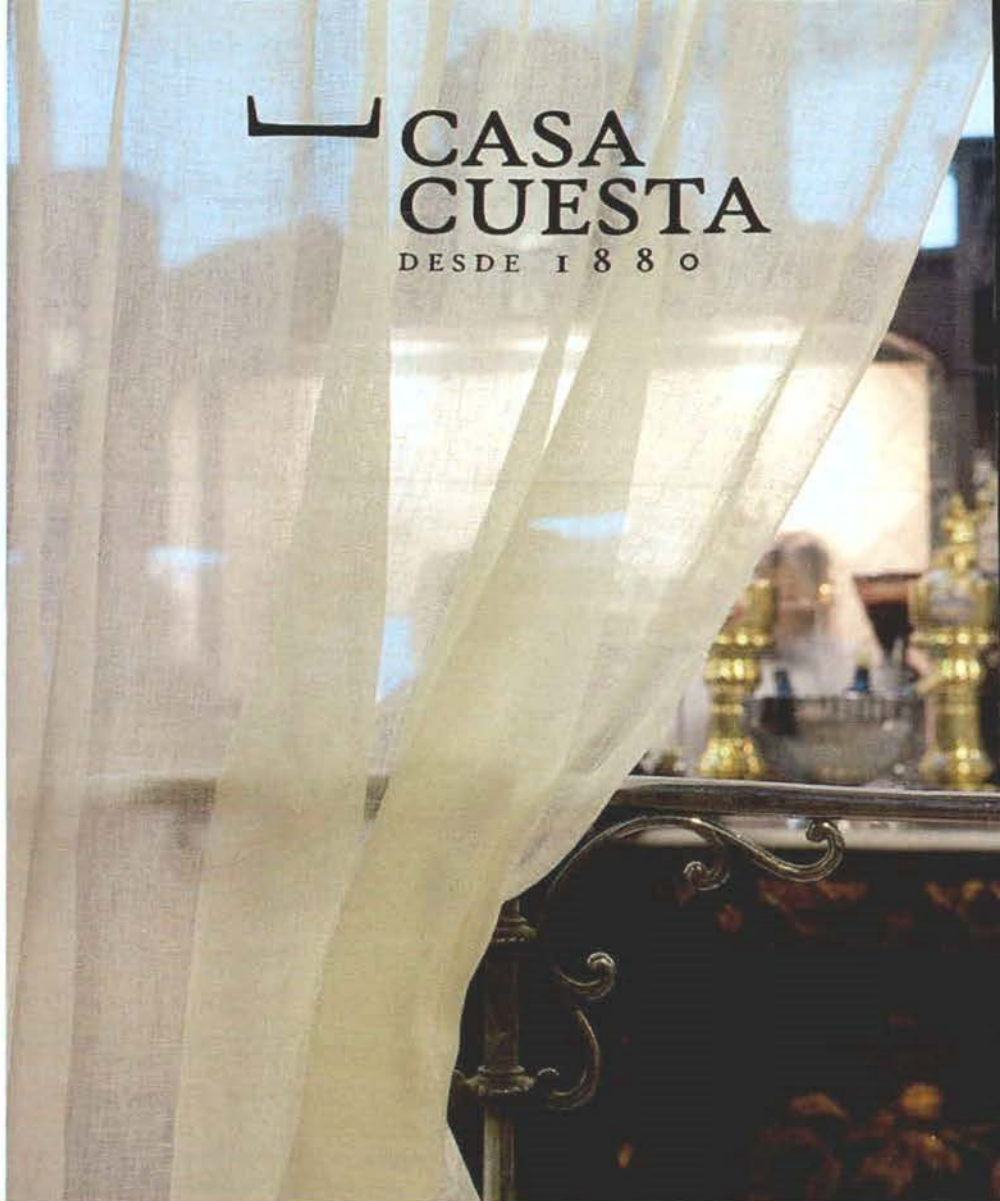
Specialties: *puntillitas de pescado* (assorted fried fish); *cazón en adobo* (marinated tope shark)

Bodegón Torre del Oro

Santander, 15.

Tel: 954 22 08 80

Specialties: *cola de toro* (oxtail); *urta a la roteña* (blue spotted sea bream in spicy tomato sauce); *pavía de bacalao* (fried battered cod)



CASA
CUESTA
DESDE 1880

For the true Sevillano, eating tapas at some of the city's 4,000 bars, mesones and tabernas is more than just an amusing way of having lunch or dinner.



Tortillita de camarones

Chickpea flour fritter of Guadalquivir shrimp and onion

Ingredients serves about 4: 350 gr/12 oz chickpea flour; 250 gr/9oz shrimp; 1 onion, chopped; parsley to taste; 1 tsp. pimentón (Spanish paprika), salt, olive oil.

Boil the shrimp in water. Place the flour in a bowl with the parsley and salt and add enough of the shrimp water to make a thin paste. In a small frying pan, heat a little olive oil until smoking hot, then pour in a little of the mixture, tilting the pan to spread it, and then place a tablespoonful of onion and another of shrimp on top. Fry until golden and serve immediately.

Try it at: Bodega Belmonte, Mateos Gago, 24 (Map N°.2)

Center - Sierpes

Adjoining General Polavieja is Seville's most famous street, calle Sierpes. Its side streets contain many excellent tapas locales, from which delicious smells waft, tucked in among authentic fan and shawl shops.

Barbiana

Albareda, 11. Tel: 954 21 12 39

Specialties: *papas con chocos* (potatoes with squid); *puntillitas de pescado* (assorted fried fish); *tortillita de camarones* (shrimp fritter)

El Portón

General Polavieja, 20. Tel: 954 21 40 20

Specialties: *menudo* (tripe); *lomo a la pimienta* (peppered pork loin)

Don Carlos

General Polavieja, 18. Tel: 954 22 59 79

Specialties: *tagarinas con huevo* (cardoons with egg); *riñones al jerez* (kidneys cooked in sherry)

La Viuda

General Polavieja, 10

Specialties: *cazón encabollado* (tope shark soured with onion); *habas con jamón* (broad beans braised with cured ham)



International Gastronomic Meetings
What's Cooking in
Spain?

TEXT

CARLOS TEJERO

TRANSLATION

JENNY McDONALD

PHOTOS

JAVIER ROJAS/MADRID FUSION

At gastronomic events it is not unusual to spot the occasional star of worldwide cuisine. What is unusual is to see a whole constellation of them. But Michel Bras, Marc Veyrat, Heinz Winkler, Alfonso Iaccarino, Charlie Trotter, Tetsuya Wakuda, Ferran Adrià and Juan Mari Arzak and other great cooks from Mexico, Thailand, Turkey and Spain were all in Madrid for three days in January to present their respective culinary philosophies. The occasion was the 1st International Summit of Gastronomy that welcomed 500 participants. "Everyone is fascinated by what's going on in Spain," said Tetsuya Wakuda. "I'm intrigued by innovation and, every time I come I find something new or surprising. There's a constant revolution going on."

From left to right: Andoni Luis Aduriz, Sergi Arola, Enrique Dacosta





Ferran Adrià



Charlie Trotter

Spain is in the midst of its second gastronomic revolution, stirred up by Ferran Adrià. With no end in sight, the shock waves are spreading well beyond the Spanish borders. But this comes in the wake of events in the 1970s, when Juan Mari Arzak—a chef trained in the traditions of Basque cooking—became interested in the “nouvelle cuisine” piloted by Paul Bocuse. Not only did this lead him to change his personal style but he also renovated Basque cuisine, which had always been at the forefront of culinary matters in Spain. That was Spain’s first gastronomic revolution. It may not have had much of an impact internationally but it certainly fired Spanish cooks with enthusiasm. From the Basque Country, the fervor spread first to Catalonia and then to the rest of the Spanish regions, actively supported by the Spanish public, whose gastronomic culture was increasing in parallel with their purchasing power. New restaurants mushroomed, and specialist gastronomic journals and guides appeared. In 1999, Rafael Garcia Santos decided it was time to channel all this new interest and he created *Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía* (The Best of Gastronomy) in San Sebastian, which soon came to be an event not to be missed for Spanish gastronomes (see box on page 88).

Then, in the 1990s, Adrià turned the rules of “nouvelle cuisine” upside down with his deconstructions, hot jellies, etc. Inevitably, his initial creations were the butt of much criticism but they gradually sparked interest among the best of the Spanish chefs. The Adrià phenomenon renovated Catalanian cuisine, just as Arzak had renovated Basque cuisine. But the effects of the explosion went further this time. French cooks heard it and, as a result, over the last five years, gastronomists the world over have been intrigued by the culinary goings-on in Spain. They started coming to see for themselves and have not only found seething activity in the kitchens but also a hotbed of ideas and experiments. Gastronomy has become fashionable, with specialist sections in the press, cooking programs on television, a host of publications, etc. And gastronomic events have started to proliferate: the World Summit in Seville (September 2002), San Sebastian (November 2002), Madrid Fusión (January 2003), the Forum de Vic (February 2003, see box on page 89).

Fusion of Delights

The admiration felt by many of the world’s greatest chefs for Ferran Adrià has brought him a great following.

His collaboration enabled the organizers of Madrid Fusión (Grupo Restauradores, publishers of food magazines and guides, and Grupo PCYC, an advertising, communication and consultancy company in the field of gastronomy) to create a real International Summit of Gastronomy. Never before had an event of this type, outside France, brought together so many Michelin stars. The summit began by paying tribute to the fathers of nouvelle cuisine—Paul Bocuse, Pierre Troisgros and Michel Guerard. Their French colleagues, Michel Bras and Marc Veyrat, showed that creativity could take many different forms. Bras’ cuisine is characterized by simplicity and the use of local ingredients. He prepared on his own, without assistants, simple dishes such as “Braised monkfish in black olive sauce with mustard stalks”. In contrast, Veyrat’s cooking is complex and technical. Surrounded by cooks and artifacts, he prepared a “Pumpkin soup with virtual bacon” and “Nuggets of pigeon with slightly acid grapefruit juice and aniseed foam”. This audacious chef stands out because he uses no flour, oil or butter in his sauces, replacing them with vegetable stock, milk or herbal or vegetable infusions. (“Hollyhocks give a gelatin that has the same effect as agar-agar”).



Marc Veyrat

Like Bras, Carme Ruscalleda ("Monkfish in rancid Ibérico ham stock with peas in two textures") stresses the use of native ingredients to give added personality to her cooking. "There's nothing sadder than a dish that tastes the same in Girona and in New York," she says. Joan Roca praised the confit technique as a way of preserving the juiciness and flavor of food products while also enhancing their keeping qualities. "Slow cooking over hours has the same effects as pasteurization." Manuel de la Osa proved with his "Juice of cheese with truffles, hazelnuts and cocoa" that imagination is still alive on the plains of central Spain. The German Heinz Winkler ("When I'm in Spain, I have a dish of olives for breakfast every day") insisted that hard work and discipline were essential before creativity can develop. When asked for advice for young cooks just starting out, he surprised his audience by recommending the old-fashioned method of "staying at home and studying."

New Generation

Andoni Luis Aduriz, Sergi Arola and Enrique Dacosta represent the latest generation of Spanish cooks (see Spain Gourmetour No. 53, 54) and their creativity is more the result of knowledge than of intuition. These three chefs performed simultaneously. First Dacosta, in keeping with his Mediterranean heritage, demonstrated his thorough mastery of rice, although his fame is based on dishes such as "Oysters with a green apple granita and a swig of Albariño". Andoni Luis Aduriz spoke at length about foie, sounding sometimes like a forensic expert, "The vacuoles are cavities in the cytoplasm of a cell that store the fat in the liver. When removed from the pan, the internal temperature of the liver should be 58° C/136° F; it immediately rises two degrees more and this temperature should not be exceeded because, if we look at a sample under a microscope, we can see that at 60° C/140° F the vacuoles are at their smallest so the texture of the liver is ideal.

Though it might seem hard to believe, a couple of degrees can make all the difference to the texture." Sergi Arola was spokesperson for the three of them, comparing his role with that of the leader of a jazz group. "We are now going to do something completely different to what was planned. Yesterday we decided to improvise, so today we shall see what we can do in this jam session." First, they selected three members of the audience to form a jury. Then the three cooks prepared one dish each, with a maximum of three ingredients (the idea probably came from Aduriz, see Spain Gourmetour No. 53). The ingredients allowed included foie gras, cockscombs, rice, an infusion of meadowsweet and cream of sea urchins. Then the cooks combined the nine ingredients at random forming nine different dishes ("Foie gras with cockscombs and cream of sea urchins", "Creamy rice, with an infusion of meadowsweet and foie gras", etc.), all of which were then tried out by the improvised jury. The



From left to right: Francisco Torreblanca, Jordi Butrón, Albert Adrià



Tetsuya Wakuda

result was so satisfactory that one of the judges jokingly accused the cooks of cheating because they knew these ingredients would combine well in groups of three. "Of course we thought they might," said Arola, "because we're cooks. But we couldn't be sure until the dishes were actually tried and tested."

