

# SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine

SPAIN GOURMETOUR



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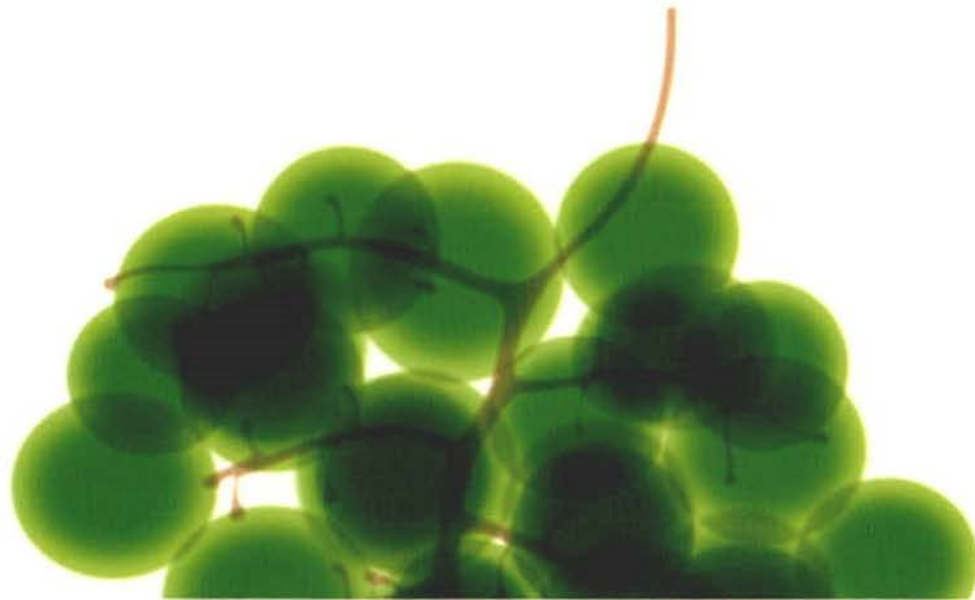
25 years  
of Spanish Wine

Pressing  
on

1982-2007

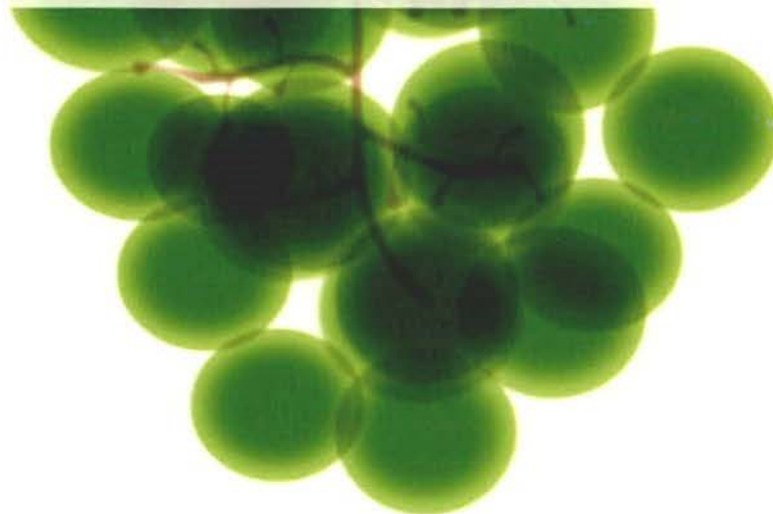
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*Spain Gourmetour* is a publication of the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the State Secretary for Tourism and Commerce to promote Spain's food and wines, as well as cuisine and culture. The magazine is issued three times a year in English, French, German and Spanish and is only and exclusively distributed, free of charge, to trade professionals, specialized journalists, chefs, cooking schools and other food and wine professionals. For more information, please contact the Economic and Commercial Offices at the Embassies of Spain (see list on page 116).

The opinions expressed by the authors of the articles are not necessarily shared by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX), which cannot be held responsible for any omissions or error in the text.

This issue is packed with history. We start off with a retrospective, retracing the brilliant career Spanish wines have had over the past 25 years, how our magazine has monitored it and how we sometimes even spotted trends before they happened.

Vega Sicilia, one of the most evocative names in wine both in Spain and abroad, has joined forces with another great name: Tokay. We bring you the latest on a venture first launched 15 years ago.

The discovery of fire was unquestionably one of the biggest steps forward for human civilization. In Spain, as in many other parts of the world, mastery of fire finds expression in char-grilling—an art form whose boundaries are being stretched by modern-day exponents. We introduce you to some of Prometheus' followers, with their new approach to fire and a repertoire that extends far beyond traditional sardines and steaks.

Apparently, the Sumerians had already discovered the deliciousness of truffles. It's good to know, then, that a scheme to cultivate truffles undertaken more than three decades ago is bearing fruit! And did you know that Spain also breeds its own sturgeon? Don't believe it? The report on caviar from Granada is one for you.

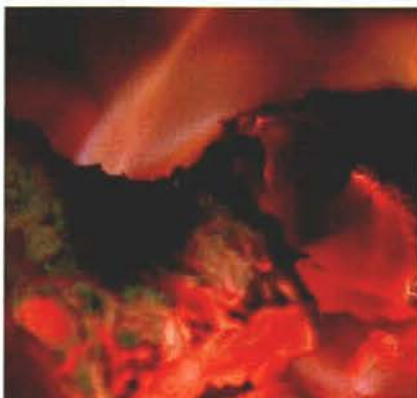
We close this issue with a visit to respected Hispanist Lord Thomas of Swynerton, otherwise known as Hugh Thomas, whose book on the Spanish Civil War is an established classic. He shares his impressions of the making of modern Spain with us.

Cathy Boirac

Editor-in-Chief



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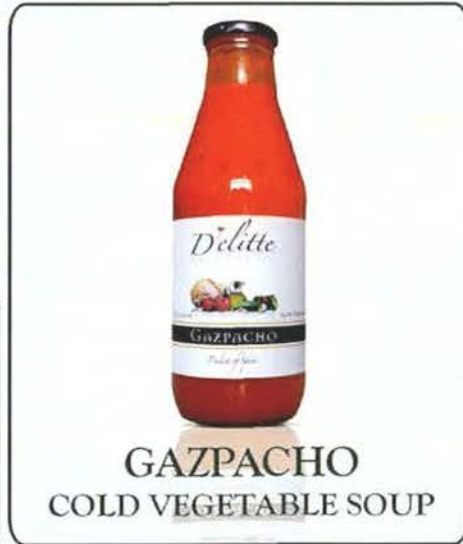
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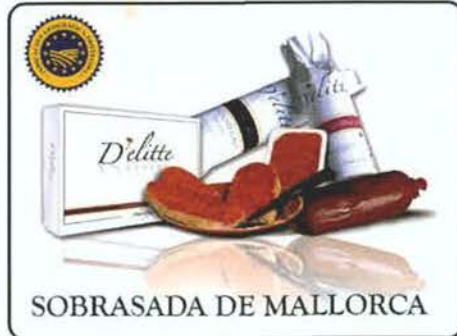
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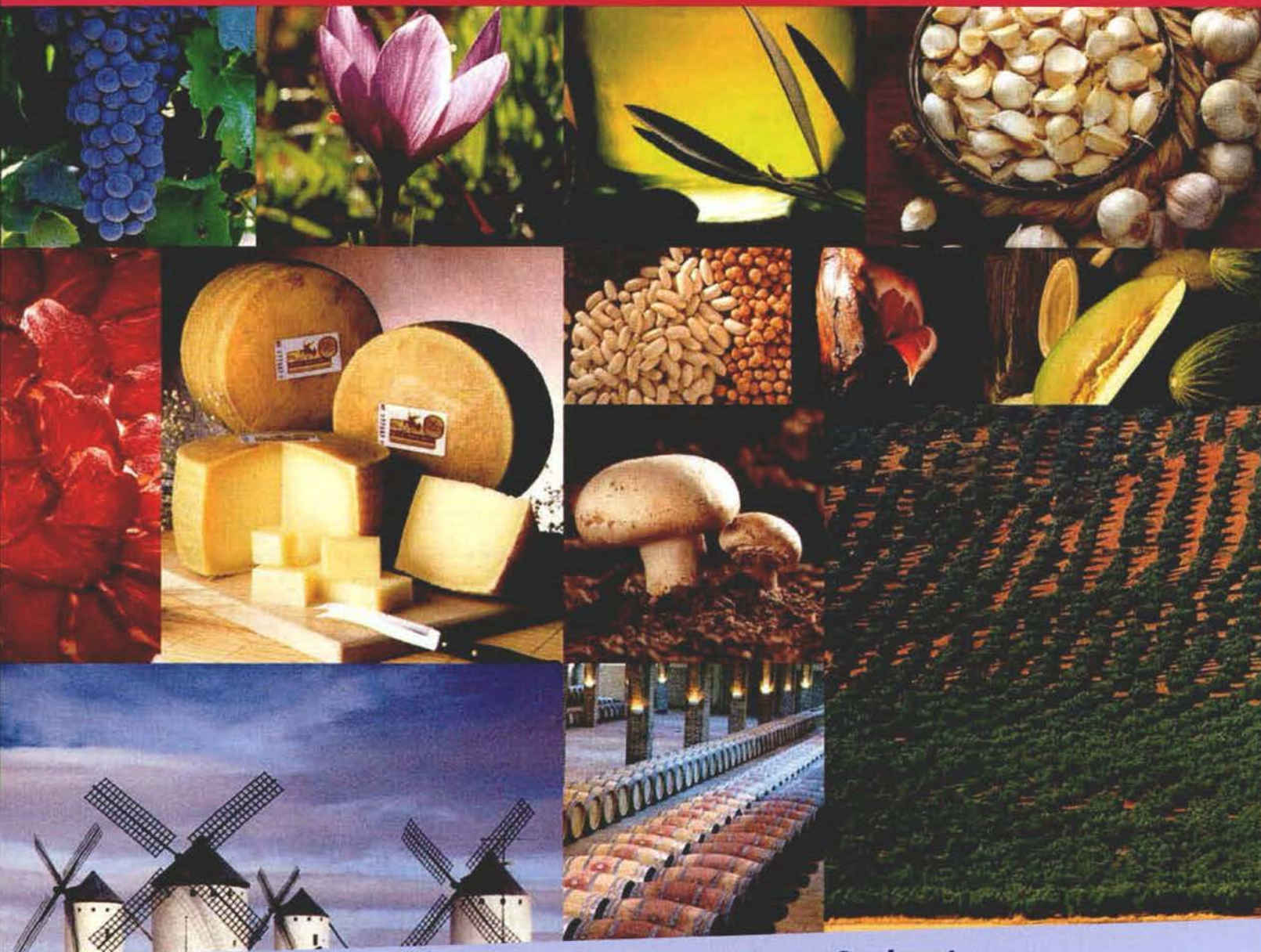
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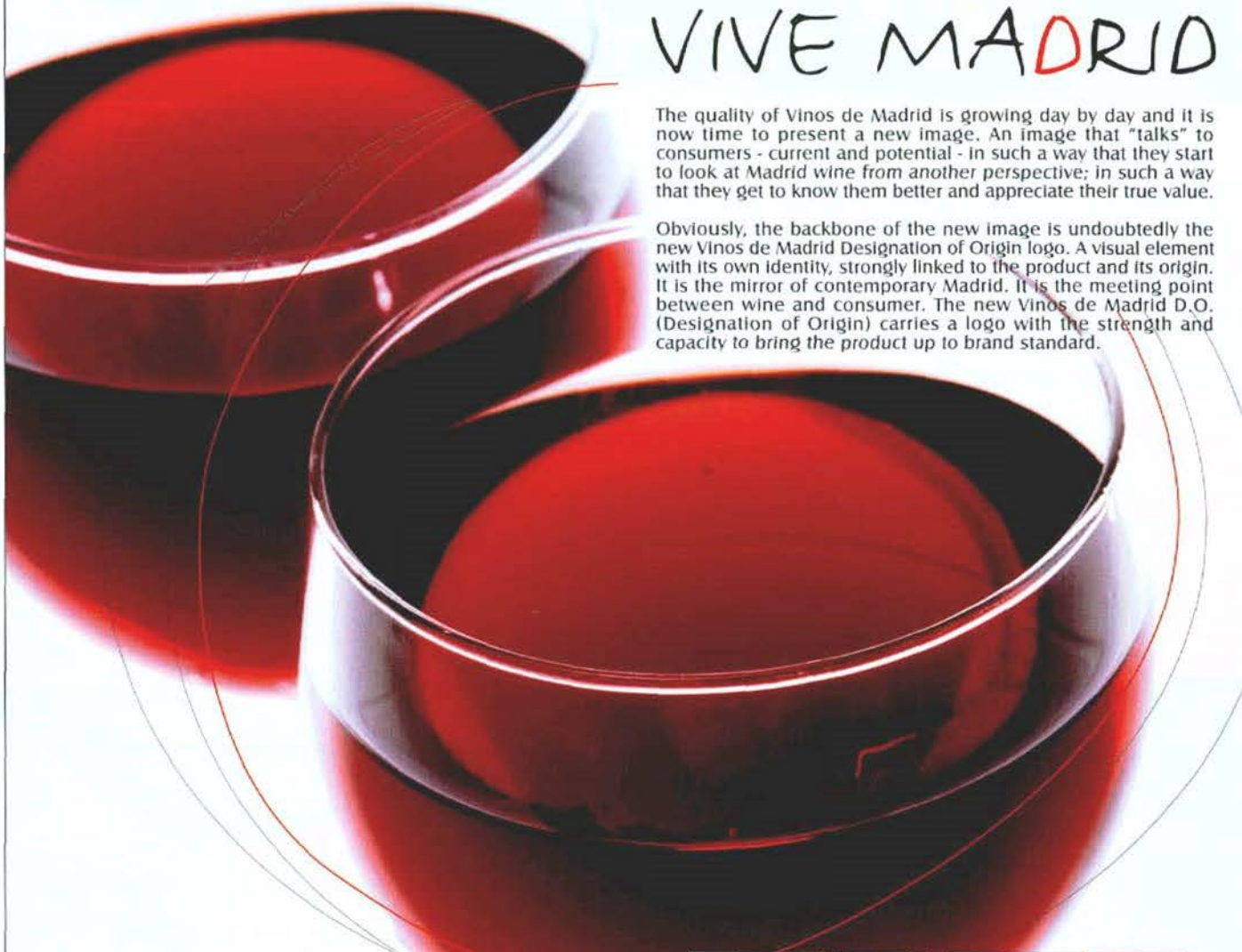
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VINOS DE MADRID HAVE A NEW IMAGE

VIVE MADRID

The quality of Vinos de Madrid is growing day by day and it is now time to present a new image. An image that "talks" to consumers - current and potential - in such a way that they start to look at Madrid wine from another perspective; in such a way that they get to know them better and appreciate their true value.

Obviously, the backbone of the new image is undoubtedly the new Vinos de Madrid Designation of Origin logo. A visual element with its own identity, strongly linked to the product and its origin. It is the mirror of contemporary Madrid. It is the meeting point between wine and consumer. The new Vinos de Madrid D.O. (Designation of Origin) carries a logo with the strength and capacity to bring the product up to brand standard.



MADRID AND ITS WINES

Madrid, a cosmopolitan and open city, capital of museums and enjoyment, modern and cheerful as well as the land of fields and vines.

Vine cultivation and wine production is a tradition deeply-rooted since the 13th century throughout the community of Madrid.

The effort of vine growers and wine producers in modernising their wineries, the improvement in the preparation and search for better quality wines, culminated in 1990 with the constitution of the Regulating Council and the achievement of the D.O. Vinos de Madrid.

Thanks to the research and implementation of the most advanced techniques in all processes of cultivation and production, wines are achieved that are ever better suited to current tastes and demand.

Today, the wines of the D.O. Vinos de Madrid enjoy deserved prestige among the experts and there are more and more consumers who appreciate the excellent quality of the wines of our D.O..

The constant growth in quantity, variety and exporting certifies the recognition of some wines that receive awards and considerations in the main world fairs of the sector.

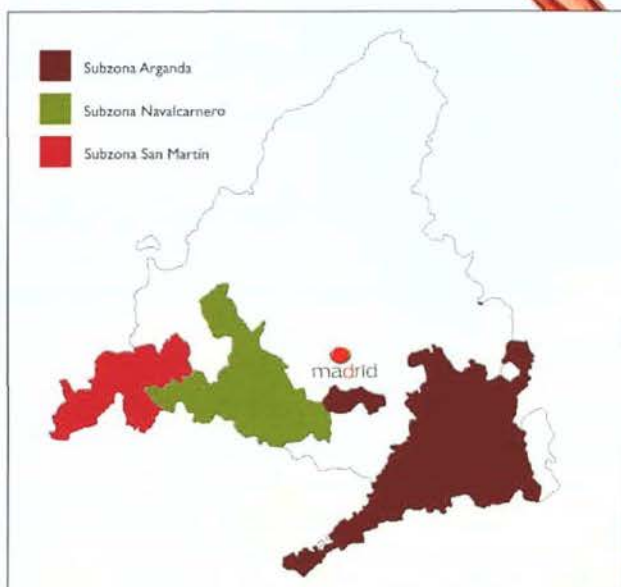


Serious and rested wines like the reds; or aromatic and mild wines like the rosés, along with the young, pleasant whites. These are the wines of the D.O. Vinos de Madrid, wines that have to be lived.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIETY

The Madrid red wines are made from the Tempranillo, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah varieties, the first two of which are mainly grown in the area of the Designation of Origin.

The white wines are made from the Malvar, Albillo, Parellada, Turrontés, Viura, Airén and Moscatel Small Grain varieties. The first two are the main ones, along with Malvar which is also autochthonous to the region.



## VINOS DE MADRID OPENING MARKETS

Thanks to the great effort made by the wine sector in Madrid and the Vinos de Madrid Regulating Council, the "Vinos de Madrid" brand is becoming recognised both in its natural market, the Madrid community, and in the market outside the region, as shown by the 70 awards achieved by these wines in the last five years in national and international contests.

The commercialisation of Vinos de Madrid has passed from 50,000 bottles at the outset to more than 4.5 million bottles today, of which 30% are sold in the foreign market (mainly Germany, United Kingdom and the USA, where it is experiencing the greatest growth).

In just two years (from 2004 to 2006) the total sales abroad have risen 20% in value, amounting to close to 2 million euros in 2006.

This year the Vinos de Madrid Regulating Council received the award for European Excellence as an entity that has stood out due to its relations and its European opening.

## QUALITY TO EVERYONE'S TASTE

The community of Madrid has a vine surface area of more than 19,000 hectares of wine, of which at least 40% is covered by the "Vinos de Madrid" designation or origin brand, which brings together 41 wineries of the region.

The Denominación de Origen Vinos de Madrid controls and protects the grapes and vines mainly in the south of the community of Madrid divided into three clearly distinguished sub-zones of great wine tradition.

### Arganda sub-zone

This includes 30 municipalities to the south-east of the community, which along with the El Encin ranch in Alcalá de Henares, hold close to 50% of the vines registered in the Regulating Council. Through its lands flow the waters of the river Jarama, a tributary of the Tajo, and the Tajuña and Henares that feed it. Its continental climate reaches an annual average of 14 degrees.

This is the area of least rainfall, 461 mm. a year, with abundant sunshine, some 2,800 hours of sun a year. The composition of the soil is suitable for making quality wines, and the white Malvar and red Tempranillo grapes are the most abundant varieties on these lands.

### Navalcarnero sub-zone

To the south of the community, the Navalcarnero sub-zone includes a plain cut from north to south by the river Guadarrama. It is made up of 19 municipalities in the central-south area, accounting for more than 14% of the total vines in the Community, with a predominance of red Grenache. These are brown lands without calcium, with thick sand and clayish sub-soils.

The average rainfall is 529 mm. a year. The wine production in this area, traditionally known for its rosés, has recently surprised many with the appearance of high quality reds.

### San Martín de Valdeiglesias sub-zone

This includes 9 municipalities to the south-west of the community and 35% of the vines, with Albillo white and Grenache red grapes as the main varieties. The proximity of the Central System gives it a hilly relief that serves as protection from the cold northerly winds.

This means that the continental climate is developed with more temperate temperatures in a damp climate. The annual rainfall is 658 mm. The soils and brown earth on a granite base, are highly suitable for preparing quality wines.

## VINOS DE MADRID INTERNATIONAL DISPLAY WINDOW

This year, thanks to the support of PROMOMADRID and the Madrid Chamber of Commerce, the D.O. Vinos de Madrid Regulating Council has continued its expansion in all the markets, by attending the main national and international fairs, such as: FOODEX JAPAN, PROWEIN, CLUB DE GOURMETS, VINO ÉLITE, LONDON WEIN, NAPA, etc. In addition to the commitment of presenting Vinos de Madrid in the United States.

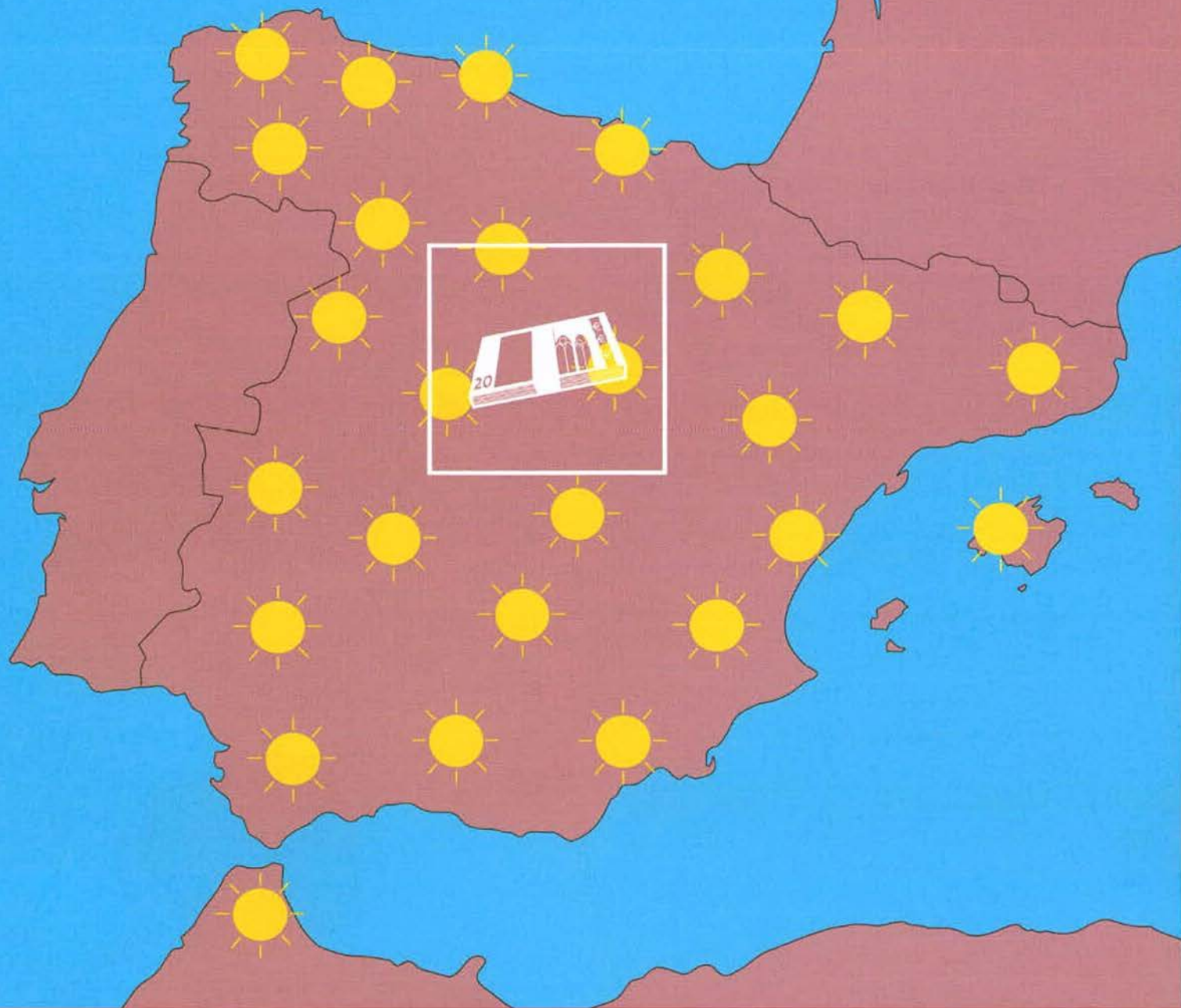
Likewise, on the coming 19th November, the Madrid Hotel Palace will be holding the Vinos de Madrid Exhibition, a meeting in its 9th edition thanks to the recognition of the most important critics, the press, and naturally, the public. A unique display window to find and see the quality and variety of the Vinos de Madrid and its wineries.

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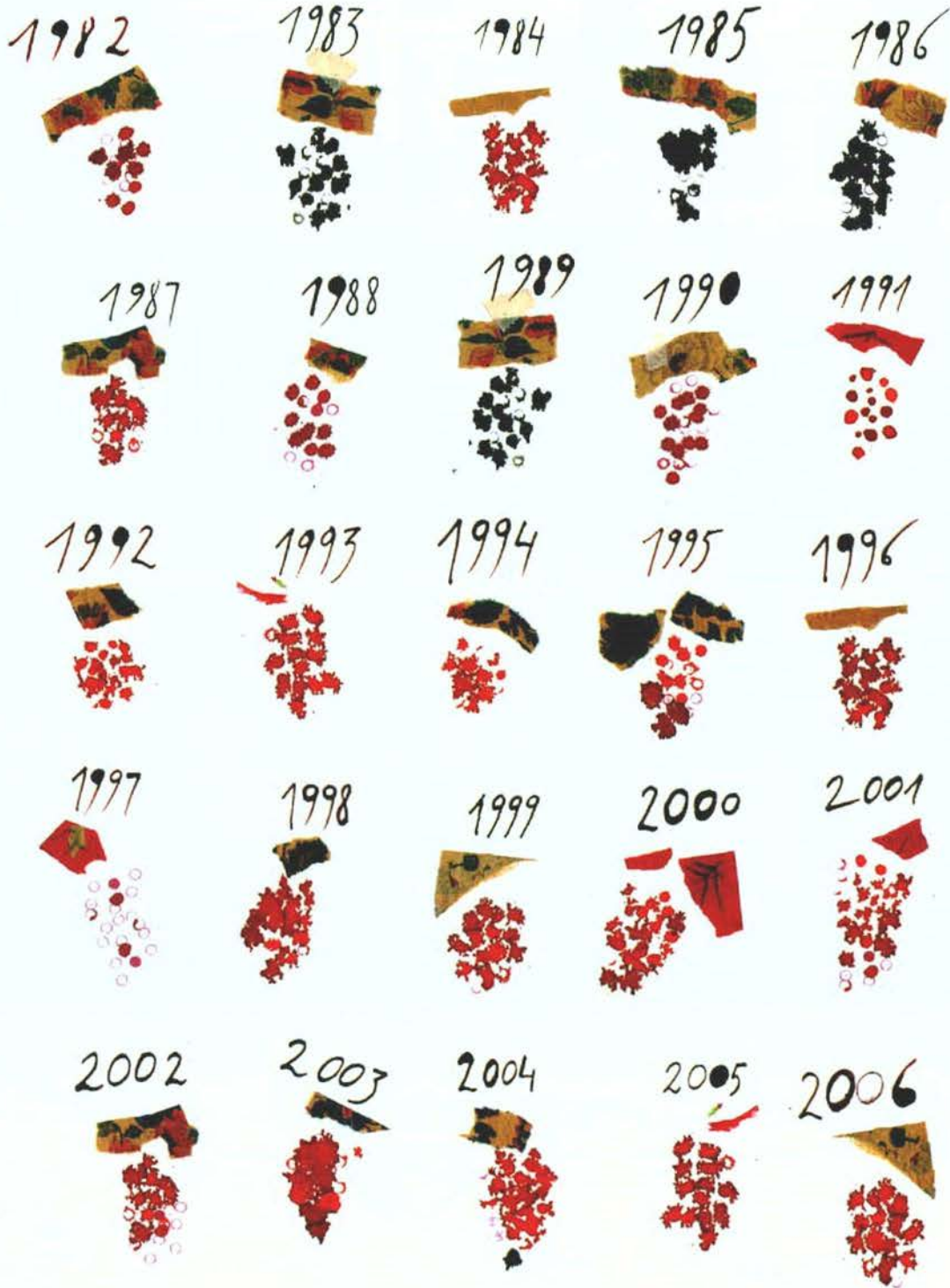
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A simple wander around Spain's village and cities is enough to notice that the country has undergone a dramatic change in the last 25 years. Things are definitely no longer what they used to be. The same rings true for the world of Spanish wine, which has transformed beyond recognition, perhaps more so than many other aspects of Spanish life.

# PRESSING ON



A Retrospective  
of Spanish Wine:  
1982-2007

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TEXT  
ANDRÉS PROENSA

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ILLUSTRATIONS  
JAVIER ZABALA

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PHOTOS  
JUAN M. SANZ/ICEX

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TRANSLATION  
JENNY MCDONALD

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In 1982, Spain had about 1.5 million ha (3.7 million acres) of vineyards. Irrigation was not allowed and 30 to 34 million hl (793 and 800 billion gal) of wine were produced a year. There were 25 designations of origin and little more than 10% of the wine produced was exported, mostly in bulk. Twenty-five years ago, Spain held little weight in the world of quality wine, and its image was that of a country producing oceans of what the British call "plonk", that is, cheap wine. Around that time, a British group with interests in Jerez, Harvey's, sponsored a small wine guide that classified the whole of central Spain as a producer of anonymous bulk wines, disregarding the DOs that were functioning on both sides of the Castilian plain and omitting mythical brands such as Vega Sicilia and newcomers including Protos and Pesquera. Today the vine-growing area is smaller, spanning just over 1 million ha (2.47 million acres), and the stunted, dry-farmed stocks have been transformed into modern plantations with the branches supported on structures and wires and often with drip irrigation. More wine is being produced, about 40 million hl (1 trillion gal). One third of the production is exported, mostly

in bottles, and there are now three times as many DOs. And perhaps most importantly, there are now many more quality wines. Alongside the figures that have traditionally had a place on the international market—the famous Jerez clans, the Torres family or the very unique Alejandro Fernández—are some outstanding creators of wine, such as Álvaro Palacios, Marcos Eguren, Fernando Chivite, Javier Ausás and Peter Sysseck, among others. Together they are drawing a completely new portrait of Spanish wine.

Symptomatic of the change is the proliferation of specialist publications. In 1986, when *Spain Gourmetour* came out for the first time in English, wine information was limited to the veteran trade publication *La Semana Vitivinicola*, a specialist journal that was new at that time, *Bouquet*, and articles in the only gastronomic journal, *Club de Gourmets*. At the end of that same year, the latter brought out the *Guía Práctica para Amantes y Profesionales de los Vinos de España*—the predecessor of today's *Guía de Vinos Gourmet*—a pioneer in its field and one of the few titles on the world of wine that could be found in bookshops at the time. And to find

good wine to drink, you could try one of the handful of specialist wine stores or search for one of the few restaurants that had a sommelier.

## Witnesses to change

The market now offers several wine journals such as *Mi Vino*, *PlanetaVino*, *Vivir el Vino* and *Vinum*, among others, there are many specialist websites and most gastronomic publications pay special attention to wine. Likewise, the general press has regular wine sections and there are about a dozen wine guides and yearbooks as well as countless texts on different aspects of wine, from production and conservation to serving and tasting. The interest includes related activities, such as the increasingly popular wine tourism. This fascination has also led to the opening of many specialist shops, the creation of designated areas dedicated to wine within stores and a greater focus on wine in restaurants where the sommelier is no longer a rarity. Over the last 25 years, the specialized press has undergone a spectacular transformation with regards to Spanish wine. There are still reminiscences of the past, some good (the great old wines from



## SPAIN GOURMETOUR. LOOKING BACK WITH A PERSPECTIVE

Andalusia, conservation of old varieties in many areas), some not so good (the on-going feeling of crisis, the unequal rate of modernization in different producing regions), but some of the novelties are so important that the end result can only be described as extremely positive. Over these last two and a half decades, Spain has risen from being a non-entity on the worldwide quality wine scene to being one of the most promising wine-producing countries in the world.

In fact, Spain seems to be on the way to becoming a global power in the field of quality wine. Its competitive edge is based on its prices which continue to be very favorable, the personality achieved by the use of native varieties and diverse growing conditions, the high standard of its wineries and the increasing technical know-how of Spanish enologists. This new state of affairs has not come to pass overnight, nor has it happened by chance. It is the result of a costly process, one that continues today. There is still work to do, especially in the consolidation

A summary always has a greater impact with regards to what it omits than for what it includes. This review aims to note the main milestones in the history of Spanish wine as reflected in the pages of *Spain Gourmetour* (SGT) (first published in 1986 in English, followed in 1988 in French, in 1991 in German and in 2003 in Spanish). With our reports on the most significant designations of origin and the great names in wine, we have drawn up an outline which we trust will serve to give readers a reliable picture of a world that has developed at a vertiginous speed over the last quarter of a century.



### The Wines of Priorato: Past and Present

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 5, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1986

Author: Víctor Rodríguez

One of the first wine-producing areas to be covered by SGT was Priorato. Based on the traditional Garnacha and Cariñena grapes, wineries such as Scala Dei would bring new life to this part of Catalonia starting in the 1980s. The 100 points recently awarded to Clos Mogador by Robert Parker confirm the good work done. Andrés Proensa returned to Priorato in No. 55 (2002) of SGT with his article "DO Priorato: Shades of Burgundy", to testify to the rising popularity of these star wines.

SGT 1987



**Wines of Navarre: Looking to the Future**

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 9, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1987

Author: Tony Lord

In the 1980s, the DO Navarre began important research work on new grape varieties both from other parts of Spain (Airen, Verdejo and Xarel-lo, etc.) and from other countries (Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Syrah, etc.). SGT returned in 1991 to see how things were progressing with an article on its new reds called "Red Wines of Navarre, Moving On" in issue No. 23. The story came full circle in 1997 with the article entitled "Spain's California: Navarre Goes Native" (No. 47), which explained how the native grapes were once again coming into their own with new production methods, without renouncing the contribution made by foreign grapes.



of this newfound prestige, with the great image developed thus far turning over time into the legendary reputation enjoyed by great global brands. But even the most skeptical of observers has to acknowledge the huge amount of progress made.

