

# SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine



SPAIN GOURMETOUR

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Galicia's  
Seafood. A Taste  
of the Sea

The 100 Definitive  
Wines from Spain.  
Rhapsody in Red

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The Thrill of Spain's  
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Summer will soon be here again—at least for most of our readers—a time when we all seem to long for special treats to help us get over the year's hard work so far. This issue has quite a few treats in store. The hundred definitive wines from Spain were tasted at the Madrid Fusión event in January, and regular *New York Times* contributor Bruce Schoenfeld reports on it for you. Try some of his favorites with Galician seafood!

Are new sauces and special dips missing from your store shelves? Have a look at some Spanish ones. They can cheer up any dish, with echoes of fresh, natural, good old home-style cooking.

Summer may well make you too lazy to tackle the whole of *Don Quixote of la Mancha*, but Janet Mendel's observations on food in this first modern novel, published back in 1605, will give you a flavor of it.

Our regular series keep you informed about wines selected by international experts—this time from the United Kingdom—and about big names in wine: our latest is Rioja's *enfant terrible*, Miguel Ángel de Gregorio. Meanwhile, our Spanish shopping series (which is coming to an end—just one more to go) takes you into the nation's heartland.

Toñi Vicente, woman chef from Galicia, lets the genuine qualities of the local seafood and fish speak for themselves, but gives them a modern edge. Or perhaps it's just the feminine touch?

**Cathy Boirac**  
*Editor-in-chief*



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Andalusia welcomes you with a smile

All of Andalusia welcomes you with a smile – the people, nature and gastronomy...Andalusia, the southernmost region of the Iberian Peninsula cherishes the Mediterranean cuisine and offers a rich variety of healthy and natural food: fruit, vegetables, fish, olive oil, cereals...and exquisite wine: from Sherry, Brandy and Montilla to other, not less remarkable varieties from Malaga and Huelva. An unlimited source of taste and culinary delight, which our region offers for Andalusians, you and all who wish to enjoy them as well.



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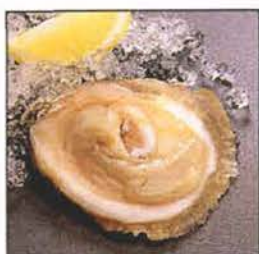
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Four hundred years ago, Don Quixote sallied forth from his La Mancha village in search of adventure. Wearing a rusty suit of armor and a bashed-up helmet, he partook of a meager meal of salt-cod at a roadside inn, and was unceremoniously be-knighted by the innkeeper with a thwack on the shoulder.

The year 2005 marks the IV Centenary of the first publication of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. The first part of the book, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*—seen by many to be the first modern novel—came out early in 1605. Its ratings were huge and the sequel followed a few years later. La Mancha in central Spain will celebrate the IV Centenary with myriad events literary, touristic, theatrical and even gustatory.

Throughout the book, Cervantes feeds us morsels about life and food at the end of the 16th century. Don Quixote proves an excellent guide to the foods and cooking of present-day La Mancha, for the lay of the land has changed very little.

This article, however, will also allow us a glimpse of what Manuel de la Osa is capable of doing with traditional Manchego dishes. *Gachas*, garlic, *galianos* soar to new heights in the hands of the “Ingenious Chef of La Mancha”.



Text  
Janet Mendel

Eating with  
**DON**



**QUINTE**

## Concerning the famous hildago Don Quixote de La Mancha and what he ate for dinner

*"En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor. Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lentejas los viernes, y algún palomino de añadidura los domingos, consumían las tres partes de su hacienda. .... Frisaba la edad de nuestro hidalgo con los cincuenta años: era de complexión recia, seco de carnes, enjuto de rostro, gran madrugador y amigo de la caza."*

"In a certain place in La Mancha, whose name I don't wish to remember, there lived not so long ago a gentleman of the landed gentry, the sort who kept a lance in the rack, an old shield, a thin nag and a racing greyhound. An olla—boiled dinner—with rather more beef than mutton, salpicón—leftovers—most nights, duelos y quebrantos—eggs and brains—on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays and some squab on Sundays for good measure, used up three-quarters of his income... Our gentleman was getting on for 50: he was of robust constitution, lean, gaunt-faced, an early-riser and aficionado of hunting." (My translation.)

In the very first paragraph of the book Cervantes introduces his character, Don Quixote, man from La Mancha, knight-errant and tilter

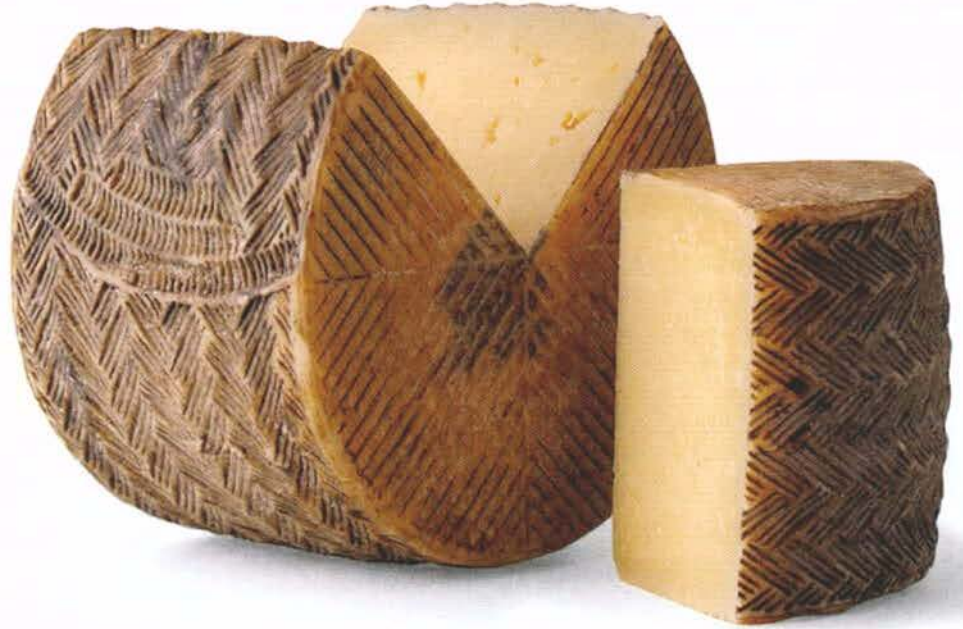
*Fritanga manchega con bacalao:*  
Partridge and belly pork in pisto (a rich sauce made with tomatoes, peppers and onions) with, in this case, the addition of salt-cod, a feature of many La Mancha dishes.





“Aquí trayo una cebolla y un poco de queso, y no sé cuántos mendrugos de pan—dijo Sancho—, pero no son manjares que pertenecen a tan valiente caballero como vuestra merced.”

“I have an onion here and a bit of cheese,” said Sancho, “and a few hunks of bread. But they are not the victuals for a valiant knight like your worship.”



at windmills, by telling us what Don Quixote ate most days of the year. We can almost see him, seated alone at the table, eating his frugal fare. Let's see what was for dinner.

The *olla* is a soup pot, big and potbellied so it would fit into a tripod over the hearth fire. In Spanish, *olla* refers to both the cooking vessel (from the Latin *olla*, meaning a pot) and the food cooked in it—a meal-in-a-pot with meat, vegetables and legumes. In the 16th century—and yet today, in winter—it was the principal dish for the main, midday meal. The broth is served first with bread for sopping (now, with some type of pasta). Platters of meats, sausages, and vegetables follow.

When Cervantes tells us that the *olla* served in Don Quixote's house contained more beef than mutton, he's telling us that Quixote lived with

reduced financial resources. In those times, beef was cheaper than lamb and mutton. Beef—probably salt-beef—was so common that it was served to the poor, while veal was reserved for the higher-ups.

La Mancha (the name comes from the Arabic meaning a flat, dry land) occupies the high, central plain of Spain, where the rain, mainly, does not fall. Here sheep and goats thrive on dry hillsides, while cattle graze in river valleys and grasslands.

Today's *olla* (also called *cocido* or *puchero* or *pote*) usually contains beef marrow bone and meaty beef shin or knuckle, to give the soup substance, and only rarely does it contain mutton. La Mancha in modern times raises both good-quality beef and superb lamb, some of which is certified as Protected Geographic Identification (PGI) Manchego Lamb (see Glossary p. 143).

Don Quixote ate *salpicón* for supper most nights. *Salpicón*, essentially, is leftovers from the midday *olla*.

*Salpicón* (*sal* = salt; *picar* = to chop) is a cold hash made by chopping together the leftover meat and vegetables from the stew pot and dressing with salt, olive oil and, probably, vinegar.

Yet in present-day Madrid taverns a favorite *tapa* is also called *salpicón*. Its current rendition is a far cry from Don Quixote's leftover hash. It is a cold salad of chopped tomatoes, onions, peppers with shrimp or other shellfish dressed with salt, olive oil and vinegar. The tomatoes and peppers in today's *salpicón* probably never appeared on Don Quixote's table. By 1592, a hundred years after Columbus' first voyage and the discovery of the Americas, Cervantes' writing career was beginning to flourish (he was earlier an enlisted soldier, a prisoner



“¿Qué sangre ni qué fuente dices, enemigo de Dios y de sus santos?” —dijo el ventero—. “¿No ves, ladrón, que la sangre y la fuente no es otra cosa que estos cueros que aquí están horadados y el vino tinto que nada en este aposento, que nadando vea yo el alma en los infiernos de quien los horadó?”

“Good God!” exclaimed the innkeeper at this point. “If that Don Quixote, or Don devil, hasn’t been slashing at one of the skins of red wine at the head of his bed! Full they were, and what this fellow takes for blood must be the wine spilt on the floor.”



captured by Barbary pirates, and a tax collector). His lifetime saw amazing exploits by Spanish explorers in the Americas. Cervantes himself unsuccessfully petitioned the Council of the Indies for a post in the West Indies.

And by the time Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, many New World plants had been brought back to Spain and were being grown experimentally or ornamentally. It is likely that Cervantes knew of beans, sweet potatoes, squash, potatoes, tomatoes, chocolate, though he never mentions anyone actually eating them!

Tomatoes were not widely accepted as safe to eat for another century or two. He does mention *pavipollo*, or turkey, a fowl from the New World. One New World plant that gained wide acceptance early on and might have been used in cooking by *Don Quixote*’s housekeeper was the capsicum annum pepper—the chile. When Columbus tasted the

hot-tasting capsicum, he called it *pimiento*, a variation on the Spanish word for black pepper (*pimienta*). Columbus carried peppers and other New World fruits back to Spain, where they were cultivated by monks in various abbeys. The Hieronymite monks at the Yuste monastery in La Vera (Extremadura, west of La Mancha) were the first to dry (and smoke) the peppers and use the powder—*pimentón*, a type of paprika—as a flavoring and food preservative (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 46).

Supposedly Emperor Charles V, when he abdicated the Spanish throne in 1555 and retired to the Yuste monastery, liked the spice (he was a notorious gourmand) and recommended it to his sister, Queen Mary of Hungary. That’s where it became paprika, the Serbo-Croatian word for pepper.

In Spain the capsicum quickly became a stand-in for real pepper in

flavoring and preserving foods. It is essential to *chorizo*, the most emblematic Spanish sausage. On Saturdays *Don Quixote* ate *duelos y quebrantos*, which many Spanish cooking authorities interpret as “bacon and eggs”. But don’t try asking in the market for a dozen *quebrantos*! Roughly translated, *duelos* means “toils and travails”, or “grief” (a *duelo* is a wake preceding a funeral, too), and *quebrantos* means “afflictions” or “cracked”. Some researchers suggest the origin of the dish is in the old custom in some places of La Mancha for shepherds to deliver any animals injured or dead during the week to their masters. The meat was salted and dried to make sheep or goat jerky (*tasajo*), and the bones cracked and cooked in the olla to make a Saturday stew. Presumably, it was the master who had lost his stock who suffered the *duelos*—and ate them. According to José Rosell Villasevil, president of the Sociedad Cervantina

Left: *Lechona en agujas de pino con manzana y caviar*: Suckling pig flavored with pine-needles and served with apple and caviar.

Right: *Leche en polvo de oveja con ostra y queso fresco, azafrán y salvia*: Powdered ewe's milk (made with Merino ewe's milk, from which Manchego cheese is made) with oyster, curd cheese, saffron and sage.



## QUIXOTIC FOOD: A TRIBUTE

**Text:** Roberto Arnaz

**Translation:** Hawys Pritchard

In the four hundred years since it was written, the story of *The Famous Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* has become the most universal story in Hispanic literature and has been hailed as the first modern novel. While recounting the adventures and misadventures of the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, Cervantes also held up a mirror to his time, reflecting a frieze of characters and customs and making over 2,000 references to the gastronomy of Golden Age Spain. Food will therefore loom large among the events put on to celebrate the novel's quatercentenary, which are being coordinated by the Empresa Pública Don Quijote de La Mancha 2005. Two events, *La Cocina del Quijote del Siglo XXI* (The Cuisine of Don Quixote in the 21st Century) and *Homenaje a la Cocina Universal del Quijote* (A Tribute to the Universal Cuisine of Don Quixote), will set the gastronomic tone of this year dedicated to celebrating Cervantes' hero.

Top names in Spanish cuisine (Ferran Adrià, Juan María Arzak, Martín Berasategui, Santi Santamaría, Carme Ruscalleda and Toño Pérez) have joined forces with Castile-La Mancha's six best-known chefs, headed by Manuel de la Osa, to rework and update the most representative recipes that appear in the novel. The combined talents of this group (who can claim a total of 21 Michelin stars among them) has gone into creating a collection of recipes to which each of them has contributed an aperitif, a fish dish, a meat or game dish, and a dessert. *La Cocina del Quijote del Siglo XXI*, which contains over 40 recipes, was first published this spring and will later appear in CD and Internet form. It is also to be translated into English and Japanese. One of its aims is to serve as a culinary reference book for the restaurants along the *Ruta de Don Quijote* (Don Quixote Route)—at 2,500 km (1,550 miles), Europe's longest ecotourism itinerary—which links the 145 localities that provide the backdrop for Cervantes' novel. For the year's other big gastro-event, the Tribute to the Universal Cuisine of Don Quixote, the plan is to bring together top

chefs from each of the five continents for an international gastronomic festival in November. Alice Waters will represent the American continent, Ferran Adrià will be there for Europe, and Tetsuya Wakuda for Oceania. They will be joined by the best chef in China and the best in South Africa or Morocco representing Asia and Africa, respectively. In what can hardly fail to be a marvelous gastronomic display, each will pay his or her particular tribute to the food and foodways mentioned in Don Quixote, working creatively on the basis of the many foodstuffs that Castile-La Mancha produces. Meanwhile, the 13th edition of Castile-La Mancha's *Concurso de Gastronomía* (Gastronomic Competition) will be going on in parallel. As a special feature this year, competitors will be required to feature in their menus at least one dish inspired by the cuisine of Don Quixote—in either a traditional or a 21st-century interpretation.



**Star Products of Castile-La Mancha**

Many of the gustatory delights that come from Castile-La Mancha today—with Manchego cheese and regional wines at the top of the list—were already well-known in Cervantes' time. Here's a taster's inventory of products from La Mancha. Quite a few of them have a type of Protected Designation (see Glossary p. 143).

**La Mancha Saffron (PDO Azafrán de la Mancha)**

The saffron of La Mancha is said to be the best in the world—the most intense (and enduring) golden color; the headiest aroma; and the most complex taste. Look for the distinctive sticker "Denominación de Origen Azafrán de la Mancha" with a mauve saffron flower and a Quixote emblem to prove its authenticity. This spice—the lightly toasted stigmas of the saffron crocus—was introduced to Spain by the Arabs in the ninth century. It grows in only a few spots in La Mancha. The flowers are harvested by hand; the stigmas are removed by hand; they are toasted in small quantities and packaged by hand. This is yet, in this day and age, a product as artisanal as it was in Quixote's time.

**Olive Oil (PDO Aceite de Oliva Virgen Montes de Toledo)**

Castile-La Mancha produces more olive oil, after Andalusia, than any other region of Spain. Much of it goes to make good-quality supermarket-brand oils. A very small but important quantity is estate-produced and bottled (*aceite de pago*). Within the region, only the oil from the region of Montes de Toledo, which encompasses the southwest of Toledo province and the northwest of Ciudad Real, presently has *denominación de origen*. The predominant olive variety is the Cornicabra, which produces an extra virgin oil that is buttery and sweet.

**Manchego Cheese (PDO Queso Manchego)**

La Mancha's most renowned product is certainly its cheese. The region produces some excellent industrial cheeses of mixed milk (goat, sheep, and cow), plus fine goat's milk cheese. But beyond a doubt, the

crowning glory is the age-old Manchego cheese made exclusively from the milk of Manchega breed sheep and aged a minimum of 60 days (usually longer). Commercialized as both artisanal—made from raw milk—and industrial—made from pasteurized milk, the authentic cheese is regulated by the Manchego Cheese Regulatory Council, which tests the cheeses to protect their origin and quality.

**Lamb of La Mancha (PGI Cordero Manchego)**

Superb lamb of the Manchega breed (the same breed from which the milk for Manchego cheese is derived) is marketed with the stamp of the Protected Geographical Indication Cordero Manchego, which regulates the quality of this gourmet meat.

**Garlic (PGI Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras)**

*Ajo morado*, purple garlic, a variety of hard-necked garlic that has papery white layers enclosing cloves tightly wrapped in violet skins, is so esteemed that it enjoys its own Protected Geographical Indication. Grown in the environs of Las Pedroñeras in the provinces of Cuenca and Albacete, purple garlic is both sweet and pungent, with a powerful bite. Top chef Manuel de la Osa at Las Rejas (see p. 23) in Las Pedroñeras uses purple garlic in his most creative dishes.

**Melon (PGI Melón de la Mancha)**

A variety of melon known as *piel de sapo*—"toad skin"—for its rough green peel, grown in the center of Ciudad Real, has its own protected geographical designation. The melon has pale yellow flesh and is ever so sweet (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 61).

**Pickled Eggplant/Aubergine (PGI Berenjena de Almagro)**

Tiny eggplant packed in a tangy marinade are a specialty of the towns around Almagro (Ciudad Real). A must for an appetizer.

**Almond Marzipan (PGI Mazapán de Toledo)**

Marzipan is a paste made by grinding and kneading sweet almonds with sugar. The paste is shaped into charming figures, glazed and decorated. The center of

production of marzipan is the medieval city of Toledo. Both artisanal and industrial firms qualify for PGI Mazapán de Toledo.

**Gourmet Game**

Partridge *pâté*, rabbit in *escabeche*, and venison ragout are but some of the gourmet products produced and marketed in cans by specialized firms in the provinces of Toledo and Ciudad Real. Game comes from both wild and farmed sources.

**Mushrooms**

Cuenca and Albacete provinces market both cultivated and wild mushrooms.

**Honey (PDO Miel de La Alcarria)**

Exquisite honey comes from several areas of Castile-La Mancha, with herbal flavors. That of La Alcarria (Guadalajara) has PDO status.

**Wine (DO Valdepeñas, La Mancha, Méntrida, Mondéjar, Jumilla, Mancheula, Ribera del Júcar); plus Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla and Vinos de Pago**

Castile-La Mancha is the biggest wine region on earth, representing about eight percent of all the vineyards in the world. It produces about half of all the wine made in Spain. Decades of restructuring and investments in new wineries, putting the emphasis on quality, not quantity, are paying off with new wines, new varieties, new character, new markets. These are the wines of the future (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 62).

Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla are new wines that fall outside the designations of the traditional *denominaciones*, while Vinos de Pago are those that are *château*-bottled from grapes grown on a single estate.

in Toledo and a scholar of Cervantes' works, the addition of bacon or salt pork is contrary to custom of Cervantes' time, for Saturdays were days of semi-abstinence, when fatty meat and salt pork were not allowed, but animal 'parts' were permitted. A soup of offal—chicken feet, gizzards, lambs brains, tripe—would be thickened with beaten eggs. From that, he explained, is derived the modern interpretation of the dish as eggs with lambs brains, often with the addition of bacon—a modest venial sin in exchange for a great deal of pleasure. Sr. Rosell adds that the culinary delights of consuming

pig fat ought to be classified today as a serious mortal sin—on the grounds of raising cholesterol levels. But, worth the occasional risk.

However, let us continue, for we are still in the first paragraph of Don Quixote.

On Fridays Don Quixote ate lentils. Because it was Friday—a day of abstinence from meat in the Catholic Church—they were certainly lentils *viudas*, "widowed", without meat or sausage added. Nevertheless, well-flavored with the olive oil of the region, garlic and onions, and spices such as cumin, they were probably a substantial and tasty meal. The

region of Castile-La Mancha today grows an important percent of all the lentils produced in Spain. Sundays were a bit special, with a *palomino* for dinner. Later in the book, when Don Quixote is joined at table by Sansón Carrasco, B.A., a pair of *pichones* is added to the daily fare. Palomino and pichón are squab or dove. The bird could have been a fat and tender squab from the farmyard or it might have been a wild dove, as we are told that Don Quixote was a keen huntsman. La Mancha in the 16th century and yet today is a region abundant in small game, in particular red partridge,



...y dos calderas de aceite mayores que las de un tinte servían de freír cosas de masa, que con dos valientes palas las sacaban fritas y las zabullían en otra caldera de preparada miel que allí junto estaba.

...while two cauldrons of oil, larger than dyers' vats, served for frying puddings, which they drew out ready and plunged into another cauldron of warmed honey, which stood alongside.

dove, hare and rabbit, ingredients in some of the region's most popular dishes (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 36). In another episode in the book, a goatherd who joins the party is offered a haunch of cold rabbit, speared on a knife. Rabbit, partridge and squab are even today to be found on menus throughout La Mancha. The most popular preparation is *estofado*, braised with onions and wine. Another is *en escabeche*, cooked and preserved in an herb and vinegar marinade, once a way of keeping the game a period of time without

refrigeration and one of the best Spanish traditional cooking techniques.

### About what happened when Don Quixote and Sancho Panza became hungry

Unlike his sidekick, Sancho Panza, one who unabashedly relishes his food (Panza means "belly"), Don Quixote, with his mind on other matters, seems hardly to care what

he eats. Though, make no mistake, he doesn't like missing a meal! After one of their early adventures together, Sancho proffers his humble repast of onion, cheese and bread, slyly suggesting that it wouldn't suit the likes of a valiant knight like Don Quixote. Don Quixote, quite hungry by this point, declares that, though it's a point of honor with knights errant not to eat but once in a month, when they do eat, he declares, they take what's nearest to hand, except for the occasional sumptuous banquet, of course. So the two share the humble meal companionably.

Another time they sup with shepherds—Don Quixote seated on an up-turned watering trough—on braised goat meat, cheese and edible acorns.

An early misadventure occurs when Don Quixote sees dust clouds from two converging herds of sheep, which he decides are armies preparing for battle. When he intervenes, the shepherds lay him low with stones from their slings. From medieval times sheep were a source of fantastic wealth for their wool. In Cervantes' era, the powerful Mesta syndicate controlled the wool trade and the routes of the transhumance, from the summer pastures in the north of Spain to southerly ones in La Mancha where herds passed the winter. Several La Mancha villages have the name of La Solana, or "a place in the sun", protected from winds sites where shepherds wintered their flocks. The Mesta was abolished in the 18th century and, gradually, the importance of Spanish wool diminished. Today it is virtually worthless, but the cheese—once a by-product, made by shepherds—is like gold.





Cervantes mentions cheese dozens of times in the text of the novel. The cheese of La Mancha, queso Manchego, is sheep's milk cheese (that made from the milk from the Manchega breed of ewes now has Protected Designation of Origin). The shepherds also share their wine with Don Quixote and Sancho. The drinking horn makes the rounds so frequently, "like the bucket of a water-wheel", that the group easily empties one of the two wineskins. The wine they drank would have been *vino del pais*, the wine of the country, which in La Mancha was almost as abundant as water. (We learn in the second part of the book that Don Quixote himself owned a small vineyard.)

La Mancha was wine-producing land from before Roman times. Apparently, even the Muslim Moors were allowed special dispensations in order to partake of it. Today the region of Castile-La Mancha, called the biggest vineyard on the planet, has more acres dedicated to cultivation of wine grapes than anywhere in the world (almost half of Spain's vineyards and eight percent of the world's).

Which continues the adventure of the Knight of the Forest and the genial supper that took place between the two squires

In an episode in the second part of Quixote, a well-meaning friend posing as another knight-errant, the Knight of the Forest, along with his attendant squire, attempt to way-lay

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. While Don Quixote and the Knight of the Forest discuss their ladyloves, the two squires settle down to eating and drinking. The second squire produces an *empanada* (a type of pie) fully half a yard across, stuffed with a rabbit so big and plump that Sancho takes it for a goat.

Sancho drinks deeply from the wineskin. Ah, he exclaims, this wine's from Ciudad Real, isn't it? Ciudad Real is the city and province in the south of La Mancha, origin of much of the wine that nowadays has

the Designation of Origin of both La Mancha and Valdepeñas.

You're quite the expert, says the other squire.

Sancho Panza reveals that he comes by his expertise naturally, for, on his father's side of the family, were two of the top wine-tasters ever known in La Mancha. He tells a story about them: A winemaker asks the two tasters to sample the wine from a certain barrel. One samples it with the tip of his tongue and the other merely raises it to his nose. The first declares the wine has a taste of iron.



The second taster detects the aroma of leather. The winemaker insists that the barrel was clean and contained nothing extraneous. Nevertheless, the two tasters stick to their assessments. When the wine was all sold and the barrel emptied, on cleaning it, a tiny key hung on a leather thong was found in the bottom of the empty cask.

*Denso de galiano frio manchego:*  
A version of the traditional *galiano*, also known as *gazpacho manchego*, made from unleavened bread with game meat (usually hare or rabbit) and broth.

### Which relates the wedding feast of Camacho

The most memorable meal in the novel is certainly that of the *bodas de Camacho*, the wedding feast of a rich man named Camacho (who doesn't, by the way, get the girl). Don Quixote and Sancho encounter some 50 cooks at work preparing the meal. A whole young steer stuffed with a dozen suckling pigs is roasting on a huge spit. Lamb, hare and chickens are stewing in enormous earthenware ollas. Loaves of bread are piled into a mountain and whole cheeses, stacked like bricks, form a wall. A treasure

chest of spices is at hand. Cooks are frying sweet pastries in great cauldrons of oil, then dipping them into boiling honey syrup. Sancho Panza cannot contain himself. He begs permission to dip a crust of bread into one of the cook-pots and is bidden to skim off what he likes—and take the ladle too! Happy, he scores three hens and a couple of geese for breakfast. The pastries Cervantes refers to, called *frutas de sartén*, or “fruits of the frying pan”, are typical sweets in areas of Spain such as La Mancha and Andalusia where olive oil reigns supreme. (In Castile-La Mancha, the oil of Montes de Toledo has



## QUIXOTIC CUISINE

**Text:** Sonia Ortega

**Translation:** Hawys Pritchard

**Photos:** Toya Legido & Tomás Zarza/  
ICEX

In a place in La Mancha, by the name of Las Pedroñeras, lives a gentleman who, although physically quite different from the famous knight errant, shares something of his eccentricity. For opening a restaurant as ambitious and innovative as his in a remote little Manchegan village 25 years ago was a distinctly eccentric thing to do. The gentleman in question is Manuel de la Osa, and he has successfully developed a cuisine characterized by its subtlety while remaining true to the flavorful but undeniably rustic foodstuffs of the region.

A sign used to inform you as you entered Las Pedroñeras that you had arrived at the garlic capital of the world! Las Pedroñeras' garlic is purple, smallish, with firm, aromatic cloves, and it has provided the raw material for one of the staple dishes for countless Spaniards throughout history—*sopa de ajo* (garlic soup). The classic recipe used garlic, *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain), cured ham—for those who could afford it—, broth, and slices of yesterday's bread. Manuel de la Osa has created his own version—*sopa fría de ajos* (cold garlic soup)—still using the same modest ingredients upon which, through subtle changes of temperature, texture and presentation, he performs something of a miracle. But cold garlic soup—by now a firmly established favorite in the restaurant—is just one example. The self-taught and immensely creative Manuel, while open to products from all over the world, is a particular devotee of the food of his own part of Spain, both its products, like saffron, honey and

Manchego cheese, and foods that are traditional to its diet, like *bacalao* (salt-cod). On the occasion of the quatercentenary of the publication of *Don Quixote*, De la Osa was the obvious person to devise a new take on the foods that feature most significantly in the novel. Here are his suggestions for a complete menu. You see what we mean about creativity:

*Leche en polvo de oveja con ostra y queso fresco, azafrán y salvia:*

Powdered ewe's milk (made with Merino ewe's milk, from which Manchego cheese is made) with oyster, curd cheese, saffron and sage.

*Sopa fría de ajo morado de Las Pedroñeras:*

Cold garlic soup, made with purple Las Pedroñeras garlic (as described above).

*Lechona en agujas de pino con manzana y caviar:*

Suckling pig flavored with pine-needles and served with apple and caviar.

*Denso de galiano frío manchego:*

A version of the traditional *galiano*, also known as *gazpacho manchego*, made from unleavened bread with game meat (usually hare or rabbit) and broth.

*Fritanga manchega con bacalao:*

Partridge and belly pork in *pisto* (a rich sauce made with tomatoes, peppers and onions) with, in this case, the addition of salt-cod (a feature of many La Mancha dishes).

*Capuccino de almendra tierna, azafrán y miel con crujiente de gachas manchegas:*

A dessert 'capuccino' made with fresh young almonds, saffron and honey, served with crunchy sweet *gachas* (a far cry from the traditional *gachas*, which is a spread made with pork fat, grass-pea flour, *pimentón* and garlic).

Enough to cheer up even the Knight of the Rueful Countenance!



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“Eso juro yo bien –dijo Sancho–: cuchillada le hubieran dado, que le abrieran de arriba abajo como una granada o como a un melón muy maduro.”

“I’ll swear to that,” said Sancho. “They would have given him a slashing that would have split him from top to toe like a pomegranate or an over-ripe melon”.



*Denominación de Origen.*) The simple dough, flavored with aniseed and sesame, is rolled out and shaped into twists, ears, leaves, rosettes, rings and turnovers, fried until golden in olive oil, then dipped in boiled honey or sugar syrup.

The Arab Moors introduced sugar cane to Spain and it is still grown in the south, in Andalusia. They also introduced the process of extracting the juice from the cane. However, in Cervantes’ time, honey and grape must, boiled to reduce it to a sweet syrup, were the commonest sweeteners.

In another sweet episode of the book, a young maiden attempts to seduce Don Quixote. But he resists her advances.

*Para sola Dulcinea soy de masa y de alfeñique, y para todas las demás soy de pedernal.*

For Dulcinea, his idolized ladylove, he is a real softie, “like sweet dough and sugar candy”—in other words, a piece of cake; for all the other ladies, he’s hard as flint. Not that Dulcinea ever got to try him out.

*Alfeñique* is a paste of boiled sugar, sometimes also with ground almonds. Like marzipan and many other Spanish sweets, it is a legacy of the Moors (Muslim Arabs and Berbers) who ruled parts of Spain from 711 until 1492. In Cervantes’ time, the Reconquest of Spain by Christian kings was complete, but Moors still inhabited some of the lands. Cervantes creates a fictionalized ‘author’ for his tale of Don Quixote—a Moor named Cide Hamete Benengeli, or “My Lord Eggplant”. (Eggplant was a favored vegetable of the Moors, the Sephardic Jews, and, subsequently, of the Christian Spanish.) Cervantes relates that the narrator pays a translator in raisins and bushels of wheat to render the manuscript into *castellano* or Castilian Spanish. Sancho does quite a lot of chest-pounding about being an “old Christian”—meaning he claims not to have any Jewish or Moorish blood. This was at the height of the Inquisition. Nevertheless, quite a few of the dishes of the era, especially those almond and sugar

sweets, are direct descendents of the Sephardic and Moorish communities of La Mancha. Converts from Judaism to Christianity—*conversos*—carried favorite recipes with them, sometimes straight into convents of cloistered nuns. To this day nuns in La Mancha convents prepare sweets and pastries that are almost identical to those prepared by Sephardic cooks in Los Angeles, Seattle, Izmir (Turkey) and Tel Aviv.

### About what happened to Sancho Panza at dinner

In the second part of Quixote, Sancho Panza finally gets his wish to govern an island, which he manages with some craft, aplomb and adroitness. At the dinner table, however, he is in dire straits. Don Quixote counsels him to lay off the onions and garlic, to keep his breath sweet (so no one would know he was a peasant). He also suggests moderation in eating and drinking.

*Sopa fría de ajo morado de Las Pedroñeras:*  
Cold garlic soup, made with purple Las Pedroñeras garlic.