Praise for Produce

The session featuring Tetsuya Wakuda, a Japanese cook who learned his art in Australia, received one of the largest audiences, together with those for Charlie Trotter and Ferran Adrià. Wakuda ("Dublin Bay prawns with marine oil and bitter tea") does not seem too interested in the scientific side of cooking but he showed how careful, intuitive experimentation can lead to the end results that any cook should aim for—a dish with flavor, aroma and texture. "Above all, we must respect the flavor of the fresh product. What the cook should do is bring out the flavor rather than transform it."

Though Wakuda rejects the "fusion" label, he does combine western and oriental techniques and traditional and modern recipes in his creations. "If that's what people call fusion, well fine. All I care about is flavor and I use the ingredients I need, whether they come from France, Japan or Spain." Bras or Arzak defend the cuisine of the land. They are concerned about identity. Wakuda is not. But this is a matter of debate for the cooks. What the rest of us care about is that the two opposing philosophies should produce pleasing results.

The Italian cook, Alfonso Iaccarino, also loves simplicity. He made two pure Mediterranean dishes with pasta, tuna roe and squid. Martín Berasategui was unlucky. His "Apple sorbet with raw pea tears" did not come out right, the result of haste and an incorrectly closed bottle of oil. Pedro Subijana gave a lesson on how to concentrate the flavors of the sea and the soil in his "Scallop, cardoon and artichokes with uncooked egg custard". Salvador Gallego chose

to celebrate the best of classic Spanish cooking with "Madrid-style quail in pepitoria sauce". And Juan Mari Arzak spoke at length and with enthusiasm about all manner of things, including cooking and shopping. "I take my inspiration from the people in the street. I like to listen to them talking, even if what they're saying has nothing to do with food." Charlie Trotter turned out to be the most practiced speaker amongst the cooks. He said his prime objective, obviously, was for his customers to leave his restaurant feeling content, not because they had eaten a large meal or drunk a good wine but because they had discovered new flavors and textures. "A meal with taste should not be a heavy meal." Trotter explained that his new approach to cooking is not to cook. "I have always thought cooking vegetables is much more interesting than cooking fish or meat. There are more flavors to discover. My challenge now is not to cook vegetables but to prepare them raw. Not because I'm specially interested in healthy food—which I

MADRID FUSION



Parallel Events

Alongside the talks and demonstrations given by the great cooks, other interesting activities were also on the program of the Summit. A debate was held on the great European hams. ("When faced by an Ibérico ham, all we cooks can do is turn off the gas," said Carme Ruscalleda). Is it possible to give quality food to large groups? The debate on New catering techniques showed that it was, thanks to the new technologies (automatic serving systems, ultra-freezing equipment, etc.). "Can we offer quality dishes, for example, to wedding parties or in congresses? Yes, but it is impossible for really large numbers," said Juli Soler, who is responsible for catering in El Bulli. "It is very easy to criticize the food served on planes, for example, but if you study the way in which airline catering services work, you reach the conclusion that it is impossible to do it better." And there were debates on desserts, olive oil, molecular gastronomy ("Physics and chemistry at the service of cooking" as defined by Hervé. This, a scientist "with no idea about cooking" who nevertheless acts as an oracle for the great chefs), brandies, cigars, the aesthetics of eating...

Wine did not receive as much attention as it deserved. The Summit might well have included a section on marriages between wines and food, especially in view of the im-

portance given to such partnerships by chefs such as Wakuda and Trotter (both of whom, strangely enough, come from what the wine sector calls "the new world"). But at least there was wine for the tasting committee. A panel of experts (including the winemakers Carlos Falcó and Franco Martinetti, the journalists Michel Bettane-*Revue du Vin de France*, Thomas Mathews-*Wine Spectator* and Victor de la Serna-*El Mundo, Decanter*) declared after blind tests that the red Rento 2000 by Agricultura y Bodega Renacimiento de Olivares (Ribera del Duero) was the best Spanish wine priced at under 30 euros. Within this same limit, the contest amongst the best white wines from the "new" and the "old" worlds was won by Deponcins Condrieu 99 (France) and, for reds, the prize went to Aalto PS 99 (Ribera del Duero).

www.madridfusion.net

am—but because I want to offer delicious, surprising vegetable dishes." But he clarified that cooking begins at 47°C/116°F. "Foods subjected to temperatures above this lose most of their nutrients and taste." Up to that limit, according to Trotter, food can be considered raw.

Ferran Adrià did not cook but his talk focused on a number of interesting topics. This Catalan's current concern is to document his work. This may seem obvious but few chefs do it because they prefer to concentrate on inventing new dishes. "Unless you write things down," he explained, "you lose track of your own progress and, as the years go by, you forget whether you have ever made a dish and, if you did, when or how often. It's very important, firstly, to keep a record of what you yourself do, and then of what other cooks do, because that's the only way to be objective in such a subjective matter as cooking."

Adrià started by talking about basic aspects such as the different types of cuisine—traditional, classic, contemporary, fusion and avant-garde. "What is not yet being done. Some people say my cooking is avant-garde but that's not true. My cuisine is contemporary. Avant-garde cuisine is what you will be doing one day," he said, addressing the younger members of his audience. He finished by talking about the evolution of sauces in El Bulli, which amounted to a brief history of his restaurant. "We are now known for our innovation and creativity, and people think we were always like this. But, at the start in El Bulli, we used to make classic sauces, such as Périgieux.

The first thing a cook has to do is to be honest and sincere. Otherwise, things won't work out." Adria challenged his audience to disagree with him when he said, "Nobody in Spain today questions the use of olive oil as a basic ingredient. This seems obvious for such a traditional Spanish product. But before 1980, only a few restaurants used olive oil." Nobody contradicted him.

But the summit was not all creativity and exercises in culinary innovation. Hiroo Miki, Patricia Quintana, Tasanai Phian-o-Pas and Gönül Paksoy, from Japan, Mexico, Thailand and Turkey respectively, showed us modestly—with no TV cameras or press conferences—that sometimes in the western world of Michelin stars, we use the adjectives "imaginative" and "original" too freely.

"On the last day of the event, the organizers provided each participant with a book containing all the recipes conceived by the invited chefs."*

Carlos Tejero is a journalist and coordinator of Spain Gourmetour.

**Editor's note: Any similarity to real life is purely coincidental!*

Despite the extraordinary resemblance, Spain Gourmetour magazine has not been involved in the design of this book in any way.



F Ò R U M G A S T R O N Ò M I C D E V I C

Expanding Horizons

Vic (37 miles north of Barcelona) has long been famed for its charcuterie but it is now fast becoming the gastronomic capital of Catalonia. Since 1999, when the first edition was held, the Fòrum Gastronòmic de Vic has been consolidating its position as a meeting point for great chefs and gastronomes. The event (organized by Fòrum Gastronòmic, a company specializing in gastronomic consultancy) previously centered on Spanish and French cooks, but it is gradually becoming more international, although only at the very highest level.

Those present in February included names such as Juan Mari Arzak, Santi Santamaria (both holders of three Michelin stars), Carme Ruscalleda, Joan Roca, Sergi Arola (two stars), Alain Senderens ("First the wine, then the dish"), the Canadian Anne Desjardins (whose "fusion" menus include references to Spain, such as gazpacho or Arbequina olive oil from Tarragona), and Pierre Herme (a young, French dessert chef who has won a reputation for his

risky combinations such as chocolate with cumin, tomato with vanilla...).

The forum was anything but provincial. Though held in the land of cava, pride of place was taken by champagne. A comparative tasting session was held for two great champagnes – Cristal Roderer and Bollinger – in the presence of the presidents of the two wineries (Jean Claude Rouzaud and Ghislain de Montgolfier, respectively). Other interesting fare focused on wine, the world of truffles, foie gras (given by André Bonnaure, one of the world's leading experts), and the parallel activities ranged from the picturesque (the market with its display of fresh products) to the appetizing (the Table Evenings, when a group of local cooks prepared the dinner) or meditative (the well-stocked library of gastronomic publications).

www.forumgastronomic.com

'GASTRONOMY'S BEST' IN SAN SEBASTIAN

Text: Sonia Ortega

Translation: Hawys Pritchard

Photo: Lo mejor de la gastronomía

In 1995, food critic Rafael García Santos launched a restaurant guide book whose mission was to 'promote artistic cuisines'. Entitled *Lo mejor de la gastronomía* (Gastronomy's Best), it immediately became the bible for those interested in keeping up with the creative cutting-edge of Spanish gastronomy.

In 1999, the mission was pushed forward by the first 'Lo mejor de la gastronomía' conference, which brought together Spain's top chefs—and some from other parts of Europe—prepared to share their approach and technique with the upcoming generation of young, unconventional cooks. The fourth edition of the conference, now firmly established as major, and celebratory, culinary event, took place in November 2002.

The conference was held in Kursaal, the modern, seaside building designed by architect Rafael Moneo, where San Sebastian's International Film Festival is held. It attracted over 600 cooks, most of them young, who took part in a packed four-day program which offered a bit of everything: demonstrations by young 'auteur' chefs; master classes by cutting-edge chefs from Spain, France and Italy; tastings of *pincho*-and-*tapas*-bar 'miniature cuisine'; talks about a future direction for haute cuisine; specialized sessions devoted to *tortillas de patata* (Spanish omelettes), *bacalao* (salt cod), rice dishes and foie gras; overviews of the culinary cultures of Japan and the Mediterranean; talks on technique as a tool for the imagination; competitions. And these were just some facets of a conference which brought a genuine gastronomic dimension to San Sebastian.

A lot of big names were there. As well as Martín Berasategui, to whom a tribute

event was dedicated, other celebrity chefs included Ferran Adrià, star of Catalan restaurant El Bulli (he presented his book *El Bulli* 1983–2002, something of a food publishing ground-breaker, see p. 111); Sergi Arola, of Madrid's La Broche; Spanish National Gastronomy Prize winner Andoni Luis Aduriz, of Mugaritz restaurant (in Rentería, Guipuzcoa); Pedro Subijana of Akelarre in San Sebastian and Hilario Arbelaitz of Zuberoa in Guipúzcoa; Pascal Barbot, designated France's Best Young Cook; the famously innovative Carlo Cracco from Milan; and Maximiliano Alajmo from Padua.

Every day, a packed time table lasting from 10 in the morning to after nine at night offered the chance to watch eight great chefs giving hands-on demonstrations of their latest and most successful creations. These included Subijana's *Burbuja de mariscos* (Seafood Bubble); Arzak's *Círculo de chipirón* (Circle of Squid), Manuel de la Osa of Las Rejas' *Cordero confitado con leche de oveja, con canela, vainilla y romero* (Sheep's milk confit of lamb with cinnamon, vanilla and rosemary), and Davide Scabin of Turin's Al Combal's high-tech *Cyber huevo* (Cyber-egg)....

As you would expect of any Spanish food event, fish played a major role. Arzak and Andoni Aduriz both highlighted how brilliant a combination oily fish and nuts can be, as in Andoni's *Ventresca de atún cubierta de virutas de almendra tierna y macadamias y curry fresco de hierbas silvestres* (Belly of tuna covered with flaked almonds and macadamias with fresh curry of wild herbs). But it wasn't all new wave. As García Santos explained: "What we have chosen to do is to seek out new gastronomic approaches among young chefs in Spain, France and Italy, and promote the next generation. Having said that, the fact that we actively embrace modernity doesn't mean that we forget the importance of traditional popular cuisines, to whose updating and refining we have also dedicated several lectures."

The Spanish *Tortilla de Patata* championship—already a traditional feature of the congress—proves this point, as do sessions such as *La revolución de la hoguera* (Revolution on the Grill) during which Víctor Arguizoniz demonstrated how the traditional Basque method of cooking a la brasa (on a grid over a wood or charcoal fire) can be given contemporary relevance with dishes such as: *Angulas al carbón de encina* (elvers cooked over holm-oak charcoal); *Chuletas a la madera de cepas viejas* (chops cooked over old vine-wood) and *Espardenyes sobre ascuas* (ember-cooked sea cucumbers)

Each of these crammed days was followed by dinner cooked by some of the celebrity speakers, with whom the food could be discussed in detail during after-dinner conversations. There was also the opportunity to taste wines not yet launched on the market at tastings guided by the people who make them: Chivite, Hurtado de Amézaga of Marqués de Riscal, Pablo Álvarez of Vega Sicilia... The judges of the 8th Haute Cuisine Championship, a competition for young chefs, had tough decisions to make: "We nearly came to blows," commented a beaming Ferran Adrià, and Martín Berasategui agreed. This event spots new talent year after year, and serves as a launching pad for Spain's Future Top Chefs.

www.lomejordelagastromia.com



The conference attracted over 600 cooks, most of them young, who took part in a packed four-day program.



RECIPES

10

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Cream of Avocado with Shavings of Foie Gras

Serves 4:

2 large, ripe avocados
1 lime or lemon or mandarin
1 1/4 1/4 cup / 1 3/4 pt chicken stock, with the fat removed
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz single cream
Salt
Maldon salt
Pepper
Tabasco, to taste
Sweet Oloroso sherry for the foie gras

Grate one quarter of the lemon, lime or mandarin, peel and squeeze the juice. Peel the avocados, remove the stones and blend the flesh with the citrus juice and half a teaspoon of the zest.