**The first steps**

During the early eighties, the Spanish wine map hardly existed. The unsuccessful Wine Statute of 1932 and the 1946 regulations on designations of origin were replaced in 1971 by the Statute on Vineyards, Wine and Spirits, which positively resulted in the creation of the Spanish National Institute for Designations of Origin (INDO). This body played a decisive role in the path taken by Spanish wines during the 1980s and early 1990s until the re-structuring of the Spanish State led to the transfer of its powers to the newly-established regional governments. The first task for the INDO was to re-organize the sector. In 1982, the register of vineyards was completed, more or less accurately recording

the area under vine, vineyard locations, cultivation conditions, the varieties grown, the size of plots, the age of stocks and other information. Meanwhile, the designations of origin were developing and initiatives were being taken to promote wine quality and modernize the whole sector, including sales and distribution.

Also in 1982 and in parallel with this process, ICEX, the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (*Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior*) started to promote quality Spanish wine exports, and Wines from Spain was created, now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (see box on page 34).

Modernization was underway. Even in the 1960s, when Spain was still recovering from the long post-war period, the first steps were already being taken. The leaders included the Spanish-born, US-national Jean León, who set up his winery in the Penedès region. He experimented with some of the world's most outstanding varieties that were already forging ahead in the incipient Californian wine empire. Several were rejected, and the final choice were with



SGT 1988

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Chardonnay.

Following in the footsteps of the Penedès vineyards came Miguel A. Torres who, soon after completing his studies, was to take charge of his family's winery and convert it into a spearhead for modern viticulture and a testing-ground for the latest growing, production and aging techniques. He was to become one of the most emblematic members of the new generation of winemakers, followed closely by Carlos Falcó, Marquis of Griñón, champion in adopting new varieties and creator of the world's first Petit Verdot varietal, in addition to New World farming techniques.

Soon after, in the early seventies, another young enologist appeared on the scene in search of new alternatives. Francisco Hurtado de Amézaga, from the Rioja area, was about to give up his attempts to achieve great white wines in the hundred-year-old Marqués de Riscal winery, when he discovered the potential of the Verdejo grape, the white variety from Castile. Close by, in Navarre, where the introduction



**Toro Wines: From Medieval to Modern Times**

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1988

Author: José Carlos Capel

The full-bodied wines from Toro, dating back to medieval times, underwent a thorough transformation from the mid-1980s onwards. In just a decade, they adapted to modern tastes to become lighter, more balanced and elegant without losing any of their character. SGT returned to this region in northwest Castile 12 years later (SGT No. 51, 2000). The title speaks for itself: "A New Star on the Duero, DO Toro". People such as Manuel Fariña were active participants in this revolution.



**Ribera del Duero: Another Little Gem?**

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1988

Author: María José Sevilla Taylor

The first SGT article to focus on Ribera del Duero described it as "highly promising" and closed with a question mark. Today, the question has been answered in full, as explained by John Radford in 1994 in his article "Ribera del Duero: Keeping the Promises" (No. 32, 1994). Vega Sicilia, Pesquera, Pérez Pascuas and Protos are just some of the names of wineries that are making history in this region.

of foreign stocks was prohibited, the Magaña brothers were smuggling in samples of French varieties which they started to propagate in their family's nursery.

SGT 1988



**The Wines of Somontano: Smooth Wines from Rough Country**

*Spain Gourmet* No. 12, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 1988

Author: Victor Rodriguez

Somontano is another of the small DOs that attracted the attention of SGT in the late 1980s, the main reason being the native variety used, Moristel. "Very promising" is the most frequently-used expression in articles on the new Spanish DOs. The Somontano wines did not take long to establish a name for themselves. Proof of this was the article published ten years later (SGT No. 18, 1999), reporting on the progress made by this DO.

**New grape varieties**

This was the beginning of a dual process in the renovation of Spanish viticulture—the adoption, on the one hand, of the most prestigious of the international grape varieties and support for the traditional, native varieties on the other. The two paths are still being followed with fashionable varieties such as Syrah and Petit Verdot alongside Graciano, Monastrell, Garnacha, Prieto Picudo and other traditional varieties, led by Tempranillo, Spain's most emblematic grape. At the same time, the wineries were undergoing a technical revolution that had a lot to do with future trends for wines. Symptoms of change were already being noted in the leading zones. Rioja had taken the commercial lead with a whole group of new wineries, the so-called "seventies generation", which were able to take advantage of the improved Spanish family economy to open the door for the consumption of quality wines. The producers of cava were following suit, searching for ways to improve their products and try to compete with champagne. The method followed was to improve the base wines by adopting cutting-edge techniques. This was the golden age of stainless steel, of refrigeration systems to control fermenting temperatures and of anything that would help improve the young wine. One of the mistakes made was the production of technological wines, made from selected yeasts that

ironed out all varietal character. The eighties were a transition period, marked by a whole series of young, fresh, fruity wines. These were suitable for special processes, such as cava, in which the subsequent processing gave them character, or for the liqueur wines from Andalusia, which actually needed wines with little character, acting like a blank canvas on which the aging processes could paint all the color. The Jerez wineries were also quick to adopt stainless steel and other features of modern winemaking. Soon the most intuitive winemakers realized that wines not only had to be technologically sound but also had to have personality. They then resorted to the international grape varieties that came in almost like an invasion, not with as devastating a style as Attila, but more like Scipio, who came prepared to Romanize the lands he conquered.

**The improving varieties**

Several factors were behind the introduction of foreign varieties: first there was the uniformity of the wines produced using the new technologies and, second, the lack of confidence in native varieties. Also, the new varieties offered the special commercial appeal of their foreign-sounding names and prestige. As for white grapes, they were traditionally obtained by what could be called industrial farming which concentrated on productivity and

alcohol content above all else, and whose final destination was distillation. The varieties grown offered high yield but little character or aroma. In the case of red grapes, Garnacha, Cariñena, Monastrell and many others were not considered suitable for wines that were going to be aged.

In both cases time showed that these were mistakes. It wasn't that the varieties weren't good but that they were not being treated properly. While their qualities were being discovered, the gate was opened for what were called upgrading varieties, grapes with well-known virtues that, in combination with local ones, were able to enhance the resulting wines. This sparked the renovation of many vineyards, sometimes with such enthusiasm that the native varieties were completely displaced. In Murchante (Navarre), Bodegas Principe de Viana had to buy Garnacha from other towns because the cooperative was not producing enough for the winery's rosés. The eighties was when Spain was invaded by Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay. But a small pocket of resistance in Rioja stood fast, like the unyielding village of the comic characters Asterix and Obelix, and only very recently, in fact this year, has the door been opened to other grapes apart from the traditional seven. Authorization has now been given for new white varieties including Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc and also, quite significantly, Verdejo. The debate,



SGT 1989



**Fino: The Sherry Spaniards Drink**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 15, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter  
 1989  
 Author: John Reeder

SGT has always had a special place in its heart reserved for sherries—manzanilla (SGT No. 21, 1990), fino (SGT No. 15, 1989; No. 25, 1991), cream (No. 30, 1993) and vintage sherry (SGT No. 36, 1995). One of the latest SGT articles on the world of sherry covered the new VOS and VORS appellations for sherries that undergo long aging processes (SGT No. 54, 2001). How to marry sherry has been one of the star topics in SGT with articles such as "Sherry and Cheese from Spain: The Perfect Match" (No. 39, 1996) and the recent "Sherry at your Table!" (SGT No. 69, 2007).



**The Penedès Wine Industry: The Old and the New**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 16, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter  
 1989  
 Author: Tony Lord

One of the first examples of a technological revolution in the world of Spanish wine was seen in the Penedès district. This is where cava and white wines rule, with such well-known international names as Freixenet and Codorníu. Over the last two decades, SGT has devoted many articles to both the DO Penedès and the world of cava. From "The Irresistible Rise of Cava" in 1986 (SGT No. 4) to "Characterful Cavas" (SGT No. 54) in 2001, the progress of the Spanish sparkling wines has been carefully followed by SGT.

however, has re-opened—or, rather, it never closed, regarding reds. From outside Spain, it must have seemed a rather odd argument. Varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon had been grown in Rioja since they were brought in 150 years ago by the first

SGT 1989



**The New Wines of La Mancha**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 17, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter  
 1989  
 Author: John Reeder

This SGT report documented the waking up of wines in La Mancha, the world's largest producer region. The thorough technical revamping that took place there is another of the keys to the article. The path followed towards achieving quality wines was again covered in 1996 with two articles, "La Mancha: The Future Building on the Past", and "Wines of La Mancha: Onward and Upward" (No. 39, 1996). In "The New Wines of Don Quixote's La Mancha" (No. 62, 2004), SGT reports on the progress being made by estate wines in the region.



modern producers of Rioja, including the Marquis of Riscal, and had been used ever since. The solution was rather a clumsy one: they could be used but not named, and the euphemism "other varieties" was adopted. This substitution method was not used in other areas. In many designations of origin the international model was followed, with foreign varieties being used to attract customers. From the eighties to the nineties, it seemed that uniformity was to prevail, even in wine. There were many varietals made from foreign grapes, to such an extent that the profiles of many classic wines were becoming blurred, but it was soon seen that this was not working either. In contrast to the brownish wines that dominated the Spanish panorama, the international fashion was to focus on color above all other considerations. Colors were to be bright and intense at the cost of other characteristics. This was the time of pebbly wines with a bright robe, plenty of body and a backing of green tannins. There were many

wines with vegetal hints, often because of the incomplete ripening of the grapes. Producers were cautious about alcohol content so harvesting took place too early, before phenolic maturity, a concept that had not yet been fully grasped. This desolate panorama, fortunately, was not predominant throughout Spain. In the eighties and especially the nineties, a style of wine that came naturally in some areas was making its presence felt. This was Ribera del Duero's chance. It had been classified as a designation of origin in 1982 and was making huge strides forward, firstly in international markets and then at home. It was so successful that it woke up the Rioja giant, which had been resting on the laurels of its large volumes.

And then came Priorato

Reaction to the surfeit of pebbly wines turned consumers towards Mediterranean wines, with the introduction of concepts such as phenolic maturity to get over the

harshness of the pebbly wines and put an end to prejudice regarding alcohol content. Around 1989, a group of pioneers led by René Barbier started to produce some new red wines in the DO Priorato, a wild area in inland Catalonia that had been described in the sixties by a group of sixty experts from the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) as having everything needed to produce the best wines in the world. Nobody had believed them until the early nineties when the first Priorato wines came out.

These new Prioratos—Finca Dofi, Mogador, L'Obac, Erasmus and Martinet—opened a new chapter in the history of Spanish wines with a wealth of new concepts. These included different growing practices and a change to native varieties (the much-criticized Garnacha and Cariñena) all the while ensuring they were safeguarded and backed by foreign ones, some outstanding production processes, new approaches to matters such as body and alcohol content and, most importantly, prices that had not been seen before for Spanish wines. Another important change but one that did not have such immediate effects was the focus on the *terruño*, that is, the soil and growing conditions.

In the 1990s, especially in the latter half of the decade, there was a fundamental change in the working philosophy of wineries affecting both production structure and the actual profile of the wines produced.

Enologists started to take growing conditions into account. They knew that wine quality was largely determined in the vineyard so they began to take action in the field in order to shape the profile of the end product from the very start.

This is difficult to achieve in a vineyard that is not one's own property, so wineries adopted a new policy of buying up acres under vine. While in the seventies they had been selling off their vineyards and waiting in the winery for farmers to

## SGT 1989



**Alejandro Fernández: Forging a Dream on the Castile Plains**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 18, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1990  
Author: Richard Lorant

In 1990, Alejandro Fernández was the first to be featured by the Best of the Bunch series, which traced the progress of the winemakers and enologists who were responsible for the changing wine scene in Spain. The name behind Pesquera—the red compared by Robert Parker with a Petrus—was one of those responsible for restoring life to Ribera del Duero. A combination of the latest technology, quality and marketing were the keys to Fernández's success. Other figures included in the Best of the Bunch were Mauricio González, Enrique Forner and Jean León.



**The Rueda Revolution**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 19, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 1990  
Author: Richard Lorant

To talk about Rueda as a new DO is technically correct because it acquired this status in 1980, but the fact is that this region of Castile has been producing wine for five centuries. A more appropriate term would be "revolution", one that has resulted in some of Spain's most highly-valued white wines. Verdejo and Viura are traditional varieties that are still being used, but methods applying cold fermentation are now bringing out all their hidden nuances. This unique and surprising character was described in 1996 in the article, "And Now for Something Completely Different: The White Wines of Rueda" (*SGT* No. 40).

bring in their grapes, in the nineties enologists came out and got mud on their boots. The young specialists coming out of agricultural school started traveling to see what was going on elsewhere, and then came home to spend long hours in the vineyards, designing, pruning and managing crops. They were

**SGT 1990**



**Jean León: The Man behind the Label**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 21, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1990  
 Author: Hawys Pritchard

SGT devoted another of its feature articles to Jean León, the champion of foreign varieties in Spain. Arriving here in the early 1960s, he pioneered the cultivation of Chardonnay and then introduced barrel fermentation techniques. By 1981 his wines had achieved such recognition that they were included on the menu for the inaugural dinner for Ronald Reagan. Today, it would be impossible to imagine regions such as Penedès without Chardonnay grapes and the other innovations introduced by León.

searching for ripeness, concentration, personality and the expression of the *terruño*. On these foundations, with the skill of their winemakers and spurred on by the prices being fetched by the Prioratos and the progress being made by the Riberas, from the first half of the nineties onwards, new styles started to appear for the Rioja reds. These were based on fruit with color, body and verve, limited aging characteristics and a more modern style. They soon started to triumph in the international markets while recovering positions at the top of the specialized press rankings which had been occupied by emerging areas such as the stars from Priorato and Ribera del Duero. The new Somontanos and other top-quality wines were appearing from every direction.

**Grandfather's vineyards**

Among the producer districts that profited from this new style were precisely some of the traditionally less lucky areas. These regions had had to fight against their environments in an attempt to lighten wines that naturally tended towards what had become known as the Mediterranean style. These were areas with tough growing conditions on poor, rough soil in harsh climates, with particularly hot summers, such as parts of Aragón along the Ebro River (Cariñena and Campo de Borja), the southern

region of Navarre, a good part of Catalonia (Montsant, south of Costers del Segre, Empordá), all of the eastern coast down to the area known as the Altiplano with its five designations of origin (Almansa, Alicante, Yecla, Jumilla and the southern part of Valencia) and beyond. This also included Bullas and the emerging red wine areas in Andalusia (Sierras de Málaga, Sierra de Cádiz) and even some inland areas such as the DO Toro and the giant La Mancha area. Previously marginal areas, they were now becoming modern and attractive. Young enologists took up the challenge of producing vigorous wines with no psychological barriers regarding alcohol content, and they found a real treasure in the native varieties. They were working on vineyards that had been neglected as people fled country life for the cities. The ancestral vineyards had only survived as a meager means of subsistence for the aging population that was left behind. These old vineyards were now behind the revitalization of whole districts, with their quality raw materials and the enthusiasm of young winemakers who were prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities they found there. This process, which had already taken place in Ribera del Duero in the eighties and was repeated in the nineties in Priorato and Rioja, gradually spread all over Spain. Facing the threat posed by Cabernet or Syrah, the old stocks of Garnacha,



Monastrell, Bobal, Cariñena and other minority varieties started to blossom once again, even some that had practically disappeared from the map. The pebbly wines made from unripe grapes were overtaken by reds made from very ripe grapes, with daring production methods and long periods of maceration to achieve a bright color.

At the turn of the century, the passion for bright colors persisted, but vegetal tannins were rejected. The key expressions came to be phenolic maturity and concentration, and the consequent

high alcohol content was no longer considered important. The reaction against pebbly wines led to the jammy wines that came along at just the right time in the late nineties. This was when studies were appearing on the heart-healthy qualities of moderate consumption of red wine (with its resveratrol, the

French paradox), spurring the sale of bright red wines full of beneficial substances. The wineries sold all of their production and areas such as Ribera del Duero, where prices were not cheap, finished off practically all of their stocks. And new horizons were opening up within the Spanish market. Although

## SGT 1991



### Marqués de Griñón: Wines with Pedigree

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 22, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1991

Author: Hawys Pritchard

Carlos Falcó, Marquis of Griñón is undoubtedly one of the most enterprising figures in the Spanish world of wine. In 1991, SGT focused on his activities from the previous decade. Falcó was a big supporter of the concept of estate wines in Spain and, from the start, worked with both native varieties such as Tempranillo and international ones such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. Over the years, the wines from his main winery, Dominio de Valdepeña, have secured a well-deserved place in the international market.



### Rosés, Rosados: The Very Pink of Courtesy

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 23, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 1991

Author: John Radford

Rosés, the "midway" wines that are rarely in the spotlight, have played a very important role among Spanish wines. In No. 23, SGT traveled round the different producer areas such as Valencia, La Mancha, Catalonia, Castile-Leon, Aragón and, of course, Navarre, reviewing the different grapes used. Other SGT articles featuring rosés were "Pink Parade" (No. 47, 1999) and "In the Pink: Rosès" (No. 61, 2004). These indicated the large number and the diversity of rosé wines in Spain.

there was a drop in wine consumption, the new generations of consumers were happy to try new brands, new wineries and new production areas. Rioja remained in the lead and broke all of its sales

SGT 1992



**Galician Wine: The Great White Hope**

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 26, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1992  
 Author: Victor Rodríguez

If white wines could be said to have a homeland, it would probably be Galicia. Monterrei, Valdeorras, Ribeiro, Ribera Sacra and Rías Baixas are the DOs that make up this enological map. SGT reported on the transition from bulk wines to the sale of bottled wines, on the basis of a wide range of native grapes, especially Albariño, Godello and Treixadura. The DOs were the subject of "Which Way at the Crossroads? Rías Baixas" (SGT No. 60, 2004), and the local varieties featured in "Albariño Grapes: The Essence of the Galician Rías Baixas" (SGT No. 12, 1988).

records, but there was room left for wines from other places and new stars appeared such as Montsant, Toro, Cigales, Jumilla, Campo de Borja and, more recently, Bierzo, as well as a whole series of *vinos de la tierra*, produced on the La Mancha plain.

**New century, new style**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century came along with all these new names, especially in the leading new area, Bierzo, which gained impetus with the arrival of Álvaro Palacios, the creator of Finca Dolé and L'Ermita. New life came to the center of Spain (Mérida, Vinos de Madrid, La Mancha, Manchuela, the new Ribera del Júcar and Uclés designations of origin and the first estate DOs) with the consolidation of the districts along the eastern Mediterranean coast and in the Balearics, and the Andalusian reds made their appearance.

There was also another change of style for the Spanish red wines. The tannic harshness of the pebbly wines had had their critics, but now the same started to happen with the jammy wines that were accused, strange though it may seem, as being wines for tasting rather than for drinking, as if good wine could only appear either on the table or in tasting sessions and not in both. The fact is that the good wines with body and color had gone a little too far. The sins committed at the turn of the century, not to mention some

crazy pricing, were over-maturation and over-extraction. Things were taken to extremes, resulting in pasty wines and undesirable vegetal tannins.

The answer came soon after with elegant wines, the current trend. It was not a question of going back to the past but rather consolidating past successes and creating more fluid, more courageous wines. Today's new, leading reds are the result of greater knowledge of all the processes involved, from the *terruño* concept still valid today to the wood used for aging. After learning internationally, today's Spanish enologists have continued progressing and now have plenty to offer others. Increasing numbers of specialists from around the world now come to learn in leading Spanish wineries.

The new reds have now lost their obsession for intensity of color but colors are still bright and the new techniques are giving rise to more stable tones. Harvesting is being brought forward slightly to prevent over-ripening and to limit alcohol content. Experiments with barrel wood have not always been 100% successful, but in general the aim is to conserve the character of the variety of wine as well as its *terruño*. Maceration periods are no longer being prolonged, thus avoiding the vegetal touches caused by over-extraction and more fluid, more balanced, elegant wines are being obtained, wines that are excellent for immediate drinking and improve with time.



## Not just red wines

Longevity is the key word for the new challenge facing the major Spanish wineries, that of white wines. The process has been similar to that of the reds, but with the difference that the virtues of certain native varieties were discovered early on, but progress was only achieved very recently.

As with reds, the emphasis on foreign varieties left a small number of magnificent, long-life whites, most of them varietals (Chardonnay Chivite Colección, Milmanda, Enate, Castillo de Monjardín, Jean León and others), but also some blends (Clarión, by Bodegas Viñas del Vero). But the discovery of the local varieties such as Albariño, Verdejo, Godello, Xarel·lo and others for a long time went no further than successful young wines. Clear examples are the Castilian Verdejo and the Galician Albariño wines, which taught the Spaniards to spend 1,000 pesetas (the equivalent of six euros) on a bottle of white when an aged Rioja red cost half the price. The fact is that the presence of foreign varieties is a longstanding tradition in Spain. They were said to exist in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rioja, when the French merchants were traveling around the main wine-producing regions in Spain. The Raventós family's archives, the creators of cava with their Codorniu, record the planting of Chardonnay in the 1920s, when the Great War had devastated the area of Champagne

SGT 1992 / 1995



### The Wines of El Bierzo: Brands for the Future

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 28, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1992

Author: Víctor Rodríguez

In the early 1990s, SGT recounted the promise of the El Bierzo wines. With native grapes such as Mencía, this region achieved DO status in 1989 and has since become consolidated not only as a top-ranking producer but, more importantly, as one with its own unique style. The increase in new DOs that were small in size but had great personality was documented in SGT articles such as "Aragón Wines" (No. 19, 1990) and the series on the "Wine Rivers: Duero" (No. 38, 1996), "Ebro" (No. 39, 1996), "Miño and Sil" (No. 40, 1996).



### Barrel Fermented White Wines: Wood Works

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 36, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 1995

Author: Andrés Proensa

A full account of the explosion of barrel-fermented white wines was given in No. 36 of SGT. Although this technique had been present in Spain for 20 years, it was only in the mid-1990s that it really blossomed. The author of this article explored its use in different regions of Spain, from the pioneer, Penedès, to the Canaries, and including Rioja and Navarre.



SGT 1999



**Winemakers at Work: Interchange of Technology in Spain and Abroad**  
*Spain Gourmetour* No. 47, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1999

Author: Jeremy Watson

SGT gave an overview of the most relevant and innovative winemakers at the time, both new arrivals such as Peter Sissek, Telmo Rodríguez and Fernando Chivite and the widely-acclaimed Miguel Torres and Carlos Falcó. The article also focused on the phenomenon of the traveling wine specialists, led by the Australian Nick Butler, and the adoption of new technologies such as controlled-temperature fermentation.

and emptied its cellars, leaving French sparkling wine to be produced in Spanish wineries. Evidence documenting this hangs from the walls of Bodegas Bilbaínas in Haro (La Rioja). Thus, with Chardonnay or native varieties, separately or in blends, the time came in recent years for the renovation of white wines. Generally speaking, those from foreign varieties in the most significant areas such as Somontano, Penedès or Navarre, now one of the Spanish enclaves for Chardonnay, maintain a style similar to that of their counterparts in the New World, although finer, more profound wines are being sought and achieved. At the same time new preparations are being explored for wines made from the most prestigious local grapes in order to promote two or three-year-old wines to complement, or replace, the young, year-old wines. Barrel fermentation followed by aging on the lees is a 40-year tradition in Spain, (this was the system used by Jean León for his white Chardonnay), but other methods that are less aggressive for wine are being tried out, such as production in large-capacity oak

cones, maturation in steel tanks with the lees or the use of new woods (cherry, acacia—there is already a wine aged in acacia, a Guilián Godello varietal). There is a whole generation of great, new wines from Rías Baixas, with wood (Veigadares and Gran Veigadares, Organistrum, Condes de Albarei, 1583 Albariño de Fefiñanes, barrel-fermented Fillaboa) or aged in the tank (Pazo de Señoráns. Albariño de Fefiñanes III Año, San Amaro, Fillaboa Monte Alto, Finca de Arantei).

### The challenge of longevity

The search is also on for wines that will last in the bottle, like some Albariños and some of the new Ribeiro wines, or the Godello wines, as they are the new stars on the Galician viticultural scene. This is a variety that was rescued in the 1970s from a few stocks growing haphazardly around the DO Valdeorras, in inland Galicia. It is one of the most promising districts for the production of whites in recent years, to the extent that it now represents serious competition for

Rías Baixas, the homeland of Albariño, or for the traditional Galician wine-producing area, DO Ribeiro. The champions are wines by Gutiérrez or the new, exceptional As Sortes, by Rafael Palacios.

The battle of the whites even involved the traditional varieties that were previously considered as being of use only for distillation or aging in the wood, such as the classic Viura Rioja whites. But the new techniques are achieving unimaginable results from previously unexploited varieties such as Viura (in Rioja fermented in the barrel) and even Airén, from La Mancha, with some surprising wines (Frcavio, Finca Antigua). And others are being tried out: Garnacha Blanca in parts of Catalonia (complemented with classic stocks from the Rhône district, especially Viognier), Xarel·lo, Catalonia's emblematic white grape, Merseguera from the east coast and the rare Picapoll from inland Catalonia.

There is still a long way to go for whites, but the ball is rolling. The same can be said for sparkling wines, with cava being the undisputed leader and still growing. As with whites, work on cavas focuses on two aspects—first enhancing the personality of the product and the brand, then obtaining cavas that keep well in the bottle.

## The world's best rosés

This enthusiasm to produce wines to last was even noted in rosés, wines

that are renowned as being best to drink in the short term. Rosés have had a fluctuating history over the last 25 years. In the early 1980s, there were areas that specialized in the

production of rosés, a type of wine that was directly associated with the name Navarre and the Garnacha variety. There were other areas, such

## SGT 1999 / 2001



### Miguel Torres: Wine Diplomat

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 49, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 1999

Author: Víctor Rodríguez

Miguel Torres figured in the third of the series "A Lifetime Devoted to Wine", which also portrayed other great personalities from the wine world such as Agustí Torelló Mata (SGT No. 48, 1999). Under his guidance, the centenarian Torres winery underwent thorough modernization, following in the footsteps of other great winemakers such as Carlos Falcó. Being free of any particular enological bias, Miguel Torres was able to introduce new varieties and vinification techniques. He was also one of the first of the Spanish winemakers to invest abroad. As part of a new series on the investments made by Spanish wine companies, issue No. 69 (2007) reported on his winery in Chile's Central Valley, run by Marimar Torres.



### DOCa Rioja: From Classic to Cutting Edge

*Spain Gourmetour* No. 53, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2001

Author: Andrés Proensa

The series of articles published in SGT about Rioja wines, one of Spain's leading producer regions, closed with this article published in No. 53. It described how the DO had developed over the last century and a half in three main stages. First in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then with structural renovation in the 1970s and finally, with the "new Riojas" in the 1990s. The last 20 years have seen SGT articles on the Alava Rioja wines (SGT No. 7, 1987), the classic wines from the Upper Rioja (SGT No. 13, 1988) and the white barrel-fermented Riojas (SGT No. 27, 1992).

as Castile-Leon, where rosé received the traditional name *clarete*, just like those from Cigales from the eastern part of Ribera del Duero, in the provinces of Burgos and Soria, and in other districts such as Páramo de León (today home to the DOs Valles

de Benavente and Tierra de León), and the current quality wine-producing area of Ribera del Arlanza. With the technological improvements in wineries, rosés joined the group of young wines that were pushing forward in the eighties,

and the catalogue of good rosés expanded to include names such as Penedès, Utiel-Requena, Valencia, Jumilla and others, even Rioja. Many of them used grapes from old vineyards that later were fully taken up for the production of reds. But the grapes were good and the wines were made carefully, sparking a revolution among rosés and giving rise to some of the world's best. But their virtues of fruitiness, freshness and drinkability were lost after about one year. So formulae to counter this decline were sought, including barrel aging, although for a shorter time than for the classic Rioja or Cigales rosés. The best results seem to be obtained by staggering placement of the different batches on the market and keeping the wine motionless until it is to be bottled for sale.

Rosés were also affected by the renovation of vineyards and by the impetus of the reds, but the result was not always positive. The grapes for many of the new plantations were used for rosé while waiting for the plant to become sufficiently mature to be used for reds. This gave rise to fresh rosés and led to the use of new varieties resulting in luxury products such as rosés from Merlot, Syrah and Petit Verdot. But the grapes used were often considered second best and, like elsewhere in the world, good rosés tend to be scarce because the grapes are not grown specifically for rosé wine. When rosé wines are made from

SGT 2004 / 2006



**Álvaro Palacios: Back to the Future**  
 Spain Gourmetour No. 62, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2004  
 Author: Luis Cepeda

In 2004, for its series Big Names in Wine, SGT interviewed Alvaro Palacios, one of the architects of the Priorato miracle and the man behind Clos Dofi and Les Terrasses. After his experience in Priorato, this young enologist turned to El Bierzo and this new adventure led to the San Martín, Las Lamas, Moncerval and La Faraona wines, mostly made from native varieties such as Garnacha, Mencía and Tempranillo.



**Spain: A Garden of Grape Varieties**  
 Spain Gourmetour No. 67, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2006  
 Author: Andrés Proensa

SGT devoted its feature article to an ambitious tour around the many native Spanish varieties: Cariñena, Mencía, Monastrell, Prieto Picudo, Tempranillo, Garnacha, Airén, Albariño, etc., a long list of traditional varieties that have helped give Spanish wines a marked personality and have adapted well to the new processing techniques. Many of these grapes had already featured in monographic articles, such as Godello (SGT No. 41, 1997), Graciano (SGT No. 42, 1997), Viura/Macabeo (SGT No. 43, 1997) and Palomino Fino (SGT No. 35, 1995).



specific batches of grapes (from young vines, from plots in cooler areas, from high-yielding vines), their quality improves and this is the practice followed today by producers of the best Spanish rosés. There is also another quality rosé that is made from the wine drained out of red wine tanks in order to raise the proportion of skins to must and obtain more concentrated reds. Altogether, the end result is a very attractive range of rosés, from the classic, light salmon-colored ones such as the Riojas from the "rosé triangle"—San Asensio, Cordovín and Badarán in the Ureña valley in the Upper Rioja—to the modern rosés in various tones of strawberry. This segment is receiving a lot of commercial attention, especially in the markets along the Spanish coasts and in countries such as Great Britain and the United States.

## Fortified wines

The positive vibes of modernity are even reaching the most traditional segment: that of fortified aperitif and dessert wines. In the case of the legendary wines from Jerez, Málaga and Montilla-Moriles, where little can be added to their greatness, special emphasis is placed on the essence that comes from the very old, treasured wines in old casks. The creation in 2001 of the new categories VOS and VORS, for wines with an average age of 20 and 30 years respectively, has revitalized a declining sector and brought to light some real jewels. The finos and manzanillas have been slightly lightened, placing them on par with white wines for serving at the table, so that they are no longer served exclusively as aperitif wines and their position in international markets is ensured.

A special mention should be made of dessert wines, a sector that is currently increasingly in popularity the world over and in which Spain has some great wines to offer. The list begins with the dark wines, old wines made from raisins, from Muscatel and especially from Pedro Ximénez. These are classic, dense wines that often feature on the menus of avant-garde restaurants. At the other extreme are the young, pale, fresh wines made from Muscatel and other varieties using all the techniques in vogue, from late harvesting (which for many parts of

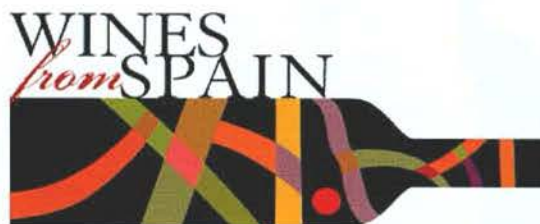
Spain means that the grapes are still on the plant in September) to ice wines and the recovery of old styles such as toasty wines from Ribeiro, traditionally made from grapes that have been dried in the attics of homes. Today this process takes place in the winery or in specially-built drying chambers.

Throughout Spain, winemakers are trying out new approaches, adopting new trends and building a future that fascinates with its constant evolution and enhancement. But most important of all is that old complexes are fading fast. Today you rarely hear a Spanish enologist speak of emulating the Bordeaux, Borgogne, Rhône or Californian wines. Now they talk of the *terruño*, optimization of quality and bringing out the personality of each of the regions, districts and soils, as well as the personal contribution made by each producer. And this is the philosophy behind a splendid future for Spanish wine.

*Andrés Proensa is a wine writer, director of the magazine PlanetaVino and author of the Guía Proensa.*



Wines  
 from  
 Spain



W I N E S   F R O M   S P A I N :  
 G R A N   R E S E R V A   8 2

Wines from Spain (WFS) is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Set up in 1982 to promote Spanish wines abroad, its path has run in parallel with Spanish wines, often meeting up with them on the way. After its close contact with the sector over the years—gauging its needs and devising strategies to meet them—WFS has become a living chronicle of its development. Throughout this period, it has been the public face of the Wines Department of the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) and of Spain's Economic and Commercial Offices in other countries.

