

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

SPAIN

G O U R M E T O U R

No. 40 SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1996

SPAIN GOURMETOUR

US \$5



ONE GREAT ORANGE GARDEN • AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: THE WHITE WINES OF RUEDA • LA VERA: AWAY FROM IT ALL

A SECRET NOT TO BE KEPT



Only the **VERDEJO** variety, free, bared to the cold Castilian winds and the intense summer heat, has learned to brave the elements and the harshness of a land brimming with history to rob them of their secrets

A secret which, in **RUEDA**,
cannot go unveiled.

PI & ERRE

SPAIN

GOURMETOUR



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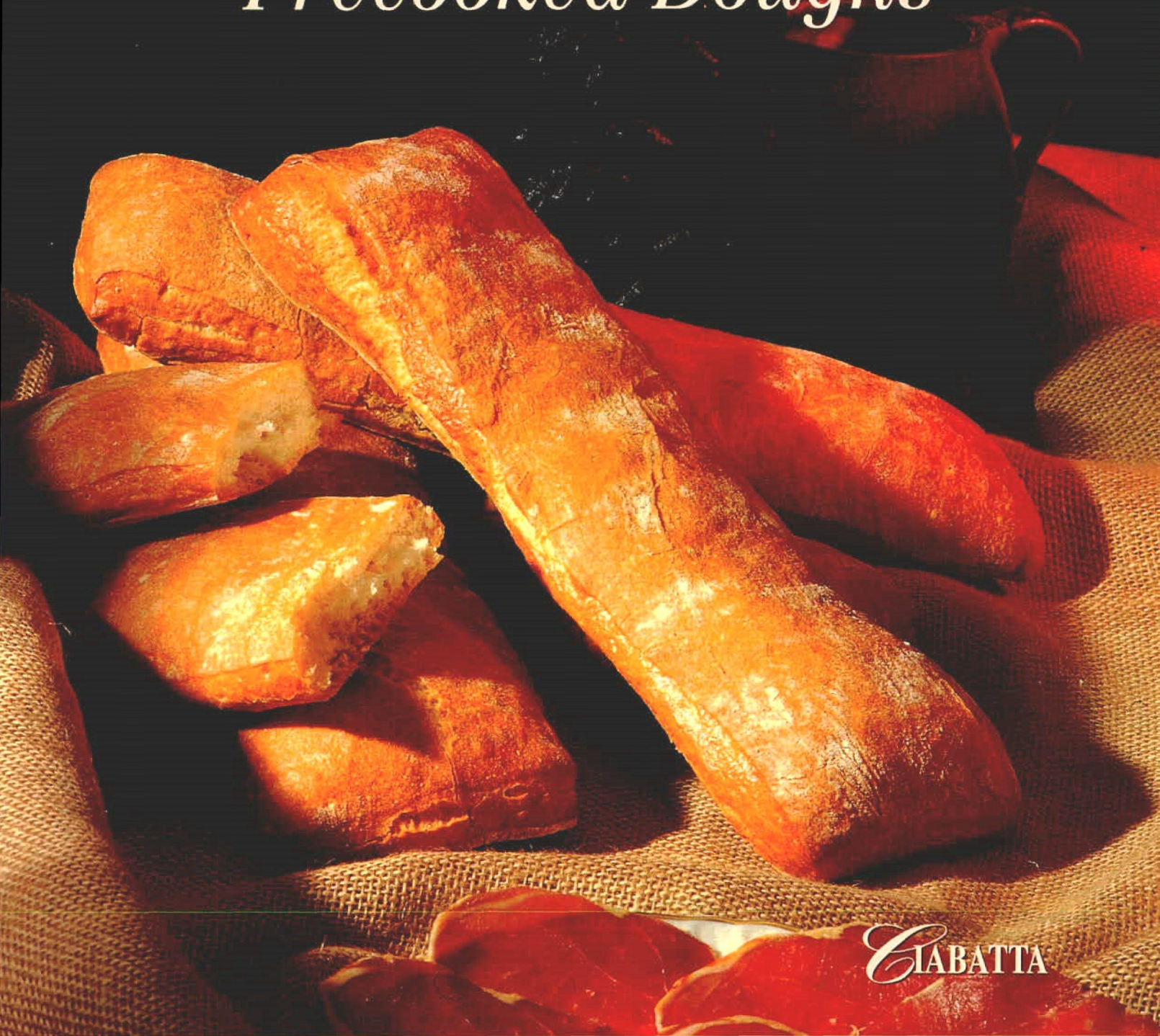
Spain Gourmetour

is a journal published by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the Economy and Finance Ministry to promote Spain's food and wines, as well as its cuisine and culture. The magazine is issued three times a year in English, French, and German, and is distributed free of charge to professionals in the sector, through the Spanish Embassy Commercial Offices (see list on page 25).

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ear readers,

One of Spain's classic exports has always been the dessert orange. Particularly towards the end of the year, when the days become shorter, the bright color of this fruit brings light and joy to our table. Previously, these oranges were only available at Christmas time, but today, thanks to up-to-date growing and cultivation methods, there are some varieties that can be harvested as early as September and others which continue into July. The long export tradition of this fruit is beautifully reflected in the old Art Nouveau and Art Deco labels and posters advertising oranges from Spain around the turn of the century and later, all over the world.

In Rueda too, a few enthusiastic oenologists are producing, with the aid of modern technology, a wine from another "thoroughbred Spaniard," the autochthonal Verdejo grape, comparable with no other wine on the market. This varietal white attracted winemakers like Jacques Lurton from Bordeaux and Bodegas Marqués de Riscal from Rioja to the Castilian plateau.

Any special wine will always attract its court, and an emperor, Carlos V, was similarly attracted by a very special place. Four hundred and fifty years ago the Yuste Monastery in the La Vera area offered the emperor the peace and beauty which we still find in this region. Rich in architectural and historic treasures, you will also find such gastronomic delights as paprika from La Vera with its own quality denomination.

We end our series on Spain's wine rivers which has taken you through the northern half of Spain, with the Galician rivers of Miño and Sil, which have an instrumental effect on the climate of the wine growing regions of Bierzo, Valdeorras, Ribeira Sacra, Monterrei, Ribeiro and Rías Baixas.

At Christmas, we would like to invite you to two festive menus from Spain which can vary your traditional Christmas fare if you would like a change. One is classic, the other innovative, and both will entice you to round off your meal with a handmade cigar from the Canary Isles. Our article on the pure pleasure of these noble cigars tells you how and where they are made and how they arrived in the Old World.

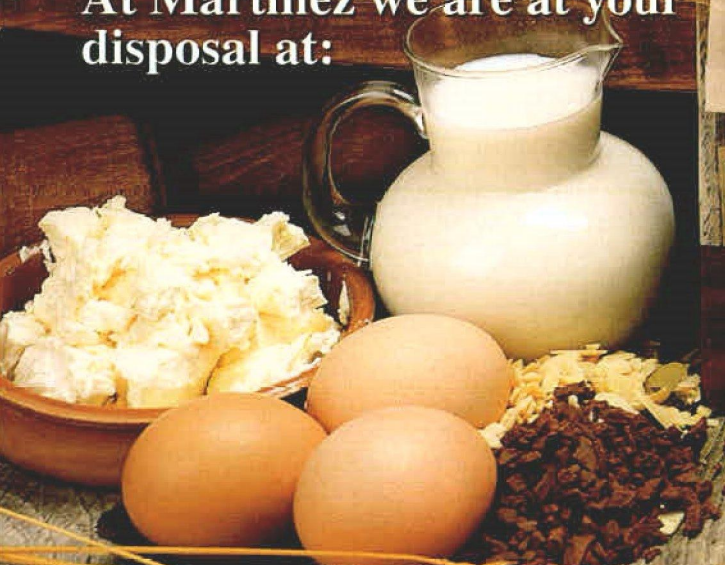
On this culinary note, we say our farewells for this year and wish you all a happy 1997.



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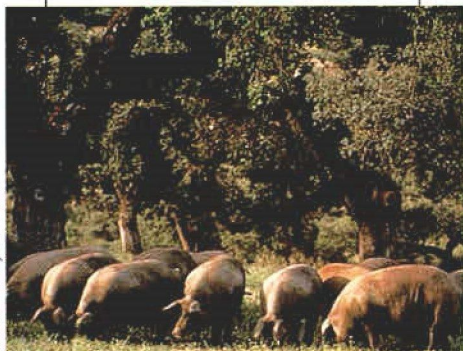


Compiled by
BETTINA KRÜCKEN



**BODEGAS BILBAINAS PRESENTS
LA VICALANDA RESERVA '91**

La Vicalanda hails from the eight-hectare vineyard of the same name, which belongs to the famous Viña Pomal in the heart of the Rioja Alta, dedicated completely to the Tempranillo grape. The 1991 harvest achieved perfect maturity with good acidity and has been classified as "Very good." According to traditional wine making methods, the harvest was followed by one year in oak barrels and three years maturing in the bottle. La Vicalanda Reserva '91 is a classic red wine from the



Carlos Navajas / ICEX

SALICAL 97 OPENS ITS DOORS FOR THE FOURTH TIME

The International Exhibition of Quality Label Foods, Salical 97 and Tecnosalical, is hosting an extensive program of events in La Rioja from the 12th to the 16th of March, 1997: wine tastings and championships and the Food Technology and Quality Congress, the second European Meeting for Denominations of Origin which, as a forum for education and debate on tested quality products from the many regions of Europe, gives experts an opportunity to get to know other products and production methods, providing an important venue for visitor and exhibitor alike. Machinery for processing, filling and packing, new services for manufacturers of quality products, marketing, and restaurants complete the exhibition showing the various aspects of this specialist field.

BODEGAS CARLOS SERRES 100 YEARS OLD

Charles Serres and Ciprianno Roig founded their *bodega* in La Rioja in 1896, bringing with them wine-making methods and technology from Bordeaux. To celebrate its centenary, this year the bodega marketed its Gran Reserva 1987 Centenario. The sophisticated business philosophy of the company is based on careful husbandry of the soil and vines, the rigorous selection of the best grapes, the processing and presentation of the wine, and last but not least, a professional marketing and after-sales service. Today, they claim a market presence in more than 100 countries. Gran Reserva 1987 Centenario is made from 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 5% Viura, and 5% Graciano and has matured for 36 months in American oak and five years in the bottle. The result is a wine the color of ripe cherries with clear brick red glints, a clean and complex aroma of leather from the oak barrel, spices and coffee and an elegant bouquet. It is smooth, harmonious, lasting and balanced with noble tannins, promising a long life.

JABUGO HAMS AND SPANISH CUISINE IN THE FRANCHISE SYSTEM

Three partners have joined forces under the name of Mesones de Sánchez Romero Carvajal, S.A. in order to sell their exquisite Jabugo hams and other products made from Iberian pork in the capitals and large cities of Spain and Europe using the franchising system. Since Sánchez Romero Carvajal-Jabugo was founded in 1879, hams with the best flavor, aroma and quality have been awarded five Js, now synonymous with the highest quality in Jabugo ham production, and also the trademark of "Mesones Cinco Jotas." The franchise concept combines a restaurant, a bar for Andalusian *tapas* and the sale of fresh and air-dried products and other quality products made from Iberian pork under their own brand name. The company is planning 45 establishments in Spain and 25 throughout Europe in the next 5 years. Also using the franchising system, but concentrating entirely on Spain's regional cuisine, the "Sólo Spain" chain is opening its first restaurant in Francfort Main in November of this year. Apart from selling, and therefore promoting Spanish quality products, such as virgin olive oil from Baena, Piquillo peppers or Iberian ham, "Sólo Spain" will organize Spanish weeks or dinners with the best Spanish chefs in top restaurants throughout Europe and publish a yearbook listing all the specialities of the chain. The main markets for the two franchising projects are Belgium, Great Britain, The Netherlands, France, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Portugal, and Austria.

Rioja: an intense, clear color with a powerful aroma reminiscent of red berries and sand wood, smooth and with a lasting aroma. La Vicalanda is ready to drink, but will gain in elegance in the next six to seven years.



SPANISH CITRUS FRUITS FOR THE U.S.A. AND JAPAN

The Valencian citrus fruit sector is investing 8.3 million US\$ in promoting sales on world markets. The Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) is putting up 60%, with the remaining 40% coming from the Valencian Export Institute (IVEX). For the first time, ICEX and IVEX are cooperating in a joint promotion campaign for clementines in the U.S.A. Now that Japan has lifted its import ban on certain Spanish oranges, this country offers new potential for the Valencian export trade. It is mainly a question of satisfying the high quality demands of the Japanese market.

SPAIN ON THE INTERNET

The Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) now offers information via Internet in order to support the international networking of Spanish companies. Publications on export conditions and important addresses of ICEX trade delegations throughout the world and other facilities, in addition to databases (Oferes, Biblos, Estacom and Asoc, accessible via Telnet, run by the Institute for small and Medium Businesses - IMPDI), also provide data on Spanish industry and Expotecnia '96 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The information is also available in English (www.icex.es).

The Spanish Food and Drink Industry Federation, FIAB, has a list of Spanish companies that want to access potential customers throughout the world more quickly and more efficiently using information pages on the Internet. The data relating to the individual sectors and companies already on the Net can be traced easily and are more accessible. You can find the Web pages of FIAB on the so-called Yellow Pages of the Internet, the starting point of any search. (<http://www.sister.es/fiab.htm>) The Marketing Club of Navarre, in partnership with the Association of Owners of Hotel and Restaurant Companies in Navarre (AEHN) has also grasped the initiative and published a hotel, restaurant and camping guide for Navarre via the Internet "Web." Names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, prices and services for more than 100 hotels, 200 restaurants and 20 camping sites in Navarre can be called up via <http://cmn.navarra.net>

CLASSIFICATION OF THE 1995 VINTAGE OF SPANISH WINES WITH D.O.

ALELLA	VG	MENTRIDA	G
ALICANTE	G	MONTILLA MORILES	A
ALMANSA	VG	NAVARRA	E
AMPURDAN - COSTA BRAVA	VG	PENEDES	G
BIERZO	G	PRIORATO	E
BINISSALEM - MALLORCA	VG	RIAS BAIXAS	VG
BULLAS	VG	RIBEIRO	VG
CALATAYUD	VG	RIBERA DEL DUERO	E
CAMPO DE BORJA	G	RIOJA	E
CARIÑENA	G	RUEDA	G
CAVA (V.C.P.R.D.)*	G	SOMONTANO	E
CHACOLI DE GUETARIA	G	TACORONTE ACENTEJO	VG
CHACOLI DE VIZCAYA	G	TARRAGONA	VG
CIGALES	G	TERRA ALTA	VG
CONCA DE BARBERA	VG	TORO	VG
CONDADO DE HUELVA	G	UTIEL-REQUENA	G
COSTERS DEL SEGRE	E	VALDEORRAS	G
EL HIERRO	G	VALDEPEÑAS	VG
JUMILLA	G	VALENCIA	G
LA MANCHA	G	VALLE DE OROTAVA	G
MONTERREI	G	VINOS DE MADRID	G
LANZAROTE	VG	YCODEN-DAUTE-ISORA	G
LA PALMA	VG	YECLA	VG

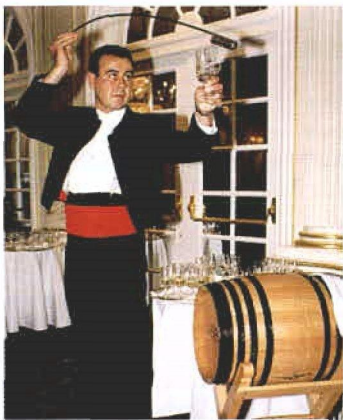
* V.C.P.R.D.: Quality Wines Produced in a Determined Region

D: POOR R: AVERAGE G: GOOD VG: VERY GOOD E: EXCELLENT

Text: Charles Powell

Fiesta de España in New York

Foods and wines from Spain are a revelation



Carol Gillot

A culinary mystery some two millenia in the making was unraveled at a seminar that took place over three crisp days of a New York autumn. The mystery is why Spain's fascinating culinary culture, splendid foodstuffs and many contributions to the spread of foods between hemispheres are so little known or understood. Like peeling an onion, it was debated and revealed by a stellar assembly of food experts, editors, chefs and restaurateurs, culinary scientists and historians who led over 200 attending seminarians through meetings, receptions, tastings and meals that explored, explained and savored a broad spectrum of the Spanish culinary experience.

Logic and Spain's role in world affairs does little to explain the mystery. Well over 2000 years ago, Spain was Ancient Rome's most favored nation in supplying food. The history of Spain included 700 years of Moorish and Jewish influence, leaving a rich culinary heritage. Five hundred years ago Spain introduced many new world foods to the old

world: corn, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and corn are on that list.

Additionally, they brought many foods to the new world. Spain was once rich beyond belief, the ruler of a vast colonial empire. The language

is still there. In these latter days Spain, with its tem-

perate and sub-tropical growing climes and bountiful food exports is rightfully called "the market garden of Europe" and a major food and wine exporter to the U.S.

Why then is Spain trapped in the dark corners of so many culinary minds?

Theories for this curious set of circumstances were an important part of the total immersion seminar entitled: "Fiesta de España, A Celebration of Spanish Culture and Cuisine." This important event was presented by The International Olive Oil Council and The James Beard Foundation, North America's first and only historical culinary center, with the active support of Foods and Wines From Spain, the country's Embassy Commercial Office devoted to promoting Spanish exports. The seminars attracted food journalists, cookbook authors, restaurateurs and American chefs of every type and stripe. Attendance was strong among wine aficionados and American "foodies," people who help set trends for the great restaurants and are so important to the sale of specialty foods. We invite you to share this culinary experience by coming along with us.

Day one, the mystery described and partially revealed

The seminar venue was the elegant Essex House Hotel facing Central Park. The day began with an authentic Madrileño and Catalan breakfast experience. *Churros*, olive oil fried strips of batter, cooked to crispy-crunchy morsels were dunked like donuts in rich cocoa, just as they are savored in virtu-

ally every breakfast kiosk in Spain. They are the Spanish equivalent of French croissants and New York's bagels. For those with a more Catalan bent, there was *Pan tomaca*, toasted peasant bread rubbed with ripe tomatoes and drizzled with olive oil.

Len Pickell, President of The James Beard Foundation welcomed us and introduced Nancy Harmon Jenkins, noted journalist and cookbook author (*The Mediterranean Diet Cookbook*), an expert on food as well as food history. She focused on the olive varieties grown in Spain as we learned about the management of groves, harvesting, pressing and the factors affecting quality and shelf-life. We also learned that Spain has over one third of the world's olive oil production. Tastings were led by Jerónimo Díaz, technical advisor to the olive oil industry in Spain. No brands were tasted. Rather, various olive varieties were sampled. We were instructed on how to taste for flavor qualities described as: earthy, grassy, sweet, peppery, fruity and hay in the oils. As Ms. Jenkins said of Spanish olive oils: "You just can't find the same variations of flavor and character from any other country."

The next seminar, "Exploring the Spanish Spirit" was a lively panel discussion with members coming from diverse culinary careers as authors, restaurant reviewers, educators, chef/patrons, even a curator at one of Harvard's libraries focusing on women's history and thus culinary subjects. We learned of factors that hindered the spread of Spanish cuisine: for example, the



Carol Gillot

700 years of Muslim domination in Spain, profoundly alien to the rest of Europe; Spain's long struggle with England to dominate the western hemisphere; the Spanish-American War; immigration patterns and an insular foreign policy during the Franco years. The morning seminars ended with a review and tasting of classic gazpacho recipes.

The first Luncheon featured a regional round-up of some of the great dishes of Spain. We feasted on intensely-flavored Clams Marinera in the Catalan manner, Valencia-style crusted rice with poultry, Basque braised ox-tail in an incredibly rich meat sauce and for dessert, a cake created by the Spanish Capuchin Nuns. The religious orders have created many of Spain's "sinfully rich" desserts. Wines for the lunch and other tastings were selected and described by wine lecturer and tour guide Gerry Dawes. Entertainments included Spanish guitar and singing.

The afternoon lectures with author Paula Wolfert focused on some of the essential ingredients of Spanish cooking: olive oil, garlic, pimentón (Spanish paprika), saffron and other seasonings. This was followed by a review of the traditional tools of the Spanish kitchen: *cazuelas* (clay pots), *paella* pans, and the mortar and pestle by

Maricel Presilla, the Hispanic culinary historian. Chef Antonio Buendía of the Cafe Barcelona in Florida then created a superior *alioli* and *romesco* sauce. Next the noted Madrid culinary expert

Clara María G. de Amezúa spoke on Spanish culinary history and pointed out that Spain is now rediscovering its culinary roots, a cuisine that was always based on peasant fare that included Arabic, Jewish and even Gypsy influences. She told us of the poverty of the past that made it so, but current desires for the simple has now made it very much the fashion. And in Spain, where expansive out-of-home entertaining is the rule, foodservice provides what customers require: simple fare prepared with the best ingredients and the utmost care. Hardly a poor recipe for a superior cuisine!

The first night reception, held at Sign of the Dove, a New York temple of gastronomy, was a sterling success. Chefs from ten of the top restaurants in New York competed for culinary attention with their tapas fare. Included were Bolo, the Tapas Lounge, Marichu, Bistro Latino, Spartina, Erizo Latino, Paradis, Picholine, Contrapunto and, of course The Sign of the Dove. The dishes were exquisite and delightful, especially when taken with a splended fino Sherry, poured by *venenciador* (Sherry pourer) Jesús María Delgado Rey, one of but 20 in all of Spain.

Day two, more revelations

The day began with Ms. Barbara Haber's informative review of the "Columbian Exchange," covering the importance of Spain in the introduction of foods between two hemispheres that had previously existed unaware of each other. Despite all the gold and silver, it was the food interchanges that were the true rich-

es, for they have fed the world in new, healthier and better ways ever since.

"The Allure of Spain" was the next topic, addressed by American chef panelists and moderated by *Saveur* magazine editor Coleman Andrews, author of the cookbook *Catalan Cuisine*. It was the sense of the meeting that though Spain's superior quality foods and wines are fairly well known by America's chefs, the cuisine is not. Andrews made the point: "Many Spanish restaurants must also feature Mexican fare to retain customers and this creates confusion." Several panelists felt that the tapas trend among non-Spanish operators will increase knowledge of Spanish fare.

The morning seminars ended with a review and tasting of classic *gazpacho* recipes. Lunch featured Basque cooking by Chef Teresa Barenchea of Marichu, an authentic Spanish restaurant in New York. In addition to baby squid in black ink sauce (rich and full of flavor), tender, sweet piquillo peppers of Navarra were served stuffed with meat. The hauntingly piquant flavor of these vegetable gems were exquisite, ranking right up there with truffles and foie gras in gourmet cachet.*

Afternoon seminars covered the importance of rice in Spanish cuisine by author Naomi Duguid and a well-described slide tour of typically Spanish home cooking with Tom Lacalamita. This was followed by artisanal cheese and Sherry tastings and ratings led by cheese consultant Steve Jenkins and wine expert Ana Fabiano. They were superb food and beverage combinations.



Carol Gillot



Carol Gillot



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The evening activity, held at the prestigious New York Athletic Club, was "The Great Match '96: Wine & Tapas," one of the six regional tastings throughout America. Over 140 different Spanish wines, brandies and sherries were sampled by some 800 merchants, customers and wine aficionados. Eight noted restaurants offered samples of what they felt would be a perfect match for these Spanish wines. Although served tapas style, the morsels were inspired by many cuisines: the Thai restaurant, Typhoon, served grilled chicken satays and Matthews offered coriander-crusted tuna on chickpea flatbread. The Park Avenue Cafe served BBQ chicken and Jalapeño cheese dumplings and Layla presented a Middle Eastern mezze with hummus and tabouleh. They all proved to be exceedingly tasty accompaniments to the Spanish wines served.

Day Three, Summaries and Sumptuousness

The venue for the last day of the seminars was Peter Kump's School of Culinary Arts in Manhattan. In their expansive demonstration kitchen, Spanish Chef/Instructor Joseba Encabo of the Culinary Institute of America demonstrated rice cooking, followed by the renowned Basque chef/instructor Iñaki Izaguirre of the Madrid School of

Hotel Management. He will soon open a restaurant in his native province. He demonstrated fish cooking, preparing roasted baby squid and shrimp and rice, fisherman's style. An interesting "sweetish" flavor nuance was achieved by using ladyfingers as the thickener.

Lunch was prepared by Chef José Antonio Valdespino of the noted restaurant La Mesa Redonda in Jerez, Andalusia. A tapas plate included *mojama* (cured tuna), scallops on toast and a potato omelette. This was followed by a seafood stew with Spain's rarest of all spices, saffron, sea bream in lemon sauce and quail roasted in sherry wine. A lemon almond tart ended the meal and was served with Argüeso Pedro Ximénez sherry, called "the cream of cream Sherry" for its incredibly rich liqueur-like flavor.

After lunch, Chef/Patron Richard Stephens of Madrid's La Gamella restaurant, demonstrated deep-frying with olive oil, recommending a mix of pure and extra-virgin oil to provide the best flavor. A Grand Finale Dinner for 100 (a sell-out) was held at the Beard House in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. Chef Salvador Gallego and his wife, who own the noted El Cenador de Salvador outside of Madrid, were the visiting celebrity chefs. Working with in-house staff in a great display of organized chaos in the "smallish" Beard kitchen, it was a pleasure to observe. To begin, Fino Sherries and Malavella waters were served in the garden. Tapas were there, of course, including delicious toasts with baby asparagus and black olive cracklings and a chilled tomato puree with quail eggs. The elegant dinner that followed included a Tomato Charlotte with Pickled Tuna, a thick chickpea, salt cod and spinach soup, Basque-style steamed autumn vegetables and stewed partridge with almond and saffron sauce. Dessert was a visual feast of edible elegance: *Espuma de Turrón de Jijona*, a highly decorated almond nougat mousse. This seminar went a long

way towards answering the mystery that has baffled culinary historians, frustrated importers, befuddled growers, processors and exporters, exasperated many great chefs in search of quality and annoyed the restaurant cognoscenti: why Spanish cuisine and the extraordinarily high quality Spanish foods and wines are not always available and, as yet have not achieved a more exalted status on the North American continent, indeed in the English-speaking world.

Perhaps before the third millenia begins, the answer will come. After all, the appreciation of Spanish food merely requires a liking for fine olives and their oils, hearty breads, delicious cheeses, superior seafood, splendid spices, ripe delicious fruit, great wines and brandies, the freshest vegetables and the very best hams and sausages. As New Yorkers are fond of saying, "So what's not to like?"

* Addendum: On the following day, the Marichu Restaurant was the host for a presentation featuring artisan-prepared sweet piquillo peppers from Navarre. The top tier of 25 New York chefs and food journalists attended to sample piquillo peppers in several recipes; in a potato soup, in a salad with fresh basil, with feta cheese, in an egg frittata and stuffed with salt cod in a bechamel sauce. Introductions to this new, splendid culinary specialty will be repeated in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Charles Powell of the American Culinary Federation is an author, chef, restaurant reviewer and food/travel writer. He makes his home in New York and New Hampshire and is a regular contributor to Spain Gourmetour.



Andy Feldman



Carol Gillot

Su
Calidad
les
Distingue



ACEITES

G

ran Selección

96

MEDALLAS DE ORO

MEDALLAS DE PLATA

MEDALLAS DE BRONCE

ENVASES ESPECIALES

Hermida

Carlos Hermida Sánchez
Esquivias

Dintel-Virgen Extra 1/4

Aceites Toledo, S.A.
Los Yébenes

Dintel-Virgen Extra 3/4

Aceites Toledo, S.A.
Los Yébenes

ENVASES 1 LITRO

Moral Oro

Coop. Santiago Apóstol
Moral de Calatrava

Pantocrator

Alta Alcarria, S.C.L.
Valdeolivas

Castillo de Ontur

Coop. San José
Ontur

ENVASES 5 LITROS

Moral Oro

Coop. Santiago Apóstol
Moral de Calatrava

Sierra Prieta

Colival
Valdepeñas

Pantocrator

Alta Alcarria, S.C.L.
Valdeolivas



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Junta de Comunidades de
Castilla-La Mancha

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

SONIA ORTEGA

• Since the official opening in 1918 of the first Spanish National Parks (Covadonga and Ordesa), policies for the protection of nature have come and gone, but there are now over 700 protected areas in Spain and these are the subject of **Nature in Spain - Natural Protected Areas**. This is a bilingual publication in two volumes: one showing the striking photos by Antonio Manzanares with comments by a number of specialists, and the other giving full maps with a complete list of the protected areas and a brief description of each. If your interest goes even further, we would recommend **Los parques nacionales españoles**, in which two environmental specialists give full details of the background of the different protected areas.

• As an economic sector, tourism clearly moves considerable interests, not least in publishing. Apart from the tremendous number of tourist guidebooks available, new periodic publications are now appearing on the market. One such is **España desconocida**, a monthly magazine giving the usual type of information such as tourism routes, gastronomy, local festivals, art, rural tourism, etc. But since this book covers Spain alone, it is able to deal with the subject in depth and to cover more remote, less frequented spots that are rarely mentioned in other such guides.

• The prolific collection of *Guías con encanto* (Guides with Charm) published by El País-Aguilar that we have had call to mention on previous occasions, has now produced a work of considerable interest - a

collection of eleven books entitled **Vinos y licores de España** (Wines and Liqueurs of Spain). Each covers one area (**Cataluña; Levante y Baleares; Tajo y Guadiana; Andalucía y Canarias; Castilla y León; Aragón, Navarra y los Chacolis; La Rioja and Galicia**) with the remaining three dealing more specifically with **Jerez; El cava; and Licores and aguardientes**. Compiled by two oenologists, Isabel Mijares and José Antonio Saez Illobre, the collection covers a thousand *bodegas* in all the Spanish Denominations of Origin. The books are intended for the non-specialist tourist (as is the whole of the *Guías con encanto* collection) so the content is straightforward, the price reasonable and the format easy to use. Along the same lines, the Ribera del Duero Regulatory Council has recently published a double guide, **Guía de Ribera del Duero**, firstly covering the local wines and bodegas and then giving routes to visit all the main monuments in the area. The first section is bound with a ring binder so that any new bodegas

set up in the future can be added.