Bring the stock to the boil, then remove from the heat and dissolve the avocado mixture in it, forming a light cream. Season with salt, pepper and a few drops of Tabasco to taste.



Add the cream and heat without boiling. Serve, with thin slices or flakes of foie gras mi-cuit in the centre. Sprinkle a few drops of sweet Oloroso sherry over the foie gras, followed by a few flakes of Maldon salt. Trickle a little single cream over the cream of avocado.

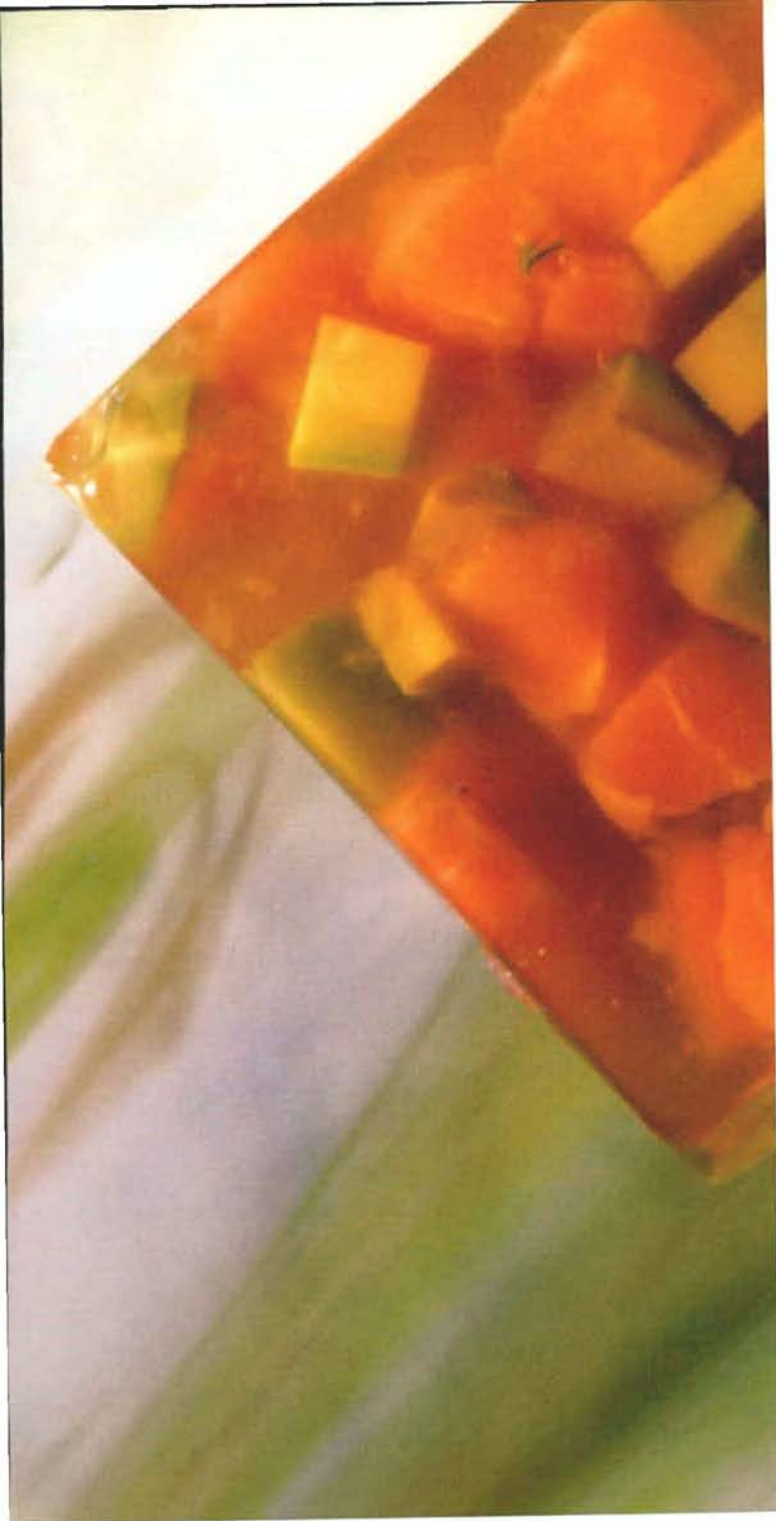
This dish may also be served cold.

Preparation time:

20 – 25 min.

Recommended wine:

The same sherry that is used to enhance the foie gras, that is, a sweet, Oloroso made from Palomino fino and Pedro Ximénez grapes from the DOP Sherry-Xérès-Jerez (Glossary page 135). Its touches of toast, almond and caramel will bring out the best from the cream of avocado, intensifying the flavors.



Mosaic of Avocado and Salmon in Gelatine with Dill Sauce

Serves 4:

3 avocados
Lemon juice
Salt
1 salmon, weighing 800 g /
1 3/4 lb
100 g / 3 1/2 oz rock salt
100 g / 3 1/2 oz sugar
50 g / 2 oz fresh dill,
chopped
1 tsp white pepper
1 sachet gelatine

Dill sauce:

15 ml / 1 tbsp mustard
25 g / 1 oz dill, chopped
1 tsp pepper
15 g / 1/2 oz sugar
75 ml / 5 tbsp mayonnaise
150 ml / 1/2 cup 2 tbsp /
5 fl oz single cream
2-3 tbsp stock, to lighten
the sauce
Salt

Salmon: Mix the salt, sugar, pepper and chopped dill. Bone the salmon and rub with the salt and sugar mixture. Place one fillet on top of the other, with the skin facing out, and place on a bed of the mixture in a deep dish. Cover the dish with aluminium foil, then cover with a board and a weight. Refrigerate for 1-4 days, turning every 24 hours. Scrape the mixture off the fish, and cut into small dice.

Avocados: Peel the avocados and cut into dice the same size as the salmon. Sprinkle with lemon juice and season.

Gelatine: Follow the instructions on the packet to make the jelly, pour a little over the base of a mould and refrigerate until set. Meanwhile, keep the rest of the jelly in a cool place allowing it to take the consistency of egg white but without setting. Place the mixed salmon and avocado dice on top of the set jelly,

then pour the rest around the sides and over the top. Refrigerate until set.

To turn out the jelly, place the mould for a few seconds in hot water, gently pull the jelly away from the sides of the mould then turn out onto a dish. Serve with the dill sauce.

Dill sauce: Mix the mustard, dill, pepper, salt and sugar with the mayonnaise. Add the cream and a little stock.

Preparation time:

50 min. + time in the fridge

Recommended wine:

The wine must not overpower the subtle flavors of the salmon and avocado jelly but should help to lighten the oiliness of the two ingredients. Try a DOP Navarra rosé with a fine, fruity aroma, or perhaps a Penedés cava that will offer both body and a refreshing sparkle.

Avocados with Carpaccio of Cecina



Serves 4:

4 avocados
200 g / 7 oz cecina from León (air cured meat)
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz olive oil
Freshly-ground black pepper
Lemon juice
Maldon salt flakes
Chives
Coriander
Oil for drizzling

Slice the cecina very thinly by machine, or use vacuum-packed cecina slices. Lay them out on a serving-dish, overlapping slightly. Sprinkle with black pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Leave to marinate for half an hour.

Cut the avocado pears in half and remove the stone, taking care not to break the peel. Without going as far as the peel, scoop out the flesh using a teaspoon. Sprinkle the flesh with lemon juice to prevent it from getting brown.

Place balls of avocado flesh inside the avocado shells, interspersed with the cecina marinated in oil. Sprinkle with chopped chives and coriander. Drizzle with a little olive oil then sprinkle a few Maldon salt flakes over. Serve cold.

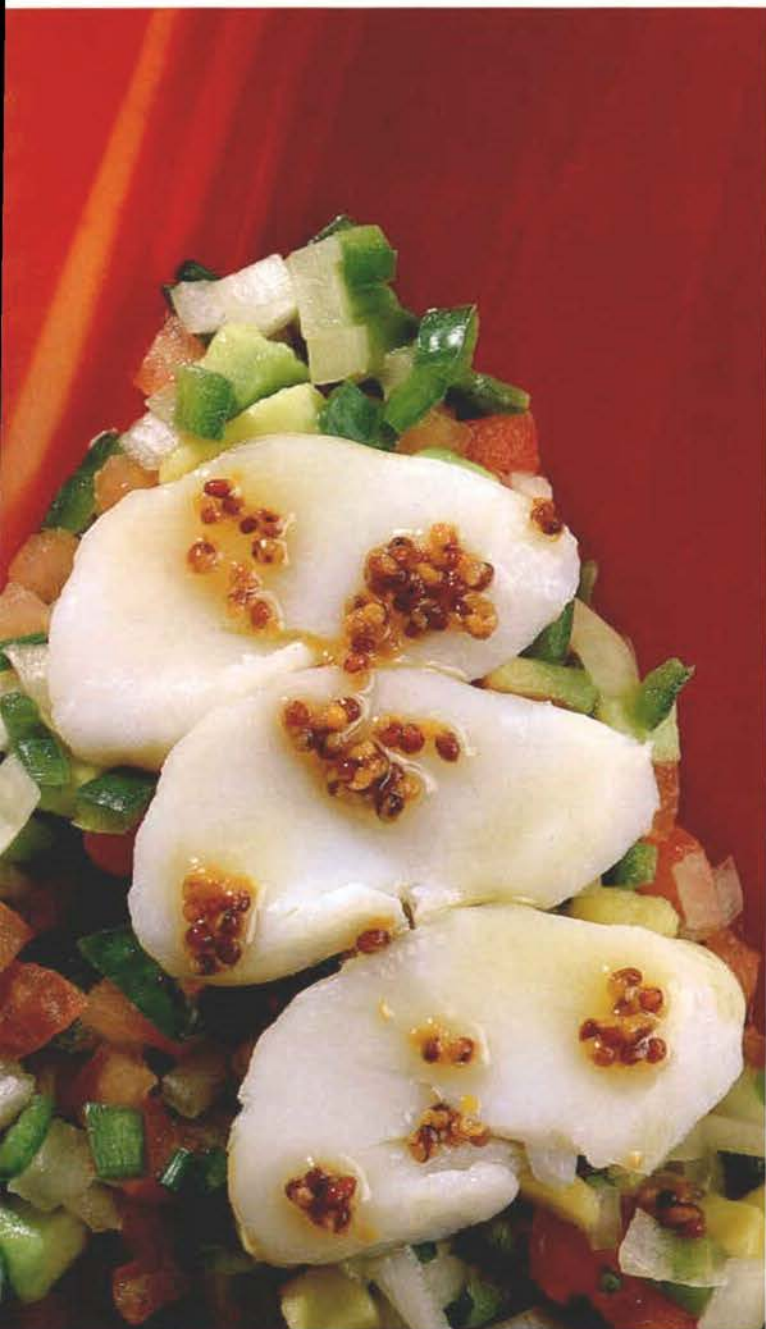
Preparation time:

30 min. + marination time

Recommended wine:

A varietal Mencía from the DOP Bierzo. This is a full-tasting wine with a fresh, fruity aroma and tannins that will team up well with the buttery avocado. A young red Garnacha from the DOP Priorato would also make an excellent choice.

Pipirrana of Avocado with Flakes of Cod en Confit



Serves 4:

Pipirrana:
2 avocados
2 firm, red tomatoes
1 thin green pepper
1 small, young, white onion or 1 spring onion
3 - 4 chives
Half a lemon

Dressing:

75 ml / 5 tbsp olive oil
25 ml / 1/8 cup / 1 fl oz sherry vinegar
1 tsp honey or sugar
Salt
Pepper

Cod:

200 g / 7 oz salt cod, soaked overnight
200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp / 7 fl oz olive oil

Pipirrana: Peel the avocados, chop the flesh very finely and sprinkle with lemon juice. Wash the pepper. Blanch, peel and seed the tomatoes. Peel the onion or spring onion and chop all the vegetables together, including the chives. Mix in a bowl with the avocado, and dress.

Dressing: Dissolve the sugar or the honey, salt and pepper in the vinegar and beat into the oil.

Cod: Dry the cod and place in a pan, covered with oil, over a very low heat. Cook very slowly, without allowing to boil. After half an hour, raise the heat and when the oil is just starting to boil, remove from the heat and leave to cool. Break the cod into flakes and serve with the avocado pipirrana.

Preparation time:

45 min.

Cooking time:

40 min.

Recommended wine:

A light, sharp chacoli from Guetaria with fruity aromas will provide a refreshing contrast to the slow-cooked cod and the raw vegetables in their sweet dressing. If chacoli is not available, try a white Verdejo from the DOP Rueda. This will be equally fresh but less sharp.