There have been two main periods in the history of WFS. The initial efforts focused on setting up promotion centers, starting out with the first branch of WFS in the United Kingdom. This was followed by the US, Germany and the Netherlands. The strategy was to promote the image of Spanish wines through the Spanish designations of origin. "Originally," says Rosa Angulo, head of ICEX's wine department, "the policy was to work sector by sector. We negotiated with the

regulating councils that were keen to internationalize their businesses and helped them draw up their marketing plans." At the time, Europe saw the DOs from a geographical point of view, and the giants in the New World had not yet raised their heads. This made it relatively easy to publicize the virtues of Navarre and Rioja wines and sherries. But, by 2001, it was clear that a new approach was needed. "The multiplication of DOs to the point when there was more than 60 of them, of which about 17 were being promoted abroad by ICEX, and the consequent overlapping of messages to consumers and, above all, the arrival on the market of the New World wines with their simple but efficient marketing models meant we had to change our way of thinking," says Angulo. "And the result was the new General Plan for Wines from Spain." So, from the promotion of specific designations of origin, the move was made towards the idea of Spanish wines as being synonymous with quality and

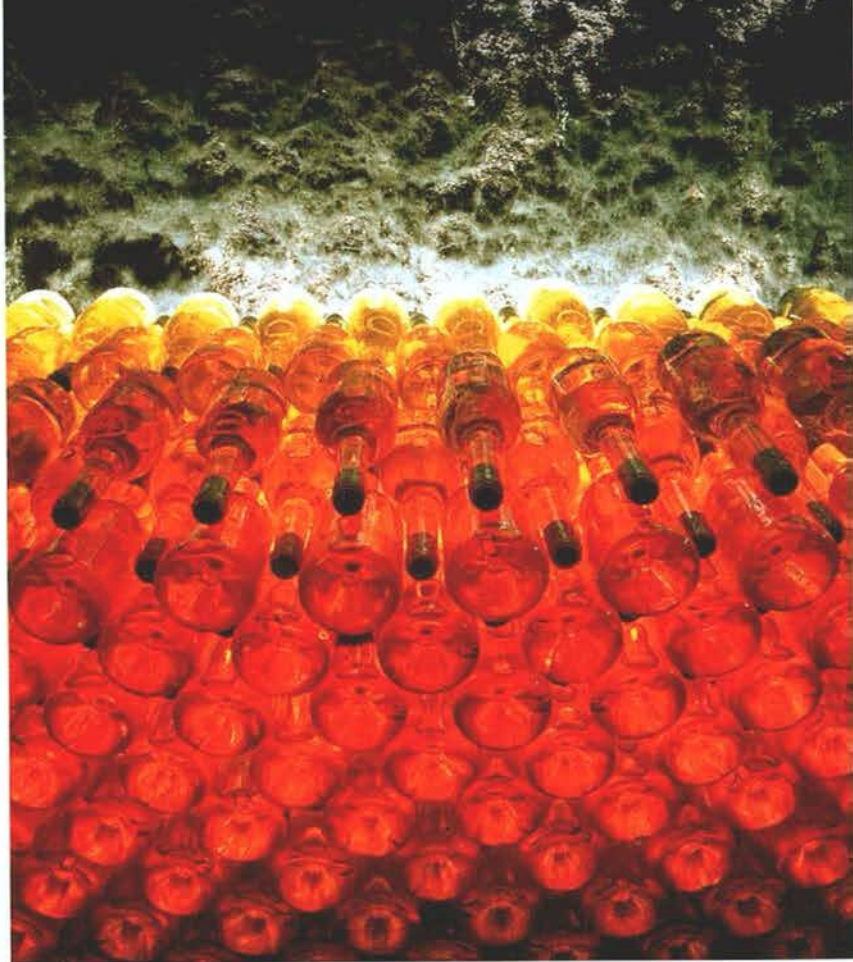
variety, whatever their place of origin. This general plan was applied initially in Sweden, the UK and Japan, and soon proved to be effective. "Right from the start, we felt we had to work hand in hand with the sector, so we set up the Consultancy Group for the Promotion of Wines from Spain. This has 15 or 16 members representing the interests of the whole sector, from small wineries and large groups to regulating councils and cooperatives." In addition to careful selection of the participants, every effort was made to design programs and activities that would meet companies' needs, always with an emphasis on training. The exporters soon noted the advantages of this strategy which involved working with quality wine producers to transmit the image of Spain as a pioneering country in the wine market. "The better the image of the companies, the greater the pull effect for the rest of the sector," explains Angulo. Both traditional winemakers—Mariano Garcia, the



Marquis of Griñón and Fernando Chivite and the new stars on the Spanish viticultural scene—Álvaro Palacios, Peter Sisseck, Sara Pérez and Telmo Rodríguez—played an essential role in this change of strategy and collaborated at all times with Wines from Spain. Proof of this was “Spanish Superstars: The Next Generation”, an event organized recently by WFS in New York which René Barbier, Jr., María José López Heredia, Rafael Palacios and Eduardo García attended. Putting a face to the wine has been one of the latest innovations in the WFS approach. This conceptual change also made its mark on WFS’s image. In the words of Angulo, “We felt we should not just change our message but also our image. Previously, our main concern was the distinguishing features of each producer region, but there was nothing to weave it all together, except for the logo of the Spanish flag in the shape of a bottle. So we signed on with an agency to study our image in three of our top markets and to come up with proposals

for a unified concept. As a result, a new image and logo were designed, and the change affected our stands at trade fairs. The reception has been excellent.” Today WFS is concentrating on six priority markets: the US, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as another 19, including Japan, Canada, Mexico, Russia and Ireland. This year one of the main actions has been to create a committee to promote agri-food in the Asian market, with of all the regions of Spain joining forces for the Year of Spain in China. Everything indicates that Spain will soon be on the crest of the wave. The focus on international markets’ growing conditions and native varieties gives it a head start. “Most Spanish wineries use native varieties, an advantage that other countries don’t have and one that is being promoted by ICEX. But we’re also up there, competing at the highest level with wines made from international varieties, such as those from the New World. That’s why this is a good time for

Spain,” says Angulo. She adds, “By celebrating the WFS’s birthday, we’re recognizing the efforts made by the wineries and the DO Regulating Councils to reach today’s high quality levels.” After reviewing the past 25 years, Angulo looks into her crystal ball. “The wineries have made, and are making, large investments in the future and are becoming consolidated in the quality segments in the main consumer markets. Their export departments are increasingly staffed by young, well-trained people who are setting up new projects or new businesses to sell quality wines. We have great faith in our future in the medium and long term and trust that consumers in other countries will appreciate everything that Spanish wines have to offer.”



# Vega Sicilia HUNGARIAN ROYALTY

The wine-growing region of Tokay, Hungary, boasts world heritage status, and part of it is, oddly enough, the heritage of the Vega Sicilia wineries. We are referring to the centuries-old Oremus vineyards, birthplace of the world's oldest and most famous wines—Tokay, a nectar born of the so-called “noble rot”. Almost 15 years have passed since the company's first investment, so the time seems ripe for a visit to the Vega Sicilia sanctuary on the Castilian Ribera del Duero plain to take stock of the Álvarez family's first international venture.



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TEXT  
DAVID CÁNOVAS WILLIAMS

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PHOTOS  
VEGA SICILIA

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TRANSLATION  
JENNY MCDONALD

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Through a curtain of rain, we follow a gravel path leading up to a stone building and a sign in black and white with just two words: Vega Sicilia. We are shown into a brick, barrel-vaulted hall that answers one of our questions even before the interview starts—austere luxury, perhaps a defining characteristic of this winery's philosophy. Pablo Álvarez, the company's CEO, makes a striking impression, like a powerful animal carefully calculating its strength. He speaks calmly and his gestures are restrained, as if bearing the weight of many years of tradition. The Álvarez family bought Vega Sicilia in 1982 and, one decade later, took over Oremus (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 40). The project was to move outside Spain, to get involved in the production of these legendary wines—a far cry from the classic, Castilian reds—and spark a technical revolution. A parallel could be drawn between the two wineries—both had a history and a name and both were looking

towards the future. “But when we entered Oremus, we had experience and we knew exactly what we wanted,” says Álvarez, or Don Pablo, as he is known here.

## In the heart of Tokaj

Tokaj, in the northeastern region of Hungary on the river Tisza and its tributary, the Bodrog, was the world's first region to classify its vineyards by the quality of their wines, 70 years before Bordeaux. In fact, the Oremus vineyards received the highest rank, Premier Grand Cru Classé. The Spanish winery started out with 35 ha (86.5 acres) and, gradually overcoming the legal barriers in terms of the purchase of vineyards, eventually reached a total of 120 ha (296.5 acres). “Our plans for growth are complete, and our priority is now to fine-tune our wine production.” Things have by no means been easy. The company has had to invest ten million euros, “the

largest investment in this area, I believe,” says Álvarez, and carry out a transition from the outdated Communist model to that of a modern, cutting-edge enterprise. “From 1993 to 1996 we were buying up land and setting up our project and then, at the end of the decade, we launched a large-scale renovation. But it's been a slow process. The cellars alone span about 4 km (2.5 mi).” It is in this underground network, 30 m (98.4 ft) deep in some parts, that the Oremus wines age in their own good time, and considering that excavations started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it's no surprise that some changes were needed. “Most of the work,” continues Álvarez, “has been carried out since 1998, including the construction of the new winery, which opened in 2001.” Partly carved out of the hillside, it is a 3-storey construction with a triple selection belt—one strip for each type of grape. There has been an intensive replanting of vines in addition to work on improving drainage. But it

all crystallized in 2003, when Oremus received recognition as winery of the year in Hungary, an award granted annually by the Hungarian Wine Academy and the Federation of Hungarian Grapes and Wine Producers.

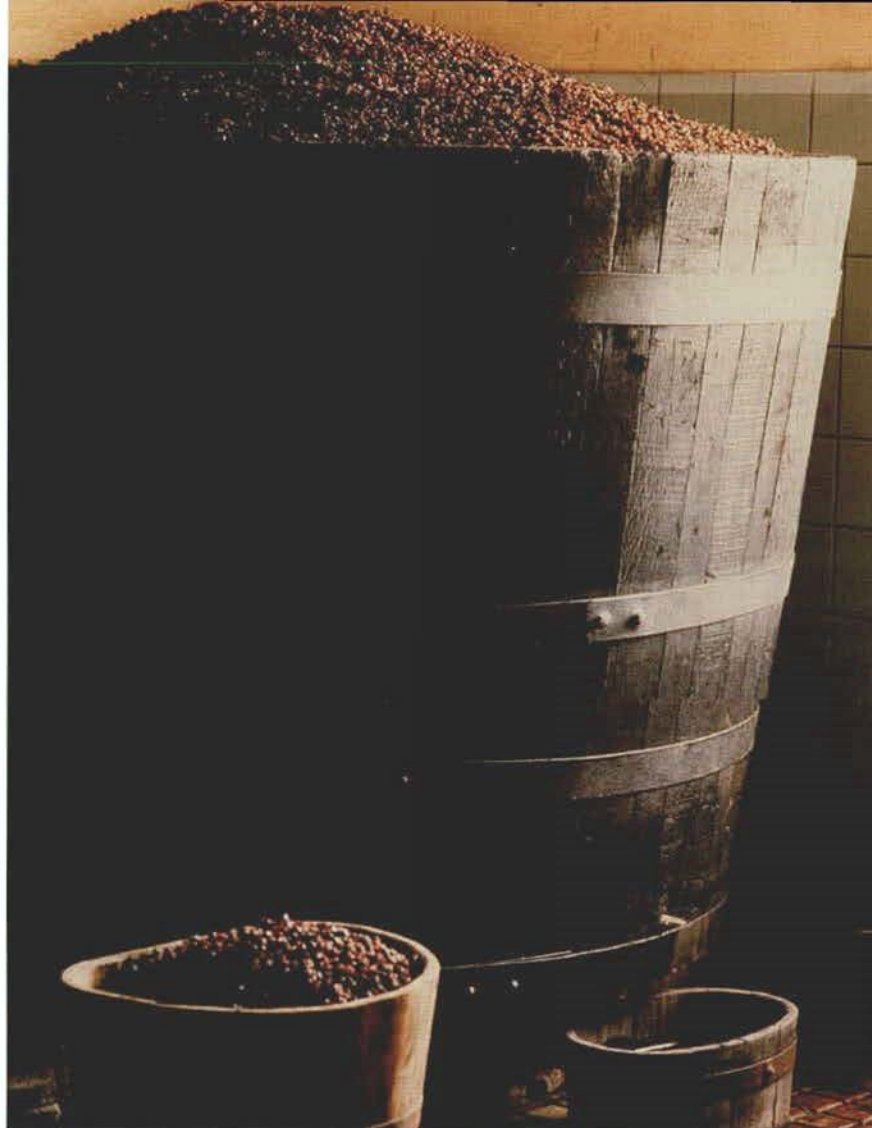
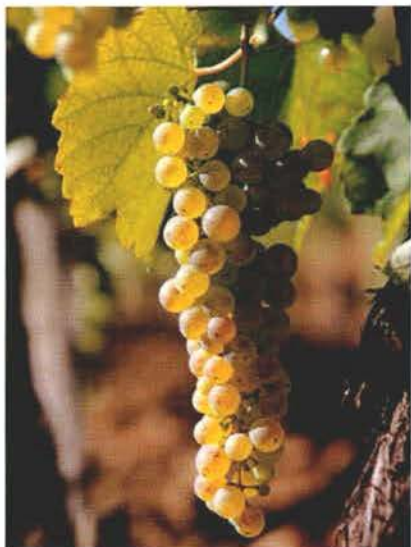
But in addition to modernization, Vega Sicilia also had to wrestle with oblivion. "It may seem ironic, but what was the oldest wine in the world, at least in terms of its production method, had become a great unknown. Simply put, during the Communist era, the Tokay wines

missed out on half a century, the most important years for wines in Europe. So the main challenge for Vega Sicilia is to bring Tokay back onto the international scene." Vega Sicilia has never used the standard advertising channels for its wines, preferring to be tasted on the recommendations of opinion leaders, with quality being its most redeeming characteristic. This was the method used to sell Oremus, one that is gradually obtaining the desired results today. Oremus has now made Spain its third largest

market, after Hungary and the US, paving the way for other wineries from the same area. It is also highly appreciated in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom.

Another challenge in selling Tokay is that they are liqueur wines, mostly drunk as a dessert wine or as an aperitif. Such wines are always slower sellers. The inevitable comparison is with the French Sauternes. "The Sauternes wines are 200 years younger than the Tokay," explains Álvarez, "and our grapes are harvested manually, one by one. This





is not the case for Sauternes.” He goes on to speak with pride of the balance between sweetness and natural acidity, and the seductive lightness of the Tokay wines.

## Corrupt, rich and triumphant perfumes

And now for the secret behind these famous Hungarian wines. The special combination of moisture and warmth in this part of Hungary encourages the growth of *Botrytis cinerea*, otherwise known as “noble rot”. This mold, which is responsible for such mythical wines as Château d’Yquem, dries up the grape, increasing its glycerine content and giving rise to the characteristic creamy texture of the Tokay wines. It also leads to a complex range of aromas: apricot, quince, honey, tropical fruits, straw and tar, to name but a few. The

botryzied grapes, called *aszú* in Hungarian (meaning withered), are added to the base wine in varying proportions, measured by the 20-l (5.3-gal) basket or *puttonyos*. The number of *puttonyos* determines the type of Tokay wine, from the mildest and driest to the top-of-the-pyramid *Eszencia*, made exclusively from *aszú* grapes. In this case, the sugar content is such that the yeasts may need centuries—literally—to carry out the necessary fermentation. “I recently drank a Tokay in London with one of our importers whose business dates back to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was an *Eszencia* from 1874, and it was still drinkable,” says the chairman of Vega Sicilia. Such wonders of nature can only happen in the enigmatic world of wine, where age and decay become transformed into beauty and harmony.

## Thinning the ranks

Over the years, Vega Sicilia has been working on creating a distinctive range of Oremus wines, and the philosophy of this Valladolid winery is clear. “The world of wine today is changing so quickly that it’s impossible to keep up with all the new products appearing on the market. I believe in improving the wines that you already produce. In the case of Tokay, I think there were too many wines,” and he compares the process adopted with Oremus with the policy of limiting the product range as followed in Spain. “When we made the decision to eliminate Valbuena 3<sup>o</sup> in 1987, it was not because we were bringing out Alión—that’s a different wine, a wine in its own right. It was because we wanted to focus on two wines, Único and Valbuena.” Today, Oremus comprises six wines. The first is Mandolás, a dry white wine,

the first of its kind from this region, made from Furmint grapes. Together with Harslevelű and Muscat Lunel, these are the three main varieties growing locally. "We believe in this wine. I personally believe in it. No wine like it had been produced in this region before, and I consider it to be a magnificent wine sold at an excellent price." It's followed by Late Harvest, a wine made from grapes that are very ripe but not necessarily botyitized yet. Next come the Tokay Aszú, made with three, five and six puttonyos. "We've always believed that the five puttonyo Tokay has the best balance of them all," claims Álvarez, leaning back in his armchair. Last but certainly not least

is the crown jewel, the mythical Eszencia, of which production is very limited. "We are about to reach maximum production. With Mandolás we make between 100,000 and 150,000 bottles a year, and we want to reach 200,000 in the medium term, in addition to 60,000 to 100,000 of Tokay Aszú. The idea is to reach 300,000 bottles a year."

### The Vega Sicilia heritage

The new Vega Sicilia era in Hungary has already made its mark. "Since we arrived, the best vintages have been 1999 and 2000. They were prodigious, as were the 1996 and

2004 vintages." But the Oremus cellars also house other gems. "Right from the start we took on the former manager of Bokombinat, the state-owned company that ran the Tokay vineyards. He knew what the best vintages were and advised us to purchase a small stock to sell and to keep. We have some excellent 1940s and 50s, and others that have been bought at auctions."

I ask about the "Vega Sicilia touch" and he responds frankly. "We always said we were not going to teach the Hungarians how to make Tokay," he says, showing his profound respect for their age-old tradition. In fact, the Oremus vineyards are 400 years old and are said to be the place





where the botrytis mold was first discovered. Tokay was the wine of tsars and monarchs, so its homeland could be considered sacred ground. If Vega Sicilia has contributed something, apart from extensive technological modernization, it is its special concept of balance and a firm commitment to quality at any cost. "I always say that everything great must have balance. A great wine must be whole, with no single predominating element." And if we were to define the new Oremus wines, they could be said to be somewhat fresher and lighter than the Tokay wines that preceded them. Álvarez considers familiarization with the vine as a living being to be one of the keys to making wine. "It takes many years to understand vines. Winemakers talk all the time about vines but really we have no idea. I always joke and say that winemakers used to consider grapes something of an unavoidable necessity for making wine, suggesting that wine was really made in the winery. But the grape is the foundation and accounts for the wine's personality, or at least 50% of it. You then have to consider the methodology, the care, the expertise, etc." And he mentions their secret ingredient. "There are people who know what they're doing but, in the end, what really counts is the effort

they make." His words are reminiscent of Johann Sebastian Bach, who said, "Anyone who works as hard as I do will go just as far." When questioned about future acquisitions by the company, the chairman is not so forthcoming. I mention the rumors about a possible purchase in Bordeaux. His answer is rather ambiguous: "We'd like to make another investment outside Spain, and it's true that we've always been very interested in France. We have nothing against the New World, but we believe our future is here, in the Old World." When I press for names, he says, "Vega Sicilia is always looking at new possibilities."

For the time being, the only thing that's clear is Vega Sicilia's involvement in Oremus. "There's still plenty to learn in Tokay. I don't think you can ever make the ultimate wine. You have to continue the learning and investigation processes. We need 20 to 25 years to know what we're dealing with, and there's going to be work left for those following in our footsteps," he adds, with a smile.

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## WEBSITES



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

A brief history of the Tokay wines and the Oremus range.

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

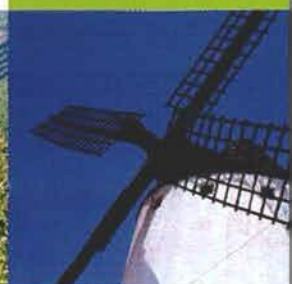
The Vega Sicilia site.

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# PURSUIT of WINE



## Wine Tourism (II)

In Spain, the European country boasting the greatest biodiversity, a 100-km (62-mi) drive can take you out of one landscape and into another, radically different, one. Between one side of a valley and the other, one bank of a river and another and the upper and lower slopes of a mountain, the climate can shift from Mediterranean to Continental, through Atlantic, to semi-desertic and even subtropical. This wealth of contrasts accounts for one of the widest vinicultural ranges in the world. Vines carpet sea-side terrain, steep-sided gorges, river banks, vast inland plains and areas with volcanic soil. In the second part of this series we travel the Iberian Peninsula from north to south, exploring regions famous for wine-making and the culture that goes with it, and you know what? Our luggage couldn't be more oddly assorted.

**Text**  
Celia  
Hernando

**Translation**  
Hawys  
Pritchard



Whereas our first itinerary stayed within the limits of northern Spain, this time we travel the length of *la piel de toro* (the “bull’s hide”-shaped Iberian Peninsula) from top to bottom. We’ve be visiting the whites of Galicia at the top to the finos of Jerez at the bottom, with the wines of La Mancha (championed by Don Quixote), the powerful reds of Jumilla and Bullas (domain of the Monastrell grape) and sweet PXs from Montilla-Moriles in between. Our purpose is to take look at what the various regions have to offer by way of wine tourism: clearly, wine is the denominator common to them all, and it is indeed the main attraction. Yet each of them takes its own different approach to wine tourism: there are winery and vineyard visits, tastings, wine and food matching, gastronomy... No two trips are the same as every winery is unique, with its own background story and above all its own individual wines. What wine tourism offers is a chance to discover the uniqueness of each territory firsthand, and to understand how that shapes the personality of the wines it produces, guided by the people most closely involved: oenologists, proprietors and even the local inhabitants.

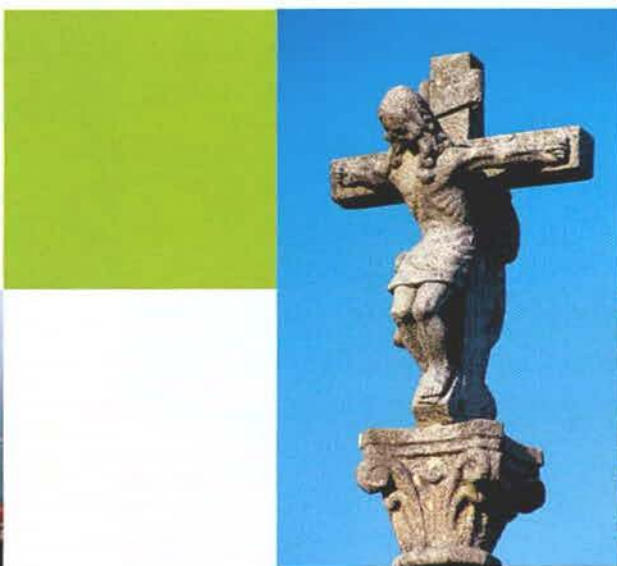
Although this kind of tourism is still in its infancy in Spain, it is developing rapidly. The growing number of destinations accredited by ACEVIN, the Spanish Association of Wine Cities attests to this. ACEVIN is the organization that, with the backing of the Secretariat General for Tourism, created the Wine Routes of Spain brand in 2001. Winegrowing regions involved in the scheme are required to meet obligatory minimum requirements in such areas as management, signage, promotion and marketing, and as a result the brand is already perceived as a quality guarantee by thousands of tourists.

Having taken advantage of the wine tourism opportunities offered by La Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Somontano and Penedès, we now complete our exploration of ACEVIN-certified wine routes. These include one for **Navarre**, an area traversed for centuries by millions of pilgrims en route to Santiago de Compostela and famous for its rosé wines, and Valencia’s **Utiel-Requena**, in the west of the Autonomous Community of Valencia, one of the last redoubts of the red variety, Bobal. However, our trip represents just one of many possible permutations. You can design your own, customized

route or stick to a tried and tested one (Finding your way, page 55 and Websites, page 56). The number of tourist-orientated wine routes is growing by the minute. As we speak, several designations of origin are at the point of joining the prestigious certified routes group.

## Whites from green Spain

Galicia just doesn’t match the picture-perfect postcard image that so many millions of tourists see in their mind’s eye when they think of Spain. In fact, this region in the northwest of the peninsula is more reminiscent of the English countryside except for the fact that, here, the landscape’s greenery is made up not only of fields and woods but also of countless vineyards. These consist of tiny plots the size of small gardens, and they are cultivated as such. All the care and effort that goes into them is reflected in wines whose quality places them among the best whites in Spain. And although their commercial horizons are constantly expanding, they remain very much rooted in the tradition from which their character derives.



Right on the Atlantic coast, a stone's throw from quiet, white-sand beaches, is one Galicia's prime grape-growing areas. The DO **Rías Baixas** lies between the sea and the broad estuary of the Umiã and Miño Rivers in the Pontevedra province. Its cool, damp climate envelops us as we step off the plane, and it will be our constant companion throughout our visit here. As we soon learn, these meteorological conditions are ideal for growing Albariño, the variety that reigns all but supreme in this area's vineyards. It is, however, a delicate grape that requires extra-careful cultivation to reach the perfect degree of ripeness. This explains why the vines are trained on tall, granite posts so that air can circulate around the grape bunches and prevent them from rotting. Given the height of the vines, which are harvested exclusively by hand, and the small-holding pattern traditional to the region's agriculture, it comes as no surprise that most of the area's bodegas are small-scale. The same reasons explain why the cooperative is a preferred formula among Galicia's vine growers. If the figures are anything to go by, it works well for them. The Condes de Albarei Cooperative's production has doubled in the last four years and is

still increasing. Attaching ourselves to a group of wine tourists being shown around the co-op's premises, we stop in front of one of the tanks. In a matter of seconds, the oenologist deftly extracts a sample of Albariño for each of us to taste, and although she warns us that the wine isn't ready yet, we can already discern its characteristic features. Fresh, dry, fruity, intense aromas of white flowers and apples, with just a zing of acidity—these are the most reiterated comments during this impromptu tasting. The corridors of the Martín Codax winery are also buzzing with activity. This is most productive cooperative in DO Rías Baixas, and its premises are being expanded on to meet growing demand from the American market—now Albariño's biggest consumer outside Spain. The winery, which takes its name from a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Galician troubadour, has its own *obradoiro* (Galician for "tasting workshop"), where games are used to train visitors' senses of taste and smell. Its most spectacular feature, however, is the view. From its hilltop site one looks down over the valley below, where countless little plots make up a vast patchwork of vineyards. On a clear day one can see as far as the sea, punctuated by

the islands of O Grove, La Toja and Arousa.

"The tide's out at the moment," a local tells us. "If you hurry, you'll see the *marisqueiras* still working hard gathering shellfish." We follow his instructions and head for the Port of Chazo on Arousa island, a tiny natural harbor, vivid with picturesque vessels of all shapes and sizes. On the shore, a group of women are churning up the sand with rakes, chatting, joking and laughing as they do their grueling job which involves bending over for hours on end. Their bucketsful of clams and cockles will be auctioned off just a few feet away at the local wholesale fish market, a place with so much atmosphere and interesting sights and sounds that even those who don't go to buy anything find it fascinating.

There are two main sources of livelihood for the inhabitants of these coastal villages—wine and fish—and the harmony between them seems serendipitous. Albariño's finely balanced acidity makes it the perfect companion for seafood from the *rias* (Galicia's fjord-like inlets). The area's many family-run restaurants serve unbeatable, simple, traditional food that uses seasonal produce as its starting point. A good



sample meal might start off with a serving of *pimientos de Padrón* (tiny green, and occasionally hot, fried peppers seasoned with coarse sea salt), followed by *navajas* (razor clams), *almejas* (clams) or *vieiras* (scallops) and then—appetite permitting—by a ría-caught fish cooked on the griddle, accompanied by a well-chilled Albariño, the perfect foil for all those fresh sea flavors.

The many popular festivals and *romerías* (rural pilgrimages) that saturate the Galician calendar during the summer months offer a marvelous opportunity for sampling the local cuisine. They cater to all tastes. *Bandeira*, for example, holds a *Fiesta de la Empanada*, dedicated to what is Galicia's answer to the Cornish Pasty. Locals pride themselves on making them according to the recipe used centuries ago by monks and innkeepers catering to pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. The list of festivals is endless, as are the products they celebrate: mussels, oysters, *cocido gallego* (the local version of this national stew features various kinds of meat, chorizo, cabbage or turnip greens, etc.), and so on. Cambados holds a fair dedicated to Albariño. On the first

Sunday in August each year, the streets of this little town are packed with booths in which DO Rías Baixas' wines demonstrate their range. For that one day, everything revolves around them. There are tastings, competitions and solemn swearing-in ceremonies of new knights of the Order of Albariño who vow to "always to defend this wine and consider it rightful ruler of all the wines of the Christian world". This coastal municipality, considered the Albariño capital, was the source of the DO's first brand, Pazo de Fefiñanes. The winery with the same name occupies the centuries-old outbuildings of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century fortified *pazo* (the Galician word for palace, or mansion) once owned by the former viscount of the region, who was proprietor and overlord of most of the surrounding land. At harvest time, grapes being delivered to the winery provide a fascinating spectacle for people passing through the adjoining square, a huge, austere promenade presided over by the fine Romanesque church of San Benito. Galicia's *pazos* are spacious mansions, occupied in earlier times by powerful local figures. Closely enmeshed with the rural world, many of them had their own small bodegas for making wine to supply

family needs. Pazo A Capitana in Cambados has retained four wine presses from its original winery which are now displayed as decorative items in the modern one. The current owners have done up the rooms of what was once the summer mansion of a famous 15<sup>th</sup>-century captain, and turned it into a quiet country hotel. The majestic stone building is organized around a spacious courtyard from which there is access to a well-tended vineyard, planted exclusively with Albariño.

## Galicia with a Mediterranean spirit

Leaving the coast behind us, we now set off to find out where and when Galicia's wine-producing story first began. We have been driving for less than half an hour, but the landscape has already changed significantly. Towns are becoming fewer and fewer, and the earlier scattering of houses now gives way to verdant woodland of pine, oak, chestnuts and other species characteristic of Mediterranean climes. The permanent mist is no longer with us, and the sun starts to shine with surprising force. We are heading for the heart of *Ribeiro*, land of



countless valleys, and we are about to discover the secret contained therein (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 60). The ancient Romans recognized that the mild, sunny climate of this inland region made it ideal for vine growing. They seem to have been undaunted by geographical obstacles, tackling the Herculean task of digging out terraces from the mountainsides to gain more land than the natural landscape provided, and planting them with vines. What amounted to a colossal feat of civil engineering was continued and expanded in the Middle Ages by various monastic orders, which succeeded in making Ribeiro wine something of a favorite in Britain and Flanders. "Absolutely all the land you see before you would have been covered in vines centuries ago," explains Xose Lois Sebio, Coto de Gomariz's oenologist, as he skillfully maneuvers his 4x4 over the steeply sloping terrain around the winery. "The containing walls that pattern the hillsides—worn down but still standing the test of time—say it all." Since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when that era of splendor was brought to an end by religious and political problems (Galicia's Catholic bishops refusing to engage in trade with Protestant lands), other vegetation

has progressively encroached on the vine plantations. Today, however, several winery-owners are setting out to redress the balance. Coto de Gomariz is among those building up the terraces again and replanting them with native grape varieties. A visit to Viña Costeira also begins with a pleasant tour of its vineyards—Treixadura, Godello, Sousón, Loureira—the range of varieties is impressive, and all of them are native. "It's the equivalent of giving a painter a palette full of colors to work with," beams Manuel Castro, oenologist of the region's biggest co-op. "That's why a classic Ribeiro wine has always been a blend," he explains. In the tasting room, the sampling concludes with two sweet surprises. The first is a little glass of Tostado, historically a Galician wine made with raisined grapes produced in tiny quantities that never exceed 2,000 half-liter bottles a year. The second is a gorgeous *licor de café* (coffee liqueur) made with top-flight Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee. We speculate about how it might fare at the annual Licor de Café festival in Berán, during which the local bodegas throw open their doors to tourists and the merely curious. The tradition of distilling pressed

grape skins and pips to make *aguardientes* (marcs) is so deep-rooted among the people of Galicia that many still produce their own, home-made versions for home consumption.

The folk festival calendar is just as densely packed here as it was in the Rías Baixas area. Two stand out from the rest and both take place in Ribadavia. The *Vino de Ribeiro* festival coincides with the first warm weather in spring, and the *Fiesta de la Historia* takes place in August, its historical theme turning this former capital of Galicia (back in the 11<sup>th</sup> century) into a medieval pageant. The locals dress up in period costume, buy and sell in *maravedis* (the currency at the time) and, in recognition of this municipality's Jewish roots, they even celebrate a Jewish wedding. The Jewish community played a vital role in the wine trade during that era, and its heritage lives on in the streets of the *judería*, the Jewish quarter in Ribadavia's historic center. A little bakery located there has been producing traditional Jewish sweetmeats on a daily basis for the last 20 years. Herminia Rodríguez bakes her sweets and pastries from recipes so ancient, "that they've even forgotten them in Israel," she



proudly declares. A huge collection of photographs of celebrities, politicians and rabbis adorns the bakery's dark walls. Unsurprisingly, La Tahona de Herminia is a regular port of call for the thousands of people who travel Spain's Sephardic Route each year.

We have been nibbling as we go, and our appetites have been whetted for serious food. We decide to try a pre-matched food-and-wine meal: the Casal de Armán winery has a fabulous restaurant where every dish is served with a Ribeiro wine while the bodega's oenologist simultaneously conducts a guided tasting. And this is just the start of its wine tourism orientated repertoire: rural accommodation amid its vineyards, an invitation to take part in the grape harvest and suggested cycling routes for exploring the many medieval roads that crisscross the comarca are among the rest. Running the risk of getting lost, we shun main roads in favor of lesser, narrower ones that wind through the landscape of fields of vines, lush woods, babbling brooks and little villages where time has stood still. The cobblestone streets of Pazos de Arenteiro, with their many stately houses, have been true witnesses to this region's glorious past. Many of

these rural mansions, all but abandoned today, were once home to knights of the Order of Malta, successors to other warrior monks, the Knights Templar. These houses were built from the proceeds of the wine trade, and many of them still have cool, dark wine cellars beneath them. The tombstones interspersed among the paving stones inside the village's Romanesque church are, by definition, those of eminent local figures: only the well-off could have afforded this honor, for which they would have paid in kind, specifically wine.

## The land of Don Quixote

We exchange inland Galicia's rolling green hills for La Mancha's endless plain. Though the summer heat has not yet yellowed the cereal fields which alternate with vineyards, within a few weeks the vast landscape flashing by the windows of our train will look very different—more austere and unwelcoming, suitable territory for the more intrepid traveler. **La Mancha** is inconceivably huge—it is the biggest winegrowing region in the world—and the variety within it

and a wine culture stretching back into the past give it a seductive quality.

After gazing out for hours on end at vineyard after vineyard as far as the eye can see, our attention happily falls upon instantly recognizable shapes in the distance. "At this point they came in sight of 30 or 40 windmills on that plain," Miguel de Cervantes wrote in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, describing this same scene. We count ten of the windmills that the Knight of the Woeful Countenance mistook for giants. Some are perfectly preserved, as they were still in use until only 50 years ago and still have their original mechanisms which are put into action every now and again "so that they don't get rusty," our guide explains. Others have been converted into attractive little museums devoted to such themes as farming, poetry and, of course, wine. Don Quixote's weakness for wine earned tart comments from his faithful squire Sancho Panza, such as: "He commended the wine so highly that he praised it to the skies, though he did not risk leaving it there for long in case it turned into water." Campo de Criptana's famous windmills crown a little town of low houses painted white and indigo and



interconnected by a maze of steep streets. Tucked in among the dwellings we find the Castilblanque winery: "the most 'villagey' one, the most Manchegan of the lot," María José Campo claims proudly. She runs its wine tourism department, located in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century bodega, sensitively restored to keep its original structure intact as much as possible. Its various rooms are organized around a traditional cobblestone courtyard, which on summer nights sometimes serves as a makeshift theater for classical music concerts. Although most La Mancha wines are made to be drunk young, wood is starting to play an increasingly important role in the region's bodegas. In Castilblanque's cask room we tasted six reds and, under the oenologist's guidance, detected the qualities instilled into them by different woods.