• During the more than 20 years that Janet Mendel has been living in Spain, she has become closely acquainted with our gastronomy, local produce, etc. Her specialist knowledge has already given rise to two books - *Cooking in Spain* and *The Best of Spanish Cooking*, and now her third book has appeared, called **Traditional Spanish Cooking**. The recipes it gives are arranged according to the typical eating times in Spain. She starts with breakfast for which she recommends a thick, hot chocolate drink, then a full meal at midday, a snack in the afternoon, *tapas* in the evening and, finally, a light supper. She is certainly unusual in understanding the Spanish idiosyncrasies when it comes to mealtimes.

• Penelope Casas is another veteran writer on Spanish food and tourism. Although already mentioned in these pages in 1992, her book, **Discovering Spain**, has now come out in a completely revised and up-

dated version. We again recommend it for anyone wanting a carefully-prepared, first-hand guide.



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Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero
Hospital, s/n
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Tel: (34-47) 54 12 21
Fax: (34-47) 54 11 16

Traditional Spanish Cooking
Janet Mendel
Garnet Publishing Ltd.
8 Southern Court, South Street
Reading RG1 4QS
(United Kingdom)

Discovering Spain
Penelope Casas
Alfred A. Knopf
201 East 50th St.
New York, NY 10022 (U.S.A.)
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Bottled Olive Oil

The list of main exporters of olive oil published in the last issue of *Spain Gourmetour* was wrong. We regret this error and provide herewith the correct list, which has been supplied by ASOLIVA (Association of Spanish Olive Oil Exporters). We remind you that an additional list of Spanish manufacturers of this product is available as a brochure and on diskette. For more information see page 25.

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D.O. Rueda Wines

EVERYTHING BUT THE ELEPHANT...



The twelfth-century castle of Peñafiel, in the heart of Ribera del Duero.

In 1501, the city of London enjoyed a week of festivities to celebrate the arrival of a Spanish Princess, who was to marry the King's brother.

Her name was Catherine, Infanta of Castile, and the locals turning out for the beer and fireworks in her honour were cheerfully convinced that they were going to the south-London district where she was staying to see the Elephant and Castle ...The rest is history.

Everyone knows the story, but how many know the Castile from which the Infanta took her title? There's not a lot in the way of elephants to be found here, but the historic countryside still has its share of castles, as well as the heritage of a thousand years of history provided by the Royal houses of León and Castile.

The river Duero flows through a lush green landscape of fertile soils and rolling hills under a crisp, alpine-blue sky. This is a land of wildflower meadows and sheep-farms as well as castles and kings, known as the breadbasket of Spain for its production of quality cereals...And soon to be known for another of its outstanding contributions to gastronomy: the wines of the Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero. The vine thrives in the

chalk and sandstone soils here, at an altitude of 2,500 feet: the very limit at which grapes can be grown and ripened anywhere in Spain.

The high, cool spring, hot summer and autumn, and very cold winter ensure that only the healthiest vines survive to produce grapes, and the combination of freshness, acidity and

ripeness of those grapes is unique in Spain, and the rest of the world. The vine is the Tinto Fino, or Tempranillo, which has evolved its own unique characteristics in this high Castilian

plâteau – characteristics which have been much prized by those in power in the major cities of the region: Burgos, where El Cid launched his campaigns against the Moors; Segovia, where Isabella – mother of the Infanta Catherine – was proclaimed Queen; Valladolid, former capital of Spain and Soria, for many years the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain.

These proud Castilians demanded – and could afford – wines which matched their elevated tastes and the hearty foods which nature provided in such abundance.

In the countryside, too, people had a healthy thirst for good wine, and in

almost every village you'll see *luceras* – strange towers like giant spears of petrified asparagus which stick up almost everywhere, between the houses and on the hillsides.

These provide light and fresh air for the labyrinthine cellars burrowed into the soft bedrock below, where every family, no matter how humble, would tread its ration of grapes and store their beloved product.

Add to this an explosion of new technology in the wineries, new ideas from young winemakers who are masters of their craft, and new investment in the land, and you'll understand why there's an atmosphere of excitement in Ribera del Duero.

The region's winemakers, the Consejo Regulador which polices the quality, and some pretty impressive international wine experts believe that one of the world's greatest wines is emerging here. You will, too.

It was, after all, good enough for the Infanta – and you can enjoy it with or without an elephant!



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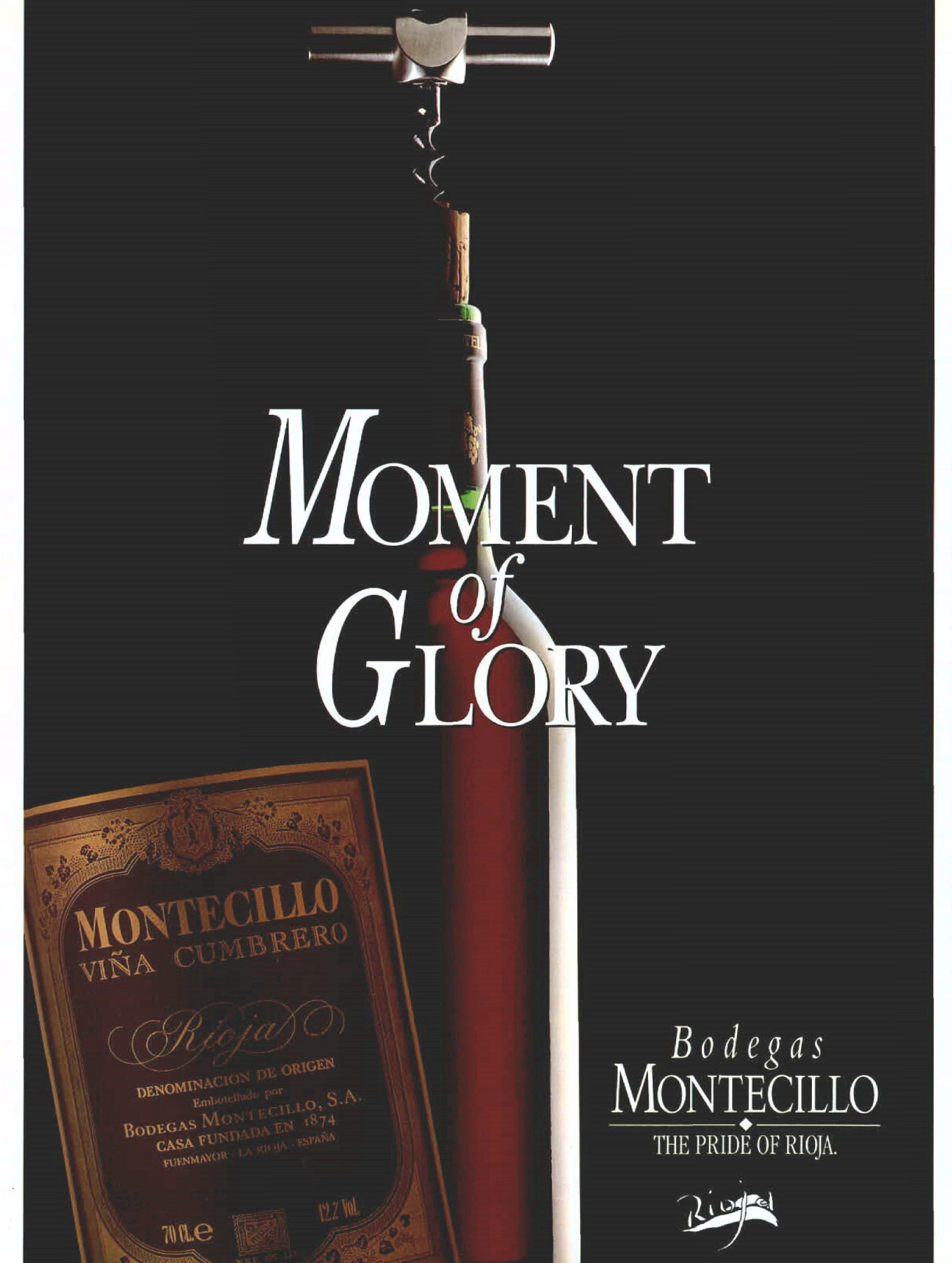
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For tourist information, contact your nearest **TOURIST OFFICE OF SPAIN**

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INTRODUCTION: SONIA ORTEGA
STILL LIFES: MENCHU ARTIME

PHOTOS: ANTONIO DE BENITO/ICEX
RECIPE PRODUCTION: CASA BENIGNA
TRANSLATION: JENNY MCDONALD

Christmas with a Spanish Flavor

CHRISTMAS IS, WITHOUT A DOUBT, ONE OF THE MAIN FESTIVALS OF THE WESTERN WORLD AND THE OCCASION FOR A MULTITUDE OF SOCIAL EVENTS, MANY OF THEM AROUND A TABLE. IN SPAIN, WHERE EATING WELL IS A MATTER OF 'VITAL' IMPORTANCE YEAR ROUND, CHRISTMAS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THROWING CAUTION TO THE WIND AND GIVING FREE REIN TO THE RICH GASTRONOMIC TRADITION. CLARA MARIA G. DE AMEZÚA, AN EXPERT IN SPANISH CUISINE, HAS DRAWN UP TWO MENUS, ONE CLASSICAL AND THE OTHER MORE INNOVATIVE, SO THAT YOU TOO CAN GIVE A SPANISH FLAVOR TO YOUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS.









The Arabs that lived in much of Spain for almost eight centuries left their mark on our cuisine, especially in the use of almonds.

Are you tired of the same old foie-gras year in, year out, or of turkey and Christmas pudding? Does it horrify you to think of eating yet another traditional Christmas dinner? In spite of a generous dose of Christmas spirit and goodwill, do you long for a change from the menu you have been eating for the last few decades? If so, or if you are, quite simply, keen to internationalize your cooking and try something new, then this is a good opportunity to try out some new flavors. So why not a Spanish Christmas meal?

In Spain there is no "standard" Christmas menu. Although certain foods are always present, such as *turrón*, and others are practically always somewhere on the scene, such as shellfish, here again, the variety of Spanish regional gastronomy comes to the fore. A few years ago, one of the great Spanish chefs, Luis Irizar, devised for *Spain Gourmetour* a menu including the Christmas specialties of several areas of Spain. This time we wanted to do something different so we asked Clara María de Amezáa to select two full menus: one a classic menu and another to ring the changes. At the same time we wanted her to include as wide a range as possible of Spanish products. She was happy to take up the challenge and has put together a meal including products ranging from saffron and olive oil to Iberian ham and Jerez vinegar.

For traditionalists

Though for us this is a classic meal, for readers beyond our frontiers it should have the charm of something

new. It includes some of the dishes served at Christmas-time in different areas of Spain - almond soup, red cabbage, oven-baked bream, and the traditional *turrón* but this time in the form of ice cream. Note that three of the recipes incorporate nuts - almonds in the soup and the *turrón*, and pine nuts with the red cabbage. The Arabs that lived in much of Spain for almost eight centuries left their mark on, amongst other aspects of Spanish life, our cuisine and countryside, with extensive use of rice, oranges, etc., and especially, almonds.

This almond soup is mostly prepared in Castile and has a sweet yet salty taste that means it can be served either at the start of a meal or as a dessert. To add an original touch, this recipe includes saffron, that almost mythical spice that has found its perfect habitat in La Mancha. There, every autumn, the flowers are collected with the utmost care and the stigmas toasted to give the best-quality saffron in the world in a class of its own that is described as "Mancha quality."

Red or purple cabbage needs no introduction. This winter vegetable often appears at Spanish Christmas celebrations, sometimes just boiled then tossed in garlic-flavored oil. Here the combination with pine nuts and raisins and the Ribera del Duero wine give a stronger flavor and delicacy to the shiny red cabbage. This excellent combination of pine nuts and raisins is often applied in Catalan cooking, especially with spinach to prepare *espinacas a la catalana*.

Now to turn to fish. After Japan, Spain is the world's

second largest consumer of fresh fish. It is not only consumed in coastal areas but throughout the Peninsula. Transport is now no problem but, until quite recently, a complex horse and cart system used to bring perfectly fresh fish to the cities of the interior. And if there was not sufficient fresh fish, then salt cod could be kept and used in a multitude of ways. Today salt cod continues to be one of the essentials of a Christmas meal in many Spanish homes, although perhaps bream is a greater favorite. However, the latter is a costly tradition, as the tasty breams fished off the Cantabrian and Galician coasts fetch enormous prices over the holiday season. But Christmas comes but once a year, and Spaniards are reticent to give up their traditions. In this recipe, the bream is baked on a bed of fine slices of potato and onion with a traditional flavoring of garlic, parsley, and saffron. And just before serving, it is sprinkled with a dressing of Jerez vinegar flavored with red chili pepper that goes perfectly with the fish. In the Basque Country, a topping of very fine slices of fried garlic is added. The result is magnificent. Jerez vinegar is one of those gastronomic pearls that, once discovered, rapidly becomes indispensable. It is versatile and can be used for salads and marinades as well as for cooked dishes and is so aromatic that just a couple of drops will do.

The obvious close to such a classic meal is *turrón*. This sweet of Arab origin, made of almonds and honey or sugar, is an essential part of a Spanish Christmas. Today there is a tremendous range

of variations - chocolate, coconut, praline - but the ancestral and original formulae give what we call soft or Jijona *turrón* (with crushed almonds) and the hard or Alicante *turrón* in which the almonds are left whole. Clara María de Amezáa suggests an unusual variation: *turrón* in the form of ice cream served with a chocolate sauce made not with butter but with olive oil, as it used to be made when cocoa was received from America.

Time for a change

If the above menu was clearly classical, the second takes a little from both worlds.

To start, an original jelly made of tomato served with fine shavings of Iberian ham, the "caviar" of Spain. It comes from the Iberian breed of pig which is practically non-existent outside Spain. Allowed to range freely on the grasslands or under the holm and cork oaks of the west of Spain, for much of their life these pigs feed on acorns. The combination of breed, environment and feeding gives a ham in which the fat infiltrates the flesh making it smooth and aromatic and giving it a unique flavor.

Did you know that in Spain there are over a hundred different types of cheese? The wealth of Spanish milk products is generally unknown but the great diversity of landscapes and climates of Spain mean that cattle, sheep and goats can be reared. Their milk, either singly or in combination, is converted using both traditional methods and modern techniques into a range of cheeses that would be the delight of any cheese-lover.

One of the most emblematic Spanish cheeses is Cabrales. Used in an original cheese pie it gives a special touch to the menu.

One of the most emblematic Spanish cheeses is Cabrales, a blue cheese of intense flavor and aroma that is left to ripen in natural caves in remote areas of the Asturian mountains in the north of Spain. Here it is used as the basis for an original, and very special, cheese pie.

Keeping to the Spanish tradition of eating fish for Christmas, this menu includes turbot. This fish has always been captured off the coasts of Galicia but now is also being bred on fish farms, mostly in Galicia. The broad beans that are served fried as a garnish are just an example of the wealth of Spanish market

garden produce. This agricultural sector is backed up by a strong processing industry so that, in addition to fresh produce, many vegetables are also frozen, canned or preserved. An example of the latter are the small red *piquillo* peppers that are baked, peeled by hand and bottled. Either slightly piquant or sweet, having become enormously popular within Spain, they are now repeating their success abroad. Many Parisian chefs, for example, enjoy experimenting with their versatility. They can be stuffed in a thousand ways, served cold in salad or, as in our menu, sautéed with a little garlic

and olive oil to accompany our Christmas capon served stuffed with meat and dried fruits, in a very Catalan presentation.

The dessert this time is a combination of fruits - juicy oranges and grapefruits from the Valencian coast, and strawberries from Huelva. This Andalusian province has become the main producer in Europe not only of strawberries but also of mangos. These and other tropical fruits, such as avocado pears and custard apples, are now being grown along what has come to be known as the "tropical coast" of Spain in the province of Granada, as well as in the Canaries.

Readers of these recipes will note at once that there is one product that is present in all of them (except for the second dessert) - olive oil. It is impossible to imagine Spanish cooking or even Mediterranean cooking without olive oil. It is certainly a basic ingredient and, in spite of the harsh drought of recent years, olive oil continues to enhance our cuisine, at Christmas and all year round.



The best of both worlds ...

Classic

Almond soup

SERVES 4-6:

1 1/4 l milk
75 gr sugar
150 gr ground almonds (or almond paste)
2 tbsp fresh white bread-crumbs
2 garlic cloves
Rock salt
4-5 strands of saffron
4-5 sprigs of parsley
White peppercorns

Garnish:

200 ml extra virgin olive oil for frying
12 very thin slices of bread fried in the olive oil
50 gr toasted flaked almonds

Put the milk on to boil. In a mortar, pound the rock salt, saffron, pepper, garlic cloves and parsley. Place this mixture with the ground almonds or paste, bread-crumbs and sugar in the boiling milk. Lower the heat and leave to cook slowly for 8-10 minutes. Sprinkle with the flaked almonds and serve with the slices of fried bread.

Red cabbage stewed in red wine

SERVES 4-6:

1 red cabbage, approx. 1 kg
250 ml young red Ribera del Duero wine
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
75 gr raisins
75 gr pine nuts
Salt and pepper

Soak the raisins in the red wine. Thinly slice the cabbage and wash. Heat the oil in a pot and lightly sauté the pine nuts. Add the cabbage and sauté for half a minute. Pour on the red wine with the raisins. Season with salt and pepper. Cover the pan as tightly as possible and simmer for one hour.

Christmas bream

SERVES 4-5:

One bream, approx. 1.5 kg
0.5 kg potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
200 gr thinly sliced onion rings
Juice of two lemons
150 ml extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp rock salt
3 garlic cloves
4 strands of saffron
1 generous bunch of parsley
For serving:
2 tbsp Jerez vinegar
Pepper
2 red chili peppers, thinly sliced
Peel of 1 lemon

Heat the oven to 200°C (392°F) for 25 minutes. Clean the fish and sprinkle with the lemon juice inside and out. Lower the oven temperature to 180°C (356°F).

In a mortar, pound the rock salt with the garlic, saffron and parsley. Add 4 tbsp oil and 3 tbsp water. Mix well and set aside.

Grease with oil an oven-proof serving dish. Spread the potatoes and onion rings over the base and sprinkle with the salt, garlic, and herb mixture. Cook gently for about 20 minutes. Place the bream on top of the potatoes and sprinkle with 2-3 tbsp oil. Place in the oven at 200°C (392°F) for 15-20 minutes.

Finally, beat the vinegar with some of the cooking juices and ground pepper. Remove the fish from the oven and decorate with a sprig of parsley. Sprinkle with the vinegar mixture and decorate with very fine slices of lemon peel and chili pepper. Serve hot.

Two turrón ice cream with chocolate sauce

SERVES 4-5:

150 gr sugar
4 tbsp water
6 egg yolks
150 gr soft Jijona turrón
2 tbsp Málaga wine
200 ml cream
3 egg whites
75 gr hard Alicante turrón
For the sauce:
200 gr plain chocolate
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tbsp water

Roughly crush the Alicante turrón. Grease a 1/2-liter soufflé dish with butter. Tie a sheet of grease-proof paper around the dish so that it projects by 5 cm (2 in). Place in the freezer.

Make a thin syrup with the water and sugar. Beat the egg yolks together with the warm syrup in the blender. Dissolve the Jijona turrón in the two tbsp of wine. Whip the cream. Beat the egg whites until stiff. One after the other, gently stir the different mixtures together. Sprinkle the soufflé dish with some of the Alicante turrón. Pour in the prepared mixture. Leave for a few hours in the freezer (preferably overnight). Then take out, remove the paper and sprinkle with the remaining Alicante turrón.

Make the chocolate sauce by melting the chocolate with the water over a pan of hot water. Whisk in the oil. Serve hot with the ice cream.

... and Innovative

Tomato jelly with Iberian ham

SERVES 6-8:

1.5 kg fresh tomatoes
20 gr gelatine diluted in 50 ml hot water
100 ml Jerez vinegar
100 ml Pedro Jiménez sherry
Salt and pepper
1 heaped tbsp finely chopped green pepper and 1 heaped tbsp finely chopped red pepper (approx. 60 gr altogether)
Garnish:
250 gr Iberian ham cut in fine shavings
300 gr small new potatoes
Vinaigrette sauce:
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp Jerez vinegar
Salt
1 tbsp freshly chopped spring onion

Reduce the vinegar and sherry to half. Blanch, peel and drain the tomatoes then remove the seeds and make into a thick puree. Dissolve the sheets of gelatine in the hot water. Mix the vinegar and sherry with the tomato. Season with salt and pepper. Add the gelatine and chopped pepper. Pour the mixture into a ring mold that has first been moistened with cold water. Leave to set for a few hours in the refrigerator then turn out. Meanwhile, wash and boil the potatoes in their jackets. Prepare a vinaigrette sauce with the ingredients given above. Peel the potatoes and cut in 1/2-cm slices. Sprinkle with the spring onion. Fill the center of the tomato jelly with the potato salad. Before serving, arrange the ham shavings around the outside of the ring.

Cabrales cheese pie

SERVES 6-8:

300 gr Cabrales cheese
6 eggs
100 ml extra virgin olive oil
100 ml cream
2 tbsp fresh breadcrumbs
2 tsp ground white pepper
1 tbsp butter

Heat the oven to 175°C (347°F). Melt the cheese with the olive oil over a pan of hot water. Remove from the heat and add the beaten eggs and cream. Grease a 3/4-liter pan with butter. Sprinkle with the breadcrumbs and pepper. Pour the creamed cheese into the mold and place in the oven inside a pan of hot water for one hour. After 20 minutes, cover the mold with aluminum foil to prevent a crust from forming on the surface. Turn out and serve with a salad of shredded endives with walnut pieces or accompany with young raw vegetables.

Baked turbot

SERVES 4-6:

1 turbot or salmon weighing approx. 2 kg
100 ml extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves
A few sprigs of parsley
50 gr dry breadcrumbs
Salt and pepper
Garnish:
4 tomatoes
50 gr fresh breadcrumbs
2 garlic cloves
A few sprigs of parsley
Salt and olive oil
500 gr frozen baby broad beans
100 ml extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper

Heat the oven to 200°C (392°F). Cut the turbot into 3-cm (1 in) slices leaving the

skin on. Cover the base of the oven dish in which the fish is to be served with half the oil, the garlic and the chopped parsley. Season the fish with salt and pepper and coat well with the remaining oil. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs on the fish slices, pressing them on by hand. Sprinkle with a little oil. Bake for 20-25 minutes. Meanwhile halve the tomatoes, arrange them in an oven dish and cover with the fresh breadcrumbs, garlic and chopped parsley. Season with salt and sprinkle with olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes then arrange around the fish for serving. Heat the oil and fry the previously defrosted broad beans for 2 minutes. Drain and season.

Spanish-style roast capon

Capon is the finest of poultry. If you are lucky enough to find the genuine castrated version, treat it with care as it can be a real treat. If not, use a free-range chicken.

SERVES 6-8:

1 capon weighing approx. 3 1/2 kg
6-8 shallots
100 ml olive oil
500 gr sausages in small slices
500 gr diced lean pork
200 gr dried peaches
200 gr prunes
100 gr pine nuts
3 coarsely diced Granny Smith or cooking apples
100 gr lard
1 glass Málaga wine
Salt and pepper (and cinnamon to taste)

First soak the prunes and dried peaches in the warm wine. Chop the shallots. Heat the oil and sauté the

shallots until transparent but without letting them brown. Sauté the sausages and diced pork with the shallots. Add the pine nuts, prunes and peaches. Then add the apples. Season with salt, pepper and cinnamon. Fill the capon with this stuffing, sewing up the ends.

Place the capon with the lard in a pan (on two crossed wooden spoons or a support so that the bird does not rest directly on the base of the pan). After half the cooking time, add the Málaga wine previously used to soak the prunes and dried peaches. Baste occasionally during cooking. A good 3 1/2-kg capon will take 2 1/2-3 hours to cook, depending on its quality and condition.

Carve the capon and arrange on a serving dish with the stuffing in the center. Pour the fat off the cooking juices. Spoon a little sauce over the capon slices and serve the rest separately. Accompany with saffron-flavored rice sautéed with raisins and pine nuts and a few Piquillo peppers.

Piquillo pepper garnish

SERVES 4-6:

3 cans Piquillo peppers
50 ml extra virgin olive oil
2 thinly sliced garlic cloves
Salt

Heat the oil. Drain the peppers. Fry the garlic slices until just golden. Set aside. In the same oil, heat the peppers. Remove from heat, drain, season and serve sprinkled with the garlic slices.

Caper sauce

2 tbsp oil
4 chopped shallots
4 anchovy fillets in oil
2 tbsp capers
1 small tsp cornstarch
1 tbsp stock
Parsley and pepper

Sauté the shallots in the oil until transparent. Add the anchovies and crush with a fork. Dissolve the cornstarch in the stock. Add the capers and chopped parsley, then leave to cook for a few minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon.

Orange and grapefruit cream

SERVES 4-6:

4 oranges
4 grapefruit
250 gr strawberries
2 mangos
6 eggs
40 gr sugar
Mandarine liqueur, or Valle del Jerte cherry brandy

Peel the grapefruit segments. Wash the strawberries and cut the mangos into equal-sized pieces. Beat the egg yolks with the sugar until pale. Squeeze the oranges and remaining grapefruit and cook over a very gentle heat. Poach the fruit in the hot juice for a few seconds. Remove from the heat, drain the fruit and keep in a warm place. Gently heat the eggs and sugar mixture together with the strained juice, preferably over a pan of hot water, until thick and creamy. Add a few spoonfuls of liqueur. For a sweeter flavor, choose the mandarine liqueur. The Valle del Jerte cherry brandy will give a drier flavor. Place the fruit in a glass dish and cover with the hot or warm cream.



The decision to invest in the Tokay area was quite simple: because of the importance of its tradition and its historical value, and also the singularity and quality of its wine.



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Vega Sicilia

Turns Tokay Towards the West

Text: **David Ing**

Photos: **Bodegas Oremus/ICEX**

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IF ANY COMPANY CAN RELY ON WORD OF MOUTH AND THE PEN TO GET ITS PRODUCTS RECOGNIZED, THEN VEGA SICILIA HAS TO BE IT.

Apart from their indisputable quality and limited production, there is another similarity between what are otherwise two totally different wines.

The smooth dry reds which Vega Sicilia produces along the banks of the Duero River in central Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 32) and the sweet white Tokay from the far-off hills of eastern Hungary both suffered periods of neglect before their present owners took them over.

In its homeland, Vega Sicilia was a large estate where the wine produced was used for simply supplying the nearby Rioja region until the Herretero brothers moved in at the beginning of the century.

They decided to produce their own wine and named it after the estate. The first bottles appeared in 1915 and, thanks to the patronage of the nobility, Vega Sicilia had already made its name in Spain when it won its first international recognition at the Barcelona Expo in 1929. However, despite its early fame, lack of investment meant that Vega Sicilia remained a rarity virtually unknown to foreign buyers until the Alvarez family stepped in in 1982.

They modernized the *bodegas*, extended the vineyards and introduced new quality controls - giving the wine a more sound commercial base while making sure it lost nothing of its character. Eleven years later the family saw another, similar open-

ing. Like Vega Sicilia, the Tokay region had suffered from neglect as the former Communist bloc first crumbled and then fell apart.

The Hungarian government, which under Communism had run the vineyards as state farms, decided the best way to revitalize them was by setting up joint ventures with foreign companies.

Accept the Challenge

Vega Sicilia was one of six west European companies to accept the challenge, taking a 75% stake in the Oremus vineyards. Since then, the company has increased its share to more than 87% while another 11% has been taken up by Spanish investment company Cofides, a member of the Argentaria banking group, as part of the European Union's aid program for eastern Europe. According to Vega Sicilia's export manager Rafael Alonso, "The decision to invest in the Tokay area was quite simple: because of the importance of its tradition and its historical value, and also the singularity and quality of its wine.

"Bodegas Vega Sicilia, being a producer of red wine of superior quality, wanted to wager on the recovery of the concept and configuration of the quality Tokay wines.

"The objective is to preserve the traditions of Tokay while making full use of the advantages to be gained from technological development."

Tokay's history as a wine growing region dates back over 1,000 years. Until the phylloxera epidemic struck in 1875, nearly a dozen different varieties of grapes were grown for making white wine, but they have since been reduced to three: Furmint, Harslevelü and Muscat Lunel.

Much of the production goes to producing fruity table wines which have long been popular in eastern Europe. But the speciality of the vineyards is without doubt the late, handpicked grapes, known as *Aszú*.

Noble Rot

The long, sunny autumns in the Zemplen hills coupled with morning mists from the rivers encourage the growth of the fungus *botrytis cinerea* which shrivels the grapes into a high sugar-content raisin in a process known as noble rot. When a little is mixed with normal grapes, the *Aszú* can be used to produce a blend known as *Szamorodni*, the name given by Polish merchants who commercialized the wine in the 19th century. The sweetness of each *Szamorodni* wine is regulated by the quantity of *Aszú* grapes used in the vinification, enabling them to vary from dry to sweet.