*Come poco, y cena más poco; que la salud de todo el cuerpo se fragua en la oficina del estómago. Sé templado en el beber, considerando que el vino demasiado, ni guarda secreto, ni cumple palabra.*

"Eat little . . . , for good health is forged in the workshop of the stomach. Be temperate in drinking, for too much wine neither keeps a secret nor fulfills a word."

But it is a presumptuous doctor who keeps whisking away Sancho's food, supposedly to keep him from doing himself harm by eating the wrong victuals, who really gets him riled up. (This sounds dishearteningly modern.)

When, finally, Sancho is allowed a supper of beef and onion hash and slow-cooked calf's feet, he digs in with as much pleasure as if it had been fine pheasant from Rome, veal from Sorrento or goose from Lavajos. Sancho declares to the doctor who was keeping him on restricted rations:

"Look, Mr. Doctor, from now on, don't even think about feeding me



dainties, nor fancy foods, because you'll just upset my stomach." He declares he's got a finicky digestion, used to goat meat, fatty salt pork, beef jerky, turnips and onions. Any of that hoity-toity palace food will just turn his stomach.

*Lo que el maestresala puede hacer es traerme estas que llaman ollas podridas, que mientras más podridas son, mejor huelen.*

"What the maître d' can do is bring me some of what's called ollas podridas—rotten stews, which the more rotten they are the better they smell."

*Olla podrida* is the "mother of all stews," from a dish fit for kings, containing all manner of game and meat—chicken, beef, mutton, salt pork, squab, partridge, thrush, pork loin, sausages, hare, salt beef, beef tongues, pigs' ears and trotters—to poor folks' fare of ham bone and salt pork. Very slowly cooked until the meat was falling off the bones, the stew acquired the descriptive name "rotten", just as over-ripe fruit gets mushy and falls away from the pit. Another explanation for the name is that the olla usually incorporates salted meats, salt-pork fat (*tocino*), and chunks of *serrano* ham and ham bone. The old ham bone, called *añejo*, meaning well-cured, aged, imparts a pronounced rancid aroma to the pottage which, tongue-in-cheek, could be called "rotten".

*Capuccino de almendra tierna, azafrán y miel con crujiente de gachas manchegas:*

A dessert 'capuccino' made with fresh young almonds, saffron and honey, served with crunchy sweet *gachas* (a far cry from the traditional *gachas*, which is a spread made with pork fat, grass-pea flour, *pimentón* and garlic).



## Concerning Sancho and a picnic with caviar

Sancho defects from his governorship of the island. Returning in search of his master, Don Quixote, he has a few misadventures all his own. He runs into Ricote el Morisco, a Moorish convert-turned-(German)-pilgrim. The best thing here is a picnic in a poplar woods. Spread out on the grass, they have bread, salt, walnuts, cheese, ham and a black paste, called caviar, made of fish roe, so salty it cries out for many slugs from the wine-skin. Oh yes! There also are olives, "dry, but exceedingly tasty". Cervantes in his travels has obviously sampled from exotic foods. Nevertheless, his caviar probably was the paste made on Spanish coasts from tuna roe, *huevas de atún*, known from Roman times, still a delicacy today. Never the gastronome, Don Quixote declares to Sancho that freedom is more precious than all the sumptuous banquets and frosty drinks they have enjoyed in the castle of the nobles where they stayed. He says he would much prefer not to be obliged to return favors, which are bonds that keep the spirit from ranging free. "Fortunate is he to whom heaven sends a piece of bread, without obliging him to bow and scrape before any but heaven itself."

Don Quixote eats. So does Sancho Panza. As much as possible. There is much about their meals. But, it is Sancho Panza's wife, Teresa, who has the last word about eating:

*La mejor salsa del mundo es el hambre, y como ésta no falta a los pobres, siempre comen con gusto.*

"The best sauce in the world is hunger, and as poor folk aren't missing that, they always eat with gusto."

*Janet Mendel is an American journalist resident in Spain for many years. She is the author of Cooking in Spain (Santana Books) and My Kitchen in Spain (HarperCollins). She is presently working on a new book, Food of La Mancha, to be published in 2006 by HarperCollins.*

*See Exporters page 130 and Photo Credits page 144*

## W E B S I T E S

[www.donquijotedelamancha2005.com](http://www.donquijotedelamancha2005.com)  
The IV Centenario del Quijote official web site gives information about all its related events. (English, Spanish)

[www.elquijote.org](http://www.elquijote.org)  
News and views related to the work of Cervantes and other literary links. (Spanish)

[www.centenarioquijote.es](http://www.centenarioquijote.es)  
The Spanish Ministry of Culture's web site, with across-the-council information about the cultural events connected with Don Quixote's quattrocentenary. (Spanish)

[www.jccm.es](http://www.jccm.es)  
This is the entry point for Castile-La Mancha's regional government web site, with links to its various departments, a bibliography, tourist information, and the IV Centenario Don Quijote organization. (Spanish)

[www.crdoquesomanchego.com](http://www.crdoquesomanchego.com)  
The web site of the regulatory council for Manchego cheese gives background information about the Manchega breed of sheep and how the cheese is made. (English, French, Spanish)

[www.dovaldepenas.es](http://www.dovaldepenas.es)  
Web site of the regulatory council for DO Valdepeñas wines. (English, Spanish)

[www.lamanchado.es](http://www.lamanchado.es) and [www.lamanchawines.com](http://www.lamanchawines.com)  
Web site of the regulatory council for DO La Mancha wines. (English, Spanish)

[www.domontesdetoledo.com](http://www.domontesdetoledo.com)  
Web site of the regulatory council for PDO Montes de Toledo extra virgin olive oil. (English, French, Spanish)

[www.mieldelaalcarria.org](http://www.mieldelaalcarria.org)  
Web site of the regulatory council for PDO Miel de la Alcarria honey. (Spanish)

# Culinary Shopping in Spain

**Text**

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**Translation**

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**Photos**

Carlos Roca/ICEX



Tasting the Spanish

A high plateau occupies the heartland of Spain. The landscape is one of plains stretching as far as the eye can see, growing cereals or vines, or vast expanses—where holm oaks and cork oaks reign—that serve as pasturelands for pigs and sheep. This is the territory, characterized by a harsh, dry climate of extreme temperatures, of the four Autonomous Communities to be covered in this article—Extremadura, Castile-León, Castile-La Mancha and Madrid.

# HEGARBLEAND



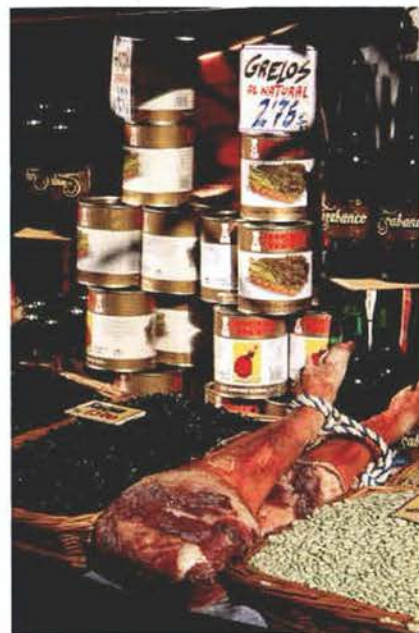
The first three share an agricultural and cattle-farming tradition, the reason for the wealth and variety of their main food products—cheese, ham, and charcuterie. Other basic products are wines, which never cease to improve, and olive oil, now reaching excellent production figures and high quality standards in Extremadura and Castile-La Mancha. As explained below, the specific traditions of each of the Communities give rise to different gastronomic products that are sometimes difficult to find outside

the places where they are produced. The case of Madrid is different. Firstly, its territory is small in comparison with the other three and, secondly, the rapid industrialization of recent decades has displaced many of the traditional farming activities. But some products, amongst them wines, have gained ground and made a name for themselves. Finally, the fact that it is the Spanish capital makes it a shop-window for gastronomic products from all the Spanish regions. The Madrid stores offer the best selection

from Spain and, of course, from other parts of the world. This article presents gastronomic establishments in the cities of Cáceres, Salamanca, Toledo and Madrid.

## Cáceres

Cáceres is known for its monumental center, dotted with ancient towers, churches and mansions in a labyrinth of cobbled streets and squares where it would come as no surprise to be hailed from a noble steed or to be charmed



Left: Aquiles Gourmet, Toledo; right: Espinosa, Madrid

by the sounds of a troubadour's lute. Close to the center, one of a cluster of small shops is Casa López, which specializes in cheese and charcuterie. For the last sixty-two years, this establishment has been serving generation after generation of faithful customers. And Jacinto López, the son of the founder, is equally faithful although he makes no secret of the fact that he would like to stop working. "But people come from all over Spain looking for the handmade *torta*, and I would hate to disappoint them." Jacinto is referring to an

exquisite, creamy cheese made from raw Merino ewe's milk coagulated with wild cardoons that is made in a totally artisan fashion, to the extent that it is almost a chance discovery. "The shepherds and dairy-farmers make five or six thousand cheeses, of which 15 or 20 per cent turn out as tortas." But these tortas—the most famous of which is the Torta del Casar from the province of Cáceres—have not always been considered a delicacy. "When my father set up this business in the 1940s," says Jacinto, "the farmers

used to bring in these cheeses because no-one else was interested in what they considered 'spoilt' produce. They used to eat them at home, hiding them from prospective buyers to avoid being considered bad cheese-makers." Jacinto says the torta is "a mystery of nature". Science tells us that certain environmental factors result in a breakdown of the proteins (technically, the process is called proteolysis) which converts the paste into a yellowish cream that presses on the rind, causing characteristic

El Gourmet de la Bellota, Cáceres





From top to bottom:  
El Gourmet de la  
Bellota, Mostazo and  
El Gourmet de la  
Bellota, all three in  
Cáceres



cracks. This is what the shepherds call "atortarse". Now that the mystery has been explained scientifically, tortas are produced industrially but Jacinto López disapproves. The natural tortas he offers are made from the end of February until mid-May and can be consumed all year although they gradually take on a stronger flavor. Transport is a problem and Jacinto refuses to send cheeses over long distances, so his customers come from all over to find them.

El Gourmet de la Bellota is a small, carefully-decorated store that mostly aims to serve the tourist trade. Located in the beautiful square of San Juan and overlooked by the church's gargoyles, it has now been open for ten years although the current owners have only been running it for the last two. The strong point of El Gourmet is charcuterie but this is for a reason. Cristina Romero Galán, the new owner, comes from a family that is now in charge of the MRC Iberian pork charcuterie plant in Carmonita, a village in the province of Badajoz, where they produce loin sausage, hams, *chorizo*, *salchichón* and *morcón* (like chorizo but with five per cent less fat). In addition to the charcuterie on display, Cristina points out the Extremaduran wines

(from Almendralejo, Cañamero, etc.) as some of her best, and most popular, products. "Some of them," she says, "such as Corte Real or Lar de Barros, have won awards at international fairs". Also from Almendralejo are some liqueurs made from acorns and figs, also popular with her customers, along with liqueur made from the Jerte valley cherries. Other local products include fig and acorn chocolates from Almoharín or Montijo (the acorns are ground with cocoa, sugar, liqueur and raisins and coated with black chocolate), truffle-filled figs, tomato jam, chestnut cream, chestnuts in liqueur, and honey from Las Villuercas and Las Hurdes. The *pan de Cáceres* is made of figs ground with almonds and coated with chocolate, and the *hurdanitos* are candies made from honey and pollen, also from Las Hurdes. Our last stop in Cáceres is at Mostazo, one of the city's oldest stores. It started out in 1966 as a grocery store, then became the first supermarket and, when the large retail outlets arrived, the decision was taken to specialize in select produce from Extremadura. Gabriel Mostazo, son and nephew of the founders, says, "Our land produces such varied, high-quality products that a specialist store can be good

business. When I took over twelve years ago, people didn't realize how good the local products were." Mostazo had already acquired great prestige for its Iberian pork charcuterie. Gabriel explains that he has his own brand—Gabriel Mostazo Sello Ibérico—on chorizos, loin sausages and hams. "But this doesn't mean we're not interested in what other people are producing. When their products are good, and the best don't come from the same producers every year, we also sell them. The Iberian hams from the DO Dehesa de Extremadura bear the best guarantee, especially those from the towns of Montánchez, Fregenal de la Sierra and Higuera la Real." In Gabriel's opinion, the best loin sausage comes in natural pig's tripe from the animals reared on acorns and slaughtered in January and February. These are filled completely by hand, so the end result is more expensive. Then Gabriel Mostaza goes on to talk about the peculiarities of Extremaduran chorizo, which is "made following the age-old recipe, with a touch of salt, ground garlic and *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) from La Vera (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 46), which distinguishes it from others". Olive oil is another of the features of the Extremaduran gastronomy scene.

El Gourmet de la Bellota, Cáceres



Gabriel recommends, amongst others, La Chinata extra virgin olive oil made in Plasencia. "Magnificent as a salad dressing, it was one of the first to be made in Extremadura, but now Las Hurdes is also producing very good oils, as are Los Santos de Maimona in Mérida and others." As we explore the wine section, Gabriel talks about the great variety of wines in Extremadura and the improving quality of the reds. But the Mostazo establishment also carries cakes and candies. The star product of Cáceres is the *rosca de alfajor*; a honey-filled ring biscuit made in El Casar. And another typical Extremaduran product is the pimentón made in La Vera, whose virtues Gabriel Mostazo extols. Only some of the brands bear the PDO Pimentón de la Vera but they all make magnificent partners for many foods. Coming in three varieties—sweet, bittersweet and piquant—pimentón is best consumed within the year of production. The store's array of pimentón is a delight. The producers have maintained the traditional style of packaging—small, square cans in bright colors decorated with old-fashioned illustrations that often feature saints, virgins or local characters in traditional Extremaduran dress.

## Salamanca

Renowned as a seat of learning and a cathedral city, one of Salamanca's less obvious calls to fame is as producer of some top-quality pork products. The whole of Castile-León, and

especially the province of Salamanca, has bitterly cold winters that help to cure its Ibérico hams. The name most closely tied to these products is Guijuelo, a village that has its own PDO and produces world-class hams and other charcuterie. Close to Salamanca's Plaza Mayor and its delightful market is Salchicheria Iglesias, a large establishment in an early 20th-

Top: La Despensa de San Antonio, Salamanca; bottom: Mantequeras Marcos, Salamanca



century building, with iron pillars, large glass counters and shelves packed with goodies. The family of today's manager, Marta Iglesias, has been producing and selling Ibérico pork products for three generations. "In 1947, my grandfather set up an abattoir and a butcher's store. My father followed in his footsteps, with four shops, and today the business consists of the abattoir, the

production plant and this store." Changes in consumer tastes and demand have led them to expand their product range. "The plant has adapted to the needs of the European market and the store to customer expectations," says Marta Iglesias. "We have cheese from Castile-León and the rest of Spain but we also offer French, Swiss and Dutch cheeses. And the same can be

said for wines. We focus on Ribera del Duero but also have a selection from other Spanish DOs as well as some foreign wines." But going back to their main *raison d'être*, the pork products, these include hams from acorn-fed pigs as well as chorizos, loin sausages, *morcillas* (black pudding) and *morcones*. Salchichera Iglesias also offers a special, homemade *longaniza* made



El Sobrao Albercano, Salamanca



Mantequerías Marcos, Salamanca



La Despensa de San Antonio, Salamanca

without additives or preservatives, just meat, pimentón, garlic, spices and salt. "It's a delicate product that spoils quickly so it's only on sale here, not in the large supermarket chains or on the export market." We asked Marta Iglesias about the *chicharrones*, a mixture of pork with lard that is sold in slabs. "It used to be a very popular product for making a sort of pork pie, a very nourishing but cheap food. We are one of the few companies that continue to produce and sell it all over Spain."

Under the arches of San Antonio, behind the Plaza Mayor and also close to the market is the Despensa de San Antonio, a small store specializing in wines and liqueurs that was opened just over two years ago. Its owner, Celeste, is an enologist and comes from a long-established family of vine-growers that founded the Dueñas winery in Arribes de Duero, in the province of Salamanca. Alongside a careful selection of international products

(liqueurs, *foie gras* and other goose and duck products, truffles, top-quality preserves, teas and coffees from all over the world, Belgian, French and Swiss chocolates, Modena vinegars, etc.) is a splendid display of wines. The *Cátedra* and *Plaza Mayor* labels are from the family winery and stand next to a selection of the best *crianza* and *reserva* wines from the DO Ribera de Duero and the DO Toro (Gran Cermeño, Sobreño and Numanthia) and other Spanish and international wines. The professional calling of Celeste and her family is evident in the collectors' wines and wine-tasting objects on display. In this small, stylish store, there is also room for Guijuelo pork products, the much-prized pulses from La Armuña in the province of Salamanca, and other products from Castile-León such as eau-de-vie from Aldeadávila, flavored oils (garlic, basil, chili pepper) from Bracamonte, goat's and ewe's milk cheese from Salamanca and Zamora, and jams

made from pumpkin with coconut that are produced locally in limited quantities.

Still in the center of the city but passing under the portico of the wonderful Plaza Mayor, we come on Calle del Concejo to one of Salamanca's most prestigious establishments, Mantequerías Marcos. In existence since 1945, its façade is a classic, with marble facing and two beautifully elegant, brass-framed shop windows. Francisco Marcos tells us, "The work was done properly, using the best materials. My father commissioned it from Loscertales, the best designers at the time, and they imitated the Mantequerías Leonesas food store on the Calle Alcalá in Madrid". On display are pork products, jams, preserves, *turrón*—dozens of products with carefully-arranged, handwritten labels, including one that states "the best salt-cod in the world". As Paco Marcos explains, "If better cod existed, I'd stock it". An enthusiast about his profession, he



Mantequeras Iglesias, Salamanca

comes from a family that is legendary in Salamanca for the sale of gastronomic products. "My grandparents settled here one hundred and four years ago and set up several food stores. My father opened this one on Calle Concejo, soon after the Civil War (1936-39). Times were hard, but he was determined to create a store that would stand out for its quality, a miracle at the time. Some products, such as whisky or Nescafé, were not available on the domestic market so had to be smuggled in from France." The shop interior is in the same style as the outside—chestnut wood shelving, decorative tiled floors, and marble and glass display cabinets to show off the goods inside. Pride of place is given to the pork products. "They're our flagship," boasts Marcos. "We're known as having the best charcuterie in Salamanca and, at Christmas, our customers queue in the street to buy it. But with all our articles, from salt or pulses to caviar and foie gras, our aim is to offer top

quality and excellent customer service." To the extent that he insists we take with us some recipes he writes down, including one for eggs with *farinato*, a traditional, Salamanca sausage made with lard, breadcrumbs, onion, oil, pimentón, salt and eau-de-vie. Chacinería Albercana and El Sobrao Albercano are two shops that share their image and their owners, a charcuterie business based, as their names indicate, in La Alberca. This is a remote village in the province of Salamanca with popular architecture that makes it well worth a detour. The two stores are located in the old town center and have traditional-style décor, with vaulted, stone ceilings and wooden beams. The hams that hang from above bear the house label of Hermanos Hoyos and are made from Ibérico pork—both acorn and cereal-fed—or white pork. The company also makes its own loin sausages, chorizo, salchichón and morcón and, according to María Jesús who is in charge of the store,

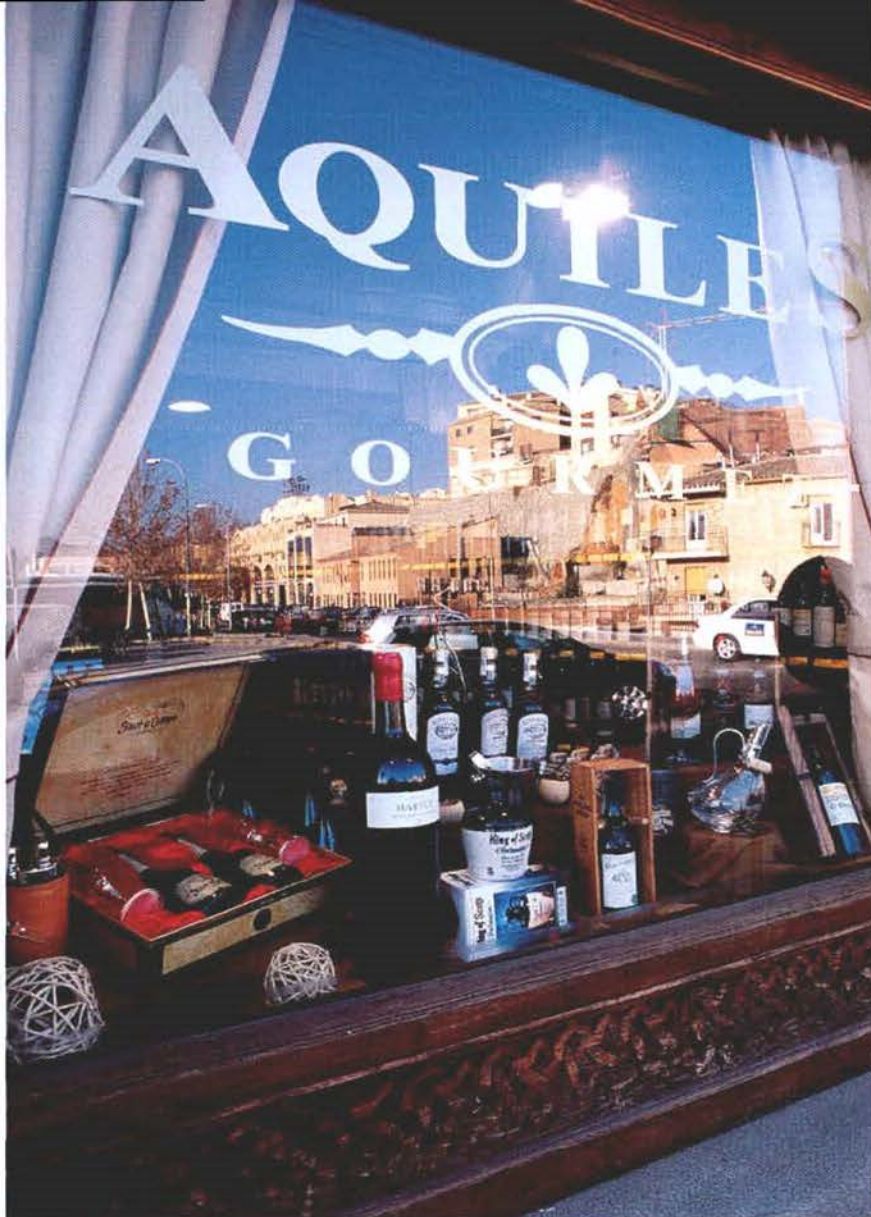
the processes are the traditional ones, using natural tripe and slow curing (a minimum of two years for the hams). The chorizos are tied by hand, so production is limited. "And we have some unusual products, such as tongue or cured pork sirloin," says María Jesús. Both the Chacinería Albercana and the Sobrao Albercano also stock pulses—entils from La Armuña and chickpeas from Fuentesauco—as well as a sort of pie filled with chorizo, ham, pork loin and egg called an *hornazo*, and a selection of typical ring biscuits and cookies.

## Toledo

Castile-La Mancha is the second-largest Autonomous Community in Spain and is essentially an agricultural area, mostly under vine and olive, with plenty of game. Its gastronomic variety is best seen in Toledo, the region's capital and one of Spain's most visited cities. Our visit begins with Aquiles Gourmet,

Top: Aquiles Gourmet, Toledo;  
bottom: Casa Cuartero, Toledo

in the lower part of the city, on the road which encircles the historic center. Here we find an enormous variety of Manchego products, with a selection of delicatessen and wines from all over Spain and from many European countries. We are assisted by Marimar to focus on the local products—extra virgin olive oils such as Oleoquirós from Mora de Toledo, Marqués de Griñón, from Malpica de Toledo, and Toletum; Manchego ewe's milk cheese, both cured and semi-cured; chorizo made from wild boar and deer; canned red partridge either in a pickle sauce or casserole; *morteruelo* (a sort of pâté



made from game meat and fat that is typical of Cuenca); *cecina* (air-cured meat) made of venison. Another exquisite product is honey from La Alcarria, a district in the province of Guadalajara, that comes in different varieties—multi-flower, eucalyptus, rosemary and spice lavender. From Consuegra in the province of Toledo comes the much-prized saffron, a condiment that requires extreme care in both harvesting and preparation. Amongst the local wines, the best in Marimar's opinion are the reds by Casa Gualda, both crianza and reserva; the Martúe whites and reds, the Emeritus, a safe bet from Marqués de Griñón as well as its Summa Varietalis, a wine made from three varieties of grape; and Torrebarreda, aged for 12 months in the barrel, and many more. On Calle Tornerías, at the heart of the historic center of Toledo, is

Esteban Bermúdez, a small charcuterie store that has been serving its customers since 1890. Four generations of the same family have run the store although the current owner fears he will be the last. "Toledo is a tourist center, and tourism brings both good things and bad. For example, the center of the town is now almost uninhabited, and it has become impossible to carry out proper modernization. Once we used to cure hams and produce our own charcuterie right here on the shop premises, but the laws protecting the city meant that we were not allowed to carry out the restructuring that was required by health and hygiene legislation." The store today has an old-fashioned appeal for visitors to the town who are the bulk of the clientele of Esteban Bermúdez. "What tourists are most interested in," he says, "are

the Manchego cheeses, the regional wines and some products such as venison chorizo. I try to have a bit of everything in stock—canned partridge Toledo-style, venison cecina and garlic-flavored loin sausage, both of them from the Toledo mountains, as well as saffron and canned *pisto manchego* (a summer vegetable stew).” This good-natured man still remembers when ox-drawn carts used to wind their way to market along Calle Tornerías—now for pedestrians only—and when street-sellers used to stand at the corners, reciting traditional rhymes about city events.

The name of Hombre de Palo Street, the location of Casa Cuartero, stems from a legend involving Philip II (1527-1598) and Juanelo Turriano, an Italian inventor who lived and worked in Toledo. The story goes that, since the inventor was finding it difficult to collect a bill owed him by the king, he built a wooden doll—the *hombre de palo*—which he took down the street to the Archbishop’s palace, where it begged for alms. Casa Cuartero opened in 1920 opposite one side of Toledo cathedral. The gastronomic products are carefully displayed on the counters and shelves of this store in

which quality is the main focus. Starting out as a butcher’s and charcuterie, it has eventually become a store for gourmet food and Manchego specialties, such as game products, wine, oil, cheese and sweets. Also on offer is a select sample of Spanish and international gastronomic items to satisfy customer demands. Florentino and Fernando Cuartero, a father and son team, state that their cheese selection includes a number of prizewinners—Artequeso from Tembleque in the province of Toledo, a semi-cured cheese made from uncooked milk; Miró from San

Santo Tomé, Toledo



Casa Bermúdez, Toledo



Casa Cuartero, Toledo



Clemente in Cuenca; Valdencinas, from Quintanar de la Orden in Toledo—and they point to a very special cheese called Suspiro, made from goat's milk and which is a farmhouse product made in limited quantities. "We also have a wide range of products based on the game that is so prevalent in the Toledo mountains—venison and wild boar salchichón, chorizo and cecina, made by a small company in San Pablo de los Montes. We make a point of visiting the villages to sniff out the best products, because often the quantities produced are so small that the goods would never reach the market otherwise." From their display of extra virgin olive oils, they pick out four brands that they describe as "glorious"—Marqués de Griñón, with its nuances of green tomato and fresh hay, Glorietta, a recurrent prizewinner, Monteconsuegra, and a completely organic oil called Labranza Toledana. For many decades, Casa Cuartero has also been selling the classic Toledo marzipan candy and exquisite almond and caramel brittle. From the four hundred or so wines in their cellar, Fernando, a professional sommelier, brings out a group of Castile-La Mancha wines which he considers to be "fantastic auteur wines"—Summa Varietalis, Calzadilla, Manuel Manzaneque, Dehesa del Carrizal and Quercus. We round off our stay in Toledo with a flourish by visiting the Obrador Santo Tomé, the city's oldest establishment, open since 1856. Its two stores lie at the heart of the historic town—in the Plaza de Zocodover, the center of Toledo life, and next to the Church of Santo Tomé which houses El Greco's most

Espinosa, Madrid

famous painting, *The Burial of Count Orgaz*. The Obrador Santo Tomé specializes in sweets but prides itself with having maintained, for one-and-a-half centuries, the traditional methods for making Toledo's sweet par excellence—marzipan, which apparently dates back to Arab times. Historical records tell us that in the 11th century the Mozarabic community in Toledo used to come together on certain high days to eat a paste made with the ingredients of marzipan, that is, almonds and sugar. Although in Spain it is traditionally a Christmas delicacy, at the Obrador de Santo Tomé marzipan is produced and sold all year round. A huge variety of shapes, sizes and recipes are on display, both traditional and innovative, and the temptation is great—pure marzipan in a variety of shapes, including fish, some filled with egg yolk candy or pumpkin jam, marzipan cookies studded with pine nuts or almonds, Santo Tomé 'princesses' made of a light almond sponge, Santo Tomé 'delights' in the form of honey-flavored marzipan pasties filled with egg yolk candy, etc. We have the Obrador Santo Tomé to thank for keeping this sweet part of the town's history alive.

## Madrid

As stated, above all Madrid is a shop-window for the best of Spanish produce. We have selected a small number of stores amongst the many offering gastronomic products, with the aim of covering a broad spectrum. Mantequeras Espinosa specializes in Galician and Asturian products and is one of the best-known, traditional stores, located in



a central spot of Chamberí district. Its window displays and its interior are pure tradition and have hardly changed since 1930. Francisco de Santiago, the owner, is perfectly clear as to which product is the most representative of his establishment. It is the Asturian *fabada*, with all its ingredients. "For years, the Tineo family has been supplying us with the best broad beans, chorizo, black pudding, *lacón* (cured pork shoulder) and belly pork—all of which together are known in Asturias as the '*compango*'. These raw materials come in every week and we sell them with the recipe so that customers only have to provide the water, the pan and the cook." Mantequerías Espinosa also has a wide choice of cakes and cookies from all over Spain.

The Santmery wine store, which opened in 1988, is close to the Parque del Oeste. Its owners, Santiago Nieto and María Morales, studied to become sommeliers. The 1,500 wines they have in stock bear witness to their ample experience of the wine world. Santmery has three sections, one selling charcuterie, cheese, preserves and top-quality cakes, a second for wines and a third is a bar where customers can try the wines for themselves with a few specialties such as a mousse of Cabrales cheese with port, chicken livers with onions or *piquillo* peppers with anchovies. Santiago Nieto is a fan of the Madrid wines. "They're wonderful value for money but people are not yet sufficiently appreciative of them. Some very good wines are now being made in

Colmenar, Arganda, Villarejo de Salvanés...." At Santmery they are happy to advise their customers and sometimes organize group tasting sessions.

A very well-known store amongst Madrid gourmets, Mantequería Cuenllas opened in 1946 as a traditional grocery and gradually developed into the gourmet store of today. It specializes in top-class charcuterie and wines, but there are also olive oils, preserves, teas, jams, cakes and everything to satisfy a demanding gourmet. "This is a family business," says Ángel Cuenllas, "and at present three generations are working here—my mother, my son and myself. We select our goods carefully, worrying more about quality than price." He points to some French, German and

From left to right: Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero, Santmery and Viuda Cuenllas, the three of them in Madrid



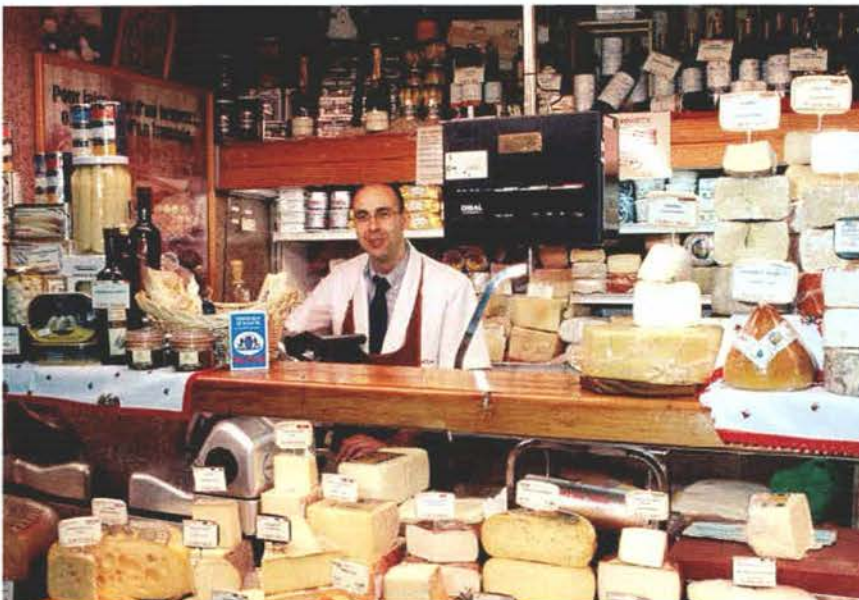
Italian wines and explains, "They're not easy to find because they're only produced in small quantities and their prices are high, in line with their quality. But our customers ask for products they can't find elsewhere." A large proportion of the store's customers are tourists, many of them Japanese who, according to Ángel Cuenllas, mostly buy ham, salt fish and wine.