Avocado and Prawn Cocktail

Serves 4:

3 large avocados
 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz prawns
 50 ml / 1/4 cup / 2 fl oz olive oil
 1 spring onion
 1 clove garlic
 Salt
 150 ml / 1/2 cup 2 tbsp / 5 fl oz double cream, unsweetened
 75 ml / 5 tbsp olive oil
 Optional: Shredded lettuce

Peel the prawns and remove the heads. Season the bodies and fry in the oil. (The heads can be used to make a stock).

Peel the avocados, remove the stones and crush the flesh with the chopped spring onion, the peeled and finely chopped garlic, the olive oil and the cream to form a velvety smooth purée. Season to taste.

Place shredded lettuce in the base of a cocktail dish (optional) then add alternate layers of prawns and avocado purée. Refrigerate until serving.

Preparation time:

25–30 min.

Recommended wine:

A white DOP Valdeorras made from Godello grapes. Its fine aroma of mountain herbs will enhance the flavor of the prawns and provide the balance needed for the creamy avocado.





Salad of Gulas and Peppers in Arbequina Olive Oil

Serves 4:

2 large, fleshy red peppers
250 g / 9 oz gulas (baby eel substitute)
5 cloves garlic
200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbs / 7 fl oz Arbequina olive oil
1 dried chilli pepper
1 endive
1 very red pomegranate
Salt

Peppers: Wash the peppers, brush with a little oil and roast in the oven for 40 minutes, turning once. Remove from the oven, turn onto a dish and cover with paper to make them sweat and easier to peel. Peel, collecting any juices, and cut into strips. Peel four garlic cloves and slice finely. Fry half of them in half the oil until golden. Leave the oil to cool down a little then in it fry the pepper strips. Add the juices and season with salt.

Gulas: Soak the chilli pepper until soft then cut into rings. Fry the rest of the garlic slices in the rest of the oil, then fry the chilli pepper rings making sure they do not burn. Fry the gulas for one minute, just long enough for them to heat up and become impregnated with oil.

Endive: Soak the endive leaves in water for half an hour then drain, spin to dry and cut into pieces.

Cut the pomegranate in half and remove the grains with a teaspoon. Rub the serving-dish or plates for the salad with the remaining garlic clove cut in half. Arrange on them the endive mixed with the pomegranate. Mix the hot peppers and gulas with all their juices and place on top of the endive. Dress with a little cold virgin olive oil.

Note: The pomegranate and the intensely fruity Arbequina oil bring out the flavor of the peppers and make a pleasant contrast with the slightly bitter endive.

Preparation time:

1 hour

Cooking time:

5 min.

Recommended wine:

A fino from the DOP Sherry-Xérès-Jerez y Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda made from Palomino grapes. This will marry well with the sweetness of the peppers and pomegranate and the dressing.

Cream of Chickpeas with an Egg Parcel and Tears of Picual Olive Oil

Serves 4:

150 g / 5 oz chickpeas
 1 onion
 1 carrot
 1 leek
 3 cloves
 1 Iberico ham bone
 50 ml / 1/4 cup / 2 fl oz Picual olive oil
 50 ml / 1/4 cup / 2 fl oz single cream
 1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup / 2 1/2 pt water
 4 eggs
 Bread crusts
 Basil leaves
 Oil for frying
 Picual olive oil for dressing
 Salt

Place the chickpeas in warm water and leave to soak overnight. Drain and start cooking with the hot water and the washed ham bone. Add the oil. Peel the onion, cut into four and stick the cloves in it. Add to the chickpeas with the sliced leek and carrot, and simmer for 2 hours. Season when the chickpeas are almost cooked. Blend, then strain to give a very thin cream. Check the seasoning and add the cream. Fry the bread crusts and basil leaves. Cut four squares of cling film and place each one over the top of a coffee cup. Press down the middle and break an egg into the hollow. Season, then make small bundles by tying up the film with string, close to the egg. When all the eggs have been wrapped, place the parcels in boiling water for 4 minutes. Remove and unwrap.

Serve the hot cream of chickpeas with an egg in the centre of each dish, with two pieces of fried crust and two fried basil leaves.

Note: With its very fruity, slightly piquant flavor, Picual oil goes well with everything, and in this recipe its smoothness makes it the ideal partner for the creamy chickpeas.

Preparation time:

1 hour

Cooking time:

2.5 hours

Recommended wine:

A red DOP Somontano made from Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo grapes will be sufficiently rich in flavor to be able to compete with the chickpeas. Another possibility would be a young DOP Toro, a powerful, tasty wine with touches of toast that will blend well with the cream.





Fillets of Hake with a Garlic Emulsion and Hojiblanca Oil Sauces

Serves 4:

800 g / 1 3/4 lb fillet of hake
 400 ml / 1 3/4 cup / 14 fl oz Hojiblanca olive oil
 1 head garlic
 3 egg yolks
 Salt
 Pepper

Garlic oil sauce:

100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz Hojiblanca olive oil
 1 clove garlic
 1 tsp paprika, half hot, half sweet

Chive sauce:

Half bundle of chives
 1 sprig parsley
 1 tsp sugar
 Salt
 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz Hojiblanca olive oil

Black olive sauce:

100 g / 3 1/2 oz stoned black olives
 1 tbsp capers
 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz Hojiblanca olive oil
 Half clove garlic

Separate the cloves from the head of garlic and stew, rather than fry, in oil for 1 hour over a very low heat, at less than 100° C/212° F. Remove from the heat, drain and use to garnish. Beat the egg yolks with a whisk in a thick-bottomed pan over a low heat until they double in size. Trickle in half of the oil used to cook the garlic (it should be almost cold) to make a mayonnaise-like emulsion. Season the hake with salt and pepper. Place in a greased ovenproof dish and cover with the garlic emulsion. Bake in the oven for 6 minutes until golden.

Garlic oil sauce: Fry the thinly sliced garlic, remove from the heat and add the paprika. Leave to stand then strain off the oil, leaving behind the sediment.

Chive sauce: Wash the chives and parsley, drain then blend with the oil, sugar and salt.

Black olive sauce: Blend the stoned black olives with the capers, olive oil and garlic.

Spoon a little of each sauce onto the plates, then top with the golden hake fillets fresh from the oven.

Note: Hojiblanca oil from Baena is a very fine oil reminiscent of herbs and green apples. Its fruitiness will enhance the flavors of the different sauces.

Preparation time:

50 min.

Cooking time:

66 min.

Recommended wine:

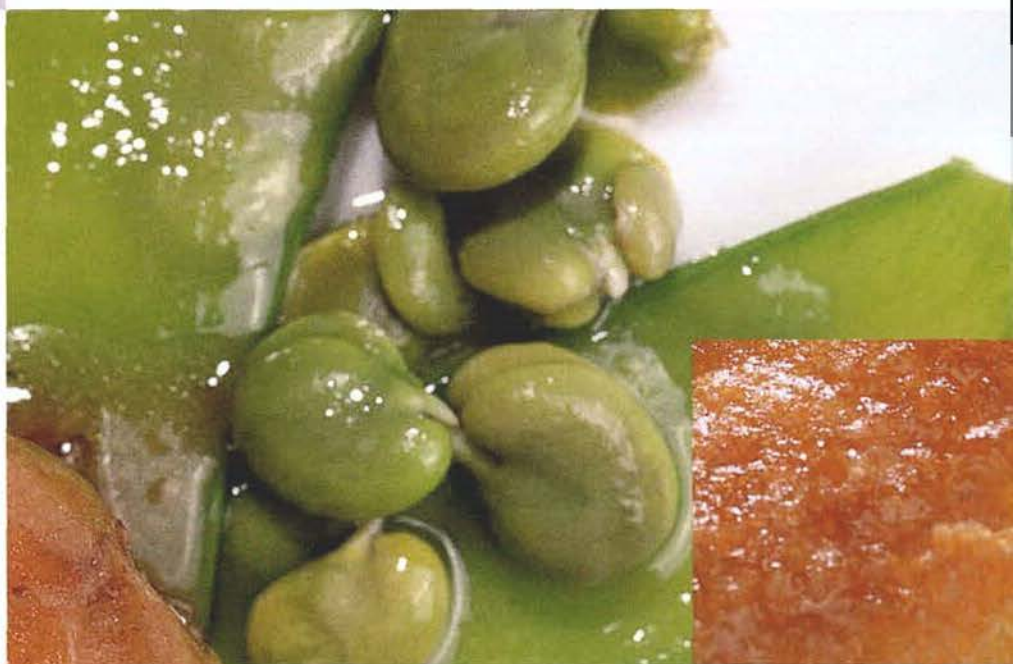
A young white wine from the DOP Monterrei made from a blend of Treixadura, Godello and Doña Blanca grapes. This will add aroma to the fish and tone down the sauces.



Pig's Trotters with Broad Beans and Mangetout Cooked in Cornicabra Olive Oil

Serves 4:

4 pig's trotters
 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb broad beans
 250 g / 9 oz mangetout
 1 onion
 1 carrot
 1 leek
 200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp / 7 fl oz white wine
 Salt
 Black peppercorns
 3 cloves
 Half a bay leaf
 Fresh mint
 Sage
 200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp / 7 fl oz de Cornicabra olive oil



Wash the onion, leek and carrot and cut into pieces. Wash the pig's trotters and cook for 2 hours with the vegetables, half the wine, salt and black pepper, cloves and bay leaf. Drain, bone and place in moulds or rings to shape them. Drain the onion, carrot and leek and fry in 50 ml (1/4 cup / 2 fl oz) of Cornicabra olive oil until beginning to go brown, then add the pork bones. Stir well then add the rest of the wine and 200 ml / 1/2 cup of the stock from cooking the trotters. Simmer until a smooth, dark sauce forms. Remove the bones, blend the vegetables and strain.

Wash the mangetout and remove from the pods. Blanch the broad beans, drain, peel and cook slowly in oil. Season with a little freshly-chopped mint. Cook the mangetout in the same way and season with salt and sage. Turn out the trotters and heat in the oven. Pour over the very hot sauce and serve with the mangetout and broad beans.

Note: Cornicabra is an elegant oil with a touch of bitterness and piquancy that will combine well with the smoothness of the trotters while making an excellent dressing for the vegetables.

Preparation time:
1 hour

Cooking time:
3 hours

Recommended wine:

A red crianza from the DOP Ribera del Duero made from Tempranillo grapes. With its marked berry flavor intensified by the wood, this wine will round off the flavorsome trotters and Cornicabra-coated vegetables. Another possibility would be a Tempranillo red from the Penedès where this variety is called Ull de Llebre.



Arbequina Olive Oil Ice Cream on a Hojiblanca Oil Cake

Serves 8:

Ice cream:

4 eggs
200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp /
7 fl oz Arbequina virgin
olive oil
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz
water
250 g / 9 oz sugar
200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp /
7 fl oz full-cream milk
1 pinch salt

Cake:

3 eggs
250 g / 9 oz sugar
275 g / 10 oz flour
1 tsp baking powder

1 full-fat plain yoghurt
125 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz
Hojiblanca olive oil
Zest of 1 orange

Syrup:

200 ml / 1/2 cup 4 tbsp /
7 fl oz water
250 g / 9 oz sugar
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz
Cointreau or orange
liqueur
Orange peel cut in juli-
enne slices
Caramel crisps:
200 g / 7 oz sugar
50 ml / 1/4 cup / 2 fl oz
water

Ice cream: Dissolve the sugar in the water, then cook for 5 minutes over a high heat. Leave to cool. Beat the eggs, add the oil in a trickle then the syrup, salt and milk. Transfer the mixture to an electric ice-cream maker and turn on until set.

Cake: Beat the eggs in an electric mixer until they have tripled in size (about 15 minutes) together with the sugar and orange zest. Add the oil and yoghurt, then carefully fold in the flour mixed with the baking powder and salt. Grease and flour a ring mould or individual moulds and fill three-quarters full with the preparation. Bake at 175°C/347°F for 30 minutes for small cakes and 45 minutes for one large cake.

Syrup: Dissolve the sugar in the water and cook for 5 minutes over a hot flame. Add the liqueur. Blanch the orange peel in salted water for 5 minutes. Add to the syrup and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Crisps: Dissolve the sugar in the water in a thick-bottomed pan and heat. When it begins to turn to caramel, stir so that it colors evenly. Pour onto a greased work surface forming fan shapes.

Pour the syrup over the cake, place the ice cream in the centre and decorate with the crisps and cooked orange julienne.

Note: The Hojiblanca oil that is the basis for most oils from Malaga is the perfect ingredient for this cake. Arbequina oil is preferable for the ice cream because it is sweeter and has a nutty flavor that perfumes the creamy egg mixture.

Preparation time:

75 min.

Cooking time:

75 min.

Recommended wine:

A not-too-sweet Malvasía wine from the DOP La Palma. After the sweet start in the mouth, this wine offers slightly sharp, fresh sensations that blend well with the sweetness of the dessert. The same characteristics can be obtained from a Malvasía from Lanzarote or, if something with more body is preferred, try a Fondillón from Alicante.