If it has been a good growing year, the marc left from the first pressing of the *Aszú* grapes can also be used again to produce a *Fordítás*

(turnover) wine which is similar to a sweet *Szamorodni*. But the stars of the Tokay collection are undoubtedly the dessert wines known simply as *Aszú* or *Eszenzia*. These have been likened to the Château d'Yquem of Sauternes and Germany's Trockenbeerenauslese, although they outdate either of them by more than a century. To produce this type of wine, the *Aszú* grapes are put into large barrels where the juice is allowed to squeeze naturally from the grapes. The nectar which is collected is known as *eszenzia*.

The remaining pulp is then macerated with fresh wine of the year to bring out the high sugar content before being stored in oak casks to ferment. To gauge the sugar content, the amount of *Aszú* used is measured in *puttonyos*, the name for the 25 kilogram-capacity baskets which the pickers carry on their shoulders.

Thus a six *puttonyo* wine will use twice as much *Aszú* grapes as a three *puttonyo* and be considerably sweeter.

Final Decision

The *puttonyos* also give a rough guide to how long the wine has been allowed to mature. Although the final decision as to when to bottle rests with the cellar master, the general rule is one year for each *puttonyo* plus two. When the vintages are of very high quality, an *Aszú-Eszenzia* may be produced,

NOW THE WHEEL MAY TURN AGAIN AS THE COMPANY CONSIDERS INVESTING IN ONE OF FRANCE'S LEADING WINE REGIONS.

which can exceed six puttonyos. These must contain at least 180 grams per liter of residual sugar and 50 grams per liter of sugar-free extracts and can need 15 years or more to mature.

But the highest of the high is the wine which uses solely the eszenzia. Because the must is so concentrated, the fermentation produced by the yeasts is very slow.

An Eszenzia takes at least 20 years to mature and even then has a strength of no more than four degrees.

This was the drink that the Empress Maria Teresa of Austria took daily for its medicinal properties and which France's Sun King, Louis XIV, described as "the wine of kings and the king of wines." Czar Peter the Great of Russia was so impressed on receiving a bottle that he wrote: "The Eszenzia itself, which flows in the Aszú grapes, cannot be bought with money; it can only be obtained through friendship, from aristocrats and rich people."

To make sure of his supplies, he later sent crack Cossack troops to guard the Tokay wine cellars and the road from there to his palace at St. Petersburg.

These cellars, some of which date back to the 13th century, also play a major part in the production process.

Investment for Expansion

Casks are rarely filled right to the top, allowing oxygen in

the air to take its effect, while the mold which grows on the cellar walls provides yeasts and bacteria which work on the wine and enhance its flavor during maturation.

With such a long history and tradition behind Tokay, Vega Sicilia has decided not to change the basic product but to concentrate on upgrading production techniques and re-launching it to a western world that received little more than a trickle during the years of the Communist regime.

"Until 1990, Russia took nearly 90% of all the region's wines, yet even those sales virtually dried up in the early '90s," says Rafael Alonso. "Our aim now is to increase promotion and awareness in western countries."

Since Vega Sicilia took over Oremus, production has risen steadily to nearly 400,000 liters a year of which about two-thirds now goes for export.

"That may sound a high figure when you consider we started with virtually nothing. But we are not looking for a big production. Our interest is in producing quality wines," he said.

Even so, the company has been pleased enough with its original US\$4 million investment to start looking at a US\$6 million expansion program.

Plans include doubling the vineyard area, currently covering 51 hectares (126 acres), as well as investing in replanting vines, further improving quality controls, and building new warehouses.

While he believes a resurging Russian market will be the main outlet for the table wines, which account for around half the total production, Señor Alonso sees Germany, the United States, Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, and the United Kingdom as the most important for the Aszú varieties.

Word of Mouth

But that will not mean mammoth advertising campaigns. "We are concentrating on tastings at wine fairs and articles written by visiting journalists to get the name better known," he said.

If any company can rely on word of mouth and the pen to get its products recognized, then Vega Sicilia has to be it.

Production of its namesake Spanish wine is around a quarter-of-a-million bottles a year, although no more than a quarter manages to reach the export market.

Despite its seemingly exorbitant price tag, Spanish connoisseurs have their names registered on waiting lists and snap it up so quickly that the wine is sold before it is even bottled.

The only consolation for many would-be buyers is to try and find the wines from the Alvarez family's new winery, Bodegas y Viñedos Alion. Also bordering the Duero and producing wines from the same grape varieties as Vega Sicilia - Tinto Fino, Al-

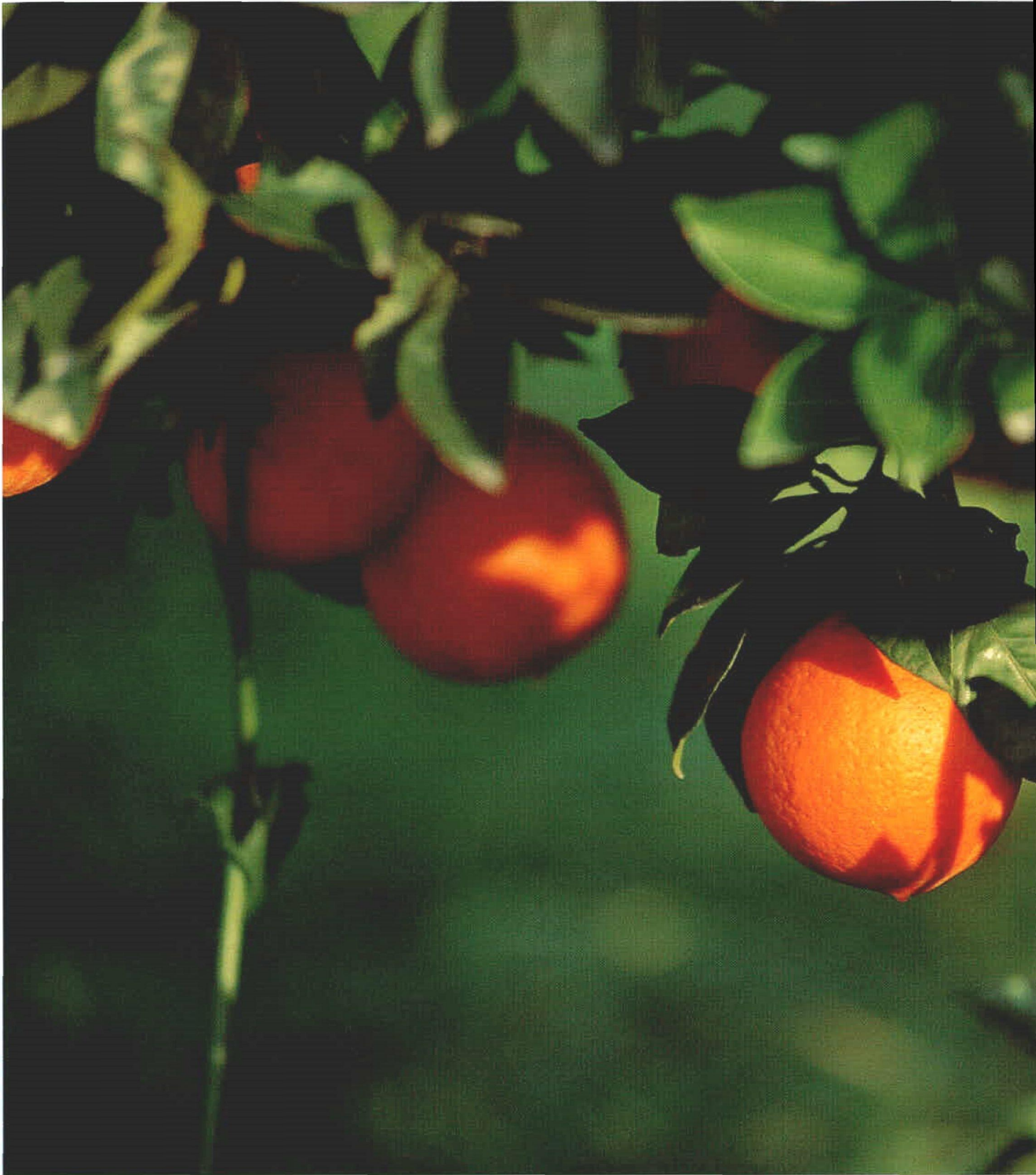
billo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Merlot - its production is set to grow from 50,000 bottles a year to 350,000 by 2002.

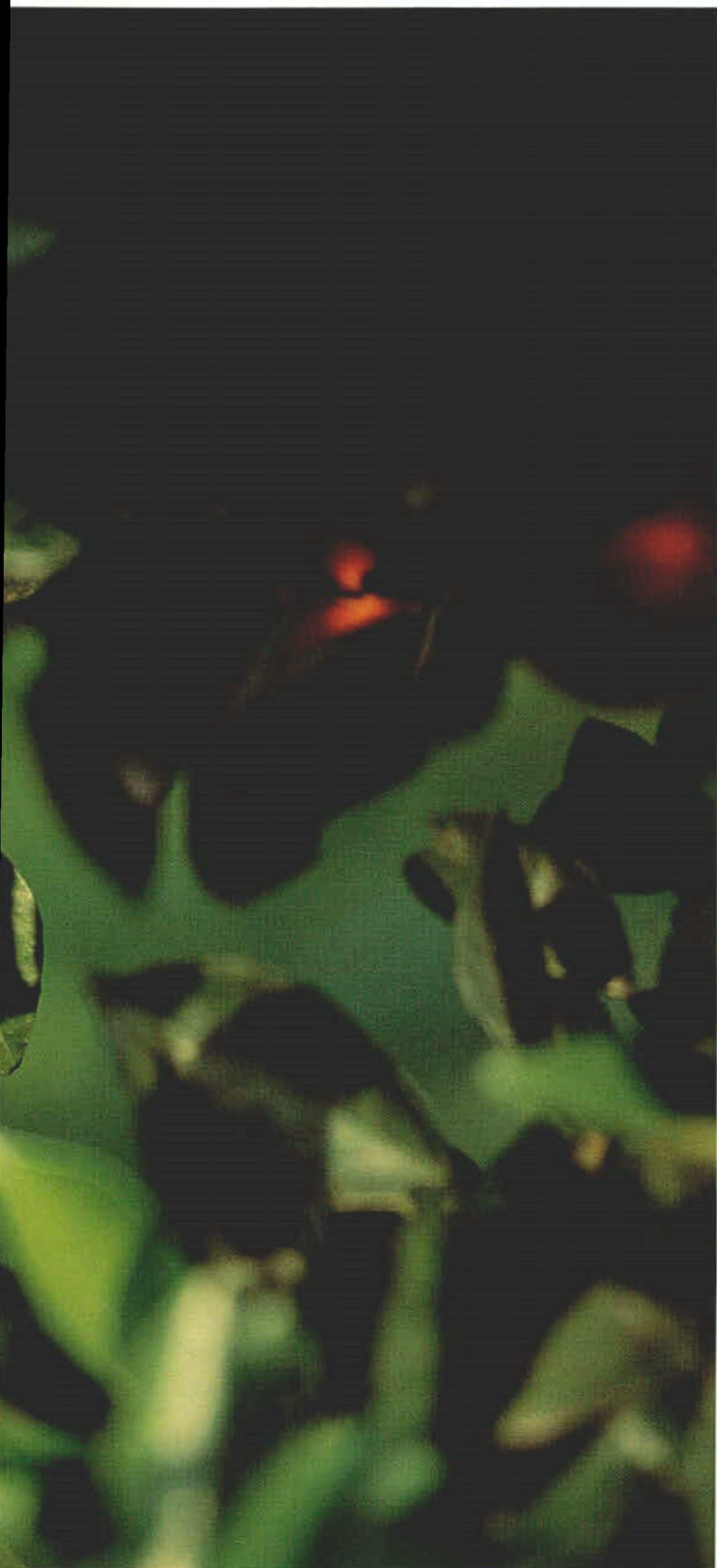
Many wine experts like to compare Vega Sicilia with a first growth Bordeaux, perhaps not surprising when it has several grape varieties in common which were brought over from France in the last century.

Now the wheel may turn again as the company looks not to buying vines from Bordeaux but of possibly investing in that or another of France's leading wine regions. "When we moved into Tokay, we saw it as an opportunity to expand," said Señor Alonso. "Vega Sicilia had never left its own region before, but the investment in Oremus has given us added experience."

Whatever the final decision may be, one thing is sure. "We will never be involved in mass production of wine," he said.

David Ing is a freelance journalist who reports on Spain for several leading international trade publications involved in the travel, food and beverage industries.





ONE GREAT ORANGE GARDEN

Photos: **Rafa Chirbes/Sobremesa**
Text: **Vicky Hayward**

The country by now was one great orange garden, wrote traveler and writer Rose Macaulay of the Valencian coastal plain in 1949. "In the orange season it must be delicious, with the golden fruit shining among the dark glossy leaves." The garden has grown since then, its groves creeping up coastal hillsides and running up inland river valleys. They keep a deceptively tranquil air, but behind that the orange-growing business quietly transforms itself. New varieties, improved cultivation methods and warehouse technology, plus shortened journey times from tree to consumer, are providing fresher oranges through a stretching season. Behind that are twin spurs for change: on the one hand, a competitive producers' market and, on the other, the scientific research closely linked to cultivation.



The great orange garden runs mainly from Tarragona to Alicante, with the groves concentrated in the heart of the region.



Planting today is geared towards stretching the season and an evenly balanced supply during those months.

By the time a Valencian priest planted Spain's first commercial grove in 1781, orange trees had been growing in Iberia for a thousand years. Under Muslim rule, they graced Al-Andalus' patios just as they do today in the courtyards of Cordoba's mosque and Seville's cathedral. These early varieties of bitter orange (*Citrus Aurantium L*) were planted not so much for their fruit trees but their fragrance and suggestive beauty. "Are they embers showing their glowing colors on the branches, or cheeks glimpsed through green curtains of covered litters?" asked the Arab poet, Ben Sara de Santarem, in his poem *The Orange Tree*.

But the trees were not purely ornamental: the zest was pounded into a digestive paste eaten in pellets at mealtimes, the blossom was used for making orange-flower water and the bark chewed as a sweetener for the breath. Such uses, as much medicinal as culinary, were handed down and kept after the Reconquest. One 1611 tract entitled *Spanish medicine contained in vulgar proverbs...* recommended bitter orange juice "to hold back the heat of anger and mitigate the thirst." Today, too, an old Andalusian saying runs, "Bitter orange before breakfast; good health."

From Bitter To Sweet

Given the tree's natural tendency to mutate, bitter or-

anges soon threw up less acidic strains. Agricultural writer Alonso de Herrera hinted at this when he advised burying sheep's horns close to orange trees to transform bitter fruit to sweet (1513). However, these less tart oranges could not compete with the fully sweet varieties (*Citrus sinensis*) brought from the east by the Portuguese in the 1520-1530s. Called China oranges, they were soon growing right around the Mediterranean.

It can be no coincidence that among Spain's cookbook writers, monks first made good use of oranges. Juan Altimiras, a Franciscan, used the juice in fish dishes in his *Nuevo Arte de Cocina* (1745) while *El Cocinero Religioso* (penned in the late 17th or early 18th century) gave recipes for crystallized rind, orange marzipan and batter-dipped fried fruit. Certainly, the orange tree graced monastery patios before it was widely grown: the Venetian ambassador to Charles V's court wrote admiringly of those growing in Seville's San Jerónimo monastery and an early 17th-century French traveller, Bartolomé Joly, commented on the oranges served on the table, with the salt, at every meal in the great Cistercian monastery of Poblet in Catalonia. This is how they appear, glowing incandescently on dark tabletops, in Francisco de Zurbarán's shadowy still lifes painted at that time. As Seville's leading religious painter, he would have been well aware of their use - and that of orange blossoms - by

other artists as symbols of the Virgin Mary's purity.

Meanwhile, the old bitter oranges did survive. One such tree, grown in a pot by Eleanor of Castile, was acquired by the Duke of Bourbon in 1523 and found its way to Fontainebleau where the famous orangery grew up around it. When royal pastry cook Juan de la Mata dedicated a chapter to oranges in his 18th century *Arte de la Repostería*, he gave recipes for "sweet, bitter and bittersweet" oranges. Today, most famously they flourish in the streets of Andalusian cities but they also grow and fruit in the Caribbean, where Columbus planted the first tree in 1493. And the legacy is not just ornamental: tangy breakfast marmalade and Caribbean curaçao liqueur were both inspired by bitter oranges' aromatic tanginess. Less well known but equally important, the trees also provided the rootstock onto which sweet varieties could be grafted.

The Orange Groves Today

Initially grown randomly along roadsides and in kitchen gardens, the newly arrived sweet oranges soon threw up spontaneous improved strains. Comuna remained the most popular variety, but others such as Salustiana - still grown commercially today - also established themselves. Once commercial groves were planted in Valencia and Castellón in the 18th century, agricultural tech-

niques also began to improve. The Museo de la Naranja - or Orange Museum - in Burriana just south of Castellón keeps examples of carved wooden tools designed by farmers for weeding, shaking the trees or picking. In the 19th century came the key switch from planting by seed to grafting shoots onto citron, lemon, or bitter orange rootstock. In this way, seedlings could bear fruit or their variety could be switched within four to five years.

By the end of the 19th century, when a lucrative export market was established, the great orange garden on the coastal plain north and south of Valencia began its steady growth. From an area of just 2,765 hectares (6,832 acres) in 1873 it grew to 80,000 hectares (197,680 acres) by the time Rose Macaulay saw it in the 1940s and 135,000 hectares (333,585 acres) in 1989. Today it runs mainly from Tarragona to Alicante, with the groves concentrated in the heart of the region but also spilling over south into Murcia and back from the coast onto slopes and river valleys. Land requirements for planting are simple: irrigation, drainage and a covering of stony soil mixed with lime and fertilizer. But the climate sets natural limits too. While the best flavored fruit comes from the risky fringes of the growing area, the trees cannot survive away from the Mediterranean's frost-free climate. Curiously, though, the character of Spanish growing is

The character of growing is set by a pattern of small-scale groves that has endured since the 18th century.

set not by this expansion but by a pattern of small-scale groves that has endured since the 18th century. A few big exporters keep groves in order to guarantee supply and experiment with new techniques and varieties, but most oranges still come from family-owned parcels, 80% of which are less than three hectares (7.4 acres) and 50% under one hectare (2.4 acres) in size. Unusual in the era of big agribusiness, this smallholding structure has been a lynchpin of Spanish growers' success since the flexibility and competition of such a spread market has produced a rare agility and responsiveness to changing market demands.

Switching Varieties, Stretching The Season

Nowhere is that agility more evident than in the replanting of new varieties. Many groves apparently unchanged to the casual observer's eye have switched variety through grafting or replanting over half a dozen times in the last fifty years.

The most important 20th-century variety was the Washington Navel, the first seedless orange with juicy sweet flesh, which originated spontaneously in Bahía, Brazil, and arrived in Valencia in 1910. Its potential had already shown itself in the hands of Californian settlers and although it took time to take off commercially in Spain, the Navel family - with such varieties as

Navelina, Navelate and Lanelate - now makes up the majority of Spain's commercial crop of top-quality eating oranges. Even with today's continual trials with new varieties, they will remain the main types till well into the next century.

In the last twenty years, planting has been geared not towards productivity but towards stretching the season and balancing supply right through those months. That, in turn, has meant oranges fresh from the tree and shorter warehouse storage right through the growing months. Navelinas, widely planted in the 1970s and 1980s, allowed the orange season to open in September rather than November while Navelate and Valencia Late have extended its end from February to July. With both early and late seasons covered this way, it has been a mid-to-late season import from Australia called Navel Lane Late (42% of new plantations) which has made its mark in the 1990s although most trees do not yet bear fruit. Lower-risk late varieties are planted on new slopes away from the coastal plain while blood oranges and pre-Navel "white" varieties are fast disappearing.

The Future: Designer Oranges

Alongside this the old potluck ways with new varieties have been replaced by the scientific methods of the interdisciplinary Instituto Valenciano de Investigación Agrícola

(IVIA), where a team of some 50 people work on genetic and biotechnology programs, mechanization and cultivation techniques.

Varietal research, in particular, centers around a collection of over 400 virus-free citrus varieties that have become a point of reference for growers around the world. Some are wild trees, others were cultivated historically but are today disappearing, yet others are new. But all are valuable for their diverse genetic qualities. Specimens are kept in triplicate: growing in tubs in a vast greenhouse, planted out-of-doors in an open grove, and as deep-frozen cell samples.

This scientific orangery has proved invaluable as a source of disease-free stock for the nurseries which sell to growers, but it may prove to be of even greater importance in the future as a genetic bank for creating hybrids. Of some 700 obtained since 1982 through pollinization or laboratory shoot-tip generation, the first ones will soon be given commercial trials. In the long term the possibilities are even greater, not only of extending the season but also of oranges designed to be disease-tolerant, drought-resistant and rich in vitamins.

Growing And Picking

Growing and picking, on the other hand, remain remarkably traditional. When the groves are wrapped in clouds of fragrant blossom in early summer, the ex-

porters' buyers begin to travel around orange country to assess the coming crop and reserve it on the tree, either "by eye," with advance down-payments on a price per tree and all risks with the buyer, or "by weight," with an agreed price for weighed picked fruit, harvesting date and all risks with the grower.

Alongside this, growers and buyers will agree on care until the fruit is picked. Pesticides and other chemical treatments must end before they can leave residues in the harvested fruit and may be specified in advance by the importing client in accordance with national legislation. Currently, the tendency is towards reducing treatments of all kind. Fully organic production remains difficult because fields need to be isolated, but exporters are introducing their own criteria such as chemical residues one-third of those allowed in Europe. At the same time, IVIA is developing a new generation of natural treatments for fruit on the tree, which range from vitamins to waxes (pine or bee) to prevent damage to the fruit during final growing and picking.

When the fruit is ripe - starting in September with Navelina and Newhall - the exporters' teams of pickers are sent in. Such is the gentle handling required that, as yet, no successful means of mechanized picking has been found. The teams set to work once the dew has lifted, packing boxes of 20 kilos. With the first drop of

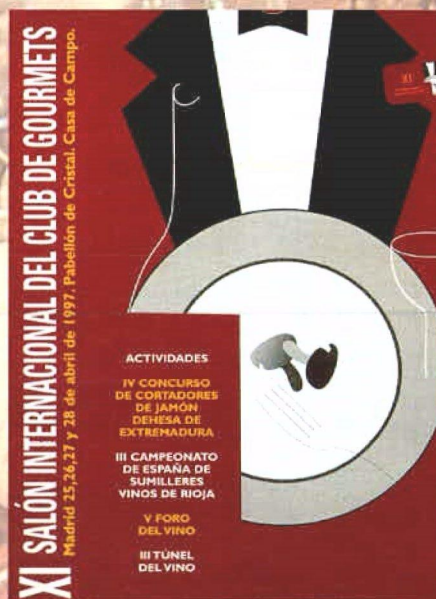
THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL GOURMET CLUB SHOW

Madrid, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th April 1997

What is the Gourmet Show?

It is the event where product manufactures, elite gastronomes, artisans and industrialists can meet the owners and chefs of the best restaurants, head buyers from hotel chains and large select food chains, special shops and experts which are lovers of a good table (members of wine clubs, readers of magazine for gastronomes and users of tourist and good food guides).

Access to the Show is only through invitation or as professional. Under no circumstances are those under 16 years of age admitted.



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The result of the tenth Show

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Exhibitors: 500.
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By the time Spain's first commercial grove was planted in 1781, oranges had been growing here for a thousand years.

rain, picking stops; fruit must never get wet to avoid rotting. Despite its well-protected appearance, it is a fragile fruit which needs to start its journey to the consumer in perfect condition.

In And Out Of The Warehouse

Once oranges reach the warehouse they go through an initial selection process for size and quality. At this stage, some good-quality fruit is set aside as rotating stock in chilled storage to outlast halts in picking. Early and late varieties grown without contrast between day and night temperatures may need degreening, as in the tropics: that is, the rind ripening from green to orange for 4-5 days. Fruit which fails to make the grade (around 10%) goes to industry, the majority of it these days to factories producing chilled, fresh squeezed orange juice.

Although warehouse cleaning and packing processes differ in detail, the processes are essentially the same. Grading by size and outward appearance - with blemished fruit weeded out - is followed by a thorough soapy washing, disinfecting, drying, polishing and waxing to stop the vitamin C and juice from evaporating. Many waxes also contain a harmless fungicide, such as diphenuyl, to prevent molds growing during journey time.

In the last five years all these processes have been mechanized, with computer control and photocellular screening of the fruit replacing costly, labor-intensive hand process-

es. Packing has also changed. The traditional wooden boxes with their richly colored Art Nouveau and Deco labels - now collectable items in themselves (see article on page 108) - have been replaced by recyclable cardboard, reusable plastic crates, shrink-wrapping or nets. Another key change has been precooling to 7-8°C (44-46°F) before the fruit is packed onto trucks to maintain it at that temperature until it reaches its destination.

Exports: Each To His Own Taste

More than any other Spanish crop, oranges have always been grown for sale to the rest of the world. By the early 18th century, fruit was being shipped from the Balearics to northern Europe - France, Germany, and the United Kingdom - while the growth of the orange garden from the late 19th century was a response to the lucrative markets opened up by steamboat. By that time, 90% of oranges were eaten abroad. Spaniards finally learned to enjoy them during the Civil War, when exports were bottled up, but today some 60% of the crop still goes abroad. Equally, with exporters pivotal to the business for over two hundred years, attitudes are framed by those of the outside world.

Of today's exports - an estimated 1,100,000 t for 1995-6, for example - some 90% go to the EU and 10% to other countries. Germany, France, Holland, and then the United Kingdom, Poland, Benelux

countries, Italy, and Czech Republic are the leading importers, in that order. The main feature of the 1990s has been rising exports to eastern Europe, currently reliant on subsidies but likely to grow in the future. Markets elsewhere in the world are also expanding. Oranges go as far afield as Singapore and Australia, while Japan is currently studying imports by ship.

Meanwhile, the system itself has become highly sophisticated. As in the growing side of the business, there is an old-fashioned fragmentation: there are 600 exporters, 50 of whom control half the market and some 27% of which are cooperatives. Today, though, the emphasis is on coordination. A growers' association represents the sector's interests in Brussels, as well as Valencia, while government-run S.O.I.V.R.E. implements independently-controlled quality tests on exported oranges. It provides a certified chemical analysis of oranges, tested through an extract from the crushed whole fruit, which gives readings of all chemicals present, as well as over-ripened flesh. The latest initiative to ease the sector into the next century has been the Mercado de Futuros de Cítricos, the world's first ever perishable fruit futures market, which opened in Valencia in 1995. It quotes prices for the main orange varieties in season, just as other commodities exchanges quote on gold or oil, helping the flow of capital and transparency of prices.

Another feature of the inter-

national market has been the growing importance of direct supermarket sales and steady standardization of national tastes. Even so, each market keeps its own tastes. The U.K. puts the emphasis on standardized outward appearance; Germany likes large oranges with high juice content; the United States is concerned with the specifics of chemical treatments; Belgium and France have taken to selling oranges with their leaves on as proof of freshness.

But one thing distinguishes these Spanish oranges from those grown elsewhere. Nearly all are luscious fruit for eating rather than juice-making. Of course there are countless ways for cooks to improvise with them in green leaf or fruit salads, sorbets or ice creams, soufflés and mousses, jams and cakes. But is it possible to improve on eating an orange in the simplest and most sensual way? Segment by segment, with the zesty aroma of the peeled rind caught on your fingers as you bite into the sweet, tangy juiciness of the flesh.

Vicky Hayward is a freelance journalist, writer and book editor living in Madrid whose feature articles - about food, arts & culture, and society - and travel guides are published internationally.

A list of Spanish orange producers is available as a brochure and on diskette. For more information see page 25.



LA VERA

AWAY FROM IT ALL

Text: **Sonia Ortega**

Photos: **Juan Ramon Yuste/ICEX**

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**



Four and a half centuries ago, the most powerful man on Earth chose to withdraw from worldly concerns to a secluded part of Spain where, it was reported, one could live a quiet life. The man in question was Emperor Charles V and the place Yuste, a little monastery in the heart of La Vera, an area known for its abundance of water, benign climate and the lush vegetation these produce. The attractions of La Vera are still much the same today: multiple shades of green provide the setting for a collection of charming villages whose distinctive popular architecture and traditions have survived the centuries, and for the area's "capital," the stately town of Plasencia.



It always amazes me as I travel around Spain just how dramatic differences of landscape and character between one area and another can be, even areas that border one with another, and even within the same region. This impression was reinforced this summer when, in mid-July, I set off to explore La Vera. By that

time of year, Spain has taken on a distinctly golden color which lasts until autumn. Only in the northern strip and certain other isolated parts of the country does green feature in the mid-summer landscape. La Vera, in the north of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, (western Spain) is one of these green

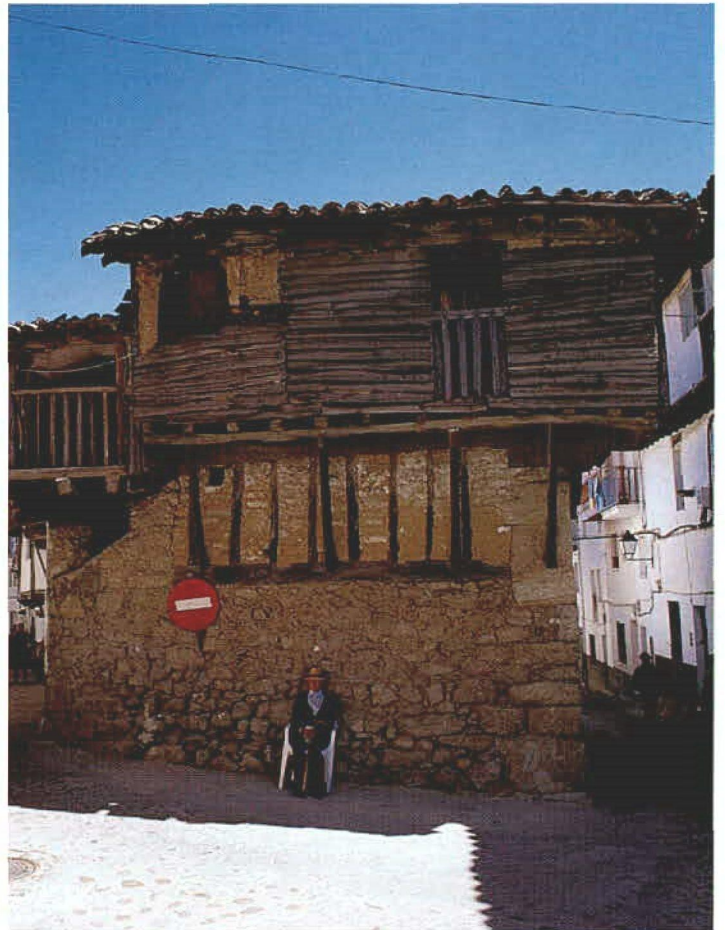
exceptions. The nearby Valle del Jerte, is another, though, proving the point about diversity between adjacent areas. It is quite different. In the Jerte Valley, cherries thrive (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 19), and their domain spreads from the hilltops down to the very banks of the river that gives the valley its name.