The La Paz market lies at the heart of the Salamanca district of Madrid. Four of the stalls have borne the La Boulette sign since 1982. "We took the name from a cheese from northern France," says Juan Méndez Moreno, the owner/manager. "We import lots of cheeses from France, Holland, Italy and other parts of Europe." In the opinion of Juan Méndez, the Spanish cheeses rate

alongside the best "although we've kept them as a closely guarded secret till now". Apart from cheese, La Boulette specializes in duck and duck products, especially foie gras from Les Landes in France, and Ibérico pork products. An indication of the quality of the goods on offer at this store is the fact that it supplies La Moncloa (the official residence of the Spanish Prime Minister), the two Spanish Infantas and many well-known names from Madrid society. The cheese-boards in some of Madrid's best restaurants (some of the names mentioned are Sant Celoni, Zalacaín and La Broche) are prepared by La Boulette. A great lover of gastronomy, Juan Méndez considers, "From the counter of a store such as this, you can follow a country's social, economic and

cultural development. To us, it's obvious how more and more people now see good food as an essential part of a good standard of living." The next port of call, but one for which we feel a special reverence, is Casa Mira, close to the Spanish Parliament building. This beautiful store, with wood paneling inside and out, with French paintings on its walls, a molded ceiling and a marble floor, has hardly changed at all since it was set up in 1855. The founder, Luis Mira, a friend of King Alfonso XIII, obtained the title of "Purveyor to the Royal Household". The current manager, Amelia Almodóvar, explains that turrón has been made in the kitchens at the back of the store for six generations, although the most popular varieties—Jijona and Alicante—are made in the store's

Left: La Boulette; and right: Espinosa, both in Madrid





Casa Mira, Madrid

facilities in the town of Jijona in Alicante. Other varieties include hazelnut, chocolate, fruit and egg yolk; the 'snow' turrón is basically marzipan; the Cádiz variety is baked and consists of layers of egg yolk and sweet potato-flavored marzipan. All are based on carefully-classified, peeled almonds and other supreme-quality ingredients, and include no additives or preservatives. Other in-house products include *glorias de Jijona* (almond cakes flavored with sweet potato and pumpkin), egg yolk candy with walnuts, crystallized fruit, *marrons glacés*, *polvorones*

(crumbly almond and lard cakes) and *turrón a la piedra* (almond cream with lemon and cinnamon). "We're at our busiest at Christmas but we serve turrón all year round, especially to tourists who like to take it home as gifts," says Amelia. The store run by the Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero is a rather special case. It is a non-profit undertaking whose aim is to inform and guide people about olive oil consumption. "It's no longer a question of telling people how good extra virgin olive oil is for them," says Álvaro González-Coloma, Managing

Director of the Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero Foundation, "but of encouraging them to go one step further and understand how to use different types or varieties of oil for different purposes." In these olive-green premises, the staff are experts who try to guide customers depending on their tastes and needs. "We don't recommend brands so much as explain the flavors, qualities and special characteristics of the different brands and their different culinary uses. Anyway, extra virgin olive oil is a changing product. One year, a specific product might be



Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero, Madrid

ideal for a specific purpose but the next it might not be so perfect," says Álvaro González-Coloma. This is a fascinating store, in which the oils are classified according to production areas, of which there are ten in Spain, each producing a wide range of products. "It's interesting," says the foundation's managing director, "that more and more chefs are coming along to the store to find out about the different oils with the idea of applying what they learn to their cuisine. I hope we'll soon see the day when restaurant customers will ask for the oil list just as today

they ask for the wine list. That would be a great step forward in our gastronomic culture!"

**Maria Unceta** is a travel writer. She works regularly for *Viajes National Geographic* magazine and for the *El Correo* newspaper. She has written a number of travel guides and has coordinated the *Guía de la Ruta de Don Quijote*, recently published.

Santmery, Madrid



Mantequerías Marcos, Salamanca



## THE STORES

In many Spanish cities, the El Corte Inglés chain of department stores offers a selection of regional products in its Club del Gourmet section.

**Cáceres****El Gourmet de la Bellota**

Plaza San Juan, 6

Tel: (+34) 927 240 724

Charcuterie, olive oil, cakes and top-quality Extremaduran wines.

**Gabriel Mostazo**

San Antón, 6

[www.gabrielmostazo.com](http://www.gabrielmostazo.com)

Hams and charcuterie, farmhouse goat's and ewe's milk cheeses, wines, liqueurs, cakes and olive oils from Extremadura and *pimentón* from La Vera.

**La Despensa Cacereña**

Roso de Luna, 3

Tel: (+34) 927 245 724

Hams, charcuterie, cheeses and cakes from all over Extremadura.

**Salchichería López**

San Pedro, 6

Tel: (+34) 927 247 434

A traditional store specializing in handmade, *torta*-style cheese.

**Salamanca****Andrés Ingelmo Marcos**

Plaza del Corriño, 18

Tel: (+34) 923 260 251 and 923 237 206

Specializes in Ibérico pork products from *Guijuelo*.

**El Sobrao Albercano**

Rúa Mayor, 16 and San Justo, 26

Tel: (+34) 923 214 324 and 923 215 045

[www.hermanoshoyos.com](http://www.hermanoshoyos.com)

Ibérico pork hams and other charcuterie made at the proprietors' own facilities, a variety of goat's and ewe's milk cheeses and wines from Ribera del Duero.

**Iglesias**

Plaza del Mercado, 6

Tel: (+34) 923 212 735

Hams and charcuterie from *Guijuelo*, specialties from Salamanca, and cheeses.

**J. Sanz**

Dr. Jaime Vera, 18 and San Pablo, 2

Tel: (+34) 923 254 024 and 923 263 531

Production and sale of artisan Ibérico hams and charcuterie.

**La Despensa de San Antonio**

Plaza del Mercado, 23

Tel: (+34) 923 217 264

Specializes in Spanish and foreign wines, Castilian products, Ibérico pork charcuterie and *pâtés*.

**La Tahona**

Paseo de Carmelitas, 23

Tel: (+34) 923 266 135

A wide selection of Spanish and international delicatessen foods.

**Mantequerías Marcos**

Concejo, 14

Tel: (+34) 923 212 375

A charming, traditional establishment that sells select gastronomic products and Salamanca specialties.

**Toledo****Aquiles Gourmet**

Ronda del Granadal, 17

Tel: (+34) 925 285 095 and 925 472 076

[www.aquilesgourmet.com](http://www.aquilesgourmet.com)

Delicatessen products from all over Spain and a wide range of wines and products from Castile-La Mancha.

**Casa Cuartero**

Hombre de Palo, 5

Tel: (+34) 925 222 614

[www.casacuartero.com](http://www.casacuartero.com)

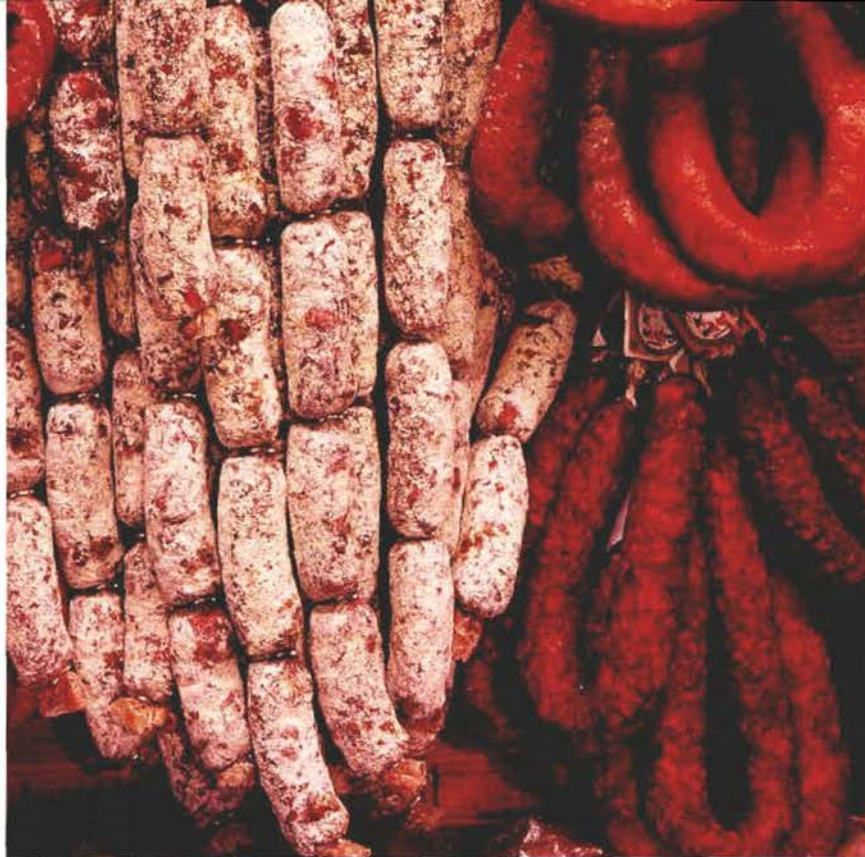
Specializes in game charcuterie, cheese and marzipan. Also a well-stocked wine cellar.

**Esteban Bermúdez**

Tornerías, 10

Tel: (+34) 925 222 319

A traditional store specializing in Ibérico pork charcuterie and traditional cheeses.



Left: Mostazo, Cáceres;  
right: Casa Cuartero, Toledo



#### Santo Tomé

Santo Tomé, 5  
Tel: (+34) 925 223 763  
www.santotome-sa.es  
This establishment has been producing and selling traditional, Toledo-style marzipan since 1856.

#### Madrid

##### Casa Mira

Carrera de San Jerónimo, 30  
Tel: (+34) 914 298 895 and 914 296 796  
Over 150 years in the business of producing excellent artisan *turrón* in the Jijona and Alicante styles or made from hazelnuts, egg yolk, etc., as well as almond and caramel brittle and other types of candy.

##### Cuenllas

Ferraz, 3  
Tel: (+34) 915 473 133  
A specialist grocer's for hams and charcuterie, with a good choice of wines, preserves and sweets.

##### El Gourmet de Cuchilleros

Cuchilleros, 2  
Tel: (+34) 913 665 235  
Gastronomic products from all the regions of Spain, and Spanish wines. Especially proud of its top-quality pulses.

#### Espinosa

Génova, 1  
Tel: (+34) 913 080 513  
Specializes in Asturian *fabada*. Galician and Asturian products and sweets from all over Spain.

##### La Boulette

Ayala, 28 (Centro Comercial La Paz, stalls 63-68)  
Tel: (+34) 914 317 725  
www.laboulette.com  
Ibérico and *serrano* hams and charcuterie. French *foie gras* and Spanish and foreign cheeses, preserves and top-quality wines.

##### La Hidalguía

Doctor Castelo, 41  
Tel: (+34) 915 736 822  
Manchego cheese, foie gras, salmon and select preserves. Wines from all over Spain. Products can be tasted at the bar.

##### La Oleoteca

Juan Ramón Jiménez, 37  
Tel: (+34) 913 591 803  
Specializes in the world of extra virgin olive oil, with select brands. Also a range of cruets, and olive-wood kitchen utensils.

##### Lavinia

Ortega y Gasset, 16  
Tel: (+34) 91 426 06 04  
www.lavinia.es  
Impressive store with the capital's most complete selection of Spanish and foreign wines. It organizes wine-tasting sessions and has wine club.

#### Mantequerías Bravo

Ayala, 24 and General Martínez Campos, 23  
Tel: (+34) 915 767 641 and 914 480 918  
Top-quality wines, liqueurs, pork products and cheeses.

##### Mantequerías Olmedo

Serrano, 74  
Tel: (+34) 914 355 862  
Open since 1900, specializes in traditional regional products and quality charcuterie, with a wide selection of wines from all over Spain.

##### Patrimonio Comunal Oliverero

Mejía Lequerica, 1  
Tel: (+34) 913 080 505  
This establishment provides advice on, exhibits and sells Spain's best extra virgin olive oils.

##### Ponçelet

Argensola, 27  
Tel: (+34) 91 308 02 21  
www.poncelet.es  
Open since December 2004, this store specializes in cheeses. In national types alone it boasts over 100 varieties.

##### Santmery

Juan Álvarez Mendizábal, 27  
Tel: (+34) 915 426 742  
Cava, cheese and charcuterie with a well-stocked wine cellar. Products can be tried at the bar.



Miguel Ángel de

# GREGORIO



# Beyond Rioja

## Text

Luis Cepeda

## Translation

Hawys Pritchard

## Photos

Pablo Neustadt/ICEX

His wines occupy an eminence all their own in DOCa Rioja (see Glossary, page 143). Shunning predictability, he chooses to play from a classical score but to use new chords. A passionate belief in the importance of *terroir* and the best possible oak orchestrate his quest for the perfect Rioja. Allende, Calvario and Aurus are well on the way there.

### **Do your wines represent a complete departure from the classic Rioja?**

Not at all. Our wines are forward-looking but inspired by the past. It's easier both to agree and disagree with the past, which we know about, than with the future about which we know so little. We are treading new ground: our brand name, 'Allende', means 'beyond'—certainly is a declaration of principles—but we still adhere closely to the rural notion of viticulture and winemaking that is La Rioja's. That notion has always aimed to be personal, even if a touch of complacency had the effect of standardizing tastes until not so long

ago. When I'm asked which wine the ones that I make most resemble, I usually answer the 1945 Marqués de Riscal.

### **So in what sense are you original?**

Essentially, we have reinstated respect for the *terroir*, that subtle French concept which we might translate here in Spain as '*terruño*' were it not for the fact that in our language the word has less specific associations. We have re-made the discovery that quality wines are created in the vine and acquire their nuances from subtle differences in the landscape—geographical

orientation and related winds, minerals in the soil, temperature patterns, exposure to the sun, choice of training methods and varieties—though in fact nearly everything around here is Tempranillo. In short, we realized that every plot is a little world—something that the DOCa already felt empirically.

### **Wine is something you feel?...**

It's a combination of feeling and technique—not just hunch or intuition. Personally, I prefer to feel with my brain. There the *terroir* is, with its diverse parcels that give different wines their particular character. One has to identify them and respect the natural balance with which they endow the plant. They are governed by microclimates with scientific variables which have to be taken into account. A particular soil type and particular variety call for specific grafts and cultivation techniques. One doesn't treat a goblet-trained vine in the same way as an espalier one; pruning in January isn't the same as pruning in April; plantations with 5,500 vines per hectare are different from ones with 1,500. We had been getting it wrong. The vital factor was not how many kilos a hectare yielded, but what each

plant's ideal yield was. I'd even go so far as to say that one needs to understand each plant and care for it in a specific way. It's a complex, demanding job. Getting it right sometimes takes years of trial and error, because there's always something else that needs sorting out.

#### **And after that there's the vinification, the *crianza*...**

I subscribe to the school of thought that believes that wine should be subjected to as little as possible in the winery, that a wine is made in the field and will deliver the goods in the winery without too much hassle. But our concept of winemaking is that the wine from each parcel is made in a particular way and will need to develop in a particular way. Some wines benefit from a long *crianza*; some need intense oak, others moderate wood; some wines combine the qualities derived from various vineyards—like an Allende, which brings together wines from all over the estate—while others represent specific parcels, like Aurus, or just one vineyard, like Calvario.

#### **So it's all very finely-tuned.**

In the case of Aurus, we are talking about parcels in a very special vineyard, but there are also parcels from which we will derive 14 different wines in the next four years. Yield is minimal—in some cases no more than two casks per parcel. Since 1998 we have developed a completely Burgundian system—uniquely in Spain—and we have also spent 10 years getting to know our terroir. We had to, because we didn't start off with the benefit of

centuries' worth of experience in this method that Burgundy has.

#### **And what does the method consist of?**

Making wine in the Burgundy style is synonymous with vine growing and winemaking craftsmanship. Small, monovarietal plantations are devised to extract the innate and unrepeatability of each parcel. It's rather like a jigsaw—a maze of possibilities, whose pieces have to be fitted together individually to achieve the full picture of each parcel.

#### **And how many parcels are we talking about in Finca Allende?**

We have 92 parcels, spread about the Briones municipality, old-planted—in some cases pre-phyllloxera—vines, requiring traditional cultivation methods, which means minimal production per hectare. Manual selection reduces this still further. In production zones where seven thousand kilos of grapes could be obtained, we obtain just two thousand gross, which will come down to five hundred kilos after selection. The idea of big yields is something that we have left behind.

#### **And what else have you left behind?**

Preconceptions about wine, and many of the official regulations concerning it, which were outdated. Fertilizers that change the nature of soil; putting any kind of pressure on a plant to produce more; commercially-orientated, predictable approaches to winemaking; cutting-edge technology when it is allowed

to prevail over the grape. The 95 Allende, with its carbonic maceration and *crianza* in oak, represented a break with traditional processes but the individual character it revealed spread the word about this *comarca* to an unprecedented degree. The Calvario was made in polyester tanks, basically because we did not have the resources to do it any other way. Aurus was always intended to be a classic. In all three, allowing the grape to speak for itself and giving each individual wine just the right amount—one might say the homeopathic amount—of *crianza* it needed, took precedence over standard practice and technology.

#### **They were described as high flown wines...**

I hate the term. In fact, it was coined by one of those people who were critical of Rioja's enological move forward, a regulator still harking back to unhappy, controversial times.

#### **Your generation of winemakers is unorthodox and anti-establishment. Yet nearly all of you (Álvaro Palacios, Telmo Rodríguez, Sara Pérez) are the children of winemakers. Does each generation reject the previous one?**

I don't think so. Perhaps we've devoted ourselves to rediscovering once and for all what that policy of development in the 1960 and 70s seemed to be heralding. As far as I'm concerned, there is no such thing as traditional wine and modern wine: for me there are great wines and lesser ones. I adore the great classic

wines, just as I adore everything that's well conceived. In fact, my wines and Álvaro's are already hailed in restaurants as classics. It's interesting: our bodegas have been going for 12 and 14 years—that's why I don't think that generational rejection comes into it. Family origin, that hereditary human factor, is transmitted into one's wine. I would even go so far as to say that there are certain great wines, created with enological authority, in which emotion is lacking. They are 'mechanically' good, but if you probe deeper you realize that they lack the family element, that ancestral commitment to wine's domestic origins. At the time of Loriñón and Dominio de Conté, I already felt responsible for the family heritage and went in for very personal wines.

### Those were your beginnings...

I suppose my true beginnings must have been genetic. I was born in La Mancha, the biggest wine-growing area in the world, to a family of winemakers. My father, who was a grower, moved to La Rioja to take charge of the vineyards for Marqués de Murrieta when I was nine months old. I grew up among vineyards and helped with harvesting from when I was a child. Then I qualified as an *ingeniero agrónomo* (agronomist), a course of study rooted in love for the land and with a high humanistic content, and followed that with a Master's degree in enology. I worked at Madrid's Polytechnic University as a researcher, and my experience with Bodegas Bretón was a kind of lead-up to the Briones project. Loriñón and Conté were a source of both satisfaction and conflict—in other



words, they were a stimulating experience. I launched terroir wine in DOCa Rioja, and that meant a return to the past for some and a revolution for others. Then, with my sister Merche, I began to buy small parcels of old vines in Briones, whose qualities I was already familiar with as a grape buyer. We gradually accumulated various vineyards in that part of the Rioja Alta sub-zone; there were no wineries there at the time, but it was a revelation for me. It was just the place for the Burgundy-inspired kind of wine-growing that I longed to do, producing what we call '*vinos de municipio*', or 'municipality wines', to convey their rural aesthetic. And that was how Finca Allende came into being. Its first wine, Allende 95, found an immediate place among the best Riojas of all time. Later came the elegance and status of a single-vineyard wine like Aurus, made from centenarian grapes, leading on to

Calvario, which was awarded top marks by international experts. Meanwhile, I was tackling another challenge which was to make a cask-fermented white Allende using Malvasía and Viuria—very Burgundian. I admire white Burgundies so much.

### And did you put your unorthodox doctrine into practice in other areas?

Not so much that as help to rationalize winemaking processes in some wineries, such as Victoria in Cariñena and Castell del Remei in Costers del Segre, with successful end results.

### And what does such a successful career imply by way of obligations?

To carry on pedaling, of course. To feel that one is playing one's part in advancing Spanish wine in the world context; to ensure that its quality is



better than satisfactory and reflects the viticultural potential in which I have such faith. All these elements enhance one's desire to carry on. Innovations have now become trends, and there is a growing market for exclusive Spanish wines. I am turning my attention to new ventures, like a project in Mérida in conjunction with Daniel Entrecanales. His Arrayán Premium, a coupage of Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, has revealed the latent talent in an historic comarca. It is broadening its wine-growing outlook by using well-chosen varieties, and making innovative wine on the strength of it.

**Your La Mancha red, from your home patch, is causing eager anticipation.**

I hope it won't prove to be ill-founded. We have set up a winery in the place where I was born—Almodóvar del Campo, in Ciudad Real province. It is a very different scheme from the Rioja one for reasons of climate and scale, and we have approached it with a different philosophy. We had to switch from Tempranillo, which wasn't suitable for what we had in mind, and choose more suitable varieties to achieve the complexity we wanted. The vineyards are at a considerable altitude—more than seven hundred meters—and south of the latitude on which Valdepeñas lies, where Ciudad Real borders with Córdoba. That part of La Mancha is not like the Tomelloso area: we get the influence of the Sierra Moreno there—a different climate, different winds.

We harvest 20 days later than the rest of La Mancha. And we've built concrete tanks, instead of using steel—they provide identical thermal and sanitary properties—because the key ingredient is not technology but grapes, painstaking vine cultivation, and casks made of the best woods in the world, which will later interact with the wine.

**You seem very enthusiastic about the plan based in your native *pueblo*. Things could be said to have gone full circle. Do you think one tends to finish up back where one began?**

One never finishes anything. And perhaps there's no such thing as beginning, either. When you have the privilege of tasting a great wine from the past, you start to realize what you have in your hand and how mighty the legacy of wine is in Spain. Nothing begins, and nothing finishes. Wine is a sort of eternal threshold.

*Luis Cepeda is a journalist and writer. He is the author of titles including Los cien platos universales de la cocina vasca; Gusto de Reyes; Lhardy; La Cocina de Paradores and Maridaje de vinos y platos. He is currently restaurant and wine critic for Madrid's weekly Guía del Ocio listings magazine.*

*Exporters page 130*

**Miguel Ángel de Gregorio**

Miguel Ángel de Gregorio used to be the *enfant terrible* of DOCa Rioja: he questioned its rules, overturned prejudices and followed his convictions, bringing us clever wines that challenged our preconceptions. Since 1999, his Calvario and Aurus have appeared as the top Riojas in experts' selections. Born surrounded by vineyards, he has just turned 40. He has something of the smartest boy in the class about him, and also the naughtiest. He thrives on contradiction. Emotional yet considered, traditional yet innovative, calm yet impassioned: while he is all these things, his unaffected way of talking, peppered with good humor and cultivated references, is disarming. The terroir is where he feels he belongs, and he found his Promised Land in Briones, a remote village in the Rioja Alta. He is a wine activist who lends his support to worthy causes, and spreads his iconoclastic doctrine in Cariñena, Mérida, Costers del Segre and La Mancha. Wines from his Finca Allende estate are sold in 50 countries.

Sip by Sip



**John Radford** joined the UK wine trade in 1972, working for a small, independent importer. In 1974 he was sent to Spain to source new wines for the company's range. He fell in love with the country on that first visit and has been returning ever since, visiting almost every region and DO in the process.

He became a writer in the 1980s, producing a comprehensive survey of DO zones on behalf of ICEX from 1989 to 2001 which involved visiting DO zones from Txakolí to Ycoden-Daute-Isora. His book *The New Spain* (Mitchell Beazley, London 1998) won four international awards, and a new, updated edition was published in September 2004. *The Wines of Rioja* (Mitchell Beazley Classic Wine Series) was published in November, 2004.

**Text**  
John Radford

Spanish  
**WINES**

Selected  
and Tasted  
by  
International  
Experts



United  
Kingdom



**Winery:** Martín Códax  
**Wine:** Martín Códax 2002  
**DO:** Rías Baixas  
**Type:** White wine  
**Elaboration:** Albariño

A former co-op and one of the biggest producers in the area, this winery is named after the first man in Spain to write down music. As an example of the challenges faced by wineries in these parts, there are 190 ha (470 acres) of vines, divided into some 1,200 small parcels, which makes the vintage a complex affair. Martín Códax is not the bodega's most expensive wine but it does exhibit the soul of the Albariño—gentle, perfumed, fresh aromas and crisp, clean, racy acidity on the palate with a long but gentle finish. The winery is small by Spanish standards but thoroughly modern and beautifully kept.

**Matching recommendation:**  
 The local tradition is seafood, from lobster and *langostinos* to *percebes* (goose foot barnacles) and, of course, turbot, all of which demand a crisp, dry white wine. Few occasions match an evening at a beachfront restaurant cracking crabs and downing Albariño.

**Winery:**  
 Martín Códax  
 Tel: (+34) 986 526 040  
 Fax: (+34) 986 526 901  
 comercial@martincodax.com  
 www.martincodax.com



**Winery:** Bodegas Estefanía  
**Wine:** Tilenus Pagos de Posada Reserva 2001  
**DO:** Bierzo  
**Type:** Red wine  
**Elaboration:** Mencía

Bierzo toiled for years to tame the 'difficult' Mencía grape with its mean streak of acidity, and this new (1999) bodega is one of a number of 'new-wave' producers using the latest technology to get the best out of it. They do have the advantage of 5 ha (12 acres) of 70-year-old vines and a smart new bodega with all the most modern equipment. The wine has lovely, positive summer-fruit flavors matched with the austerity of 100% French *barricas* to create a four-way balance of fruit, acidity, tannin and oak. It is quite simply delicious.

**Matching recommendation:**  
 This is the north of Castile-León and here the food is likely to be locally shot winged game (mainly red partridge), poultry and pork: light meaty dishes which need a full, fruity wine, but with a bit of weight behind it—an excellent balance.

**Winery:** Bodegas Estefanía  
 Tel: (+34) 987 420 015  
 Fax: (+34) 987 420 015  
 cascudo@tilenus.com  
 www.tilenus.com



**Winery:** Bodegas Luis Cañas  
**Wine:** Hiru 3 Racimos 2001  
**DOCa:** Rioja  
**Type:** Red wine  
**Elaboration:** Tempranillo, hand-selected

'Hiru' is the word for '3' in the Basque language (this wine is from the province of Álava), symbolizing the low yield of these 60-year-old vines—about three bunches per vine against the legal maximum of 10. The concentration is astonishing and the wine is very much at the forefront of the high-expression and sometimes controversial 'new-wave' style in Rioja. It has blockbusting fruit, tremendous aroma and extraction, big, bold tannins and a persistence that seems to go on for ever. It won the Rioja regional trophy at the inaugural 2004 *Decanter* World Wine Awards in the UK.

**Matching recommendation:**  
 This is a wine for big, powerful Riojano dishes such as *chorizo*, *morcilla* (black pudding), and roast lamb in all its many manifestations (especially *cordero asado*). As a challenge, try it with southern-French *cassoulet* or Hungarian *gulasch*.

**Winery:**  
 Bodegas Luis Cañas  
 Tel: (+34) 945 623 373  
 Fax: (+34) 945 609 289  
 bodegas@luiscanas.com  
 www.luiscanas.com



**Winery:** Sangenís i Vaqué  
**Wine:** Clos Monlleó 2000  
**DOCa:** Priorato  
**Type:** Red wine  
**Elaboration:** Garnacha and Cariñena

Another medal-winning wine, this company is run by a young couple who reinvented an old bodega in 1995, with plantations of vines going back to 1978. It's situated in Porrera, which is emerging as one of the *Grand Cru* villages of Priorato. The style is 'modern-classic' with high concentration of fruit, wonderful rich aromas with an endless warmth and length. The wine spends up to 16 months in new French oak to give it elegance and a final burnish but the overall impression is one of huge 'locked-in' fruit and carefully-controlled power. At a tasting of 500 Spanish wines in London in 2003, this got my joint-highest mark.

**Matching recommendation:**

Another one for robust flavours—perhaps the Catalan speciality of rabbit and lobster in chocolate sauce (a favourite of Salvador Dalí) or one to enjoy with the fabled cuisine of Ferran Adrià—if you know someone who can get a table at El Bulli.

*Winery: Sangenís i Vaqué*  
 Tel: (+34) 977 828 238  
 Fax: (+34) 977 828 068  
 Celler@sangenisivaque.com  
 www.sangenisivaque.com



**Winery:** F. Schatz  
**Wine:** Finca Sanguijuela Acinipo 2001  
**Table Wine**  
**Type:** Red wine  
**Elaboration:** Lemberger

This is a beautiful curiosity. The Schatz family and the Lemberger grape both originate in the German region of Württemberg, where the grape makes a light red of pleasant character. In the rocky highlands of Ronda, however, the Lemberger ripens much more readily and provides a wine of great depth, fruit and perfume, with a delicious richness which stops short of being sweet. Federico Schatz set out to prove that you can make top-class non-fortified wines even as far south as the province of Málaga, and is one of the few bodegas making wine under the recent Sierras de Málaga DO.

**Matching recommendation:**

Although this is Andalusia, the wine remains relatively light and the fruit is prominent enough to go with outdoor meals in the magnificent Andalusian climate—a selection of non-fishy *tapas* including cured loin, ham, Manchego cheese, croquettes and, of course, a piece of *tortilla* (Spanish omelet), should do the trick.

*Winery: F. Schatz*  
 Tel: (+34) 952 871 313  
 Fax: (+34) 952 161 825  
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 www.f-schatz.com



**Winery:** El Vínculo  
**Wine:** El Vínculo 2001  
**DO:** La Mancha  
**Type:** Red wine  
**Elaboration:** Tempranillo

Alejandro Fernández, the self-styled 'King of the Tempranillo' proved all the doubters wrong when he built a winery in the DO La Mancha and announced that he was going to make a world-class wine to sell at €20 a bottle in an area once seen as nothing more than a bulk producer. He has succeeded brilliantly, by contracting growers, supervising their vineyards and buying in grapes at way above the going rate. Sometimes harvesting a month before everyone else to retain acidity. The result is a wine of warmth, elegance and weight, with classic Tempranillo raspberry/strawberry fruit and a robust, southern structure.

**Matching recommendation:**

The wine may be very modern but it's the perfect accompaniment to traditional Manchego foods—garlic soup, lamb chops, the magnificent cheese and, perhaps best of all, the *gazpacho de La Mancha*: a hearty stew made with game, lamb, pork, potatoes and other root vegetables and served on a giant tortilla.

*Winery: El Vínculo*  
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# Rhapsody in

During Madrid Fusión, the gastronomic congress held in Madrid last January, the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade (ICEX), in collaboration with consultants from the Unión Española de Catadores (the Spanish Association of Winetasters - UEC), organized a wine-tasting event entitled “The 100 Definitive Wines from Spain”. A selection of the wines that, according to many national and international connoisseurs, are the most intriguing Spanish wines today. The event was divided into five categories: whites, sparkling wines, *generosos*, reds and a special category devoted to the gems of Spanish wines. The tasting sessions were led by some of the most outstanding experts in the country, such as Pilar Molestina, José Luis Casado, Carlos Delgado, Andrés Proensa and José Peñín. A total of 22 specialized journalists from a variety of different countries participated in the experience. Although the wines were not classified by their qualification, there was a diversity of evaluations and quite a few surprises. *Spain Gourmetour* sought out the opinion of one of these experts, journalist Bruce Schoenfeld, connoisseur of Spain and a regular contributor to magazines such as the *New York Times Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Travel & Leisure*. This is his story.

# 100

## The 100 Definitive Wines from Spain



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TEXT  
BRUCE SCHOENFELD

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PHOTOS  
FERNANDO MADARIAGA/ICEX

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Wine-tasting isn't science, but sometimes it demands laboratory conditions. With wine journalists from around the world gathered for the third edition of the Madrid Fusión gastronomic conference in January, it seemed the ideal time to taste through the best wines Spain produces, as chosen by ratings and scores in the domestic and international press. We weren't pairing bottles with food and charting their evolution over the course of a meal, which is how I prefer to drink wine, but a reservation for 48 at El Nazareno in Roa (Burgos) every day for a month—with lamb sizzling on a platter pairing perfectly with the Tempranillo—wasn't exactly tenable.

Instead, we filed into a conference room at Madrid's Palacio de Congresos early one morning, arranged our pens and notebooks like scientists do, and tasted for two days in clinical fashion. As soon as one wine was on the table, the next was poured. From every

flight, I pulled two or three glasses off to the side and rested them on paper napkins with the name of the wine scrawled beside. My table space came to resemble an air-traffic control center, but I didn't care. First impressions aren't always best with wines that come straight from the bottle.