The casks at Finca Los Nevados occupy a much bigger hall, with a roof supported by high, iron arches, but this comes later in the itinerary. Beforehand, we take a horse-drawn carriage tour around the winery's 200 ha (494 acres) of vineyard. As we go, the vineyard manager is keen to stress the point that the down-market bulk-wine image attached to La Mancha for so many years is still

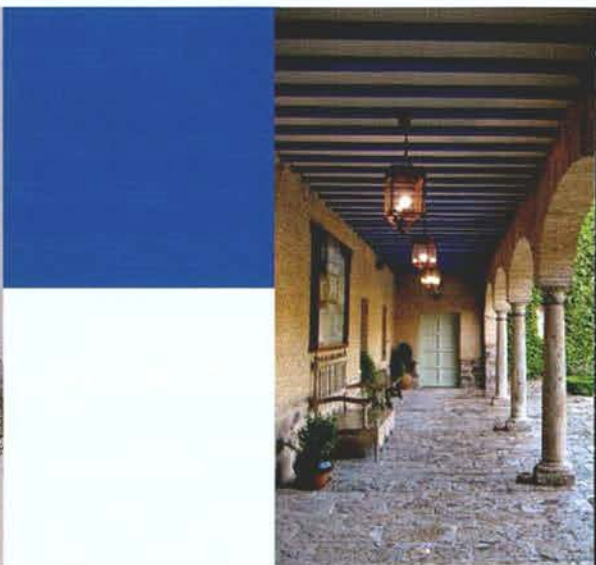
impeding recognition of the region's true situation today. "Of course, huge cooperatives shifting vast quantities still exist," he says, "but beside them are dozens of wine-growers, ourselves among them, who have opted for quality wines and small-scale production." Visitors get the chance to test the results of this approach in the bodega's restaurant. The cuisine, a creative take on the Manchegan tradition, is accompanied by wines whose exact vineyard provenance is proudly specified.

Pago del Vicario, in Ciudad Real, was also created along the lines of a French wine chateau. Its vineyards extend around buildings designed to blend discreetly into their surroundings, and in addition to the winery itself, these include a luxury hotel and a restaurant. This was where we tasted Manchego cheese for the first time on this trip, and it was excellent. Manchego cheese, which is protected by a designation of origin, is made exclusively with milk from sheep of the Manchega breed which roam freely about this dry terrain, feeding on scrub, stubble and acorns. It is a fatty, slightly piquant, salty cheese, which is matched beautifully by the fruitiness and herbaceous aromas of a young La Mancha red.

The family that owns Pago del Vicario also runs the little Villadiego cheese factory where all the cheeses are artisan-made from raw milk obtained from Manchega sheep.

## Southern La Mancha

It's a long way between one bodega and another in the biggest winegrowing area in the world, but this at least gives one a chance to stop off occasionally en route to combine the main purpose of our trip—wine—with other interests such as art, nature, movies, etc. Part of Pedro Almodóvar's film *Volver* was shot in Almagro, in the heart of the Campo de Calatrava. "I love the severity of these streets, the stones underfoot, the black iron windows unadorned by flower pots or any other decoration, the dark socles, the bright daylight." Such were the La Mancha-born filmmaker's impressions of the town during filming. But in addition to the quiet streets and noble houses, Almagro's attractions also include the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Corral de Comedias, Spain's only surviving Golden Age theater, which hosts the International Festival of Classical Theater every summer.



Nearby, heading southwards, lies the territory covered by one of other oldest designations of origin in Spain—**Valdepeñas**. In its capital, the town of the same name, with its urban wineries, bars and fiestas, wine and its culture are everywhere. The town is at its most quintessential during the first week of September each year when it celebrates its *Fiesta del Vino*, a wine festival that also has religious, cultural and gastronomic facets. At other times of the year, a visit to the Museo del Vino provides ready access to information about the region's vinicultural history. The museum is housed in a traditional 19<sup>th</sup>-century winery where time seems to have stood still. Arranged around its central courtyard, under the cover of its arcade, is a collection of old vineyard tools and equipment. But the museum's prize exhibit is an important collection of photographs by the American photographer, Harry Gordon. Taken in the 1950s, the black-and-white photographs are of peasants harvesting grapes, transporting them to the bodega in carts, treading them, dancing and laughing. Some feature huge, earthenware *tinajas* (jars) identical to those in the cool, dark cellar beneath

our feet. In the past, *tinajas* were traditionally used for storing wine until it was ready for sale, but they were gradually usurped by casks and eventually relegated to the role of decorative objects, often seen in the streets and parks. Even so, some winery-owners still adhere to old-fashioned methods. Dionisio de Nova is an "ecological" winemaker who makes his biodynamic wines guided by astral positions and cosmic rhythms. Our little group's visit to his family winery drew to a close in a pleasant little room with an open fireplace. This turned out to be the tasting room, and as we tasted we were regaled with fascinating tales involving mythology, the phases of the moon and constellations in addition to the more usual information regarding color, aroma and flavor.

A network of transhumance roads known as *Cañadas Reales* crisscrosses the Iberian Peninsula. Several of them used to traverse the Valdepeñas region, linking the Mediterranean coast and southern Spain. Travelers through this part of the country in the 17<sup>th</sup> century would have stopped at the Marisánchez, a *venta* (roadside inn) that then stood on the site now

occupied by Bodegas Reales. "Like all *ventas* in those days, it was a gathering place for shepherds and merchants and, as such, it was a place for commercial and cultural exchange," explains Julián Alcolea, Bodegas Real's wine tourism manager. When old buildings were renovated, the living accommodation was restored and other, modern, elements were added to the complex, though still maintaining the spirit of a typical La Mancha *venta*. The restaurant, located in former winery buildings, serves a delicious *arroz con perdiz* (rice with partridge). Partridge move around freely in the shooting reserve that surrounds Bodegas Real, as do wood pigeon, hare and even the occasional wild boar.

## Way down south

Between the plateau of La Mancha and the east coast stretch known as Levante lies the town of **Jumilla**. Historically a crossroads for several civilizations, it retains traces of all of them. From its majestic, originally medieval castle, one looks out over a rocky, stony...and vine-growing landscape. The variety grown here is Monastrell, acclimatized to tough



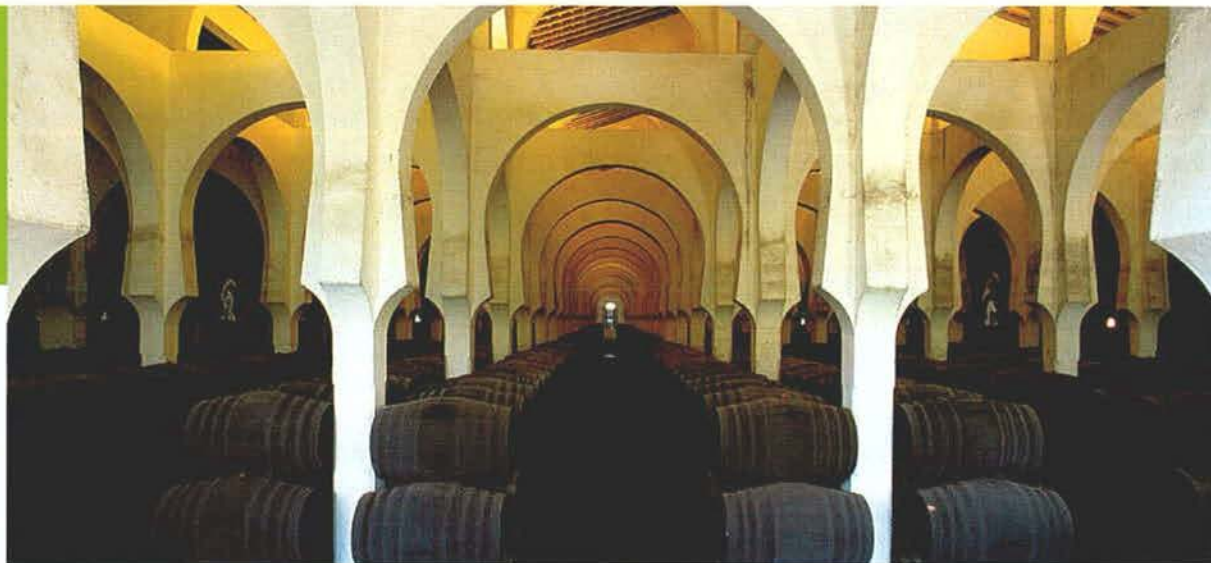
## JEREZ: A WORLD PIONEER

Sherry is said to be unique, an oenological triumph on a par with other legendary wines such as Sauternes and Port. The fascination exerted by its complex ageing method—the result of know-how accumulated from various civilizations—is further enhanced by other attractions that contribute to its mystique: monumental winery buildings, the sherry-flamenco link, the maritime connection, etc. And whereas wine tourism may be a new phenomenon in most other wine-growing areas, Jerez and its region have been welcoming visitors from all over the world for the better part of a century. It has a head start compared to the rest and experience is always an advantage. This part of southern Spain has capitalized on it cleverly, becoming an outstanding wine destination in the process.

The local winery owners never tire of telling the story of sherry and what an international wine it has always been. It's a good story whoever tells it, but the Osborne winery in Puerto de Santa María actually brings it to life. Dramatized events staged there reveal the involvement of the Phoenicians, Greeks, Arabs and even English pirates in the sherry story, and are a great attraction on summer nights. "In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Francis Drake plundered various ships and took the spoils—3,000 casks of sherry wine, back to London with him," whispers one of the interpreters from a little improvised stage between two rows of stacked casks. The plundered sherry was well-received in England and

became fashionable in the court, we are told, and as a result, Britain eventually became the main customer for sherry wines. This fact was instrumental in shaping the sherry we know today: the long sea voyages involved in trade with Britain made it necessary to fortify the wine with alcohol to prevent its turning into vinegar in transit. Although modern transport imposes far less wear and tear, this winemaking practice is still carried out and is now a characteristic feature of the wines from the sherry region. Before conducting further on-the-spot research into the famous sherry-aging method, we decide to explore the vineyard landscape that stretches between this DO's constituent municipalities (DO Denominaciones de Origen Jerez-Xérès-Sherry, Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Vinagre de Jerez) and the sea. From the vantage point of Domecq's Castillo de Macharnudo, there is an unrivalled panoramic view of gently undulating white hills dotted with green vine plantations. "This white, chalky albariza soil is ideal for grape growing," explains the commercial department's Rocío Benítez. "It not only retains the rainfall, which in this area tends to be concentrated in the winter months, but it also reflects light which helps ripening." Out in the vineyards we see bunches of white Palomino grapes, the all-but absolute protagonist of sherry wines. The Atlantic Ocean is a vivid blue strip in the distance, and we're aware of its sea breezes waiting around us. Today's

westerly wind is cool and damp, the diametric opposite of the much warmer, drier, easterly wind which does the wine-aging process no favors. Equipped with experience accumulated over many generations, the winemakers of the sherry region know how to capitalize on the former and keep the latter at bay. Indeed, their wineries are designed to this end, leaving nothing to chance. Their orientation, always facing the sea, their height and the materials with which they are built are all dictated by function. Impressed by their grandeur, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British traveler Richard Ford dubbed these bodegas "Cathedrals of Wine", yet their vast proportions are a consequence of functional, rather than aesthetic, criteria. Having toured the Caballero Group's Lustau winery, we realize that the ceilings are as high as they are—up to 14 m (46 ft)—to moderate the heat in summer. "Our forefathers relied on their own know-how to keep the temperature constant. If it worked for them, why should we need air conditioning?" asks export director Federico Sanchez with a smile. The windows, placed high up on the walls, are hung with esparto blinds which let in moisture and keep out light. The floors beneath our feet are made of compressed *albero*, the type of sand used in bullrings, and are periodically sprinkled with water to keep the atmosphere cool throughout the day. Meanwhile, walls up to 1 m (3.3 ft) thick keep out much of the sun's heat. Built on the proceeds and for the benefit of wine,



the sherry bodegas are both practical and aesthetically pleasing. With minor variations, the same 18<sup>th</sup>-century architectural model is replicated in most wineries in the region and all harbor the secret that makes sherry so inimitable. The singular *crianza* (aging) method used for sherry wines takes place in a system of casks organized into rows three or four high, containing wine of different ages. It is essentially a dynamic method in which the youngest wines are mixed with older ones so that they acquire their characteristics. References to specific sherry vintages are therefore meaningless: the relevant time reference is the average period spent in the *crianza* system, and this is never shorter than three years and can be as long as 30. "We are determined to tell the world about the hidden wonders of these wines," declares Eduardo Serrano, manager of Bodegas Valdivia. To that end, they have ensured that a visit to their premises is a real learning experience. Right from the start we are plunged into the very epicenter of the sherry world with an engaging, audio-visual show. In the winery itself, we watch as the cellar master wields his *venencia* (an instrument composed of a cylindrical container attached to a long, flexible handle) to extract small quantities of wine from the casks, testing their contents one by one before mixing them. "We aim to tap into sherry's lively, entertaining, youthful facets," stresses Eduardo. "That's why we're promoting it as drink of choice at *palos de flamenco*

and *potajes gitanos* (flamenco events): sherry is interwoven with all aspects of our culture." And other cultures, too, we observe upon discovering that they offer tai-chi classes in the vineyards. Indeed, sherry lends itself to cultural fusion more than most wines. Top chefs have been known to combine it with oriental dishes like sushi, sashimi and even Vietnamese spring rolls (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 13). La Villa del Duque, the quintessentially Andalusian-style guest house beside their winery, is the icing on the cake of Valdivia's wine tourism attractions. In addition to the usual "per night" arrangement, it offers its comfortable rooms by the hour during the day so that visitors can enjoy the benefits of a classic Spanish siesta.

Not far away is another venture whose aim is to reveal the secrets of sherry. The *Misterio de Jerez* museum occupies a former winery building with its classic, porticoed Andalusian patio with white-washed walls, cobbled floor and wrought-iron wellhead still intact. The wineries around here are like miniature towns with their paved streets, little squares and lovely gardens. At González Byass, the most-visited winery complex in Europe, a little train carries the more than 200,000 visitors that come here every year around the extensive site in comfort. It comprises six wineries, one of the most famous being La Concha, designed by architect Gustave Eiffel of Parisian tower fame. Arranged within this shell-shaped, iron-framed building are 115 casks decorated with as many

national flags—further proof of how widely sherry is exported.

Drop into an Andalusian bar just before lunchtime (never earlier than 2 pm in this part of Spain) any day of the week and find yourself a place at the counter. You will soon become aware that sherry is the drink of choice, with a little dish of olives, boiled crayfish or finely-sliced cured Ibérico ham on the side. But it is more than an aperitif wine, it is versatile enough to take to the table. El Gallo Azul, in Jerez's old quarter, and El Faro, in Puerto de Santa María, offer a tasting menu in which each dish is matched with a different type of sherry. Dry, light fino and manzanilla are served with tapas and seafood, the smoothness of an *amontillado* provides the perfect foil for white meats and cured cheeses, while *oloroso*, with its penetrating, nutty aromas, is an excellent match for stews, game and red meat. Should you be lucky enough to find an empty table at Casa Bigote, an informal bar/restaurant in Sanlúcar's fishermen's quarter, jump at the chance to sample impeccably fried *pescadito frito* (assorted fish) and a glass of chilled sherry. Sublime simplicity.





climatic conditions and able to thrive with long periods of hot sun. For many decades, robust Jumilla wine was sold in bulk as a reinforcer for other, feebler, European wines. However, all that changed in the 1990s when several winery owners resolved to prove that Monastrell could yield quality wines that were powerful, expressive, fruity and dark with violet hues, their alcoholic strength counterweighed by balanced acidity. Agapito Rico was one of the leading figures of this winemaking revolution. His winery makes splendid wines under the Carchelo label for which he uses, in addition to Monastrell, other foreign varieties such as Merlot, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. The Jumilla route's wine tourism attractions include, in addition to its wineries, the informative Museo del Vino Juan Carcelén and picturesque local Fiestas de la Vendimia at grape harvest time.

The domain of the Monastrell grape extends southwards into **Bullas**, one of Spain's youngest DOs and yet, or perhaps therefore, one of the most active in the area of wine tourism. Bullas shares both climate and predominant grape variety with its northern neighbor in Murcia, yet

manages to produce wines that bear the singular stamp of its precipitous landscape, villages and people. This is an area that respects tradition. In Caravaca de la Cruz, for example, the local people celebrate a thrillingly vivid fiesta known as *Caballos del Vino* (Wine Horses), which commemorates a legendary episode in the town's history. The legend as related today tells of Caravaca's being besieged by the Muslim kingdom of Granada. When the water supply showed signs of running low, a group of Templar Knights mounted on horseback broke their way through the surrounding attackers, then galloped back bearing big skins of wine to satiate the thirst of the townspeople. Every May 2<sup>nd</sup>, for many centuries, horses have been ridden, at a gallop, up and down the steep hill to the castle, cheered on by thousands of people.

The place to learn about Murcia's winegrowing history is Bullas' Museo del Vino, located within the walls of a centuries-old winery which still retains many of its old earthenware tinajas. Another informative visit, this one more lively and participatory, takes place on the first Sunday of every month. Timed to

coincide with El Zacatín market, which sells regional, artisan-produced foodstuffs, the nearby wineries open their doors to the public—an excellent opportunity to taste their wines and understand just why they are creating such a stir on the global wine scene.

The white variety Pedro Ximénez (PX) is to **Montilla-Moriles** what the red Monastrell is to Bullas and Jumilla. This variety with its thin, almost transparent, skin enjoys its ideal habitat in this little area of Andalusia: not much moisture, plenty of hot weather, and around 2,500 hours of sunshine a year. Although the PX grape dominates the varietal map, it shares a dominance of the landscape with cereal and olive crops—the classic Mediterranean trilogy. Consequently, this wine route can be supplemented by a visit to an oil mill or olive grove.

Montilla-Moriles' wine types—finos, amontillados, olorosos—and its solera system and "nurseries" are similar to those of Jerez, with the important difference being that in this region to the south of Córdoba, the wines do not need to be fortified with wine alcohol. Thanks to the natural sweetness of the PX grape, wines



made here reach 15° of alcohol with relative ease. For this DO's sweeter wines—known by the varietal name and famously eulogized Robert Parker—first the grape's water content must evaporate and then all their components must become concentrated (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 59). Harvested bunches of PX grapes spread out on dozens of esparto mats to dry slowly in the sun are a timeless picturesque sight. Wine tourists in this area will also enjoy the charming *pueblos blancos* (white villages) in Montilla and Lucena, observing the artisan work that still goes on in family wine-presses, many of which are located in the actual vineyards, and visiting the *Museo del Aceite* (Olive Oil Museum) in nearby Cabra. Contrasting with Montilla-Moriles' luminous, white, chalky *albariza* soil are the dark, volcanic soils of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. The archipelago's vineyards were unaffected by phylloxera and consequently still possess unique grape varieties. Some of these, grown at over 1,700 m (5,572 ft), boast the European altitude record, while others grow at barely 100 m

(328 ft) above sea level. Despite their small size, the islands have a surprising ten designations of origin. DO **Tacoronte-Acentejo**, on the northeastern edge of Tenerife, is outstanding and offers world-class wine tourism. Making wine in this part of Spain calls for engineering and effort, as vines survive in accidented terrain crossed by narrow valleys and gorges, always close to the coastline. Just as in Galicia, the vines occupy terraces carved out of rock and grapes are always laboriously harvested by hand. A visit to this region must include the beautiful, old town of San Cristóbal de La Laguna, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site based on its more than 600 historic buildings and the layout of its streets, still intact since it was founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Casa del Vino La Baranda, in El Sauzal, is the Canaries' wine promotion HQ: most of the wines in question are young reds made from the native varieties Listán Negro and Negramoll. A visit here plunges visitors into the islands' wine culture: a wine museum relates its history while a tasting room, restaurant and wine bar/store

provide the chance to immediately experience the product. The Canaries beautifully exemplify how much potential there is for wine tourism in Spain, already one of the world's major tourist magnets and wine producers. Though these two areas of expertise have been aware of each other for only a few years, the synergy between them is starting to show results. And there's plenty more where that came from.

*Celia Hernando* is a journalist whose media experience includes working for Cadena Ser and Punto Radio. She is currently part of the staff at Spain Gourmetour.

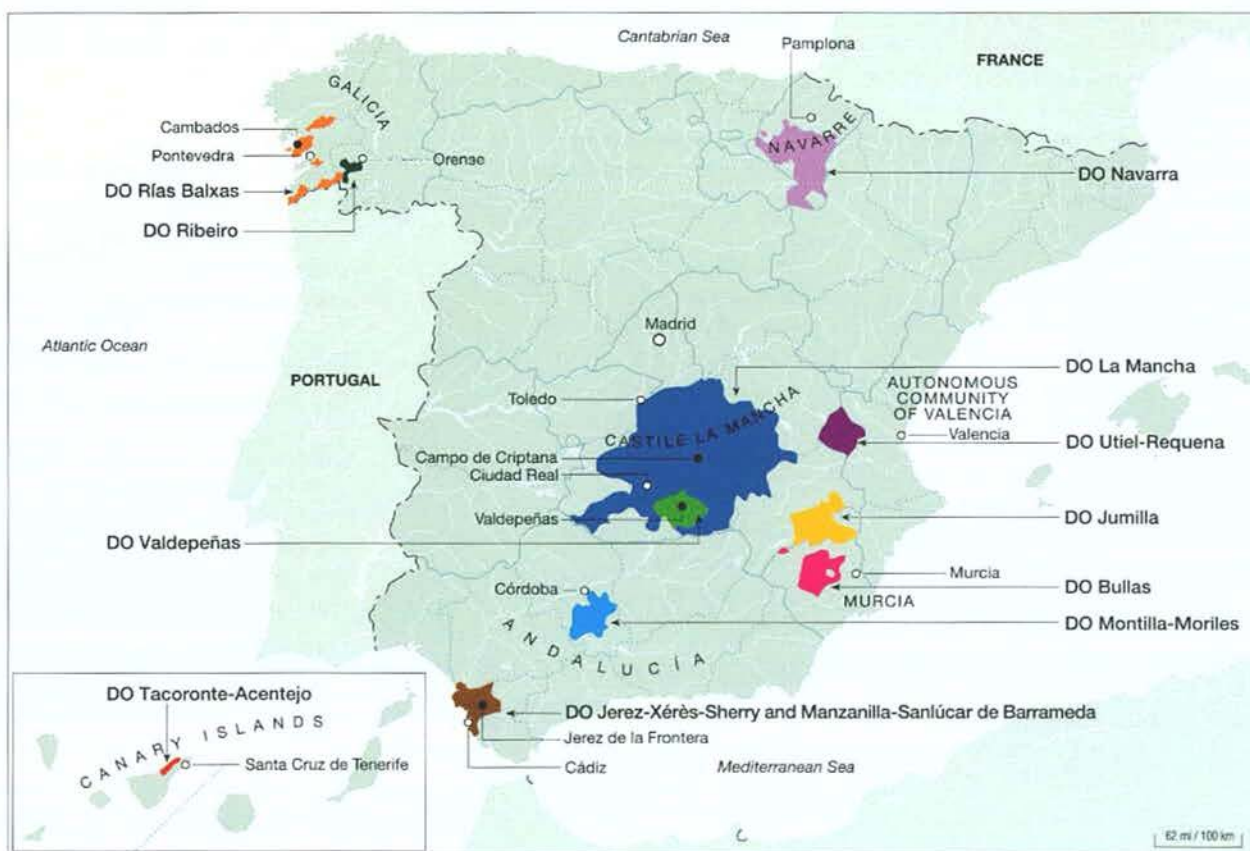
## FINDING YOUR WAY

What with compiling itineraries, lists of wineries, visiting hours, addresses of wine bars, restaurants and hotels and the like, organizing a wine tourism trip might at first seem dauntingly complicated. However, in addition to the usual tourist office leaflets and useful websites, there are several specialist guides to ensure that you get the best out of your route.

**Rutas por los vinos de España (Routes among the vines in Spain)**, Francesc Ribes. Spanish. This guide is particularly suitable for budding wine culture enthusiasts in that it includes basic information useful for interpreting a world that beginners sometimes find baffling. It suggests 38 routes through different designations of origin chosen to represent the diversity of Spanish wines. Although it focuses primarily on the best-known wineries of each region, it also covers other resources such as restaurants, wine museums, accommodation, buildings of interest and the natural environment. (*El País Aguilar; elpaisaguilar@santillana.es*)

**Guía del turismo del vino en España (Guide to wine tourism in Spain)**, Ignacio Medina. Spanish. This comprehensive guide to wine tourism in Spain covers all its designations of origin, organized by autonomous community. The first chapter covers essential information about viticulture, climate, soil types, winemaking methods and the grape varieties most frequently grown in Spain. Winery, restaurant and specialist wine shop details are supplemented by historical data relevant to each route and detailed road maps. (*Anaya Touring-Grupo Anaya; anayatouring\_internacional@anaya.es*)

**Hoteles con viñedo (Hotels with vineyards)**, Pedro Madera. Spanish. A rigorous selection of some of the best wine tourism hotels in Spain. Most are rural with privileged vineyard views, and some also have their own wineries. There is a description of each hotel, followed by information about the surrounding area and excursion suggestions, as well as information about the wine-growing area in which it is located. (*El tercer nombre; info@eltercernombre.com*)





## WEBSITES

**[www.spain.info/tourspain/rutas+vino](http://www.spain.info/tourspain/rutas+vino)**

Tourespaña's site includes a section devoted entirely to Wine Routes. It covers eight wine-growing destinations and provides useful info about related activities and services. (Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish)

• **Rías Baixas**

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

The official Wine Route site. This region's wine tourism opportunities are organized into northern, southern, eastern and western itineraries. (English, Galician, Spanish)

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

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (English, Galician, Spanish)

Wineries:

Condes de Alberi

**[www.salnesur.es](http://www.salnesur.es)**

Martin Codax

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

Palacio de Fefiñanes

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

• **Ribeiro**

**[www.ribeiro.es](http://www.ribeiro.es)**

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (Spanish)

Wineries:

Viña Costeira

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

Casal de Armán

**[www.casaldearman.net](http://www.casaldearman.net)**

• **La Mancha**

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

The official Wine Route site (Spanish)

**[www.lamanchado.es](http://www.lamanchado.es)**

This DO's website (English, Spanish)

Wineries:

Castiblanque

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

Finca Los Nevados

**[www.fincalosnevados.es](http://www.fincalosnevados.es)**

Pago del Vicario

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

• **Valdepeñas**

**[www.dovaldepenas.es](http://www.dovaldepenas.es)**

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website, including information about its Wine Route (English, Spanish)

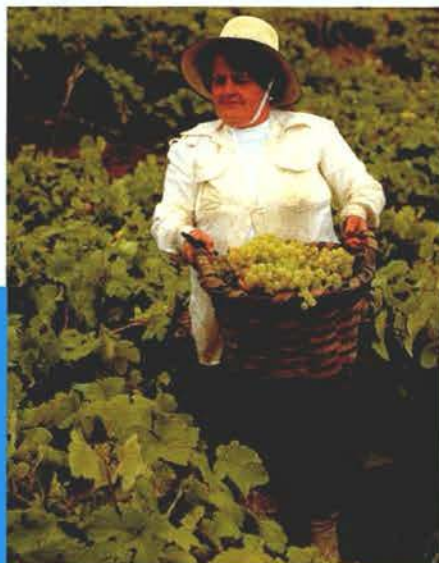
Wineries:

Bodega Dionisos

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

Bodegas Real

**[www.bodegas-real.com](http://www.bodegas-real.com)**



#### • Jerez

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

This official Wine Route website covers all the municipalities that make up the route and gives details about their wineries, restaurants, hotels, opening times, and useful addresses and telephone numbers. (English, Spanish)

[www.sherry.org](http://www.sherry.org)

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (English, French, Spanish)

#### Wineries:

Grupo Osborne

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

Domecq

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

Emilio Lustau

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

Bodegas Valdivia

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

Bodegas González Byass

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

#### • Jumilla

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

The official Wine Route website. Itineraries both in town and in the surrounding area are suggested. There is also a comprehensive calendar showing at what times of year specific vineyard tasks (harvest, pruning, grafting, etc.) are carried out. (English, Spanish)

[www.vinosdejumilla.org](http://www.vinosdejumilla.org)

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (English, Spanish)

#### • Bullas

[www.rutadelvino.bullas.es](http://www.rutadelvino.bullas.es)

The official Wine Route website. Differently themed routes are suggested, exploring Bullas' natural setting, the historic quarters of local towns and the area's wineries. (Spanish)

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

A joint website shared by the local authority and the Regulatory Council of this DO (English, Spanish)

#### • Montilla-Moriles

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

The official Wine Route website. Three different itineraries are designed to suit different time frames. (English, French, German, Spanish)

[www.montilla-moriles.org](http://www.montilla-moriles.org)

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (Spanish)

#### • Tacoronte-Acentejo

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

The official Wine Route website. Six differently themed itineraries are suggested focusing on nature, culture, traditions, wineries and so on. (English, German, Spanish)

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

The Regulatory Council of this DO's website (Spanish)

#### • Navarre

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

The official Wine Route website (Spanish)

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

The Regulatory Council of this DO's official website (Spanish)

#### • Utiel-Requena

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

The official Wine Route website. Advice is offered for planning your trip and different itinerary suggestions are geared to the time available and visitors' specific interests. (English, Spanish)

[www.utielrequena.org](http://www.utielrequena.org)

The Regulatory Council of this DO's official website (English, Spanish)



Fanning the

# COALS

# New Wave Grilling

Fire is what turned mere eating into gastronomy, necessity into pleasure. Hot coals are, and were apparently destined to be, the fount of flavor; they are the greatest taste-enhancer, the most direct of seasonings, aromatizing food as they cook it. Cooking over an open fire—the most straightforward and democratic method—is now experiencing a new wave. Its centuries-long pedigree is still very much intact, but it is now also embracing ingredients that have never been near a grill before, and delivering delicious results. Thanks to the most ancient cooking method and the simplest equipment, we are rediscovering what things really taste like.



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TEXT  
LUIS CEPEDA

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PHOTOS  
TOMÁS ZARZA Y  
TOYA LEGIDO/ICEX

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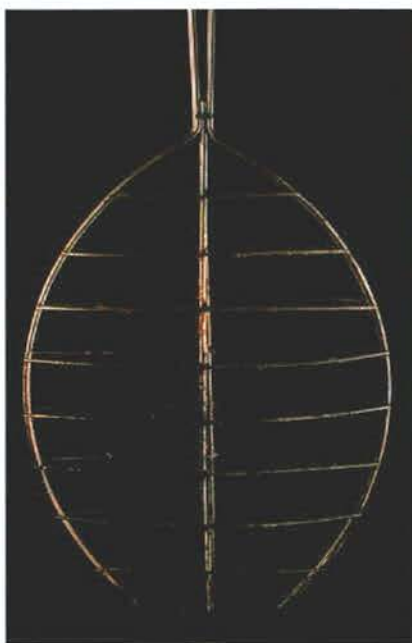
TRANSLATION  
HAWYS PRITCHARD

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"A cook may be taught, but a man who can roast is born with the faculty". This incontrovertible axiom was coined by Brillat Savarin in his *Physiology of Taste*. Some might argue with such a categorical and authoritative a statement, but it is a fact that those born to roast leave the rest of us awestruck. Cooking is a learnable trade and an admirable one, and it involves specific ways of doing things that are taught, practiced and assimilated. The cook's job is a civilizing exercise in which physics, chemistry and aesthetics all come together. Its processes are methodical and generally collective, and are aimed at achieving harmonic, satisfying flavors.

Cooking food on a grill over an open fire, on the other hand, is an empirical, individual activity, not without its metaphysical aspect. It represents the first and most concise step in gastronomic evolution, and all it requires is foodstuffs, fire and instinct. Its purpose is to make the most of simple raw materials and to do so without delay.

One modern Spanish equivalent of Brillat Savarin's "man who can roast" is the *parrillero*, or grill cook. A *parrillero* empathizes with his product, almost physically becoming part of it and to some degree subjecting himself to the fire along with it. Heady with heat and heightened awareness, he knows intuitively how the food he handles will react to the flames and consequently exactly how long to cook



it for optimal results.

His knack of understanding the embers is more physical than mental. It is a gift that *parrilleros* are born with. They know that they have the gift, and once they discover their *métier* they rarely return to conventional cuisine. This is because they discover that each foodstuff, however simple it might seem, is a little world in itself that is never the same twice, just as each fire calls for different handling. This sums up the intrinsic diversity and the solitary nature of skilled grilling. Chefs adhere to their precise recipes, reproducing their own perfected

versions of dishes, but nothing cooked over an open fire ever turns out the same twice. For the *parrillero*, each cut of meat and each fire poses a different challenge that calls for a different approach.

## Fire and its culture

No one can really lay claim to having invented the grill. Mastery of fire—the envy of the irrational world—marked the dawn of culture and with it came flavor and thus the pleasures of taste. Glowing coals cauterize a slice of meat, keep in its juices, heat its interior, break down its fibers and impart their own vegetable, smoky seasoning. Thousands of years worth of satisfied taste buds can't be wrong. For exponents of the world's oldest profession—hunting, actually, and not the one usually cited—fire was both a reward and a source of pleasure, a foretaste of the more sedentary agricultural era to come.