The villages there, quiet and pleasant, though not outstandingly attractive, adhere to the banks of the river which, channelled between two mountain ranges, wends its way to Plasencia, the local big town. On the far side of these mountain ranges, the Sierra de Tormantos, lies La Vera. Here, cherry trees are replaced by



chestnut and olive, orange and lemon, oak and fig, cypress and mulberry... La Vera's villages stand not at the riverside, this valley's river is the Tiétar - but several kilometers uphill, leaving between them and the water a fertile strip now used for irrigated crops such as peppers, for the manufacture of *pimentón* (Spanish paprika),

tobacco, and flourishing fruit and vegetable gardens, skirting villages with a very particular character of their own and, in many cases, a fascinating history. These villages have beautiful sonorous names, and most of them share a common suffix: Jaraíz de la Vera, Jarandilla de la Vera, Villanueva de la Vera, Madrigal



With some exceptions, such as the monastery in Yuste, La Vera is not an area of imposing buildings but rather of harmonic combinations of village and landscape, and the stone and wood that characterizes its traditional domestic architecture.

Its old houses are stone-built up to half-height, the remainder is built out of adobe (mud and straw) bricks around a framework of wooden beams which are left exposed.



Cuacos is quiet and restful. The first plaza one comes to on entering Cuacos is dedicated to Juan de Austria, and the restored house in which "Jeromín" lived stands beside it.



de la Vera... their names burble along as merrily as the runnels of fresh water that course along the center of many of their streets, showing just how much of it they have and performing an effective cooling function in summer. Water, such a rare commodity in other parts of Spain, is part of this area's natural heritage, and it

plays an important role in its life and landscape. Cold and clear, it gushes down from the snowy peaks of the Sierra de Gredos, blue-tinged in summer, to join the slower-moving waters of the Tiétar. The channels it has carved for itself are known locally as *gargantas*, or gorges, though they are not necessarily as narrow or steep-

sided as their name would suggest. Their impact on the landscape is dramatic and beautiful: because of the force with which the mountain streams rush downwards, their beds and banks are lined with boulders, some of them huge, among which the river forms little waterfalls and pools, sometimes creating natural swim-

ming pools which in summer are a big attraction for locals and summer visitors, despite the chilliness of the water. Water is also much in evidence in the fountains which provide the centerpiece of most local village *plazas*. The most typical model, found throughout Extremadura, has a stone basin with, at its center, a



column supporting a stone ball from which jets of water flow. Stone and wood, used in skillful combination, provide the basis of the traditional architecture which is one of La Vera's principal attractions. While not particularly monumental in the sense of not having many large imposing buildings, La Vera is lucky

enough to have architectural treasures in the form of entire villages. Visitors to, for example, Villanueva, Valverde, Cuacos and Garganta la Olla find their original layout intact, their narrow streets and houses dating back hundreds of years. And these are not carefully preserved "museum villages" which stop breathing

Villanueva and Valverde de la Vera are the best examples of the traditional architecture. Both were given "Village of Historical and Artistic Interest" status early enough to save their traditional houses from being replaced by new buildings.



once the last tourist is back on the bus. So far at least, real life is still lived here: as you roam the streets, you hear and smell lunch being cooked; the posters in the plaza advertise events that make up the program of the forthcoming fiestas in honor of the local patron saint; on warm summer nights, people bring chairs out into the

street and sit outside their houses chatting animatedly with their neighbors instead of watching the omnipresent TV. It's not all bucolic charm, though, and in some of these villages, "For Sale" signs hang on many ancient house fronts. If nobody buys them, many of these houses will end up either falling into disrepair or being patched

up just enough to keep them standing, doomed to a half-life as part of a museum village, particularly if the younger generation tends towards buying modern houses. For, as so often happens, the villages that have prospered most in modern times are now the poorest in terms of cultural heritage. Such are the swings and roundabouts

of progress. Mercifully for the moment, though, La Vera is relatively unscathed.

Getting There

Heading for La Vera from Madrid, there are several routes to choose from. The most straightforward takes barely two hours, traveling



through Toledo Province as far as the town of Oropesa, whose imposing castle is now a fine Parador de Turismo (see box). A road from there takes you straight to Madrigal de la Vera. Another road, leading to the same destination, runs parallel to the foothills of the Sierra de Gredos, the mountain range which serves as a protective

shield for La Vera and whose melting snows provide its life force. This route is rather hillier than the first, but it is also more scenic. More difficult, but even more rewarding, is the route across the mountains that separate the Valle del Jerte from La Vera. From the mountain pass known as El Puerto del Piornal, there is a



Sierra de Gredos, the mountain range which serves as a protective shield for La Vera and whose melting snows provide its life force.

Garganta la Olla is one of this area's most engaging villages, not just for its houses and streets but also for its setting among picturesque *gargantas*, woodland and fertile fruit and vegetable plots.

A mixture of the sacred and folkloric characterizes the fiestas and traditions which live on in La Vera. Some of the traditions are unique and are a must for anyone interested in popular culture, since they survive here in authentic form.

marvellous view over almost the whole of La Vera, dotted with villages, that makes the extra effort well worthwhile. Most of La Vera's villages lie immediately beside the road that winds through it, though some, such as Garganta la Olla and Guijo de Santa Bárbara, seem to be suspended from the hill-sides. All of them share the common characteristics of steep streets and stepped alleyways - an approach to planning which is a frequent feature of villages in a country as mountainous as Spain. Traveling from east to west, and heading eventually for the medieval town of Plasencia, you come upon the twenty or so villages that make up this area. They all have their attractions but, unless you are making an in-depth study of La Vera, selectivity has to come into play. My personal favorites (listed in east to west order) include Villanueva de la Vera, Valverde de la Vera, Jarandilla, Cuacos, Yuste with its nearby monastery, and Garganta la Olla.

Local Architecture

With some exceptions, such as the castle in Jarandilla, the monastery in Yuste and several churches, La Vera is not an area of imposing buildings but rather of harmonic combinations of village and landscape, of shades of green, species of trees, and the stone and wood that characterizes its traditional domestic architecture. Its sturdy old houses are stone-built up to half-height, the remainder is built out of adobe (mud and straw) bricks around a framework of wooden beams

which are left exposed, in the manner of the *colombage* houses of Normandy. The upper story usually juts out above the rest of the façade and has a balcony supported by large beams, often beautifully carved, as are the balustrades. In these narrow streets, balconies and overhangs on either side of the streets almost meet in the middle, close enough for their plants and flowers to intertwine.

Villanueva and Valverde de la Vera are the best examples of this type of traditional architecture. Both were given "Village of Historical and Artistic Interest" status early enough to save their traditional houses from being replaced by new buildings. I wandered about their streets on a quiet, hot afternoon (tempered by runnels of cool water set into them) savoring that sensation of time having stood still that we city-dwellers find so seductive and experience less and less often these days.

Valverde's eccentric maze of streets and roofs is crowned by the ruins of the 15th century castle of Nuño Pérez de Monroy and a 16th century church, charmingly named for *Nuestra Señora de Fuentes Claras* (Our Lady of Clear Springs), which contains the alabaster tombs of the first Condes de Nieva. Just as you enter Valverde, you come upon a pillory with Gothic decorative detail. The pillory, known in Spanish as the *picota* or *rollo*, is a column at which condemned criminals were exhibited for public ridicule, and it was also a symbol of the fact that a village had attained the status of "villa" in its own right and was entitled to administer justice, in-

cluding the ultimate sanction, independently of other townships. Castle, pillory, counts... these relics suggest a past when Valverde de la Vera enjoyed mightier status than one might imagine today, with its barely 800 inhabitants and quiet plaza. Valverde's plaza, like nearly all the village squares of La Vera, is arcaded and still provides the focal point of village life.

Villanueva de la Vera has neither pillory nor castle but it does have more inhabitants and more verve. This is my favorite in the traditional architectural stakes. Its maze of streets and covered alleyways seem the work of a designer unfamiliar with the concept of symmetry. Many of its houses are quite grand, their doorways topped by severe stone lintels in which the date of construction is carved, as if declaring proudly that they have withstood the passage of two hundred, sometimes nearly three hundred years. These lintel stones occur in other villages, too, but they are most common in Garganta la Olla where the date of construction is often accompanied by the name of the house's original owner, generally a tradesman. Overall Garganta la Olla is one of this area's most engaging villages, not just for its houses and streets but also for its setting among picturesque gargantas, woodland and fertile fruit and vegetable plots. There is an excellent view of it, presided over by the square tower of its church, from the road that leads up to the Monastery of Yuste, not far away. Generally confined to his apartments as he was, it seems unlikely that Charles V ever enjoyed this particular view, though he was careful to en-

sure that his retreat was surrounded by natural beauty.

In the Emperor's Footsteps

Emperor Charles V knew all about the benign climate and natural beauty of this part of Spain when he chose it as his retreat. Born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1500, King of Castile and all the constituent states of the Catholic Monarchy, including the American continent, Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation, worthy successor to his Spanish grandparents (Ferdinand and Isabella, the "Catholic Monarchs"), and father of the future Philip II, the vicissitudes he bore in the course of his action-packed life caused him frequently to consider the possibility of abdicating power.

By 1543, he had reached a decision, for an imperial commission was traveling through Spanish territories charged with finding the most suitable place for the monarch's retirement. Though Charles was only 43 years old at the time, his health was very poor. The suggestion that he should settle in La Vera came from the Extremaduran-born Marqués de Mirabel, leading figure in the Emperor's small court and thoroughly acquainted with Charles' tastes and physical condition. In 1554, while in the Low Countries preparing his abdication, Charles instructed his son, Philip II, to visit Yuste. He was to deliver to its Hieronymite monks the sum of 3,000 ducados and a letter expressing his desire to retire among them, along with a plan of the apartments he wanted built. The plan was apparently

Villages have beautiful sonorous names, and most of them share a common suffix: Jaraíz de la Vera, Jarandilla de la Vera, Villanueva de la Vera, Madrigal de la Vera... their names burble along as merrily as the runnels of fresh water.

based on the Ghent house in which he was born. Charles V finally abdicated in 1555 but could not yet move into his longed-for retreat since, for various reasons (including disagreement within the monastic community), building work was taking longer than anticipated. In early August 1556, though his apartments were still not ready, he set off from Brussels for Extremadura, where he was to arrive in mid-November. Chroniclers of the journey report that, in his impatience to reach La Vera, rather than taking the usual route via Plasencia, Charles opted to cross the Sierra de Gredos so as to arrive as quickly as possible at Jarandilla where he was to stay as the guest of the Conde de Oropesa in his imposing castle (see box). This part of the journey was a nightmare; in the absence of beaten tracks, his retinue had to create a way forward, and the Emperor traveled to Jarandilla neither by litter nor on horseback but on the shoulders of peasant bearers. Small wonder, then, that accounts of the journey relate how, on arriving at the summit Charles declared: "I shall never go through another pass in my life unless it be that which leads to death." After a couple of months in the castle, he at last set off for Yuste on 3 February, 1557. Visitors are invariably amazed at the simplicity and austerity of the ex-emperor's apartments. The *palacete* that the most important man on Earth had built onto the monastery is composed of four simple rooms ("A large cell for a monk; a small refuge for a Caesar," was the comment at the time) in

which he meant to lead a life dedicated to reading, study, religious meditation and to receiving visitors who traveled as far as Yuste to see him. Though small, the apartments were comfortable, albeit hung with copious black hangings recalling his grief for his dead wife, Isabella of Portugal. In fine weather, he strolled about the garden and fished for trout in the lake.

It was at Yuste that Charles got to know his illegitimate son, Juan de Austria. Born to a German noblewoman, the boy had been brought up in secret by Luis Méndez de Quijada, a colonel with over 30 years spent in the service of the Emperor, and his wife Magdalena de Ulloa. When Charles V moved to Yuste, so did "Jeromín" (the local nickname for Juan de Austria), and his adoptive family which set up home in Cuacos. Juan de Austria later became an important military leader, particularly after his part in the defeat of the Turks in the Battle of Lepanto.

Charles' plans for a peaceful retirement were marred early on by a serious deterioration of his health. Gout, exacerbated by consistent over-indulgence at table and, apparently, malaria, brought about his death in 1558. He savored the pleasures of La Vera for a mere year and a half. When he had become so ill that he could barely move, he would spend hours in the sun-filled room overlooking the lake, fishing from his armchair. This chair, specially built to accommodate his gouty leg, can be seen there today, as can the sedan chair in which he crossed Spain en route for Extremadura.

He spent the last days of his

life prostrated in bed. Profoundly religious and obsessively preoccupied with the idea of a "*buena muerte*" ("a good death"), Charles had his bed placed in a position from which he could follow the many masses which he ordered to be celebrated in the monastery's church, adjacent to his bedroom. His son Philip II later copied this arrangement at the Escorial. When he died, Charles was buried according to his wishes in a crypt beneath the altar, positioned so that his head lay beneath the feet of the priest as he celebrated mass as a symbol of humility. When Philip II ordered his father's remains to be transferred to the Escorial, the arrangement was replicated. The fact that I go into such detail about Yuste and its illustrious occupant reveals something of how evocative a visit there is: the knowledge that almost five centuries ago, when this area of glorious countryside and woodland was completely isolated, it was home to a personage of such stature, sets the imagination working. One cannot help picturing how things were then, or recognizing how cleverly the Emperor chose his place of retreat. It is significant that Fray Luis de León (1527-1591), one of Spain's finest Renaissance poets dedicated his poem *Vida retirada* (A Secluded Life) to the Emperor in his retirement in Yuste. Its first lines, very well known in Spain, declare: "*¡Qué descansada vida/la del que huye del mundanal ruido,/y sigue la escondida senda por donde han ido/los pocos sabios que en el mundo han sido!*" (What a restful life they lead, those who flee from worldly

noise and follow the hidden path trodden by the few wise men there have been in the world.") At Yuste, as well as the Emperor's *palacete*, there is also the monastery with two fine cloisters - one Gothic and the other Plateresque, an unpretentious church and impeccably kept gardens shaded by mighty trees.

The Court and the Military

Austere though Charles was in many respects, an emperor is an emperor, and he did not renounce all privileges. He arrived at Yuste accompanied by a retinue of about fifty people, made up of secretaries, gentlemen-in-waiting, doctors, cooks, barbers, washerwomen, tasters and other "indispensable" servants, most of them Flemish. The retinue was installed in the villages near the monastery. As if by natural segregation, the military settled in one village and the members of the small court entourage in another, the villages being Garganta la Olla and Cuacos, respectively. One imagines Garganta la Olla to have been the livelier of the two, it still is to this day. At least part of its animation would have emanated from the blue building which stands on the main street, its door-post adorned with a relief carving of a doll. This is *La casa de las muñecas* - The Dolls' House. The dolls were prostitutes permitted to exercise their profession by Royal Decree of Isabella, the Catholic Queen, on condition that they distinguish themselves from other women by wearing gray-colored hems on their un-



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Emperor Charles V knew all about the benign climate and natural beauty of this part of Spain when he chose it as his retreat. In 1554, while in the Low Countries preparing his abdication, Charles instructed his son, Philip II, to visit Yuste.

derskirts. The system continued to function during the reign of Charles V, being considered necessary for the soldiers in time of war. The still current expression "*ir de picos pardos*" (To go "grey-hemming"), meaning to go on the razzle, derives from this. This house, the only one with a doll relief, and another three in Garganta, are still painted an unmistakable aniline blue. In the interests of historical authenticity, their present-day inhabitants have opted to retain their houses' original look.

As I strolled around Garganta la Olla on a Sunday morning, there was a lot going on. Had I arrived a few days earlier, I could have witnessed the *Danzas de las italianas* (Dances of the Italian Women) on the 1st and 2nd of July. The girls who take part in the dance wear costumes of Cretan origin, and the rite itself derives from a tribute to Ceres, Roman goddess of agriculture. Now we know why this area is so fertile.

That same morning, Cuacos was quiet and restful. The first plaza one comes to on entering Cuacos is dedicated to Juan de Austria, and the restored (indeed over-restored), house in which "Jeromín" lived stands beside it. The picturesque Plaza Mayor, further into the village, is flanked by broad arcades and the streets leading into it contain beautiful examples of La Vera architecture.

The road to Plasencia passes through Jaraíz, which is worth stopping to explore. The park at the entrance to this industrious town contains its pillory, and also provides a marvellous balcony from which to look out over La Vera. The old tobac-

co drying towers which dot the landscape are something of a blot. These vented red brick buildings are now in disuse, the variety of tobacco grown nowadays being dried by heaters rather than naturally, as in the old days. The tobacco question is a vexed one hereabouts, for sooner or later, La Vera will have to opt for alternative crops. More olives, figs, or asparagus? More peppers for *pimentón*? Jaraíz is the center for most of the *pimentón* manufacturers' cooperatives (see box) and is the main focus of the area's economic activity and population. Seen from the road, it does not look particularly interesting, but its old quarter still has charming streets and picturesque sights, in addition to the 15th century church of Santa María. On the outskirts of town is an enormous natural swimming pool, la garganta de Pedro Chate - surrounded by greenery and very popular with the locals, as are all the gargantas within easy reach of villages. But if you prefer privacy you can be sure of finding a good place to bathe by just following the course of the garganta.

Pleasures of Plasencia

As we leave La Vera behind us, the landscape changes again. In a matter of kilometers, the verdant, wooded landscape gives way to a more monotonous, and predominantly golden one. Even the town of Plasencia is built of golden-colored stone. Founded around the 12th century by Alfonso VIII, at a time when much of the Iberian Peninsula was occupied by the Moorish in-

vaders, Plasencia was enclosed by defensive walls, considerable stretches of which still stand, as do several of their gateways. Living up to the king's motto for it - "*Ut placet deo et hominibus*" (Pleasing to both God and man) - the city developed quickly into one of the most important bastions of western Spain. Today, Plasencia is a combination of the noble heritage of its religious and civic buildings and bustling street life. Except, that is, at siesta time in summer, which is still a respected institution here. Plasencia is the capital of its surrounding area, for much of whose economic activity it serves as the conduit. If you time your visit here for a Tuesday, you will witness the famous market which has been held in the Plaza Mayor since the 12th century and which reaches a high-point on the first Tuesday in August, the date of a fiesta known as *Martes Mayor*, when the plaza is transformed into a medieval marketplace. With or without the market, the plaza and surrounding streets, full of bars and eating places of one sort or another, are the focus of activity in this lively town. You notice the contrast when you move into its quieter old quarters. Medieval alleyways lead through arches, among noble escutcheons, elegant façades and plazas, passing stately homes such as the Casa de los Monroy, interesting architectural detail such as the corner balconies of the Casa del Deán, convents such as San Vicente, and mansions such as the Renaissance Palacio de los Marqueses de Mirabel, (descendants of the Marqués who first recom-

mended La Vera as a suitable retreat to Charles V) with its two lovely patios and a fascinating hunting museum. All these are dominated by the cathedral, which is actually composed of one cathedral superimposed on another: the Catedral Antigua, built in a transitional style between Romanesque and Gothic, and the 16th century Catedral Nueva, with its Gothic interior and Plateresque façade, on which the leading architects of the century worked. Overall, it exemplifies the best of the styles it incorporates: fine façades and vaults, a lovely cloister and, best of all, the choir stalls carved in walnut by master craftsman Rodrigo Alemán, which, in their mixture of sacred and profane scenes, juxtapose mythological, satirical, fantastic, and folklore images which were once deemed pornographic and cost their creator a spell in prison.

Traditions and Fiestas

This same mixture of the sacred and folkloric characterizes the fiestas and traditions which live on in La Vera. Some of the traditions are unique and are a must for anyone interested in popular culture, since they survive here in authentic form. They include controversial displays, emblematic of a certain facet of deepest Spain, such as the *empalaos* procession of Valverde and the Pero-Palo fiesta of Villanueva, both as ancient as they are distinctive, and literally unforgettable once experienced. The *empalaos* are a survival of the most violent expressions of penitence during Holy Week. These

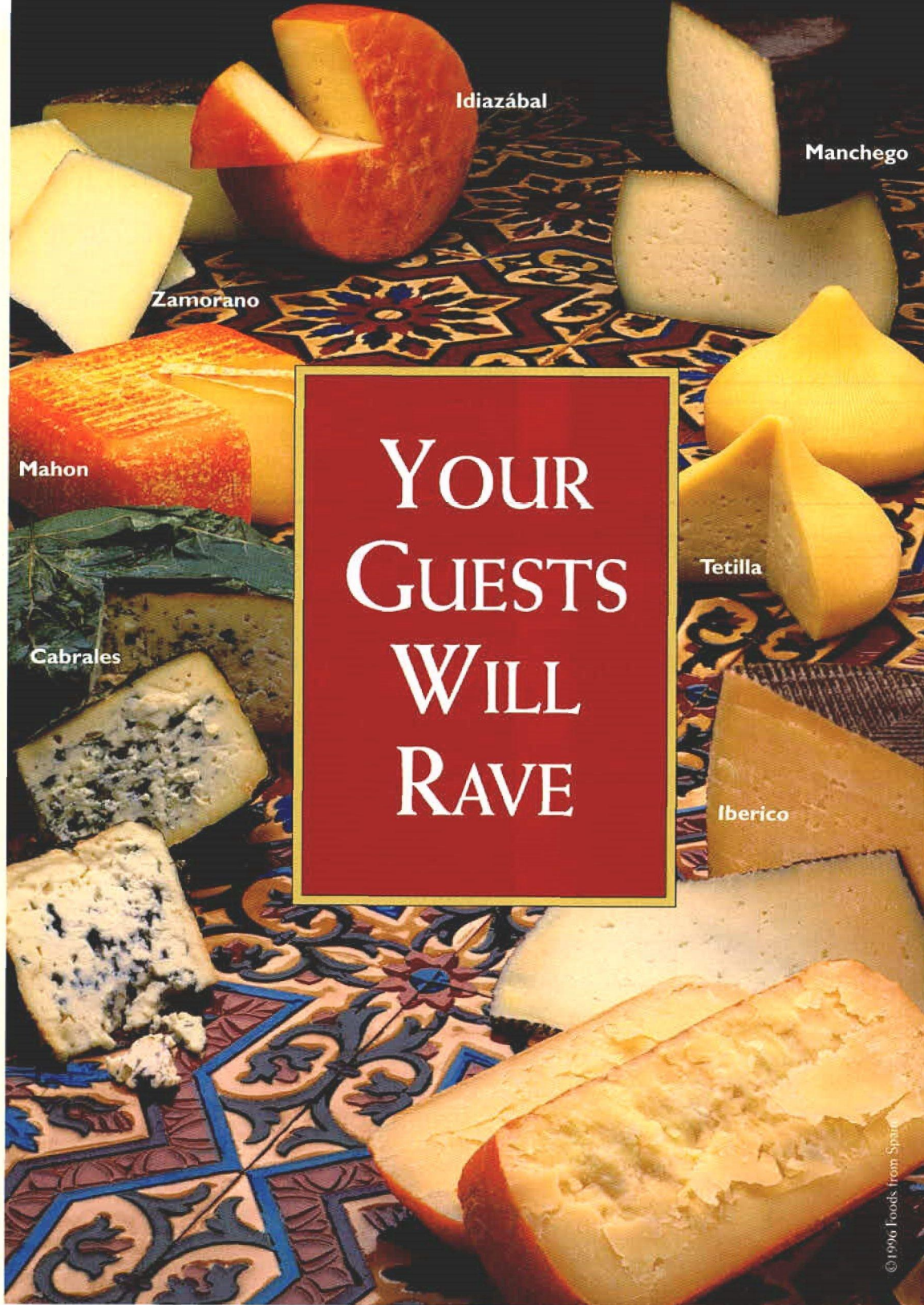
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have died out in many other parts of Spain, in part because of enlightened legislation during the 18th century and in part because of more recent social change. Here, however, throughout the night before Good Friday, the streets of Valverde are walked till dawn by a procession of spectral figures - the empalaos - to the accompaniment of murmured prayers. The hooded empalaos have their extended arms lashed to wooden beams which they carry across their shoulders, and their naked upper bodies are tightly bound with ropes to recall the sufferings of Christ.

Villanueva's Pero-Palo festival, medieval in origin, is a livelier affair. The Pero-Palo is a life-size straw figure

dressed as a bandit, which is paraded through the village streets between Sunday and Shrove Tuesday at carnival time, followed by a jostling crowd of adults and children who dance to the beat of a drum and chant rhymes about the impending fate of the Pero-Palo. The figure is finally tossed in a blanket until he falls apart and is eventually burnt, to the delight of some and mock-wailing of others. The end of the fiesta is accompanied by good wine and sweets, provided by the festival's so-called "captain," to anyone who cares to join them. Food and drink are always an integral part of Spain's fiestas just as, for me, sampling local cuisine (not necessarily festive) is an integral part of exploring. The clas-

sics of this area's gastronomy is kid cooked either as a *caldereta* (casseroled with garlic, wine, and pimentón), or as a *frite* (cut up and fried with garlic and green pepper). Extremadura has been sheep-herding territory for many centuries, and the quintessential dish of shepherd cuisine, *migas*, occurs throughout the region. The word miga means simply "crumbs," and the dish is, indeed, basically fried bread-crumbs in combination with garlic, pimentón, salt pork and anything else you might care to add: sardines, peppers, charcuterie... even grapes. Readers will have realized that La Vera doesn't grow its peppers for nothing. Vegetarians can eat well here, too: there is good tomato soups and a range of

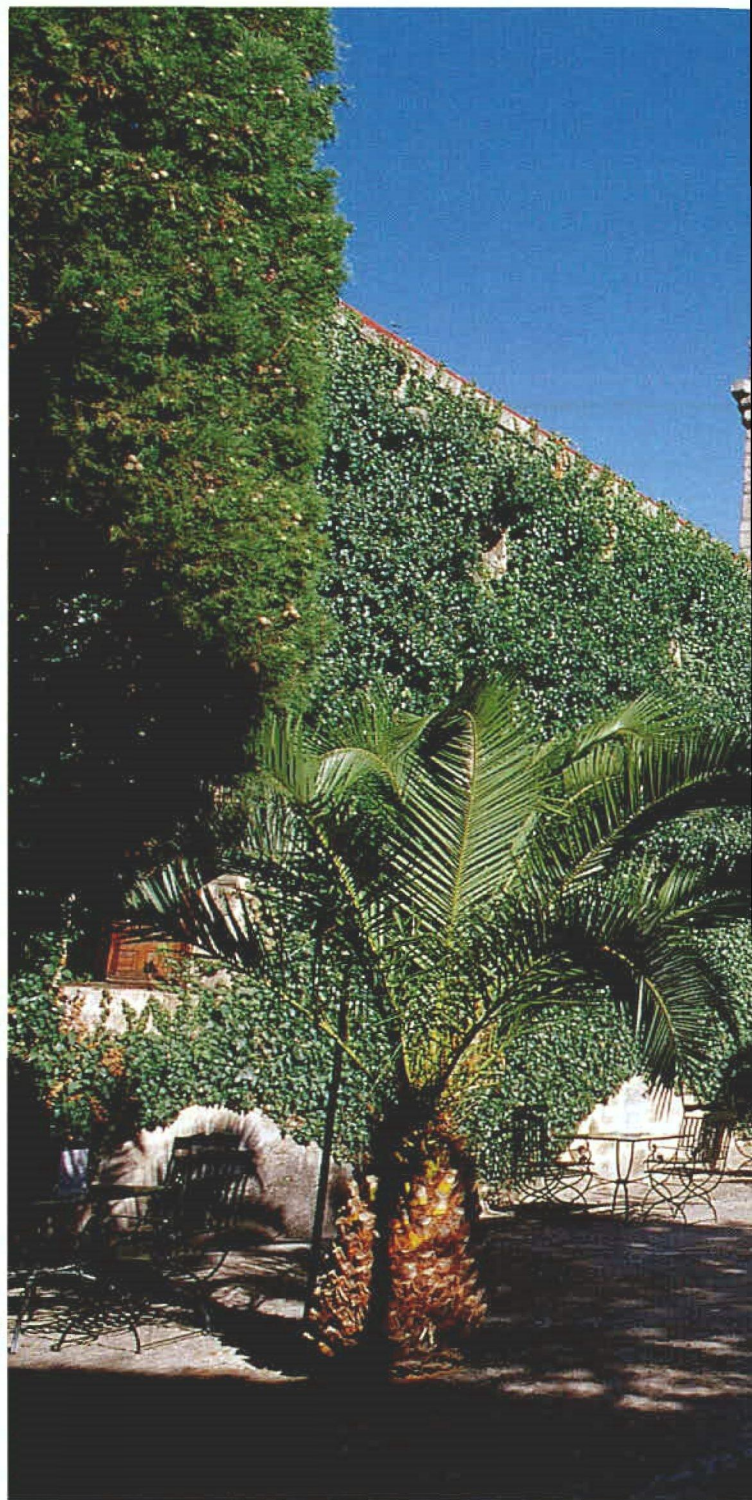
revuelto dishes - eggs scrambled with local produce harvested from the wild, such as sprue asparagus, cardoon, or pale local truffles. The area's icy rivers give tench and trout, which are served fried or in stews, and local fruits provide the dessert. This is timeless food, as simple, classic and enduring as the overall appeal of this lovely part of Spain.