The selection wasn't perfect—where was Capçanes Cabrida? Clos Erasmus? Contador?—but it provided a terrific basis for discussions that periodically segued into arguments, mostly over the use of new oak. By the end, we'd each formed a mental snapshot of the state of Spanish wine. Lovers of Spain's wines to start with, most of us found ourselves infatuated all over again—but with even stronger opinions about where the industry stands, and where it's headed. What follows is one man's account of the tasting, further informed by discussions and written responses by a dozen other participants:

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The 100 Definitive Wines from Spain

## WHITE WINES

ALBARIÑO DE FEFIÑANES III 2001  
 CHIMITE COLECCIÓN 125 BLANCO 2002 FERMENTADO EN BARRICA  
 D.O. FERREIRO CEPAS VELLAS 2003  
 DÁVILA 2004  
 EMILIO ROJO 2003  
 ENATE CHARDONNAY FERMENTADO EN BARRICA DE ROBLE 2002  
 FILLABOA FINCA MONTE ALTO 2002  
 FINCA LA COLINA 2004  
 GRAN VEIGADARES 2002  
 GUITIÁN GODELLO SOBRE LIAS 2002  
 JEAN LEON CHARDONNAY 2002  
 JOSÉ PARIENTE VERDEJO 2003  
 LUSCO FINCA PAZO PIÑEIRO 2003  
 MILMANDA 2002  
 NAIA DES 2003  
 PALACIO DE BORNOS SAUVIGNON BLANC FERMENTADO EN BARRICA 2002  
 PALACIO DE OTAZU CHARDONNAY 2000  
 PAZO DE BARRANTES 2003  
 PAZO DE SEÑORANS SELECCIÓN DE AÑADA 2000  
 VIÑA MEIN 2002  
 VIÑAS DEL VERO CLARIÓN 2003



## White Wines: Not red but Rojo

Spain's white wines seem to fall into two categories: refreshing, high-acid seafood wines and oak-aged Chardonnays; and Chardonnay imitators with low acid and the viscosity and mouthfeel of clarets. I much prefer the former. When I want to drink red wine, I'll drink red wine—not some oaky, apple-gone-to-butterscotch white wine that longs to be red.

At the same time, I also demand a measure of elegance from my high-acid whites. That's a complicating and perhaps even contradictory factor, but I won't apologize for it. Somehow, the best manage to pull it off.

The very first wine of the tasting, a 2003 José Pariente Verdejo from Dos Victorias in Rueda, set the refreshment standard. It had a nose

like pineapple sorbet and enough acid to wash down almost anything. It wasn't a wine for contemplation, just pure summer enjoyment. I preferred it to even many of the higher-priced Albariños that followed.

That it couldn't compare to the 2003 Emilio Rojo from Ribeiro later in that first flight is no denigration. No other white wine in the tasting could, either, in my opinion. Year after year, Rojo's complex blends of Torrontés, Treixadura, Albariño, Louriero and Lado (in varying proportions, depending on the vintage) create Spain's most interesting white. Rojo vinifies only a few thousand bottles, and claims he wishes he could make even fewer. He's a unique individual, and he crafts a uniquely pleasurable wine.

Of the Albariños, the Do Ferriero Cepas Vellas 2003 from Bodegas Gerardo Méndez in Pontevedra

showed well at the end of the first flight, followed by the Fillaboa Monte Alto at the start of the second. Full of grapefruit and a hint of orange blossom. Its finish was decisively longer than any other white wine of the tasting. I ranked it second to the Emilio Rojo overall. The Palacio de Bornos Sauvignon Blanc stood out for me because it's just the type of wine I never would have expected to like. Antonio Sanz, whose experimental spirit has taken wines in Rueda (and, lately, Toro) to uncharted places, barrel-ferments Sauvignon Blanc. The result is a wine with more than enough acid to be fresh in the mouth, but with an elegance that reminded me of the best white Bordeaux. Unlike many barrel-fermented whites, I believe it would be exceptionally food-friendly, standing up to the intensity of the kind of fresh seafood found at Joan Gatell in Cambrils (Tarragona): barnacles, baby eels, date shells...



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## Cavas: All that glitters isn't always...

*Cava* is most often positioned as a value wine. It doesn't even try to compete with champagne in terms of quality, though the largest cava producers sell more bottles annually than any other sparkling wines in the world.

What they do, they do well enough. But sparkling wine is the only category in which Spain doesn't attempt to compete with the best wines of the world. The three grapes that are most common in D.O. Cava, Xarello, Macabeo and Parellada, are problematic varieties; Macabeo is particularly challenging in that it often lends a petroleum smell to the wines. So I don't understand why nobody is attempting to make great sparkling wine from other varieties somewhere else in the country, such as Galicia.

Of the 16 cavas we tasted, only a few stood out as wines worthy of discussion. Most of those that did use little Macabeo in their blend. The Cava Gran Claustro de Castillo de Perelada 2002 adds Chardonnay to the traditional mix, and its austere character and bitter-lemon flavor provided a welcome respite from the oil-slick cavas of the first flight. But not even the Gran Claustro had an aroma that invited me to take a sip, which is the hallmark of a great champagne.

Halfway through the category, we were poured the Raventós I Blanc Gran Reserva Personal 1998, which is sourced from 40 percent Parellada. It was lighter in style than most of the others, with a rich mousse and a bit of a bite on the finish. Many of my colleagues agreed with my rating of this as the best cava of a rather uninspiring bunch.

I also liked the non-vintage Parxet Aniversario Brut Reserve, billed as a "coupage of different varieties" but

### CAVAS

CASTELL SANT ANTONI CUVÉE MILLENNIUM

CAVA GRAN CLAUSTRO DE CASTILLO DE PERELADA 2002

CODORNIU PINOT NOIR BRUT ROSADO

FREIXENET CUVÉE DS BRUT NATURE

GRAMONA III LUSTROS 1998

GRAMONA PINOT NOIR BRUT ROSADO

HUGUET BRUT NATURE

JANÉ VENTURA BRUT NATURE GRAN RESERVA

JAUME DE CODORNIU

JUVÉ Y CAMPS RESERVA DE FAMILIA 2001

KRIPTA 1999

PARXET ANIVERSARIO PA 84 BRUT NATURE

PRIVAT OPUS EVOLUTUM

RAVENTÓS I BLANC GRAN RESERVA PERSONAL 1998

RECAREDO BRUT DE BRUT 1999

ROVELLATS BRUT ROSADO

TORRE GALIMANY 2000



showing strong Chardonnay characteristics in its aroma and flavor, and the Castell Sant Antoni Cuvee Millenium, which was yeastier than most and perhaps the most powerful wine of the category. Nobody would confuse either one with Dom Perignon—but at perhaps a tenth of the price, that probably isn't an issue.

## Fortified and Naturally Sweet Wines: A mixed bag

This was two categories in one. Most of the fortified wines were absolutely correct in their construction, if not especially thrilling to taste. If the Barbadillo Solear Manzanilla doesn't remind you of eating fresh shellfish at the Romerijo in El Puerto de Santa María, you haven't spent enough time in Andalusia. On the other

hand, it has a total production of 1.2 million bottles, so it wasn't like we didn't know the wine already. The same was true with La Ina, Tio Pepe, and the rest of Spain's fortified standards. Perhaps as a result, my favorite of the *generosos* was a wine I didn't know nearly as well: the Domecq Amontillado 51 1<sup>a</sup>, which coated my mouth with caramel flavor, but without the corresponding sweetness. The sweet wines were more fun. The Exxencia 1999, from Bodegas de Crianza de Castilla La Vieja, is another bit of experimentation from Antonio Sanz. Made from 100 percent Verdejo, it wasn't subtle, but had peach on the nose and some Sauternes-like character on the palate. Enrique Mendoza's Moscatel de la Marina 2003, a varietal Moscatel de Alejandria, had a fragrant, floral nose and a restrained sweetness. Perhaps the most balanced wine of the selection was the Molino Real Mountain Wine

2001, from peripatetic winemaker Telmo Rodríguez. It had a cleanliness to its aroma and flavor that reminded me of a spring breeze, with violets on the palate adding interest. My two favorites of the flight were wines I hadn't known before. Casta Diva Reserva Real 2002 from Bodegas Gutiérrez de la Vega, another single-variety Moscatel de Alejandria from Alicante, is a true Mediterranean wine. It had a stronger nose than the Enrique Mendoza, more alcohol, more sweetness, and an intense flavor that polarized the group. To me, it had the focus of a single-vineyard Pinot Noir, and I loved it. When I looked up the wine in a guidebook later, I saw that only 180 bottles were produced. The only wine I liked more was the Don Juan Trasañejo Pedro Ximénez from López Hermanos in the Sierras of Málaga. With its sugar content and heft perfectly balanced with a slash of acidity, it was the only Pedro



Ximénez that transcended pure sweetness, the only one I'd actually want to drink rather than pour over ice cream. The brown-black color of licorice in the center of the glass faded to orange and then yellow on the rim, and its flavor showed the same complexity. I'm not big on using flavor descriptors—who ever walked into a wine shop asking for something that smelled of cloves and blackberries?—but I couldn't help noting the separate tastes of prunes, plums, figs and dark chocolate that permeated the glass. A stunning wine.

## Red Wines: An embarrassment of riches

These wines were a showcase for the breadth and depth of Spanish viticulture and enology, a range of bottlings from around the country made in a wealth of different styles. Nearly every one was worthy of mention. How to simply breeze past the rich and meaty 2002 Finca Sandoval Syrah? Or the 2000 Dehesa

del Carrizal Colección Privada Cabernet Sauvignon, made in the traditional claret style that has all but disappeared from Bordeaux these days? A Lautus 1999 from Bodegas Guelbenzu made a strong statement for Navarrese reds, and a Blecua 2001 did the same for the underappreciated designation of Somontano. The Blecua, a singular blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot and Tempranillo, didn't exude any particular Spanishness, but it showed cherry in the mouth and an evolving palette of flavors that made me long for that table at El Nazareno. Two hours with the wine and a plate of *chuletillas* (suckling lamb chops) and I'd see where it would go.

In this case, I barely had the chance to appreciate the Blecua because the next wine was a 2001 Corullón Villa 2001 from Álvaro Palacios' winery in Bierzo. It was the first of four Palacios wines we tasted—I'll remove the suspense: all four showed terrifically well—and the piercing flavor and high-acid freshness of the Mencia grape was a welcome counterpoint to the

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## LICOR AND NATURALLY SWEET WINES

ALVEAR PX SOLERA 1830  
 AMONTILLADO 51 1<sup>a</sup>  
 CASTA DIVA RESERVA REAL 2000  
 CHIVITE COLECCIÓN 125 VENDIMIA TARDÍA 2002  
 DON JUAN TRASAÑEJO PX  
 ENRIQUE MENDOZA MOSCATEL DE LA MARINA 2003  
 EXXENCIA 99  
 FINO LA INA  
 FINO QUINTA  
 FINO TIO PEPE  
 HUMBOLDT 2000  
 MOLINO REAL MOUNTAIN WINE 2001  
 NOÉ SOLERA PX  
 OBISPO GASTÓN PALO CORTADO  
 OCHOA DULCE MOSCATEL 2003  
 OLOROSO VIEJO HIDALGO  
 OSBORNE RARE SHERRY PEDRO XIMÉNEZ VIEJO  
 ROYAL AMBROSANTE VOS 20 AÑOS PX  
 SAN LEÓN MANZANILLA  
 SOLEAR MANZANILLA



Cabernet-based wines. The Corullón was darker than a typical Pinot Noir, but it had the same cleanliness on the palate, and I could imagine drinking it with everything from wild game to monkfish. Immediately following that came a different interpretation of Mencía, the Dominio de Tares Bembibre 2002. Deeper and darker than the Corullón, almost like a Petite Syrah in its bottomless-pit richness, it illustrated the protean nature of the grape. This exuded black fruit, not the Corullón's red, augmented by the vanilla of evident oak. It was no less a successful wine than the Corullón, but somewhat less interesting to me. I knew we'd have plenty more of those big, internationally-styled wines to come.

A breath. And then an amazing run of wines, starting with the Gran Claustro Tinto 2001 from Cavas del Castillo de Perelada in Ampurdán (Girona), a wine with an egg-nog nose (from the oak) and a startling intensity that showed so much promise, it made me question why the more exalted Perelada Ex Ex Syrah wasn't included anywhere in

the tasting. Only a moment to wonder, though, because here comes the Priorato: Clos Mogador and Vall Llach from 2002 and Palacios' Finca Dofi from 2003. All three were tremendous wines, and I literally carried them out with me during our brief break to taste them with a bite of *Jamón serrano*.

In the end, I found the Clos Mogador the most profound, a wine with decades of potential that offered up different glimpses of its personality with each sip. The Dofi was more fun, brighter, and more easily accessible, with raspberry flavors blended with a streak of dark fruit, as well as the best nose of the flight. I couldn't help thinking that the Vall Llach, a wine that seems to be getting better with every vintage, held secrets we'd never know, not given the time constraints of this tasting. Which bottle would I pick if I could have only one for my cellar? The Mogador, but only after great deliberation.

The second flight of the category began with new-wave Riojas. The Rioja designation has reacted to the stylistic debate between traditional

and new-styled wines in fascinating fashion. Nearly every major property has added a *Vino de Autor* to its existing line, a dark-colored, extracted wine that may or may not augment the Tempranillo with Cabernet Sauvignon, but features plenty of new oak and double-weight glass bottles that billboard the wine's importance. Some of these wines sell for as much as 150 Euros, which is about ten times the price of a regular *reserva* bottling (see Glossary on page 143). If you want the traditional *crianza* through *gran reserva* from wineries such as Marqués de Riscal, Marqués de Murrieta, Muga, Beronia and Bodegas Lan, to name just a few, you can get them as easily as ever. In most cases, hundreds of thousands of bottles are made. But if you want this new manifestation of the winemaker's art, Rioja as seen through a different prism, the same winery can show you its version, too.

Some of the best of those Super Riojas remain the earliest manifestations of them, such as Marqués de Riscal's Barón de Chirel



and Muga's TorreMuga. But this tasting showed that several wines that seemed overoaked and unsubtle in their first vintages in the mid-'90s have rounded into form. Contino's Viña del Olivo 2001 had a smokiness, even gaminess, to it that wouldn't have been out of place in a Cote Rotie. It had the sweetness of oak on the palate, but it was wonderfully integrated into the body of the wine. "What Rioja should taste like," someone beside me said, and I found myself agreeing. Just as good, in its own way, was the newest incarnation of Culmen de Lan, a high-concept wine that has lowered its price from more than 100 Euros a bottle to half that, yet improved greatly in the process. The 2001, a traditional blend of mostly Tempranillo, some Mazuelo and a little Graciano, showed a nose of blackberry jam in a cedar box, and a polished, showy style that stands in stark contrast to Lan's more restrained Reserva and Gran Reserva. The best three Riojas came next. Finca Allende's Calvario is a wine that I have always preferred to the pricier Aurus. This 2001 had a

eucalyptus nose—I might have blind-tasted it as an Australian—and sleekness and femininity on the palate. There was no sense of place whatsoever, no sign that this wine came from anywhere in particular, yet I hesitate to quibble because the wine was so enjoyable. The TorreMuga 2001 was equally smooth, yet an utterly different wine than the Calvario. It tasted to me like a terrific young traditional Rioja that had been buffed to the point of brilliance. It was utterly seamless, without that grip in the mouth that usually signifies an old-world wine, yet the flavor profile was absolute Rioja.

I couldn't figure out whether I preferred the Calvario or the TorreMuga, but it didn't matter. From my first sip of the 2001 Cirсион from Bodegas Roda, I knew it would be my favorite wine of this category. It was closed and compact, with a more restrained nose than the previous wines but latent power. It had absolute polish—drinking it was like sliding along a teak floor—but so much more waiting beneath the surface. I was wowed.

# 100

The 100 Definitive Wines from Spain

## RED WINES

- ALIÓN 2000
- BLECUA 2001
- CALVARIO 2001
- CHIVITE COLECCIÓN 125 RESERVA 2000
- CIRSION 2001
- CLOS MOGADOR 2002
- CONTINO VIÑA DEL OLIVO 2001
- CORULLÓN-VILLA 2001
- CULMEN 2001
- DEHESA DEL CARRIZAL COLECCIÓN PRIVADA 2000
- DOMINIO DE ATAUTA 2002
- DOMINIO DE TARES BEMBIBRE 2002
- ENATE RESERVA ESPECIAL 2000
- ENRIQUE MENDOZA RESERVA SANTA ROSA 2000
- FINCA DOFÍ 2002
- FINCA SANDOVAL 2001
- FLOR DE PINGUS 2001
- GRAN CLAUSTRO TINTO 2001
- GRAN COLEGIATA CAMPUS 2000
- HACIENDA MONASTERIO RESERVA ESPECIAL 1998
- HACIENDA PRADOLAGAR 2000
- LA VICALANDA RESERVA 1999
- LAUTUS 1999
- LEDA VIÑAS VIEJAS 2002
- MALLEOLUS DE VALDERRAMIRO 2002
- MARBORÉ 2001
- MATALLANA 2001
- MAURO VENDIMIA SELECCIONADA 2000
- MC 2002
- MIRTO DE RAMÓN BILBAO 2001
- NEO PUNTA ESENCIA 2001
- PAGO DE LOS CAPELLANES PARCELA EL PICÓN 1999
- PAGOS VIEJOS 2002
- PINTIA 2001
- PROPIEDAD HERENCIA REMONDO 2001
- PUJANZA NORTE 2002
- SED DE CANÁ 2001
- TERMANTHIA 2001
- TORRE MUGA 2001
- VALL LLACH 2002
- VIÑA SASTRE PESUS 2001
- ZEMIS 2000



One last wine to mention before ending this astonishing flight: the Termanthia 2001. I'm a fan of many of the wines coming from Toro these days, but this is the ultimate manifestation of that area. Crafted in tiny quantities from century-old vines that twist and double back on themselves, it's a deep, dark cave of a wine with only a few hints of what treasures might await in the interior, accessible only with bottle age. It's the best Termanthia I've tasted, and one of Spain's finest wines. Perhaps no designation showed better over the two days than Ribera del Duero. One wine after the next displayed the typicity of roasted meat on the nose, great structure, and a flavor profile of intense Tempranillo. With the planting of so many new vineyards having brought the average vine age of the region down precipitously, I'd figured these would be difficult years for the area, but that hasn't proved the case at all. I loved Matallana from Telmo Rodríguez, and the Neo Punta Esencia, and the Syrah-like Sed de Caná from Bodegas y Viñedos del Jaro, all from the 2001 vintage. The

Alión 2000, a profound wine of great depth, belied the initial Alión concept of a wine to drink while the gems from the Álvarez family's other property, Vega Sicilia, spent a decade and more aging. This Alión could have used a decade or so, too. The Leda 2000 had a nose of toasted almond and terrific aromatics, while the Hacienda Monasterio Reserva Especial 1998 was as dark and meaty as some barrel samples, even more than six years after harvest. I didn't think it possible, but my four favorite Ribera del Dueros were yet to come. The Pago de los Capellanes Parcela El Picón 1999 was a finished wine, smooth and round in the mouth and ready to drink. The Malleolus de Valderramiro 2002 from Emilio Moro sat at the other end of the spectrum. A young wine, it teemed with unresolved tannins, fruit flavor, oak, a savage character, and the promise of future brilliance. Somewhere between them on the aging curve were the Mauro Vendimia Seleccionada 2000, the very essence of Tempranillo, big and tannic and decidedly not ready, yet already drinking well—and the Viña

Sastre Pesus 2001 from Bodegas Hermanos Sastre, with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot included. I ranked the Cirсион, Calvario and Termanthia first, second and third for the entire category, with a special award to the Ribera del Duero designation for its consistent excellence. Then I staggered off in search of lunch.

## Spain's Legendary Wines: The state of the art

The atmosphere that greeted us upon our return to the tasting room that afternoon was electric. Television cameras were in place, the venerable José Peñín was in the master of ceremonies' spot at the head table, and the finest wines of Spain awaited us. In fact, I would have pulled at least half a dozen wines out of this category and exchanged them for my favorites from the morning, three or four Ribera del Duero, the Cirсион, Calvario and Termanthia. But I couldn't complain. When it had



ended, two of the three best wines of the week had come from this final flight, despite all that had gone before.

Before I get to which they were, a brief word on some surprises. The Real de Asúa 2000 from the Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España isn't the most heralded of the Super Riojas, nor the most expensive, and it usually doesn't earn the best scores. But as a drinking wine, a wine to open beside a long lunch with a range of entrees on the table, it ranked among the best of the tasting. So balanced, smooth yet not over-extracted, it was an object lesson in winemaking. The Aalto PS had improved greatly since I tasted the first vintage as a barrel-sample two years ago. This 2001 had butterscotch on the nose, chewy tannins, and a great cocktail of fruit flavors on the palate. Sure, it had lots of oak, but it will age seamlessly for the better part of a decade.

I've never understood Pingus, Spain's most famous garage wine. I won't

even bring up its cost, which exceeds that of Bordeaux's first-growths. Just working with what's in the glass, it's a wine that always seemed cold and sterile to me, though I understand that proprietor and enologist Peter Sisseck (whose Hacienda Monasterio wines I greatly enjoy) works only with three particular old-vine vineyards in Ribera del Duero. Tasting the 2001 in this ultra-select company, I found it highly textured and full of sweet tannins, but betrayed by a short finish. It was balanced, certainly pleasurable, but a brittle wine, lacking soul, and with less connection to the land than many of the wines that came before. Some of my colleagues agreed with my assessment, while others strongly disagreed, calling it the best wine of the tasting. I know top Spanish winemakers who believe that Sisseck has the commitment and the raw material to produce absolutely the best wine in Spain one of these vintages, when the weather and the

# 100

The 100 Definitive Wines from Spain

## SPANISH LEGENDARY WINES

- AALTO PS 2001
- ARO 2001
- AURUS 2001
- BARÓN DE CHIREL RESERVA 1999
- DALMAU RESERVA 2000
- EMÉRITVS 2000
- FINCA EL BOSQUE 2002
- L'ERMITA 2002
- PÉREZ PASCUAS GRAN SELECCIÓN GRAN RESERVA 1999
- PESQUERA JANUS GRAN RESERVA 1995
- PINGUS 2001
- REAL DE ASÚA RESERVA 2000
- REMÍREZ DE GANUZA RESERVA 2001
- RESERVA REAL 2000
- VEGA SICILIA ÚNICO GRAN RESERVA 1994
- VIÑA EL PISÓN 2002



*terroir* come together for him. I don't disagree. But for my taste, it certainly hasn't happened yet.

The final two wines of the tasting were the most compelling. The 1994 Vega Sicilia Único may well have been the best-made wine of the week. It came into the glass so well-integrated that it was impossible to separate out the distinct components in the mouth. The wine was clean, fresh, bright on the palate (far brighter than a typical Único a decade into its life), and continually evolving. There is a unique quality to Vega Sicilia's wines—Valbuenas, Únicos and Reserva Especial—that comes through even in lesser vintages, and 1994 is one of Spain's best of the last century. Fifty years from now, people will be drinking this wine and calling it classic. What could be better? Only L'Ermita, Palacios' tour de force from the steep slopes of the Priorato. His 2002, from only a passable vintage, offered a nose full of wild strawberries, along with slate and other mineral

notes. The wine hit the palate with smoothness and depth and never let up, ending with a lingering finish that left me wanting to put nothing else in my mouth, lest I'd ruin the sensation. It wasn't as elegant as his 2001, but perhaps a shade more complex: an old-world wine made in a modern style with a rustic underpinning. What other wine in the world, save an old rarity, would I have substituted for that glass of L'Ermita in front of me? I could think of none. Palacios has proven beyond any doubt that he is Spain's premier enologist, and this wine—considering the vintage—is one of his most impressive achievements. I'm eager to chart its evolution in the bottle.

In the end, my top wines from the two-day experience were L'Ermita, Cirsion, Vega Sicilia Único, the Artadi Viña El Pisón and Termanthia. That's five wines from four designations spread from Zamora to Tarragona, all different manifestations of Tempranillo (in

Vega Sicilia's case, blended with other grapes). Quite a range for a country that, not long ago, offered only Vega Sicilia, Pesquera and a handful of Riojas on the world-class level.

It was only a snapshot. Prolonged exposure to these wines, with food and time in the glass, might have yielded different results. That isn't likely to happen, so I'll be satisfied with the glimpse I was afforded at one of the more memorable tastings I've ever attended. Even a snapshot can be a work of art.

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A Taste of the

# SEA

The whole Galician coastline, from the chilly Rías Altas southwards to the Rías Baixas, with the wild Costa da Morte in between, is a natural aquarium populated by countless mollusks and crustaceans. As a result, this chunk of land jutting out into the Atlantic is heaven for lovers of seafood—mussels, swimming crabs, clams... and goose-barnacles, a highly-prized delicacy found on the steepest rocks of this *finis terrae*, whose harvest is a heroic task tackled by none but the brave.

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**TEXT**  
HENRIQUE MARIÑO

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**TRANSLATION**  
HAWYS PRITCHARD

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**PHOTOS**  
XURXO LOBATO/ICEX

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No one visits Galicia without responding to the siren call of one of the major attractions of this coastal region of northwestern Spain. Boiled, grilled, in more elaborate recipes, or just as they come, Galicia's mollusks and crustaceans are closely-guarded treasure, found not only on the seabed and cliffs, but also in nurseries and beds in the *rias*, the region's characteristic fjord-like estuaries that wend their way far inland.

## Percebeiros: none but the brave

Suso Lista has been keeping an eye on the sea for 42 years. Today, because the phase of the moon is right, he has donned his life-jacket ready to pit himself against Nature yet again. "We brave this world of water every day," he explains, in the heartfelt tones of an unrecognized hero.

Suso is a *percebeiro* and in this part of the world, that title carries status. Percebeiros (as they are known in the Galician language, *gallego*) are the men who cling dangerously to wave-battered rocks to harvest the

most highly-prized seafood of all—the delicious, fingernail-shaped crustaceans known as *percebes* (goose-barnacles).

We are in O Rocundo, where the very best percebes are to be found. They are said to have the best sea-flavor. The flavor, presumably, of the waves currently washing right over Suso so that he disappears from sight behind a curtain of white foam which contrasts, when the sea recedes, with a black carpet of percebes stretching before him. It is a carpet that covers 4 km (2.5 miles) of the coastline that Galicia calls A Costa da Morte. This 'coast of death' is celebrated in legend as the setting of bizarre happenings and dramatic shipwrecks. After all, we are at the end of the earth. Or so the Romans believed when, having traveled thousands of miles, they came upon the Atlantic and named this piece of land thrusting out into the sea 'finis terrae'—Fisterra (Finisterre) to today's inhabitants. The Costa da Morte, where the sun disappears each evening, could be perceived as a metaphor for Galicia itself—this coastal region of northwestern Spain where the

*morriña* (heartache), *orballo* (unremitting drizzle) and *marisco* (seafood) for which it has a romantic reputation are rather more than picturesque clichés. This is historically a land of emigrants, and the women who stay behind miss their husbands and sons. Galician poet Rosalía de Castro (Santiago de Compostela, 1837-1885) described them as "widows of the living", mourning their absent menfolk. No wonder *gallegos* and *gallegas* alike are prone to la *morriña*, that generic yearning—homesickness, longing for loved ones—that the Welsh know as 'hiraeth'.

This sadness finds an echo in el *orballo*, the ever-threatening fine rain so familiar to these people who live by, and from, the sea. Many of them still remember a time when seafood was something at which even the poor turned up their noses. That is hard to believe today, when it plays such a starring role in local cuisine. Starriest of all the crustaceans in terms of price are percebes. Not only are they dangerous to harvest but, because of sustainable husbandry methods, relatively few are available to meet a growing demand. In



consequence, goose-barnacles are the most expensive crustacean on chic restaurant menus.

"In the old days, it was the workers on the land that had the desirable food resources and the seafarers that lacked them. Maize bread was something we all wanted, and you'd exchange a basketful of spider-crabs for half a dozen corncocks. Percebes were used for fertilizer in the fields, and if a local saw a *nécora* (swimming crab) on the rocks, he'd give it a kick because it was worthless. Things are the other way round today," explains Inocencio Suárez, presiding officer of the *Cofradía de Corme*, the 'fraternity', or community fishery organization, of the town in A Coruña province which is the backdrop for O Roncudo.

Today's goose-barnacle prices can appear prohibitively high: at Christmastime, a kilo can fetch up to 150 euros at the quayside auction, though this comes down considerably at other times of year. But an outing with Suso to his wave-swept place of work is enough to convince one that bravery of that order is without price. "*A mala!*" (A

bad wave!), he shouts to his co-workers, sensing danger. "*Fai quedada!*" (Carry on!), he shouts, when the wave turns out to be less menacing than its foaming approach suggested. Their yells and turns of phrase defy literal translation: percebeiros have their own jargon and have christened every rock.

"All the stones have names here, *amigo*. This one's La Muela del Medio; that one, La Muela del Vendaval; that other one, La Muela de Nordés and that one over there is O Roncudo rock, home to the best percebes in the world," explains Maso, another Corme percebeiro who, incongruously, uses video-game terminology when talking about his job: "This is a serious business. One slip, one false step, or one freak wave, and that's it. Game over."

Viewed from the land by someone who knows nothing about it, O Roncudo rock, distantly visible with the sea swirling about it, looks an impossible prospect. You have to get there by boat before starting to pick the goose barnacles growing on it. Other sources can be reached on foot, however.

Percebeiros obey an almost fetishistic ritual which begins at home as they prepare their simple kit: comfortable clothes, a life-jacket, a neoprene suit, knee-pads, a *ferrada* (a wooden pole with an iron spatula at one end) for extracting the percebes, and a bag in which to carry them. The battle with the elements seems heavily weighted in favor of the elements.

"I'm very superstitious," explains Lista. "I have a ritual for getting dressed, as bullfighters do, and I always wear the same clothes. If I leave home feeling that I've left something out, I get edgy."

Before going down to the rocks, the percebeiros get together on the cliff-top first thing in the morning to plan their working day. While he may be an institution for country-dwellers, here on the coast "the weather-man doesn't exist", declares Inocencio Suárez. "If you need to know what the sea's doing, there's nothing to beat getting up in the morning and having a look at it."

Down on the rocks, Lista applies an unwritten rule: "Bigger quantities don't mean better money". Consequently, he singles out the best specimens, like the type known as

The courageous *percebeiros* brave the power of the Atlantic Ocean to harvest the most precious of the crustaceans, the goose barnacle.



*teto*, "shaped like your big toe".

Although the clusters of *percebes* are generally composed of no more than three, careful selection of each and every specimen before picking is what guarantees the most lucrative day's work.

On O Roncudo, they do not use ropes, though they sometimes do in the nearby Sisargas Islands where the heroic *percebeiros* tie themselves to the rocks to avoid being taken by the waves. They do without them on O Roncudo because at low-water level the cliff is flat; furthermore they might get in the way if they needed to run for it. "You have to keep one eye on the *percebe* and the other on the sea," advises Lista, who dreads the pitfalls that might lurk beneath the *golfe* (seaweed, to the uninitiated).

But how can they detach the crustaceans from the rocks with such a crude-looking implement without damaging them? "The *percebe* is stuck to the rock by its head, which is the red part, because it has a gland which contains an adhesive substance. You have to hit the rock sharply to avoid breaking it, because otherwise it goes like an accordion and can't be sold. A whole *percebe* is like a living crab: it will survive for several days after being picked, as long as you cover it with a cloth dampened in sea-water. If you take the cloth off, you can hear them breathing."

That's another working day over: they coincide with full and new moons. There are spring-tides at those times, usually lasting from three days before until three days after each moon. Consequently, every

24 hours, work begins forty minutes later than the day before, though it invariably ends at around 5 pm. That is when all the work involved in extracting, cleaning, classifying into categories, weighing and labeling prove their worth: it's auction time, and buyers mill about on the quayside, vying with each other for the best of the catch. But the town does not live by *percebes* alone. Corme has another aspect that looks inland and lives by agriculture and stock-breeding. Others work with different types of crustaceans (swimming crabs, prawns) or mollusks (octopus). And considerable economic activity is generated by the Costa de la Muerte's only raft-culture seafood nursery growing mussels and oysters on wooden platforms moored out to sea.





The Ria de Arousa encompasses the great majority of the 3,337 mussel *bateas* in Galicia, the second-largest mussel producer in the world after China.