The Architecture of Wine through the Centuries

Part 1

Early in the 19th century, the British Hispanist Richard Ford (1796–1858) traveled all over Spain following in the footsteps of the Duke of Wellington, ouster of Napoleon from the Iberian Peninsula. While in and around Jerez he coined the term ‘cathedral bodega’ to describe the sherry maturation wineries which so characteristically dominate the skyline and urban layout of Sanlucar de Barrameda, Puerto de Santa Maria, and Jerez de la Frontera—the three key points of the so-called

The Sherry

sherry triangle. Designed specifically to provide the perfect microclimatic conditions for the biological ageing of fino and *manzanilla* sherries under their layer of *flor*, these very high, simply delineated buildings are fascinating, their dimly lit interiors redolent of the rich, cosmopolitan history of the wines of Jerez. This is a story in which modest master builders rub shoulders with famous engineers, and in which the working lives of cellar masters and their workers are punctuated by memorable visits from royal personages, scientists and intellectuals.

CATHEDRALS

TEXT

BINGEN URQUIJO GARAY

TRANSLATION

HAWYS PRITCHARD

PHOTO

FÉLIX LORRIO/ICEX

Flor is a living organism that grows spontaneously inside sherry butts. After the fermentation process turns must into wine, the *flor*—a film of aerobic yeasts—appears on the surface of the wine. This not only regulates the access of air to the wine, thereby preventing it from oxidizing, but also feeds on it and, by doing so, endows it with the characteristics proper to finos and manzanillas as biologically aged wines. *Oloroso* sherries, which are oxidatively aged, are fortified with *aguardiente* (grape alcohol) to 18° and do not develop flor. Ageing under a film of flor was first carried out in the early decades of the 19th century. Fino sherry was sold commercially from 1825 on, and the bodegas were built to provide environmental conditions conducive to the generation and development of flor. These conditions include temperatures that are as stable as possible, to be maintained between 12° and 22°C/39.9°F; humidity of over 50%; little light, and intense ventilation. To create an air space in which flor can thrive, butts are filled to only five-sixths of their 600-liter capacity and are loosely stoppered. The butts are stored in tiers known as *andanas*, and the wine is matured according to a dynamic system of *criaderas* and *soleras* (Glossary, page 135). When *mosto de vino*, as the young wine is known in Jerez, arrives in the bodega, it is

poured into the last *criadera*. The growth of flor and the sequential flow of wine from *criadera* to *solera* are two of the centuries-old rites celebrated in these unique sherry cathedrals.

Worshippers in the Mosque

One of the most beautiful of the cathedral bodegas paradoxically contradicts Richard Ford's epithet in that it is known as La Mezquita (The Mosque). In 1974, with sherry expanding commercially, Bodegas Pedro Domecq invested in a 25,600 m²/275,556 sq ft winery building that incorporated four miles of corridors. The architect designed the building as a homage to Andalusia's Muslim past while incorporating characteristics of the cathedral bodegas of the two previous centuries, such as Domecq's El Molino in Jerez (1730), Osborne's La Palma in Puerto de Santa Maria (1772) and Antonio Barbadillo's La Arboledilla in Sanlúcar de Barrameda (1876).

Some of the early cathedral bodegas were financed by capital provided by Spanish businessmen newly returned from the American colonies, which had just declared independence, and were built by master builders and masons working without architect's

drawings or direction. In 1876, one such mason, known by the very Andalusian nickname of El *Esmerao* (The Painstaker) and also known, more mysteriously, as '*Conejito*' (Bunny Rabbit), built Antonio Barbadillo's Arboledilla, considered the cathedral of Manzanilla sherry and said to be the highest bodega in the Sherry Triangle.

Domecq's La Mezquita replicates the constructive approach deployed by El Esmerao in the Arboledilla. The building stands on high ground, catching sea breezes in the morning and winds in the evening. Its northwest-southeast orientation exposes it to as few hours of sunshine and as much moisture as possible. Small windows, set high in the walls to keep the sun's rays away from the butts, are screened by grilles to prevent anything but sea breezes from getting in. The pitched roof is 14.5 m/47.57 ft high in places, thereby creating a huge volume of air per cask of wine. The side walls are 60 cm/23.62 ins. thick to provide a high degree of thermal insulation, and the tendency to absorb moisture from the air of the outer walls ensures high moisture levels, which are maintained during Jerez's hot summers by sprinkling the sandy floor with water twice a week.

The Mezquita's outer walls are simple expanses of whitewash, offering no hint of the seductive elegance within,

where arches support the roof and shape the unforgettable space in which the wines are aged. Beneath the wooden ceiling is a veritable forest of double horseshoe and semi-circular arches, at whose feet tiers of butts create dark wave shapes in the half-light. Eye-pleasing perspectives stretch in all directions, but Domecq workers guide us to a corner to view a particularly impressive one – 40,000 butts of fino, looking like worshippers bowing towards Mecca. From here, the bodega's 4,400 double arches, inspired by the 8th century mosque built in Cordoba by Emir Abderraman I (731–788), seem to stretch to infinity.

Eiffel and Torroja

Some of the other big bodegas opted for innovation, albeit respecting the cathedral bodega essentials in terms of light, air and moisture conditions. In the mid-19th century, Bodegas Gonzalez Byass built the Bodega Real de la Concha, so named for its seashell shaped iron-structured roof, designed by French engineer Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923) almost thirty years before his famous Parisian tower. It was built by British engineer Joseph Coogan in 1862 to coincide with a visit to Jerez by Queen Isabel II. This was a revolutionary building for its time since Eiffel's design gives the roof no central support but distributes its weight to the outer walls

by means of iron ribs. We found 214 casks of excellent olorosos in its halloved interior.

A century later, between 1960 and 1964, a modern, 21,000 m²/226,041 sq ft bodega was built and given the name Gran Bodega Tio Pepe as a tribute to Jose Angel de la Peña, the eponymous Uncle Pepe who acted as advisor to his nephew, Manuel Maria Gonzalez Angel, on the setting up of the Gonzalez Byass company in 1835. The only three-story bodega in the area of Jerez, it has a capacity of 10,000 casks per floor, given over to finos on the first two and olorosos on the top. It was designed by Spanish engineer Eduardo Torroja Miret (1899–1961), who also designed the Zarzuela horseracing track in Madrid and Algeciras' covered market. Torroja's skill and experimental approach are much in evidence in his use of reinforced concrete in this bodega, with its light, elegant shapes created with apparently heavy materials. It is topped by four slender concrete domes 12 m/37 ft high and 43 m/130 ft in diameter, whose dimensions have invited comparison with that of St. Peter's in the Vatican. In 1975, Europe's biggest winery was built in Jerez. Designed by architects Ramon Montserrat Balleste, Pablo Canela Jimenez and Ignacio Gonzalez Mesones, the Williams & Humbert bodega is an enormous

complex and, with its 180,000 m²/1,937,502 sq ft of built space, is a colossal successor to the old cathedral bodegas. All stages of the production cycle are catered for within it, from reception of must to dispatch of the bottled end product. The ageing zone, which measures some 75,000 m²/807,292 sq ft, can accommodate over 60,000 casks which are stacked beneath ceilings whose eccentric reinforced concrete design pays tribute to wine glass shapes.

The sheries aged in the shady light of these wineries are destined to travel around the globe and finally be enjoyed from a *copita*, the typical sherry glass. And indeed, a glass of fino could be said to encapsulate the whole raison d'être of these cathedral constructions, its aroma of apple, almond and wood, its pale straw color, delicate yet pungent nose, and light dry palate are the quintessence of the combination of history, landscape and know-how that make the wines of Jerez inimitable.

Bingen Urquijo Garay, information manager and architecture enthusiast, has created guided routes around many of Madrid's most interesting buildings.

EASTING IMPRESSIONS

Text
Vicky Hayward

The boom in chefs' cook-books came late to Spain. When it finally arrived a couple of years ago, it had special relevance. Such a mass of new ideas, techniques, and approaches were bubbling up in restaurants that they needed to be recorded and shared in the cooking community—professional or otherwise. The result is that today we have a splurge of good books by Spanish chefs who have something original to say. Behind all of this lies the towering influence of Ferran Adrià, the Catalan-born chef of El Bullí. He repeatedly quotes the lesson taught to him by Frenchman Jacques Maximin: "Creativity is not copying." Olé—not just for the idea but also for living it through. By doing so Ferran has been a catalyst of incalculable importance in Spanish cooking. Now he and his colleagues are transferring that principle into a trilogy of books entitled *elBulli* 1983-2002. The first volume, covering the years 1998-2002, was published late last year. I think the appropriate response to this book is, "Olé, maestro." It is humbling to see such coherent creativity condensed in this form. (See the next page for a full review of the book.)

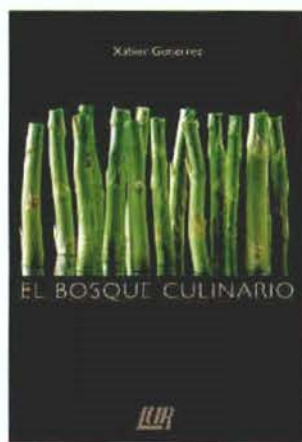
But other admirable chefs' books should not be forgotten. Carme Ruscalleda's *Cocinar para ser feliz* (Cooking to be Happy), already in its second edition, reflects her belief that eating fundamentally influences our emotions—as prison studies are beginning to suggest. This lies behind her cooking at San Pau, just outside Barcelona, which won its second Michelin star in 1996. In her first book she has opted to present her ideas on home cooking in a simple, unillustrated book. Nonetheless, the food in it is clearly tempered by her professional approach: all the recipes are based on rigorous seasonal thinking, with precise use of ingredients and timing, a great feel for textures and a tremendous flair for subtle twists of flavor.



Examples are a *suquet* (fish stew) with cava, a soupy rice "to cure tired stomachs," and a braised farmyard hen (cooked half in olive oil, half in mineral water) served with anchovy vinaigrette. (Viena Ediciones, viena@vienaeditorial.com)

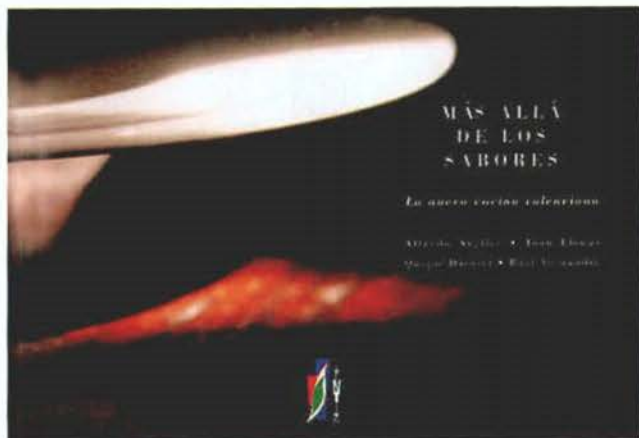
Xabier Gutiérrez's book *El bosque culinario* (The Culinary Forest) is a practical visual source-book to inspire other chefs to create. The quality of the food, photography and lateral thinking make for stimulating reading for both sides of the brain—bear in mind that Gutiérrez is a long standing member of the A-team developing new dishes with Juan Mari and Elena Arzak of the eponymous three-starred Arzak restaurant in San Sebastian. How does the book work? Four pages are dedicated to each of 120 ideas—not recipes—and, for each idea, there are two pages of still-life photos capturing the abstract ideas and two explaining Xabier's development of these in the form of sketches and text. Examples: developing the flavor of ash, using chocolate with hot peppers as in Mexico, layering fruit waters with added textures.... And so on. (Lur Argitaletxea, Fax: 944 27 63 49)

A fourth title, *Más allá de los sabores. La nueva cocina valenciana* (Beyond Flavors. The New Valencian cooking), is an interesting example among the many books on regional cuisine, firstly because the Valencian



repertoire is fabulous but little explored; secondly, because the recipes include around 40 excellent short texts on relevant produce, by Valencian journalist Alfredo Argilés; and finally because the two young chefs responsible for the 55 recipes, Enrique Dacosta, from El Poblet restaurant (see *Spain Gourmetour* n° 54) and Raúl Aleixandre, from Ca'Sentp are supremely talented. Especially admirable is that their recipes are not individually credited. This, however, is yet another good foodbook crying out for an index. (Editorial Ingente S.A., a.argiles@mail.ono.es)

Oriol Balaguer was just 28 when he wrote *La cocina de los postres* (Desserts Cookery). However, to put this in context, he was 21 when he won the Best Spanish Master Artesanal Pâtissier award. Soon after that, he crossed the line into the restaurant world, working with Ferran Adrià's team for eight years. By linking a pâtissier's precise scientific skills to Adrià's world of creative experiment he began to develop a series of brilliant, highly aesthetic desserts. Here they are in a beautifully designed, well structured book that opens with Oriol's long introduction on techniques, ingredients and inspiration—which he resumes as lack of conformity, rigor and the willingness to learn. Since publishing this book he has gone independent. (Montagud Editores, www.montagud.com)



In Brief

HOME COOKING

A la carta (À La Carte) A hundred complete menus from María Jesús Gil de Antuñano, food writer for El País, Spain Gourmetour and other publications, with wine suggestions from Custodio Zamorra. The menus are broken into various sections, one of which is Spanish dishes, but in fact the whole book is infused by the feel of modern Spanish cooking. (*Alianza Editorial*, www.alianzaeditorial.es)

Cocina vasca, recetas de setas (Basque Cooking, Mushroom Recipes) J. García Salazar, the author of this plainly presented text book claims that "mycogastronomy"—his own neologism—has been the fastest evolving area of Basque cooking in the last thirty years. Perhaps that's taking it a bit far, but the breadth and depth of the repertoire today is made clear—the book includes 200

recipes, covering the sixteen best known types of cultivated and wild mushroom.