Sonia Ortega is a journalist and has been Coordinator of this magazine since it was launched in 1986.

See recipes on page 106.

LA VERA AND SURROUNDINGS





JARANDILLA DE LA VERA AND ITS PARADOR

Situated in the geographical center of La Vera and in beautiful surroundings, Jarandilla is dominated by its castle, now converted into a magnificent Parador.

Built in the late 14th century by the Conde de Oropesa (who also owned the castle in the town of Oropesa), this castle provided temporary lodgings for Emperor Charles V while work was being finished on his apartments at Yuste. Had accommo-

modation at the castle been then as it is now since its recent rehabilitation, he might well have simply stayed on here. The imposing effect of its architecture, with its mighty turrets and towers, is softened by the approach adopted by Marta Medina, one of Spain's leading interior decorators, who has capitalized on its best existing features to create a new look throughout the whole Parador by means of clever use of color, fabric, and



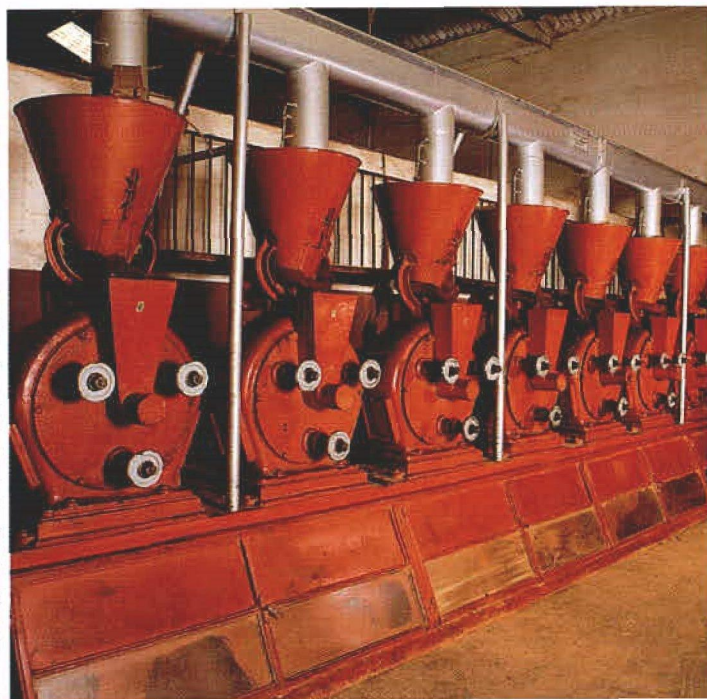
lighting. Features such as the splendid Patio de Armas courtyard, with its series of Gothic carved stone balconies and the delicious juxtaposition of green ivy against ancient walls needed little aesthetic help. Palms, ficus, and hydrangeas grow there - evidence of a mild climate - suggesting the delights of sitting out on summer nights with the fountain providing a background murmur. This part of the Parador is a fa-

vorite with its young manager, Susana de la Rubia. Though a relative newcomer in this particular post, she declares herself completely seduced by both the Parador and La Vera. She likes to ensure that, as well as enjoying everything the Parador itself has to offer - traditional cuisine prepared by chef Paco Muñoz, and, in summer, the pleasures of a gorgeous swimming pool set among olive and orange trees,

and rosemary bushes are just some examples - guests are informed about and encouraged to explore their wider surroundings, whether on foot, on horseback or by canoe, helped by local adventure tourism companies. Although the Parador is open all year round, Susana de la Rubia recommends autumn and, especially, spring, as the best times to enjoy La Vera at its best. If you do opt for winter, though,

you get the opportunity to watch the Jarramplás, a traditional event when bonfires are lit and the straw brooms that are made for this occasion are charred in the flames. Then the assistants slap each other with the brooms leaving ash marks.

Parador Carlos V
Av. García Prieto, 1
Jarandilla (Cáceres)
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PHOTOS: REGULATORY COUNCIL OF THE D.C. PIMENTÓN DE LA VERA/ICEX



PIMENTÓN: A TASTE OF LA VERA

Every October, the air of La Vera takes on its own special smell - the aroma of peppers drying in oak or holm-oak smoke in preparation for making Spanish paprika or *pimentón*. This process is peculiar to this area and gives the final

product particular characteristics which have earned it a Denominación de Calidad. On his return in 1493, Christopher Columbus made a presentation of gifts to the Catholic Monarchs at the Monastery of Guadalupe in Extremadura.

They included exotic fruits from the New World, and among them was the capsicum, or bell pepper. The monastery's Hieronymite monks were entrusted with the proliferation of pepper cultivation among their monasteries, and thus it was that the pepper reached the Monastery of Yuste and, by extension, La Vera, where it found an ideal habitat. However, it was not until the mid-19th century that the farmers of La Vera began growing peppers for the purpose of

manufacturing pimentón, dehydrating the fruits in wood-fueled driers and grinding them in the flour mills that stood along the area's riversides. Little has changed since those times. Pimentón is obtained from the species *Capsicum annum* and the sub-species *Cerasiforme* and *Longum*, which give three types of pimentón: sweet, bittersweet, and hot. The plant's biological cycle begins in March and ends in early October when the fruit is hand-harvested, only com-

Thanks to the oak or holm-oak burned to provide the heat and smoke that will dry the peppers, La Vera *pimentón* acquires its characteristic aroma, taste and color stability.



pletely ripe fruit being selected. Next, the peppers undergo the drying process traditional to La Vera: oak or holm-oak is burned to provide the heat and smoke that will dry them completely. This is a slow process, lasting ten to fifteen days, during which time the farmers turn the peppers daily. Though labor-intensive, this method pays off since La Vera *pimentón* acquires characteristic aroma, taste, and color stability which differentiates it from *pimentón* produced in other areas from

peppers dried either in the sun or, particularly, blow-dried. Once dry, the peppers are transported to the manufacturing plants where they are sorted by quality and variety, and destalked. They are then ground - seven times in all - in traditional stone mills until reduced to a very fine red powder which is then given one final grinding in a large mill. This system ensures that the temperature is kept low so that the *pimentón* loses none of the smoky aroma characteristic of

the La Vera product. The special bouquet of La Vera *pimentón* and the care that goes into its cultivation and manufacture (all monitored by the Regulatory Council of the Denominación de Calidad) make it something of a deluxe product, and it is highly regarded by cooks and, especially, by the charcuterie industry, which buys 85% of La Vera's *pimentón* output - the color stability is what makes it such a good product for charcuterie. Jesús María Hernández, manager of

one of the area's biggest cooperatives explains: "The slow drying process we use produces enzymes which raise the resistance to oxidation. That is why a *chorizo* made with this *pimentón* will keep its natural color much longer." Flavor, color, aroma... these are qualities that interest any gourmet, and in La Vera *pimentón*, they occur naturally, without any additives at all.

See list of Main Exporters on page 19.



In the last five years the sector has seen heavy investment in new production plants...



SWEETS KEEP EVERYONE SWEET, JOKED ONE EXPORTER, TO EXPLAIN WHY SPAIN'S MASS-PRODUCED CAKE AND PASTRY PRODUCTS ARE DOING SO WELL ABROAD. IT'S A NEAT SAYING, BUT ONE THAT ONLY APPLIES IF THE SWEETS ARE GOOD ONES. SPAIN'S MODERN BAKERY PRODUCTS INDUSTRY, WHICH HAS ITS ROOTS IN LONG-ESTABLISHED TRADITIONAL FAMILY BUSINESSES, HAS RESPONDED DYNAMICALLY TO NEW CONSUMER TASTES AND HABITS. IT PROVIDES QUALITY AND DEPENDABILITY HAND IN HAND WITH INNOVATION, AND THESE CHARACTERISTICS ARE EARNING THE CONFIDENCE OF FOREIGN BUYERS AND CONSUMERS. FOREIGN MARKETS ARE GROWING, AND THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING.

Text: **Julia López de Sagredo** Photos: **Magdalenas Lázaro** Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

SPAIN'S FLOUR CONFECTIONERY INDUSTRY: LET THEM EAT CAKE



... new product lines
being introduced and
equipment updated.

THERE HAS BEEN TREMENDOUS DYNAMISM IN THIS SECTOR OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, DISCERNIBLE PRIMARILY IN ITS LEADING COMPANIES.

Most of the companies that make up Spain's industrial "flour confectionery" sector were founded by people from what one might call a baking background. The history of each of these companies can nearly always be traced back to a little bread or cake shop from whose oven emerged *magdalenas* (cupcakes), rolls, buns, and *rosquillas* (doughnuts) for local customers in the village or part of town that they served. Gradually, the original proprietors and their descendants began moving towards larger-scale production, automating processes previously carried out by hand, extending or reorganizing their range of products, and creating the sort of logistical set-up necessary to reach new customers further away. Some, of course, made greater changes than others. Today, Spain's flour confectionery industry is very fragmented: a large number of small companies operating within a very local sphere coexist alongside large, modern, industrial companies which sell their products all over the world. There has been tremendous dynamism in this sector over the last five years, discernible primarily in its leading companies. It is a period that has seen heavy investment in new production plants, the expansion of existing ones, new product lines being introduced, and equipment updated. Turnover has doubled, and significant activity has begun in the area of exports. Spain's industrial flour confectionery sector turns over an estimated 270,000-plus tons per year, worth over 116 billion pesetas

(US\$906.25 million), of which some 64 billion pesetas (US\$500 million) is accounted for exclusively by small cakes and breads. Consumption of this type of product is currently stable in Spain, and producers are opting for various formulas to sustain growth: exploring sales channels other than food outlets, developing new product lines, and seeking new markets abroad.

PRODUCTS WITH APPEAL

So what is it, in general terms, that differentiates Spain's mass-produced flour confectionery and makes it so acceptable to foreign markets? We asked executives from some of Spain's sector leaders for their opinions. For Luis Martínez and Antonio Lamadrid, respectively director general and marketing manager of Repostería Martínez, S.A. in Santander, the key factors are the enormous variety that Spain offers and the lightness - not to be confused with "liteness" - of its products. Spanish buns and cakes are softer and spongier, less dense in texture, and therefore lighter than their equivalents in other countries. Mariana Moncasi, marketing manager of Productos Alimenticios La Bella Easo, S.A. in Zaragoza, points out that the products are generally simple, unsophisticated, natural and, as such, healthy. These characteristics, along with their light texture, make them readily adaptable to the tastes of most consumers and also correspond closely to what the market has been demanding in recent years. Along these same lines, José Ignacio Pardo, foreign sales

director of Panrico, S.A. in Barcelona, comments that the recipes used are based on traditional ones that anyone could make at home: "The products tend to be as natural as possible; if a natural ingredient can be used instead of an artificial flavoring, we use it, and we likewise avoid using any sort of preservative."

The range of products put out by this sector is very wide. Many originate from strong regional and artisan traditions, while others are recent "creations" and reflect producers' efforts to meet current consumer demand. Spanish flour confectionery can be categorized into groups, of which *magdalenas* (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33) constitute a very important one. These little cupcakes are very traditional, popular classics, a fact reflected in the wide selection of mass-produced ones available in general food shops and the considerable and very varied range made and sold locally by bakeries and cake shops and small-scale industrial producers.

Magdalenas come in many forms, and what they contain varies slightly according to what shape they are. Spain's classic *magdalena*, still the best-seller, is round and comes in two types: *aragonés* and *castellano*, the first of these being made of a puffier sponge than the other. Concha Morales, commercial director of *Magdalenas Lazaro* S.A. in Zaragoza, explains that this is because it contains more egg and less sugar (sugar inhibits the formation of leavening gas, so that the mixture rises less). The *aragonés* type

is consequently a bit blander in flavor than the other, and is usually given a touch of vanilla. Square *magdalenas* are the most popular abroad, sometimes lemon-flavored, sometimes not, or made with yogurt, or filled with chocolate spread, apricot or strawberry jam or - a new line this - lemon marmalade. Elongated *magdalenas*, known as the *valenciana* type, are also sold and enjoyed abroad, though some other types - triangular ones, for instance - are so far sold only on the domestic market only. *Sobaos pasiegos* are another Spanish classic. Spain's leading mass-producer of *sobaos pasiegos* and the mainspring behind their being sold nationwide, is Repostería Martínez, S.A. These cakes originate from the northern Spanish region of Cantabria, more specifically from one of the remotest parts of that region, the Valle del Pas. Tradition endures in this wild verdant countryside where rivers wind their way through dramatic mountain terrain whose high pastures are dotted with huts occupied by shepherds at some seasons of the year, and whose lovely old towns are gems of traditional architecture. The local inhabitants are known as *pasiegos*, and they, using ingredients they had at hand, were the inventors of these delicate butter and egg sponge cakes which bear their name. Traditionally made in individual flat squares, they are now also available in smaller, rectangular form. *Sobaos pasiegos* are still very much in evidence in their region of origin, in both production and consumption. There are

THE RANGE OF PRODUCTS IS VERY WIDE. MANY ORIGINATE FROM STRONG REGIONAL AND ARTISAN TRADITIONS, WHILE OTHERS ARE RECENT CREATIONS.

many local producers, and private houses in the more touristy towns often display signs inviting visitors to sample *leche con bizcochos típicos* (milk and local sponge cakes): this is the classic combination for Spaniards. "The secret of a good sponge-cake is high egg content," reveals Luis Martínez, "and in the case of the *sobao*, egg is what makes it spongy. In *magdalenas*, on the other hand, vegetable fat is what gives them their sponginess." Antonio Lamadrid points out that the *sobao*, perhaps because it is made with butter, is creamier on the palate than the *magdalena*. Be that as it may, both are light cakes and as such have to be baked in paper cases, without which they would lose their shape during the baking process. Otherwise, they would have to be made of a closer grained, denser mixture, as *madeleines* are in France.

The Spanish croissant is a less traditional product altogether, though it has met with complete acceptance since being "developed" as a product by Spain's flour confectionery industry five years ago. The Spanish croissant has been another key product in expanding the export market. It is made from a sponge-type dough different from the flaky type used for the classic patisserie croissant as made for and served in cafés and cake shops. The "Spanish croissant" is sold in "mini" size, and comes both straight and curved: the curved type is the more popular in Spain (they prefer them straight abroad) and is more labor intensive to produce since it has to be

curved by hand. Mini-croissants can be eaten just as they are or toasted, and made into a sweet snack with butter and jam or honey, or a savory one with ham, cheese, salad, paté and so on, for breakfast, lunch, or snack-times during the day. This versatility is one of the secrets of their success, along with other characteristics, as Mariana Moncasi explains: "They are made of a lighter dough than the flaky type, and are smooth and easy to eat since they don't tear or fall apart. Also, they can be heated in the microwave, while the flaky type needs a conventional oven." Mini-croissants also come with chocolate, peach, strawberry and confectioner's custard fillings. Aiming at the impulse buyer and snack purchaser, both Panrico and La Bella Easo have recently launched a larger croissant, filled with chocolate spread in the first case (brand-name Dofi) and chocolate, raspberry or confectioner's custard in the second (brand-name Big Roll). The *ensaimada* is another traditional Spanish pastry, which many tourists to Spain will already be familiar with, especially visitors to the island of Mallorca, where it is a local speciality. Traditional *ensaimadas*, which come in many different sizes, are long strips of flaky pastry dough coiled into a flat spiral and baked. The mass-produced version comes only in a small, individual size, is made of a spongier dough, and does not include the traditional addition of *cabello de ángel* (candied squash). The traditional snail formation and sprin-

gling of icing sugar have been retained, though.

The dividing line between sweet and savory in mass-produced cakes and rolls is neatly straddled by the *mediasnoches*. This little roll is not unlike the mini-croissant, though rather sweeter in taste, finer in texture, oval shaped and glazed: it is made from a muffin-type dough. Its size and other characteristics make it suitable for using in the same sort of ways as the mini-croissant. As well as their snack food function, *mediasnoches* are ubiquitous at Spanish social events, from children's parties to adult cocktail parties and buffets. Fillings obviously change to suit the occasion, but the combination of savory fillings with the slight sweetness of its light, smooth textured bread accounts for much of the *medianoche's* success.

Pastelitos constitute another group. According to Antonio Lamadrid, these little cakes are different from their equivalents elsewhere in Europe. They are bite-sized sponge cakes which come in different shapes and with various cream or jam fillings, sometimes syrup-soaked, sometimes chocolate covered. *Hojaldres*, another group again, are crisp puff pastries, sometimes of traditional regional origin, sometimes adaptations of pastries from other sources. Depending on how the pastry strips are coiled, looped or twisted, they have names such as *palmeritas*, *lazos*, *corbatas*... Other assorted Spanish classics include *rosquillas*, fried or oven-baked doughnuts which come in many varieties, fla-

vored with orange, vanilla, lemon, almond, anise liqueur, oil, wine.... *Tortas de aceite sevillanas* are, as their name suggests, a Seville specialty, and are thin, round, crisp biscuits (in the "cookie" sense) made with olive oil, anise liqueur, and spices such as sesame and aniseed. *Tortas andaluzas*, also Andalusian, are similar to them but are thicker and flakier in texture. *Pastas* are sweet biscuits (cookies) of various sorts, which often incorporate traditional ingredients such as almonds and candied squash.

QUICK RESPONSE: THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

Spain's flour confectionery industry, particularly as represented by its leading companies, has shown an impressive degree of dynamism and adaptability, especially in the last five or six years. Product ranges are an example of this: using the patisserie tradition as a point of departure, they have managed to combine maintaining traditional recipes and formulae with quick and flexible responses to different tastes and new consumer habits by modifying existing recipes and creating new products based on traditional ones. The wholemeal product range offered by La Bella Easo, for example, is a case in point: they make a wholemeal flour and brown sugar range of *magdalenas*, mini-croissants and *mediasnoches*. The invention of a Spanish version of the croissant is another: it meets demands that the flaky-doughed patisserie classic did not. And it was with the particular demands of foreign markets in mind

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THE SPANISH CROISSANT HAS BEEN A KEY PRODUCT IN EXPANDING THE EXPORT MARKET. IT IS MADE FROM A SPONGE-TYPE DOUGH DIFFERENT FROM THE FLAKY TYPE.

that different fillings were introduced into magdalenas and croissants: in Spain, these filled versions account for a mere five percent of consumption, and show no signs of increasing.

Packaging has been changed, too, both in appearance and size, to meet the particular needs of each market. Repostería Martínez, S.A. is currently spearheading a trend towards individual packaging. The advantages of this are twofold: it extends shelf-life and also expands the options for marketing and sales. Individual wrapping prevents each "unit" from drying out and losing flavor, in effect keeping it fresh until it is eaten. It also makes the product easier to carry about as a snack for school or at work. Marketing family-size packs containing individually wrapped pieces responds well to the contemporary trend towards less frequent shopping, the contents of the outer pack staying fresh long after the outer pack is opened. This sort of packaging has also opened up new sales channels for the mass-produced flour confectionery sector: bulk supplies for self-service sales represents an attractive new option for food outlets and also finds these products a place in the impulse buy, catering, and large-scale purchasing markets. A high proportion of recent producer investment is being directed towards gearing their plants to this sort of packaging, despite initial objections to over-packaging. Export customers are buying the individually packaged products, convinced by its obvious advantages and suitability to cur-

rent patterns of purchase and consumption.

The dynamism within this sector also reflects a desire to supply top quality products. In mass-produced flour confectionery, quality depends on three fundamental factors: raw materials (quality control is carried out daily by qualified experts in laboratories equipped with the latest analytical technology), the manufacturing process, and how quickly the product reaches the consumer. To meet the requirements of this last factor, companies plan their work patterns according to orders so that even the longest-lasting products are warehoused for no more than two days, and gear their distribution system to ensuring that deliveries are as quick as possible.

TAKE-OFF YEAR: 1993

Most of the leading companies in this sector started exporting five years ago. Though the star product was, and still is, the magdalena, some companies opened up foreign markets with other products, as La Bella Easo did in Germany with the mini-croissant. The take-off year for foreign sales of these products was 1993. Export figures, including sales of special breads and biscuits (cookies), increased by 71.5% over 1992, reaching 44,852 tons. In 1994, this sector showed a positive trade balance for the first time, with 68,785 tons exported - a 53.4% increase on the previous year - as against 65,105 tones imported. The value of exports, of industrial flour confectionery exclusively, increased by 108.6% in 1994 over the previous year's fig-

ures, reaching 11 billion pesetas (US\$85.9 million). The main target market is Europe, though this by no means excludes other possibilities. Even so, as Luis Martínez warns: "You have to tread warily in the export business. We're talking about perishable items here, so it's very important to choose a partner who will handle the product properly." The most important customers at present are France, the U.K., Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Switzerland. Interestingly, Switzerland's per capita consumption rate of magdalenas is not far off Spain's, according to José Ignacio Pardo whose company, Panrico, is the leader in that particular market. As he says himself: "In industrial-scale patisserie, there's little left to invent. What's happening at the moment is a decanting of products from one market to another. Because it is difficult to find new bakery goods within Europe with which to galvanize the market, we have turned our sights backwards to recuperate traditional products, or even towards other countries, an approach that has helped us introduce our products into their markets." That said, though, products are also sent farther afield: to the Arab countries, South America, Russia and the U.S. Concha Morales, commercial director of Magdalenas Lazaro in Zaragoza, does not rule out the North African countries, Algeria and Morocco, which "although they might be rather difficult at the moment, are potentially interesting markets."

Export formulae vary according to each company's

approach. Some aim for arrangements with local distributors, others for collaboration with manufacturers to complete ranges in their respective markets, as in the cases of Repostería Martínez and Unipasa, while others set up subsidiaries, as Panrico aims to do in Europe. Many companies have also considered the possibility of broaching more distant markets by setting up production plants. This has been done by Panrico in China, Repostería Martínez in Moscow, the Huesca-based El Quiteriano ("Heras") in Buenos Aires and Lithuania, and the Valencian Dulcesol group in Hungary. Some companies are even considering becoming producers of frozen doughs with a view to exporting very short-life baked goods, ultrafresh, and taking advantage of the growing trend for so-called "hot points" as an alternative sales outlet.

Julia López de Sagredo is an agronomist. She worked for seven years at the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Düsseldorf, Germany, promoting Spanish food products, and currently lives in Almería, where she writes for agro-alimentary and foreign trade publications.

See list of Main Exporters on page 19.



PUROS FROM THE CANARY ISLES

Pure Pleasure

Puros - or cigars as we know them - from the Canary Isles go back a long way. In fact, it all began with Christopher Columbus. Rodrigo de Xeres had been sent off to find gold. But instead he found "chimney men," who had smoke coming out of their mouth and nose, but he had no idea that he had indeed found gold - brown gold - or tobacco.

The date chronicled was 2 November, 1492, three weeks after Columbus landed in the new world. Columbus sent Rodrigo de Xeres off to find out about the inland and at the same time to look for gold. He was very disappointed when Rodrigo de Xeres returned without gold, but with incredible news - he had discovered the land of the chimney men. With great excitement, he reported that he had seen natives smoking like chimneys. They carried about a brown tube that burned at one end. They put the other end in their mouth and then blew out smoke through the mouth and nostrils, which they seemed to find extremely pleasurable.

Understandably, Columbus found it difficult to believe this story and decided to pay the land of the wandering chimneys a visit himself. What the Admiral then saw was later chronicled by the monk, Bartolomé de las Casas: "all the men carried a torch, breathing in the heady smoke like incense. A few dry herbs were placed on a dry leaf, which was then rolled up into a tube not unlike a small musket barrel. This was then lit at one end. They inhaled a type of smoke from the other end with each breath,

said to sooth the body and have a pleasant inebriating and soporific effect. The natives called the tubes "tabacos." Neither Columbus, the monk nor Rodrigo de Xeres suspected at that time that they had tumbled on "gold leaf"- the brown gold called tobacco. But they took it home with them as a curiosity and also for the purpose of documenting the barbaric customs they had found. And that is how the tobacco plant arrived on the Canary Isles, the first port of call after the long and weary journey across the Atlantic. For Columbus, and all the other Spanish explorers, Islands like La Palma, Gomera, Hierro, Tenerife and Gran Canaria were like a green paradise after the blue, wet wilderness of the Atlantic, somewhere where they could obtain fresh water, fruit and vegetables. They were also the first chance they had to tell about the strange habits of the natives, their "chimney men." La Palma flourished early as a result and the capital and port of Santa Cruz de La Palma grew quickly as the result of the contact with the new world, to become a leading trading post and the third largest port of the Spanish empire after Seville and Antwerp. This is how tobacco arrived in La Palma.

Text: **Erich F. Mühlhofer**

Photo: **Rudi Bacher/ICEX**

La Palma, which has enjoyed always close relations with Cuba, is the only island in the Canaries where tobacco grows. Some parts of the island provide the ideal microclimate for cultivating this plant.

Tobacco tradition of the Canaries

The name "tobacco" originates from a mistake by the chronicler. What the natives called "tabacos" were actually the small tubular or trumpet shaped objects - early *figurado* cigars - and not the plants from which they were rolled. But, as is often the case, sometimes historical errors become facts.

Nor was it true that Columbus or the *Conquistadores* immediately became enthusiastic smokers of tobacco - this heathen habit remained suspect for a long time. But for Rodrigo de Xeres, who discovered the "chimney men," tobacco was his undoing. Back in Spain, his wife discovered that he smoked secretly in the dark in his room. And in the sinister atmosphere of the Middle Ages, she believed that he had made a pact with the devil and so reported him to the Inquisition. And the smoking Xeres ended up on the stake. Demetrio Pela was the first cigar "manufacturer" who, in 1541, reported that Panduka, the Indian chieftain, had taught him how to roll a cigar. In any case, the Europeans transformed the cumbersome smoking device - the "tubes" made from leaves - into the work of art which is the cigar today. The technique was perfected in Cuba, but was principally the work of Spaniards, mainly migrants from La Palma. Since the time of the *Conquistadores*, La Palma has enjoyed close relations with

Cuba. Adventurers left the island to find their fortune in the New World. Not all of them were successful in the search for the legendary Eldorado, the land of gold, but many settled in Cuba as farmers and established families there. The fact that they were excellent farmers and were also very industrious was extremely advantageous for the tobacco industry. In the middle of the last century, those returning home and who had worked as tobacco planters in Cuba, mainly in the region of San Juan de los Remedios, brought the tobacco plant with them to the island and cultivated it on small plots for their own needs. Up to now, La Palma is the only island in the Canaries where tobacco grows. Helped by the mountainous topography of the island, the volcanic soil and the abundant rainfall, some parts of the island provide an ideal microclimate for cultivating tobacco. Around 1870, tobacco growing on La Palma had become so important that it even surpassed the success of breeding the *cochinilla*, the insect used for dyeing silk. Families like Sotomayor (the famous Cuban high jumper had ancestors from La Palma) and Poggio had large tobacco plantations. At that time, "Puros de La Palma" became synonymous with craftsmanship and first class tobacco. According to old records, a cigar from La Palma had to include tobacco leaves from Breña Alta and the Caldera (the enormous crater

of the extinct volcano Taburiente), it had to burn uniformly all round, producing a white ash, and have the characteristic herby aroma which was the mark of quality.

The people of La Palma soon learned the art of cigar rolling from those returning from Cuba; all families rolled cigars at home for their own needs and later also for selling in continental Spain. Nothing has changed on La Palma up to now - the art of making cigars has been passed on from generation to generation.

More or less at the same time as on La Palma, in the second half of the last century, the great cigar boom also started in Cuba. More than four hundred large and small companies hand produced the cigars suddenly in demand in Europe and the U.S.A. Those involved were mainly Spaniards and migrants from La Palma, as the famous brand name "Hoyo de Monterrey" proves - after the Monterrey family that originated from La Palma. In the 1920s, when there was a recession, there was mass emigration from La Palma to Cuba. Exports of silk and textiles - the mainstay of the island's economy until then - had collapsed completely. Hunger and need became every day life.

As a result, many people left La Palma for the cigar islands in the Caribbean, where they already had relatives and were welcomed with open arms. After Castro's revolution, there was a move in the opposite direc-

tion: many of the migrants returned home and many Cubans found a second home on the larger islands of the Canaries, such as Tenerife and Gran Canaria. They include such legendary names in the cigar business as the successors of José María García and Hermenegildo Menéndez, who created the Montecristo brand, and also part of the Cifuentes family, who followed Jaime Partagás, the founder of the factory with the same name in Havana. They found everything they needed on the Canary Isles - sufficiently experienced cigar rollers and a great tobacco tradition - and so were able to continue their trade. This provided a second major impetus for cigar production on the Canaries. Naturally, the small quantities of tobacco produced in La Palma were not sufficient for the mass production of cigars, so raw tobacco was imported from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, but also from Indonesia and Cameroon. In the same way as a cuvée with wine, Canaries cigars are always a blend of several excellent tobaccos of different provenance. This allows many variations in flavor and subtle nuances. What they have in common is the excellent craftsmanship combined with the experience of generations. It is indicative that in Spain, *torcedores* and *torcedoras* (cigar rollers), are not regarded as normal workers, but as craftsmen and

It is typical of the Canaries' cigars that each cigar roller makes a complete cigar from the beginning to the end - exactly the same production process as that used in Cuba.

craftswomen. For at the end of the day, the product that they make - the cigar - is a work of art.