## AQUACULTURE: THE WAY FORWARD

"Our supply of seafood is constantly decreasing, and there is already a shortage. The situation is being investigated," declares Esteban Castro, president of the Asociación de Comercializadores de Marisco (Seafood Traders' Association). Research bodies are aware of the situation and are on the case, working on improving species and traditional approaches to mollusk and crustacean "farming". For example, the Marine Investigation Center (CIMA) and the Galician Aquacultural Training Institute (IGAFA) are working together on a scheme, directed by Alejandro Guerra, to update some mini-nurseries currently producing clam and oyster seed so that they can work with mollusks, too.



Other IGAFA initiatives include one for producing young lobster for restocking purposes. "We're just starting, but we already have the basic techniques for producing young specimens," explains biologist Gonzalo Pérez. "The repopulation approach has its supporters, and the future of some species depends on it." Among other schemes is a genetic selection program for flat oysters resistant to the lethal, parasite-borne disease bonamiosis. Meanwhile, associations such as the Galician Aquaculture Cluster are carrying out research into the larva and fattening stages of octopus farming. Private initiatives are also at work, among them Galician Marine Aquaculture (GMA), which is backed by the University of Santiago de Compostela, and which aims to promote and sell organically farmed abalone.

Alejandro Guerra, Director of the Marine Investigation Center (CIMA)

To talk statistics for a moment, a *percebeiro* can collect up to 6 kg (13 lbs) of goose-barnacles a day. There are 48 issued permits for harvesting on foot and 19 for harvesting afloat, namely from boat. Overall, 67 associates gather around 30 tons of *percebes* a year, worth 624,000 euros. In Galicia as a whole, production in 2004 exceeded 406 tons, representing quayside auction takings of some 11.7 million euros. The price peaked at 162 euros per kg (80 euros per lb). Lista is keen to show off his erudition: "The nail-like part is where the legs and reproductive organ are: it's a hermaphrodite crustacean and has the biggest penis in the world in relation to its body size. The submerged one is the 'mother' *percebe*, and it produces young all year round, and so must never be touched." He speaks as one of the *percebeiros* who realized some years ago how important it is to harvest responsibly. In the 1980s, O Roncudo had been exhausted by over-harvesting. That was when the fraternity took the decision to introduce controlled harvesting so that their stretch of



coast could recover its star crustacean. “We presented a Goose Barnacle Management Plan to the Galician Government’s Fisheries Department, and designated five picking areas: four of these are always closed and one open for a month at a time, each of them in turn, like the fallow field system on land,” explains Suárez. “This kind of harvesting is completely responsible—it’s like felling and planting trees,” argues Lista, who gave his support to sustainable fishing rather than having to “pack my bags and emigrate in search of work. What used to be complete anarchy has been turned into a commitment to sustainable exploitation on the part of the town. After two years of controlled harvesting and the current fallow system, percebes have ousted mussels from the rocks, which are now covered with them.” So Suso Lista is staying on, wielding his ferrada in search of (and defense of) goose-barnacles, “exposed to the blazing sun and raging storms” to which this land’s end—“the wildest habitat in the whole of Nature”—is subject.

“Darwin gave up his research into percebes because they were driving him crazy. When he forgot about them, he was able to get on with thinking about the rest and develop his theory about the evolution of the species,” declares this philosophical percebeiro. He is standing beside a white cross—a symbol of times when men have lost their battle with the sea.

## Life rafts

The Ria de Arousa is as calm as usual this early morning, and seagulls wheel overhead, warming their wings in the sunshine and looking down on this incursion of the sea inland. Many settle on the hundreds of *bateas* (raft-culture platforms) that bob gently on the water’s surface. The Indemosa III dodges the floating platforms which lurch as it passes, four fishermen hard at work on board. This 20-m (65-ft) polyester boat has just set off from the port of O Grove, epicenter of Europe’s mussel industry, with a load of *mejilla* (young mussels) for re-stocking this natural nursery with new specimens.

Also on board is Carlos González, manager of Indemosa, one of the most international, cutting-edge companies engaged in breeding, depurating and selling this particular Galician seafood. “Prepare for mooring,” he orders from the bridge once the boat has drawn up alongside the *batea*. On deck, the *marineros* set about dealing with the *mejilla*, which is ready for attaching to ropes suspended from the *batea* (a floating structure, measuring at most 500 sq m (5,381 sq ft) anchored to the bottom by a mooring system involving several floats supporting a mesh to which the growing-ropes—up to 500 of them, of some 12 m (40 ft) maximum length—are tied, “We use two methods for breeding mussels. In April, we cast the ropes in, and mussel eggs suspended in the water attach themselves to them. The other consists in buying in *mejilla* from a local fraternity, which breeds them on rocks. We then place these along the length of the rope and wrap it in a cotton mesh. This disappears over time and, two or three months later, we redistribute them. By this time the mussels will have plumped out and need more



Mussels account for 60 percent of the fresh seafood haul from the seas of Galicia, where this popular bivalve mollusk is a culinary favorite.

space, so we spread them out over more than one rope. Between six and eight months later, they are ready for the marketplace," explains González. A few meters away, Raúl Caneda raises his friendly, weather-beaten face. An employee of, and shareholder in, Indemosa, he is 63 years old and has spent half his life on a batea. "This job doesn't kill anyone, but it does wear you out. In the old days, we used to work like mad and it was tougher. Although the method we used was the same as today, everything had to be done by hand and there was more drudgery. Bringing in machinery has made it less tough, and also means that fewer people are needed, even though production has gone up," he explains.

Between Raúl's first experiences on a batea and the present day, the mussel industry has overcome problems that derived from the small scale of operations and dependency on the trading sector, both of which affected its development and profitability. People have worked hard and

organized themselves into *asociaciones de bateeiros* (raft-workers' associations): in combination with their accumulated know-how, new technologies, sustainability levels, market development and an increasingly mature business culture, this has resulted in doubling production in just thirty years.

The mussel industry's development has been "spectacular", admits Uxto Labarta, researcher for scientific research council CSIC. It now accounts for "60% of the fresh sea produce landed in Galicia, with exports of fresh product growing by 50% and those of frozen products multiplying by sixteen". Annual sales of mussels have gone up from 150,000 to 260,000 tons per year; this lags behind China, the world's leading producer with 500,000 tons, but leads Italy, New Zealand, France and Holland, who produce over 60,000 tons. Overall, mussels sold for industrial or processing use account for 60% of Galicia's production, and are either

sold via the *cocederos* (boiling plants) (47%) or go directly to the canning industry (53%), which produces between 10,000 and 12,000 tons of canned mussels per year. "Sales for fresh consumption are more profitable, in that 40% of production yields 60% of the turnover," estimates Labarta.

By today, Galicia's mussel sector has attained a degree of know-how which is reflected in significant allied technology (materials, cultivation methods and machinery created in the region). Its Regulatory Council president explains that there are 84 raft-culture 'parks' involving a total of 3,337 bateas (distributed among the rías of Ares, Muros, Pontevedra, Vigo and Arousa, this last accounting for 69% of the total), 1,200 boats, 40 depurating plants, four boiling plants and 9,000 people who earn their living directly from this industry. "Businessmen in the mussel sector have made significant strides as regards both market and product. For one thing, they have gone in for specializing in a preferred product



and market and, for another, adopted a policy of gradual vertical integration so that, as well as associations of raft cultivators having their own depurating plant and fresh produce distribution network, some of the cooperative companies have recently started to develop their own processing industries (chilling, freezing, pasteurizing, protective atmospheres...) or to work in tandem with some of the existing ones," declares Labarta, coordinator of a recent study entitled *Bateiros, mar, mejillón. Una perspectiva bioeconómica* (Raft-workers, Sea, Mussels. A Bioeconomic Perspective), published by the Fundación Caixa Galicia. Other adaptations have been consumer-led, such as new presentations to meet the demand generated by increasing consumption of chilled, frozen and ready-made products. But before being eaten in their traditional market destinations in Spain and the rest of Europe (fresh product exports amounted to 27,265

tons in 2003, going mainly to Italy and France), what happens to mussels after they are harvested from the batea?

"A mussel is like a ripe fruit: unless you pick it, it falls to the bottom of the sea," explains Carlos González. "When the mussels have reached optimum size, the ropes are hauled up by crane and shaken by hand so that they fall off. Still on the boat, they are then sorted by size and cleaned of impurities. Back on land, they are transported to the depurating plant, given a preliminary wash and put into pools containing chlorinated sea water for 24-48 hours as part of the ongoing cleaning process. They are then packed in nets, labeled, and are ready for the marketplace."

Trucks wait at the doors of the commercial companies to transport them to the domestic and foreign customers who have contractual direct purchase agreements with the industries in O Grove (El Grove), and meet the costs of transport and distribution.

## W E B S I T E S

**[www.turgalicia.com](http://www.turgalicia.com)**

Tourism and gastronomy in Galicia. (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish)

**[www.turismocostadamorte.com](http://www.turismocostadamorte.com)**

A gastronomic and touristic guide to *finis terrae*. (English, German and Spanish)

**[www.riasbaixas.org](http://www.riasbaixas.org)**

Exploring and eating out well in Pontevedra province. (English and Spanish)

**[www.cetga.org](http://www.cetga.org)**

Information about aquaculture in Galicia. (Spanish)

**[www.pescadegalicia.com](http://www.pescadegalicia.com)**

Fish markets, species, prices and useful links. (Spanish)

"Mussels are the biggest-selling mollusk, and have a worldwide reputation," explains José Figuera, president of the Mejillón de Galicia Regulatory Council which is responsible for monitoring product traceability so that it complies with the quality parameters of this Protected Designation of Origin. "Production control is carried out on all the lots delivered to the quayside markets, and there are also two additional controls: one at the depuration plant, and the other at the end market."

"Because of its location, Galicia is a world yardstick for seafood production. The rias, orientated to northwest and southwest, constitute an exclusive ecosystem," Figuera adds. "As an effect of the tides, millions of cubic meters of water are renewed each year. And the fine quality of their mussels can also be attributed to the phytoplankton which are brought into the rias by underwater currents and rise to the surface because of the different densities of the cold and warm waters."

In *Bateiros, mar, mejillón. Una perspectiva bioeconómica*, Labarta examines why this mollusk is the



After harvesting on foot or off a boat, the clams are sold at the nearby fish market auctions. The clams from Carril are the tastiest.



king of "feedless aquaculture":

*"Were you able to explore the rias of Galicia with Captain Nemo, you would be astonished by the density of ropework you found there. From the 3,300 rafts that float on their waters hang some 119 million m (62 million ft) of rope (...), representing a useful surface of 5.5 million sq m (58 million sq ft) on which mussels can settle and grow (...). If you were to take the trip, you would find some 16,000 million mussels. To these can be added all those that attach themselves to the coastal rocks and that are also integral to the bioeconomic paradigm of Galicia's rias."* The Indemosa III, with its load of young mussels, is revving up again. There are still many bateas to be visited and the day is just beginning for the five crew members on board. A voice from the deck shouts: "Prepare to cast off!"

## Clams from Carril

"Quick! Let me through!" shouts a young woman carrying two bags of clams. The auction is about to begin at Moaña's quayside fishmarket, one of the busiest on the Ría de Vigo. The fraternities of Cangas, Arcade,

San Adrián, Redondela, Canido and Moaña bring their products here. The eyes of seafood fishermen and dealers are trained on the scales where the produce is being weighed. Their gaze then swivels to the electronic screen displaying species, price, last bid, and buyer. Every single face is focused on one figure, one decimal point, as if this were the Stock Exchange.

Esteban Castro is the head of Mariscos Escacha, an O Grove company that deparates and trades in mollusks. He visits the local fish markets on a daily basis to buy in supplies. Moaña's market is particularly good for mollusks: they arrive here from different parts of the province and, having been sold, are transported to companies for deparating and selling. "Starting on *almeja fina*," yells the auctioneer. On the screen appears: Price: 23.86 euros/kilogram. Buyer: Iglesias. It's already the fourth deal of the afternoon, which means that the best stuff is already on its way by truck to the deparation plants. Among the produce are clams picked from the sandbanks of Carril, a little village tucked into the estuary of the

River Ulla. In Carril, there are 1,238 clam nurseries, whose boundaries are demarcated by underwater stakes. Echoing the pattern of Galicia's agriculture, the local economy here depends on marine 'smallholdings'. These support some 600 families who gather the clams from little boats (using long-handled grapples in the deepest places) or on foot (using mattock-like tools where the banks are highest), depending on the species, explains Ventura Vidal, presiding officer of Carril's fraternity, who estimates production at 1,000 tons a year. This is an impressive amount for a village of only 5,000 inhabitants, who also gather over 200 tons of cockles.

Three species of clam are cultivated on its sandbanks: *almeja babosa* (*Venerupis pullastra*), *almeja fina* (*Venerupis Dicusata*) and *almeja japónica* (*Ruditapes philippinarum*). The first two of these have represented Carril in some of Spain's topmost restaurants. "We keep the beds very clean, and the mixture of salt and sweet water also gives them a special taste."

Dolores Bóveda is a purist as far as clams are concerned. She runs Casa



Night falls in the Ria de Arousa; the boats rest on the calm of the quiet seas, while the sound of the men's voices flows from the taverns.

Loliña, a family restaurant that has been going for 70 years, where she serves clams *a la marinera*, the recipe for which this engaging lady, devoted to the cause of Galician cuisine, gives as follows: "Good olive oil, sweet and hot *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain), onion, white wine, flour, salt, *almejas babosas* and lots of love". She declares that the local clams are "gorgeous, whether a *la marinera*, steamed, in a rice dish, or canned". Overall regional figures place the *babosa* type in first place, with production in 2004 at 1,166 tons, worth 15 million euros. This is followed by the *japónica*, introduced in the 1990s (734 tons/6,000,000 euros), the  *fina* (730 tons/19,000,000) and the  *rubia* (271 tons/2,400,000 euros). The future of the native clam species has been placed in the hands of scientists. Alejandro Guerra, director of the Galician Marine Research Centre, CIMA, is working from his

HQ in Vilanova de Arousa on developing mini-nurseries to produce seed bivalve mollusks for use in restocking and cultivating. "While there is plenty of mussel seed, *almejas babosas* and oysters don't produce as much, so that the fraternities are forever needing more to top up what the beds produce naturally," he explains. The aim of his research would be to cultivate clam seed so as to introduce new specimens in considerable numbers. "In Galicia, there are 80 million sq m (861 million sq ft) of marine surface which could, theoretically, be capitalized on and put to use, thereby multiplying production. This could be achieved by pickers progressing to become growers," declares CIMA's director. At present, clam seed is either obtained from private nurseries, imported from countries such as Italy (in the case of *japónica*), or gathered from the *rías'* natural

supply. The scheme put forward by Guerra would achieve not only the required seed but also see mini-nurseries being managed by technicians trained at the Galician Aquacultural Training Institute (IGAFA).

"We provide technical direction for the scheme, and the IGAFA trains the staff. In the second phase of the scheme, the fraternities would have to take responsibility for the equipment and its management and provide the technicians' wages. Other installations would then have to be created to pre-fatten the seeds in an economically viable way."

## Galicia's natural aquarium

Galicia as a region can lay claim to almost as many types of seafood as rainy days. Among the crustaceans, the most important are lobster,



In the bar O Pescador, retired fishermen from Malpica recall its past as a whaling port.

swimming crab, spider crab, crayfish and goose-barnacles. Mollusks need to be considered in their separate categories of univalves, namely ones with just one shell (limpets), bivalves, which have two shells (cockles, razor clams, oysters, mussels, clams and scallops—these last famous for providing the 'badges' for pilgrims traveling the route to Santiago de Compostela), and cephalopods (squid and octopus), which have no shell at all. In O Grove's fishmarket, Carlos Barbeito is brandishing a couple of net-caught spider crabs. He catches about three dozen every day, which fetch up to 15 euros a kilo (7.50 euros per pound). Big specimens will fetch about 45 euros apiece. Other species are caught using *nasas*—narrow-necked baskets which trap prawns, octopus and swimming crabs.

"The bidding starts from a given figure and goes downwards; when it

reaches six euros, they stop it to prevent a drop in prices," explains Barbeito, while potential customers study the crabs to ascertain whether they are male or female. You can tell by the abdomen: the male's is smaller, narrow and thin, while the female's is bigger, oval, broad and thick.

"*Ya!*" (Now!) shouts a gentleman in a corduroy cap, chipping into the auctioneer's rapid downward litany when it reaches 14 euros (the starting price was 35 euros). The buyer is from Mariscos Benavides, a company that owns a *cetárea*, another link in the seafood industry chain. A *cetárea* is a sort of holding station, a regulatory repository in which seafood is kept alive, underwater, until it is sold. This particular company also has a boiling plant for crustaceans (swimming crabs, spider crabs and prawns).

So what is it that makes Galician seafood so special? Esteban Castro,

who is also president of Galicia's Association of Seafood Traders, AGACOMAR, believes that there is "a big difference" between local crustaceans and ones from elsewhere. "You can see it in the color. The others are kind of straw-colored, while ours are bright red." "No crustacean from outside has such good flavor as specimens from the ría," confirms Moncho Lavandeiro, one of the thirty O Grove restaurateurs who host *Jornadas de Exaltación del Centollo* (spider crab 'tribute days') in their restaurants. Production of spider crab exceeded 190 tons, worth 2.3 million euros, in 2004. "The fine quality of the flesh, which is denser, differentiates it from foreign ones, whose flesh is less firm." "And why is our octopus so delicious?" wonders Lavandeiro. "Because it feeds on swimming crabs, spider crabs, common crabs, clams, prawn, mussels... There isn't a single

fair or saint's day in the whole of Galicia that doesn't have a *pulpeira*." What he is referring to is a mobile stall that serves up portions of cut-up octopus dressed with olive oil, coarse sea salt and pimentón on a wooden plate—simple, marvelous, fast food. In the fishmarket at Malpica, more than two hours' drive by car from O Grove, hundreds of octopus are spread out on steel tables. A high proportion of the women on this little peninsula jutting out into the ocean from the Costa da Morte work at sea-related jobs. Some go out fishing alongside their husbands, some are *redeiras*, who repair nets, others handle sales during the auction or sell the catch in the food market, while others even go down to the quayside at dawn when the boats come, fill boxes with ice, pack recently-caught sardines and horse-mackerel in them, and load them onto trucks. "Never let it be said that women don't do heavy work," complains

Laura García, a young Malpica woman who makes her contribution to the family income by selling in the fishmarket what her father and uncle catch in their boat. "Fourteen euros, thirteen, twelve, thirteen, twelve, eleven," the price goes up, down, up, down, voiced unremittingly by the auctioneer. Malpica still has much of the old-time fishing port about it, as exemplified by this shouted auctioning.

The special qualities of the products auctioned here are described by food critic Cristino Alvarez, who mentions the beneficial effect on seafood of "a special climate and different water-temperature, an effect of the Gulf Stream. The plankton and agitated, highly aerated waters are also decisive factors in the quality of goose-barnacles."

There is also a difference of texture: the flesh is smoother, finer and firmer. Texture depends on what crustaceans eat, and in Galicia they eat very well indeed. And how

should we eat them? "They taste best just boiled," declares Cristino, "but one shouldn't discard the possibility of cooking them in more elaborate recipes. Let's face it, they are good raw, griddled, in cooked dishes... If you're boiling them, the ideal is to use sea water. A bay leaf adds a little something. As for mollusks, oysters and *almeja fina*, these can be eaten raw, while certain other ones, such as *zamburiñas* (variegated scallops) can be cooked in recipes."

Asked about Galicia's *nueva cocina*, Alvarez mentions Toni Vicente (see recipes on page 98), Manicha Bermúdez and Ana Gago, and delicious dishes such as crayfish or scallop carpaccio that come to mind. "It's a fact that the public is quite conservative, but it responds well to a slightly new take on food. And these cooks are concerned with respecting what things taste of, not masking it." And if the products of this part of Spain taste of anything, it's the sea.

Scallops (left) and cockles are two of Galicia's most typical molluscs.





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*See Recipes on page 98 and Exporters on page 130*

## LONXANET SUPPORTS RESPONSIBLE FISHING

The Fundación Lonxanet por la Pesca Sostenible (Lonxanet Foundation for Sustainable Fishing) has hit upon an original way of generating new sources of income for the fishing fraternities: a scheme for rural fishing-holiday centered tourism and a school/workshop aimed at children. "The tourist scheme's pilot project was launched last summer, and was a success," reports Antonio García Allut, an anthropologist with a special interest in the fishing community at the University of A Coruña, and president of the Lonxanet Foundation. "It is suitable for people from all walks of life, and visitors from Italy, Holland and Germany tried it." Activities begin at 6:30 am with participants meeting up at the port in Lira (A Coruña) to have breakfast with the fishermen before setting off on a boat trip that lasts until 2:00 pm. "We also want the younger generations to know more about seafaring culture," explains García

Allut. The school/workshop to which he is referring consists of a 'cultural' visit on board a fishing boat, simulated fishing, talks about the fishing in the old days, and a mock auction in the quayside market. "When the children grow up, this experience will help them appreciate the value of artisan fishing, which is the most sustainable approach of all." The foundation plans to set up a protected maritime fishing area in Lira and to create a transnational fishing network. Lonxanet (a company created by various Galician fraternities) has also developed an online service selling quality certified fish and seafood: [www.lonxanet.com](http://www.lonxanet.com)

Moncho Lavandeiro in his restaurant, holding two plates of mussels during the celebration of the Spider Crab festival (right) held each year in O Grove.





The Thrill  
of Spain's  
Homemade  
**Sauces**

Tradition in a

# JAR



By now echoes about the bliss of Spanish top-cuisine must have reached most every gourmet around the globe. You may or may not be among the lucky who have savored it, but you will be glad to know that supermarkets and gourmet stores worldwide are increasingly featuring a choice of what is probably Spain's most all-round treat: its stellar traditional sauces. Whether the versatile *sofrito*, pungent *alioli*, savory *romesco*, or green and red *mojo* from the Canary Islands, it is hard to think of a dish they wouldn't cheer up or a private or professional kitchen where they wouldn't be an asset. Backed by centuries of culinary savoir faire, they have remained largely unaltered yet have stayed in step with the times.




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TEXT  
ANKE VAN WIJCK

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Advanced technology is allowing producers in Spain to bottle sauces with fresh natural ingredients that can rival the best homemade preparations and to make them available to a much larger number of actual and potential consumers both in Spain and abroad. Sauces from a jar are no longer anathema to the concept of gastronomy. Not surprisingly—and even though modern logistics are poised to facilitate changes in this sense—many of these producers are still located precisely in those areas of Spain where the main ingredients originate and where the different sauces often have a long tradition. Masterly mastering the art of sauce making, several producers, in addition to their lines of traditional sauces, are widening their field. ArteOliva from Palma del Río (Córdoba) has launched a line of ecological sofrito, mayonnaise, and alioli that has been exceptionally well received in Northern Europe. Les Flors del Montseny (Barcelona)

presents a line of aromatic oils and vinaigrettes in pretty collectible bottles with handwritten labels, and Conserves Ferrer from Santpedor (Barcelona) markets a colorful spicy oil. Others, like Borges or Yemas de Santa Teresa (see insert) have called upon Spain's world-renowned chefs to bring in even more gastronomic excitement.

### It is all in the sauce

The Spanish word for sauce is *salsa* and in Spain the term is used as generically as its English counterpart. Different sauces get a proper name from which over time the word *salsa* may disappear. *Salsa romesco* is simply called *romesco*. It has however, as the food writer Janet Mendel rightly points out, nothing to do with the "chili-hot condiment used in Tex-Mex-style foods" as it is known in the United States (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 44). Especially in Spain's homemade cuisine, sauce has held and still holds a key position.

Particularly when domestic economy is scarce, a succulent vegetable sauce made with olive oil, garlic, herbs and spices, often given extra flavor and consistency with fried bread or some crushed nuts, will make the absence or paucity of meat or fish go wholly unnoticed. Spain's excellent climate and long growing seasons of course make the necessary ingredients available year-round. Now if this sounds simple enough, getting "sauce-savvy" in Spain is a task in and of its own.

If, on the one hand, there are those sauces that are intrinsic to a dish and part of the cooking process, special mention should be made of *tomate frito* (fried tomato) and *sofrito*, the indispensable *fond de cuisine* that no home in Spain could go without. Many staple dishes of Spanish cuisine wouldn't be the same without them and that certainly includes *paella*. The adjective *frito* comes from *freir* or fry, but in the context of sauce of course refers to slow frying. A good sofrito may take

Onions, tomatoes and garlic form the basis of the **sofrito**, a pillar of Spanish cooking.



quite some time. In fact the suffix *so-* means lightly or gently. Although often confused, the following distinction may apply: *Tomate frito* is a basic tomato sauce that in its simplest form consists of tomatoes, oil, salt and pepper and a hint of sugar to offset the tomatoes' acidity. At times, it also includes onions and garlic. It has a fresh, rather fruity taste and a bright red color. A *sofrito*, or *sofregit* in Catalan, generally contains onion with, at times, other vegetables like peppers or leeks or even little pieces of ham or *chorizo*, but not necessarily tomato. If it does—which is often, especially when made industrially—it may also be called *sofrito de tomate* and features a darker orange-red color. Both the color and the stronger flavor of *sofrito* have everything to do with the degree of caramelization of the onions. In fact, according to Colman Andrews, author of *Catalan Cuisine*, *sofregit* is mentioned in an early Catalan culinary treatise called *Libre de Sent*

*Sovi* that is dated around 1324, when in most of the world tomatoes were still a well-kept secret.

## More than a ton-load

Until not so long ago, these sauces would be (and often still are) homemade. Yet changing circumstances, like the massive incorporation of women into the workforce and the gradual disappearance of neighborhood produce stores, have led to changing attitudes and changing habits. "A good selection of sauces is key in today's home-cooking everywhere," says Jose Suárez Osa, whose company JR Suárez Monedero from Las Pedroñeras (Cuenca) features a quite eclectic line of sauces. At the same time, the quality of industrial products has improved enormously. In most cases they contain absolutely no additives and are made with all-natural ingredients.

No unnecessary acidity, no strange after-tastes. You really need to be a headstrong cook, to stick to your own. "With our natural *sofrito* we just make a cook's life easier. A good *sofrito* may take you two hours. It's the basis of a myriad of different recipes and each person can give it his or her personal touch," says Felipe Silvela of ArteOliva (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 62) in Palma del Rio (Córdoba) that markets its *sofrito*, made with extra virgin olive oil, in a handy 260 g / 9 oz Tetra Brik. A good example to illustrate the above distinction is Conserves Ferrer, which sells both a homemade-style *tomate frito* and *sofrito de tomate*. The former is simply made of oil, tomato, onion, garlic, salt and sugar, while the *sofrito* contains the same ingredients but also a small amount of crushed hazelnuts and almonds. Ybarra, a large olive oil and sauce producer from Dos Hermanas (Seville), makes its *tomate frito* with olive oil. "We do a lot of R+D to achieve full



## GOING WITH THE TIMES

While at times in the food and beverage sector bigger still seems better, in response to socio-demographic changes, new consumer habits, and a higher demand for variety, Spain's producers of traditional sauces are increasingly offering small-size packaging. The underlying concept is that you can savor a different sauce and therefore a wholly different gastronomic experience every day without feeling the need to finish up the open jar that is staring at you from the refrigerator. "Sauces should be succulent, healthy and made with top-quality ingredients, and they should be functional as well," says Gonzalo Ybarra. His firm presents four-packs with small 105 g / 3 1/2 oz jars containing four different sauces and, like Chovi, has launched small sachets. The latter also features a 70 g / 3 oz mini-mortar and Mojo Canarión offers an 80 g / 3 oz single-dose jar. But even standard retail sizes in general do not exceed 250 g, except perhaps for *sofrito* and *salsa de calçots*. ArteOliva, the company that pioneered olive oil in a Tetra-Brik and in 2002 made *The New York Times* with the headline "olive oil is finally

joining the carton generation," presents their full line of products in that same type of packaging. Most of their sauces come in small 125 g / 4 1/2 oz Tetra-Briks that serve two. Whatever the presentation, a natural product—even though it keeps well in the refrigerator—starts to lose some of its organoleptic qualities once open. "We prefer our customers to open up a fresh package each time," explains Felipe Sívola. And speaking of small, even for the food service channel, the largest size the company presents is a one-liter pack that is easy to store and to manipulate and, as the sauce is poured directly from the package, helps avoid cross-contamination.

homogeneity of our products, because with all-natural ingredients that is not an easy task," says Gonzalo Ybarra, who is the fourth generation to be in charge of the company. The fact that they are all-natural also makes these sauces more versatile. Simply warmed up, they can be used directly on pasta, rice, eggs, meat or fish. Indeed, the mentioned companies are just a few good examples. With a production of some 120,000 tons, these tomato-based sauces constitute almost half of Spain's total sauce production and the segment is still growing, thanks to the added value of natural ingredients, the increased use of olive oil and appealing packaging.

## Cold, warmer, warm

Most everywhere one could make quite a clear distinction between warm and cold sauces, but not in Spain. Some of its most exquisite sauces can be used both ways. And here it is even harder to see the forest through the trees, or rather the sauce through a multitude of amateur and professional cooks who benevolently claim to be in possession of the true recipe. (Local contests are often required for a final verdict, if only for one year.) But it is well worth trying. Even a short analysis, on the one hand, bears witness to a still-vigorous popular interest in all things culinary that is both the backbone and—as the recipes that follow

show—a continuing source of inspiration for Spain's new generation of wildly creative chefs. On the other hand, it shows the power of oral transmission from generation to generation. Many sauces have withstood the passage of time, all the while being enriched by the culinary habits of other cultures and the incorporation of new products. But for a proper analysis, we need to move on to Catalonia. Nestor Luján (1922-1995), one of Spain's foremost gastronomic scholars, claimed that Catalan cuisine is based on four sauces, namely the already mentioned sofregit, *sambaina* (a sort of *ratatouille* made of eggplant, squash and a tomato sofrito and called *pisto* in the rest of Spain), alioli (to be discussed later), and last but not least the *picada*, another invaluable fond de cuisine that is stirred into warm dishes and cold sauces.

"The basis of all these sauces is the traditional Catalan *picada*," explains Laia Pecanins from the export department at Conserves Ferrer. "They are really close cousins." The sauces she refers to are romesco, xató, and *salsa de calçots*—at times also called *salbitxada*—all of which they produce. *Picada*, which today is quite unique to Spain, may go back as far as Greco-Roman culture and has clearly been influenced by Arab cuisine, but has also had the distinct honor of being proclaimed by the American food-writer Paula Wolfert as "the cooking of the future" (Paula Wolfert's





*World of Food*). Undoubtedly, Wolfert bases her enthusiasm on the picada's versatility, intense flavor, digestibility, nutritional value and the fact that it is easy to make. *Picar* (both in Catalan and Spanish) means crush or chop. The picada then is a preparation that again has as many versions as there are cooks, but which comes down to a basic mixture of garlic, olive oil, roasted nuts (almonds, hazel- and/or pine-nuts) and often bread. The addition of other ingredients like a touch of vinegar or rancid wine, spices like pepper, *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain), or saffron and even chicken- or fish-liver depends on what its final destination will be. The picada, like most of the sauces mentioned, used to be and is still often processed with mortar and pestle, but—although purists would cringe—it admits an electric blender quite well.

### Three cousins

David Solé i Torné, chef-owner of Restaurant Barquet in Tarragona, who has written extensively about romesco, explains that the word reached us by way of the Mozarabs (Spanish Christian minority groups that in the 13th century lived in Spain among the occupying Muslims). Apparently it meant "mixing things together" and that, he says, is exactly what you do when you make a romesco. Even though the bases for romesco undoubtedly were laid earlier, the origin of the sauce as we know it today is tightly linked to the fishermen from the coastal city of Tarragona (some 100 km / 62 miles south of Barcelona) and started off as a sauce in which fish was cooked at high sea. All of its basic ingredients (garlic, dried red peppers—either the round chubby

*ñora* or the oblong romesco pepper—and nuts, stale bread, oil, and rancid wine) can be stored for a long period of time and together with the fish provide a perfectly healthy and nutritious meal. For this version of romesco, as prominent on menus as ever, first a picada is made with most or all of the above ingredients. Yet no two romescos are alike. The many variations may include roasted or even fresh tomatoes to make it less pungent, chili peppers (*bitxos*) to achieve exactly the opposite, *pimentón*, onions, parsley, vinegar or white and red wine. Garlic may or may not be roasted, peppers may or may not be fried or scalded and used whole or only their flesh, bread may be fried or soaked with some vinegar. Not to forget the little secret that each and every cook whips in. Have you started to see the forest, or rather the sauce yet? Solé describes twelve

**Xató** and **romesco** are two similar sauces, but each with its own personality. They can be paired with very different foods, from fish to vegetables.



different versions. The picada is then either simmered or sautéed in very little olive oil and finally fumet (fish broth) or water is added together with the fish, which can be a single type of any fish, or a *mélange*. Yet while the fish version is prevalent, in the countryside a romesco is also prepared with veal, rabbit, hare, pig's-feet, tripe, or lamb. As so often occurs, both the principle ingredient and the dish are called romesco. Not infrequently, romesco is cause for multitudinous celebrations and when that is the case you go and have a *romescada*.