(*Hiria Luburuak, S.L.*, Fax: 943 22 40 67)

Manjares de Somontano

(Feasts from Somontano) An excellent book on popular cooking in Somontano, the area of northern Aragon whose vineyards have leapt to fame in the last few years. The 90 recipes, collected by a team in villages and towns, have bubbled up from below, and the author, Joaquín Coll Clavero, has synthesized and shaped them very intelligently, emphasizing what is really distinctive—the confits of pork, vegetable preserves and shepherds' cooking, for example. He also writes well on food production, the agricultural year, and cooking methods. Recommended.

(*La Val de Onsera*, lavaldeonsera@derecoquinaria.com)

Spanish Home Cooking. Cocina Casera Española.

This is a book with a big heart. The author Miriam Kellen has turned up a personal choice of everyday Spanish recipes from eight of Spain's seventeen regions, collected via friends and email correspondents, many of them pictured in snapshots. There are classics, but also plenty of unexpected ideas for stews and soups, vegetable dishes and sauces. A fresh, honest, downhome book.

(*Cocina Casera, Inc.*, www.cocinacasera.com)

Tastes of the Pyrenees.

Classic and Modern. Marina

Chang gives us a collage of recipes hung around the theme of the Pyrenees and, as such, it inevitably reflects a fragmented physical and cultural geography, which includes separate Mediterranean and Atlantic culinary axes. There is a somewhat hazy focus—the inland Catalan, Aragonese and Basque valleys are neglected, the coastal lowlands overemphasized, and the localized agricultural systems lying behind the cooking are not fully explained. But the recipes are well written, with great care, and there are gems like an eggless ali-i-oli.

(*Hippocrene Books Inc.*, www.hippocrenebooks.com)

CHEFS' AND RESTAURANT COOKING

Setas y hongos en la cocina

(Mushrooms and Funghi in the Kitchen) Leonese chef Carlos Cidón has done really great work to support local foodstuffs. Here he turns to wild mushrooms, which he gets to grips with admirably as ingredients used in many different ways—he does not just throw them into sauces, but also pulverizes them, cooks them in jams and stocks, essences, confits and caramels, ice-creams and so on. Along the way they are matched with their habitats and a huge variety of other produce. Good explanatory photographs and clear explanations of the 50 recipes. An excellent source-book of ideas. (*Everest*, www.everest.es)

Tres Riojas, Tres Miradas.

La cocina de El vino y los 5 sentidos (Three Riojas, Three Views. Cooking with Wine and the 5 senses.) This annual illustrated paperback sponsored by the Riojan government links wine to the work of the region's chefs and takes a geographical approach which focusses on a restaurant from each of the Rioja's main subzones. There are both modern and traditional dishes—local vegetables stand out along the way.

(*Gobierno de La Rioja*, www.elvinoyllos5sentidos.com)

PRODUCE AND PRODUCTS

Best Olive Oil Buys Round the World

Judy Ridgway's pocket-format guide to extra-virgin olive oils has an interesting 21-page introduction to the worldwide state-of-play in olive-oil making. Then comes a directory and critique of 135 selected oils widely available in English-speaking markets—I emphasize this since only a handful of Spain's dozens of new-wave single-estate and other premier Spanish oils appear. A sobering thought. (*Gardiner Press*, Tel: 1273 733 122)

Compendio bibliográfico sobre el cerdo ibérico y sus productos derivados

(A bibliography of the Iberian Pig and Iberian Pork Products) A detailed bibliography of 451 articles and books about the Iberian pig. They range from historical to veterinary works—but don't include references to the Iberian pig in general works. Hopefully to be added later.

(*Club de Amigos del Cerdo Ibérico*, Fax: (34) 924 23 07 39)

FOOD HISTORY

Escritos gastronómicos

(Gastronomic Writings) The first of two books dedicated to the work of Ángel Muro, best known for his 1894 francophile cookbook *El practicon* (The Expert), Spain's most popular cookbook for forty years. This volume recovers Conferencias Culinarias, a potpourri of recipes by journalists and writers, edited in 1892. An interesting period piece for the evident interest in Latin American cuisines.

(*La Val de Onsera*, lavaldeonsera@derecoquinaria.com)

La cocina en tiempos del Arcipreste de Hita (The Kitchen/Cooking at the Time of the Archpriest of Hita) Antonio Gázquez Ortiz takes *El Libro de Buen Amor*, a bawdy 14th-century verse classic penned by the so-called Archpriest of Hita, as his main research source for this study of medieval cooking, although he also draws on relevant contemporary food



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Bodegas Artesanas

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writing. However, as social historian Peter Laslett and others have shown, literary evidence is a notoriously unreliable source for everyday life in pre-industrial times. Highlights are the recipes from Ibn Razin, next to those from Ruperto de Nola, suggesting the continuities between Moslem and Christian cooking. (*Alianza Editorial, www.alianzaeditorial.es*)

Las cocinas árabe y judía y la cocina española (Arab and Jewish Cuisines and Spanish Cooking) José Aguilera Pleguezuelo has written an invaluable, concise, well researched small book. He hits the middle ground between existing academic work and coffee-table books on Arab and Jewish cooking in Spain, explaining the scanty source material and then giving an overview of both traditions in the past and present. A second more detailed book would be welcome. (*Editorial Arguval, editorial@arguval.com*)

Un convento de aromas (A Convent of Aromas) For once, we have not just an anthology of nuns' recipes, but also a study of how their cooking has evolved, looking at the religious rules and convents' changing food supply. The author, L. Jacinto García, has focussed on 15 convents in Toledo to find original material and recipes, although this is well rounded out from other sources. (*Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, www.jccm.es*)

WINE

Guía de los vinos de Rioja (Guide to Rioja Wines) Not so much a guide, more an illustrated fact file, organized by location, with each wine simply described and illustrated by a label. Not yet comprehensive, but could grow to be very useful reference. (*ICE Comunicación, ice@ice.es*)

Guía Proensa de los mejores vinos de España (The Proensa Guide to the Best Spanish Wines) After 20 years as a highly respected wine critic, Proensa has finally gone alone for the first time with his own guide to

the best wines of the previous year—there are around 600. The introduction on developments in 2002 is useful for wine professionals. Unpretentious, concise, and highly informed.

(*Andrés Proensa, S.L., proensa@jazzfree.com*)

Las voces del vino y la vid (The Words of Wine and the Vine) Augusto Jurado's dictionary is a readable compendium of 7,500 words relating to vine-growing and wine-making, simply defined in everyday terms. There are some quite amusing everyday phrases, each related to drunkenness. (*C&G Ediciones, captacyg@arrakis.es*)

Libro de Jerez, Oporto y Madeira (The Book of Sherry, Port and Madeira) Written by Yoshiko Akehi, this is the first book written by a Japanese to be published on fortified wines. It dedicates 120 pages to wines from Jerez—not just their production, but also how they are drunk in everyday life in Andalusia. A discreet, beautifully produced paperback. (*Shogakukan, tazawa02@mail.shogakukan.co.jp*)

Los mejores vinos y quesos de España (Spain's Best Wines and Cheeses). In the first half of the book, wine writer Mauricio Wiesenthal analyzes today's Spanish red wines—this is a great concise introduction looking at the changes since the 1970s. In the second 120 pages we find the text of Enric Canut's classic *Los 100 quesos españoles*, first published in 1996—it remains an excellent no-nonsense rundown, but it is a shame it doesn't have a parallel introduction on the latest developments in the cheese-making world.

(*Salvat Editores S.A., www.salvat.com*)

Tratado de viticultura general (Treatise of General Viticulture) This vast 1,235-page tome by agricultural engineer Luis Hidalgo, now in its third edition, is a bible dealing with every aspect of wine-making. The book has a clear emphasis on the hispanic world, which makes it useful reference for anybody interested in Spanish wines.

There is a good brief run-down on the history of wine-making in each Spanish region, a section on Latin American wines, and another on organic vine-growing. (Mundi-Prensa Libros, S.A., www.mundiprensa.com)

RESTAURANT GUIDES

Gourmetour Spain's first ever restaurant guide, now 25 years old, remains standard reference although its conservative leanings result in some unexpected inclusions and omissions from the highest marked restaurants. Comes complete with CD Rom (Ediciones Paladar, www.gourmets.net)

Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía (The Best of Gastronomy) Rafael García Santos' book is not in truth so much a restaurant guide; really, it's an annual primer on everything that's going on in Spanish food since it also covers popular cuisines, the best wines and products. But the heart of the book focuses on the country's best cooks (over 125), in part because it's such a live scene at the moment and also because García Santos writes incisively, knowledgeably and outspokenly. Essential reading. (Ediciones Destino, www.edestino.es)

PHOTOGRAPHY & FINE ART

Andalucía & Las Alpujarras. An Artist in Lemon Country This book of pastels and daybook sketches by Lionel Aggett follows a long road journey which takes the artist south through Spain to Andalusia's sunlit sierras, olive groves and sweeping plains, all caught here in rich pastel colors that reflect the region's light-saturated palette of colors. (Halsgrove, www.halsgrove.com).

Ferias y mercados de la Comunidad de Madrid (Fairs and Markets in Madrid Province) This lavish book is testimony to the liveliness of Madrid's market traditions—and there are some great behind-the-scenes shots of the wholesale food market and agricultural fairs by Félix Llorio. There is also a serious

historical essay on Madrid's commercial spaces since Moslem times, published in both Spanish and English.

(Lunweg Editores, lunweg.mad@retemail.es)

La Festa - Elche (The Fiesta - Elche) Photographer Maria Ángeles Sánchez is a native of Elche (Elx), the Alicante town best known for its palm forest. This book is her record of (and tribute to) the Misteri, the extraordinary mystery play staged in the city's cathedral every August. It's also a reminder of how deep Spain's extraordinary tradition of fiestas goes.

(Ajuntament d'Elx, www.elche.com)

Viñas de Vida (Vines of Life) Aragonese photographer Ricardo Vila was commissioned by Viñas del Vero bodegas to spend two years shooting in Somantano. This book is the result. Accompanied by brief diary extracts, the exquisite photographs portray the landscape, people, fauna and flora as an inextricable whole, viewed throughout the course of a year. A genuinely new way of looking at vineyards as an ecosystem. (Ediciones Darana, www.daranaeditorial.com)

TRAVEL

Gourmetescapadas

(Gourmetescapes) The idea of this book—52 three-day-breaks combining gourmet and cultural attractions—is fine, but there is only one choice of hotel and restaurant for each slot, with the briefest of descriptions and no photos, so it is hard to reconcile these with personal tastes.

(Editorial Paladar, www.gourmets.net)

Gourmetgolf

 (Gourmetgolf)

With golf coming back into fashion, this guide, perfectly described by its title, may be less of a strange hybrid than it seems. The hotels and restaurants for the 101 chosen golf courses are picked for the elegant crowd.