Roasting was hugely popular in medieval Europe, and whole carcasses of farmyard or game animals impaled on giant spits and rotating slowly over a fire featured largely in the enjoyment, and the iconography, of an otherwise dark and beleaguered period. Under the civilizing influence of the Renaissance, this kind of outdoor roasting became more refined and Spain saw the introduction of the more discreet Castilian roasting oven, a niche built of fireproof adobe and fuelled by



incandescent firewood beneath it or in its depths. This was a rival cooking method to boiling in water, the gastronomic antithesis of roasting. To boil or to roast?—that is the question. The Golden Age brought with it new products in the form of the fruits of conquest in the Far East and the New World, which added distinction to soups and stews, sautés, dressings, cold soups and fried foods. With the Age of Enlightenment and the innovative approach of Carême—the first culinary structuralist—cooking over an open fire came to be associated with the rural environment and was considered the most archaic method. After the French Revolution, sophisticated, middle-class, urban restaurants came into being, many chefs having been left redundant by the abolition of the aristocracy. Cooking meat over glowing coals survived as a method, its bold simplicity productive of food more basic than elegant. It was considered crude, and the more refined restaurants disdained it. Cooking by gas, electric hotplates, pressure cookers and the emergent technology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were to further delay a new wave of char-grill cookery until well into the last century.

## Ode to the ox

A restaurant that specializes in roasting and grilling meat is known in Spain as an *asador*. The emergence of the *asador* as a gastronomic phenomenon, and the

first phase of new wave *asador* cookery, dates back to the 1960s and can be largely attributed to the Basque town of Tolosa, capital of the Guipúzcoa province, until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Julián Rivas, a native of Lodosa (Navarre), is something of a legendary figure in this regard, as it was he who opened the first ox-beef *asador* in 1961 in a former garage on Tolosa's Santa Clara Street. The ox (an adult castrated bull) is an emblematic animal in the Basque Country. Ousted by the mechanization of agriculture, oxen began to be consigned to the abattoir for meat. Public response was initially wary. However, the combination of mature loin muscle marbled with fat, slow ageing in the cold room and cooking on an artisan, holm oak, charcoal-burning grill with fire-proof vertical walls, roof and chimney so that the interior of the meat became hot, produced miraculous effects. No one had ever tasted such flavor-packed meat before, and the retired work-ox triumphed over heifer and calf to assume unexpected gastronomic status. Such was the demand for big, solid cuts of meat, simply seasoned with coarse sea salt to form a crust and keep in the juices, oozing with natural flavor and with the crunchy/silky textural contrast that this cooking method produces, that one of the most daringly simple restaurant concepts in the world was created. The menu focused on just one product—the one kg-or-over (2.2 lbs) beef *chuletón* (steak on the bone)

garnished with *piquillo peppers* (those little triangular, slightly hot red ones) slowly roasted to the point of deliquescing, preceded by just the one first course: giant, white Lodosa asparagus spears, peeled by hand and dressed with a light vinaigrette.

## The pride of the Basques

The Basques are big meat eaters, and well before the launch of the new wave they had developed two idiosyncratic methods of char-grilling steaks: in the Berriz style, which dates back to the 1940s, and the in the considerably older Villagodio. The first of these involved grilling a beef steak flanked by two others over a wood fire so that all the juices flowed into the middle one. Only that one was eaten, the adjacent ones being considered mere also-rans and thrown away—a shocking waste that devotees of the method still advocate, albeit rather shamefacedly as if owning up to a secret vice. A Villagodio was a steak big enough for sharing, from a two to three year old calf, so called in jibing reference to the tameness of the Marqués de Villagodio's fighting bulls. The name was taken up by restaurants to refer to any large cut of red meat cooked on the grill or griddle from 1909 on (that was the year when the aristocratic stock-breeder's bulls made their debut in the bullring he had built in Bilbao's Indauchu quarter, and when



mechanization of farming led to the discovery of an unexpectedly fine raw material which, when char-grilled, launched a whole new wave for this method of cooking.

## Master grillers

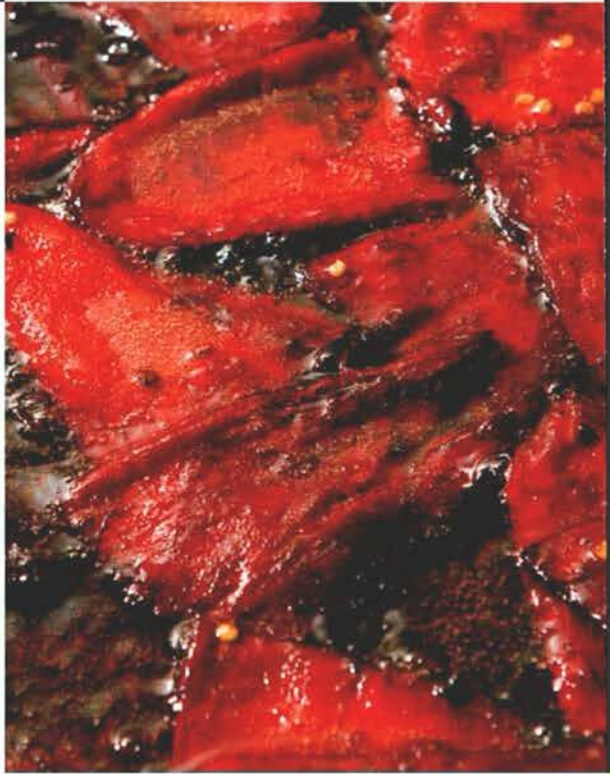
Pioneering grill-cook Julián Rivas was anxious to leave his Julián de Tolosa asador in good hands that would carry on his epoch-making legacy. He took the initiative to arrange a meeting between one of his regular customers, Juan Villar, an endocrine specialist from San Sebastian, and young local chef, Matías Gorrotxategui, whose interest in and aptitude for char-grilling he had spotted (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 67). Having encouraged them to form a partnership, he transferred the business to them. Twenty-five years later, there are two branches of the Julian de Tolosa in Madrid: the Julián de Tolosa de la Cava Baja, and Casa Matías near Plaza de España. The Gorrotxateguis are in the process of forming a grilling dynasty: the father still cooks in Tolosa, at lunchtimes only, except for weekends when he also opens for dinner, while his two sons, Iñaki and Mikel, each run one of the Madrid branches.

It is not widely known that Juan Mari Arzak, redoubtable champion of avant-garde cuisine in Spain for the last 40

it became apparent that they were only fit for eating).

Guipúzcoa's discovery of the wonders of grilled ox-beef inspired José María Busca-Isusi, one of the most prestigious food critics of the 1960s and founder of the Basque Gastronomic Fraternity, to declare publicly that "the Basques invented the ox"—a statement that sounds less far-fetched if one takes it to mean the ox's role in gastronomy. In most famously carnivorous parts of the world, such as Argentina, Texas, Australia and Japan, cattle-raising is conducted with the aim of producing meat, and doing so quickly. Cattle is

rarely grazed for longer than three years. The high cost involved in raising an ox for 20 years, the age at which castrated working bulls are usually slaughtered, would make it unthinkable. However, the beef eaten in the Basque Country could be said to have paid for itself by working on the farm, producing milk in the case of cows and serving as draught animals in the case of oxen. These latter used to die of old age without giving their potential as a source of meat a second thought. The arrival at the abattoir of oxen liberated from the yoke by the



years, also felt the attraction of grill cooking. In 1967, after graduating from Madrid's Escuela de Hostelería catering college and returning to Spain after training periods in various restaurants around Europe, he took over his family's restaurant. He installed a holm oak, charcoal-burning grill in a former entranceway in full view of the diners. It is still in use today and comes into its own against the cutting-edge technology of his present-day kitchen when all a prime raw material needs is judicious charcoal grilling. This San Sebastian chef recognizes that grill cooking is an art, and played his part in its resurgence, serving up impressive red sea bream and meaty neck cuts of hake, entrecote beef steaks and *présalé* lamb chops all cooked over charcoal at a time when the demand for this sort of food seemed insatiable. Meanwhile, he was conceptualizing and laying the foundations of the New Basque Cuisine. Matías from Julián de Tolosa, along with his neighbors and disciples (Pedro, from Casa Nicolás, Juanjo, from El Burruntzi and Javier from the Orue Erreategia), all part of the *fons et origo* of the Tolosa-style chuletón can probably be held responsible for exhausting the supply of ox-beef, which had to be sourced from even farther afield: Asturias, Galicia and even as far away as Portugal. Meat described as ox-beef is

still served today, but is rarely more than just mature beef. The enduring popularity of the chuletón is largely due to the selective purchasing policy of specialists such as Los Norteños. They source outstandingly good rib cuts from all over Spain, operating as flavor-scouts and reserving particular animals whose rearing and care are kept optimal by the demand for top-quality meat.

## Culinary champions

The burgeoning of asador restaurants did not depend entirely on meat, though chuletones were unrivalled as the star product at San Sebastian's most prestigious, and still thriving, asador El Rekondo de Txomin "el Torero", on the way up to Igueldo, and the famous Asador del Trapos, which appeared almost secretly in a former clothing store in the town's historic quarter. Both of these have gone down in history as seminal charcoal-grilling institutions. Oyaszun, an inland town in the Guipúzcoa province, became the yardstick for grilled sea bream and steaks served in portions big enough to share. Atamix is a restaurant with a tree-shaded terrace, long communal tables and constantly burning holm oak fired grills positioned between the open air and the big, old house, and provides a good example of the fact that players

of *pelota vasca* (a Basque court game played with a ball) are often outstandingly good parrilleros. Former Spanish *pelotari* champion (a person who plays *pelota vasca*) Luciano Juaristi ("Atano X") proves the point at Atamix. This was the most popular Basque asador in the 1970s and it still maintains its fine reputation, located on the highway at the junction with the road to Astigarraga, home of Vasconia natural, or "hard" ciders. Zapiain *sidrerías* (typical Basque cider bars and restaurants) also date back to the same period, and are still an integral part of the gastronomic scene, having instigated the concept of a very specific, traditional menu: *tortilla de bacalao* (salt cod Spanish omelet), char-grilled beef steak weighing a kg (2.2 lbs) or more (intended for sharing, except in the case of particularly hearty eaters) and Idazábal cheese served with walnuts and quince jelly. Diners eat at tables surrounded by cider-storing *kupelas* (the Basque term for wooden casks). From his old family *sidrería* in the Basque Country, Miguel Zapiain runs a national chain of asadores whose badge of identity is their traditional *sidrería* menu. El Zerain, in Madrid's Las Letras quarter, and the three Imanol asadores established by *pelotari* Miguel Ansorena (formerly the promoter of the reputable Frontón de Madrid group of asadores,



champions of the historic resurgence of char-grilling in the Spanish capital 27 years ago), serve exemplary, typical asador menus with cider on tap, and are located in premises whose enormous gastronomic appeal is reflected in the fact that they are always crowded.

The Ansorena family's trajectory demonstrates both a calling and skill for Basque parrilla cooking. Rafael runs a restaurant under the family surname in Madrid. Paco Ansorena, another pelotari champion, set up the Asador Epeleta at the end of his sporting career, first in Azpiroz and then in Lekumberri (Navarre), another temple for devotees of this sort of food. Also noteworthy is the longevity of Madrid's Asador Txistu and Asador Donostiarra, which date back to the 1970s. They are probably the most popular meat asadores in the whole of Spain, serving several hundred customers a day under the unflagging supervision of their founder Pedro Ábrego. Now more than 80 years old, he is a legendary figure in the Spanish hospitality industry and recipient of a Medalla de Oro al Trabajo—the nation's top award for a lifetime's work.

## Seafood on the grill

Although char-grilling is a method primarily associated with meat, numerous fish asadores appeared in coastal areas where they still thrive today. Indeed, char-grilling fish was to trigger a second new wave. There has always been plenty of seafood in the Basque Country that was eminently suited for cooking over an open fire. Take sardines: their own fat melts over the fire to create one of the most crowd-pleasing yet nuanced flavors in the whole of fish cookery. Char-grilled sardines, simply seasoned with coarse sea salt and eaten with one's fingers (holding the tail in your left hand and the head in your right, you eat our way along "as if playing the harmonica", as Julio Camba puts it), were an integral part of the Vizcayan diet in spring and summer, often cooked with just a piece of tinfoil between them and the glowing coals. In Santurce (Vizcaya), José María González Barea, a larger-than-life character better known as "Currito", installed a grill specially designed for cooking sardines, placing them very close to the coals and slightly tilted so

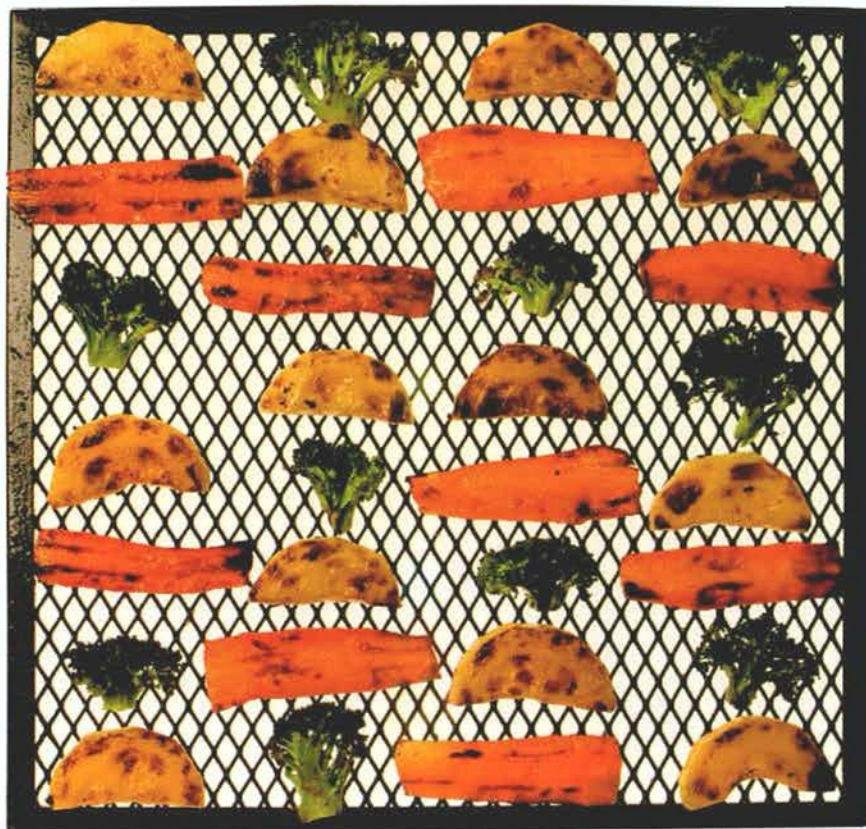
that the fat could run off. Such was his success—even in a fishing comarca where sardines are almost part of the folk culture—that he headed for Madrid. The grill producing sardines, fish and beef chuletones has been a feature of the tree-shaded terrace of Madrid's Currito in the Vizcayan Pavilion of the city's Casa de Campo park since 1975. Red sea bream is another fish long associated with the charcoal grill. It is a favorite at the Oyarzun Atamix (mentioned previously), but most of all at the long, communal tables of Asador Joxe Mari in the seaside town of Orío (Guipúzcoa), where it has become a local specialty known as "*besugo oriotarra*". Fish weighing around 800 g (28 oz) are gutted and then cooked whole over the coals, encased in a metal mesh utensil invented there (ergonomically designed so that it also makes it easy to turn the fish over on the grill). After cooking each side for ten minutes, the Orío-style sea bream is opened like a book, the backbone is removed and the fish is then sprinkled with salt, a few drops of vinegar and dressed with a hot *fritura* of olive oil, garlic slices, chili rings and chopped



parsley. This classic version uses the same method used for grilling *dorada* (gilthead bream) on the Mediterranean coast. I have even had the gratifying experience of seeing the same method, described as *a la vasca* (Basque-style), applied to Gulf-caught red snapper in Veracruz, Mexico.

## Guetaria

Guetaria can be credited, in part, with having consolidated the art of cooking fish over charcoal and giving it credibility. Talaípe, a restaurant situated at the mouth of its medieval port, at the foot of the hill known as Cerro del Ratón, and with its own basement fish-pen reclaimed from the sea, can claim to have been the first restaurant to char-grill fish, crayfish and *mixeras* (lobster). It has been doing so for 50 years. Later came Kaia and Kaípe, two restaurants with panoramic views of the port and open-air grills on which they cook top-notch turbot, red sea bream and sole. However, it was Pedro Arregui from Asador Elcano, located outside the old town walls, who thought up the signature Basque fish-grilling dish: *cogote de merluza a la brasa* (char-grilled hake neck). His co-opting of this cut of fish (hitherto stewed with potatoes in fishermen's households) for new purposes probably qualifies him as the most important traditional fish parrillero in history. He was also the first person to cook whole turbot over the coals. Previously the custom had been to cut turbot into wide slices before grilling; Arregui's method, however, retained the juices better. Spurred by success, he daringly set himself up in Madrid in the 1970s but did not meet with the response that he merited. Soon after he returned his business to the fishing port of Guetaria, whose claims to fame include its being the birth place of Juan Sebastián



Elcano, the first man to sail round the world, and the original source of the only Basque wine, *txakoli* (chacoli).

## Vegetables matter

As we have seen, the first new wave in char-grill cooking began in Tolosa as a consequence of oxen becoming redundant in agriculture. The later wave has been far more eclectic, however, embracing products of all kinds and with enclaves where the skill is practiced distributed all over Spain, though the Basque Country is still the pace-setter. Roasting potatoes among the embers in the hearth at home is an ancient practice; a more recent example of cooking vegetables over glowing coals are *calçots a la brasa* (char-grilled long-stemmed spring onions), traditional to the Valls area in the

Tarragona province (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 55). *Calçots* were discovered in Valls in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by a solitary farmer by the name of Xat de Benaiges, who seems to have discovered the culinary potential of new shoots produced by a mature onion replanted especially for this purpose. He also devised a suitable grill and the romesco-like dressing or sauce (made with chorricero pepper, roasted garlic, roasted tomatoes, almonds, hazelnuts, stale bread, oil and vinegar) generally served with *calçots*. The onion shoots are roasted over the flames until their outer membrane burns, at which point the white, edible interior is extracted in a deft maneuver and dipped in the sauce. They have to be eaten with the head tipped backwards, much like a sword-swallower, and wearing a bib. There is ritual and significance involved



in eating *calçots*: in Valls they say that eating them is a way of giving thanks to the earth for bestowing such gifts upon us. The celebration dedicated to *calçots* is possibly Spain's biggest gastronomic event involving charcoal cooking. It is an authentic, rural festival in celebration of vegetables and fire, and takes place on the last Sunday in January in Valls and other nearby towns and villages which have many restaurants that specialize in *calçots*. As Catalan cuisine has spread across the country it has taken this specialty with it, and certain char-grilling restaurants, such as La Huerta de Lleida in Madrid, serve them at harvest times, extending the repertoire to include other products such as artichokes, salt cod and snails cooked *a la llauna* (on a roasting tray). These are all prepared on a wood-burning grill under the guidance of Valentín Botargues, the experienced *parrillero* formerly found presiding over

the grill at the famous vegetable market in Lérida (Catalonia), and in Madrid for the past seven years.

### Tradition, enthusiasm, technology

Another Catalonian specialist who has introduced surprising techniques into grill cookery is Jordi Herrera, from Barcelona's Manairó restaurant. He is a cook with a technical bent and plenty of imagination, creative without being over-the-top, and he could be described as a gastronomic blacksmith given that he works with fire and iron, though the equipment he uses also suggests an enthusiasm for D.I.Y. home improvements. Using everything from an autogenous welding kit to an electric drill and a blowtorch to inventions of his own such as the "fakir cook" (a bed of nails that irradiates heat from inside outwards) as well as high-strength



spotlights, he has come up with new concepts of cooking meat, fish and vegetables that achieve the fundamental aim of grilling to perfection, however eccentric the method. Steaks cooked on hot nails, meat glazed with a hot air gun (which melts the primary layer of fat, leaving behind a transparent glaze, or film), and pigeon rotated on an electric drill may sound bizarre, yet they respect the traditional essence of the dish while making surprising changes to the rules of harnessing fire and producing delicious food.

Any new wave grill restaurant itinerary must also head to Valencia where Asador Askua offers a new take on the long-established venue, changing ways of doing things while still retaining its fundamental qualities. Ricardo Gadea's restaurant embraces contemporary design yet is convincingly traditional in the way it handles big cuts of mature beef, rounding out the menu with

carefully selected milk-fed veal and calf sweetbreads and delicious *espardeñyes* (sea cucumbers), lightly char-grilled. La Venta del Sotón, a restaurant in a big, old, typically Pyrenean house in Esqueda, 14 km (8.7 mi) from Huesca, uses an unusual method of cooking over a wood fire that combines tradition and originality. Cooking "a la teja" or "a la lata" involves placing the food on tiles or trays over glowing coals so that juices are retained. Another not-to-be-missed port of call for new wave grilling enthusiasts is the Asador Alameda in Fuenmayor (La Rioja). Here Tomás Fernández cooks, over a holm oak charcoal fire, meat from 10-year-old-and-over Rubia cows that has been slowly macerated in the cold room: Alameda steaks have a reputation for being among the best in Spain.

Meanwhile, in Castile, Guillermo from El Molinero in Traspinedo (Valladolid) grills skewers of marvelous milk-fed lamb over a vine-shoot fire, in Matapozuelos (also in Valladolid), char-grilled rabbit is the local specialty and at El Capricho in La Bañeza (Leon), the beef steaks are guaranteed to come from the last working oxen in the Portuguese countryside, so a visit there is an opportunity to sample a rare treat. El Llar de la Campana, a restaurant in Llanera (Asturias), is another place of pilgrimage for devotees of char-grilled meat, fish and offal. Its proprietor, Lolín Bobes, considered to be one of the top *fabada asturiana* (Asturian bean stew) cooks, has bowed to the fact that his customers love the food he produces on the grill. In the last few years Madrid has also succumbed to new wave grill cookery. The recently opened Rubaiyat in the Chamartín district of town is a good example, consisting as it does of



two destinations. One is Baby Beef, which is dedicated to meat, as its name suggests, and boasts four grills in full view of the public and in constant action cooking cuts of meat and offal of European and American provenance. The other is El Porto which is located in the basement and specializes in char-grilling a selection of fish worthy of a Galician quayside, plenty of which is wild and is displayed alongside the grills where the cooking is done for everyone to see.

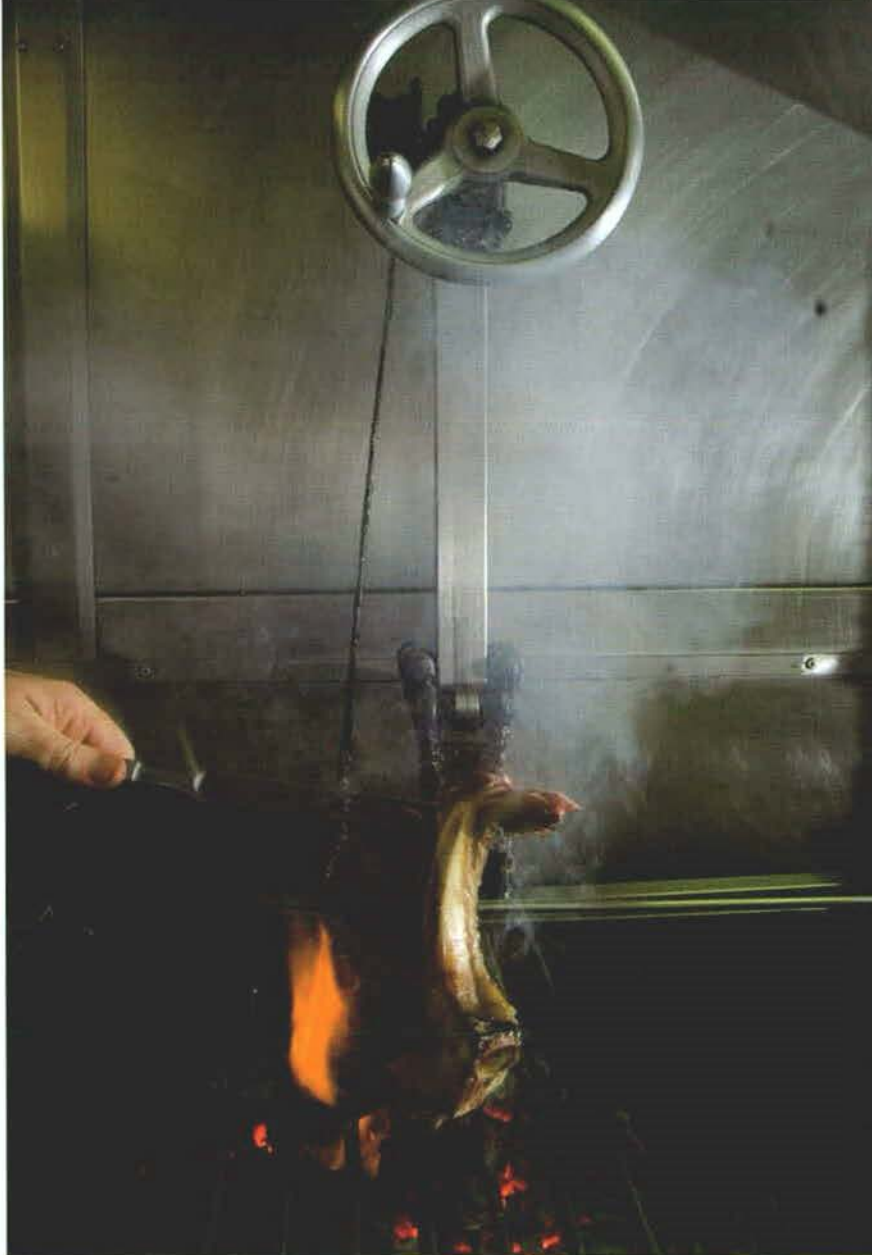
## Quintessential flavor

But back in the Basque Country is where the constantly resurgent new wave parrilla cooking is most in evidence. In Vitoria, Senén González's restaurant Sagartoki has two facets, both of which are excellent: it combines one of the best pinchos (tapas) bars in Spain with an experimental asador-

sidrería. Simple char-grilling (the fish is particularly good) and haute cuisine share the menu. Incidentally, this restaurant's steaks and Iberico secreto pork (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 68) merit a review all to themselves. Another enduring yet progressive asador is El Zaldúa de Pedernales in Vizcaya, where Juan Antonio Zaldúa serves outstanding quality char-grilled meat and fish. He is particularly famous for his two-stage method of grilling steaks. First they are covered in salt and placed ten cm (4 in) away from the coals until a crisp crust forms, and then they are placed 30 cm (12 in) away from the fire so that the heat reaches the interior without burning the meat or drying them out. Relative newcomer, Asador Ripa, on Bilbao's old Muelle de Ripa, is of a similar standard. Housed in a centuries-old building, it is owned by the Bustinza family, who also own the Horma Hondo asador. Asador Ripa

features seasonal produce and the grilling skills of Miguel Ángel Hernando, whose innovative char-grilled duck-liver *au naturel* and *kokotxas* (the Basque word for *cocochas*—hake or cod cheeks) have had food critics tripping over their superlatives, though his more traditional grilled fish and meat are equally outstanding.

We round off this tour at Etxebarri, the asador in Atxondno (Vizcaya) that currently best represents the revolutionized methods, more daring approach, subtle use of char-grilling and clever produce selection that characterize the new wave. Victor Arguinoniz effectively prepares haute cuisine on the grill and has become famous for it: he goes so far as to replace the usual holm oak charcoal with different aromatic woods chosen to suit particular foodstuffs. The mild aromatizing smokiness produced by olive wood, vine shoots, branches or orange wood is imaginatively matched with the grilled products. Victor's work represents a milestone in this style of cooking: foodies and chefs from all over the world regard him as a major avant-garde cuisine figure and his taberna, in a big, old house, is a place of pilgrimage for those in the know. His enthusiasm for letting the grill work its magic on whatever product has led to his designing various pans, grills and receptacles so that they do the best possible job with ingredients that range from the usual red sea bream and horse mackerel to the more unlikely Iranian caviar and *angulas* (elvers), creating a method for the latter two that unprecedentedly obviates the need to double-cook them. Not only are the products he cooks unexpected but his techniques are also ingenious and rational—grills



that work from above and below simultaneously, for example. Pairs of anchovies are cooked using meat-grilling methods while sea cucumbers with baby broad beans, oysters on a bed of seaweed, zucchini flowers with herring, white and red shrimp, grouper, woodcock—a boundless range of raw materials—reveal their essential deliciousness in the laboratory of cutting-edge grill cuisine that is Etxebarri.

It's hard to imagine another, more radical new wave than the one going on in grill cuisine today. It has never been so sophisticated, so popular or so sybaritic. Who better to sum up this quick survey of its historical and geographical highlights than Spain's most eminent gourmet, Julio Camba, who paradoxically declared that: "There is nothing so ancient yet so modern, so easy yet so difficult, so

simple yet so complicated, so familiar yet so exciting."

*Luis Cepeda is a journalist and the author of many books including Los 100 platos universales de la cocina vasca (100 universal Basque dishes), Gusto de reyes (The tastes of kings and queens), Lhardy, La cocina de paradores (Parador cuisine) and Maridaje de vinos y platos (Matching wine with food). He currently commentates on the food scene for OnMadrid, the leisure supplement of the daily paper El País, and is technical director of the Spanish Federation of Chefs (Federación de Cocineros de España).*



## A WORLD OF ASADORES

### MADRID

#### Casa Julián de Tolosa

Cava Baja, 18  
28005 Madrid  
Tel: (+34) 913 658 210

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

This Madrid branch of the Basque Country's pioneering ox-beef asador has its own unbeatable method of grilling steaks and peppers. With 20 successful years of behind it, this is a guaranteed choice for eating out in the capital.

#### Asador Imanol

General Díaz Porlier, 97  
28006 Madrid  
Tel: (+34) 913 090 859

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

Miguel Ansorena, a former pelotari and founder of the legendary El Frontón, established Asador Imanol with the intention of building a chain (there are three branches in Madrid) offering a straightforward formula of top-quality fish and meat cooked over charcoal.

#### El Álamo de Iñaki Ongay

Camino de Valladolid, 28-chalet  
28250 Torrelozanes  
Madrid

Tel: (+34) 918 591 190

The most tried and true asador in Madrid's countryside. Excellent, mature beef and quality fish skillfully char-grilled by top-flight parrillero Iñaki Ongay (trained at Julián de Tolosa), with his own distinctive touch.

#### Casa Matías

San Leonardo, 12  
28015 Madrid

Tel: (+34) 915 417 683

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

This restaurant bears the guarantee of being part of the Julián de Tolosa group. It specializes in meats, salt cod and monkfish. Its dining room with cider on tap and delicious, straightforward food provides a convincing taste of the Basque Country. The apple-hued dining areas are divided off and sound-proofed by huge barrels of cider.

#### Currito

Pº de la Gastronomía  
(Pabellón de Vizcaya-Casa de Campo)  
28011 Madrid

Tel: (+34) 914 645 704

[curritomadrid@telefonica.net](mailto:curritomadrid@telefonica.net)

José María Barea, aka "Currito", brought his grilling skills from Santurce to Madrid where he has established a fine reputation for the best sardines and hearty ox-beef steaks around. Located right in the heart of Madrid's Casa de Campo park, this is a classic summer destination.

#### Urrechu

Barlovento, s/n  
Centro Comercial Zoco de Pozuelo

28223 Somosaguas  
(Pozuelo de Alarcón) Madrid

Tel: (+34) 917 157 559

[www.urrechu.com](http://www.urrechu.com) / [reservas@urrechu.com](mailto:reservas@urrechu.com)

This cider bar occupies the lower floor of one of the best haute cuisine restaurants in the northwestern outskirts of Madrid. Urrechu is known for good quality raw materials and a close relationship with its customers, who include executives from the nearby business parks for whom it seems to exert a magnetic pull.

#### La Huerta de Lleida

Cuesta de Santo Domingo, 16  
28013 Madrid

Tel: (+34) 915 478 080

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

[info@lahuertadelleida.com](mailto:info@lahuertadelleida.com)

First and foremost this is the place for char-grilled vegetables, whose top quality does justice to the fertile area from which it takes its name. Snails and cod cooked over the coals are the other specialties that Valentín Botargues serves his clientele.

#### Zerain

Quevedo, 3. 28014 Madrid

Tel: (+34) 914 297 909

One of the latest, big, traditional Basque names to set up a business in the capital (almost a decade ago). Cider on tap, rustic style, char-grilled meat and fish sum up the experience.

#### Baby Beef & Porto Rubaiyat

Juan Ramón Jiménez, 37

Tel: (+34) 913 591 000

28036 Madrid

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

These two restaurants occupy a building that formerly housed the fish restaurant Cabo Mayor. Spanish-born Brazilian entrepreneur Belarmino Fernández successfully combines the enduring maritime concept with an international one here with good grill cooking and top-quality products.

### BARCELONA

#### Manairó

Diputació, 424

08013 Barcelona

Tel: (+34) 932 310 057

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

[info@manairo.com](mailto:info@manairo.com)

Given his relationship with iron and fire, Jordi Herrera could be described as a gastronomic blacksmith. His eclectic cooking techniques involve soldering, an electric drill and inventions of his own such as the fakir cook. His innovative approach to dishes such as steaks cooked on hot nails, meat glazed with a hot air gun and centrifuged pigeon.

### ASTURIAS

#### El Llar de la Campana

Ctra. AS-18, km 11

33192 Pruvia Llanera

(Asturias)

Tel: (+34) 985 265 836

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

Though chiefly known for large-scale catering events such as weddings and banquets, this restaurant's culinary standards are by no means compromised. Since its inception, the charcoal grill presided over by a Basque parrillero has occupied pride of place, and boasts a fine reputation for steaks.



## LA RIOJA

### Egües

Campa, 3  
26005 Logroño  
(La Rioja)  
Tel: (+34) 941 228 603  
www.mesonegues.com  
meson@mesonegues.com

A charming rustic restaurant right in the center of Logroño where Fermin Lasa, another graduate of Julián de Tolosa, char-grills Cantabrian seafood, Galician beef and Riojan vegetables.

### Asador Alameda

Pza. Félix Azpilicueta, s/n  
26360 Fuenmayor  
(La Rioja)  
Tel: (+34) 941 450 044  
www.restaurantealameda.com

This is the restaurant that gave the Chuleta del Alameda—considered to be one of the best on-the-bone steaks in the whole of Spain—its name. It is a traditional asador built of stone and old brick. Esther Álvarez is in the kitchen and Tomás Fernández is at the grill. Together they exercise their considerable skills with select prime materials. The grilled offal, meat and fish are particularly good.

## VALENCIA

### Askua

Felip María Garín, 4  
46021 Valencia  
Tel: (+34) 963 375 536  
www.askaurestaurante.com

Ricardo Gadea's restaurant has embraced contemporary design but remains faithful to the tradition of fine cuts of mature beef, delicious sea cucumbers and juicy sweetbreads.