Cigar production in the Canaries

The tobacco industry in general and cigar production in particular not only have a great tradition in the Canary Isles, but are also very important economically. Twenty-three billion cigarettes (1.15 billion packs) and 400 million cigars (including machine made cigars) are produced every year. Seventy-five percent of the production is exported. The tobacco industry employs 4,000 people directly and another 2,000 indirectly as suppliers.

Whereas the Spanish domestic market has always regarded handmade cigars from the Canaries as a quality symbol, and these have always sold very well, it was only in the last few years that the cigar boom in the U.S.A. and Europe (mainly Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain and, recently, France) has dramatically increased the interest in *puros canarios*. Top producers are now emerging to deal with the export demand.

Puros Vargas in Santa Cruz de La Palma is one of these companies - it employs 52 people, making it the largest cigar producer on this small island. Seventy-three-year-old Enrique Vargas, company founder and father of the present Manager Director of

the same name, is still going strong and smokes and rolls his own cigars. For the whole of his life, he has done nothing else but make first class cigars with a great deal of love and care and cannot stop now, although he has reached retirement age. Enrique Vargas is perhaps the best example of a very old family tradition producing cigars in the Canaries. His son, who is responsible for marketing, has brought a breath of fresh air into the company, which is organized as a cooperative. The company produces six brands - Don Enrique (named after the founder of the company), Vargas, Tene-guía, Peña, La Criolla and La Mia - still made by hand in the traditional manner, but now marketed in a more modern way. The company buys tobacco from La Palma, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Sumatra and Java for the *tripa larga* (long filler) and *capote* (binder) and also from Connecticut (U.S.A.), Java and Sumatra for the *capa* (wrapper) (see box on page 77). They produce approximately 50,000 cigars a week at the moment.

Comercial Arico on Gran Canaria is one of the younger, though not less famous cigar manufacturers of the Canary Isles. Founded in 1980, the owner, Antonio Montañés Alemán, can already point to a successful export business. Comercial Arico has earned itself a reputation as a quality producer, making 100,000 hand-

rolled cigars every month, of which 90% are exported to the U.S.A. and 10% to Europe and the domestic Spanish market.

Brands include Casanova, one of the most well known and popular brands from the Canary Isles, available in four different sizes: Churchills, Sublimes, Superfinos and Consules, and also La Regional, available as Monarcos, Churchills, Lonsdales, and Coronas. Comercial Arico also makes Cara Mia for the U.S. market: Piramides, Churchills, Toros, Lonsdales and Coronas, and Don Xavier: Piramides, Churchills, Gran Corona, Lonsdales, Petit Lonsdales, Coronas, Panetellas, Petit Panetellas, and Robusto and also Sommer's for the German market: Churchill, Coronas, Panetellas, Sólidos, Delgados, and Superfinos.

The cigars are produced from Caribbean tobaccos (from Cuba, Dominican Republic), tobacco from Brazil, the Canary Isles and also Connecticut wrappers from the U.S.A.

The latest addition to the family of export-orientated cigar producers on the Canary Isles is Fulgencio Vega Gil, also from Grand Canaria. In 1989, the owner, Fulgencio Vega Gil, started his business in a small room measuring 120 m² employing a handful of cigar rollers. Three years later, the expanding company moved to premises with a floor space of 600 m² and to even larger premises three years later. Only the Montecanario brand from Fulgencio Vega

Gil is 100% handmade. Initially, it was only intended for the local market, but the first export successes soon followed with small quantities to Germany and now also to the U.S.A. By concentrating on the handmade brand, Fulgencio Vega Gil can adapt his production to the wishes and requirements of his export customers - both in terms of size, and tobacco composition, mixing the long filler with tobacco from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Brazil combined with wrappers from Indonesia.

These three well-known cigar producers are representative of the variety and range of production on the Canary Isles which is based on a centuries-old tradition and - most importantly - a large pool of local craftsmen who produce these works of art by hand.

Erich F. Mühlbofer is the chief editor of the leading cigar magazine published in German, the *European Cigar Culture Journal*, and has already organized readers' trips for cigar aficionados to the most important producers in the Canary Isles.

See list of Main Exporters on page 17.

Spanish Masterpieces



GONZALEZ BYASS
SHERRY & BRANDY

CIGARS FROM THE CANARIES ARE A WORK OF ART

Each hand-made cigar is an individual work of art, when the art also consists of making them all as identical to each other as possible.

Completely handmade. It means that the cigars are exclusively made by hand throughout - unlike pseudo hand-made cigars, when only the binder is rolled by hand onto a machine bunched nucleus.

Each cigar consists of three parts: the bunch, made from *tripa larga* or *tripa corta*, the binder or *capote*, which holds the bunch together and then the wrapper which is known as the *capa*. The "inner workings" determine the quality of the cigar and

how it smokes: *tripa larga* means that strips are torn from whole tobacco leaves and twisted together to form a bunch. A different tobacco can be used to do this. The ash will only hold together when the cigar is smoked if long pieces of tobacco are used. If cheaper short tobacco pieces - *tripa corta* - are used (and may also include waste) the ash falls off very quickly.

The bunch consisting of several pieces of tobacco leaf, is held together by the binder or *capote* and is compressed in a wooden mold. These wooden molds have the shape and size of the finished cigar and give the "blank" its form. When

the wooden forms are full - they hold between 10 and 12 cigar blanks, depending on shape and size - they are stacked on top of one another and clamped.

After a certain time, the wrapper is rolled on to the cigar blank. The wrapper is cut to size with a round blade from half a tobacco leaf, from which the veins have been removed. All this requires considerable skill, because the leaves are very fine and are therefore very sensitive and tear easily. They are also expensive, so it makes sense that as many wrappers as possible need to be cut from the tobacco leaf and there must be as lit-

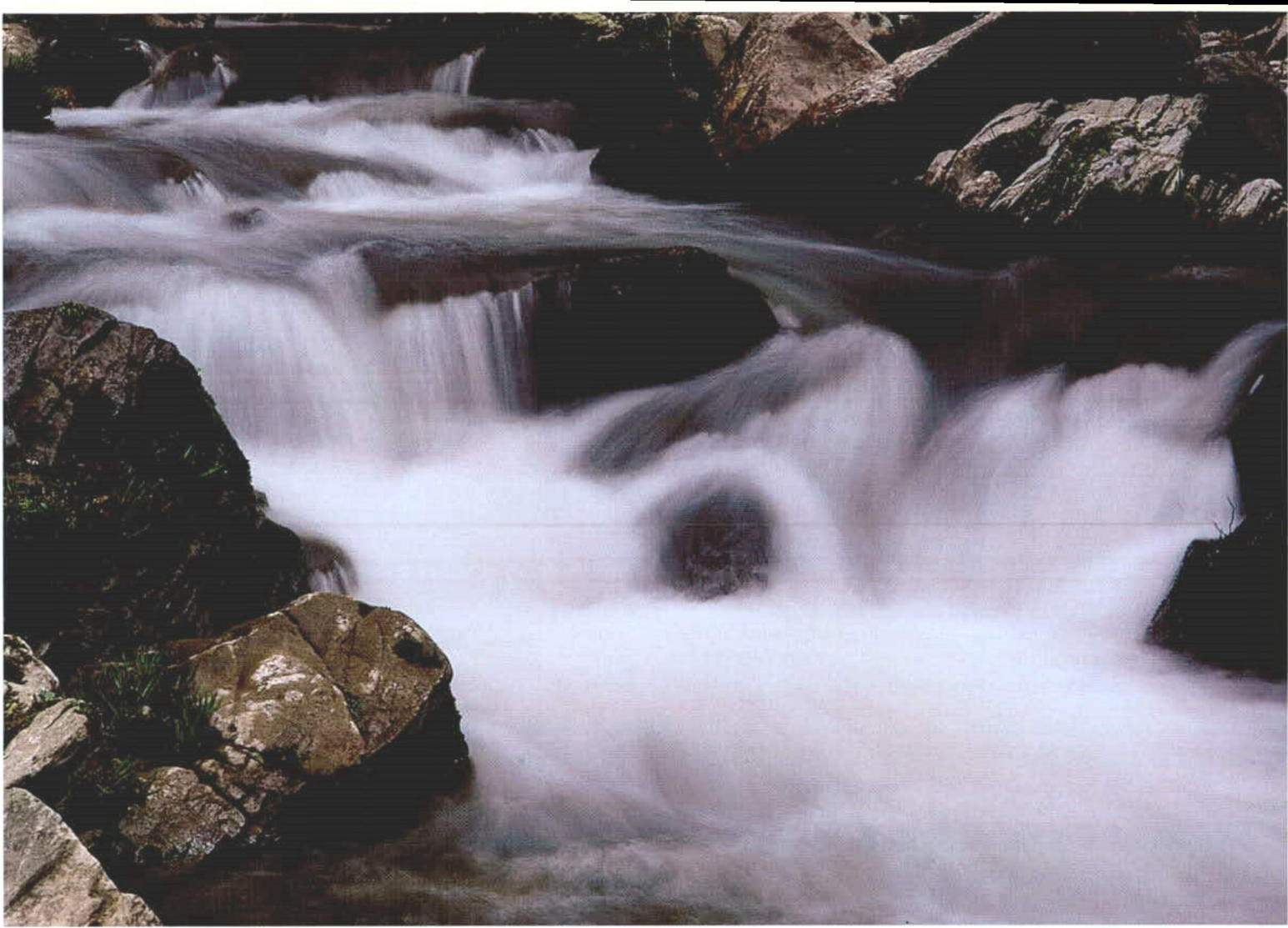
tle waste as possible. The wrapper is rolled onto the blank at an angle and a small semi circular tip is cut at the end or head, which seals the one end of the cigar. It is fixed with a natural resin adhesive. The tuck of the cigar is then trimmed with a sharp knife - and the work of art is ready.

It is typical of the Canaries cigars that the production process is exactly the same as that used in Cuba - each cigar roller makes a complete cigar from beginning to end, whereas in other cigar producing countries, the bunch and wrapper are very often made by different workers.

WHAT SIZE IS A "PYRAMIDE"?

Since there is an uncountable number of sizes for Puros, we just give a list of the formats mentioned in the article. The sizes indicated may vary slightly between individual producers and are, therefore, only average measures.

CHURCHILLS	17.8 x 1.8 cm/7.00 x 0.70 in.
SUBLIMES	12.9 x 1.6 cm/5.07 x 0.62 in.
SUPERFINOS	17.5 x 1.4 cm/6.88 x 0.55 in.
CONSULES	14.6x 1.5 cm/5.74 x 0.59 in.
MONARCOS	17.8 x 1.8 cm/7.00 x 0.70 in.
LONSDALES	16.5 x 1.6 cm/6.49 x 0.62 in.
CORONAS	13.6 x 1.5 cm/5.35 x 0.59 in.
PIRAMIDES	15.6 x 2.1 cm/6.14 x 0.82 in.
TOROS	16.8 x 2.0 cm/6.61 x 0.78 in.
GRAN CORONA	14.3 x 1.7 cm/5.62 x 0.66 in.
PETIT LONSDALES	15.5 x 1.6 cm/6.10 x 0.62 in.
PANETELLAS	5.9 x 1.4 cm/6.25 x 0.55 in.
PETIT PANETELLAS	15.2 x 1.3 cm/5.98 x 0.51 in.
ROBUSTO	12.4 x 1.9 cm/4.88 x 0.74 in.
SOLIDOS	12.7 x 1.7 cm/4.99 x 0.66 in.
DELGADOS	12.6 x 1.4 cm/4.96 x 0.55 in.



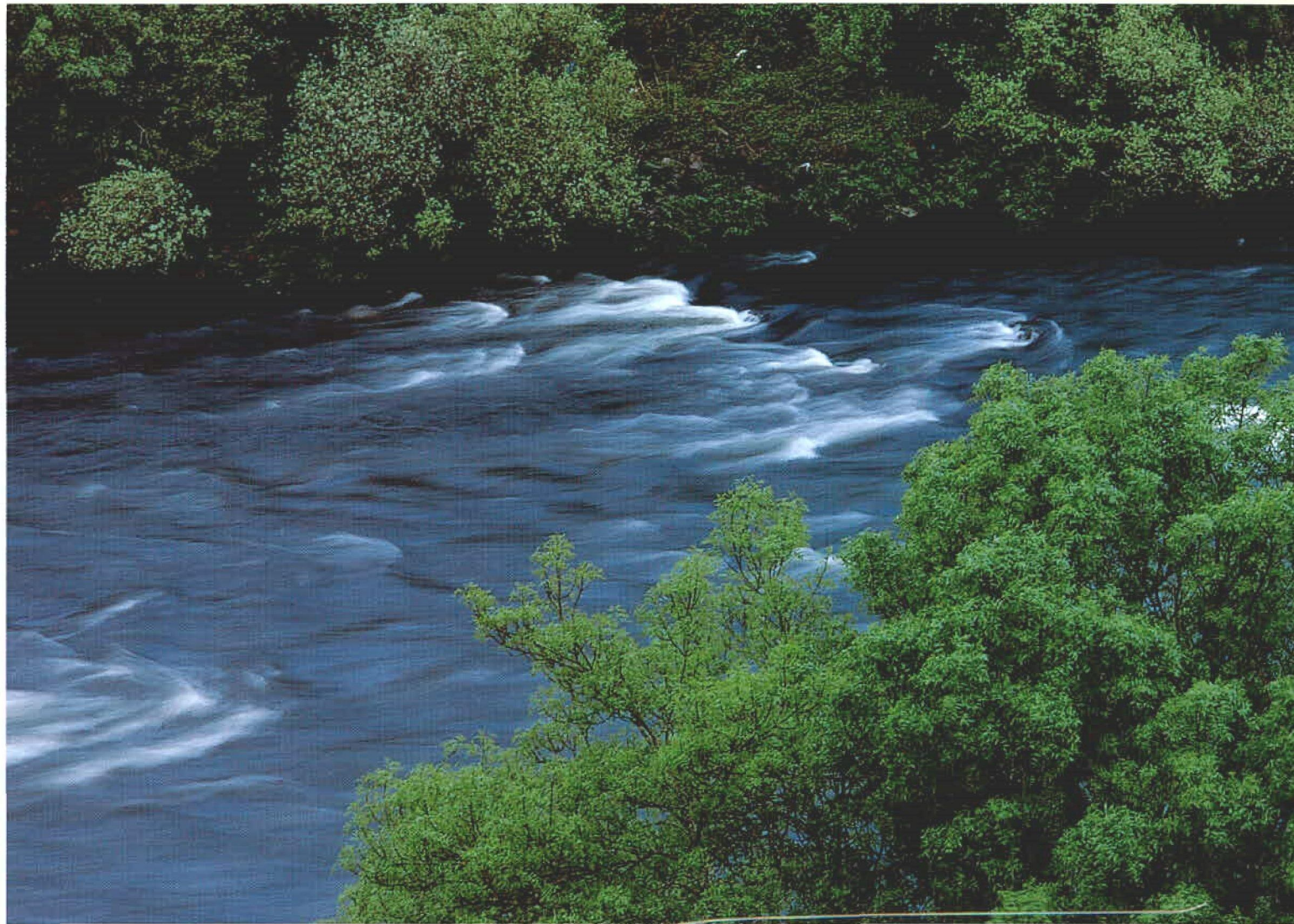
The image
of the rivers
Miño
and Sil is of
mighty flows
of water
relentlessly
making their
way through
steep sided
gorges,
past some of the
most unusual
scenery in
all Spain.

The River Miño and Sil

The Wine Rivers of Spain (III)

THE NORTHWEST OF SPAIN IS A FASCINATING AREA, CULTURALLY, HISTORICALLY, GEOGRAPHICALLY AND GASTRONOMICALLY. SITUATED AT THE WESTERN END OF THE CORDILLERA CANTABRICA AND NEXT TO THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, THE LANDSCAPE IS DOMINATED BY VERDANT PASTURES AND GREY, GRANITE MOUNTAINS THAT GO ALONG THE RIVERS MIÑO AND SIL, AS THEY FORGE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE GORGES AND VALLEYS OF THIS DRAMATIC REGION. FOR THE MOMENT, THIS IS THE LAST ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES WHICH HAS JOINED WINES AND RIVERS.

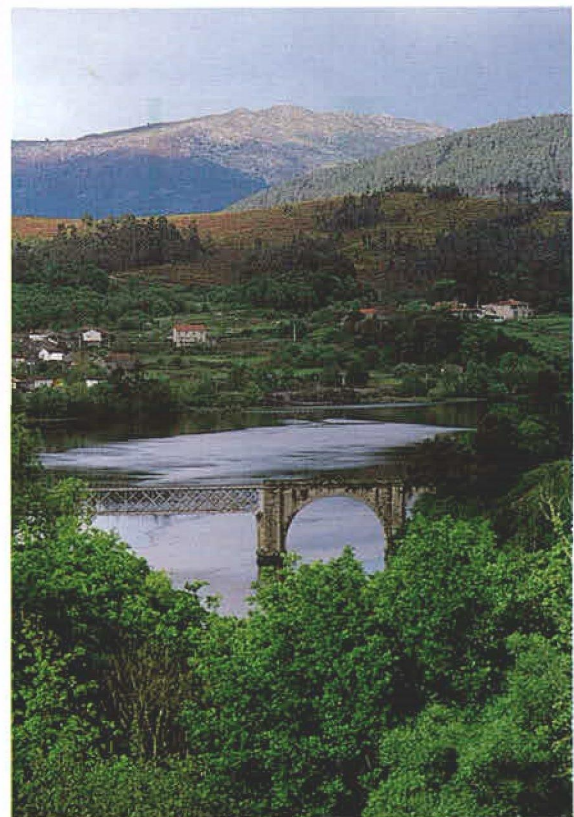
Text: **Jeremy Watson**
Photos: **Fernando Briones/ICEX**

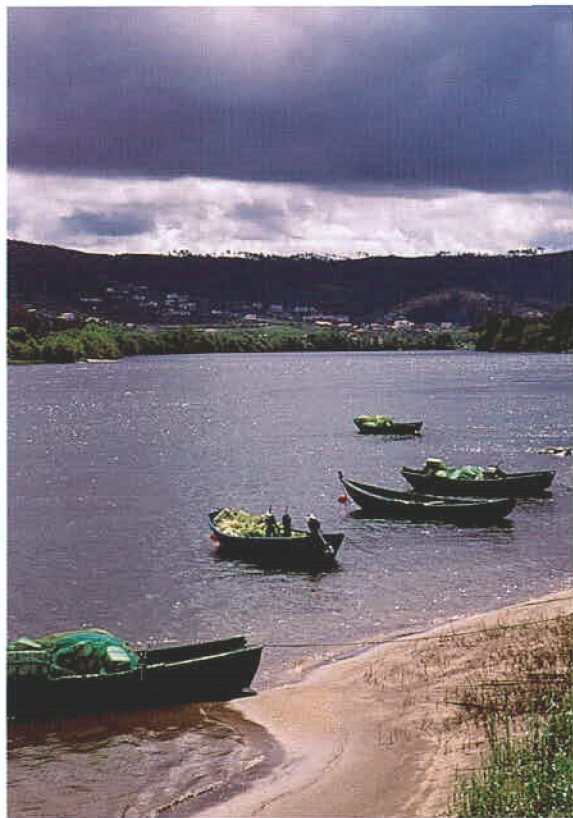


This part of the country is unique and totally unexpected to one visiting it for the first time. The Miño is the main river, but the Sil is a very important tributary.



In Ribeiro, the wine Denomination to the west of Orense, on the north bank of the Miño, wine production is crucial to the local economy.





The river is slowing now, as the gradient eases and it approaches the estuary. It now forms the border between Spain and Portugal and passes through the Rías Baixas D.O.



The river has arrived at its mouth where the town of La Guardia is known as the capital of the lobster, and, at the journey's end, where better to enjoy a bottle of lightly chilled Rias Baixas wine.



FOR SO LONG IGNORED, BIERZO HAS TAKEN A HUGE LEAP FORWARD, AND LIKE ITS NEIGHBORS IN GALICIA, IS NOW PRODUCING SOME EXTREMELY GOOD WINES OF A REVOLUTIONARY NATURE.

Recollections of rivers can recall sunny afternoons and spring flower filled meadows, or raging torrents tumbling over rocks and through deep ravines, or, massive, stately flowing, unstoppable expanses of water, and, while some will fulfill all of these pictures along their courses, most leave one abiding image.

That of the rivers Miño and Sil is of mighty flows of water relentlessly making their way through steep sided gorges, past some of the most unusual scenery in all Spain. For this part of the country is unique and totally unexpected to one visiting it for the first time. In a vibrant and hard working environment, there is a feudalism that takes you back centuries, and this is an essential part of the charm and influence of the countryside through which the rivers flow.

The Miño is the main river, but the Sil is a very important tributary. It rises on the southern slopes of the Cordillera Cantábrica to the northwest of the city of León, fed by countless tributaries as it tumbles its way down to Ponferrada, an iron and anthracite mining community named after the iron bridge (*pons ferratus* in Latin) built there in the 11th century, and through the valley of Bierzo, the most northerly and westerly of the Denominations of Castilla-León, and contiguous with the most easterly in Galicia - Valdeorras.

Hidden Developments

For so long ignored, or dismissed as a producer of fairly unpleasant red wines of dubious origin, Bierzo has, one might say, secretly, taken a huge leap forward, and like its neighbors in Galicia, is now producing some ex-

tremely good wines of a revolutionary nature. To suddenly find Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, may not be such a surprise, but include Gewürztraminer and Chenin Blanc, and it is clear the local winemakers have really been thinking about what they are doing and where they are going. Add to this the vast improvements in the wines from the indigenous Godello white grape and Mencía red, and you know this is a place to watch. The Mencía has the characteristics of a cross between Cabernet Franc and Merlot, but, at about ten degrees of alcohol probably lacks the real finesse that these names imply.

There is a lot of the sherry vine variety, Palomino (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 35), in this part of Spain, but it is gradually being replaced by the more suitable light wine varieties as demand for heavy white wines (*Rancios*) and heavy reds from the Garnacha Tintorera declines. Malvasía might well make an impression here as well, but it is a low yield vine and plantings are very limited at present.

Along with Asturias and Galicia, this is an outpost of old Christian Spain, and responsible for its revival during the initial push back of the invading Moorish armies in the 11th century. The Knights Templar were active here, and there is ample evidence of the trappings that would be expected on the Pilgrim's route to Santiago de Compostela. But, as the gateway into Galicia, or out of it to the rest of the Peninsula, Bierzo has been overlooked, thus there are many delightful and secluded villages in this comparatively unspoiled area (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37).

The climate in the northwest of Spain is two fold depending on which side of the Galician divide you are. To the east, it is basically continental with cold and frosty winters, very hot summers and a reasonable rainfall. To the west it is milder, but exposed to the Atlantic storms (next stop west is New York!), and, of course, it is wetter. The river Sil now heads for Galicia through a series of reservoirs and hydroelectric dams and the most unusual landscape of disused goldmine heaps (Las Medulas). According to Pliny (23-79 A.D.), the regional governor and also the mines' administrator, over seven tons of gold were produced per year, and five hundred tons in total. Recent research puts the total amount of gold produced at one million kilograms. It is estimated that 80,000 slaves mined 240 million m³ of material to extract this amount of gold!

Another World

The river Sil now enters another world - Galicia - which bears so many resemblances to the Celtic fringe of Europe from Brittany to the west of Scotland, yet it is different. Clearly, the geographical environment cannot be ascribed to the Celts, who were the first invaders, though the name Galicia can, as also can the type of bagpipes (*Gaita*), and the people's melancholy (*Morriña*) and adventurousness. All are Celtic, but the language is pure Romance, derived from the next invaders in the third century. But the Visigoths and then the Moors, who were here briefly, left nothing of significance to the Galician culture. Galicia is like nowhere else in Spain. It is enchantingly medieval with a peasant cul-

ture, yet *Gallegos* are punctilious and businesslike; these are the people who created the wealth that their ports enjoyed in the 18th century when allowed to trade with the Americas and bring back the riches to be found there. Until the new road was built, the wine region of Valdeorras was only accessible to the most persistent traveler, and wine buyers were not generally amongst them; not because they lacked the hardiness, simply there was insufficient need, and so the route ensured they looked elsewhere. This is a primitive environment, which seems years, not hours, away from the rest of Spain, where teams of oxen still pull heavily laden, wooden wheeled carts, and farmers use simple old fashioned tools to work the soil; where there are *borreos* - centuries old, small grain or corn granite stores on mushroom stilts, and when it is wet, people still wear *zuecos* - wooden soled shoes that act like gum boots. However, things have changed, both communications and need! Now one finds old *bodegas* refurbished, and new *bodegas* established, in places like O Barco and A Rúa and all making more modern, internationally appealing wines.

The focus is on Godello for the whites - they are crisp, clean dry aromatic wines with a pleasing delicate fruit, at around nine degrees of alcohol - and Mencía for the reds. As in Bierzo, there is a need to reduce the percentage of Palomino and Garnacha that is planted. The vineyards are on hill-sides in alluvial soil combined with silicates and chalk. It is also a good place to find rabbit and partridge, and the custom of the family

IN THE HILLS NORTH OF LUGO, AROUND THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER MIÑO, THERE IS AN ABUNDANCE OF CATTLE. THE CHEESES PRODUCED FROM THE COWS' MILK, LIKE TETILLA, ARE FULL FLAVORED.

and the lard preserved in salt for use in the famous *caldo gallego* during winter. The word "soup" does not adequately describe this kind of dish - it is more of a potage of meat with greens and potatoes.

In the hills north of Lugo, around the source of the river Miño, there is an abundance of cattle. The cheeses produced from the cows' milk are full flavored - Tetilla, meaning "breast," and in the shape of one, is probably the best known, along with the much proclaimed smoked San Simón cheese.

By the time the Miño reaches the historic, city of Lugo with its mighty Roman walls up to six meters (19 feet) thick and interspersed with tower-like bastions, the Miño is wide and clear and flowing gracefully south through the massive reservoir and dam of Belesar. One begins to see houses with *miradores* - glazed in balconies to protect against the wind while enjoying the sun, and *pazos* - rather plain, but substantial, granite manor houses graced with a coat of arms over the door. The steep river "banks" finally are terraced in many parts and are planted with fruit trees, and, where the Miño meets the Sil, the vines of Ribeira Sacra.

Sacred Wines?

Ribeira Sacra gains its name from the proliferation of monasteries and religious strongholds to be found there. Remember, this is one of the religious outposts of Spain. Clearly the monastic orders will have had much to do with the introduction of the vine, but the types of wines that are produced now are not normally associated with the sacristy. The varieties are much as before, but with the addition of Albariño (see

Spain Gourmetour No. 36) and Treixadura.

The Denomination is about to be approved and has yet to achieve any significant recognition outside Galicia. The vines are planted on steep hillsides and the aforementioned terraces, which makes them very hard to work. In some parts the only way out for the grapes, at harvest time, is by boat! It will be important that they develop wines of high quality, in order to justify the tremendous labor and cost of producing these wines. One wonders what will happen when younger generations are faced with the toil that their fathers accept as normal.

The confluence of the two rivers is impressive indeed, with the highway passing over part of it on a stilted bridge. The two become the Miño, which can be crossed over a dam at this point, and which continues its route south to Orense where it is joined by the river Arnoia. This tributary has descended from a new Denomination - Monterrei.

A Region Reborn

Monterrei lost its status as a provisional Denomination of Origin when Spain joined what we now know as the European Union, because it could not meet the requirements. Immediately, interested parties set out to rectify those matters that had displeased the authorities in Madrid, and restructured vine and wine production in order to gain the region's full status as a Denomination of Origin, which was achieved in January this year. The climate is semi-continental, but production per hectare is good and above average.

There are 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of vineyards

planted both in the truly beautiful Verín or Monterrei valley and on its lower slopes, all of which is very near the northern Portuguese border. The conditions are ideal for vine growing and the predominant varieties are white - Verdello and Doña Blanca with some Palomino. The red varieties are Mencía and Tinta Fina (a clone of Tempranillo). The vineyards are well organized and economic to run, and when more are trained on wires, mechanized pruning and harvesting will be possible.

On a Grand Scale

Much of what has been achieved in Monterrei, had already been done in Ribeiro, the Denomination to the west of Orense on the north bank of the Miño. Orense sits in a bowl surrounded by high hills that often trap the river mists in winter. Perhaps that is why there is a large production of agudiente (*eau-de-vie*) in this area, to the extent that they have gone to the trouble of creating a controlled classification for that type marketed as Orujo. In general, the vineyards escape the worst effects of this cold humidity.

Wine production is crucial to the local economy, and there are very large cooperative style production operations around Ribadavia in the center of the region. White wines made from a whole variety of different vines, including the Treixadura, Macabeo (better known in Catalonia, or as Viura in Navarre and Rioja), Godello, Albillo (mostly found in the Dours Valley), Albariño and Palomino (the sherry grape again), as well as the Torrontes that originated here, but has been exploited better, so far, in Argentina.

There are reds from the Caíño, Mencía, Tempranillo, and Alicante varieties. Again the wines can be as low as nine degrees in alcohol, which is appealing for those seeking lighter, less heady wines.

In the bakeries of the towns and villages will be found the ubiquitous *empanada gallega* - a dough based pie with tomatoes, onions, seasoning, and a dash of wine, with a fish like mussels, sardines, tuna, or a meat. Perhaps it is indicative of the gallegos will to travel and the dish's popularity, that some of the best snacks in the cafés of Madrid airport are the empanadas.