(Editorial Paladar, www.gourmets.net)

Gourmetapa... de tapas por Barcelona (Gourmetapa ... Tapas in Barcelona) Useful guide to 146 tapas bars with suggestions of what to eat in

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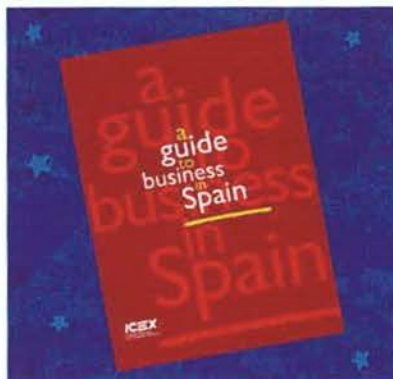
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each, and an honest and succinct opinion about the clientele from an uncredited author who clearly knows his or her patch. The choice of bars is quite different from the tapas section in the main *Gourmetour* guide. The guide would benefit from a map. (*Editorial Paladar*, www.gourmets.net)

Guía de espacios naturales Asturias (Guide to Natural Spaces. Asturias) The fourth in this user-friendly layperson's series of guides for exploring Spain's multiple wild spaces. A fair chunk of this book is dedicated to the Picos de Europa, but two dozen less well known spaces are also covered. (*El País Aguilar*, www.espais-aguilar.es)

Rutas por los hayedos de España (Routes for Exploring Spain's Beechwoods) An illustrated guide pulling together all the sights in pockets of northern Spain with beechwoods. Since these date back 3,000 years they go hand-in-hand with megaliths, Roman roads, and medieval churches. (*El País Aguilar*, www.espais-aguilar.es)

ALSO RECEIVED

For a full review of wine guides, see *Spain Gourmetour* n° 56, p. 104. For a full review of food guides, see *Spain Gourmetour* n° 55, pp. 103-104

El Guñon 2003 Mapa de Carreteras España y Portugal (The Guide 2003 Road Map to Spain and Portugal) (Anaya, www.anaya.es)
Guía Campsa (Campsa Guide) (*Repsol*, www.repsol.com)
Guía Campsa de los mejores vinos de España (Campsa Guide to the Best Wines in Spain) (*Editorial Paladar*, gourmet@gourmets.net)

Guía Cepsa 2003 (Cepsa Guide 2003) (*Everest*; www.everest.es)
Guía grupo Mundial Assistance de Hoteles y Restaurantes de España (The Mundial Assistance Guide to Spanish Hotels and Restaurants). (*El País Aguilar*, www.espais-aguilar.es)

Guía Jaguar Restaurantes 2002-3 (Jaguar Restaurant

guide 2002-3) (Ediciones Arnal, tel (34) 913 763 233)
Guía Peñin de los Vinos de España (Peñin's Guide to Spanish Wines) (*Pi & Erre Ediciones*, www.elvino.com/penin)

La Guía de oro de los Vinos de España (The Golden Guide to Spanish Wines) (*Ediciones Mundo Natura, S.L.*, tel 91-386 51 52)

Visita España de ruta en ruta-Guía Endesa 2002-3 (Route by Route around Spain - Endesa Guide 2002-3) (*Everest*, www.everest.es)



El Bullí, The Book

eIBullí1983-2002, volume 3 (1998-2002) looks like a classic boxed book. But once you pull it out from its box you find a reversible leaf-fold annexe enclosing a CD. All three elements are vital to the complete work. The book itself is structured like an artist's catalogue raisonné, with over half its 500 pages devoted to a visual catalogue of 825 dishes and food items created in El Bullí between 1998 and 2001. These are arranged chronologically and, within that, by the order and structure of the menu. (Last year, 2002, was a year of retrospective analysis and reflection, without new items on the menu.) Following the photos of food for each year is a concise analysis of the underlying creative work, with easily absorbed bites of text on unrealized ideas, flavor combinations, concepts, products, techniques, flavors, utensils and so on. In 1998, for example, came the first hot agar-agar gelatines and hot siphoned foams, the accidental discovery of how to make croquettes with liquid fillings, changes to the menu's structure, and a reflection on honesty as a creative principle ... plus a lot more. The second main element, the leaf-fold annexe contains an A-Z lexicon of 78 ideas fundamental to understanding the book (they range from Adaptation and Thick Creams to New Raviolis and Sixth Sense) and a CD containing the recipes for the visually catalogued food. In all sincerity, it is impossible to review such a major work in such a short space and without very deep culinary knowledge—so it seems more useful to accurately describe the book's structure. But a few things should be said from a first reading. One, this is a very generous as well as a practical and beautiful book. Nothing is kept secret and everyone involved in the process of creating dishes is acknowledged, as is the role of chance. Two, this is not a pretentious book. The parallel to an artist's monograph is justified by the visual creativity of the food and the photography, which are aesthetically thought-provoking on nearly every page. Thirdly, don't be tempted to skip the text analyses of each year's work—these seem to me to be the heart of the matter, giving us a new insight into the work of a great chef and what we may learn from his work in the broadest sense. Finally, given all that is squeezed into the box, this book is good value. We have been promised that an English language edition will be published in autumn 2003. (Rte El Bullí S.L., www.elbulli.com)



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Conferences, fairs, new restaurants, awards, star chefs,...the food world is buzzing just about everywhere, Spain included. This section aims to reflect what's going on within Spain itself and events relevant to Spain elsewhere in the world.

Wine

Bodegas Viña Extremeña (PDO Ribera del Guadiana) and **Bodegas Enate** (PDO Somontano) are both firms with a strong commitment to social causes. The Extremadura winery's Corte Real wine will be graced with special silk-paper labels illustrated by the artist Julian Grau Sanots and sold in an attractive wooden presentation box together with the book *El Siglo de Oro Español, el siglo de los sueños* ("The Golden Age of Spain, a Century of Dreams") containing a selection of verse by Lope de Vega, Calderon de la Barca and Tirso de Molina. For each box sold, six euros will go to an account held by the Extremadura Tutelaje Foun-

ation, an institution dedicated to the guidance, protection and defence of people suffering from mental or physical disabilities. Each box will also include a numbered card certifying the contribution made by the purchaser. Meanwhile, the Enate winery has included **Braille lettering** on the back labels of its wines. The first wine labelled using this system is the 2002 Chardonnay-234, which has been on the market since the beginning of this year. The firm plans to label its whole range of wines in this way during 2003. This tactile alphabet was invented by the blind Frenchman Louis Braille in the 19th century. It is based on six dots which are combined in different ways to form 64 signs, in-

cluding a blank space.
www.vinexa.com
www.enate.es

The protective effects of moderate wine drinking on the **cardiovascular system** are now well known due to what has been dubbed the "French paradox". These effects are also to be gained from the consumption of Cava, according to the preliminary findings of a study performed at the **University of Barcelona**. This research, which was presented at the 1st Congress of the Spanish Association of Dietary Specialists and Nutritionists, is the first to prove the beneficial effects of Cava on the organism. According to the authors, the main factors behind the beneficial effects of Cava

Text
 Carlos Tejero

are phenolic compounds, which act by inhibiting the oxidation of low-density lipoproteins or, in layman's terms, by reducing "harmful" cholesterol (LDL) levels. These compounds basically comprise cinnamic acids such as caffeic acid and resveratrol. The interaction of these two components boosts the anti-oxidising effects of the Cava. It seems that pathologies such as arteriosclerosis, cancer and Alzheimer's disease are associated with oxidative stress. In this regard, Doctor Rosa Lamuela of the University of Barcelona Faculty of Pharmacy, one of the co-authors of the study, asserts that "the phenolic compounds ingested through the diet would prove a key factor for the prevention of these diseases, because as antioxidants they prevent any degenerative disease caused by excessive oxidation of the organism." www.fivin.org

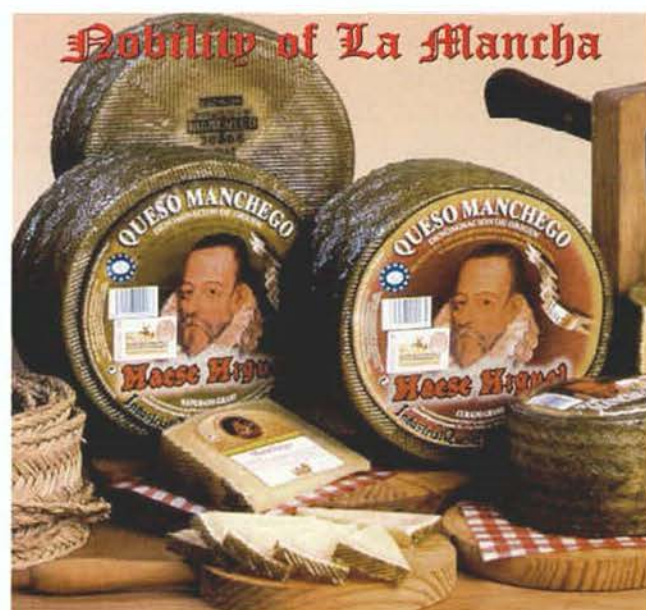
Food

Andalusia is not only Spain's food powerhouse (6,177 businesses), but also the leading Autonomous Community in ecological farming with 221,407 ha/546,207 acres under crops of this kind, according to Francisco Casero, the chairman of the Andalusian Ecological Farming Committee. By provinces, Córdoba has the most land given over to green farming, but at the district level it is the municipality of Almonte (Huelva) where the largest acreage is concentrated, not only in the region but in the whole of Spain (16,788 ha/41,483 acres). The world market for ecological food products is growing fast and its worth is now estimated at 21.5 billion euros per year. In some countries, such as Germany, ecological produce is expected to account for 20% of consumed foodstuffs only seven years

from now. According to Casero, this "justifies discussion of the environment from the economic standpoint alone, as it proves that protection is profitable." www.juntadeandalucia.es

Alimentos de Extremadura is celebrating its sixth anniversary. This trademark was created by the Extremadura Regional Government to promote quality foodstuffs and embraces products under Protected Designation of Origin (see Glossary on page 135) and Protected Geographical Indication such as Ribera del Guadiana wines, Jerte Valley cherries, Villuerca-Ibores honey, Gata-Hurdes olive oil, Monterrubio olive oil, Ibores cheese, Serena cheese, Torta del Casar cheese, Pimentón de la Vera (spanish paprika) lamb, veal and, of course, Ibérico ham. Extremadura is the leading cherry producing region in Spain (27,500 tons representing 28% of the total) and the second largest producer of tomatoes (1 million tons representing 27% of the total). It is also the top ranking Spanish region by number of ecological farming businesses (7,121, or 45% of the total) and the second measured by acreage. www.juntaex.es

Did you know that the world's largest humanized (i.e. cultivated) forest is in Andalusia? In fact a carpet of around 100 million olive trees (15% of the world's total) covers the land. With this powerful argument, the 1st International Conference of Olive Oil Cuisine was organised in Baeza (Jaen) last March. The event was aimed at chefs, students, and hotel and other professionals with the aim of disseminating the gastronomic and nutritional virtues of the product. The conference, directed by Salvador Gallego (National Gastronomy Prize, 1994), was



Quesos



Rocinante

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www.rocinante.es
rocinante@manchanet.es



Matured in Virgin Olive Oil

addressed by leading chefs such as Martin Berasategui (three Michelin stars), Abraham Garcia and Juan Pablo de Felipe. Talks were given on other not strictly gastronomic subjects such as health and the olive oil industry. Visits to oil mills, the Olive Oil Museum (La Laguna) and the Mengibar Olive Growing and Oil Technology Facility were also arranged. The event has a forward-looking mission and the organisers intend to hold an annual conference. www.dipujaen.com

Gastronomy

The II World Congress of Dry Cured Ham was held in Caceres. This is a biennial event, organized for the second time now in Spain. Cordoba was the venue on the first occasion. The Congress was attended by some 400 entrepreneurs and 150 researchers from Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the United States, who, during fifteen plenary monographic sessions, debated matters connected with processing and handling technologies, food safety, marketing and market trends, quality, health, gastronomy and the application of information technologies to drying and curing processes. The curing of hams is an ancient tradition in Spain, the earliest written references to the process dating back to the Roman period. **Spain** is currently the **world's leading producer** of hams (34 million units per year), as well as the largest consumer. Two types of ham are made in Spain. These are "Serrano" ham (from the word *sierra* meaning mountain range), which is produced all over the country using various breeds of white pig, and "Iberico", which is made from the autochthonous Iberian pig bred only in the south-west of the Peninsula. For anybody wishing to learn

the secrets of this unique product, the PDO **Jamón de Huelva** Regulating Council organizes tailored courses, both in Spain and abroad, for groups of professionals from the fields of catering, distribution, and the media. These courses cover the history and identification of hams, carving techniques, and how to appreciate the organoleptic properties of this star product of Spanish cuisine. www.conjamon.com
www.jamondehuelva.com

NH Hoteles promotes the training of **young chefs**. One of the outstanding features of this Spanish chain, Europe's third largest hotel group with 239 establishments (35,000 rooms) in 17 countries worldwide, is how mindful it is of its restaurants' quality standards. The proof of this is that NH's advisers include the Michelin three-star chefs Ferran Adrià (adviser to the whole chain) and Martín Berasategui. These two and other famous chefs formed the jury that selected six young chefs (between 20 and 25 years old and with four years' experience) for the award of a one-year training grant, commencing last April, in leading European and world restaurants: Michel Bras (France), Le Calandre de Padova (Italy), Residenz Heinz Winkler (Germany), Pierre Winnants (Brussels), El Bulli (Spain) and Martín Berasategui (Spain). The grants are intended to fund not only the training itself, but also accommodation, travel, etc. and provide a monthly allocation of 1,000 euros. www.nh-hoteles.com

New Spanish gastronomy portal: Cocinavino.com has over 3,000 pages of information on Spanish cuisine and wines. The site contains over 13,000 recipes with photographs and step-by-step instructions, as well as

other sections recommending gastronomic tours, suggested menus, descriptions of ingredients, utensils, tricks, and so on. It also has dedicated sections on wines, cocktails, coffee and teas, and cigars, as well as a virtual shop. It is planned to include video demonstrations of cooking techniques, tips, etc. in the future. www.cocinavino.com

Abroad

Nicolas Burrige and **Mauricio Gonzalez-Gordon** have been invested as new members of the *Gran Orden de Caballeros del Vino* (Great Order of the Knights of Wine). The order was founded by Wines from Spain (London) in 1984 as a distinction for those making a particular contribution to the promotion of Spanish wines in Britain. Burrige is one of the UK's pioneering importers of Spanish wines, and a glance at the list

of wines contained in his publication *Burridges of Arlington* provides a clear indication of his enthusiasm for our country. The Spaniard Gonzalez-Gordon, Marques de Bonanza, is a recognized sherry wine expert, and his work at the head of the family firm (Gonzalez Byass) has at all times been marked by the pursuit of quality and the defense of the wine as a unique, inimitable creation that can only be properly produced in Jerez, its place of origin.