## NAVARRRE

### Arotxa

Santa Catalina, 34  
31792 Legasa (Navarra)  
Tel: (+34) 948 456 100  
www.arotxa.com

Just a couple of miles away from the Señorío de Bértiz, Navarre's splendid natural park, this unpretentious asador serves good, simple food made from excellent raw materials.

## GUIPÚZCOA

### Restaurante Elkano

Herrerrieta, 2  
20808 Getaria (Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 140 024  
www.restauranteelkano.com  
info@restauranteelkano.com

The proprietor and chef de cuisine of this restaurant is the veteran cook Pedro Arregui, who always maintains that its only recipe is "tradition plus tradition". Unsurprisingly then, its cuisine is based on superb quality produce and its skilled handling. He specializes in fish and was the first to char-grill large fish whole.

### Casa Julián

Santa Clara, 6  
20400 Tolosa (Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 671 417  
www.casajuliandetolosa.com

The pioneer Julián Rivas founded this restaurant in the 1960s, and today it's known as "the cathedral of Basque Steaks". Matias Gorrotxategui has since taken over, though the fundamental elements remain the same: the unusual *parrilla* contained by fire-proof bricks with glowing holm oak charcoal and the grill quite close to the fire. Meat, pure and simple.

## Asador Nicolás

Avda. Zumalacárregi, 6 – bajo  
20400 Tolosa (Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 654 759

Disciples of the Julián de Tolosa style in the chuletón capital. Meat and fish are cooked here skillfully and simply.

### Burruntzi

San Francisco, 3  
20400 Tolosa (Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 650 559

Juanjo Pascual, another disciple of the most legendary of parrilleros, cooks large, delicious on-the-bone steaks for a discerning clientele.

### Talaípe

Portu Zaharra, s/n  
20808 Getaria (Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 140 652  
www.talaípe.com  
info@talaípe.com

Situated in Guetaria's medieval quarter, close to the marina and fishing port at the foot of Cerro del Ratón. Beautifully char-grilled, fine-quality fish with grilled lobster is a star dish.

### Kaia y Kaípe

General Arnao, 4  
20808 Getaria  
(Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 140 500  
www.kaia-kaípe.com  
info@kaia-kaípe.com

Situated alongside Zarautz parish church, this restaurant was established by Ignacio Larrañaga almost half a century ago, the asador being added ten years later. It specializes in fish and seafood from its own nurseries.



### Asador Bedua

Ctra. Zumaia-Meagas. Barrio de Bedua  
20750 Zumaia  
(Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 860 551  
www.bedua.es

Housed in a medieval guildhall not far from the Urola estuary, this highly-regarded, rustic-looking Basque asador has a marvelous terrace overlooking the river. In addition to its char-grilled specialties, mainly fish, it has its own kitchen garden from which customers can buy produce.

### Joxe Mari

Herriko Enparantxa, s/n  
20810 Orío  
(Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 830 032

Orío's finest asador has long, communal tables at which its classic signature dish, char-grilled red sea bream, is served.

### Rekondo

Pº de Igueldo, 57  
20008 Donostia-San Sebastián  
(Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 212 907  
www.rekondo.com

This not-to-be-missed classic on the slopes of Monte Igueldo was opened by Txomin Rekondo in 1964 as the town's trail-blazing asador. One of the most popular restaurants in San Sebastián, it serves traditional Basque cuisine as well as delicious char-grilled food.

### Zapiain

Kale Nagusia, 96-Errekalde Etxea  
20115 Astigarraga  
(Guipúzcoa)  
Tel: (+34) 943 33 00 33  
zapiainsat@terra.es

The Zapiain family invented the formula of

eating standing up around barrels of cider that became quite a favorite in northern Spain. Customers drink as much cider on-tap as they like while meat and fish are char-grilled for them. Diners can even take in their own ingredients to be cooked there. Open from Monday to Friday, evenings only.

## VIZCAYA

### Asador Zaldúa

Sabino Arana, 10  
48395 Sukarrieta-Pedernales  
(Vizcaya)  
Tel: (+34) 946 870 871  
www.asadorzaldua.com

Juan Antonio Zaldúa serves top-quality, char-grilled meat and fish. He is particularly well-known for his two-stage method of grilling steaks: covered in salt and 10 cm (4 in) away from the coals until a crisp crust forms, then 30 cm (12 in) away so that the heat reaches the interior of the meat without it burning or drying out.

### Etxebarri

Plaza de San Juan, 1  
48291 Axpe-Marzana - Atxondo (Vizcaya)  
Tel: (+34) 946 583 042

Victor Arguinzoniz's work represents a milestone in this style of cooking: foodies and chefs from all over the world regard him as a major figure in avant-garde cuisine. His enthusiasm for letting the grill work its magic on whatever product has led to his designing various pans, grilles and receptacles so that he can include ingredients that range from the usual red sea bream to the more unlikely Iranian caviar and *angulas* (elvers). Not only does he cook unexpected foods, but his techniques are also ingenious and rationally applied.

### Asador Ripa

Muelle Ripa, s/n  
48001 Bilbao (Vizcaya)  
Tel: (+34) 944 249 295  
www.asadorripa.com  
asadorripa@asadorripa.com

Owned by the Bustinza family, who are also proprietors of the reputable Horma Hondo asador, this restaurant focuses on seasonal produce and Miguel Ángel Hernando's parrillero skills. His char-grilled duck liver au naturel and hake or cod cheek are particularly good, though his superb fish and meat are by no means outdone.

## ÁLAVA

### Sagartoki

Prado, 18  
01005 Vitoria (Álava)  
Tel: (+34) 945 288 676  
www.sagartoki.es

Senén González's restaurant has two facets: it has one of the best pinchos (tapas) bars in the whole of Spain and also incorporates an experimental asador-sidrería. It is particularly good for grilled fish, in particular unusual species, and the char-grilled beef and Iberico secreto pork are also exceptionally good.





# EARTHY AROMAS

“The black truffle is the soul of nature, its hidden essence.” This is a categorical statement from Santi Santamaría, the Spanish chef with the most Michelin stars for his three restaurants: Can Fabes, which has three, Santceloni, with two, and Evo, with one. But before it reached the world’s top kitchens, this delicacy had to travel through time and space, from the depths of the earth to the table, in a mist of darkness and magic.

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TEXT  
 JORGE LUIS BARTOLOMÉ

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PHOTOS  
 JUAN MANUEL SANZ/ICEX

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TRANSLATION  
 JENNY MCDONALD

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The oldest texts known to man were found many centuries ago in Mesopotamia, engraved on clay. The Sumerian society at that time knew of the fruit that grew underground without being sown and that went on to become one of the favorite foods of kings. It was a fungus belonging to the *tuberaceous* species, genus *Tuber*, a truffle. We now know, centuries later, that the Ancient Egyptians were very fond of truffles. Several chronicles report that the Pharaoh Cheops liked to eat them coated in goose fat and cooked *en papillote*. The Jewish people also revered truffles. The story of their discovery of manna, a gift from God to his people, is described in the book of Exodus and, according to some interpretations, manna might have been a sort of truffle. And the Greeks and Romans, from Pythagoras to Pliny and Cicero, sang the praises of this fungus that featured on the tables of Roman Emperors and senators. However, with the arrival of the

Middle Ages, the truffle fell into obscurity. Its mysterious origin—just appearing in woodlands, on barren land, underground but apparently without roots—led the church, followed by public opinion, to consider it evil and associate it with the devil.

Fortunately, with the Renaissance, the truffle made a comeback as a delicacy and superstitions were left behind. It started to appear in the European Courts, especially in France. The French gastronome and writer Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin paid tribute to it in his *Physiology of Taste*, with one of the most famous sentences with regards to the truffle, calling it “the black diamond of gastronomy”. That was in 1825. Since then the truffle has never ceased to grow in popularity and its qualities have been admired by all lovers of good food. Nobody today mentions its evil associations but few can deny that as a temptation it is hard to resist.

## Asleep among the roots

The black truffle, or *Tuber melanosporum*, is an underground fungus with a similar origin to that of the white Piemonte truffle (*Tuber magnatum*) and other truffles offering less quality and aroma, such as *Tuber brumale* and *Tuber aestivum*, the summer truffle. The shape is more or less spherical, and the surface is rough, with small pyramid-like lumps. It needs such special growing conditions that it is only found in the Mediterranean Basin countries. Spain, together with Italy and France, is one of the main producer countries.

The black truffle can only develop in symbiosis with the roots of certain *quercus* trees, especially holm oaks, oaks and hazelnut. But it also needs the right climate and a precise geographical location. The tree it grows with must have its roots in limy soil, with a pH between 7 and 8.5, and the climate must be cold,



with low temperatures in the winter and mild summers. When all these factors come together, the life story of the truffle can begin. But it takes a full year of patient waiting.

We start out in the depths of winter in a field of holm oaks. Snuggled up against the roots of a tree is a black truffle, one that must release its spores and begin its reproduction. So nature performs another of its tricks. The dense, pungent, unique

aroma of the truffle attracts animals with a well-developed sense of smell, such as wild boars, badgers, foxes and even insects that seek out the truffle as food. They then propagate the spores, helping them reach the roots of other trees that can cradle the development of further truffles. Then comes spring. By this time the spore has found its place amongst the roots of the new tree, forming the mycorrhiza. During May and

June, the truffle starts to form but will only do so if it receives plenty of moisture during the summer. This is one of the most delicate stages of development. Without rain, the fungus will not grow and will remain hidden forever; however, with rain, in August and September it will swell and reach the last phase of its life cycle.

In autumn, development stops and maturation starts, a process which





comes to an end between November and March, the harvesting season. This is when the truffle starts to release its characteristic aroma to attract animals and the reproduction process starts all over again. And now comes man. With the help of an animal, usually a specially-trained dog (although pigs or even tamed wild boars can be used, or certain insects can be followed), they hunt for this small black jewel, this gastronomic gem.

## Buried treasure

Black truffles have traditionally been found in wild areas. The oak woods in many parts of Spain have always been one of the preferred hunting-grounds for truffle collectors but, during the last few decades, wild truffles have become scarce, so trees previously mycorrhized with the truffle mycelium are now being planted. Such plantations have been set up in most of the historical truffle areas, especially in Soria and Teruel, in northeast Spain. The trees are carefully tended and pruned and,

with time, begin to give the first fruits. The locals wait patiently with the typical calm demeanor that has characterized them generation after generation.

Looking into the eyes of one of these men, I get the impression that he has been gazing for years over the jagged horizon of the valley, over the sharp silhouettes of the mountains. His name is Serafín Nieva. This is the Metauten valley, in the Navarre district of Urbasa Lóquiz Estella, opposite the town that gave it its name. He is the president of the Lóquiz Truffle Growers Association that operates in this area, close to the city of Pamplona.

He scans the valley, with its five towns, its vineyards, its cereal fields and the herbs that grow freely all around. He reminds me of a sailor, always looking towards the skyline, watching out for changes in the weather. Behind us is the Truffle Interpretation Center in the town of Metauten, Spain's first truffle museum.

Serafín is a lively conversationalist,

but a touch of nostalgia creeps in at the end of every sentence. "A few years ago, all the land was cultivated. But there's not much soil and what remains is poor quality, so people have been leaving for the cities where they can make a lot more money. But for a while now it seems that the land is, in fact, good for truffles, at least good enough for some people to be able to stay. That's very important for us."

Serafín is the spokesperson for the 300 inhabitants of this valley, and his words could apply to many of Spain's truffle-growing areas, most of which are in under-populated regions. If the conditions are right for truffles, they are not likely to be very good for other types of crops. A car drives towards us and the driver honks his horn to greet Serafín, and then continues up towards the villages—Ollogoyen, Ganuza, Arteaga, Ollobarren—located at the foot of the Lóquiz mountains. On both sides of the road are small plots planted with truffle trees. These small woods are becoming one of the



Navaleno, and here things move at a different pace. The older inhabitants sit in front of the doors of their houses, slowly watching life go by—along with the occasional vehicle. Alone with their thoughts, they watch the mountains and the trees that have withstood many a cold winter. One of those mountains is home to the 600-ha (1,482-acre) plantation of mycorrhized holm oaks that belong to the company Arotz. I am greeted on the Arotz premises by José Ignacio Ruiz, who is responsible for the firm's exports.

His comments are in line with Serafin's. "These plantations have turned into one of the safest bets for this area. You can control the yield and guarantee annual production, depending much less on luck, on nature and on the lack of rainfall." This plantation and the company go back to 1969, when a Navarran trader named Salvador Arotz Arena had the idea of creating an artificial holm oak wood to produce black truffles. The techniques of injecting the trees with the truffle mycelium before planting had already been

economic driving forces for this district.

Turning his gaze from Metauten's quiet silhouette, Serafin explains, "Truffle growing is a good option for the people in the valley. We are now producing truffles on more than 100 ha (247 acres) of land, not counting the mountain, of course. We also have the museum. The truffle is helping the valleys cope with depopulation. I think this is the beginning of something that's going to grow in the future."

## And so they grow trees

Another area where the truffle has helped the local economy is in the province of Soria. In order to see one of the companies that has taken full advantage of this gift from the land, we head to the small town of Navaleno, in the northwest area of the Soria province, just 50 km (31 mi) from the capital. There are seven towns along the road between the city of Soria and



TRUFFLES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



In the Metauten valley, with the Lóquiz Mountains in the background, a white building stands out: it's the site of the recently-opened Truffle Interpretation Center. Its displays show how the black truffle develops in symbiosis with the holm oak's roots, an animated projection shows how the whole process works and in the background are some of the tools used by truffle harvesters.

This is the first truffle museum in Spain. María Martínez Etxeberria takes us around the exhibits and photos, explaining the reasons for setting up this jewel of a museum. "We want people to treat truffles as they deserve to be treated. We want them to know what truffles are, how they form, what they are made up of and what properties they have," she says, with pride. "And this is just the beginning. We hope by next year to be able to give visitors a demonstration showing how truffles are found." Just a few dozen feet from the museum, several mycorrhized holm oaks await their maturity, when they will take on the role as informants and teachers.

But it is not only in Metauten that museums and interpretation centers are being set up. In Graus, in the province of Huesca, plans are underway for a truffle-growing experimentation center to study different ways of improving the process of mycorrhizing plants with the truffle fungus. And in Navaleno there is a museum dedicated to the local fungi, among which the black truffle reigns supreme.

developed, but nobody had applied them on such a large scale. Now, years later, Arotz is one of Spain's most important truffle companies and a European standout in its sector. "Obviously," says José Ignacio Ruiz, "customers like to know their supplier can provide them with truffles every year, and we've been able to build up that confidence." But such certainty can only come with hard work in the field, with pruning, light plowing and especially irrigation in the summer. But truffles are not only being grown in Soria and Navarre. In some areas, truffles are harvested both in the wild and on cultivated plantations. Examples can be found in Teruel or Graus (in the foothills of the Pyrenees, in Huesca, in northern Spain), where there are about 1,000 ha (2,471 acres) growing mycorrhized trees. At the other end of the scale is the town of Morella, in inland Castellón on the east coast, which has continued to harvest wild truffles with almost no plantations. Guadalajara and Cuenca, in the center of Spain, are in the early days of truffle cultivation.

Winter warmth

It's midnight in the bar at the railway station. We are in the town of Mora de Rubielos in Teruel, in northeast Spain, on a bitterly cold winter night. It's truffle season and a group of locals are drinking wine, whispering together. This is the location of one of Spain's most important truffle markets. Here and in other similar places, in the towns of Graus (Huesca), Vic (Barcelona), Morella (Castellón) and Molina de Aragón (Guadalajara), the week's



price for the black truffle is set. Dealers and harvesters communicate by signs and monosyllables, closing deals worth thousands of euros. Truffle markets have always taken place in venues like this, surrounded by secrecy and darkness. But now there are associations of truffle-growers who are determined to develop the world of the truffle. They already exist in Catalonia and Aragón, bringing together other small associations that have been created in the producing regions. And companies are beginning to fight to get into this competitive world of truffles and truffle by-

products. One of the best examples is Manjares de la Tierra (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 70), a company that sells and processes black truffles, located in Sarrión (Teruel). María Jesús Agustín, one of its founders, explains, "There have always been *Tuber melanosporum* in the mountains of Sarrión. The reason we set up our company was to make black truffles better known. They're one of nature's most amazing foods and we wanted to give them a name, and a brand that consumers could trust."

## Reaching new heights

Finally, we reach the kitchen, the moment for which everybody's been waiting. In the winter, just hours after being dug out of the earth (if left for too long, the aroma fades), the black truffle enters the most prestigious of restaurants through the back door. The whole kitchen fills with their unmistakable, sweetish, earthy smell. The time has come for the chefs to use their imagination, to create culinary masterpieces full of subtleties and details.

We ask a group of Spanish chefs what dishes they would make with black truffles. Most of them hesitate before answering, but then the ideas start flowing. Santi Santamaria considers one of the best possible dishes to be truffle baked in clay, although he also mentions whole truffle in puff pastry or grated truffle in potato soup, in addition to truffle with a little pork fat, wrapped in paper and baked over hot coals. Mario Sandoval, from his restaurant *Coque* in Humanes in Madrid, maintains that one of his favorites is fried free-range egg with truffle grated over the top. Manuel de la Osa, from his *Las Rejas* restaurant in the town of Las Pedroñeras in Cuenca, prefers wild radish wafers filled with pieces of truffle in a green pineapple stock. And Paco Roncero, from *La Terraza del Casino* de Madrid, suggests cardoons with chestnuts and truffle.

But both chefs and experts agree on the outstanding properties and versatility of the black truffle. As an ingredient in sauces and stews, it gives off its full aroma. But,

according to Manuel de la Osa, they should not be cooked at a temperature greater than 70°C (158°F), or the truffle's properties begin to lessen.

Another frequent way of using truffles is as the final garnish, grating it or placing thin slices on the top of the dish, preferably at the table. This way the temperature of the cooked dish brings out the truffle aroma, achieving an instant, almost magical result.

One of the most surprising comments comes from Juan Pablo Felipe from the restaurant El Chaffán in Madrid. He believes the black truffle can even be used to give different nuances to wine, and recommends placing a few pieces of *Tuber melanosporum* in wine glasses to offer new sensations, a new wine experience. "It's only an experiment really," says the chef, "but it's worth trying."

*Jorge Luis Bartolomé has collaborated with Canal Sur, Onda Punta TV and on the literary journal Nvmenor. He is currently an intern journalist at Spain Gourmetour.*



## WEBSITES

[www.turismonavarra.es/esp/organice-viaje/recurso.aspx?o=3980](http://www.turismonavarra.es/esp/organice-viaje/recurso.aspx?o=3980)

Website for the Navarre Government with information on the Metauten Truffle Interpretation Center. (Basque, English, French, German, Spanish)

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

The official museum website with information on opening hours and prices, as well as instructions for organizing a visit to the center. (Spanish)

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

Website for the National Federation of Truffle and Mushroom Exporters, with information on its activities, statistics on the truffle market, links to official organizations and contact details for all its members. (Spanish)

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

The Arotz website, with information about the company and links to videos showing the its plantation and the black truffle producing process. Also offers a display of the company's products. (English, French, Spanish)

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

The Manjares de la Tierra website, with texts about the black truffle and the company's product range, from fresh truffle to truffle juice. (English, French, Spanish)

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

The Laumont website, with information on its premises, products and contact details of retailers. (Catalan, English, Spanish)



## TRUFFLES AND SUMMER, A POSSIBLE COMBINATION

Normally, fresh black truffles can only be eaten when they are in season, from November to March, but today a small processing and canning sector now allows consumption of truffle products all year round.

Options for the summer months are truffles in their own juices or in brandy, or deep-frozen truffles. Several companies, such as Laumont and Arotz, have developed this type of processed truffle.

If the idea is to cook with truffles, one possibility is to use the cooking juices from natural truffles, which is sold, among other products, by Manjares de la Tierra. Or, of course, extra virgin olive oils with truffle or vinegar with *Tuber melanosporum* aroma are available, ideal for all sorts of dressings.

Another way of sampling black truffle is in foods with which it is made. Try *salchichón* with truffle from a company called Riera Ordeix, in Vic (Barcelona), or hen stuffed with truffles, sold by Melsa, a company in Graus (Huelva) that has been perfecting this recipe for over a hundred years: hen stuffed with pork sirloin or cured ham and marinated with black truffle and Armagnac.

Another interesting option is eggs with truffle aroma, a simple but delicious idea. Eggs are left in contact with a fresh black truffle for a week so that the porous shells can allow the unmistakable truffle flavor to penetrate the egg inside.

Curiously enough, the British royal family is known to consume one of the most exquisite truffle preparations on the market: goose liver with Spanish black truffle, also made by Melsa, in Graus. Clearly a food fit for royalty.



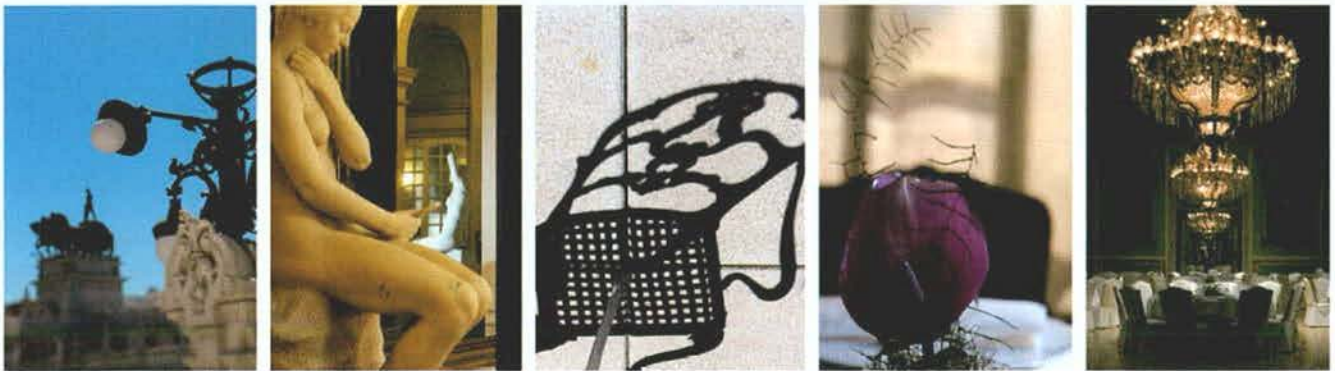
**Recipes**  
Paco Roncero

**Introduction**  
Almudena Muyo

**Translation**  
Jenny McDonald

**Photos, recipes**  
Toya Legido/ICEX

**Photos, introduction**  
Tomás Zarza/ICEX



# La Terraza del Casino

Originality and creativity are the main virtues of Paco Roncero, the chef at La Terraza del Casino (one Michelin star), who has received unanimous recognition of his work. The International Academy of Gastronomy named him Chef L'Avenir 2005, and he received the Spanish National Gastronomy Award for 2006. Considered to be one of Ferran Adrià's star pupils, he has remarkable skill at blending different textures and temperatures so that they explode in the eater's mouth. An ambassador for the latest Spanish cuisine, his inventiveness entails futuristic techniques, using different combinations of jelling agents, thickeners, emulsifiers and gases. La Terraza del Casino prides itself on having not only Paco Roncero in the kitchen but also María José Huertas as sommelier. Named Sommelier L'Avenir 2005, she is behind the wines recommended here.

La Terraza del Casino

Alcalá, 15

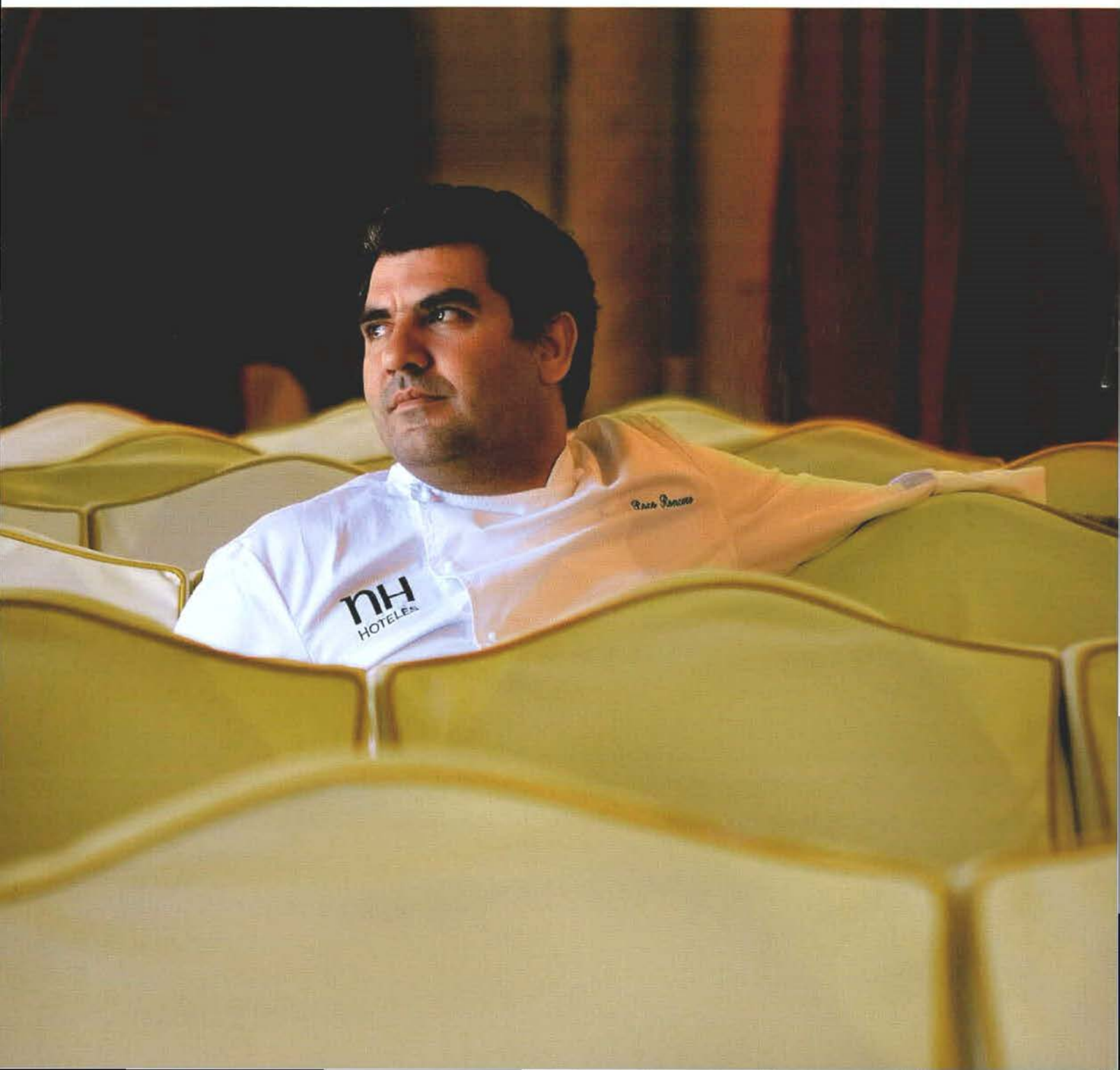
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[www.casinodemadrid.es/sp/gastronomia/rest\\_terraza/index.htm](http://www.casinodemadrid.es/sp/gastronomia/rest_terraza/index.htm)

[terraza.casino@nh-hotels.com](mailto:terraza.casino@nh-hotels.com)

# 5 RECIPES



# Milk-film omelet and truffle-flavored oil semolina

(Tortilla de piel de leche y sémola de aceite de trufa negra)

This is a very technical dish combining a milk film, like a traditional Japanese yuba, with a foam filling, liquid nitrogen, extra virgin olive oil, truffle, etc. The coming together of tradition and technique make this one of my favorite dishes, so much so that I often recommend it when customers ask for my advice.

## SERVES 4

**For the milk film:** 1 l / 4 1/4 cups full-cream milk; 35 ml / 1 fl oz cream.

**For the curd cheese foam:** 20 ml / 1 heaping tbsp cream; 200 g / 3/4 cups curd cheese; 2 dl / 3/4 cups whey; 1 cartridge N<sub>2</sub>O (nitrous oxide); 1 iSi siphon cartridge; 1 sheet gelatin.

**For the oil semolina:** 1 cartridge N<sub>2</sub>O; 200 ml / 3/4 cups extra virgin olive oil, DO Baena; 4 g / 1/6 oz table salt; 800 ml / 3 1/2 cups liquid nitrogen.

**For the black truffle oil:** 10 g / 1/3 oz black truffle; 30 ml / 2 heaping tbsp sunflower oil; 2 g / 1/9 oz table salt.

**Others:** 10 g / 1/3 oz Maldon salt; 50 g / 2 oz black truffle; basil leaves.

### For the milk film

Pour the whole liter of milk into a pot 32 cm / 13 in in diameter. Heat to 70°C / 158°F and wait for 15 minutes until a skin forms over the top. Remove this skin with your fingers and fold in half to form a half-circle two layers thick. Keep the milk at about 70°C / 158°F and wait another 15 minutes for another skin to form. Repeat the process until you have one

2-layer half-circle per person. Lay carefully on plastic film spread with cream and cut into rectangles 13 x 18 cm (5 x 7 in). Brush with plenty of cream, cover with another layer of plastic film and chill.

### For the curd cheese foam

Blend the curd cheese with the whey from inside the bags. Pour 225 g / 8 oz of the resulting cream through a cloth filter and the rest through a fine strainer. Combine the two resulting liquids. Heat one third of this and dissolve the well-drained gelatin in it. Add the rest of the liquid and mix well with the cream. Transfer to a siphon and load the gas cartridge. Refrigerate for 3 hours.

### For the oil semolina

Place the extra virgin olive oil and salt in the siphon and attach the N<sub>2</sub>O cartridges. Spray into the liquid nitrogen and leave to act for approximately 1 minute. Strain through a wire chinois and place in the freezer at -20°C / -4°F for 10 minutes. The semolina can then be refreshed in liquid nitrogen to obtain the right texture.

### For the black truffle oil

Blend the black truffle with the sunflower oil. Season with salt and refrigerate.

### To finish

Lift the film off the top of the yubas. Apply the curd cheese foam to the middle of the yuba, forming a rectangle measuring 12 cm (5 in) and 2 cm high (1 in). Wrap the foam with

the yuba, making an oval shape like an omelet and ensuring that all the foam is wrapped up.

### To serve

Place the omelet-shaped parcel on a rectangular dish with the folds downwards. Along the top, place a line of oil semolina and top this with a few basil leaves. Finish with a few freshly-sliced truffle wafers and dress with black truffle oil.

### Preparation time

1 hour

### Cooking time

30 minutes

### Recommended wine

Gramona Argent 2003, by Bodegas Gramona. This subtle, creamy cava made from Chardonnay grapes has well-integrated bubbles, giving just the right freshness to accompany this dish.



# Black truffle cannelloni with bone marrow and rabbit's brains

(Canelón de trufa negra con  
tuétano y sesos de conejo)

This dish could be said to be representative of true Spanish cuisine, with the black truffle blending perfectly with the brains. There is no single main ingredient; all of them are equally important.

## SERVES 4

**For the rabbit's brains:** 6 rabbit's brains.

**For the black truffle cannelloni:** 50 g / 2 oz black truffle; 10 g / 1/3 oz butter.

**For the bone marrow:** 200 g / 7 oz veal bone marrow.

**For the bacon en confit:** 80 g / 3 oz Iberico pork belly; 150 ml / 2/3 cup extra virgin olive oil (0.4° acidity).

**For the consommé:** 500 g / 1 lb chicken; 15 g / 1/2 oz carrots; 15 g / 1/2 oz onions; 15 g / 1/2 oz leek; 50 ml / 4 tbsp sunflower oil; 2.5 l / 10 1/2 cups water; 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz fresh veal knee bones; 2 chicken carcasses; 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz veal knuckle.

**For the consommé jelly:** 50 ml / 4 tbsp clarified meat consommé; 2 g / 1/9 oz agar-agar; sea salt.

**For the meat stock:** 150 g / 5 1/2 oz carrots; 350 g / 12 oz onions; 20 g 1 oz leek; 60 g / 2 oz red tomato; 60 ml / 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil (0.4° acidity); 40 g / 1 1/2 oz sugar; 1 l / 4 1/2 cup young red wine; 2.5 l / 10 1/2 cup water; 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb fresh veal knee bones; breast of veal.

**For the sauce:** 100 ml / 1/2 cup meat stock; 10 g / 1/3 oz butter; 1 ml / 1/4 tsp sherry vinegar, 25-year-old Reserva; sea salt.

**Others:** 5 ml / 1 tsp black truffle oil; sea salt; extra virgin olive oil (0.4° acidity).

### For the rabbit's brains

Cleave the rabbit's heads vertically with a clean blow. Using a round-tipped knife, remove the brain (now in 2 halves), being careful not to break it. Chill the brains. Set aside 3 half brains per person.

### For the black truffle cannelloni

Peel the black truffle and slice with an electric slicer to a maximum thickness of 0.05 cm (0.02 in). Arrange the wafer-thin slices on lightly-buttered wax paper, forming a rectangle measuring 6 x 12.2 cm (2 1/2 x 5 in). There must be no gaps and the wafers should overlap slightly so that the cannelloni can be rolled up without falling apart. Lightly brush the truffle with butter and cover with plastic film. Trim the film, leaving 1 cm (0.4 in) extra all around to facilitate handling. Set aside.

### For the marrow

Leave the bones at room temperature for at least 4 hours. Cleave the bones, trying not to break the marrow and use a round-tipped knife to extract it. Soak in water to remove any blood and refrigerate for at least 12 hours. Place in a pot of water and blanch slowly just until the water begins to boil. Remove from the heat and leave to cool in the cooking water. When cold, drain. Remove any gristle or bone and cut into 0.5 cm (1/4 in) cubes. Set aside.

### For the pork belly en confit

Soak the pork belly in cold water to remove any salt. Drain and trim off any rind. Cover with extra virgin olive oil and make a confit in the oven for 1 1/2 hours at 100°C / 212°F. Remove

the pork from the oil and refrigerate. Remove any gristle or rancid parts and cut into 0.5 cm (1/4 in) cubes.

### For the consommé

Brown the veal bones in the oven at 180°C / 356°F. Trim any fat off the chicken carcasses. Cut the veal knuckle into pieces. Trim any fat off the chicken and cut into pieces. Peel the onions, cut into rings and brown in a skillet. Peel the carrots and trim the leek. Place all the ingredients in a pot and cover with water. Simmer for 8 hours, then strain.