When romesco is used as an accompaniment, the corresponding picada ingredients are slowly emulsified with olive oil, no broth is added, and it is served at room temperature with, for example, roasted vegetables, hard-boiled eggs, as a bread-spread or even on freshly

cooked pasta, much in the way you would do with Italian *pesto*. But mind you, you would still have to decide if you want your romesco coarse with crunchy pieces of nuts, or smooth. Not to worry, producers have made the decision for you and you can just pick the one you like... but then again, choosing among the many cute-looking jars that rival each other in quality and color may take some time. Conserves Ferrer, for example, offers a rather smooth emulsion, Olivera d'Atenea from Reus (Tarragona) an in-between and the firm Les Flors del Montseny from the beautiful village of Montseny that lies high up in an age-old beech forest of the same name, features a coarser version. Just to go easy on yourself, try all three!

Close cousins are xató and salsa de calçots. They are both cold emulsified sauces, but what makes them

different is another question. "There is no single truth," says Manuel Marqués, who has just launched a full line of traditional Spanish and other Mediterranean sauces, called Olivera d'Atenea. "Overall ingredients are the same as romesco, but composition and applications are different." According to Joan Sella, the author of a booklet on xató, the word derives from *eixatar* which means breaking down a solid and incorporating it into a liquid. The sauce is typical to an area south of Barcelona that comprises five municipalities (the famous beach-town of Sitges, Vendrell, Vilanova i la Geltru, Vilafranca del Penedes, and Sant Pere de Ribes). Needless to say that they all claim the best recipe both for the sauce and the dish of the same name. It consists of *escarola*, a sturdy type of spiky winter chicory torn into chunks by hand, and small pieces of salt tuna,

Alioli is a classic in the gastronomy of Catalonia and the Levant.



cod and/or anchovies all mixed together with the sauce. "It should be made about half an hour before consumption, except in Vendrell where they prefer to marinate it for several hours," explains Pura Adell from Sitges, who was elected *mestre xatónaire* (master of xató) at several tokens, not only at the yearly contest in her own village, but—even more telling—in neighboring Vendrell, Valentín Mongay, chef-owner of a small restaurant in Sitges appropriately named La Salseta (little sauce), looks forward to the month of January when a very special less bitter and more delicate escarola called *perruqueta* (wig) comes on the market for only a short period of time. He also explains that even though eaten throughout the winter, xató is typical of Carnival when the traditional *xatónadas* are held. That means that besides xató, you are served different types of omelets (with white beans, artichokes and white or black sausage). In an effort to combat the winter lull of visitors, the five joined forces and created the Ruta del Xató. In the meanwhile, other neighboring villages have allied. For a fixed price, all 120 joining restaurants serve xató as an appetizer and each offers a different regional entrée and dessert. Besides romescadas and xatónadas, there are also *calçotadas*—another winter feast (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 55). Young onions (*calçots*) are slowly

braised on charcoal and traditionally served in old-fashioned roof-tiles. At the table, you peel off the charred outer skin, pick the long onion up by its green leafy end, dip it into the *salsa de calçots* and just let it slide into your mouth. Although you're provided with a large bib, you'd best not wear your Sunday clothes. For that same reason, compared to *romesco* or *xató*, *salsa de calçots* is normally made thicker by adding extra bread or nuts. But don't let a lack of access to young onions deter you from buying this smooth and savory sauce. Just dip in a piece of crusty bread.

## Alioli is the name

And as Victor Chovi, the co-owner of Chovi, S.L. in Benifayó (Valencia) claims, "it really doesn't need an introduction". Of all the specialty sauces mentioned, alioli is undoubtedly the best known both in and outside Spain. Over fifty million tourists visit the country each year, with a considerable concentration in Catalonia and the Levant. And this is also the stretch along the Mediterranean coast where alioli (Catalan for garlic-and-oil) since time immemorial has been a gastronomic must. Today it is not only served to give that very characteristic touch of flavor to an infinite array of dishes that go from grilled fish to black rice, but it is also the most ubiquitous *amuse-bouche* you will get before dinner in almost every restaurant. In short, you can't get around it. On the other hand, Spain cannot claim the exclusivity to alioli. A basic paste of garlic and oil with at times bread and a touch of lemon or vinegar can be found throughout the Mediterranean, like *ailioli* in southern France or *agliolio* in Italy. But nowhere has it kept such a prominent place or has it been perfected to such an extent as on the Spanish Mediterranean coast. The original alioli is indeed an emulsion of garlic, salt, oil and an optional touch of lemon, but "adding egg-yolk smoothens the taste,"

explains Elvira Pla, the chef-owner of Casa Elvira in Benifayó. She always prepares both versions of her alioli with mortar and pestle and only to order, never in advance. Besides, the egg version is strictly reserved for the

regulars. "If I don't know the client, I will just serve Chovi's because that's the one I like best," she says matter-of-factly. Chovi's expertise in alioli has come a long way from the time when father and uncle made alioli for

the locals. Today their product is easy to recognize because it is smartly marketed in a plastic copy of the traditional yellow and green earthenware mortar. But you should look for them in the refrigerated

## THE NEW SIGNATURE PRODUCTS



Staying in tune with the times today in Spain means teaming up with its famous chefs. Grupo Borges, whose products are present in over one hundred countries worldwide, has lined up with Ferran Adrià, the much celebrated chef-owner of the El Bulli restaurant in Rosas (Girona). Two years ago they made their debut with a line of ten infused oils that go from roasted garlic or fresh basil to the more exotic vanilla, cinnamon or chili-cardamom. The collaboration has been so fructiferous that they have just launched a new line of all natural *vinagretas de cuchara* (vinaigrettes to be served with a spoon): black olives, anchovies and olives, romesco and mustard. They definitely carry Adrià's signature. They

look beautiful, have a very distinct texture and continue to surprise at every bite. "The idea behind the spoon," explains Nuria Balague (Marketing) "is that you don't want to shake it to mix oil and solids, but stir it once and then just spoon it over whatever you have on your plate." To that effect, Adrià has designed a special triangular spoon that serves the left- and right-handed alike. But R+D is rolling and new shared, as yet undisclosed, projects are in progress. Likewise, under its new direction, Yemas de Santa Teresa from Ávila, which for 145 years has manufactured the local famous egg-yolk sweets of the same name, decided that the time was ripe to diversify, but always building on its well-earned reputation for all-natural products. To that end, they entrusted Martín Berasategui, the

respected chef-owner of the eponymous restaurant in Lasarte (Basque Country), with the creation of a line of—not surprisingly—egg-based sauces. Simultaneously they engaged ArteOliva, with its proven expertise in emulsified sauces, to produce them. As a result, you can now find all-natural 100% extra virgin olive oil mayonnaise, alioli and cocktail sauces signed by Berasategui which come in small 125 ml Tetra Briks. "But," says Isabel Lopez, Director of Marketing, "as they are freshly made, they have only a nine-month shelf-life." That means that they are kept in the refrigerated section of your supermarket or gourmet store. The company's next step is the confection of refrigerated ready-made dishes in combination with these sauces.



section of your supermarket. "That's what really makes us different," says Chovi. "Thanks to technology, forty years after my father and uncle wanted to do it, we're now able to sell freshly made alioli to the larger public." So great has been their success that their distributor in Germany has launched a Chovi website: [www.alioli.de](http://www.alioli.de).

But for purists there is still a wide choice of the original alioli, emulsified to such perfection that you would barely notice the absence of egg if it weren't for that quintessential tang. Here again, the use of top-quality ingredients is key. "Our ingredients all have a name and a surname," says Marques. Like Les Flors del Montseny, Marques uses extra virgin olive oil from the gentle and fruity Arbequina and purple garlic from Las Pedroñeras, the sole garlic with PGI, Protected

Geographical Indication (see Glossary page 143), in Spain. It is in this village, where a gentle waft of garlic tickles your nostrils as soon as you enter, that JR Suárez Monedero produces both the original and a herb-added alioli, but also features small jars of all-natural sliced garlic and garlic paste under the name Don Ajo (Mister Garlic). Without having to clean, chop, or crush the garlic, they allow you to make your own alioli—in addition to serving many other culinary purposes.

### A colorful treasure from the Fortunate Islands

Tourism and the Mediterranean coast are to alioli what tourism and the Canary Islands are to mojo. This traditional sauce from the so-called

Fortunate Islands has attained considerable recognition abroad thanks to the massive affluence of tourists, especially from northern Europe. And like alioli, here green and red mojo is served on practically every restaurant table. Consumers in Germany, for example, are definitely becoming mojo-savvy. According to Pecanins they profess a clear predilection for *mojo verde* (green mojo) instead of *mojo colorado* (red and mild) or *picón* (red and spicy), even when buying the product at home. But if you think that there are only two types of mojo, you'll have to think again. "Every home has its own recipe, and there are slight differences from island to island," says Carmen Ramírez, the founder of Mojo Canarion from Ingenio (Gran Canarias). Just to give you an idea, she produces seven types. Among them is the rather rare and very mild

Besides their beautiful colors, the **mojos** from the Canary Islands are very tasty, boasting plenty of original flavors.



*mojo de zanahorias* (carrots) made with her grandmother's recipe and reportedly much favored by British visitors, and also a *mojo agridulce* (sweet-and-sour).

All mojos are served cold as an accompaniment to a wide variety of dishes, but one is prevalent: *papas arrugadas* or wrinkled potatoes, cooked in the skin, drained and left to dry on a low flame until a thin layer of salt forms and they become all wrinkled.

Mojo may also be used to marinate. It is again a basic emulsion of raw garlic, oil, vinegar, peppers (dried or fresh), in most cases a touch of cumin, and at times, bread. The level of piquancy of course depends on the type of pepper. Mojo picon has a combination of red Canary peppers and chili peppers, while *mojo colorado* only has the Canary peppers. Green mojo has often a

touch of black pepper and either cilantro, parsley or green peppers or a combination thereof. Ramón Bencomo of Argodey y Fortaleza in Tenerife explains that for green mojo, the vinegar may occasionally be left out. The company features a full line of mojos and other typical Canary Island products, but their main product is still *almogrote*, a mojo made with cured goat's cheese and often tomatoes, typical of the small island of La Gomera from where Bencomo's family originates. It is best on a simple piece of toasted country bread. With their fresh and light flavor and touch of acidity, mojo is the sauce par excellence for the warm climate of the Canary Islands. Fans are growing steadily, to such an extent that mainland manufacturers like JR Suárez or Conserves Ferrer have added mojo to their line of production.

## Mayo, anyone?

An article about Spanish sauces would not be complete without mentioning what is undoubtedly one of the world's most universal sauces. Although discussions—not void of patriotic feelings—over where and how mayonnaise came about are still ongoing, the Spanish origin of the name is now widely accepted. It is quite likely that a similar emulsion was made throughout the Mediterranean basin where olive oil was the prevalent source of fat and, as we have just seen, the use of an emulsified garlic-and-oil paste was very common. But legend has it that when the French in the 18th century temporarily took over the Isle of Menorca (Balearic Islands) from the British, it was the Duke of Richelieu, a known gastronome, who having made acquaintance with this simple

W E B S I T E S

**www.lassalsas.com**

Web page for the Spanish Association for Sauce and Seasoning Manufacturers and Customer Development. History, types, nutritional values and conservation methods for the different sauces. (English, Spanish)

**www.martinberasategui.com**

Web site for Martín Berasategui's restaurant, books and products, like the mayonnaise sauce for Yemas de Santa Teresa. (Basque, English, Spanish)

**Companies**

Web sites on the companies quoted in the article which manufacture traditional sauces. They include information about their history, products, recipes, etc.

**www.arteoliva.com**

(English, French, Spanish)

**www.borges.es/borges/indice.php**

(English, Spanish)

**www.c-ferrer.com**

(Catalan, English, German, Portuguese, Spanish)

**www.chovi.com**

(English, German, Spanish)

**www.florsmontseny.com**

(Catalan, English, Spanish)

**www.salsasjr.com**

(Spanish)

**www.ybarra.es**

(English and Spanish)

but delightful and versatile sauce in a tavern in Mahón (Menorca's capital), immediately recognized its gastronomic excellence and officially introduced it into France as sauce from Mahón or sauce *à la Mayonnaise* and that is the term that has remained with us since. Every year a contest is held in Mahón where both amateurs and professionals can show off their best mayonnaise and dishes based on it. Making a good mayonnaise, even though few cooks would confess to it, is not an easy task. Emulsifying an egg-yolk with a little salt and a thin stream of oil seems simple, but whoever has tried, knows that much can go wrong and that even the proverbial tricks won't work. Besides, homemade mayonnaise is starting to be a rarity. Warnings about food-borne illnesses are increasingly discouraging its confection at home or in professional kitchens. According to Juan López de Sagredo, President of the Spanish Association for Sauce and Seasoning Manufacturers and Customer Development Director for Unilever Bestfoods España—carrier of several

brands of mayonnaise—the legal prohibition to use non-pasteurized eggs in the restaurant and catering business has been a boon to the industry. Indeed, in an effort to rise to the occasion and meet consumer expectations, producers have started to diversify. Companies like Ybarra or ArteOliva now produce mayonnaise with parsley, with mustard or featuring 100% virgin olive oil, besides of course other mayonnaise-based sauces. What oil to use is a recurring issue as it reflects on both flavor and price. The general consensus is that sunflower oil—of which Spain is an important producer, according to López de Sagredo—imparts a rather neutral flavor and allows for a milder mayonnaise, thereby appealing to a larger segment of the population. Yet since the rise in popularity of olive oil, many producers add a small percentage of it and little by little 100% virgin olive oil mayonnaise is hitting the market, apparently with great success despite its higher price. So whichever of Spain's traditional sauces you buy, they are true exponents of the much-praised

Mediterranean food-ways. They not only are as versatile as your own imagination stretches and bring a world of flavors and a palette of colors to your table, they are also a guarantee for top-quality natural ingredients and clearly contribute to a balanced diet. Even the most purist gourmet no longer needs to find an excuse to spend some time rummaging through the sauce shelves, picking that very special jar, and then surrendering. Just one final warning, these sauces are addictive... Before you know it, you'll be hooked!

*Anke van Wijck is a sociologist and has a Master's degree in gastronomy from Boston University. Her articles have appeared in The Boston Globe.*

*See Recipes page 98, Exporters page 130 and Photo Credits page 144*





Over 15 years ago, when Toñi Vicente was starting out as a young chef in her homeland of Galicia, it was considered almost sacrilege to do anything new or different to the magnificent local produce—fish, shellfish, meat. She had grown up with the traditional Galician cuisine served at her parents' restaurant and was keen for it to form the basis for her creations, but her initial attempts were seen as unacceptably sophisticated. Over the years, however, her tenacity, hard work and talent eventually won support and Toñi Vicente is now considered Galicia's best cook. Her success today is based precisely on her skill at giving a new turn to the traditional ingredients and dishes. And her subtle, stylish and healthy recipes always offer a very feminine element of surprise.

# 10 RECIPES



**Recipes**

Toñi Vicente

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"I especially like the simplicity of this dish. The clam keeps in all its flavor and texture and blends perfectly with the characteristic taste of the coriander."

SERVES 4: 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb fine clams (*Venerupis decussata*); 1 bundle coriander; 8 cloves garlic; 50 g / 2 oz semolina (Japanese pearls); 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz extra virgin olive oil; 1 lemon

Stew the garlic cloves in the oil over low heat until cooked but still white. Set aside.

Cook the semolina in water with the lemon juice for 1/2 hour until transparent. Keep the cooking water. Chop the coriander very finely, leaving a few leaves whole.

Heat the garlic oil, add the clams and cook over medium heat until they open. Add the coriander and the garlic cloves and remove from the heat. Heat the pearls in their cooking water and add to the clams.

Serve the clams in their shells with a few coriander leaves.

**Preparation time:**

20 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

Viña Guitián Barrica, DO Valdeorras



## Fine clams with coriander, lemon, garlic confit and Japanese pearls

(Almejas finas con cilantro al limón, ajo confitado y perlas del Japón)

## Millefeuille of scallops, potato confit and low-temperature egg yolk (Mil hojas de vieiras, patata confitada y yema a baja temperatura)

*"This is a very smooth-textured dish in which the strong flavor of the truffle blends perfectly with the potato, scallop and egg."*

SERVES 4: 8 scallops; 4 eggs; 2 large potatoes; 50 g / 2 oz black truffle; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz extra virgin olive oil; 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz duck fat; chives

Wash the scallops and set aside.

Gently cook the whole potatoes in their skins in the duck fat for 90 minutes over low heat. Set aside.

Cook the eggs using a Roner thermostat or in steam for 90 minutes at 62°C / 144°F.

Brown the scallops on both sides in a skillet and leave to stand for 1 minute. Peel the potatoes and cut with a pasta-cutter to form disks 3 cm / 1.2" in diameter. Season with salt and pepper and dip in the grated truffle.

Shell the eggs and separate the yolks from the whites. Cut the yolk, which will be very creamy, in half. Use a fork to break up and lightly beat the whites which will be shaky. Season with salt and pepper and add truffle.

To form the millefeuille, layer the scallop, the egg yolk and the potato dipped in truffle, then repeat. Serve accompanied with the egg whites and the truffle.

### Preparation time:

100 minutes

### Recommended wine:

Veigadares, a barrel-aged Albariño, DO Rías Baixas





## Cocktail of warm spider crab, with saffron pistils and wild fruits and flowers

(Salpicón de centollo templado, pistilos de azafrán, frutas y flores silvestres)

*"This makes a change from the traditional shellfish cocktail, a dish I really like. While the traditional cocktail is served cold and comes mixed with the vinaigrette, in this version all the flavors are served separately and you mix them on the plate. The fruits and leaves give a fresh, sweet touch to contrast with the strength of the crab."*

**SERVES 4:** 1 spider crab weighing approx. 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb; 1 boiled egg; 1 fresh red pepper; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz pitted green olives; 16 saffron strands; 1 small onion; 50 ml / 4 tbsp cream; 2 sprigs parsley. **For the vinaigrette:** 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz extra virgin olive oil; 25 ml / 2 tbsp aged sherry vinegar; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz wild fruits and leaves (watercress, rocket, strawberries, cranberries, etc.) and flowers in season (petunias, begonias, etc.)

Cook the spider crab in plenty of boiling, salted water (60 g / 2 oz per liter / 4 1/2 cups / 1 3/4 pt water) for 12 minutes with a few bay leaves. Leave to cool and peel, removing all the shell. Keep the juices from inside the body. Hard-boil the egg and set aside.

Slice the onion and raw pepper in a fine julienne and mix with the crab flesh, chopped olives and parsley. Heat the saffron strands on a sheet of thin paper placed on the hot plate, to bring out their aroma. Place the vegetable and crab mixture in a rectangular mold. Push the cooked egg yolk through a chinois, followed by the white, and add. Mix the ingredients for the vinaigrette, season with salt and form an emulsion. Turn out the mold to one side of the plate. Make a base with the sauce from the shell which can be diluted with a little cream. Top the cocktail with the leaves and fruits. Dress with the vinaigrette and garnish with the saffron pistils.

### **Preparation time:**

70 minutes

### **Recommended wine:**

Terras Gauda, DO Rias Baixas

## Mussel, pomegranate and flaxseed salad

(Ensalada de mejillón, granada y lino negro)

*"This is a dish full of contrasts—the bitter salad leaves with the sweet crispiness of the pomegranate and the smoothness of the mussels. Not only is it a very pleasant salad to eat, it's also a very affordable one!"*

**SERVES 4:** 1 1/2 kg / 3 lb 5 oz mussels; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz white wine; thyme, bay leaf, parsley; various salad leaves (rocket, cos lettuce, endive, etc.); 1 pomegranate; Maldon salt; 50 g / 2 oz black flaxseed. **For the vinaigrette:** 200 ml / 3/4 cup / 7 fl oz walnut oil; 50 ml / 4 tbsp cooking water; 25 ml / 2 tbsp rice vinegar; 5 g / 1/6 oz mustard seeds

Wash the mussels well and steam with the wine, thyme and bay leaf until they open up. Drain, keeping the cooking water and remove from their shells. Prepare the vinaigrette by mixing all the ingredients well and dress all the salad leaves. Pick out the grains from the pomegranate and crush half of them in the blender. Add 1 tbsp walnut oil to the resulting juice.

Fry the flaxseeds in a skillet with a little extra virgin olive oil until crisp. Over the base of the plate, drizzle a little of the granada-flavored oil and the vinaigrette. Top with the salad leaves and the warm mussels. Sprinkle with pomegranate grains, flaxseeds and Maldon salt.

**Preparation time:**

50 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

White Terra do Gargalo, DO Monterrei



## Goose barnacles au gratin with cava zabaglione

(Gratinado de percebes con sabayón al cava)



*"Personally, I think it's best not to do anything fancy with goose barnacles. I prefer to serve them warm and this recipe gives an intense flavor without complicating things. The sweet touch of the zabaglione is very appealing."*

**SERVES 6:** 750 g / 1 lb 10 oz goose barnacles; 200 ml / 3/4 cups / 7 fl oz black truffle juice; salt; 7 bay leaves; 2 1/8 1/2 cups / 3 1/2 pt water; 1 sheet gelatin. **For the zabaglione:** 3 eggs; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz Chandón Brut Nature Cava; 25 g / 1 oz sugar; salt

Separate the yolks from the whites. Beat the yolks with the sugar and a pinch of salt then stir in the cava. Transfer to a bain-marie and whisk until the mixture doubles in volume. Set aside.

Heat the water with 120 g / 4 1/2 oz salt and a bay leaf. When it boils, add the goose barnacles and remove as soon as the water returns to the boil. Peel the barnacles, leaving only the flesh and keeping any juices they release.

Add the truffle juice to the barnacle juices then add the gelatin sheet, after first soaking it in water. Heat. Transfer the above mixture to serving glasses and add the barnacle flesh (retaining 6 barnacles). Add a very thin layer of zabaglione, sprinkle with the sugar and place under the grill. Decorate with a fresh bay leaf and 1 barnacle. Serve immediately, while still warm.

**Preparation time:**

30 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

Chandón Brut Nature Cava



## Baked potatoes with mild alioli

(Patatas al horno con  
alioli suave)

*"Baked potatoes with alioli are my favorite appetizer for Sundays before we sit down to lunch."*

SERVES 4: 4 potatoes; fresh herbs (thyme, basil, parsley); butter; pepper. **Mild alioli:** 2 cloves garlic; 1 egg yolk; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz extra virgin olive oil. **Traditional alioli:** 2 cloves garlic; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz extra virgin olive oil

Cut the potatoes into wafer-thin slices approximately 1/2 mm / 0.08" thick. No matter if the slices are irregular, as this will give a combination of crispy and soufflé bits. Make a few cuts in the potatoes with a knife. Chop the herbs and add to the potatoes with a few dice of butter and the freshly-ground pepper. Place in a medium/strong oven until crisp. Serve with the alioli.

**Mild alioli:**

Blanch the garlic cloves in boiling water for 2 minutes. Crush in the mortar and beat in the yolk. Gradually add the oil as if making a mayonnaise. This gives a much milder, creamier alioli than the traditional recipe.

**Traditional alioli:**

Crush the garlic cloves in the mortar and add the oil drop by drop until an emulsion forms then gradually trickle in the rest.

**Preparation time:**

30 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

A fresh, fruity Albariño such as Santiago Ruiz, DO Rías Baixas

## Romesco in a tomato capsule

(Romesco en cápsula de tomate)

*"I prefer to grill the ingredients for the romesco sauce rather than frying them to preserve a more natural flavor. This sauce makes an excellent partner for fish, meat or vegetables. Romesco peppers may not be easy to come by so they can be replaced with ñoras (a type of dried, small, round, pepper)."*

**SERVES 4:** 12 very ripe tomatoes; 200 ml / 3/4 cup / 7 fl oz extra virgin olive oil; 1 head garlic; thyme; 1 small chili pepper; 7 gelatin sheets; 1 thick slice bread; 7 romesco peppers or ñoras (both are types of dried pepper); 60 g / 2 oz roast hazelnuts; 2 tbsp vinegar; Maldon salt; 4 very thin slices bread

Blanch the tomatoes, then skin and seed. Blend in a kitchen robot, place in a colander inside a bowl and leave until they release all their vegetable water. Set aside the tomato pulp and the vegetable water separately. Place

1 tbsp oil in a pan with a clove of garlic, a little thyme and the chili pepper. Add the tomato pulp and cook until all the water has evaporated. Remove the garlic, thyme and chili pepper and add six sheets of gelatin, after first soaking in water. Cook for a few more minutes until the gelatin has dissolved. Check the salt and add a little sugar if the tomatoes are too sharp. Transfer the mixture to spherical molds and leave to cool, hollowing out a dip in the middle of each. Toast the unpeeled garlic on a hot plate with a thick slice of bread and the peppers. Allow to cook slowly, without burning. Crush the bread in a mortar together with the peeled garlic, peppers and hazelnuts, leaving 4 hazelnuts for the garnish. After forming a paste, add the

vinegar and oil, stirring all the time. Check the salt and leave to cool. Fill the tomato capsules with the romesco sauce. Set aside. Bring the vegetable water to the boil—at which point it will become completely white—and add the remaining sheet of gelatin. Transfer to four serving dishes and leave to cool. Toast the thin slices of bread.

### To serve:

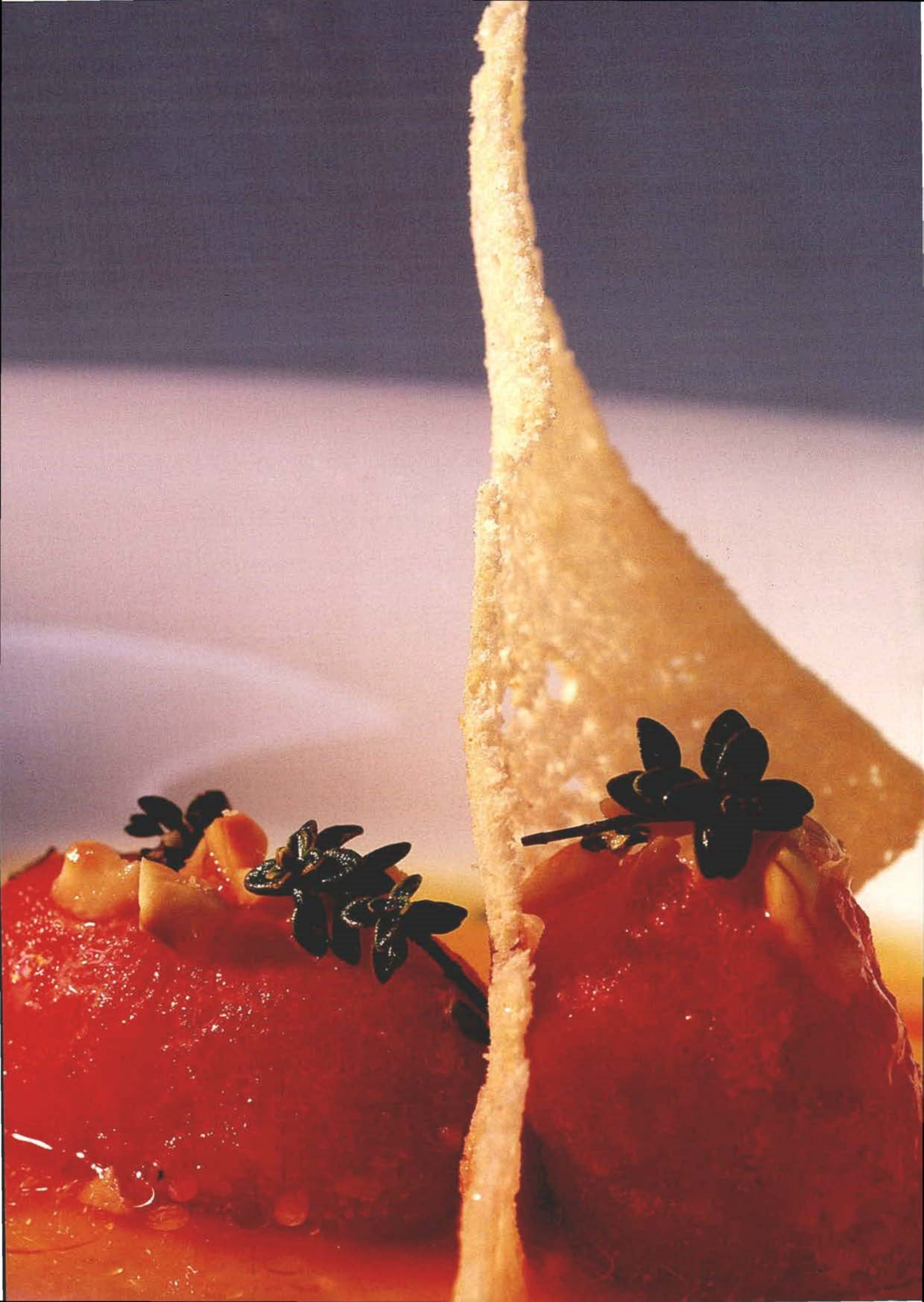
Place the filled tomato at the center of the dish of jellied vegetable water and top with chopped hazelnuts, a little Maldon salt and fresh thyme. Serve with the toast.

### Preparation time:

90 minutes

### Recommended wine:

Gran Viña Sol, DO Penedés



## Dublin Bay prawns with Canary mojo

(Cigalas con mojo canario)

*"In this recipe I recommend large prawns which have more flavor and a better texture to go with the Canary mojo sauce."*

SERVES 4: 16 large Dublin Bay prawns; 50 ml / 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil; salt. **For the mojo verde:** 6 cloves garlic; 2 g / a pinch of roast cumin seeds; 1 bundle coriander; 1/2 bundle parsley (optional); 300 ml / 1 1/4 cups extra virgin olive oil; 50 ml / 4 tbsp sherry vinegar; fresh green pepper

Crush the garlic with rock salt and cumin to make a paste. Add the coriander and parsley. Continue to crush well and gradually add the vinegar and oil. The texture should

be that of a light mayonnaise. Separate the heads from the tails of the prawns. Cut open lengthwise and grill lightly. Place some of the mojo verde on top of each prawn. Press the prawn heads and catch the juices in a bowl. Heat for a few minutes, add 1 tbsp oil and serve with the prawns.

**Preparation time:**  
50 minutes

**Recommended wine:**  
Malvasía Bodegas Mozaca, DO Lanzarote



# Hake filled with piquillo peppers and served with scallion coulis

(Merluza rellena con pimientos del piquillo y coulis de cebolleta)

*"The sauce of piquillo peppers gives color and brings out the flavor of the fish, which is served in the form of a crisp but very moist roll."*

Serves 6: 1 hake, weighing 2 kg / 4 1/2 lb;  
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz olive oil for frying;  
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, Arbequina variety;  
salt; pepper; 2 young scallions. **For the sauce:** 8 canned piquillo peppers; 50 ml / 4  
tbsp vegetable water; salt and pepper.

Wash the hake and cut into two loin fillets. Cut these into pieces 7 x 5 cm / 3 x 2" (2 per person). Season with salt and pepper.

Make a sauce by blending the piquillo peppers with the vegetable

water. Place in a pan and heat until all the vegetable water has evaporated. Transfer to cling film and roll up, forming a roll 2 cm / 0.8" in diameter. Refrigerate. Remove the film and fill the hake with the pepper sauce. Roll up the fish pieces and tie with string.

Heat the oil in a skillet over a medium heat. Dip the hake rolls in flour and fry to seal well. Then transfer to the oven at 180°C / 350°F to cook for 5 minutes. Leave to stand for 2 minutes then cut off the string. To prepare the *coulis*, separate the white and green parts of the scallions. Blanch both parts and cut

the white part into two. Dry the white part and sear on the hot plate. Blend the green part with a little of the water used for blanching and the Arbequina olive oil.

To serve, place a little of the scallion coulis on the base of the plate, then add the hake and the seared scallion.

**Preparation time:**

60 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

White Emilio Rojo, DO Ribeiro



## Steamed salmon with sofrito and lemon confit

(Salmón al vapor con sofrito y limón confitado)

*"A traditional sofrito is an ideal accompaniment for any fish. To go with salmon, I recommend frying the onion until soft, then just lightly frying the pepper and tomato so that the pepper remains crisp. The result is especially pleasant because of the different textures."*

SERVES 6: 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb salmon; 1 lemon; 50 g / 2 oz sugar; 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz water. **For the sofrito:** 2 onions; 2 green peppers; 3 tomatoes; 1 pinch *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain); 100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz white wine; 150 ml / 2/3 cup / 5 fl oz extra virgin olive oil

To make the sofrito sauce, cut the onion into dice measuring 1x1 cm / 0.4 x 0.4". Dice the peppers. Fry the onion until soft, add the pepper and cook together for 5 minutes. Blanch the tomato, skin and seed. Crush with a fork and add to the pan with the onion and pepper. Simmer together for 15 minutes. Add the pinch of *pimentón* and the wine. Cook for a few minutes then leave to stand.