The river is slowing now, as the gradient eases and it approaches the estuary. It now forms the border between Spain and Portugal and passes the first of the three sub zones of the Rías Baixas - Condado de Tea on the north bank. The Rías are the network of inlets or fiords that line the coast of Galicia - in the southern half, they are shallow and low sided and called *Bajas* (low), in the north they are deep and high sided, and called *Altas* (high). However, Condado de Tea is inland, but combines the influences of the river with those of the sea that come on the winds and with the tides. Rías Baixas D.O. is mainly associated with the Albariño vine, that is said to have originated on the Rhine, and it could be a close relation to one of the varieties in Alsace brought to Galicia by pilgrims to Santiago, but it has developed strong characteristics of its own.

Apart from anything else, it can be credited with the revival of the Galician wine industry. The interest that it created in Madrid and

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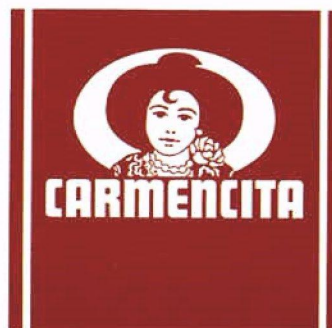
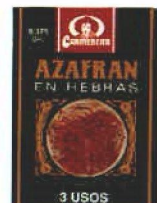
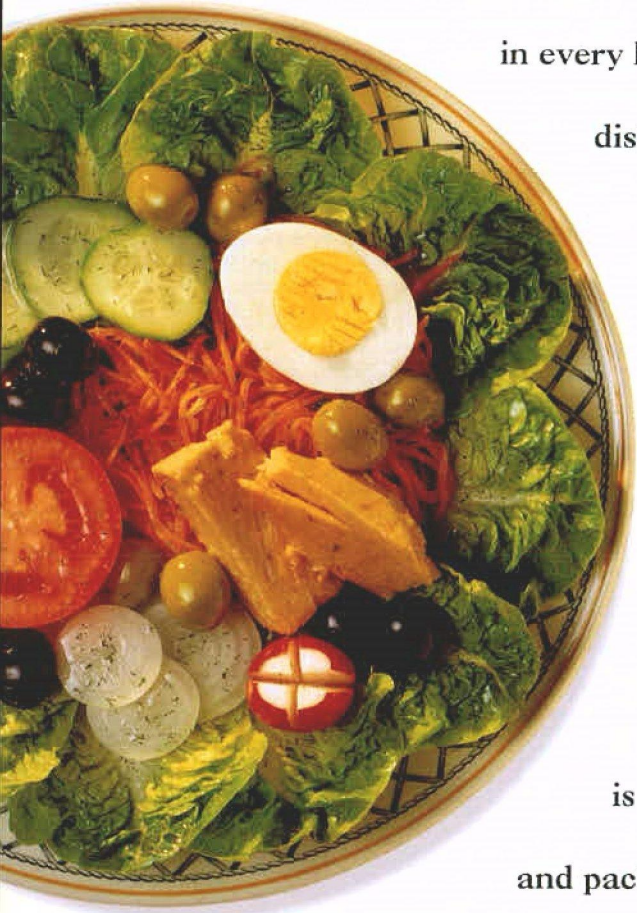
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GALICIA BEARS SO MANY RESEMBLANCES TO THE CELTIC FRINGE OF EUROPE FROM BRITTANY TO THE WEST OF SCOTLAND, YET IT IS DIFFERENT.

around the world, when marketed as a single varietal, was the injection that was needed to stimulate the pursuit of better quality wines - whites especially. However, in Condado de Tea the wines can be based on a minimum of seventy per cent Albariño or Treixadura, and in the next sub zone downstream, and also on the north bank - O Rosal - the same minimums apply to Albariño or Loureira. The wines have a reputation for being expensive, which stems from the problem of new investment and small scale production - the largest property is 40 hectares (100 acres) - but, as

the realism of marketing economics and of competition have prevailed, and initial outlays become amortized, so prices are becoming more viable. An abiding memory of this area is the outstanding beauty of the lush, rich green of the trees and pastures, not least in mid summer when the vines' leaves are fully developed and the vines crawling over the *pérgolas* that are constructed to keep the bunches of grapes clear of the wet earth and low lying dampness. Couple this with the lovely, if sometimes severe, granite houses and the wealth of abundant color in the flowers, and this

can be an idyllic environment, even when its raining!

The Wealth of the Sea

The third sub zone of the Rías Baixas wine region is Val do Salnés, which is up the coast, on a peninsula north of Pontevedra. These are the wines that must have at least seventy per cent of Albariño, and more often than not, it is the only variety. The zone owes nothing to the river Miño, of course, but, as with Rosal, it is on the coast and relates directly to the food to which the wines are most suited - shellfish and fish. The list can read like a fishmonger's guide book - prawns - large (*cigalas*) and small (*gam-*

bas), spiny lobster (*langostas*), European lobster (*bogavante*), crabs - large with huge pincers (*buey*) or spider (*centolla*), cockles, limpets, mussels boiled simply with a little white wine and a bay leaf, clams, oysters, and an abundance of scallops (the shell of which is the insignia of the Knights Templar and marks the route of the pilgrims from the Pyrenean border to the shrine of St. James).

And then there is all the wonderful fish from the Atlantic and wherever else the vast Spanish fishing fleet might roam. The squid or octopus must not be forgotten, either, for one of the region's delicacies is *pulpo a feira*, when it is boiled and sprinkled with olive oil and paprika. Spicy, yes, but be more careful with *pimientos de Padrón*, which are small green peppers that originate in the town of that name, and can really catch you out. As the restaurateur said: "Some are hot and some are not, we just don't know which is which!"

Appropriately the river has arrived at its mouth where the town of La Guardia (A Garda) is known as the capital of the lobster, and, at the journey's end, where better to eat one and enjoy a bottle of lightly chilled Rías Baixas wine.

Jeremy Watson was Director of Wines from Spain in London for twelve years, and now lives in Mallorca, working as a consultant and exploring and writing about the Peninsula and its wines.

See recipes on page 107.





C.R.D.O. Rueda

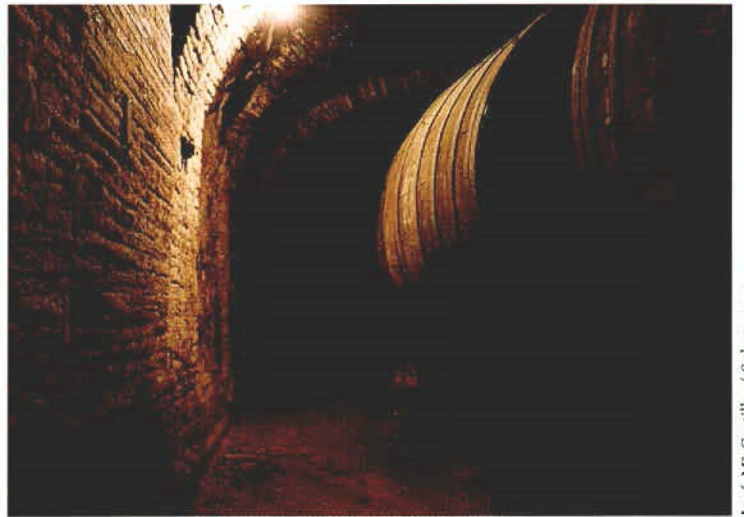
Why should one of the Rioja's most prestigious classic bodegas, Marqués de Riscal, choose to set up a white wine-making winery in a small, rather undistinguished looking wine town somewhere in the middle of the Castilian plain? Why has Jacques Lurton, one of Bordeaux's new generation of globetrotting winemakers, singled out Rueda out of all the other possible locations on the wine map as the ideal place for making a world class white varietal wine? Or why should José Peñín, "doyen" of Spanish wine writers, have settled precisely on the straggling, one-street, out-sized village that is Rueda as the perfect spot to produce his autographed white varietal Mirador? The answer is Verdejo, Rueda's unique white noble grape variety.



AND NOW FOR SOMETHING
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT:

THE WHITE WINES OF RUEDA

Text: **John Reeder**



José M^a Castillo / Sobremesa

The very particular grape variety Verdejo produces a highly distinctive, original wine.

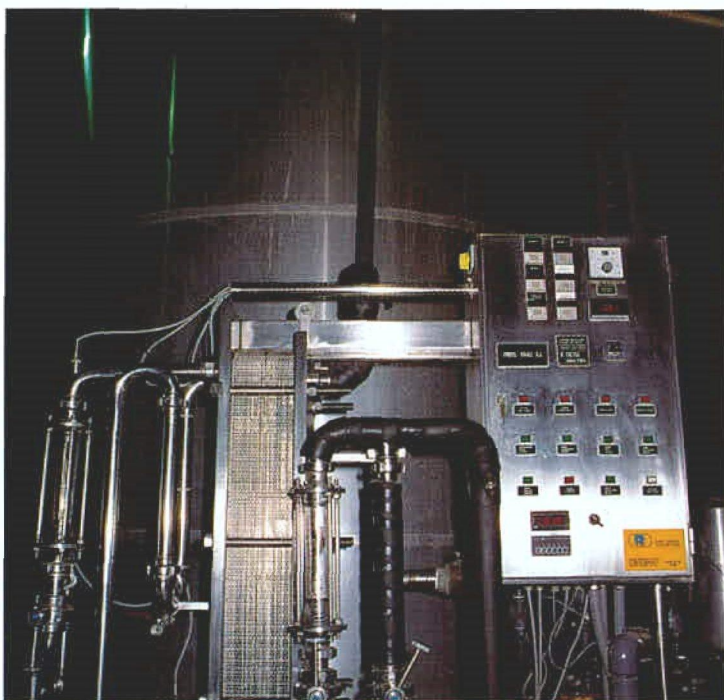
At the end of the 16th century the most costly and best appreciated wines were the older, cask aged ones.

Originally the Verdejo vines were grown "en rastra", nowadays, more and more, they are trained up over low espaliers.



José M^a Castillo / Sobremesa

The Rueda Superior Verdejo is produced with the latest wine-making technology.



José M^a Castillo / Sobremesa

Setting aside as special cases such as Pedro Ximénez, Palomino (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 35), the sherry grapes, and the Catalanian cava grapes, Parellada, Xarello and Macabeo (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 29), there are, arguably perhaps, in Spain two highly individual thoroughbred indigenous white grape varieties, two different alternative tastes in a worldwide panorama of white wines which increasingly threatens to be swamped by the all-conquering fashion for Chardonnay: Albariño Denomination of Origin (D.O.) from the Rías Baixas in Spain's far northwestern Atlantic corner, Galicia, and Verdejo grown in an area not a dozen miles or so from one of Spain's great wine rivers, the Duero, in central Castile.

Verdejo, the Noble White Grape

Verdejo is a variety of obscure origins, but certainly pre-medieval, which has over long centuries of evolution become perfectly acclimatized to the rigors of the particularly harsh climate of the Castilian high plateau, between 600 and 900 meters up (2,000 and 3,000 feet). The poor stony soils of the Rueda region where the vines are planted absorb the heat of the day and enable them to survive the bitter night frosts of a Castilian spring. It will be remembered that the vineyards of the Rueda Denomination de Origin are a stone's throw away, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) or so further down the road from the famed Vega Sicilia bodega in the Ribera del



Jose M^a Castillo / Sobremesa

Duero D.O., the quality of whose legendary red wines is also in part due to the Castilian climate. Short, cold spring, and above all, autumn nights during the final phase of the ripening of the grapes before the vintage, which follow long, hot, sunny, dry days are what, at least partly, explains that touch of acidity which lends elegance to both wines.

Originally the Verdejo vine was trained along the ground, *en rastra*, that is to say, the shoots were left long to trail along the ground precisely to protect them from the heat of the sun and so that the heat retained by the soil could keep them warm through the cold nights. Nowadays, more and more, the vines are trained up over low espaliers. A very particular grape vari-

ety, then, which grows in a very particular habitat cannot but with the help of the very latest wine-making technology available - fine-tuned controlled cold fermentation, new maceration techniques, cask-fermentation, of which more later - produce a highly distinctive, original wine. The Rueda Superior Verdejo white is a straw-yellow, greenish white wine, rich in glycerine, densely fruity and spicy, vigorous and fresh, yet with a light and subtle bouquet, well balanced, with a touch of acidity in the mouth, and with the typical Verdejo aftertaste, surprisingly and agreeably bitter. A white wine completely unlike anything else on offer at present on the wine market.

A one-off, which is in itself a refreshing surprise in a

Castillo de la Mota - splendid fortress built of bricks in the 15th century.



M^a Luisa Assens / Sobremesa

THE RUEDA D.O. CONSTITUTES SOME 6,000 HECTARES OF VINEYARD, AND SEVENTY-TWO WINE TOWNS AND VILLAGES. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE TOWNS IS RUEDA ITSELF.

world of white wine increasingly characterized by a palate and imagination-numbing uniformity. We now have Chardonnay varietals from California and South Africa, Australia and Chile, Argentina and Bulgaria, cloned wines becoming more and more undistinguishable. Now let no one dispute the quality and attractions of these fine French varieties, but isn't it all becoming a little tedious? Vive la différence, mes amis!

A Long and Distinguished Pedigree

The Rueda Denomination of Origin constitutes some six thousand hectares (15,000

acres) of vineyard, seventy-two wine towns and villages which straddle the corners of the adjacent provinces of Valladolid, Segovia and Avila, not twenty-odd miles to the south of one of Spain's great wine rivers, the Duero, along whose banks, you will recall, are to be found the other two major Castilian Denominations of Origin, Ribera del Duero and Toro. The most important of these wine towns is Rueda itself, and beneath its narrow streets and many *bodegas* are miles upon miles of labyrinths, galleries of old wine cellars, a legacy of Rueda's former glory in Spain's Golden Age. In the

Middle Ages, the wines of the area were supplied to the taverns and hostelries of the great cities of Castile and northern Spain, cities such as Valladolid or Burgos or Atlantic seaports like Santander or Bilbao. What popularized these wines was the growth of one of Spain's most important commercial fairs in the city of Medina del Campo not 20 kilometers (ten miles) from Rueda, after the discovery of the Americas in the 16th century when these fairs transformed Medina into a major financial and banking center. Spanish and European merchants who came to buy, sell, borrow, and lend at the fairs helped

spread far and wide the fame of the local white wine. Demand soon outstripped supply, new vineyards were planted and like Spain, local wine producers enjoyed a golden century of expansion and prosperity.

What were these wines like? Firstly, the most costly and best appreciated of them were older *añejo* cask-aged wines. At the end of the 16th century it was not unusual for wealthier wine drinkers to keep wine in the cask for five to ten years before drinking it and the records tell us of a prized butt of twenty-year-old wine, the property of a rich local banker. These *añejo* wines were much in demand as a restorative tonic for the sick and aged, and at this time white wine from around Rueda were apparently recommended as a sovereign cure for the gout!

A long period of decline in the fortunes of the wines of the area set in half-way through the 17th century only later to be revered in the mid-19th century when a revival in popularity saw the opening of the first important export markets - France, England, and Spanish Cuba - for Rueda's fine white wines. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the phylloxera plague - the dreaded vine louse which so devastated Europe's vineyards in the area in 1884 - cut short this revival, ruining many small grape-growers who were forced to emigrate, and bringing about a dramatic fall in production.

Recovery was slow and based largely on the planting of Palomino, the sherry grape, less fragile and higher yielding than the indige-



THE RUEDA SUPERIOR VERDEJO WHITE IS A STRAW-YELLOW, GREENISH WHITE WINE, DENSELY FRUITY AND SPICY, VIGOROUS AND FRESH, YET WITH A LIGHT AND SUBTLE BOUQUET.

nous Verdejo, but in local Rueda climatic conditions and soil types, producing only an undistinguished fortified wine, the Pálido Dorado (Pale Golden) for consumption in local taverns.

Riscal and the New Verdejo Varietal

What brought this rather undistinguished period in Rueda's history to a close was a major investment decision. In 1972 Marqués de Riscal, one of the Rioja's classic founding bodegas, decided to transfer their white winemaking set up to Rueda and henceforth Marqués de Riscal's white wines would be largely Verdejo varietals. This was the culmination of a long search for a distinctive thoroughbred white grape variety in which the Riojans had been advised and assisted by Bordeaux's

leading oenologist, the renowned Emile Peynaud.

The new bodega, Vinos Blancos de Castilla, began paying premiums to local grape-growers who planted Verdejo, thus more than compensating them for any loss they might incur through replacing the higher-yielding, hardier Palomino. Later, as we shall see, Vinos Blancos de Castilla encouraged the planting of the Rioja white grape, the Viura and the French variety Sauvignon Blanc, mostly for blending purposes, and more recently they have acquired extensive vineyards of their own. The success of the new Verdejo white attracted other winemakers to Rueda, the Davis University-trained Carlos Falcó, Marqués de Griñón, for example, and by 1980 when the wine-producing area of Rue-

da was officially designated as a Denomination of Origin, most of the leading local winemen had been won over. This same commercial success for the young varietal white quickly relegated the production of the old Pálido Dorado (which has, at the time of writing, 1996, virtually disappeared) to second place, as other local Rueda bodegas followed Riscal's example. The new cold-fermentation technology, and more careful winemaking techniques in general brought in from the Rioja, also found imitators in Rueda and in what was a relatively short period of time the whole business of grape growing and winemaking in the area was transformed. One of Spain's success stories of the 1970s and 1980s.

The Second Revolution

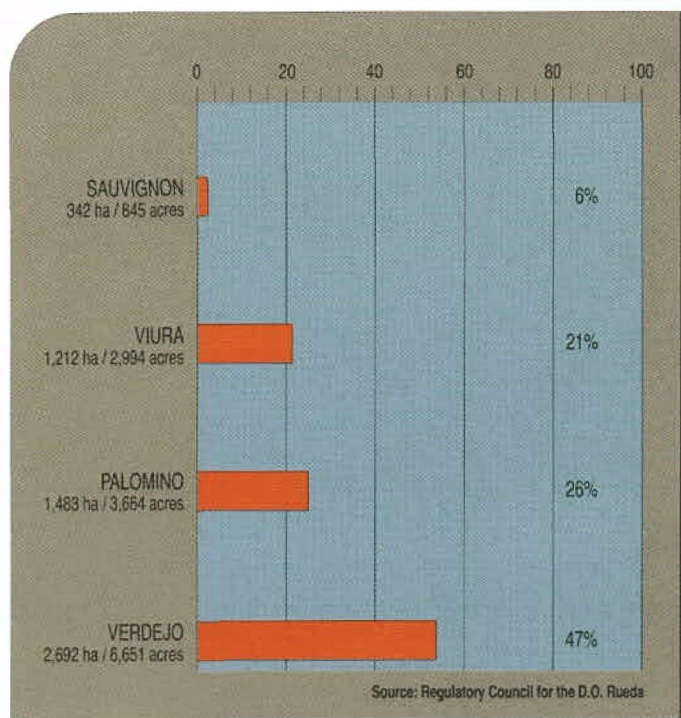
So, midway through the 1990s, what's new? Well, spurred on yet again by the market leaders, the Riojans at Vinos Blancos de Castilla, a second wave of technological innovation is spreading across Rueda. In their quest for a more complex satisfying white wine, the men from Riscal have firstly introduced new cold maceration techniques which make for a much more densely aromatic fruity wine. This is a process developed in France during the last decade whereby the grape must, unfermented grape juice obtained from the pressing, is left to macerate on the grape skins at a controlled temperature for a few hours before fermentation is allowed to begin, thus, in this case, absorbing more of the fruity,

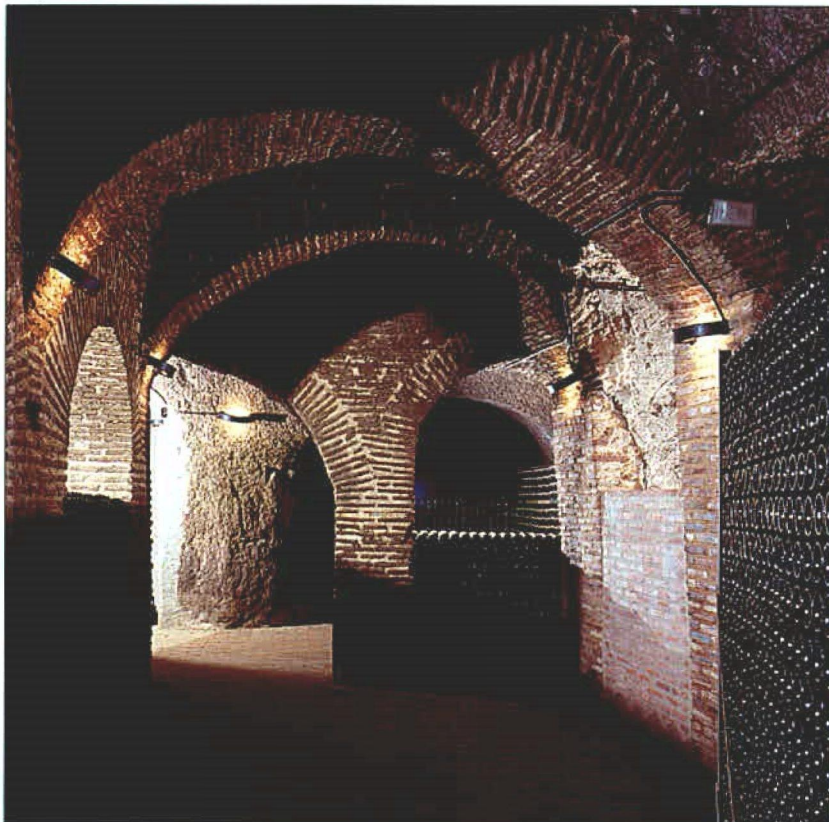
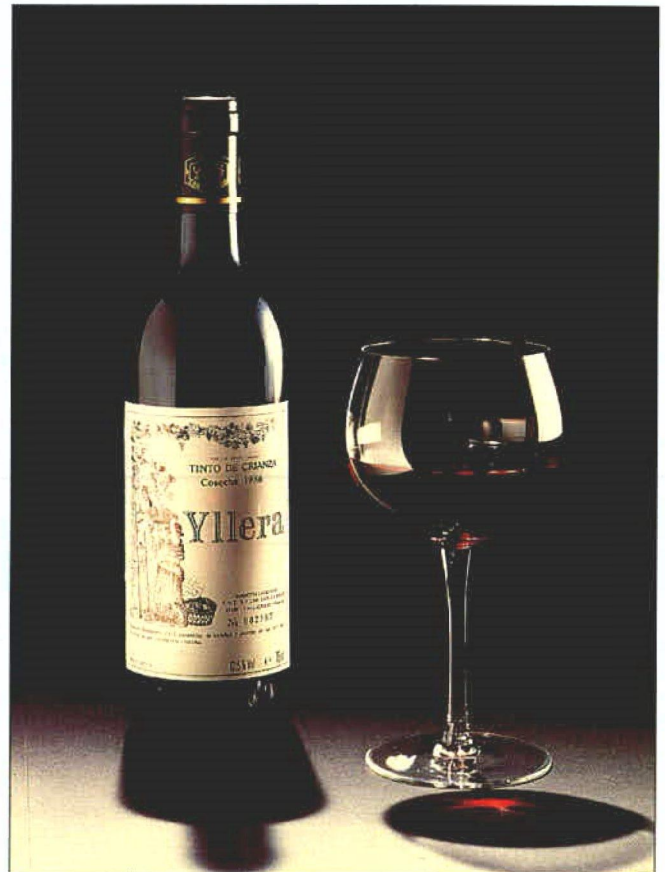
grapey varietal personality of the Verdejo.

Secondly, a more effective cold fermentation system has been developed involving the insertion of long, flat, cooling plates directly into the tanks which permit what one might describe as fine tuning the control of the temperature of the fermenting wine. In collaboration with an exceptional vintage, that of 1994, these new techniques have helped produce an exceptional wine, the overpoweringly aromatic and richly fruity Marqués de Riscal Rueda 1994, of which top man and technical director at Vinos Blancos de Castilla, Pedro Aznar, told me that he did not expect to be able to make a better white wine in his lifetime. Not a single bottle of this outstanding vintage remains in the bodega, the million and a half originally produced all having been sold. So if you see some out there on a shelf somewhere, grab it!

Riscal has also, since 1988, invested over three million dollars in acquiring over a hundred and fifty hectares (37,000 acres) of vineyard which they have planted mostly with Verdejo, but also with Sauvignon Blanc. This obviously gives them greater control over their supply of grapes, and over the quality of these grapes. The third major development in new wine-making technology has been the experiments carried out by various wineries with cask-fermentation. You will recall that experiments have been going on in Rioja for some five or six years now (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36), with young second-year white wines first fermented

RUEDA D.O. VINEYARD SURFACE AND PERCENTAGES





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IN RUEDA, A SECOND REVOLUTION HAS TAKEN PLACE IN WINE-MAKING TECHNOLOGY— NEW MORE EFFECTIVE COLD FERMEN- TATION SYSTEMS, NEW MACERATION TECHNIQUES, AND CASK FERMENTATION.

in oak cask, then left to un- dergo a short period of cask-aging. It has long been the opinion of Manuel Ruiz Hernández of the Oenologi- cal Research Station in Haro, that white wines greatly benefit from being ferment- ed in new, carefully cut and cured oak casks, emerging from the first fermentation in the wood with delicately oaky aromas as better-bal-

anced, more finished younger wines which com- bine the virtues of the fresh, grapey, fruitiness of a first year wine, with the subtler complexity of an aged vin- tage. With his Palacio de Bornos Rueda Superior Fer- mentado en Barrica (fer- mented in the cask) Antonio Sanz of Bodegas de Crianza de Castilla la Vieja seems to be achieving just that. Fer-

mented in new Allier oak casks for 30 to 35 days at be- tween 18° and 22°C (64° to 71°F), stirring up the lees every day, then left six months in the cask and six months in the bottle, Sanz has produced a well-bal- anced, elegantly oaky but still fruity, 100% Verdejo va- rietal which should of course age well in the bot- tle. Having seen the results

we can expect cask-fermen- tation to catch on in Rueda and more and more cask- fermented Verdejo varietal whites to be appearing. Another oenologist in Rueda experimenting with the pos- sibilities of cask-fermented Verdejo varietals is the Frenchman, Jacques Lurton, from Bordeaux. One of the new breed of itinerant wine- makers, Rueda first came to

TOTAL EXPORTS TO EUROPE
(FIGURES INDICATE THE NUMBER OF 75 cc BOTTLES)

COUNTRY	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
GERMANY	12,368	29,652	41,833	47,225	36,496	40,080	56,688	114,833	85,654
BELGIUM	20,880	24,120	25,200	37,392	45,888	37,148	31,284	17,100	27,924
DENMARK	25,020	12,840	1,269	1,036	12,000	9,600	9,168	76,147	24,744
FINLAND	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000	54,156	16,831
FRANCE	4,788	1,032	4,658	7,560	12,320	42,972	41,547	39,732	26,651
GREECE	0	0	180	0	0	0	0	0	0
NETHERLANDS	21,892	27,592	10,296	17,520	17,312	16,872	83,797	150,840	113,119
IRELAND	9,376	8,500	8,160	3,960	1,600	6,960	1,200	4,860	4,500
ITALY	0	900	0	300	0	2,549	0	24	0
LUXEMBOURG	1,800	1,800	2,040	3,060	4,080	2,520	1,740	2,760	3,300
PORTUGAL	0	60	120	0	108	1,800	180	600	0
U.K.	50,064	53,408	31,404	70,556	12,300	41,065	226,767	211,872	221,100
SWEDEN	0	0	0	0	0	0	71,064	107,100	156,136
TOTAL EU	146,188	159,904	125,160	188,609	142,104	201,566	529,435	780,024	679,959
ANDORRA	1,860	3,780	10,440	17,160	3,536	600	1,140	300	357
AUSTRIA	240	0	1,800	6,096	0	0	0	0	0
ICELAND	3,360	1,344	0	2,016	0	0	0	0	60
NORWAY	0	0	0	0	0	240	0	120	120
POLAND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,200	1,800
RUSSIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,400
SWITZERLAND	4,680	3,780	10,440	17,160	1,440	14,592	10,392	10,884	41,760
YUGOSLAVIA	0	0	0	2,160	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL REST OF EUROPE	10,140	8,904	24,696	42,576	4,976	15,432	11,532	12,504	46,497
TOTAL	156,328	168,808	149,856	231,185	147,080	216,998	540,967	792,528	726,456

Source: Regulatory Council for the Denomination of Origin Rueda

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the notice of Lurton at a tasting at Bordeaux's Vinexpo in 1989 while he was looking for a suitable Spanish white wine for an English importer. In his own words: "Of all the Spanish whites I tasted, the Verdejo was the one which most impressed on the palate. Later, when I came to visit the area, I was able to confirm my initial diagnosis. Here, I said to myself, is the raw material for a world class white." Since then, together with a small local producer, Lurton has been experimenting with cask-fermented Verdejo varietal whites. A first offering, a limited production run of 10,500 of the Belondrade y Lurton 1994, was recently exported to England.