### For the consommé jelly

Season the consommé with salt. Mix in the powdered agar-agar. Over medium heat, bring to a boil, stirring the whole time. Remove from the heat and skim. Pour into a flat dish and place in the refrigerator to set.

### For the meat stock

Add the sugar to the wine and reduce to half. Keep for deglazing the veal which will be cooked in the skillet. Brown the veal bones in the oven at 180°C / 356°F. Cut the breast of veal into 10 x 1.5 cm (4 x 3/4 in) pieces. Seal in a skillet with a little oil over a high flame until brown but still raw inside. Deglaze with the wine. Cut the vegetables into small pieces. Brown in the oven with a little oil at 150°C / 302°F. Once they are beginning to brown uniformly, add the tomato cut into quarters. Continue to cook until the tomato juice has evaporated and the vegetables are browned. Place all the ingredients together in a pot. Cover with cold water and bring to a boil over medium heat. Then simmer



for 6 hours, skimming frequently. Strain and leave to cool so that the fat solidifies. Remove the fat.

#### **For the meat sauce**

Reduce the meat juices to form a fairly thick, flavorful sauce. Bind with cornstarch if necessary. Set aside. Brown the butter in a pan. When hazelnut color, deglaze with the sherry vinegar. Add the meat juices and season with salt. Keep warm.

#### **To serve**

Separately, heat the cubes of marrow and pork belly en confit until they lose any surplus fat and are warm. Drain and mix. Heat the consommé jelly and add to the marrow and pork cubes. Season with salt. Remove the wax paper from the truffle cannelloni and spread 20 g / 1 oz of the marrow and

pork filling over the truffle rectangle. Roll up and place along the left side of a long dish. Season the rabbit's brains and griddle until browned and lightly-cooked. Place 3 halves of brain to the right of the roll lengthwise, leaving 2 cm (3/4 in) between each. Finish the dish with a strip of black truffle oil along the top of the cannelloni and add some of the meat sauce.

#### **Preparation time**

45 minutes

#### **Cooking time**

30 minutes

#### **Recommended wine**

El Regajal 2005 (DO Madrid). This is a flavorful, fruity, powerful wine that is fresh enough to blend perfectly with this dish.



# Black truffle and apple pie

(Tarta de trufa negra y manzana)

When I discovered filo dough, which is similar to puff pastry, I was reminded of a dish from days gone by—truffle *en croûte*. In my version, I add a touch of freshness with apple. This is a very light dish, one that we include in our tasting menu.

## SERVES 4

**For the filo dough millefeuille:** 2 sheets filo dough, black truffle oil.

**For the apple juice:** 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz Granny Smith apple.

**For the apple jelly:** 2 g / 1/9 oz agar-agar; 250 ml / 1 1/8 cup fresh apple juice.

**For the apple cubes:** 200 g / 7 oz Granny Smith apple.

**For the slices of black truffle:** 25 g / 1 oz black truffle; 50 ml / 4 tbsp black truffle oil; Maldon salt.

## For the apple juice

Prepare a pot of boiling water. Core the apples and cut each into 8 segments. Dip into boiling water for 5 seconds, drain and refresh in iced water. Liquidize the apple and place the liquid in a tall, narrow container. Chill in the freezer until the solids have risen. Remove with a slotted spoon. Pour the juice through a cloth filter.

## For the apple jelly

Mix the apple juice and the agar-agar. Bring to a boil over a medium heat and skim. Leave to set in a flat dish 0.5 cm (1/4 in) deep for at least 3 hours. Cut into 10 x 5 cm (4 x 2 in) rectangles.

## For the filo dough millefeuille

Brush off any loose flour from the filo dough sheets. Then brush one sheet with black truffle oil and top with another. Repeat with a third sheet. Cut into 10 x 5 cm (4 x 2 in) rectangles and arrange on two silpats. Place another silpat over the top to prevent the dough from rising. Bake at 210°C / 410°F until golden (3 or 4 minutes).

## For the apple cubes

Cut the peeled apple into 0.5 cm (0.2 in) cubes. Place between sheets of moistened paper to prevent oxidation.

## For the black truffle wafers

Wash the black truffles under a thin stream of water, scrubbing with a brush. Scrape with a sharp knife to remove the rough parts. Cut with a mandolin into 0.1 cm (0.04 in) slices. Dress with the black truffle oil and season with salt.

## To serve

Place the filo dough in the center of a dish. Top with jelly cubes. Arrange 15

apple cubes on top of the jelly, in 3 rows of 5 cubes. Place a truffle wafer on top, covering the jelly and apple. Heat under a salamander for 6 or 7 seconds to lightly cook the truffle. Finish by sprinkling the truffle with a little Maldon salt and black truffle oil.

## Preparation time

20 minutes

## Cooking time

5 minutes

## Recommended wine

José Pariente 2006 (DO Rueda), from Dos Victorias. As aromatic as the dish and as fresh as the apple.

# Lamb shoulder, with Iberico pork and black truffle ravioli, bread and baby onions

(Espaldita de cordero, con raviolis de ibérico y trufa negra, pan y cebollitas)

And now for a real winner: lamb with charcoal smoke flavored black truffle, a must for my winter cuisine repertoire.

## SERVES 4

**For the lamb shoulder:** 2 kg / 4 1/2 lbs sea salt; 1 kg / 2 1/4 lbs sugar; 1,600 g / 3 lbs 11 oz lamb shoulder.

**For the aromas:** 5 g / 1/6 oz fresh garlic; 2 g / 1/9 oz fresh thyme; 2 g / 1/9 oz fresh rosemary; 1 g / 1/9 oz bay leaves; 20 g / 1 oz butter.

**For the lamb stock:** 1 g / 1/9 oz parsley; 32 g / 1 oz fresh garlic; 48 g / 2 oz onions, peeled; 1 g / 1/9 oz black peppercorns; 1 g / 1/9 oz bay leaves; 20 g / 1 oz sugar; 2 l / 8 1/2 cups water; 40 ml / 3 tbsp sherry; 480 ml / 2 1/6 cups white wine; 40 ml / 3 tbsp sherry brandy; 320 g / 10 1/2 oz lamb bones; 2 g / 1/9 oz fresh thyme; 2 g / 1/9 oz fresh rosemary.

**For the ravioli:** 100 g / 3 1/2 oz Iberico pork belly; 40 g / 1 1/2 oz black truffle; salt.

**For the baby onions:** 8 small French onions.

**For the bread:** 1 kg / 2 1/4 lb bread.

**Others:** 2 fresh chicken's eggs; sunflower oil, toasted bread chips.

## For the lamb shoulder

Cover the lamb for 2 hours with the mixture of salt and sugar. Remove and wash. Place in a 100% vacuum pack with a knob of butter and the herbs. Cook in the Roner at 70°C / 158°F for 12 hours. Place in ice water to stop the cooking process. When cold, refrigerate.

## For the lamb stock

Brown the bones in the oven at 180°C / 356°F. Deglaze with white wine and place in a pot. Lightly fry

the vegetables in the order to be cooked and deglaze with the wine and sherry brandy. Add to the pot. Cook the bones, vegetables and herbs with the sugar, wine and sherry brandy. When reduced to half, add the water and simmer for 12 hours to obtain 1 l / 4 1/4 cup of lamb stock. Transfer to plastic containers and refrigerate. When a layer of fat has formed on the top, remove. Reduce and bind with butter until the right consistency.

## For the pork belly and black truffle ravioli

Place a piece of pork belly in the freezer. Slice into thin wafers using an electric slicer and spread over a sheet of non-stick paper. Clean the truffle and cut into 3 mm (0.12 in) slices. Place one slice of truffle on top of each slice of pork and season with a little salt. Fold each slice of pork in half, forming perfect rectangles 5 x 4 cm (2 x 1 1/2 in).

## For the baby onions

Blanch the onions and leave to cool. Peel and cut in half vertically. Use a sharp, pointed knife to remove the central part, then separate the most complete layers and set aside.

## For the bread envelopes

Freeze part of a loaf of bread 10 cm (4 in) long. Use the electric slicer to cut into thin wafers. Fold the slices in two, without flattening, and bake in the oven until just lightly browned.

## To serve

Sear the lamb in a skillet with sunflower oil. Place three toasted bread chips separately and randomly on the

plate. Place one pork and black truffle ravioli on each bread envelope. Sear the onion pieces on the griddle, empty side down, then turn over, arrange on the dish and fill with egg yolk. Add the glazed lamb and pour a little sauce on top.

## Preparation time

14 hours for the lamb shoulder and 30 minutes

## Cooking time

12 hours for the lamb

## Recommended wine

Finca Dofi 2003 (DO Priorato), by Álvaro Palacios. This is a well-structured, fleshy wine that provides the perfect partner for the lamb.



# Black truffle airbaguette (Airbaguette de trufa negra)

One of our amuse-bouche, topped with truffle—a real treat! We enjoy surprising our customers with recipes like this.

## SERVES 4

100 g / 3 1/2 oz black truffle; 10 ml / 2 tbsp black truffle oil; 10 g / 1/3 oz table salt.

**For the bread dough:** 10 g / 1/3 oz pressed yeast; 190 ml / 3/4 cups whole milk; 320 g / 10 1/2 oz unprocessed wheat flour; 4 g / 1/6 oz table salt.

## For the bread dough

Mix the yeast, milk, flour and salt. Knead mechanically for 5 minutes at medium speed. Then knead by hand for 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl, cover well and place in the refrigerator. Leave for 5 hours.

## For the airbaguette

Roll out the dough using the roller to achieve maximum thickness. Cover with a damp cloth and leave to stand for about 1 minute. Then roll out again to 0.5 cm (1/4 in) thickness. Repeat

the operation twice. Fold in half and roll out again to a thickness of 0.5 cm (1/4 in). Repeat the procedure twice. Cut into 10 x 1 cm (4 x 0.4 in) oval shapes. Place in a pasta roller and roll out to a thickness of 0.3 cm (1/8 in). Repeat the procedure twice. Bake in the oven at 240°C / 464°F for 3 minutes. Turn over and bake for another 2 minutes until well-risen and brown. Remove from the oven and, with a sharp, pointed knife, split in half, being careful not to break it. Set aside.



**For the black truffle**

Remove any dirt from the truffle using a brush and a little water. Dry well with paper towels and peel, removing any black parts. Using the electric slicer, slice the truffle into wafers 0.1 cm (0.04 in) thick, preparing about 8 wafers per person.

**To serve**

Season the truffle wafers with table salt. Lightly brush the top of the airbaguette with black truffle oil and pile the truffle wafers on top,

overlapping each other and creating height. Dress the truffle with a little black truffle oil and heat very lightly under the salamander. Serve on a rack with sandwich paper.

**Preparation time**

1 day for the dough to stand

**Cooking time**

From 5 to 10 minutes

**Recommended wine**

Gramona Celler Batlle 1997, by Gramona, a cava that offers the structure and complexity needed to complement the airbaguette.





### Pescaviar takes off in the Persian Gulf

Boosting the status of a product that might be taken, at first sight, for a mere caviar substitute up into the gourmet bracket is quite a coup, and Pescaviar has done just that. In barely a decade, this company has progressed from being a twinkle in the eye of its founder, Luis Irisarri, to a presence on the shelves of Harrods' Food Hall in London. Its most recent international operation involves Emirates, the Gulf's major airline, whose first and business class passengers will soon be sampling its star product, Avruga. Avruga is made by processing the flesh of wild North Sea herring using a state-of-the-art spherification technique, resulting in a product Pescaviar describes as "herring pearls". The Emirates deal came about as a result of contacts made at Gulfood 2007



Dubai, the Middle East's premier food fair. Given its earlier arrangement with Japan Airlines, which is also to serve Avruga on intercontinental flights, Pescaviar could be said to be reaching new heights with this product. The company has achieved remarkable international expansion in recent years. By 2006, it had 16 customers in six new countries, including Argentina, Chile, South Korea and Taiwan, and with these latest additions its distribution network now covers a total of over 30 countries. Export director Ana Irisarri is categorical in her account of the company's approach: "Our company was established with its sights set on

exporting. By the end of 2007 we want exports to account for 50% of our business." Pescaviar's range includes four other products in addition to Avruga: Moluga, Arénkha, Anchoviar and Lobsviar, the first two of which are made from herring and the other two from anchovy and lobster, respectively. They are

distributed primarily through gourmet import channels. "The product itself can only do so much. It won't advance further unless importers provide a good service," declares Irisarri.

**Date of foundation:** 1997  
**Activity:** Producing and selling processed seafood products  
**Workforce:** 30 employees  
**Turnover for 2006:** 3.5 million euros  
**Export quota:** 40%  
[www.pescaviar.com](http://www.pescaviar.com)

### Atlantica: from South Africa to Canada

José González del Valle and Javier Fernandez are the forces behind the agri-food product exporting consortium Atlantica. Over the last few years, these young entrepreneurs have achieved several commercial bulls-eyes in places as far-flung as Canada and South Africa, triggered by their participation in different food fairs.

Late in 2006, Atlantica embarked on a mini-tour around Quality Foods establishments in Oceanside and

# On the Move

TEXT  
DAVID CÁNOVAS WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATION  
JAVIER VÁZQUEZ

TRANSLATION  
HAWYS PRITCHARD

Vancouver Island (Canada) with a view to promoting their artisan cheeses—Manchego, goat's cheese with wine, Mahón and La Peral—which they sell under the Piel de Toro label. Their presentations, which paved the way for excellent sales, resulted from a meeting with the sales directors at Tree of Life, Canada's leading distributor of ecological and gourmet products, in June 2005. The cheeses will soon be complemented by refrigerated quince jelly which the company plans to introduce via the chilled foods channel.

They succeeded in penetrating the South African market in 2005 after establishing contact with the importing company Rialto Foods at Barcelona's Alimentaria in 2004. Atlantica currently supplies the Woolworth's chain with canned and bottled vegetables and various types of cheese and chorizo, and is also becoming involved in the restaurant supply field. Its plans for expansion include introducing new cheeses, "capitalizing on our excellent relationship with the importer," explains González. Atlantica is also involved with Iberica London ([www.ibericalondon.co.uk](http://www.ibericalondon.co.uk)),

whose premises are designed to combine the selling of gastronomic products with a restaurant business and a dash of Spanish culture. Since last summer, the Oviedo-based exporting consortium has been supplying this little Spanish outpost in the UK. Atlantica distributes its range of products—primarily cheeses, charcuterie, pickled items, canned and bottled vegetables and fish—under the Piel de Toro, Cum Laude, Esperanza, Isabella and Don Juan labels.

**Date of foundation:** 1998

**Activity:** Exporting food products

**Workforce:** 9 employees

**Turnover for 2006:** 4 million euros

**[www.atlantica-co.com](http://www.atlantica-co.com)**

## Guía Peñín: today the US, tomorrow the world

The most international guide to Spanish wines is planning to spread even farther afield. The English version of the 2007 Guía Peñín was given a gala launch in



New York as part of an event entitled *Los nuevos valores del vino español* (Spanish wine's new values). Organized by the Peñín Group, this provided an opportunity to present the latest wines both from established bodegas and up-and-coming winegrowing areas. "Our main purpose was to spread the word about wines that came onto the market between 2005 and 2006 about which the US had not yet become aware," explains José Peñín. The event was held at the New York Union Square Hotel and was attended by 40 journalists and many sommeliers and importers. "The event definitely made waves, and we are very

pleased with the way it went," he adds. A similar event was held two years ago in the UK, but today the Peñín Group is now even more ambitious. "Given the success of 'The new values of Spanish wine', we are planning an event called the 'Salón Guía Peñín 90+ New York'," the group's founder informs us. This main attraction of this event, which is set to feature the guide's most singular Spanish wines, will be "the guarantee that its independent judgment represents something consumers truly value." Even so, the US promises to be just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the Peñín Group's expansion plans. "We are already engaged in negotiations to replicate the same format in China and Japan," he reveals.

The Guía Peñín has been published for over 20 years, and there are Spanish, English and German editions, as well as a recently launched digital version. In addition to the guide, the Peñín Group publishes *Sibaritas* magazine devoted to wines and liqueurs, and also manages Spain's biggest winery and wine data base.

**Date of foundation:** 1990

**Activity:** Publishing and communications consultancy

**Workforce:** 26 employees

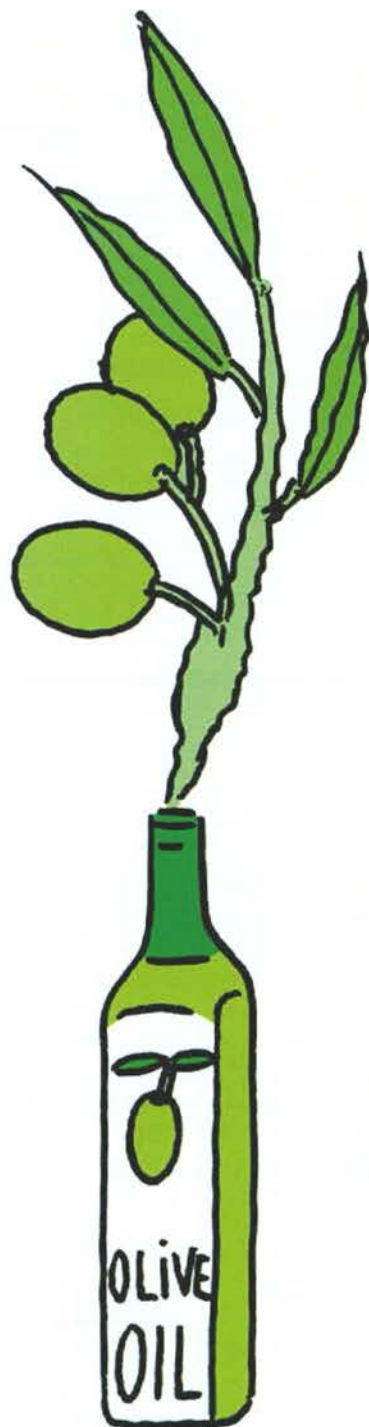
**Turnover for 2006:** 2.45 million euros

**Export quota:** 3%

**www.grupopenin.com**

### Agromillora shapes the future of Chilean olive-growing

Worth 40 million euros and extending over 3,000 ha (7,400 acres), Olivos del Sur is one of the biggest olive-growing investments in Chile. The project, which is the brain-child of Chilean businessman Alfonso Swett, is being facilitated by Agromillora. Working from its Spanish headquarters through its subsidiary company in Chile, Agromillora has been responsible for supplying the grafted olive stocks that the venture required. The involvement of the Catalan firm, which specializes in fruit and vegetable plant nurseries, also extended its services to providing advice on acquiring the necessary land, located in San José de Marchigüe (in the coastal province of Cardenal Caro) and transferring the technology. In total there will be six million olive trees, together with the investment in production premises and a greenhouse with a highly-controlled environment. The contract is worth three million euros. The Chilean state entity CORFO (Corporation for Fostering Production) has presented Agromillora at a series of seminars aimed at introducing the company to producers in Chile. "With 20 million olive trees produced this year, we can safely claim to be the world's leading nursery for this species," declares Joan Torrent, sub-director of the Catalan company. However, Agromillora also specializes in producing vines and stone-fruit plants as well as in cross-breeding to improve varieties. Currently, Chile and the US are this



company's two big markets in the Americas, and it has subsidiaries in Brazil, Chile, Morocco, Tunisia and Australia. "Our latest plans are focused on extending our presence in Asia," explains Jordi Mateu, Agromillora's technical director. Projected turnover figures for 2007 are approximately 33 million dollars.

**Date of foundation:** 1986

**Activity:** Fruit and vegetable nursery

**Workforce:** 500 employees

**Turnover for 2006:** 18.44 million euros

**Export quota:** 40%

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

### El Xamfrà takes top-of-the-range vinegars international

In the last few years, El Xamfrà, a winery that specializes in producing wines and liqueurs, has diversified its output with a new, and very well-received, range of varietal vinegars. This Catalan company, which is currently in the process of expanding internationally, has reached agreements with importers in the UK and Germany for them to distribute its Moscatel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay vinegars. "Moscatel vinegar is the most sought-after, perhaps because it is slightly sweet without being heavy, as balsamic vinegars tend to be. They are all made from quality wines," explains Cristina Fernández, head of El Xamfrà's export and sales department. She goes on to say, "Orders from the UK are repeated every three to four months, so we can safely claim that our wines have started to settle into the marketplace."

Meanwhile, the bodega has already set its sights on Japan and the US as overseas markets. "The European sector is already very saturated, so we're scoping out other alternatives," explains Fernández. "We've already made two trips to Japan and we have an on-site commercial agent. For this Christmas we'll be complementing requests for sample boxes with a selection of cavas, and one American importer has already shown interest. We're thinking of starting with Florida and then working on the west coast, though we intend to take it slow and consolidate what we have achieved already."

El Xamfrà's vinegars, which are mainly distributed through gourmet channels, present a good commercial argument for introducing the bodega's wines. "Once people have become acquainted with one of our products, they tend to try the others," observes Fernández. Its current range of cavas

includes a Reserva and a Gran Reserva, as well as the Reserva 2004, aged somewhere between the previous two. El Xamfrà also makes varietal and multivarietal wines.

**Date of foundation:** 1987

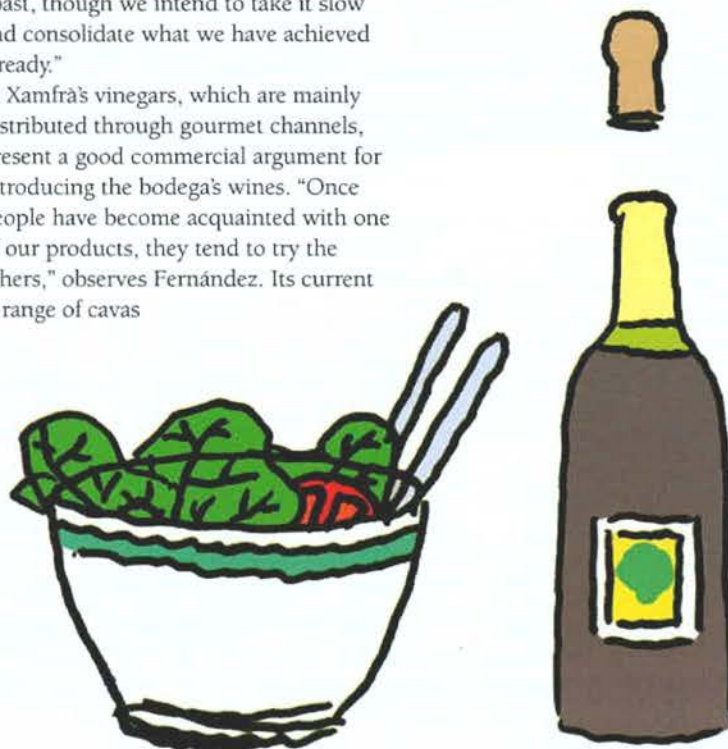
**Activity:** Producing and selling wines and vinegars

**Workforce:** 6 employees

**Turnover for 2006:** 200,000 euros

**Export quota:** 10%

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



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

# CAVIAR FROM GRANADA

**Text**  
David Baird  
**Photos**  
Piscifactoría  
de Sierra Nevada



## Piscifactoría de Sierra Nevada

In a leafy valley west of Granada where crystalline water gushes from a mountain spring, a daring business venture is truly taking off. Until recently, Spain's native species of sturgeon was in danger of extinction, but today some 400,000 are thriving in the pools of Riofrío. Furthermore, gourmets around the world are enjoying the first fruits: caviar, which is being produced in strictly ecological conditions and is winning accolades from international experts.



For more than 50 years, residents of Spain's Granada province have known where to go for the finest fresh trout. They have flocked to restaurants in Riofrío, a hamlet on the main highway between Granada and Málaga, to eat trout nurtured on a fish farm. Trade is still brisk, but unbeknownst to most visitors, less than a dozen feet away from the trout tanks, a whole new industry has been created. Without abandoning the trout, the Piscifactoría de Sierra Nevada has invested in a big way in producing top-quality caviar under the brand name Caviar de Riofrío. It's been a long process.

It all began in 1983 and the first caviar (a mere 20 kg / 40 lbs) was not marketed until 2000. In 2007 more than 2,000 kg (4,409 lbs) will be sold, and next year who knows? Demand from home and abroad has outpaced supply, but among the 400,000 sturgeon now in Riofrío's fish tanks, thousands are nearing the time when their eggs can be harvested.

The Piscifactoría claims that it has more sturgeon than any other similar enterprise and that it is the only nursery of its kind in the world employing a 100% certified ecological process. At tastings attended by international experts, Riofrío caviar has come out ahead of better-known products from Eastern Europe.

Although caviar can be stored for up to six months in the correct

refrigerated conditions, it is at its best when consumed within six days, and the Sierra Nevada company prides itself on delivering fresh caviar, and fast.

"If we get an international order today, the caviar can be on its way within hours to almost any destination," says José Javier Rodríguez Núñez, the company's sales manager. "It's the only service of this type in the world."

He stresses: "Our process here is totally ecological from start to finish and we're the only producers in Europe who can make this claim. Also the quality of the final product is guaranteed, unlike some other products sold as caviar which are really a mixture of different fish eggs." Rodríguez travels the globe, from Shanghai to New York, expounding the merits of Riofrío caviar to possible buyers. About 20% of production is exported, mostly to distributors, while the remainder is sold in Spain, predominantly to restaurants and stores.

## Exquisite product, exquisite history

The Sierra Nevada fish farm dates back to 1956. It was founded by the Domezain family from Navarre and its initial aim was to produce trout to supplement infants' diets—those were, after all, Spain's hungry years. Business really took off, sales soared and restaurants in Riofrío flourished. In the early 1980s, however, trout

sales slumped, partly due to intense competition from other fish farms. A rethink was necessary and the decision was made to try breeding sturgeon. It was a gamble that would require heavy investment and years of patient research.

In 1983, a dozen sturgeon for breeding were acquired from Italy. They were of the *Accipenser naccarii* species, native to southern Europe and at one time extremely common in the waters of the Guadalquivir River. Indeed, the sturgeon is said to have inhabited this earth 250,000 years ago along with the dinosaurs, and it was initially fished by the Phoenicians and Romans.

For many years, a factory at Coria del Río in the Seville area produced caviar. But the establishment of dams and weirs blocked sturgeons' route upriver where they bred, water pollution increased and in 1963 the Coria establishment closed. The last time a sturgeon is known to have been caught in the Guadalquivir was in 1992.

Meanwhile, poaching and pollution have reduced the famed sturgeon in the Caspian Sea by 80% and stocks in Russia's rivers are equally depleted.

Riofrío offered several important advantages for the establishment of a sturgeon fishery. First, there was an abundant supply of fresh, unpolluted water from a snow-fed aquifer beneath the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Also, there the water gushes from the rock at an

ideal temperature for trout and sturgeon, between 13 and 16°C (55 to 60°F) all year around, and it emerges at a rate of between 2,000 to 3,000 l a second (528 to 792 gal). Second, the physical installations already existed, as there were a series of large, concrete-walled tanks previously used for trout. They are located in a narrow valley so that the water cascades from one tank to the next.

## Financing a future

Even so, the estimated investment to date is 600,000 euros. Many years of breeding and research were needed before there was any return. Investigation into the characteristics of the naccarii species involved universities in Cádiz and Granada and Russian and Italian researchers. But indeed, research was done and the fish farm set out to breed this extremely unique fish. A toothless, shark-like creature with four feelers on the underside of its long snout, the sturgeon hatches

from its egg and grows to its fully mature state at the Sierra Nevada fish farm.

This species does not produce caviar until it is 16 to 18 years old, twice as long as the Caspian Sea's beluga sturgeon (*Acipenser huso*). Fourteen years passed before any sturgeon flesh, already very in demand, could be marketed and the first Riofrío caviar was harvested just in 2000.

A vital aspect of the ecological process is diet. A special feed mixture, some 50,000 kg (110,250 lbs) every month, is prepared at Riofrío. It consists of wheat flour, fish oil, fishmeal imported from France, krill, algae and mollusks. Algae are collected from a marshy area below the nurseries into which the water drains after passing through the fish tanks. Every two days the food is scattered by hand over the tanks so that it settles on the bottom where the sturgeon use their feelers to detect it. The thousands of fish are an impressive sight as they languidly

glide along, as many are well over one m long (3.3 ft). They can live 90 years or more and reach an amazing size. The beluga species in the Caspian and Black Seas, for example, reputedly lives up to 300 years and can weigh more than 1,000 kg (2,205 lbs).

## The final preparations

The company points out that the slow, natural maturing of its fish is vital in producing a superior final product; after all, it doesn't take the same time to make a good meal as to prepare a pre-cooked hamburger. A primary ecological product, it maintains, will always be richer in shades of color and flavor and be tastier and healthier than the equivalent product produced non-ecologically.

When they are eight years old, the sturgeon are examined to determine which sex they are. Males are kept until they are 12, when they weigh around 15 kg (33 lbs), and then sold for their flesh. Females enjoy more privileged treatment. Each one has a chip inserted with details of its age, diet and other information. It is subsequently returned to the water until it is at least 16 years old when it's taken to the so-called *quirófano* (operating room), a laboratory where a scan and a biopsy are carried out to determine if the optimum moment for removing eggs has arrived. The fish, by this time weighing around 40 or 50 kg (88 to 110 lbs), is massaged to induce sleepiness and then dispatched with a single, sharp blow to the head. About 10% of a female's body weight normally



consists of eggs. These are removed, washed to get rid of the fat around them and dried.

Very little marine salt is added to taste (known as the malossol system), and the caviar is ready. It is a pearly-grey color and has a silky, tender consistency with a scent suggesting sea breezes. In their descriptions, connoisseurs wax lyrical, employing the same sort of poetic language often used for wines.

Riofrío markets its product in various categories and takes pains with quality control, as David Montalbán, assistant sales director, points out.

"We want to ensure that our caviar is not mixed with inferior varieties, so we only sell it in our own clearly labeled packages."

In most of the caviar produced by the company, no preservatives are used. They are best stored at between 1 and 3°C (33.8 and 37.4°F) and must be kept refrigerated to avoid deterioration. Fresh, recently extracted caviar, which should be consumed within five days, is only available on special order and is sold in 200, 500 and 1,000-g sizes (7, 17 and 35 oz).

Other varieties include the Clásico, sold at 1,900 euros a kg (2.2 lbs), and the top brand, Excelsius Triple Cero, 3,600 euros a kg (2.2 lbs). Tins and glass jars are available for sale to the public in smaller quantities. For example 60 g (2 oz) of Clásico is 115 euros and 60 g (2 oz) of Excelsius costs 220 euros.

Also highly prized are Riofrío's sturgeon fillets, as the flesh has the same flavor as caviar. They are marketed in smoked and marinated forms, and fresh fillets are sold for 25 euros a kg (2.2 lbs).



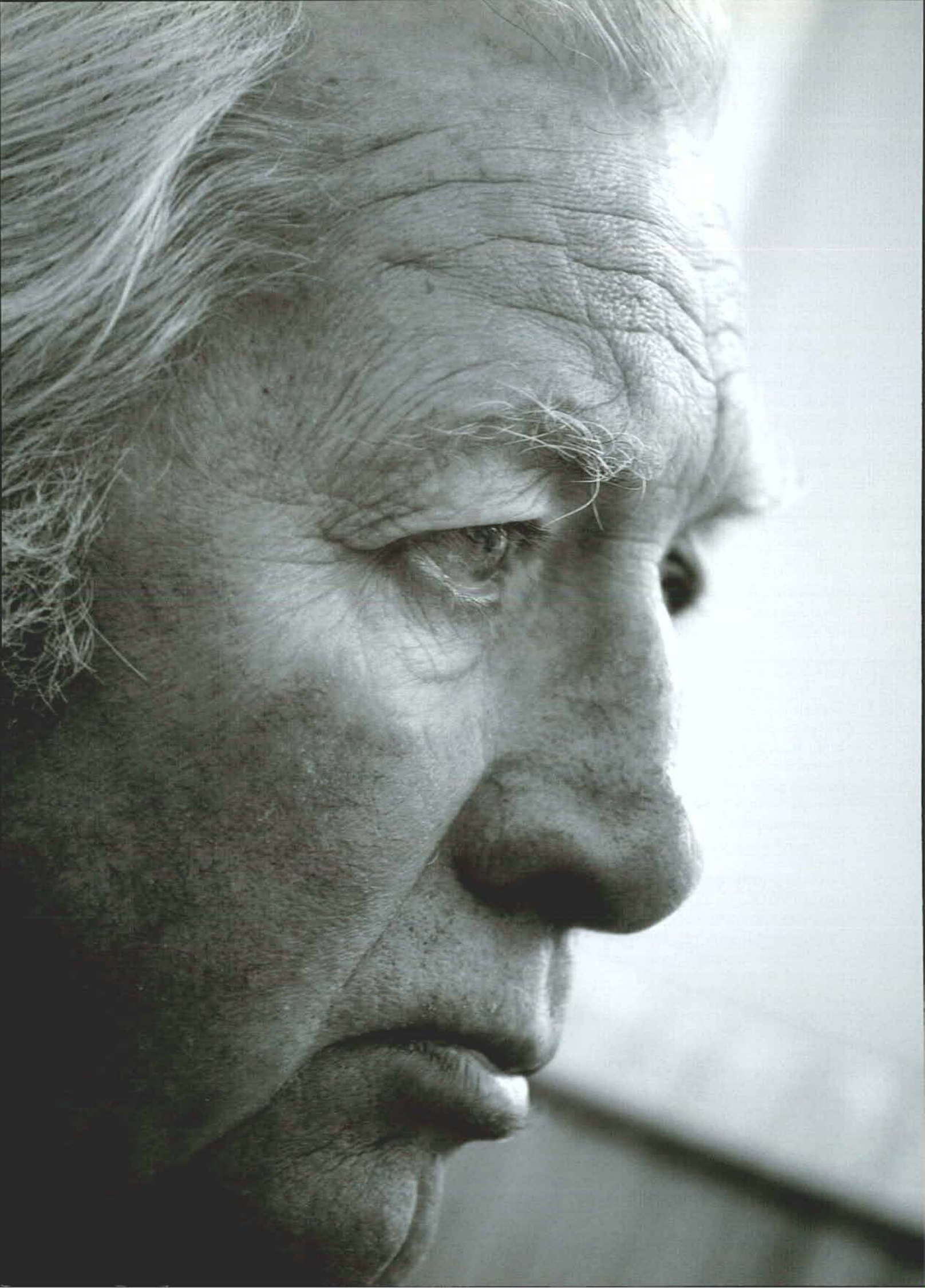
## A flourishing family business

In November 2005, the Riofrío product was put to a supreme test at a tasting in Granada attended by international experts. Competing with some of the world's most prestigious caviars, including three brands from Iran, this product from the Sierra Nevada fish farm took home the gold medal. In 2003, Spain's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries named the Piscifactoría the country's best food business in its technology investment category. While the Piscifactoría de Sierra Nevada now employs 30 full-time employees, plus up to 25 temporary workers and visiting researchers, it is still a family business. Julio Domezain is the manager and his brother Albert is in charge of research and development. Research is being carried out on the possible uses of sturgeon for medicinal purposes and the Spanish company is involved in technology exchanges through its close international contacts.