To cook the lemon, peel and remove all the pith. Cut the skin into tiny dice and blanch three times. Add the sugar to the water and cook the lemon in it for one hour over a low heat.

Cut the salmon into 6 loin fillets, removing the skin and any bones. Steam for 4 minutes. Serve topped with 1/2 tsp lemon confit and the sofrito.

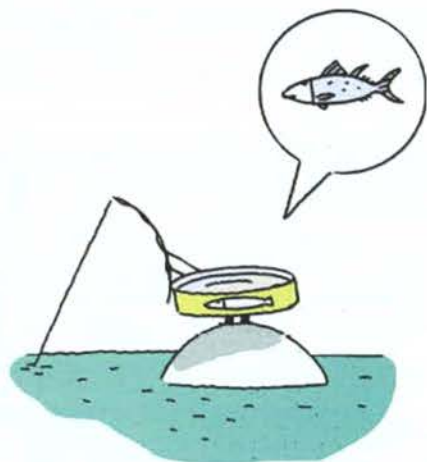
**Preparation time:**

30 minutes

**Recommended wine:**

A Torna dos Pasas, DO Ribeiro





# On the move

## Jealsa buys the leading Chilean canning business

Jealsa-Rianxeira, the leading Galician canning business, has purchased Pesquera Transantartic in Chile. This is the canning division of Robinson Crusoe, Chile's leading producer of canned fish and shellfish. Although its main business is rearing salmon and selling salmon products as well as canning sardines, clams, cockles and mussels, Robinson Crusoe has not shown any particular interest in producing tuna. Now, with the purchase of Pesquera Transantartic, Jealsa plans to develop this product line for the South American, Mexican and United States markets. So far, Jealsa has acquired an 80% stake in the company. The idea is to bring European experience to a brand that already has a sound position in South America.

Robinson Crusoe is the leader of the Chilean canning sector, with a 54% market share, and its products are sold in more than 2,000 Latin American supermarkets. Jealsa's operations in Latin America to date have been through its tuna processing plant in Guatemala, and a stake in another in Ecuador.

**Date of foundation:** 1974

**Activity:** Canned products

**Workforce:** 2,000

**Turnover 2004:** 309 million euros

**Web site:** www.jealsa.com

## Freixenet continues investing in France

Freixenet S.A. has bought up, through its French subsidiary Yvon Mau S.A., the Bordeaux winery Grands Crus Diffusion, which records annual sales of four million euros.

In addition to its interests in France, a market that is not a new one for this Barcelona company, Freixenet is planning on purchasing or building a winery in Argentina where, in the second half of 2003, it bought 317 hectares of vineyards in Tupungato (Mendoza). The foreign operations of this company based in Sant Sadurni d'Anoia also include Henri Abelé, another French champagne company, the California Freixenet Sonoma Caves Inc. and the Mexican Freixenet Mexico S.A.

In ninth position in the worldwide ranking of wine producers, the Freixenet group owns 70% of the Australian Wingara Wine Group and has sales offices in France, Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Japan, Argentina, Cuba, Switzerland, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Canada and Mexico.

During 2003-2004, Freixenet's sales of wine and cava rose from 197.8 to 202.4 million bottles, with sales in Asia increasing by 70%, especially in China and Japan, and a stronger presence in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

**Date of foundation:** 1928

**Activity:** Production of wine and cava

**Workforce:** 1,305

**Turnover 2004:** 511.4 million euros

**Web site:** www.freixenet.es

## Nutrexpa grows in China by 10%

The Nutrexpa food group obtained consolidated sales in 2003 of 312.6 million euros, an increase of 15% over 2002 (with 268 million euros), largely owing to 10% growth in its business in China. Another reason, according to Nutrexpa, has been consolidation of sales of the Nocilla brand and the recovery in powdered cocoa sales. Nutrexpa Internacional, which includes exports from Spain and subsidiaries in other countries, recorded sales of 38.67 million euros in 2003, against 16.7 million in 2002. Sales for Nutrexpa S.A.



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**TEXT**  
HENRIQUE MARIÑO

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**TRANSLATION**  
JENNY MCDONALD

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**ILLUSTRATIONS**  
JAVIER VÁZQUEZ

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(the group leader, which covers the cocoa and cocoa derivatives businesses, as well as honey, confectionery, spices, infusions and sweeteners) rose by 16% to 273 million euros, although sales by La Piara S.A., which produces *pâtés* and cooked sausages, fell by 7.1% in 2003 to 45.05 million euros.

In addition to its plants in Spain (Parets del Vallès, Montmeló, Riudarenes, Pamplona and Palencia), Nutrexpа has a soluble cocoa plant in Chile and two facilities in China.

**Date of foundation:** 1940

**Activity:** Cocoa, confectionery and meat products

**Workforce:** 1,270

**Turnover 2003:** 312.6 million euros

**Web site:** [www.nutrexpа.es](http://www.nutrexpа.es)



### SOS purchases Minerva oils in Italy

SOS Cuétara S.A. has bought up 100% of the Italian Minerva Oli S.p.a. for 52 million euros, plus an additional 11 million euros to be paid over a maximum period of three years. Minerva has a 5% share of the olive oil market and 5.4% of the extra virgin market, and is one of the four main olive oil packaging companies in Italy. Its brands are Sasso, Dante, Minerva, Lupi and Montolivo.

With turnover of 153.8 million euros in 2003 (of which 60% came from exports), Minerva's main markets are Austria, Germany, New Zealand and Australia. This operation makes SOS the world's largest olive oil group, with sales in the region of 1 billion euros in 2004 and a share of the US market in excess of 13%.

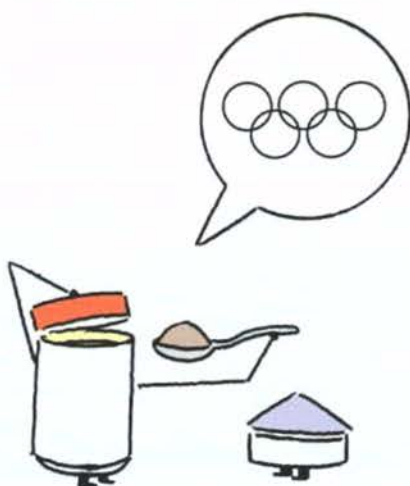
**Date of foundation:** 2001

**Activity:** Production of a wide range of food products (edible oils, cookies, rice, confectionery, vinegar, sauces)

**Workforce:** 7,058

**Estimated turnover 2004:** 1 billion euros

**Web site:** [www.gruposos.com](http://www.gruposos.com)



### Conservas Calvo enters Brazil

Calvo has bought an 80% stake of the Brazilian canning group Gomes da Costa, the leading company in South America, for 50 million dollars—50% from the North American fund, TCW, and 30% from local groups.

Within a period of three years, it will complete the operation (which should allow it to enter markets with high growth potential and low penetration of canned tuna) by acquiring the remaining 20% currently owned by local companies.

Gomes da Costa is the third of the plants owned in South America by Calvo, which employs over 1,800 people in its fleet and its plants in Venezuela and El Salvador, and Carballo and Esteiro in Galicia, and reported a net profit in 2003 of 5 million euros. Gomes da Costa, with a staff of over 1,100, hopes to sell 75 million euros this year.

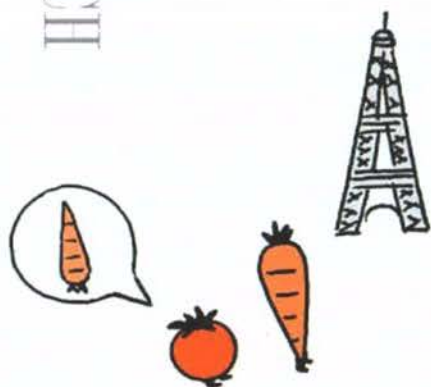
**Date of foundation:** 1947

**Activity:** Canned fish products

**Workforce:** 3,000

**Turnover 2003:** 257.7 million euros





### Bergas Gourmet sets up a distribution centre in France

The line of fresh vegetables for microwave cooking which was launched one year ago by Bergas Gourmet is now available in France where, together with Sudfruit run by Alain Barniol, the company has set up Bergas Gourmet France.

Based in Tayuela (Cáceres), the company will now be selling its ready-to-eat vegetables and meals, ranging from *paella* to spaghetti *a la bolognesa*, in France through the Sudfruits facilities in the central fruit market in Perpignan. "The French market offers great potential," says Cristina Costes, sales manager of Bergas Gourmet, which for several decades has been exporting white asparagus through AGB Hortícolas to countries such as Germany, France and Italy. "It was difficult to operate from Madrid so we carried out a few trials and saw it would be best to distribute our products from Perpignan."

The ready-made dishes can also be found in Spain under the Crono Chef brand in supermarkets, caterers' and restaurants. And the brand has opened its second restaurant in Madrid, after the one in Pozuelo de Alarcón. These offer only the company's own products.

**Date of foundation:** 2002

**Activity:** Production, processing and sale of ready-to-eat vegetables and dishes

**Workforce:** 800-1,000

**Turnover 2004:** 4.81 million euros

### Bodegas Concavins continues to grow in Japan

50,000 bottles sold in Japan last year reflect the success of Bodegas Concavins in a market described by Antonio Casablanco, who is responsible for the company's expansion, as "very competitive, in which consumers expect only the best".

Since the company entered Japan a few years ago in association with Japanese distributor Enoteca, it has achieved annual growth of 10%, and prospects for the future are looking good. "We've been working with the same distributor for five years and things have gone well. This is an interesting market in which people are drinking more and more wine but only of the best quality," says Casablanco, for whom the secret lies in establishing a good working relationship with the importer because "they're the ones that have to do the selling".

Bodegas Concavins, which is based in Tarragona, has 40 hectares (99 acres) of

vineyards and exports 90% of its products. The United Kingdom takes the most, followed by Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Japan. Other markets include the United States and Sweden.

"We want to be seen as a traditional, family-run winery with our own brand," says Casablanco. He stresses that the success achieved by Clos Montblanc Premium, the company's top-selling wine in Japan, is because it meets the high expectations of Japanese consumers. Bodegas Concavins, which sent a delegation to Japan to "introduce them to the people behind the wines", works with Enoteca, a Japanese-owned company which mostly sells to hotels and retail chains, although it also has twenty or so stores all over the country.

**Date of foundation:** 1988

**Activity:** Wine production

**Workforce:** 20

**Estimated turnover 2004:** Over 2 million euros

**Web site:** [www.bodegasconcavins.com](http://www.bodegasconcavins.com)



More news  
[www.spaingourmetour.com](http://www.spaingourmetour.com)

# COVAP

Text  
Roberto Arnaz

Translation  
Hawys Pritchard

Photos  
COVAP/ICEX



## Great things from little acorns



If ever a company needed an acronym, it is the Sociedad Cooperativa Andaluza Ganadera Valle de los Pedroches (Pedroches Valley Livestock Farmers' Cooperative Company of Andalusia). COVAP, as it is better known for obvious reasons, is a cooperative venture whose watchwords are quality and innovation. The time, planning and effort invested in COVAP have made it a yardstick for its sector. Its star product is acorn-fed Ibérico ham with which it aims to seduce discerning eaters all over the world.



The vast buildings that make up the industrial estate in Pozoblanco (Córdoba province, Andalusia) known locally as 'polígono COVAP' belie the modest beginnings of what has become the biggest livestock-farming cooperative in Spain. The very basic necessity of buying feed for his animals by the truck-load was what first gave Ricardo Delgado Vizcaíno, COVAP's founding president, the idea of getting the livestock farmers of his *comarca* (Los Pedroches, in northern Córdoba) to form a cooperative. That was in 1959.

Nearly fifty years on, this extraordinary livestock farmers' association is still in existence today, thanks in large part to the enduring determination of its Córdoba-born founder. A lawyer by training, he gave up his professional career to take charge of the land and livestock he inherited from his father. Though he died in 1994, his achievements were such that don Ricardo is still remembered with great affection by the people of Los Pedroches. "Even today, many still regard him as a visionary. He was ahead of his time, and had the foresight to realize that this kind of cooperative could develop and grow over the years," declares Arancha Salamnqués, COVAP's public relations director.

## A promising future

Back in the 1960s, COVAP started off with an animal feed factory and a small milk-processing plant. This has now grown into a vast milk and meat industry with over 10,000 associates. And COVAP has carried the *comarca* along with it, its non-stop activity generating healthy

profits for a wide range of complementary services (hauliers, hotels, restaurants, and so on). Its turnover has grown consistently year after year, reaching the impressive figure of 214 million euros in 2004, representing a net profit of over 6.5 million.

From the comfortable vantage point that these figures imply, COVAP's members view the future with optimism, as well they might. On average, its profits have increased by 10–12% per year. Furthermore, since going international just five years ago: "Exports are now worth over 5 million euros (2.5% of turnover) and our Ibérico products have already found a market in France (Galeries Lafayette), Germany (Metro supermarkets), Norway (San Leandro Tapas Bar restaurant in Oslo), and Japan. Our target for the next few years is to open up markets in the US, Italy and the UK".

In preparation for extending its ambit beyond Spain, COVAP spent nearly 30 million euros between 2000 and 2005 on a radical renovation and modernization of its meat processing plants. The main objective was to build a new abattoir designed to comply with the health and safety requirements specified by EU, US and Japanese legislation preparatory to exporting to those countries and their areas of influence. A delegation from the United States' FDA (Food and Drug Administration) is expected to visit this summer with a view to accrediting the premises for exports to North America. The new building is made up of two separate slaughtering lines, one for pigs and the other for sheep and calves: this means that they are also suitable for

ritual slaughtering, complying with the halal and kosher requirements of the Muslim and Jewish faiths, respectively. "With this new plant, in three years we'll be able to increase our throughput from 25,000 to 75,000 Ibérico pigs slaughtered and butchered per year, as well as 150,000 sheep and 14,000 calves. The abattoir's maximum processing capacity has increased to 200 pigs an hour: the daily average is 750, though some days we have processed as many as 1,200," explains Juan Antonio Ballesteros, the abattoir manager.

He describes the 'clean rooms' that are another of the plant's new features. "Cutting up and packing fresh meat is the riskiest stage of the process, in the sense that it is when the products are at the greatest risk of contamination. These little sterile rooms, whose cleanliness and atmospheric conditions are rigorously controlled, mean that we can guarantee that the food is safe." To cope with the increase in production, COVAP has had to expand and update its meat processing plants which, when complete, will have the capacity to produce up to 500,000 cured hams, shoulders and sausages. But although Ibérico pork is COVAP's star product, 47% of the cooperative's turnover comes from its dairy products industry, and in consequence it has had to build a new factory equipped with cutting-edge technology. Inaugurated in 2002, the new dairy products factory, which cost 30 million euros, was declared the most modern in Europe, to the extent that it functions as "a point of reference where packaging multinational Tetra



Pak tests its latest designs," Arancha Salamanqués informs us proudly. "Currently, the plant processes between 400,000 and 600,000 liters of milk a day": this is stored according to shelf-life and type in the so-called 'chaotic warehouse'—an impressive, completely automated store-room which at first sight looks more like something out of a futuristic movie than a milk factory. In a parallel development, COVAP bought a cheese-factory in the pastureland area of Castilseras (Ciudad Real, Castile-La Mancha), and in 1999 started to produce cheeses made from sheep's, cow's and goat's milk. This new line has gone down very well with consumers, and cheese exports began last January with a first order from the United States for a Manchego-style sheep's-milk cheese.

## Acorn power

But even so, it is Ibérico pork products (considered by many to be Spanish gastronomy's best-kept secret) that provide the basis of COVAP's exports. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that that the co-op members lavish attention on feeding and raising their livestock. The noble Ibérico pig (*Spain Gourmetour* N. 56), which some believe to be a descendant of the wild boar, is raised in complete liberty, ranging freely about Los Pedroches' vast *dehesa* (pastureland). This 1.5-million hectare (3.7-million acre) expanse, made up almost entirely (90%) of holm-oak woodland, constitutes a singular ecosystem, unique in the world: the Arabs called it Fash al-Ballut, which means Plain of Acorns. October to

January is the period of the year when acorns are in plentiful supply, and this is when the most important phase of Ibérico pig nurturing begins. Known as the *montanera*, this period is when the pigs feed on acorns (resulting in a weight gain of 1 kilo / 2.2 lbs a day). In combination with a physiological quirk known as the hypophysis defect, this causes the characteristic infiltration of fat (marbling) into their meat. This phase also establishes the different quality categories of Ibérico meat depending on what the pigs are fed. The regulations of the recently created Jamón Ibérico del Valle de los Pedroches Designation of Origin, of which COVAP is the founding member, differentiate between *bellota*—the top quality (made from pigs fed on acorns alone during the *montanera* period), *recebo* (made from pigs fed on fodder as well as acorns) and *cebo* (made from pigs fed mainly with prepared feed and fodder). It is astonishing to realize that the little fruit of the holm-oak is the key to all the flavor, juiciness and aroma that characterize one of Spain's finest gourmet products. Ibérico ham is not only irresistibly delicious, but it also has the added appeal of being cardiologically sound since the fat it contains is low in polyunsaturated fatty acids and high in oleic acid and natural antioxidants such as Vitamin E. COVAP has every reason to launch a campaign to get us all to eat more of it. The cooperative is continually evolving, and has opted firmly for a policy of excellence and food health and safety. Accordingly, it has integrated all the processes involved in production: breeding and raising the livestock, feeding with mixtures

from the cooperative's own factory, right through to the processing and final selling of its products under the COVAP label, whose label declares that it guarantees 'quality and health right from the start'.

On this issue, COVAP has let a breath of fresh air into the rather conservative cooperative system by introducing a new, quality-based payment system. The system "consists of establishing parameters of desirable quality according to which members are rewarded or penalized depending on the quality of the products that they deliver to the cooperative". Its benefits are twofold: members seek to improve the quality of their production and the cooperative is able to offer the consumer better products. COVAP has also created many added-value services which benefit its members, such as "financing, veterinary monitoring and advice by experts, to help them get the best out of their farms". COVAP could be said to cosset its members to ensure that they develop their farms sustainably and improve animal welfare, obtaining products of supreme quality in return.

*Roberto Arnaz, a regular contributor to on-line publications, is a trainee journalist at Spain Gourmetour.*

# The HERB man

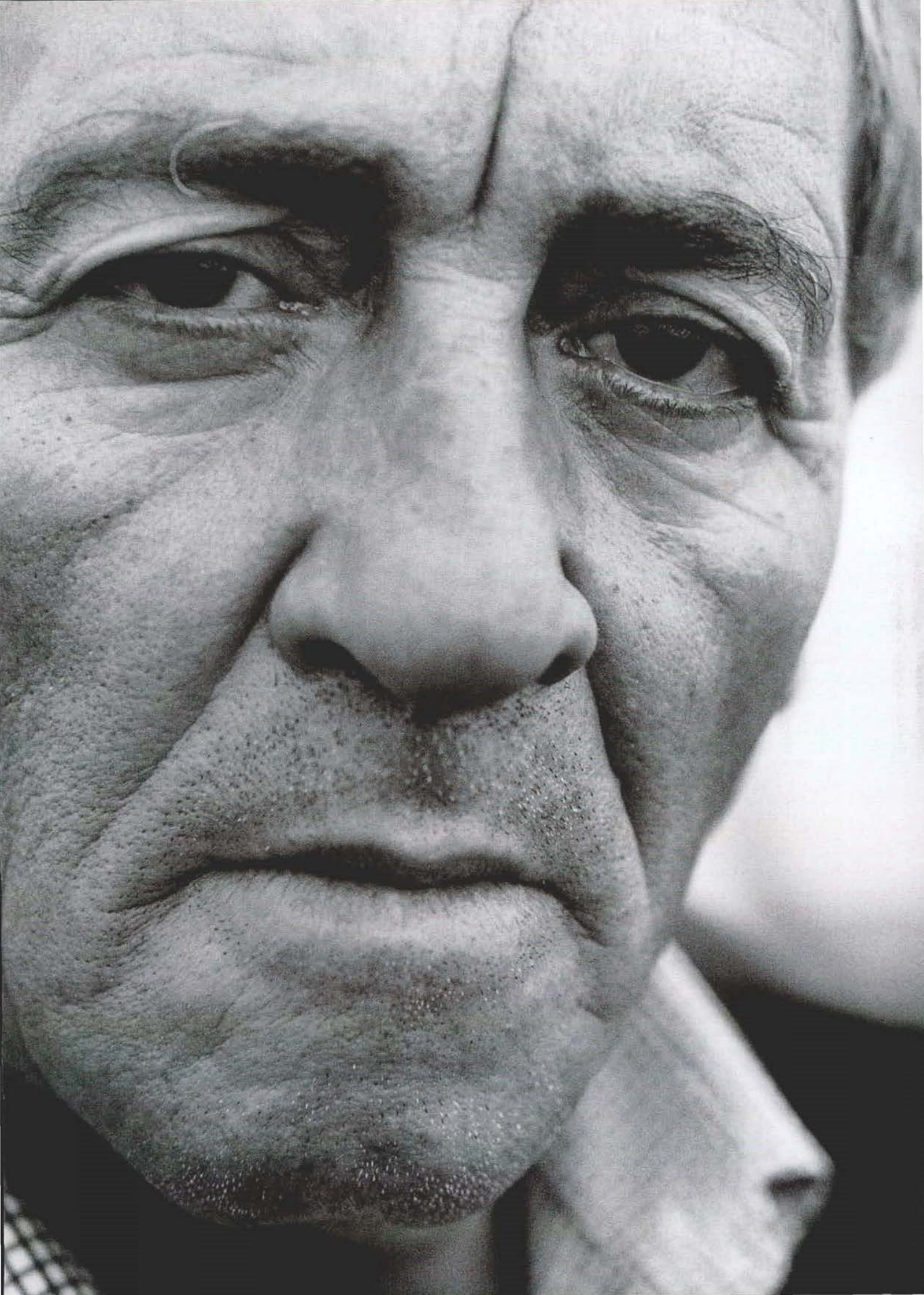
## Pedro Pérez Roque

Pedro Pérez Roque knows the *sierras* ringing his home town, Castalla, like the palm of his hand. His face, brown as polished walnut, bears witness to a life on the land. "I played in the woods, I farmed here and I've walked here all my life." A man of few words, marked by the local Valencian accent, he is slowly spoken. Now aged 63, a self-taught botanist who worked the land from the age of fourteen, Pedro has spent over fifty years working with the herbs that grow in the *sierras* behind the eastern Spanish Mediterranean coast. Since childhood he has been following a one-man path, mastering the tricky art of reproducing the wild herbs on home ground and working to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

**Text**  
Vicky Hayward

**Photos**  
Matías Costa/ICEX

Unsung Heroes



On a warm October Sunday morning Pedro is walking in the country with Vicent, an 86-year-old retired shepherd. Here, in Alicante province, an hour's drive inland from the eastern Spanish coast, pine-capped sierras cut a jagged horizon. Below them, on the lower slopes, scorched scrub clings to rocky chalky soil.

Vicent, an old friend of Pedro's, points to a spindly, tiny, yellow-flowered plant in the scrub. "*Té de roca*,"—rock tea—he says. A few minutes later he points again: "*Corazón de roca*,"—rock heart—a small-scale cousin of St John's Wort. Pedro and Vicent keep walking, heads bowed, scanning the ground, identifying one plant after another—white-flowered thyme, rue, wild lavender, bitter wild camomile and baby-leafed white pennyroyal ... Castalla, their home town, is just a stone's throw away. Its ruined Muslim castle sits on top of a stubby mound looking out over the wedge-shaped valley. On the lower slopes, olive groves curve up from the valley floor. Above, snow lies on the high pine-capped peaks in winter and scorching sun brings the risk of forest fires in summer. Pedro's lifetime love of herbs was born in the high mountains, where he spent childhood summers with his aunt Tia Ramona, whose family lived in a farmstead in a clearing in the woods. "At first I was fascinated by the herbs' aromas and perfumes," he says. "I would track them down just to smell them."

## The old herb culture

Then, when Pedro was eleven, he and his family moved out from Castalla to a farm on the valley floor where his father sharecropped cereals, almonds, vines and olives. He had two sisters, but no friends of his age close to hand. "I spent most of my time playing with Juanet and Kiko la Tiliana, two older neighbors. They grew their own vegetables and gathered herbs, which they shared with my parents." Three years later Pedro left school to help his father. The work was hard: they plowed the fields with horses, trod the grapes by foot and threshed the barley and wheat by hand.

Meanwhile, Juanet and Kiko taught Pedro to identify the herbs they gathered: white, pink and purple flowering thymes, *pebrella* or *piperella* thyme—a species found only here, in eastern Spain—oregano, savory, rosemary, fennel, mint, rock tea, rock heart, sideritis and wild lavender. The herbs were picked in spring or summer and dried to make herb teas, alcohols, steam baths, lotions and *herbero*, an *eau-de-vie* flavored with two dozen or more macerated herbs. At that time, in the mid 1950s—when there was no welfare service and doctors or antibiotics were an expensive affair—the herbal remedies provided everyday medicine.

"My mother would prepare big bowls of steaming water infused

with herbs," explains Pedro. "We'd breathe in the steam, our heads under towels, before going to bed." A household affair, the remedies were passed around by word-of-mouth. "On Sunday afternoons, families would gather at different farmsteads. Up in the mountains, it was a long walk to the neighbors. Down in the valley, we lived closer together. The children would play outside while the adults sat on the porch playing cards or having a glass of sweet wine and chatting about family news, remedies, recipes and the olive or grape harvest." Pedro also began exploring the valley on foot. "My idea was to reproduce the herbs. I would ask shepherds and foresters where the herbs grew, I'd collect the seeds and take them home to plant on a small patch of my father's land. I was very ignorant,"—he smiles and covers his eyes with his hands, as if with a blindfold—"but you learn by trial and error."

Later he saved up for a motorbike and began to travel further afield to areas like the Sierra de Mariola, famed for its aromatic herbs.

## Modern times

But it was to be another thirty years before Pedro finally dedicated himself full-time to his herbs. Meanwhile he married and continued working the land. He and his wife, Maruja, had three children. Once they were growing up, she set up her own small clothes shop in town.



"There was a moment when I realized that perhaps my grandchildren would never know the herb culture, and that I needed to spend more time working on it. Coastal wildflowers were disappearing, destroyed by the building boom, and Sunday walkers were tearing up the herbs in the sierras by their roots. And the weather was changing—the winter snows were disappearing."

It was then, just as life in the valley was changing, that Pedro took his most decisive step: he rented a field from his father and began planting trials with thirty local herb species he had collected over the years. At the same time, he began to travel further afield, south to Almería and north to the Valencian border with Catalonia, down to the coast and up to the highest mountains, collecting more different species.

And he homed in once again on the herbs' aromas. He smiles wryly. "Herbs are like cars—one plant can be a Rolls Royce and another can be a baby Seat. I noticed the same herb produced specimens with very different levels of aroma in the same

conditions. At that point I began to select the most aromatic ones. The heightened aromas have another significance, you see—they indicate the concentration of the herb oil's active components."

Lluís Serra, a Valencian government botanist and supporter of Pedro's work, explains. "Thymol, for example, the key active component in thyme's oils, can range from 14-56% of its contents. Here, in southeastern Spain, it hits the top of the range. It's a result of the plants' struggle to survive in an extreme climate. At the same time this is a biodiversity hotspot, especially where the high wooded mountains meet the desertified lowlands. So Pedro's work is very valuable."

In the early 1990s Pedro took another step forward, setting up a small cooperative to grow, dry and sell herbs and plowed the profits back into research. Today he grows his semi-domesticated wild herbs on 30 hectares (74 acres) of scattered fields, drying and selling them on to perfume and liqueur makers, herbalists and spice wholesalers. Meanwhile he adds to his seedbank

all the time. Stored in old fridges, it includes over 800 different herb species and sub-species.

## More haste, less speed

Progress in research has been slower. "The basic analysis of some fifteen substances in just one plant costs me around 700 euros. It's hard to cover that cost as a small independent grower."

But Pedro, who is well aware that pharmaceutical companies are now keen to secure a stake in herbal medicine, has also chosen the slow route. "We've had offers to buy the project, but I've said no. The terms weren't right. I believe the herbs' potential should be developed here. I'd like to see new research build on the old knowledge and be used to benefit everyone, with the profits shared in the local community."

Today, though, he is aware that the knowledge of older country people, such as Vicent and Pedro's cousin, Carmen, who still collect herbs, needs to be recorded. In Castalla, on

summer evenings, during the *frescas*—leisurely conversations seated outside in the cool of the day—they still discuss remedies: wild camomile for stomach aches and eye infections, rosemary and thyme for bronchial problems, oregano for digestion, mallow for chest infections, blood-herb (*Lithidora fruticosa*) for blood pressure, sideritis as an anti-inflammatory, sage as a blood cleanser (or to treat diabetes), and linden-flowers and leaves as a tranquilizer.

Among younger people, it is cooking with herbs which goes from strength to strength. Pedro's wife, Maruja, for example, keeps thyme, pebrella, rosemary, bay leaf, lemon verbena, sideritis, sage and *espígol* (true lavender) at home for cooking and infusions. Castalla's restaurants have also won a place on the gastronomic map for their herby *gazpachos*. Not to be confused with Andalusian gazpacho soup, this rich game stew, made here with snails, wild mushrooms and a generous sprinkling of pebrella, is ladled onto a round *torta*, or puffy flatbread, and placed in the center of the table for everyone to help themselves. Pedro's brother-in-law, Guillermo, owns Casa Paqui, one of the town's gazpachos restaurants. We go for a chat while work on Sunday lunch gets underway. Everyone—including Guillermo's 90-year-old father, another herb-collector and walker—talks away in Valencian. Dishes on the menu here include roast lamb with sage, mountain *paella* with rosemary, a sweet celery sorbet and a digestive herb tea made with fresh sage, thyme and mint. Like many of the restaurants, they rely on Pedro's

highly aromatic plants, which they grow in their own garden. "The interest is growing all the time," says Guillermo. At nearby Cocentaina, for example, Michelin-starred La Escaleta offers herb-inspired modern cuisine such as eggplant cooked in lavender milk. The gourmet connection has also stimulated the first public initiative to foster the herb culture—a pioneering two-year plan to implant sustainable management of mountain herbs' habitats and local production of homemade herbal teas and liqueurs. "One of our main aims is to preserve the original character of the liqueurs and teas," explains Lluís Serra, who is setting up the project.

## Sticking to the path

Meanwhile, Pedro continues steadily along his chosen one-man path. He works a long day, which starts by eight in the morning, providing plants to gardeners, nursery-owners, town-halls and botanists, as well as dried herbs to wholesalers. But he is always working on new ideas. Last year he began to lay out a botanical garden. Six subspecies of wild thyme are planted in one rocky mound. In another, gloriously sweet-smelling lavandin, spike and true lavender blossom together. The garden is intended not only to conserve species—"it is also designed to provoke new experimental hybrids". As Pedro talks about his work he has a graceful trick of making it sound simple. He focuses laconically on details—the date for harvesting thyme, his fading sense of smell, the plants his grandchildren like, the perfume of a local lavender—and he

glides over his own achievements. I insist, asking him how he has plotted the complex shifting direction of his work.

He laughs, dodges the question and quotes poet Antonio Machado. "*Al andar, se hace el camino.*" But that begs another question. Why choose such a long, winding path? He says nothing, except that he has never regretted it. Perhaps it is the power of childhood memory—the value of the herbs in a barely medicalized society—which has kept him so doggedly on track.

This year Pedro has taken another decisive step—he has started organic growing in fields grouped in an isolated upland valley where he hopes to build a small research laboratory. As we drive up to see the windblown fields, the truck bumping around on the hilly track, I ask Pedro when he hopes this new project will come to fruition. Again, he laughs. "Oh, in a thousand years or so." At the time I thought it was a throwaway line. Now, I have a hunch he has done his math.