Albert Adrià will participate as a speaker and jury member in the 2003 **World Pastry Forum** to be held in Las Vegas (United States) on June 29 and July 1, 2003. The Spanish chef will give a class on "Textures and Flavor" to pastry professionals and advanced students. A few days previously (June 17-18) Albert Adrià will give a seminar on the new desserts created by





"El Bulli" at the Aula Chocovic (Barcelona). Adrià, 33, has spent most of his career at the "El Bulli" restaurant (located in Rosas, Girona, Michelin three-star), which he joined in 1985, eventually becoming Head Chef. In 1998 he published the book "Los postres de El Bulli" ("The Desserts of El Bulli") which was acclaimed that same year as the best book on desserts at the Perigueux Festival (France). Since 1999 Adrià has directed the El Bulli Workshop, the renowned restaurant's research laboratory, where the dishes forming the menu each year are tried and tested. www.worldpastryforum.com

Innovation

Tapress is the name of a new top for bottles of all kinds including wine, beer, cava and soft drink bottles. According to its creators, this flexibility is one of the key differentiating features of the product compared to other tops, which can only be used with a specific type of bottle. Other advantages are its ease of use, simplicity of design, which does not spoil the aesthetics of the bottle, and a competitive price (2.50 euros in Spain). With regard to its sealing properties, Mariano Pozo, sales manager of Idea&Jit, the Huelva-based start-up responsible for the development of the product and owner of the patent, explains that "our bottle top guarantees that the full range of organoleptic characteristics of drinks can be preserved for



ten to fifteen days, depending on the type of liquid." The invention is the brainchild of two engineers and teachers at the University of Huelva, Javier Pajón and Jose Manuel Andújar, who initially began to develop a top only for one-litre bottles of beer. However, they subsequently discovered that the advantages of the design were equally applicable to wine, cava and any carbonated drink. Idea&Jit was established in July 2001 and, given its short business life, it currently markets the product only in Spain, but the company expects to embark on its first exports in the near future. www.idea&jit.com

Distribution

For some years now, cigarette smoking has become a socially undesirable, and even illegal, activity in many countries the world over. Nevertheless, cigar smoking remains a sign of distinction and *savoir vivre*. If the worldwide crusade

against cigarettes has gained strength on the one hand, on the other the Spanish company **Aldeasa** has gradually increased the number of outlets specialising in the sale of cigars at the country's main airports and in some international airports. *La Cava del Cigarro*, which was first established in Palma de Mallorca airport in 1997, now has 22 shops offering over 350 product references belonging to the leading brands, as well as smoking accessories and books. This represents a total sales area of more than 4,304 sq ft given over to meeting the needs of aficionados in the art of inhaling and enjoying the fragrant smoke of slow-burning tobacco leaves. According to Aldeasa, the Germans are the biggest buyers of cigars in airports, followed by the French and British. Demand is greatest for Cuban cigars (60% of sales), in particular the *Montecristo n° 4* brand. In addition to *La Cava del Cigarro*, Aldeasa also runs specialist fashion, perfume, wine, shoe and music

shops, as well as general establishments carrying sweets, drinks and other products. The company has 127 outlets in Spanish airports and 42 in international airports, totalling 27,000 m²/290,000 sq ft of floor space, employing 2,117 staff and generating annual sales of 501 million euros. www.aldeasa.com

EXPORTERS

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Fax: (34) 952 508 048
www.agrocanillas.com

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Fax: (34) 952 518 001
agrotejeda@yahoo.es

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www.arain.es

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Fax: (34) 952 500 462
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www.sat.2803.com

Vega Costa, S.C.A.
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Fax: (34) 958 835 680
vegacosta@inicia.es

Source: ECOHAL (Association of Fruits and Vegetables Producers and Traders)
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Fax: (34) 952 547 079
ecohal@ecohalmalaga.com
www.ecohalmalaga.com
AAGC (Association of Granada Coast Traders)
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Fax: (34) 958 834 194
aagcosta@teleline.es

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www.aceitesborges.es

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www.aceitestoledo.com

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Fax: (34) 954 690 450
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www.acesur.com

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Fax: (34) 957 315 023
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Coreysa
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Fax: (34) 955 821 001
coreysa@coreysa.es
www.coreysa.es

Rafael Salgado, S.A.
Tel: (34) 916 667 875
Fax: (34) 916 666 218
export@rafaelsalgado.com
www.rafaelsalgado.com

Source: ASOLIVA (Association of Spanish Olive Oil Exporters)
Tel: (34) 914 468 812
Fax: (34) 915 931 918
asoliva@ctv.es
www.asoliva.es

Wines

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Fax: (34) 966 950 406
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www.bocopa.com

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bodegas-mendoza@bodegas.com

Bodegas Gutiérrez de la Vega
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Fax: (34) 966 405 257
gutivega@arrakis.es

Compañía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez
Tel: (34) 941 511 128
Fax: (34) 941 511 131
cia@fer.es

Laderas de Pinoso
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Fax: (34) 945 600 850
info@artadi.com

Primitivo Quiles
Tel: (34) 965 470 099
Fax: (34) 966 960 235
primitivoquiles@terra.es

Salvador Poveda
Tel: (34) 965 471 139
Fax: (34) 965 473 389
salvadorpoveda@salvadorpoveda.com
www.salvadorpoveda.com

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.

Regulatory Council:
Consejo Regulador DOP
Alicante
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Fax: (34) 965 229 295
crdo.alicante@infonegocio.com

PDO UTIEL REQUENA

Bodegas Gandia
Tel: (34) 962 524 242
Fax: (34) 962 524 243
gandia@gandiawines.com
www.gandiawines.com

**Bodegas Murviedro
(Grupo Schenk)**
Tel: (34) 962 329 003
Fax: (34) 962 329 002
schenk@bodegas-schenk.com
www.schenk-wine.com

Bodegas Torroja
Tel: (34) 962 304 232
Fax: (34) 962 303 833
bodegas@bodegastorroja.com
www.bodegastorroja.com

Bodegas Palmera
Tel/Fax: (34) 962 320 720
KLAUS.LAUERBACH@terra.es

Casa del Pinar
Tel/Fax: (34) 962 139 121

C. Augusto Egli
Tel: (34) 962 139 101
Fax: (34) 962 139 097

Cherubino Valsangiacomo
Tel: (34) 962 510 451
Fax: (34) 962 511 361
www.cherubino.es

**Compañía Vinícola del
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Tel: (34) 962 171 141
Fax: (34) 962 174 352
www.bodegasbermell.com

Covinas
Tel: (34) 962 300 680
Fax: (34) 962 302 651
covinas@covinas.com
www.covinas.com

Emilio Clemente
Tel: 616 918 565

**Finca San Blas
(Labor del Almadreque)**
Tel: (34) 963 375 617
Fax: (34) 963 370 707
info@fincasanblas.com
www.fincasanblas.com

Torre Oria
Tel: (34) 962 320 289
Fax: (34) 962 320 311
torreoria@torreoria.com
torreoria.com

Virasa Vinicola
Tel: (34) 962 170 301
Fax: (34) 962 174 135
info@virasa.com

Regulatory Council:
Consejo Regulador DOP
Utiel-Requena
Tel: (34) 962 171 062
Fax: (34) 962 172 185
crdo@tdv.net
crdo-utielrequena.org

PDO VALENCIA

Celler del Roure
Tel: (34) 962 295 020
Fax: (34) 962 295 142
cellerdelroure@hotmail.com

Dominio Los Pinos
Tel: (34) 962 222 090
Fax: (34) 962 222 086
domlospinos@wanadoo.es

**Heretat de Tavernes
(Explotaciones Agr.
La Rambla)**
Tel: (34) 962 132 437

Jose Belda
Tel: (34) 962 222 278
Fax: (34) 962 222 245
daniel.belda@vinsbjb.com
www.vinsbjb.com

Regulatory Council:
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www.bodegasprotos.com
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cdea@cdea.es
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www.rosara.com
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euro@euroaliment.com
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www.jccm.es
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www.juntaex.es
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cmendoza@mx4.redestb.es
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buzon.oficial@nuevayork.ofcomes.mcx.es
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SPAIN OVERSEAS

If you would like to know more about any subject dealt with in this magazine, except for tourist information, please write to the Economic and Commercial Offices at the Embassies of Spain, marking the envelope Ref: Spain Gourmetour.

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Edgecliff NSW 2027
Sydney
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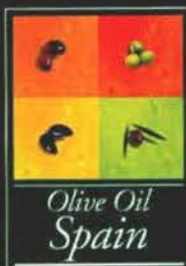


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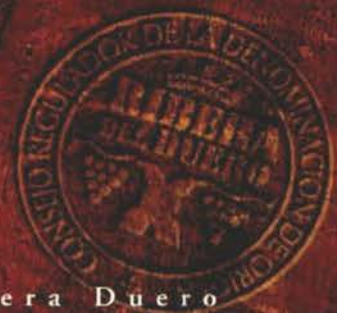
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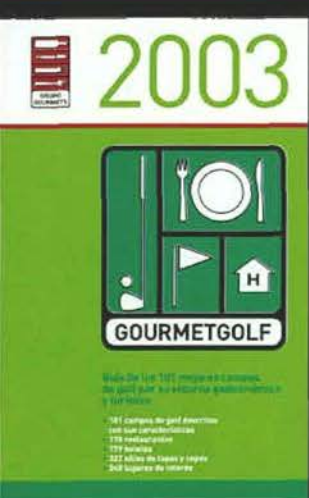
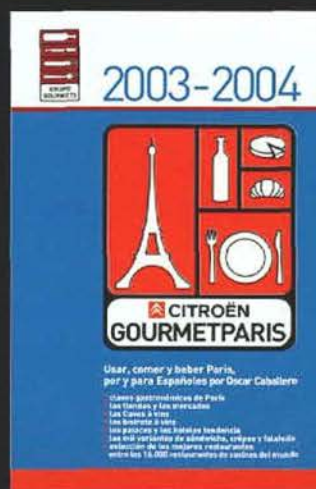
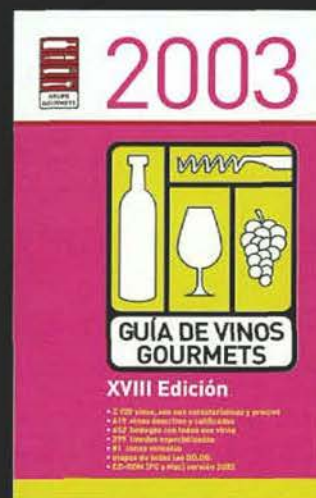
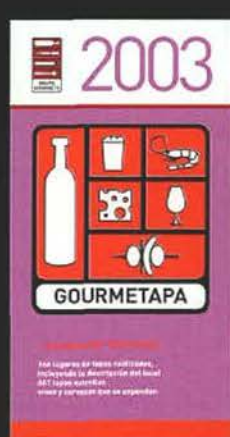
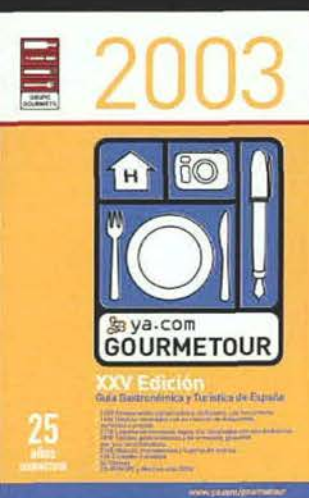
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Wine Aging Terms

Crianza. This term is reserved for wines aged in the wood and bottle for at least two years, six 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 denomination. 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, six 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 six months must be in the wood.

Note:

1. Many PDOs 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 Designation 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 Catalo-

nia. The others are Aragon, Navarre, La Rioja, Castile-León, Extremadura and Valencia. The Cava Designation should not be confused with other PDOs that might be associated with the provinces in which cava is produced. The minimum aging period for cava wines is nine months in the bottle, though many spend between 18 months and three years, and a few up to five years.

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Designation of Origin is an official denomination 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.

Protected and Qualified Designation of Origin (PDOCa)

A PDOCa is a Designation of Origin that fulfills the strictest requirements, among which should be highlighted the following:

The price of the grapes used in wine-making must be greater than 200% of the national average price.

Only wines bottled exclusively at the original wineries will be sold.

At least 90% of the vineyard dedicated to winemaking must be inscribed in the registry of PDOCa vines; and in the registry of wineries, it must be stipulated that these carry out at least 90% of the wine production within the geographical unit.

Quality control of the vines must be carried out by the regulatory council, batch by batch and with a volume less than or equal to 1000 hectoliters per batch.

At present, there are two PDOCa for wine in Spain: the Rioja PDOCa and the Priorato PDOCa.

Protected Geographic Identification (PGI)

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

Each PDO or IGP is managed by a Consejo Regulador (CR) or regulatory council, which sees to the enforcement of the regulations.

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