Under the auspices of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), it is collaborating with Iranians and Russians to help rebuild their sturgeon resources and introduce the latest technology. It is also working on projects with French and German caviar producers.

"Peak sales months are November and December," notes Montalbán. "Demand is growing all the time, but every year we are able to increase production as more sturgeon reach maturity."

*David Baird originally hails from Great Britain but is a resident of Málaga. As a journalist he has worked as a foreign correspondent all over the world. His reports have been printed in many publications, from the UK to Hong Kong to California. His books on Spanish themes include Sunny Side Up—the 21<sup>st</sup> century hits a Spanish village and Back roads of southern Spain.*



# Spain's RECORD-KEEPER

## Hugh Thomas, Historian

Lord Thomas of Swynnerton, aka Hugh Thomas, is a Hispanist and a guru for other Hispanists. His book *The Spanish Civil War* has been, and continues to be, a major work of reference for any student. He was born in Windsor in 1931. After studying at Cambridge and the Sorbonne, he joined the Foreign Office. He was a Labor Party supporter until 1975 when he shifted allegiance to the Conservative Party. Appointed director of the Centre for Policy Studies in London by Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister, he was granted a life peerage in 1981 and now sits as an independent in the House of Lords. In 2001, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic, Spain's top civil decoration.

Spanish at Heart

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TEXT  
CARLOS TEJERO

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PHOTOS  
PABLO NEUSTADT/ICEX

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TRANSLATION  
HAWYS PRITCHARD

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Bobbies in helmets are a rare sight in London these days. And the London skyline is no longer what it used to be, what with the giant wheel of the London Eye opposite the Houses of Parliament and Norman Foster's tower called the "gherkin". Many pubs no longer close at 11 p.m., and the second best cook in the world is a Brit. And with global warming going the way it is, the UK is likely to be producing quality wines in the not too distant future.

Equally unexpectedly, the afternoon of May 4<sup>th</sup> is sunny and hot in London. People are sunning themselves at tables in front of pubs. Hugh Thomas lives on a wide, quiet, tree-lined street in the Notting Hill Gate area, not far from Portobello Road's famous market. His is a typical, semi-detached London house, with a little, wrought-iron gate opening onto steps that lead up to a front door flanked by pillars. Lord Thomas greets us, dressed in an elegant, navy blue suit. The small drawing room has wall-to-wall traditional furniture, rugs and hangings ("My grandfather painted

the pictures when he was in India"). A baby grand piano ("My daughter plays it") features prominently in the middle of the room. Off the sitting room is a light-filled conservatory that leads out to the garden ("It's too wild: the neighbors' is much tidier"). "My first trip to Spain was in 1955. My father was posted in Africa and we decided to meet up in Málaga." Thomas took the TALGO (a Spanish-patented fast train) from Hendaye, traveling to Madrid at a then amazing speed of 120 km (75 mi) per hour. From there he continued his journey south in third class. "I remember that trip very clearly; it left a strong impression on me, especially Antequera station on that lovely, sunny winter's day. It has a quality of light I associate with Spain."

At that time, the only foreign historian to have written about the Spanish Civil War was Gerald Brenan (*The Spanish Labyrinth*, Cambridge, 1943), who he later met. The war's many facets were guaranteed to fascinate any historian, as they did Thomas. However,

Brenan's book had focused primarily on the social and political build-up to the war. "A diplomat friend told me that I should write a book that covered all aspects, and that was what got me started."

Thomas finished his book *The Spanish Civil War* in 1961, and happened upon a publishing house that had been recently set up in Paris by Spanish exiles called El Ruedo Ibérico, which launched its publishing career with his book (its next publication was Brenan's). During its 20 years in the business, El Ruedo Ibérico published about 150 books which were systematically censored by the Franco regime. Rather than being anti-Franco, Thomas' book simply took an objective approach. This was how it was perceived by independent historians when it first appeared, and it went on to become a fundamental work of reference for anyone studying the war. "My book was banned in Spain, but I wasn't. I was able to continue traveling there and moving about. No one ever bothered me." Hugh Thomas knows Spain very



well ("I've been to all Spain's provincial capitals") and, apart from its history and culture, "what I like most is the food. I love fish, especially hook-caught hake. The Spanish take fish cookery very seriously." The historian also enthuses about the classic Galician octopus dish *pulpo a feira* (prepared with olive oil, salt and paprika), which he has eaten in Carballino, the Orense town famous throughout Spain for its annual octopus-cooking festival.

As for the Spanish character, for Thomas "it combines the ceremonial and the informal in a way that I find appealing, possibly because it doesn't occur in any other European country." He continues jokingly: "A friend of mine who had a Spanish butler used to say that nothing worked properly in his house except in an emergency, when everything would go perfectly." And what does Lord Thomas like least about Spain and the Spanish? He seems to cast about for an answer before finally declaring: "Perhaps their lack of self-confidence. They have to get rid of

that inferiority complex."

Although primarily a historian, Thomas has also written novels and travel books. He wrote one of them, *A Letter from Asturias*, because, "I have friends in that part of the country and I've spent several summers there, between Muros de Nalón and Llanes." He is also fascinated by the popular fiestas of which there are so many in Spain, marking such diverse causes for celebration. "I've been on the Rocio pilgrimage, taken part in Seville's Holy Week, the San Fermín bull run in Pamplona, the Fallas bonfires in Valencia... I'm impressed by the immense participation, the passion and how closely engaged people are with events of that sort."

Thomas does not subscribe to the theory that Spain's heterogeneous nature distinguishes it from other European countries. "It's quite true that there are differences between an Andalusian and a Catalan, but you also find the same sort of differences between regions in France, Germany and Italy. By the way, I don't know what's going to happen during

today's election." (Thomas is referring to the regional elections taking place in the UK on the day of our interview. As it turns out, the Scottish Nationalists did well, restoring the issue of Scottish independence to prominence on Britain's political agenda).

## Favorite figures

Aside from the Catholic Monarchs, Hernán Cortés, conquistador of Mexico, is a figure that Thomas finds especially fascinating. "He was a very cultured man, and even his enemy, Bartolomé de las Casas, admits that he spoke Latin very well." That degree of enlightenment was not common among conquistadors of the period. Cortés was also a great writer. "His letters to Charles V are a treasure, only surpassed, at that time and from a literary point of view, by *La Celestina*, attributed to Fernando de Rojas and considered to be the precursor of the modern novel." He is also interested in Franco. "I may very well write something about him, though other writers, such as



my disciple and colleague Paul Preston, have already researched him thoroughly."

Thomas' latest published work is not typical of his style as an author, nor of Spain's publishing market, which is not known for producing biographical books about entrepreneurs. *Barreiros, el motor de España* relates the intriguing story of Eduardo Barreiros, a self-made man, originally from Galicia, who succeeded in creating an industrial empire in a country that was technologically backwards, politically controlled and economically self-sufficient at the time.

Barreiros set up a truck factory in Villaverde (now a district in Madrid), employing 1,500 workers. He later formed a partnership with Chrysler and began manufacturing small cars which were widely exported. However, Barreiros' intuitive nature and informal style was out of kilter with the Americans' methodical approach, and he ended up selling

them his part of the company in 1969.

"He was a mechanical expert, knew all about engines and was a creative businessman, a visionary, who looked after his workers. He knew nearly all of them personally, set up a nursery, organized training courses...." Thomas has interviewed Barreiros' former collaborators and workers, who "all remember him fondly."

Contrary to widespread belief, Barreiros did not do well because of the regime, as others did, but rather despite it. "Barreiros was an independent entrepreneur, and that sort of figure did not go down well with a government influenced by the military and which had to have everything under control." In fact, despite being one of the most important businessmen in the country, he never met Suances, the Minister of Industry. Suances was a phalangist who believed that industrial production should be in the hands of the state, so it was years

before Barreiros was granted a license to manufacture trucks. He also wanted to make buses, but was refused permission to do so. The contract with Chrysler stipulated that Barreiros should refrain from all activity within the automobile sector for ten years. Consequently, in 1981 the entrepreneur reappeared in Cuba where Fidel Castro's government had announced a competition to set up an automobile industry for the island. Barreiros' scheme won, and he ended his impressive business career in Cuba, where he died in 1992.

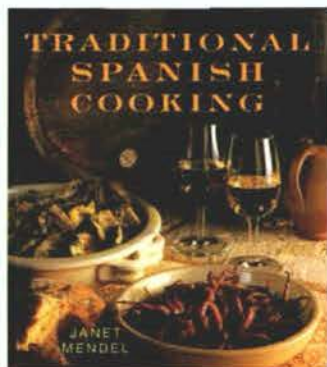
Retirement is a word that doesn't figure into Thomas' vocabulary. "I'm going to carry on writing because I learn so much in the process. I believe that a person who writes learns more than a person who reads." He's working on a text about the period 1524-1580: "a fascinating era that saw the conquests of Peru, Yucatan and Colombia, among other places."

We round off our all-too-brief conversation back in the drawing room, where the photographer asks him to pose with his chin in his hand. "I knew you were going to ask me to do that. Photographers love that pose, and I don't know why." Lord Thomas follows instructions unselfconsciously, as he's used to cameras, though he does make things difficult for the photographer by chatting to me. "I was at the London Booksellers' annual dinner last night, and the menu was made up of Spanish dishes." That's odd, I comment. "Not really. One of the things that's improved a lot about London is eating out." Why is that? "Because there are so many Spanish cooks working in the hotels and restaurants!"

*Carlos Tejero is a journalist and editorial coordinator of [www.spaingourmetour.com](http://www.spaingourmetour.com).*

# LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Text  
Samara Kamenecka

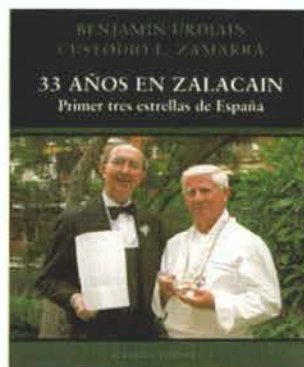


**Traditional Spanish Cooking by Janet Mendel. English.** Originally published in 1996 and now available in paperback, Ms. Mendel's book is a truly delicious work of art, containing 270 recipes of the most time-honored Spanish dishes. In addition to an extensive glossary of terms and utensils, the book recounts the evolution of the Iberian Peninsula, demonstrating how the diverse inhabitants created a melting pot of cultures. This, of course, has given rise to an absolutely stellar selection of scrumptious and classic recipes that continue to tell the story of Spain. From gazpacho cream (salmorejo cordobés) to roast suckling pig (cochinillo asado) to dust cakes (polvorones), here you can find the most authentic taste of the country's age-old specialties.

(Frances Lincoln Limited Publishers, [reception@frances-lincoln.com](mailto:reception@frances-lincoln.com), [www.franceslincoln.com](http://www.franceslincoln.com))



**Comer y beber a mi manera (Eating and drinking, my way) by Manuel Vicent. Spanish.** This book is Mr. Vicent's gastronomic trip down memory lane. Here he discusses basic foods in all their glory, and ponders everything from bread and sun-dried tomatoes to soups and grilled vegetables, complementing every section with entertaining personal anecdotes, interesting stories and historical information, all from an individual point of view. The last chapter is dedicated to his 11 most favorite recipes of all time, each influenced by someone he once knew. Definitely try the guacamole, chicken madras, lemon sorbet like Pepita Jiménez used to make or the white beans with chard, a dish he learned from Toñi, the woman who looked after his house. (Alfaguara, [www.alfaguara.com](http://www.alfaguara.com), [www.alfaguara.santillana.es](http://www.alfaguara.santillana.es))



**33 Años en Zalacain, primer tres estrellas de España (33 Years of Zalacain, the first three-star restaurant in Spain) by Benjamín Urdiain and Custodio L. Zamorra. Spanish.** The first restaurant in Spain to receive three Michelin stars opened in 1973, and since then has been coming up with some of the most palatable recipes in the world. This book is a compilation of Mr. Urdiain's best dishes, accompanied by wines selected by Spain's most prestigious sommelier, Mr. Zamorra. The duo, which was awarded the National Prize for Gastronomy, suggests truly exceptional pairings. Recommendations include roast pheasant with mushrooms and pig's feet in brandy sauce cooked in a ceramic casserole dish, superb with a glass of Pingus 2001, and thyme cookies with raspberry sauce, which go fantastically with a venerable PX 20 años. (Alianza Editorial, S.A., [www.alianzaeditorial.es](http://www.alianzaeditorial.es))



**La cerveza y los tesoros gastronómicos españoles (Beer and other Spanish gastronomic treasures) by José Carlos Capel. English.**

From lagers to ales to stouts, this book pays homage to one of the world's most popular drinks, a beverage that is so deeply-rooted in Spanish culture and with Mediterranean origins dating back 3,000 years, it's impossible to underestimate its star power.

In addition to relating the story of beer's history, this book discusses the different types and their top qualities, from vitamin content to varied taste. It also answers questions like where does the word beer come from? What exactly is stout? And how do the aromas of a dark beer differ from those of a blonde one? There are also 19 recipes based on specialties selected from each of Spain's autonomous communities, including information about the ingredients and wonderful photos. Each entry, of course, contains a description of the best beer to accompany each dish and an explanation of why it creates a winning combination of flavors. Raviolis stuffed with Mallorcan spicy sausage and

pear served with Iberian ham and citrus fruit consommé goes best with sweet beers with a high fermentation, while mussels in mandarin brine with apple ice cream is delectable with a lager that has a low alcohol content or a golden blonde beer.

In the land of delicious national cuisine and equally delicious national brews, it's no surprise that beer is fast becoming a gastronomic reference.

(*Cerveceros de España*, [www.cerveceros.org](http://www.cerveceros.org); *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, [www.mapa.es](http://www.mapa.es); *Burson-Marsteller*, [www.bursonmarsteller.es](http://www.bursonmarsteller.es), [www.bm.com](http://www.bm.com), [info@bursonmarsteller.es](mailto:info@bursonmarsteller.es))



**Los aceites de oliva en la gastronomía del siglo XXI (Olive oils in 21st century gastronomy) by various authors. Spanish.**

What do 308 million olives, 360 thousand olive farmers and 1,750 olive mills mean? It means you must be Spain, the world's largest producer and exporter of olive oil. These facts, and others, can be found in what is surely the most comprehensive text on the subject today.

Chapters cover the history of oil, olive and oil varieties, the packaging process, oil as a food and a condiment, advice for getting the most out of your oil, a decalog on extra virgin olive oil, oil tasting, health benefits, the new oils, and if you can believe it, much more.

But this book is, above all, about gastronomy, and its objective is to teach readers how to use olive oil correctly by offering practical and detailed information.

It does so with a selection of photographs and olive oil based recipes from top Spanish chefs, coming from 35 restaurants, many of which have 2 or 3 Michelin stars or 3 Suns from the Campsa Guide. Oil cocktail 0-60°C, olive sponge cake

with oil marmalade served with bread ice cream and skewered owl served over couscous with coffee and olive oil millefeuille are just a few suggestions offered by Ferran Adrià, Juan Mari Arzak and Martín Berasategui, top chefs eager to convert olive oil into one of the great gastronomic protagonists of the 21st century.

(*Editorial Everest*, [www.everest.es](http://www.everest.es); *Editorial Evergráficas, S.L.*)



**Luces y sombras del reinado de Ferran Adrià (The light and dark sides of Ferran Adrià's reign)** by Miguel Sen. Spanish. Personal opinion rings out loud and clear in this book, as Mr. Sen maintains that today's culinary scene doesn't deserve all the praise that it receives. Nowadays, Spain's history of traditional food is fast becoming overshadowed and even replaced by new, innovative cooking. While chefs like Juan Mari Arzak and Pedro Subijana were originally at the forefront of this "movement", Ferran Adrià eventually took the reigns in 1992 and since then, he and his restaurant El Bulli have become true phenomena. This book analyzes the current gastronomic situation which revolves around the success and mass media impact of Mr. Adrià, presenting him as a brilliant chef but also one whose environment, influence and advances in the field have had counterproductive effects. The author, who offers strong arguments, claims that the sector is too glorified and the legions of admirers have but one aim: to imitate the techniques

developed by Mr. Adrià and his colleagues. This is dangerous, as so many followers leads to many poor imitators, "bound for disaster and with no guarantees". He goes on to censure the "technological abuses" within the food sector and the attitudes of certain chefs and their throngs of followers. The text also offers interesting comparisons with art, philosophy and anthropology while taking a hungry swipe at Mr. Adrià and the industry. (*La Esfera de los Libros, S.L., www.esferallibres.com*)



**Diccionario botánico para cocineros (Botanical dictionary for chefs)** by Andoni Luis Aduriz and Francois-Luc Gauthier. Spanish. A botanical compilation, a glossary, a guide for culinary use—this book is many things, but most of all it's the beginning of an adventure into the wonderful world of botany. After years of observation, collection and research of all types of species of plants and fruits, the result is this text, a spectacular joint effort by Mr. Aduriz, a mastermind chef, and Mr. Gauthier, a leading botanist. An extensive, elementary botanical glossary offers the A to Z on everything from herbs, flowers and buds to stems, stalks and seeds, and entries contain short, simple definitions. There is also a culinary use guide for plants which includes scientific names and in what types of dishes around the world each is utilized. Another chapter classifies herbs according to smell. The recipes offered are quite impressive. Try the horse mackerel in tannin ceviche with toasted garlic and Allium flowers, fresh soy and rosemary cream or the cold, nut soufflé and black crab with frozen

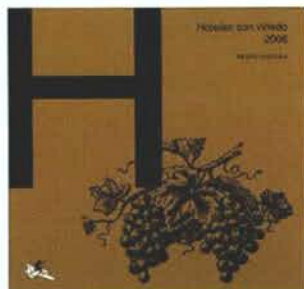
prawn gelatin, saffron flowers and pistils. Additionally the book comes with a DVD, making it possible to watch, step by step, how these flavorful dishes are made. While the text reads as series of dictionaries, in essence it is a truly colorful wealth of information with vibrant recipes, making for a very warm guidebook on the ins and outs of the culinary side of botany. (*Gourmandia, www.gourmandia.es, www.mugaritz.com, david@mugaritz.com*)



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**Hoteles con viñedo 2006**  
(Hotels with vineyards  
2006) by Pedro Madera.

**Spanish.** The world dedicated to the grape and its people, who live and breath wine, is its own unique way of life. This book allows readers to discover that world through wine tourism. For the traveler who enjoys a delicious glass and appreciates cultural heritage and architecture, this is your best guide.

Excellent information, photos, prices and websites span 250 pages of places to go, organized by region, from the Hotel Golf Peralada-Wine Spa in Girona to Torrent Fals in Mallorca.

Watch the sunset the day of the harvest, enjoy a grape-based beauty treatment in the wine therapy spa, sip a new vintage over a romantic dinner or watch the sunrise during pruning in the vineyard.

(*El Tercer Nombre, S.A.,  
Aporta Edición y Comunicación,  
S.L.*)



**Dónde comer bien en las Islas Canarias**  
(Where to eat in the Canary Islands, the best selection of restaurants for all types of budgets) by Mario Hernández Bueno and Antonio Vacas Sentís.

**Spanish.** This tourist guide takes a look at more than 170 restaurants throughout the archipelago, from Gran Canaria to Lanzarote, which offer everything from specialties native to the islands to exotic far eastern dishes.

Spots are classified according to the quality of food and the ambiance and accompanied by more than 300 photos.

The book also boasts a glossary with food and gastronomic terms typical to the islands as well as maps and information on hotels, festivals, nightlife and shopping, making it a must-have for any globetrotter who is also a curious gastronome.

(*Editorial Everest, S.A.,  
www.everest.es,  
comunicacion@everest.es;  
Editorial Evergráficas, S.L.*)



Guía Peñín de los vinos de España 2007 (Peñin Guide of wines in Spain 2007) by Pierre Comunicación Integral S.A. English, German, Spanish. Readers, meet the most extensive archive there is on Spanish wines. With 2,540 wineries, 10,190 brands reviewed and 7,531 wines tasted on over 1,200 pages, this is the book on the sector in Spain most widely read throughout the world. Offering up-to-date information on DOs, Vinos de la Tierra and table wines accompanied by their bodegas and brands, inside is also an extensive manual on wine tasting for neophytes and experts alike, revised and expanded on every year. Having received the International Gourmet Voice Award in 2005 for the Best Wine Guide, if you're looking to drink in an extensive look at the world of wine, check out this truly global reference. (Peñin Ediciones, [www.grupopenin.com](http://www.grupopenin.com), [comunicación@grupopenin.com](mailto:comunicación@grupopenin.com))



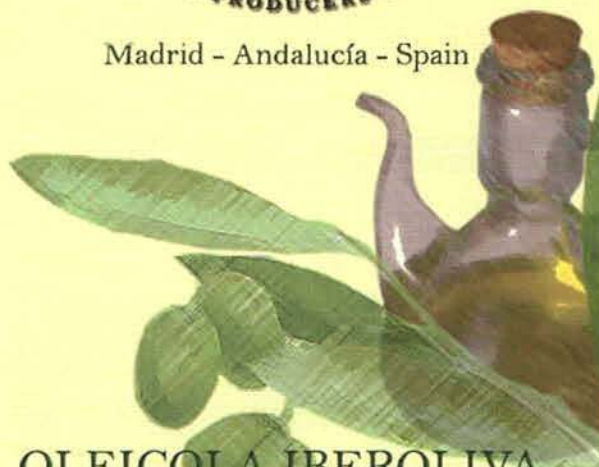
Hoteles con encanto (Hotels with charm) by Fernando Gallardo. Spanish. Alastair Sawday's Spain: special places to stay by Alastair Sawday. English. *Hoteles con Encanto* has selected 174 lodging options, from Asturias to Zaragoza, because each has a distinct style that makes it particularly unique. They do, however, share top quality facilities and services. Rated according to luxury and comfort, each getaway has a brief description, a price list, contact information and photos. *Spain* is likewise an excellent guidebook for accommodation, highlighting everything from boutique hotels to country houses, valued for their character, style and warmth of welcome. From the grand and gracious to the small and intimate, this book highlights 90 places that offer extraordinary value for money and an authentic experience. After all, as the author says, "A night in a special place can be a transforming experience." (Santillana Ediciones Generales, S.L., [www.gruposantillana.com](http://www.gruposantillana.com); El País Aguilar, [www.elpaisaguilar.es](http://www.elpaisaguilar.es); Alastair Sawday Publishing Co. Ltd., [info@specialplacestay.com](mailto:info@specialplacestay.com), [www.specialplacestay.com](http://www.specialplacestay.com))

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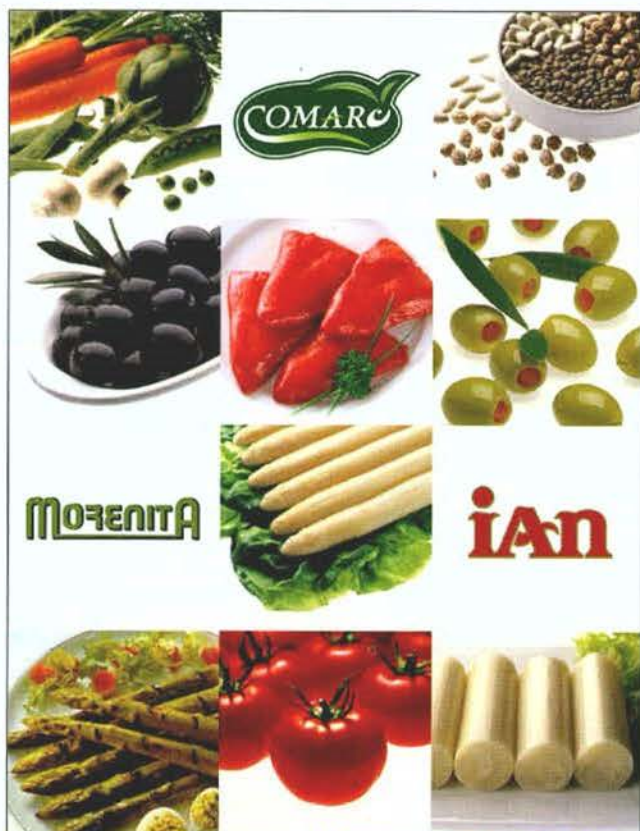
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**Source:** Federación Nacional de Exportadores de Trufas y Setas (National Federation of Truffle and Mushroom Exporters) (FENETSA)  
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|  |   |   |
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- *Decanter UK*, Tim Atkin: **5/5 stars**, "This has to be one of the best value icon reds in Spain".
- *El País*, Carlos Delgado: **9.5/10 points**, "A touch of brilliance".
- *Campsa Guide'06*: **95/100 points**.
- *Proensa Guide'06*: **97/100 points**.
- *García Santos Guide'06*: **9/10 points**.



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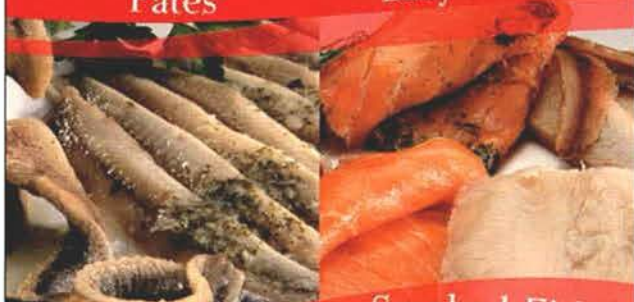


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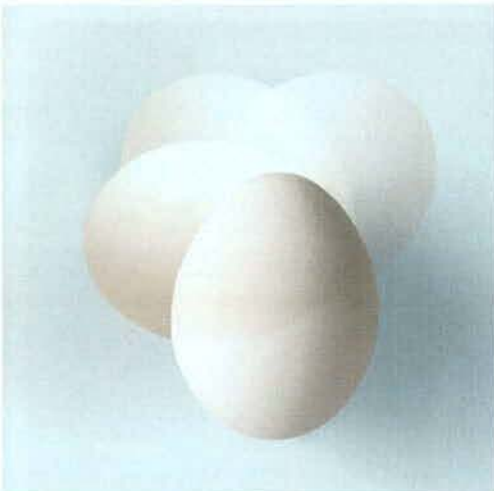
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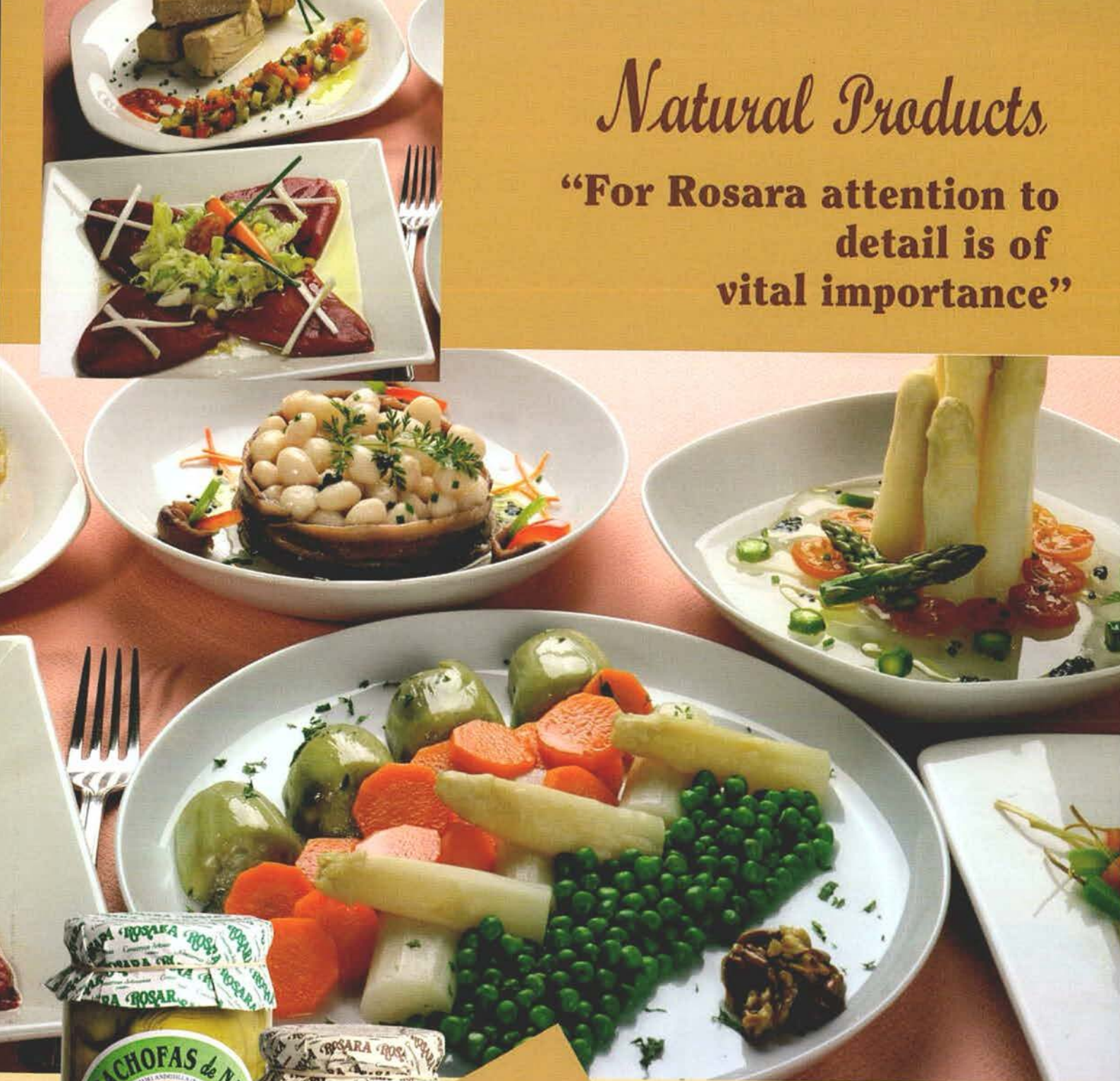


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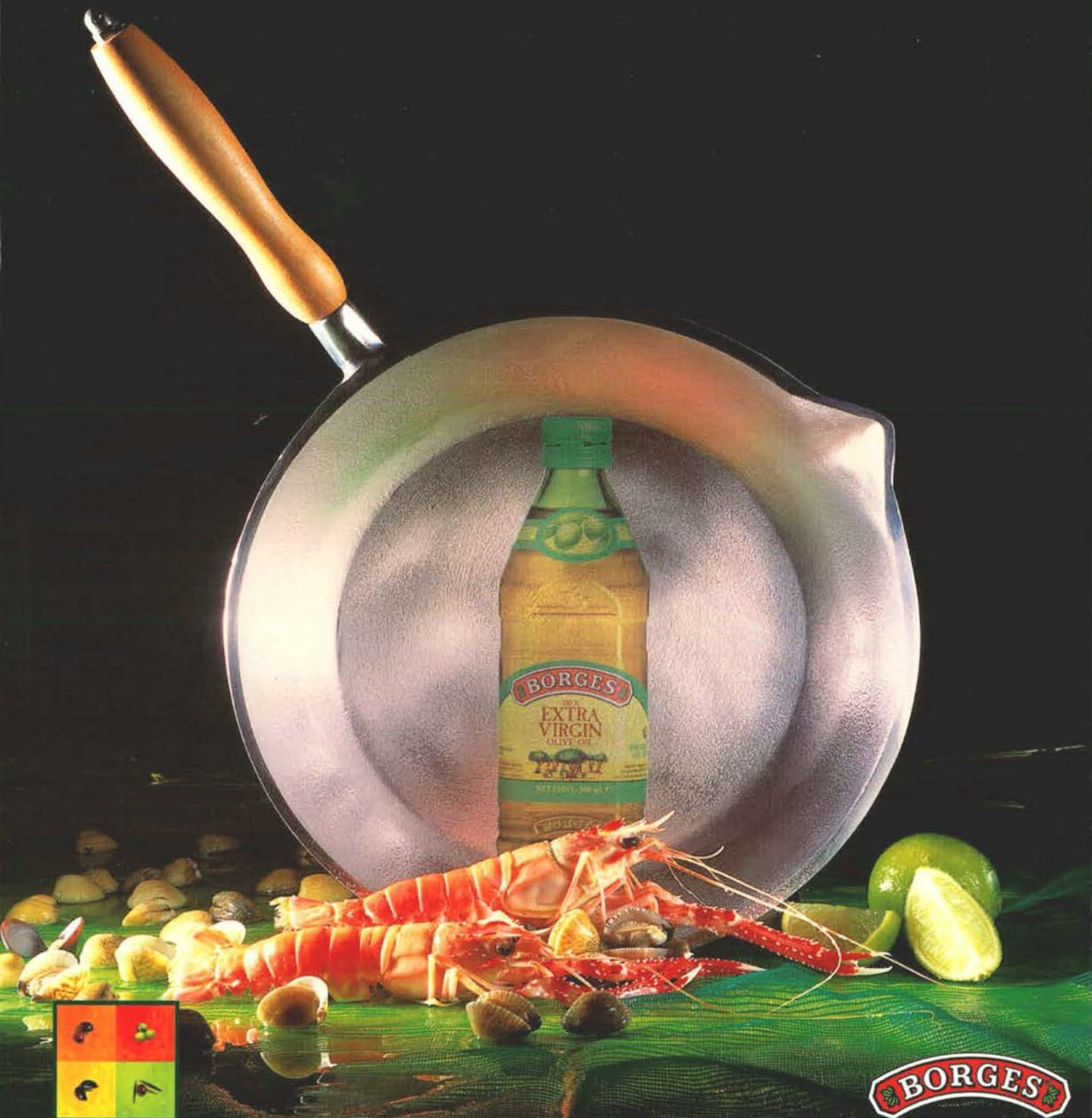


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