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

Note: Sections of this article first appeared in a paper for the Oxford Symposium, September 2004

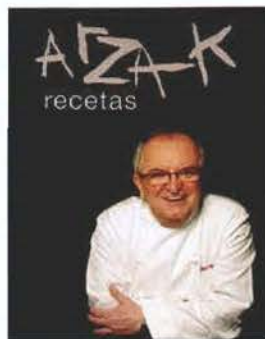
**Text**  
Gabriela Llamas

**Translation**  
Synonyme.net



## Chefs' Cooking

**Clorofilia** (Chlorophyll) It might have been just a modest herbarium, conceived to recover lost botanical traditions, but it is much more than that. A collection of 50 recipes based on 50 wild plants, each including a short narrative. Andoni Luis Aduriz, winner of the Premio Nacional de Gastronomía 2002 (National Gastronomy Prize), grows over 200 varieties of plants, flowers and wild herbs in the garden at his restaurant Mugaritz, located near San Sebastian, (Spain Gourmetour N° 63). The texts describing the plants, actually short essays, were written by biochemist Uni Ugalde and authors Hasier Etxebarria and Miguel Sánchez-Ostiz. Andoni, one of the current stars of Spanish cuisine, seeks simplicity through technique and scientifically precise cooking times, all with the help of nature. In his own words "...magic, excitement, perfection consists of integrating technique in a dish to such an extent that the technique itself goes unnoticed...". But this is no text for vegetarians: 'Sautéed scallops in a blend of leek chlorophyll and oil of St. John's Wort flowers. Tender, pressed leeks', 'Beef cooked at 70° and carved immediately. Tears of roasted vegetables. Blend of peppers from around the world and bay leaf' are just a few of the recipes included. The inspiration behind this second volume of the Cuadernos Mugaritz de Gastronomía collection, and



author of its prologue, is none other than Michel Bras. (Restaurante Mugaritz; [www.mugaritz.com](http://www.mugaritz.com))

**Arzak, Recetas** (Arzak, Recipes) Lessons from one of the world's greatest chefs, especially conceived for amateurs with a certain *savoir faire* in the kitchen. Simple, versatile formulae adding original touches in presentation and ingredients. Each recipe includes a section in which the author offers useful hints and another called 'If you can't find', with alternative ingredients to substitute those he proposes. Anchovies marinated in cider with hot pepper vinaigrette and coconut, *Entrecôte* with flowers of salt, yellow pepper sauce and vanilla-scented potatoes, or Whole-wheat cake with raspberries and sweet pesto with basil and pine nuts; their apparent simplicity may be misleading. Hints vary from keeping pea pods for making broth to marinating previously scalded anchovies, to a warning about the toxicity of uncooked morels.... Juan Mari Arzak was awarded the National Gastronomy Prize in 1985 and received his third Michelin star in 1989. (Bainet Media, S.A.; [bainet@bainet.es](mailto:bainet@bainet.es))

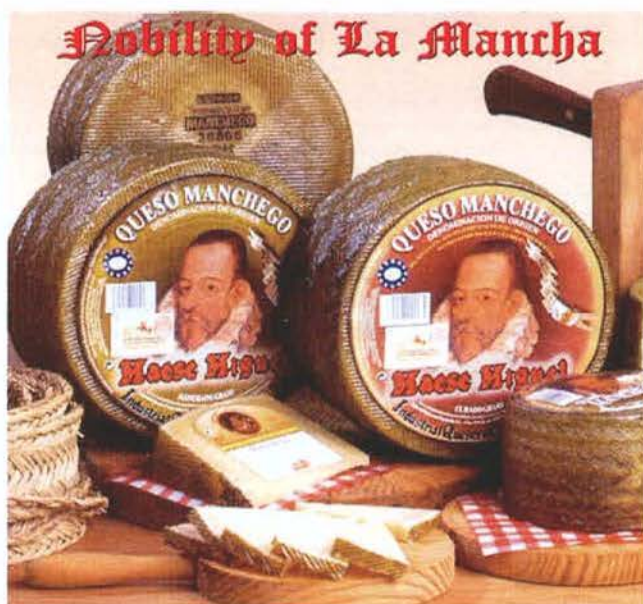
**Cocinar lo menos posible** (Cooking As Little As Possible) Nearly a hundred frequently used ingredients in alphabetical order. The idea is to play with them, develop their culinary potential to the maximum in making light, quick, flavorful dishes... in less than an hour! Reading the prologue and following the



instructions are essential: take a look at what there is in the fridge—for example, a peach. Open the book to that page: juice, *gazpacho* (cold vegetable soup), dessert, garnish, salad and a myriad of ideas for preparing your peach. The author endeavors to help you to "...develop your imagination, ...flexibility, ...self-confidence ...and to cook as little as possible..., but to cook." Xavier Gutiérrez is Juan Mari Arzak's closest associate and head of his culinary laboratory. To his carefully-worked technique he adds a healthy dose of imagination and good taste. (Editorial Everest, S.A.; [www.everest.es](http://www.everest.es))

**En el comedor de Paulino, medio siglo de recetas** (At Paulino's, A Half Century of Recipes) It was once known as the "poor man's Zalacain"—referring to the first Michelin 3-star in Spain. Recipes from a restaurant that has always blended good sense and tradition with modern touches thanks to the constant, dedicated work of its chefs. A veritable institution in Madrid at unbeatable prices. (La Fábrica Editorial; [www.lafabricaeditorial.com](http://www.lafabricaeditorial.com))

**Pinocho, La vida y la cocina en la Boquería de Barcelona** (Pinocho, the Life and Cuisine of Barcelona's Boquería Market) Prologue by Ferran Adrià, who is a great admirer of Pinocho's owner, Juanito, both as a man and gastronome. Recipes and anecdotes born in an inimitable market bar with a long tradition of quality and warmth that have brought it to nearly legendary fame. A small bar, scarcely a dozen



## Nobility of La Mancha

### Quesos



## Rocinante

**I. Quesera Cuquerella, S.L.**

Ctra. de Toledo, s/n  
13420 Malagón (Ciudad Real) ESPAÑA  
Tel.: (34) 926 266 410 Fax: (34) 926 266 413  
www.rocinante.es  
rocinante@manchanet.es



Matured in Virgin Olive Oil

stools, and delectable dishes in the midst of one of the most captivating markets in the world.

(Viena Ediciones;  
www.vienaeditorial.com)

### Cocina en miniatura

(Cooking in Miniature)

Ferran Adrià, Luis Andoni Aduriz, Juan Mari Arzak, Martín Berasategui, Carmen Ruscalleda, Pepe Rodríguez Rey and other brilliant Spanish chefs offer us their enormously original concepts of *tapas*, blending the cultural tradition of 'tapeo' with the most modern trends in contemporary cuisine. A sumptuous volume with 80 illustrated recipes, sponsored by Cervezas Mahou, one of the most popular brands of beer in Spain.

(Tarje Rest, S.L.;  
restaureline.es)

### Mis recetas favoritas, 125 recetas de la cocina regional

(My Favorite Recipes; 125 Regional Dishes) The latest by Karlos Arguiñano, the most popular television chef in Spain and advocate of traditional Spanish cuisine, to which this book is dedicated.

(Bainet Media, S.A.;  
bainet@bainet.es)

### Cuadernos del Fogón II,

relatos culinarios (Notes

from the Kitchen Range II, Culinary Tales) Short stories presented at the 2nd International Fogón Saint Julien 2003 Prize; the concept behind it is to recover the culinary history of Latin America and Spain through the revival of old recipes and traditions.

(Editorial Zendrera Zariquey,  
S.A.; www.editorialzendrera.com)

## Wine

### Platos y vinos, el difícil arte

del maridaje (Dishes and

Wines; the Difficult Art of

Pairing) Custodio Zamarra,

sommelier at Zalacain, one of

the most renowned

professionals in his field in

Spain (Spain Gourmetour N°

62) and expert in the art of

pairing, offers his

recommendations for the

selection of recipes created by

M<sup>a</sup> Jesús Gil de Antuñano,

another of the classic figures

in the world of Spanish

gastronomy. Each recipe is paired with wines from three price categories, proving that quality is not synonymous with expensive.

(Alianza Editorial, S.A.;  
www.alianzaeditorial.es)

### Guía del turismo del vino

en España (Guide to Wine

Tourism in Spain) Ignacio

Medina, veteran food

journalist, presents the first

wine tourism guide published

in Spain, a volume long-

awaited by wine lovers. A

guide to be read by both

experts and amateurs, it is

organized by Autonomous

Communities, Designations

of Origin, and includes

descriptions of routes,

wineries, towns, hotels and

accommodations, restaurants,

shops and taverns of

particular interest.

(Anaya Touring Club;

www.anayatouring.com)

### 12+1 The Friar's Dozen:

Thirteen Vintages of a

Priorat Wine, Clos de l'Obac

Carles Pastrana, journalist and

founder of Bodegas Costers de

Siurana, uses a vertical tasting

of 13 vintages (a friar's dozen

is 13) to tell us about Priorato,

its time-honored winemaking

traditions that originated with

the monastic orders, and his

view of wine as a work of art.

Photographs by Pep Escoda

merited the Golden Lux

National Photography Award

for 2004.

(Art&Pixel Edicions;

www.las12cosechasedelfratre.com)

Annual edition of the

foremost wine guides,

including the following new

innovations:

**Guía Peñín de los vinos de**

**España 2005** (2005 Peñín

Guide to Spanish Wines) The

most comprehensive wine

guide in Spain now marks its

fifteenth year in publication.

First map of Vinos de la

Tierra, and a chapter devoted

to the Spanish winery a

hundred years ago and today,

wine on the Web.

(Peñín Ediciones;

www.elvino.com)

**Guía de vinos Gourmets**

**2005 XX aniversario**

(Gourmet Wine Guide 2005,

20th Anniversary) The

doyenne of wine guides in

Spain broadens its content

with a commemorative copy

of its 20 editions. Historical milestones from 1983 to 2004, a list of centuries-old family wineries and prizes awarded from 1989-2005, updated maps of the Spanish Designations of Origin and new members on the wine-tasting committee.

(Grupo Gourmets;  
[www.gourmets.net](http://www.gourmets.net))

**Guía Proensa de los mejores vinos de España 2005** (Proensa Guide to the Best Spanish Wines 2005) Thirty-five new wineries and nearly a hundred more wines in the newest and most personal guide to Spanish wines.

(Andrés Proensa, s.l.;  
[proensa@proensa.com](mailto:proensa@proensa.com))

**Vinos de España, Guía del Buen Gourmet, Castilla y León** (The Wines of Spain: the Good Gourmet Guide, Castile-León) This book completes the Vinos de España collection written and organized by Lluís Manel Barba, enologist and teacher of sommeliers. He takes us not only to the currently booming areas, but also to the less well-known corners of the world of Spanish wine around the Ribera del Duero. Wines and varieties with enormous personality—like their history and geography—aged in Rueda, Cigales, Toro and El Bierzo.

(Ediciones Robinbook;  
[www.robinbook.com](http://www.robinbook.com))

**El Libro de los Licores de España. Historia, origen, elaboración y características de los licores tradicionales** (The Book of Spanish Liqueurs: History, Origin, Production and Characteristics of Traditional Liqueurs) David Zurdo and Ángel Gutiérrez, both technical engineers, offer an homage to the long Spanish liqueur-making tradition that grew up around the abbeys and monasteries throughout the centuries. The volume includes recipes for liqueurs, dishes and cocktails.

(Ediciones Robinbook;  
[www.robinbook.com](http://www.robinbook.com))

**Vinos de España** (Wines of Spain) A fun little flipbook with images of vines and wine.

(Mundo Flip;  
[www.mundoflip.com](http://www.mundoflip.com))

## Products

**Mercacei de los Aceites de Oliva Virgen Extra de España** (Mercacei Guide to Extra Virgin Spanish Olive Oils) This volume encompasses the over one thousand brands of extra virgin olive oil existing today in Spain. In addition to complete tasting notes and a photograph of each oil, it includes articles (well-documented and educational) by prestigious collaborators on a variety of topics—the cultivation, production and culture of olive oil. Olive oil routes through different provinces and regions with museums, oil presses, thousand-year-old olive trees, popular customs and festivals, as well as relevant shops and restaurants. A must-read to learn about the world of extra virgin olive oil in Spain.

(Edimarket Editores;  
[www.mercacei.com](http://www.mercacei.com))

**El melocotón de Calanda** (The Calanda Peach) History and cultivation of this fruit that has had its own DO since 1999. Every year in June and July, each of these millions of young peaches are hand covered with paper bags to keep out pests. With a section devoted to the myriad of interesting spots in the area around Calanda and illustrated recipes from local chefs.

(Prensa Diaria Aragonesa;  
[www.melocotondecalandra.com](http://www.melocotondecalandra.com);  
[www.comarcamatarranya.com](http://www.comarcamatarranya.com))

**Cocinar con latas** (Cooking from Tins) The Spanish preserve industry is outstanding both for its abundance and its fine quality. Fish and seafood, vegetables and fruit, poultry, game, meat and sauces... with the help of these recipes by Cris Lincoln we will be able to put together entire menus.

(Santillana Ediciones Generales;  
[www.elpaisagular.es](http://www.elpaisagular.es))

**Los frutos del mar** (Fruits of the Sea) and **Jamón ibérico** (Ibérico Ham) Two little visual flipbooks—the size of a business card—that illustrate the importance of



**TASTE OF SOMONTANO**  
BODEGAS SIERRA DE GUARA

The vineyard is placed in a privileged piece, in the O.D. Somontano, in the Municipality of Lascelas, which consists of 85 hectares of vineyards of the varieties Tempranillo (28 has.) and Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cellars Sierra de Guara are located in the Somontano region of Huesca, in the north of the Somontano of Huesca.

incomparable nature and the beauty of his reflected in their wines. incomparable nature and the beauty of his reflected in their wines.

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**SOMONTANO**  
DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN

**Bodegas Sierra de Guara**

BODEGAS: Ctra. Abilego A-1, 229-lm. 0,3 • 22124 Lascelas (HUESCA)  
Tel. -Fax. 974 31 93 63 • [www.bodegassieradeguara.es](http://www.bodegassieradeguara.es) • [ldria@bodegassieradeguara.es](mailto:ldria@bodegassieradeguara.es)

fishing on our coasts and one of the delicacies par excellence of Spanish gastronomy, respectively. (*Mundo Flip*; [www.mundoflip.com](http://www.mundoflip.com))

## Gastronomy Guides

The annual re-publication of the foremost gastronomy guides with the following new innovations:

**Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía 2005** (The Best of Gastronomy 2005) Rafael García Santos has been publishing and offering his rigorous opinions on our gastronomy, the finest dishes, the greatest chefs, the best regional specialties... for 10 years now. This version includes a special note to professionals of the sector, reminding them to continue to take their work seriously and not become self-complacent....

(*Ediciones Destino*; [www.destino.es](http://www.destino.es))

**Gourmetour 2005, Guía Gastronómica y Turística de España** (Gourmetour 2005, Guide to Gastronomy and Tourism in Spain) New edition with 12,000 updates in this guide devoted to gastronomy and tourism. New city maps.

(*Grupo Gourmets*; [www.gourmets.net](http://www.gourmets.net))

**Guía de Hoteles y Restaurantes de España 2005** (Guide to the Hotels and Restaurants of Spain 2005) With José Carlos Capel (restaurants) and Fernando Gallardo (hotels). New order by Autonomous Communities and within these, by provinces and towns.

(*Santillana Ediciones Generales*;

[www.elpaisaguilar.es](http://www.elpaisaguilar.es))

**Guía CAMPSA 2005** (CAMPSA Guide 2005) Of particular note is the definitive consolidation of the Guía Interactiva (Interactive Guide) on the Internet, [www.guiacampsa.com](http://www.guiacampsa.com), which enables would-be travelers to prepare door-to-door routes between cities and in 23 European countries. It



## El Bulli: to be continued...

In 2003 elBulli published the first of a three-volume collection that encompasses the story of the restaurant from 1983 to 2002. Ferran chose to make the journey backwards, going from the most recent times to earlier ones, and published the volume covering the years from 1998-2002 (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 58). The saga continues and there is more to come...

**El Bulli 1994-1997** This volume is similar to the preceding one, designed like an art catalog, with its special box and CD-Rom, photographs by Francesc Guillamet and texts by Josep Maria Pinto. It encompasses the most crucial period in the trajectory of elBulli, the era that forged its particular philosophy and style, and gave rise to some of its most emblematic creations. The famous sixth sense, reflected in a spice dish, offered diners the opportunity not only to eat, but to learn and play at the same time. The goal of this philosophy was none other than "...introducing emotions, through irony, provocation, a sense of humor... so that pleasure is experienced not only through the palate but also through the powers of the mind", which involves the diner's direct, active participation. Then came the emergence of deconstruction, or adaptation taken to its most radical extremes; molds, caramelization, individual preparations (cones, spoons), the new raviolis, the "petite plates", savory ice creams and the symbiosis of sweet and savory; the chronology of the siphon and the foams. The limits begin to blur and finally change the very structure of the menu. There was a clear influence of foreign cuisine during this period, both in the ingredients used and the unique application of techniques. It is utterly fascinating to witness the evolution of a creative process through such a meticulously well-ordered and illustrated description—with no thought to cost—as has never before been offered in the history of gastronomy. This is what makes the book appear to be more like a treatise on art than a cookbook.

**El Bulli 1983-1993** This first volume tells us of the origins of the process. With Juli Soler as manager, elBulli was awarded its second Michelin star and Ferran Adrià joined the staff as stagier for a month. In 1986 Ferran took over as executive chef, and it was during this period that he and Juli Soler formed their company. They were searching for a new concept in restaurants and gastronomy that would reach a balance of great respect, maximum purity and authenticity. Their idea was to renew the traditional, beginning with what was closest to hand, Catalan and Spanish cuisine. The restaurant underwent renovations, with a new kitchen installed that met the new requirements. In 1993 the work was complete and *El Sabor del Mediterráneo* (The Flavor of the Mediterranean) was published.

(*El Bulli*; [www.elbulli.com](http://www.elbulli.com))

includes the Guide to the Best Wines of Spain. (Repsol; [www.guiacampsa.com](http://www.guiacampsa.com))

#### Tapas en/in Madrid

Selection of tapas bars in the capital city and pages devoted to markets and specialized shops. English/Spanish edition in paperback format with photographs and street maps. Published by the Ayuntamiento de Madrid (City Government of Madrid). (Area de Gobierno de Economía y Participación Ciudadana, Patronato de Turismo; [www.munimadrid.es/turismo](http://www.munimadrid.es/turismo))

**Donde comer bien en Andalucía** (Where to Eat in Andalusia) The best restaurants for all price ranges, with commentaries by Enrique Calduch. (Editorial Everest; [www.everest.es](http://www.everest.es))

## Tourist Guides

The 400th anniversary of the publication of Cervantes' *Quijote*, the most significant novel in Spanish literature, and always associated with windmills. Castile-La Mancha is the epicenter of two guides based on *El Quijote*:

**Ruta de Don Quijote, a pie, a bicicleta, a caballo** (The Route of Don Quijote; on foot, by bicycle and on horseback) In collaboration with the organization *Quijote, IV Centenario*. Over 300 pages, 10 sections and 56 stages with removable cards. Plenty of useful information.

(Santillana Ediciones Generales; [www.elpaisaguilar.es](http://www.elpaisaguilar.es))

**Guía de viaje por la ruta de Don Quijote, Itinerarios, monumentos, gastronomía y folclore** (Travel Guide for the Route of Don Quijote; monuments, gastronomy and folklore) 200 pages covering five itineraries on the Route of Don Quijote, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, and including extracts from the novel. (Belacqua de Ediciones y Publicaciones; [www.belacqua.com](http://www.belacqua.com))

**Rutas por el Pirineo Catalán en coche** (Car Journeys through the

Catalonian Pyrenees) 30 weekend routes through this region where the Romanesque is just one of its many attractions.

(Santillana Ediciones Generales; [www.elpaisaguilar.es](http://www.elpaisaguilar.es))

**Special places to stay, Spain** Fourth edition of this guide, a pioneer in finding hotels with special charm all around the country.

(Alastair Sawday Publishing Co. Ltd.; [www.sawdays.co.uk](http://www.sawdays.co.uk))

**Costa del Sol Walks, all along the coast from Nerja to Manilva** 34 alternative walks, immersed in the quiet of nature, with topographic maps selected by Charles Davis, an expert on the area. (Ediciones Santana; [www.santanabooks.com](http://www.santanabooks.com))

**Balnearios de España** (Spas in Spain) All the spas in Spain. Texts about hot springs and routes of interest in the surrounding areas. (Editorial Everest; [www.everest.es](http://www.everest.es))

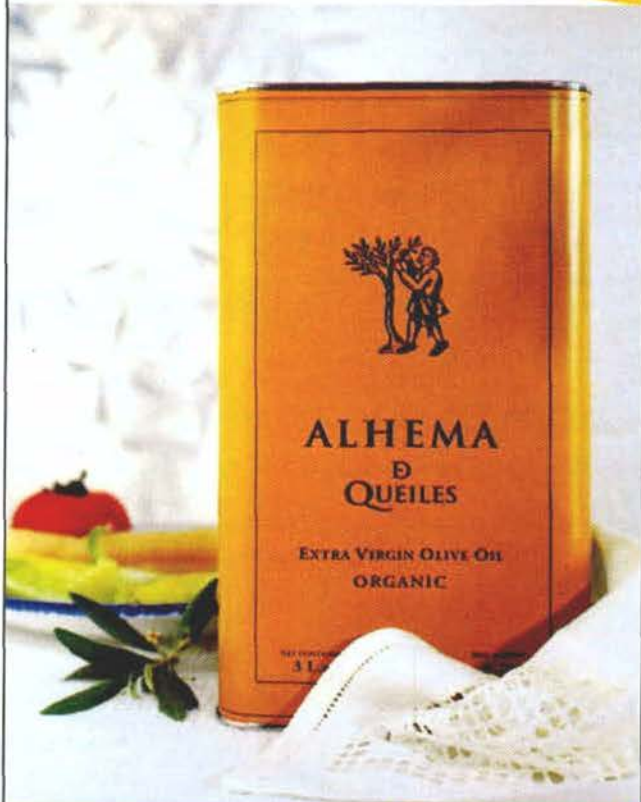
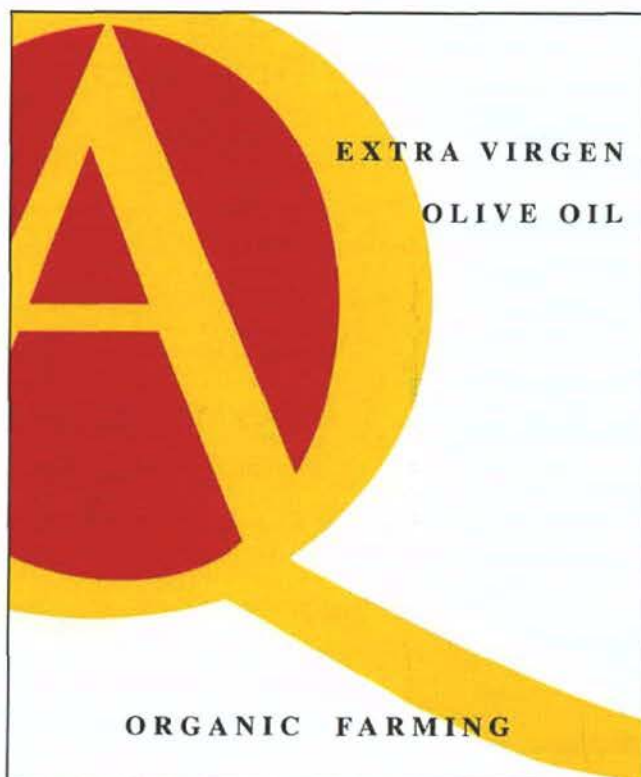
**Turismo del Silencio** (The Tourism of Silence) The criteria and selection are unusual, but the informative notes and abundant photographs will help travelers to make their own choices.

**Hoteles en Espacios Naturales,**

**Restaurantes Singulares,**

**Hoteles 2005, Balnearios y Spas, Centros de Hidroterapia 2005** (Hotels in Natural Parks, Unique Restaurants, Hotels 2005, Spas and Hydrotherapy Centers 2005), in Spain, Portugal and France.

(Salvat Editores; [www.salvat.com](http://www.salvat.com))



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

## Food Products

### Dairy and Meat Products

**COVAP**  
Tel: (+34) 957 773 888  
Fax: (+34) 957 773 845  
covap@covap.es  
www.covap.es

### Products of La Mancha

**Consejo Regulador DOP Aceite de Oliva Virgen Montes de Toledo**  
Tel/Fax: (+34) 925 257 402  
domt@domontesdetoledo.com  
www.domontesdetoledo.com

**Consejo Regulador PGI Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras**  
Tel: (+34) 967 139 333  
Fax: (+34) 967 139 334  
igt@ajomorado.net

**Consejo Regulador DOP Azafrán de La Mancha**  
Tel/Fax: (+34) 925 470 284  
doam@doazafrandelamancha.com  
www.doazafrandelamancha.com

**Consejo Regulador PGI Berenjena de Almagro**  
Tel: (+34) 926 216 202  
Fax: (+34) 926 216 647  
berenjenas@castillalamancha.es  
www.berenjenas.castillalamancha.es

**Consejo Regulador PGI Cordero Manchego**  
Tel/Fax: (+34) 967 224 020  
correo@corderomanchego.org  
www.corderomanchego.org

**Consejo Regulador PGI Mazapán de Toledo**  
Tel: (+34) 925 228 710  
Fax: (+34) 925 211 812  
laboral@fedeto.es

**Consejo Regulador PDO Miel de La Alcarria**  
Tel/Fax: (+34) 949 25 23 54  
consejoregulador@mieldealaalcarria.org  
www.mieldealaalcarria.org

**Consejo Regulador PGI Melón de La Mancha**  
Tel: (+34) 925 210 921  
Fax: (+34) 925 210 916  
www.igpmelonmancha.com

**Consejo Regulador PDO Queso Manchego**  
Tel: (+34) 926 324 365  
Fax: (+34) 926 322 712  
crdoqman@arrakis.es

### Sauces

Firms mentioned in the article:

**Argodey y Fortaleza**  
Tel: (+34) 922 29 33 03/  
615 26 04 69  
Fax: (+34) 922 24 83 33  
argodey@argodeyfortaleza.com  
www.argodeyfortaleza.com

**ArteOliva**  
**Compañía Alimentaria Sur de Europa, S.A.**  
Tel: (+34) 957 649 027  
Fax: (+34) 957 649 030  
administracion@arteoliva.com  
www.arteoliva.com

**Borges Foods, S.L.**  
Tel: (+34) 935 837 600  
Fax: (+34) 935 837 647  
mamoreno@borges.es  
www.borges.es

**Chovi, S.L.**  
Tel: (+34) 961 780 210  
Fax: (+34) 961 784 551  
chovi@chovi.com  
www.chovi.com

**Conservas Ferrer, S.A.**  
Tel: (+34) 938 272 512  
Fax: (+34) 938 272 127  
ferrer@c-ferrer.com  
www.c-ferrer.com

**Hijos de Ybarra, S.A.**  
Tel: (+34) 955 675 060  
Fax: (+34) 954 722 846  
marketing@ybarra.es  
www.ybarra.es

**J.R. Suárez Monedero, S.L.**  
Tel: (+34) 967 160 564  
Fax: (+34) 967 161 161  
salsasjr@salsasjr.com  
www.salsasjr.com

**Les Flors del Montseny, S.L.**  
Tel: (+34) 938 473 061  
Fax: (+34) 938 473 064  
artesanialimentaria@florsmontseny.com  
www.florsmontseny.com

**Mojo Canarión Artiles Ramirez, S.L.**  
Tel/Fax: (+34) 928 784 190  
mojocanarion@terra.es

**Olivera d'Atenea**  
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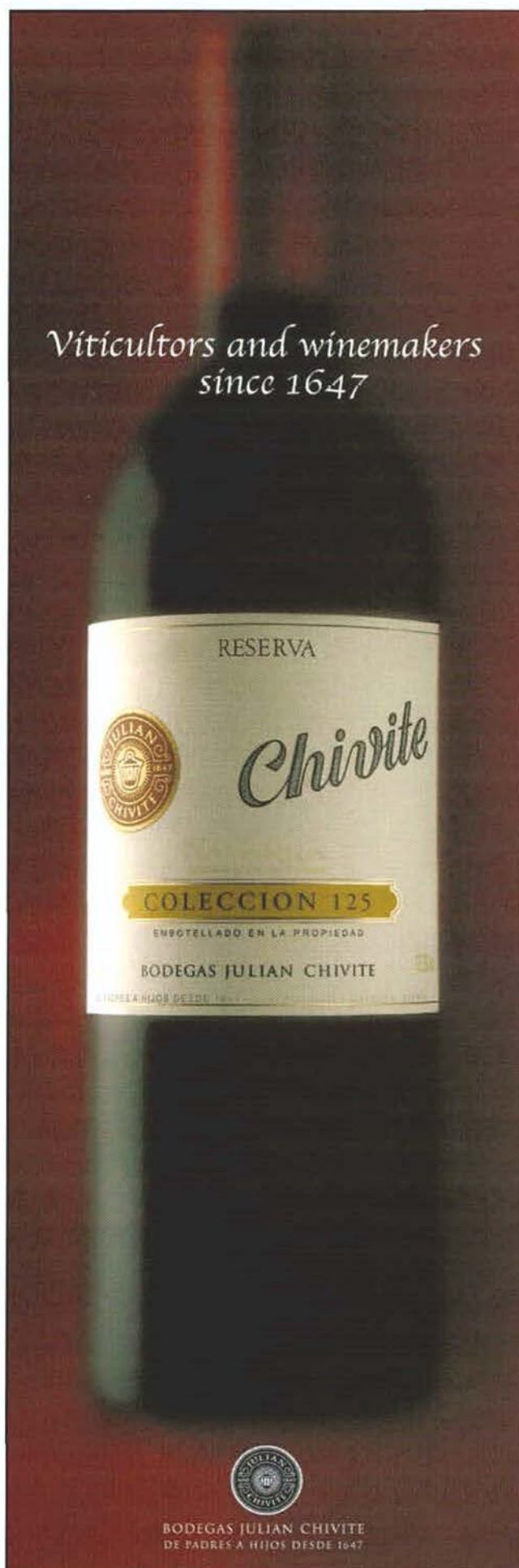
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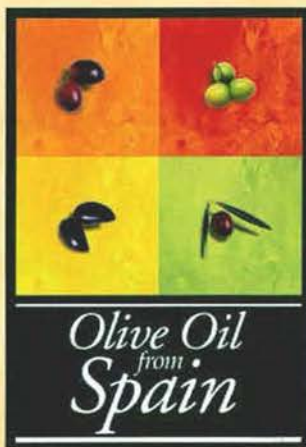
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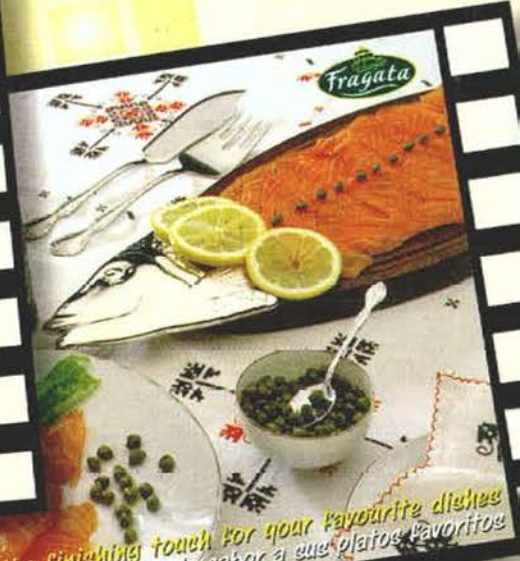
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This is the Designation of Origin for sparkling wines produced by the traditional method, that is to say, that the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle in which it is sold. The cava demarcated region is in several zones, the most important of which is Catalonia. The others are Aragon, Navarre, La Rioja, Castile-León, Extremadura and Valencia. The Cava Designation should not be confused with other DOs 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.

## 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 30% of the wine may be removed from the *solera* in any one year.

## 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 designation. Red wines must age for a minimum of 36 months in the wood and bottle, at least 12 of them in oak casks.

For rosé and white wines, the minimum period is 24 months, 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.

### Notes:

1. Many DOs 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.

## Designation of Origin (DO) and Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Designation of Origin is the official Spanish 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, manufacturing and aging methods. In recent years the term Designation of Origin (DO) has been replaced by Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in order to adapt to EU terminology, but only when referring to food products. For wine the term Designation of Origin (DO) is still in use, because the terminology in this sector is not unified in the EU.

## Qualified Designation of Origin (DOCa)

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

The price of the grapes used in winemaking 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 DOCa 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 1,000 hectoliters per batch.

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

## 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 manufacturing, but differs from a PDO in that these three factors do not necessarily have to coincide.

Each DO, DOCa, PDO or PGI is managed by a *Consejo Regulador* (CR) or Regulatory Council, which sees to the enforcement of the regulations.

## Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG)

This does not refer to the origin, but highlights traditional character, either in the composition or means of production.

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### Erratum

In the article about Old Vines included in issue 63 of the magazine, the web site [www.renebarbier.es](http://www.renebarbier.es) was erroneously mentioned on page 27. The winemaker René Barbier, who elaborates the Clos Mogador wine (DOCa Priorato) referred in the article, is not related to the same brand name, which is part of the Freixenet Group and produces DO Penedés wines. The Clos Mogador winery has no web site and can be contacted at: [closmogador@terra.es](mailto:closmogador@terra.es)

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