Rueda and Rueda Superior
We mentioned briefly above, Riscal's planting of the French variety Sauvignon Blanc in its new vineyards. What's this, you cry? Heresy

of heresies! Does this mean the abandoning of Verdejo? Let's try and put this new viticultural development in Rueda into some kind of perspective. Sauvignon Blanc at present constitutes a mere six percent of the total surface area under vine in the Rueda D.O. Officially authorized for winemaking in the Denomination, together with Verdejo and Viura, the white Rioja grape, is principally used for blending with Verdejo. Currently (1995 figures) less than five percent of the total bottled production of wine made in Rueda is classified as Rueda Sauvignon, i.e. a Sauvignon Blanc varietal white wine. Perhaps at this point we should explain in a little more detail the official classification system applied to Rueda's white wines. There are two main types, whose names will appear on the back label: Rueda Superior and Rueda. The Regulatory Council of the

Denomination of Origin defines these as follows: Rueda Superior is white wine made from a minimum of 70% of the white Verdejo grape, the remaining 30% being of the other officially authorized varieties, Viura and Sauvignon Blanc. Wines classified as Rueda must be made from a minimum of 40% of Verdejo, the remainder once more having to come from the authorized varieties. It must be insisted upon that these are merely minimum requirements. The immense majority of Rueda's twenty-seven bodegas make Rueda Superior wines, for example, that are either 100% Verdejo varietals, or include a small percentage of Viura or Sauvignon Blanc. Thus Riscal's 1995 Rueda contains 15% Viura to 85% Verdejo, the Viura lending necessary structure and body to the wine. Antonio Sanz's Palacio de Bornos Rueda Superior similarly contains 10% Viura

while José Peñín's Mirador, another Rueda Superior, has a coupage of 20% Sauvignon Blanc, to add a floral note to the fruitiness of the 80% Verdejo. Some local winemakers, as you can see, prefer 100% Verdejo varietal wines, whilst others are of the opinion that a coupage such as those mentioned above gives the best results and that in whites, as in reds, we should not become obsessed with 100% varietal wines. The jury appears to be still out on the question. Going back to the recent introduction of Sauvignon into Rueda as an adjunct and ally to Verdejo, in the last analysis the proof of the pudding is in the eating: they do appear to complement each other perfectly. It is curious to recall that precisely what attracted Professeur Peynaud to the possibilities of the Verdejo variety back in the 1960s was its similarity to the Sauvignon Blanc grown

TOTAL EXPORTS TO ASIA, AFRICA AND AUSTRALIA
(FIGURES INDICATE THE NUMBER OF 75 CC. BOTTLES)

COUNTRY	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
AUSTRALIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	0
CHINA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,400
U.A.E	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,280	0	0
PHILIPPINES	0	0	0	0	5,500	3,059	4,200	600	1,740
HONG KONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	480	900	660
JAPAN	720	864	1,800	1,440	17,524	27,903	5,820	30,600	7,656
KENYA	2,040	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MOROCCO	0	0	0	0	820	448	132	0	120
SEOUL	0	0	0	0	0	0	252	0	0
SINGAPORE	0	0	0	0	700	9,000	600	0	0
SOUTH AFRICA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120
TOTAL	2,760	864	1,800	1,440	24,544	40,410	13,764	32,220	12,696

Source: Regulatory Council for the Denomination of Origin Rueda

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in the Graves appellation in Bordeaux.

If you walk around the little town of Rueda today - more of a flat village really - sampling the wine in the bodegas, you are liable to bump into half of Europe - English vintners, German supermarket-chain buyers, French oenologists or charming Dutch ladies from Amsterdam daily papers. Ex-

ports of Rueda's white wines have doubled since 1987, and on some markets, the United Kingdom for example, sales have more than quadrupled. The U.S.A., the U.K., Sweden, Holland, Germany, and Mexico, in that order, make up Rueda's main customers. Between 1989 and 1995, production figures for bottled wines

from the Rueda Denomination similarly doubled to more than 7.5 million bottles. Little wonder then that Rueda seems to be brimming with confidence and that there is a buzz in the air in the little Castilian town. Perhaps these are the just rewards which accrue in an ever more uniform world to a highly individual first-class product.

John Reeder is a wine writer who has published in the most important English and Spanish wine journals. He is associate professor at the University of Madrid, where he lives.

See list of Main Exporters on page 21.

TOTAL EXPORTS TO NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA
(FIGURES INDICATE THE NUMBER OF 75 cc BOTTLES)

COUNTRY	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
CANADA	52,860	35,304	58,872	19,200	43,920	23,996	18,540	22,908	47,351
U.S.A.	262,945	316,060	231,552	145,596	330,500	284,506	188,526	218,748	287,028
MEXICO	43,465	63,300	58,980	132,020	135,540	81,708	100,529	125,400	85,512
NETHERLAND ANTILLES	240	240	300	0	1,200	600	900	0	1,300
ARGENTINA	0	24	0	0	0	3,000	3,000	0	300
BRAZIL	9,180	18,984	18,240	16,800	0	0	600	22,800	13,680
COLOMBIA	0	0	0	0	7,200	1,800	1,440	6,048	4,200
CUBA	0	3,840	5,400	588	16,640	9,000	10,260	16,200	36,420
CURAAO	0	0	0	0	0	0	360	0	0
ECUADOR	0	0	0	2,400	6,400	0	3,600	4,500	2,400
GUATEMALA	0	0	0	0	0	480	480	900	3,960
HONDURAS	1,200	720	900	720	1,200	0	960	900	900
JAMAICA	0	0	0	0	240	0	0	0	0
PANAMA	1,200	1,500	1,200	3,000	3,200	1,800	1,800	4,200	0
PERU	0	0	0	0	1,920	3,600	7,200	25,224	12,600
PUERTO RICO	12,240	12,600	13,980	14,700	15,680	12,253	12,060	10,404	8,880
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	3,180	2,700	3,000	2,400	1,860	3,120	3,900	3,900	6,300
URUGUAY	2,520	0	480	1,200	0	0	600	1,080	1,080
VENEZUELA	360	3,600	0	720	6,400	2,520	10,176	0	0
TOTAL	386,510	459,952	392,904	340,244	574,848	427,723	364,751	463,212	511,911
TOTAL WORLD EXPORTS	670,474	667,064	592,212	609,469	773,040	713,723	940,890	1,311,000	1,270,935

Source: Regulatory Council for the Denomination of Origin Rueda

Just visit a market, grocer's shop or supermarket in Spain and you'll see how important good food is to Spaniards. They not only devote time and patience to their food shopping but are prepared to pay for quality, especially when it comes to seafood. A glance at the menus of restaurants or Spanish cookery books points clearly to the Spaniard's love of fish and shellfish. Seafood is treated with reverence by fishmongers and consumers alike.

With this in mind and in search of new information on what's going on in the gastronomic world of the Basques, I have been traveling in the north of Spain. I was lucky enough to be invited to go out to sea to watch the fishermen catching tuna fish and bonito, with a rod and muscle, as they have done since time immemorial. I spoke to fishmongers, to amateur chefs in the gastronomic societies (places where men gather to eat, cook, play cards, sing, or organize their cultural and sporting activities) and to those in charge of the most progressive or traditional kitchens of the country who are still leading the way in cooking and being followed by many, both within Spain and abroad.

From June to well into October, the waters of the Cantabrian sea are full of round, reddish tuna fish, pale bonitos and beautiful albacores. Most of these powerful fish belong to ocean species that swim in large schools and are capable of tremendous migrations. This is the time of the fiestas in the towns and villages, the perfect excuse for cooking fish dishes that include tasty sauces thickened without flour, just with garlic, oil and the gelatine from the skin of the fish. The *Cofradía de Pescadores* (the local fishing association) in Fuenterrabía on the French border, smells of fresh fish and *marmitako*, the dish that

the fishermen prepare on board daily with fresh tomato, green pepper, potatoes and, of course, tuna fish straight out of the sea. For anyone visiting this town, I recommend the selection of *tapas* (here called *pinchos*) that are served at the Yola-berri Bar and Restaurant. Impossible to resist are the cider-stewed *chorizo*, the omelette made of peppers, the minced cod balls and especially the tuna with onions. **Yola-berri, San Pedro 22, Fuenterrabía (Guipúzcoa). Tel: (34-43) 645 611.**

But winds of change are blowing in the direction of the famous La Brecha Market (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 39) in the heart of the elegant city of San Sebastián (called Donostia in the Basque language). A project still on the drawing board plans to restore the timeworn building and to create premises that will be better suited to today's needs. Some of its current users are worried about the change, others look forward to it, concerned that La Brecha should survive into the next century. One stall that has remained unchanged over the years is Pescados Conde at the entrance to the fish market. The selection offered every morning by Ceferino and Puri Lista is unparalleled. The quality and freshness of the products and the tastefulness with which they are displayed on leaves, seaweed and ice is a sight worth seeing. Hake caught not in nets but on the hook, monkfish and scorpion fish, barbel, red mullet and sardines, fresh anchovies, oysters, clams, goose barnacles, elvers, lobsters, crayfish and, in pride of place, tuna, bonito and horse

mackerel. **Pescados Conde, stalls 39/40, Mercado de la Brecha, San Sebastián. Tel: (34-43) 428 048.**

Also unrivaled in Spain is the prestige of the Basque chef. These are real professionals - traditionally men, although the number of women is on the increase - who have grown up in an environment that loves cooking and appreciates and understands quality. They are cooks who first learn by watching their mothers and then as apprentices to the masters of their craft. To triumph, they have to learn to be competitive because most people in the Basque Country know how to cook and really value a good meal. Thousands of amateur cooks, who are used to eating well at home, regularly practice their skills in the local gastronomic societies. There are many excellent restaurants and bars in the Basque Country that offer exceptional variety. Here I would like to take the opportunity to mention two admirable families while talking about some of the dishes that I most enjoyed on this trip. The Akelarre Restaurant, at the top of Monte Igueldo that stands guard over the city, is the domain of the Subijana family (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 16). Pedro, the son of a great pastry cook, is a serious and innovative restaurateur who has spent years at the head of his much-respected kitchen and who never takes a wrong step. I still remember the taste of a cream of corn and zucchini soup perfumed with ham-flavored oil. Its delicate texture was quite simply delicious. Another dish, warm oysters with cream of leeks and broad bean vinaigrette

was masterly. My favorite amongst the main dishes was the roast pigeon with shallots and braised celery flavored with sour grapes, and my choice of dessert was the hot cherry pie with melissa and mint. Pedro chose two excellent wines - one white from Navarre, Chivite '95, barrel-fermented, and one red Rioja, Remelluri '91 - to make the meal even more memorable. **Restaurante Akelarre, P. Padre Orcolaga 56 (Igueldo), 20008 San Sebastián. Tel: (34-43) 212 052.**

I always liked the names the Basques give to their chalet-type country houses called *caseríos*. I associate them with good eating and drinking and this is precisely what happens in Garburo on the outskirts of San Sebastián. Here, in just a few years, the Arbelaitz brothers have managed to place their restaurant, Zuberoa, amongst the top-ranking restaurants of Spain. Hilario is the chef, José Mari the pastry cook and Eusebio serves the tables.

Service is watchful, efficient and considerate and the wine list is very representative of quality Spanish wines. In Zuberoa an excellent idea is to try their sampling menu, a selection of half portions of their best creations. Of the seven dishes included in this menu, I especially recommend the quail gelatine with thyme-flavored tomato sauce and the cheeks of veal in red wine with sage. From the rest of the menu, one dish I would be happy to eat often would be the roast pig's trotters stuffed with lamb sweet-breads and mushrooms. Being a small person I am always worried about my weight so rarely allow myself to eat desserts. But on this occasion I was not prepared to compromise. Temptation took the form of apple pie and custard. It sounds pretty basic but it wasn't. The Zuberoa apple pie was undoubtedly the best I have ever eaten and there have been many. The pastry was light and crisp, and the balance between the acidity of the apple and the touch of caramel was pure bliss. This time it was my turn to choose

A stroll in the Basque Country

the wine and I opted for Evo '91, a wine that is produced by another formidable set of brothers, the Guelbenzu, in Cascante (Navarre) and this accompanied all the dishes. Just perfect. **Restaurante Zuberoa, Barrio de Iturriotz 8, San Sebastián.**
Tel: (34-43) 492 679.

While accepting that good cooking is possible without professional training, but that without proper technique and experience it will never reach the standards of the Basque chefs, I decided to visit the master of them all, Luis Irizar. The Luis Irizaren Sukaldaritza Eskola is located to the left of the Playa de la Concha on the edge of the old town of San Sebastián. Practically all those who have had a positive influence on the Spanish gastronomic scene since the seventies have passed through here. This school was set up to fill a gap for cookery training, and students enroll for a theoretical and practical course lasting two years. In addition to the excellent installations of the school, an interesting gourmet shop offers a wide range of products to its students and faithful customers. I decided to try the excellent virgin Arbequina olive oil by **Antón Fonts, Cia. de Olís, S.L. San Francisco, 36, 43205 Reus (Tarragona) Tel/Fax: (34-77) 77 25 77**, and I ended up buying four bottles. Back home in London I have tried some of the products I selected with the help of Luis Irizar. These included a paste of sweet red pepper flesh produced by **Patés Zubia, Aingeru Ibiltkia, 17, 20540 Escoriaza (Guipúzcoa). Tel: (34-43) 71 51 31, Fax: (34-43) 71 52 79** under the brand name of Piparra. This paste is mostly used for preparing the famous *salsa vizcaína* (Biscay sauce) but it can be used in multiple ways in fish and meat dishes.

Apparently, the Ujués baker has decided to take early retirement and I was unable to obtain the promised bread recipe. Instead, here is my own version of an Iberian bread, published in my book *Mediterranean Flavours*.

Iberian Bread.

A baking stone is what you need if you want to bake the crisp, crusted and spongy textured breads (known as *bogazas*) popular in Spain. Prepare the starter dough the night before (with this quantity, you will have enough to bake loaves for 3 consecutive days). To keep it in the right condition, knead the starter dough for a few minutes every day and add a little extra flour and water. Use your hands to prepare the starter dough.

Makes one oblong loaf

For the starter dough:

10 gr/1/8 oz fresh yeast
250 ml/8 fl oz/1 cup tepid water
500 gr/1 lb/4 cups type "00" flour

For the second dough:

10 gr/1/8 oz fresh yeast
250 ml/8 fl oz/1 cup tepid water
1 tsp malt extract
250 gr/8 oz unbleached strong plain flour (1 2/3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour)
150 gr/5 oz stoneground wholemeal flour (1 cup stoneground whole-wheat flour)
8 gr/1/4 oz/1/2 tbsp salt
Olive oil for greasing
To make the starter dough, dissolve the yeast in 2 to 3 ta-

blespoons of the tepid water. Place the flour in a bowl with the yeast mixture and add the remaining water a little at a time, mixing it in very lightly with your hands. The mixture will be rather sticky, but will improve as more water is added. Transfer the dough to your working surface, previously sprinkled with flour, and knead for about 10 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Grease a bowl with a little olive oil, place the dough in the bowl and cover with a damp tea towel. Set aside in a cool place or the refrigerator to rise overnight.

For the second dough, place the yeast in a large mixing bowl with a couple of tablespoons of the tepid water. Stir to dissolve, then leave to rest for 5 minutes. Dissolve the malt extract in the remaining water and add it to the yeast. Add 150 grams (5 ounces) of the starter dough and mix well until blended. Add the flours and salt in several batches, incorporating each addition well before adding the next. Once evenly mixed, tip the dough on to a floured work surface and knead for 10 to 15 minutes or until smooth and elastic.

Place the dough in an oiled bowl, oiling the surface of the dough to prevent a skin forming. Cover and leave to rise at room temperature or slightly cooler, for 3 hours or until the dough has doubled in bulk.

Punch the dough to knock out any air, and turn on to a lightly floured surface. Knead briefly, and form into an oblong loaf. Slash the surface 4 or 5 times with a very sharp knife. Place on a floured baking sheet or baking (pizza) peel, cover with a clean towel and leave to rise at room temperature for about 1 hour or until doubled in size.

Half an hour before baking, preheat the oven at the highest temperature with a baking stone inside. When the bread has risen, slide it on to the hot stone. Reduce the oven to 220°C/425°F/gas mark 7 and bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until golden and well risen. The bread should sound hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack.

María José Sevilla is an expert in Spanish gastronomy, the author of several books and a BBC TV program on the subject, and is joint head of food and wine promotion in the Spanish Commercial Office located in the U.K.



RECIPES FROM LA VERA

Taken from *Cocina extremeña* by Tecló Villalón and Pedro Plasencia, Editorial Everest

Sopas Canas (Bread and garlic sops)

SERVES 4:
1 crusty loaf of bread, a few days old
3 garlic cloves
1 l milk
Salt
1 tbsp sweet La Vera paprika
Virgin olive oil

Cut the bread into small pieces and fry in hot oil together with the garlic cloves cut in two.
Add the paprika, stir well and add two glasses of water. Bring to a boil, season with salt and add the milk. Bring to a boil again and serve.

Patatas Aborregás (Shepherd's potatoes)

SERVES 4:
1 kg potatoes
2 garlic cloves
1 large onion
6 tbsp virgin olive oil
1 tsp bittersweet La Vera paprika

Peel and dice the potatoes. In an earthenware dish, fry the finely chopped onion and garlic in a little oil until golden. Add the potatoes and toss in the oil.
Add the paprika and water to cover. Simmer until the potatoes are cooked.

Extremadura Kid Stew

SERVES 6:
1 kg kid meat
100 ml olive oil
4 garlic cloves
1 bay leaf
1 tbsp bittersweet La Vera paprika
1 kid liver
1 glass white wine
Salt
Black pepper

Heat the oil in an earthenware dish. When boiling, fry the garlic cloves and set aside. Then fry the liver and also set aside. Cut the meat into small pieces and sauté in the same dish. Add the bay leaf and paprika and season with salt. Add the wine and allow the sauce to thicken.
In a mortar, crush the fried garlic and liver, a few black peppercorns and a little oil. Add to the dish, stir well and leave to cook until the sauce is very thick. Serve hot in the same dish.

Perrunillas
(Aniseed-flavored biscuits)

Perrunillas are very popular in certain regions of Spain, especially Extremadura. Though unpopular with the figure-conscious because made with lard, they have an intense flavor that makes them perfect for breakfast or as an afternoon snack. And they are easy to make and to keep.

FOR SEVERAL DOZEN *PERRUNILLAS*:

1 kg lard
650 gr sugar
Flour
4 eggs
2 tbsp cinnamon
1 tsp bicarbonate
1 lemon
1 small glass of dry anisette

Beat the butter, then add the egg yolks, sugar, cinnamon, bicarbonate, grated lemon rind and anisette. Sprinkle on the flour and mix in until a fine, soft dough is formed. Shape the perrunillas - round, flat biscuits about 6 cm in diameter or 2.4 inches - and arrange on a greased baking sheet. Brush with the beaten egg whites and sprinkle with sugar. Bake until golden brown.

RECIPES FROM THE RIVER MIÑO

Recipes selected by Ignacio Medina

Chestnut Soup

The mountains of Galicia are home to practically the last remaining chestnut forests of the Iberian peninsula. Chestnuts have always been used in Galician cooking but in the last twenty years or so they have become the center of a prosperous industry for marron glacés. Chestnut soup, one of the old formulae that live on in traditional cooking, used to be the first course on special occasions in the interior of Galicia, as was almond soup in other Spanish regions. We recommend replacing the lard of the original recipe with butter.

SERVES 6:

500 gr chestnuts,
the fresher the better
1 1/2 l milk
50 gr lard or butter
1/2 lemon

2 or 3 slices bread
Olive oil
White pepper
Salt

Start by peeling the chestnuts, removing both the shell and the fine skin covering the fruit. This is easiest if the chestnuts are first blanched for half a minute in boiling water. (Or use canned chestnuts that come completely peeled. They can be found in specialist shops.)

Then place the chestnuts in a pan, cover with cold water and add the pulp of half a lemon. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for about 30 minutes. Remove from the heat, drain the chestnuts and place them back in a pan, this time in half a liter of milk. Add salt and pepper and simmer for a further 30 minutes.

Blend the chestnuts to make a fine purée and gradually dilute with the

RECIPES

Fried Oysters

remaining liter of milk. Check for salt, add butter and stir and keep warm over a pan of hot water until ready to serve. Meanwhile, dice the bread and fry in very hot oil. Drain on a paper towel then serve separately to accompany the soup.

Not surprisingly, Galicians are great lovers of raw oysters, but they also like to ring the changes. The inclusion of oysters in traditional cooking results from the constant attention paid to them over the centuries. Ancestral recipes, such as the pickled oysters that were a favorite dish in Imperial Rome, stand alongside more modern recipes such as capon stuffed with oysters. The recipe here associates oysters with corn, a basic ingredient of Galician cooking. Large oysters are needed to ensure that, once fried, the center is still fresh, juicy and flavorful.

SERVES 6:
3 dozen large oysters
Cornstarch
Olive oil
White pepper

Open the oysters, remove from their shells and clean well. Leave to drain on a sloping dish.

Heat plenty of olive oil in a frying-pan. Meanwhile, mix the cornstarch with a little white pepper and coat the oysters, pressing slightly with the palm of the hand to ensure the coating has adhered well.

Fry the oysters in the very hot oil, turning once. Remove from the pan, drain on a paper towel and serve at once.



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They can be arranged on a bed of lettuce or fresh spinach. Although not usual practice, fried oysters go well with creamy, rather bland sauces such as hollandaise or a light tartar sauce. To make a magnificent warm salad, serve them while still hot with a combination of dressed raw and cooked vegetables.

Oven-baked Hake

Hake, turbot and sardines are the most emblematic of the Atlantic species of fish reaching the kitchens of Galicia. This dish is an example of authentic popular cooking. While the inhabitants of the coastal areas fought with the elements at sea, inland every effort was made to produce crops out of the tiniest of plots. And here we have a combination of the fruits of the sea and the land. The recipe can be freely adapted, according to personal taste or the products available.

SERVES 6-8:

2 kg hake	2 garlic cloves
750 gr potatoes	1 glass dry white wine
2 medium-sized onions	Parsley
2 red peppers	Olive oil
6 medium-sized tomatoes	Salt

Peel the onions, potatoes, garlic cloves and tomatoes. Thinly slice the onions and potatoes. Wash and seed the peppers then slice finely. Crush the garlic with a few sprigs of parsley, working them in the mortar to form a paste.

Heat a little olive oil in a large oven dish. Gently fry the red pepper and onion. When the onion begins to become transparent, add the potatoes. Fry for two or three minutes, then add the garlic paste and the tomatoes. Add the white wine, season, then place the dish in the oven. Bake at a medium heat for about twenty minutes. If necessary, add a little water to keep the vegetables moist.

Clean and season the hake (preferably in one large piece). Place it on the bed of vegetables and bake in the oven for ten or twelve minutes. Serve at once.

Orejas y Cañas (Traditional pastries)

These two pastries are traditionally served during the last months of winter and are representative of the two basic methods of pastry-making that are common in the interior of Galicia - frying and baking. The orejas (ears) are clearly of popular origin, whereas the cañas (rolls) with their meringue filling come from the more sophisticated kitchens of the middle classes.

SERVES 6:

INGREDIENTS FOR THE *OREJAS*

600 gr flour	1 small glass oil
1 egg	1 tsp cinnamon
100 gr butter	Rind of 1 lemon
1 small glass milk	1/2 small glass water

PREPARATION OF THE *OREJAS*

In a bowl mix the egg, butter, milk, oil, cinnamon and lemon rind, then gradually add some of the flour and mix to form a dough. Place on a marble slab and add the rest of the flour while working.

Roll out and sprinkle with a little water. Knead to bind well. Repeat this operation several times until a consistent dough is formed that does not stick to the marble.

To make the ear shapes, stretch the dough with the rolling pin, making it very thin. Cut out rectangles measuring about seven by fifteen cen-

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VINOS **G**ran Selección 96

MEDALLAS DE ORO

BLANCOS

Viña Alambrada 95
Bodegas Hnos. Rubio, S.L.
Villasequilla

ROSADOS

Viña Q.
Bodegas Ayuso S.L.
Villarrobledo

TINTOS JOVENES

Castillo de Alhambra
Vinícola de Castilla, S.A.
Manzanares

TINTOS DE CRIANZA

Torre de Gazate 92
Coop. Vinícola de Tomelloso
Tomelloso

TINTOS RESERVA

Viña Cuerva 86
Bodegas Naranja, S.A.
Carrión de Calatrava

TINTOS GRAN RESERVA

Vegaval Plata 87
Miguel Calatayud, S.A.
Valdepeñas

MEDALLAS DE PLATA

Veronés
S.A.T. Santa Rita
Mota del Cuervo

Tomillar
Coop. Virgen de las Viñas
Tomelloso

Veronés
S.A.T. Santa Rita
Mota del Cuervo

Concejal 93
Bodegas Espinosa, S.A.
Valdepeñas

Cueva del Granero 92
Bodegas Cueva del Granero, S.A.
Los Hinojosos

Estola 85
Bodegas Ayuso, S.L.
Villarrobledo

MEDALLAS DE BRONCE

Benengeli 95
Enomar, S.L.
Mota del Cuervo

Allozo
Bodegas Centro Españolas S.A.
Tomelloso

Castillo de Manzanares
Vinícola de Castilla, S.A.
Manzanares

Arboles de Castillejo 91
Bodegas Torres Filoso
Villarrobledo

Sembrador 87
Evaristo Mateos, S.L.
Noblejas

Señorío de Guadianeja 84
Vinícola de Castilla, S.A.
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RECIPES

timeters or six inches. Stretch by hand to make them as thin as possible and fry in hot oil until golden. As soon as they are placed in the oil, with a fork make a dent at one end to stretch them into an ear shape.

Keep the oil clean by straining if necessary and do not let it get over-hot. Serve the orejas dusted with sugar and cinnamon (four tbsp sugar to one of cinnamon) on paper napkins. In some parts of Galicia, they are served with honey. This recipe gives hollow, crisp pastries that need no type of raising agent.

SERVES 6:

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CAÑAS

500 gr puff pastry

4 egg whites

8 drops lemon juice

2 tbsp sugar

100 gr icing sugar

Lemon essence

PREPARATION OF THE CAÑAS

Roll out the puff pastry and cut into strips about ten centimeters wide. Brush the edges with beaten egg and roll around cylinders about two centimeters in diameter. Place on a baking sheet and bake in a medium oven for about half an hour. When golden, remove from the oven, allow to cool a little and remove the cylinder. Fill with meringue, chantilly cream or confectioner's cream and serve.

To make the meringue, beat the egg whites with the drops of lemon. When beginning to get stiff, gradually add two tbsp sugar and continue beating. When the meringue forms peaks, add the icing sugar and flavor with two drops of lemon essence.

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THE SPANISH

The orange, the “golden fruit,” so perky, juicy and thoroughly Mediterranean, could be seen as representing the other side of the coin to the austerity, drama and obscurantism that have been held to characterize Spain. A native of East Asia, the orange tree was introduced into Spain by the Arabs who planted it in their wonderful gardens, thereby incorporating it into the Spanish aesthetic and, indeed, Spanish culture as a whole. Oranges came to be grown throughout the Mediterranean basin, especially in Andalusia, Murcia and Valencia, but it was in this latter region that they became most important as a crop and with which they are most closely identified. Intensive orange-growing did not begin there until the late 18th century, but it expanded inexorably from then on. The economic boom that this represented for the Levante, as this part of Spain’s east coast is known, was to be reflected in its culture, and the late-19th century to early-20th century period saw the emergence of a regionalist school of painting, for which Sorolla (1863-1923), an artist of international renown, provided the point of departure. “Valencianismo” having become an established style in painting, the new wave of Modernismo was to provide it with fresh expression in the works of graphic artists and draughtsmen: from being a background feature of regional slice-of-life themes, the orange now occupied the foreground of posters, labels and other graphic material. The orange-growing industry generated printed material in quantity, so much, in fact, that it is



now the subject of an entire museum. Some of the exhibits on display at the Museo de la Naranja in Burriana (Castellón) bear the signatures of important Valencian artists, such as Segrelles, Dubon and Ballester. Most, however, are anonymous, many of them the work of printers’ in-house artists, and whereas some imitate the works and style of the maestros, they are for the most part richly original and beautiful.

Posters

As time went on, an increasingly competitive international market obliged Valencian exporters and foreign importers to pay more attention to advertising. Thus it was that in 1929, the newly-established Unión Nacional de la Exportación Agrícola (National Union for Agricultural Exports), known as UNEA, announced a competition for poster designs to promote Spanish fruit abroad. The competition attracted entries from leading graphic illustrators from all over Spain, among them Penagos and Bartolozzi. Printed advertising



campaigns for fruit, especially for oranges (exports of which reached an all-time high in the late 1920s and early 1930s) created a wonderful body of artwork in the form of posters, postcards, and book and magazine-covers, in which the charms of female and fruit are juxtaposed, and in which recreations of Valencian subjects - already archetypally Spanish, thanks to the works of two internationally famous Valencians, Sorolla and the writer Blasco Ibáñez (1867-1928) - are the primary source of inspiration. At that time, too, the influence of the contemporary artistic movements of the European avant-garde becomes evident in a new taste for plain colors and simple, rounded shapes. The Spanish Civil War (1936 - 39), more or less throughout which the Levante was in republican hands, also left its imprint, and the orange was given a role to play in the struggle. The Consejo Levantino Unificado de la Exportación Agraria (Levante United Council for Agricultural Exports), known as CLUEA, issued jingoistic posters

ORANGE



exalting the orange trade as a source of wealth to help finance the war. The Franco regime was also to promote the orange, albeit on a lesser scale, and the graphic material produced during that period uses a more classical approach, taking its subject matter from Valencian and Spanish symbolism and allegorical imagery.

Labels

But it was stencils, tissue papers and labels that, being more closely related to production and marketing sources than to official bodies, contributed most to the orange's graphic heritage. While stencil designs, printed in the form of monochrome stamps onto the wooden crates using lead cut-outs, could represent little more than letters and simplified shapes, the tissue papers in which the individual oranges were wrapped offered far more possibilities and, using a limited range of colors on white paper, they featured logos and engaging illustrations ranging from the perennial Valencian beauty to Walt Disney characters and spaceships.



The labels are more engaging still. These usually rectangular paper shapes stuck onto the outside of the orange boxes were technically miniature posters, their small size being compensated for by their quantity and variety. This type of label was used originally to differentiate the many Valencian brands amongst themselves, and the ones produced between 1915 and 1920 are by far the best, reflecting the fact that this period coincided with the last throes of Valencian Modernismo. In subject matter, they tend to opt for the exotic, projecting a picturesque image of Valencia and Spain, or making reference to the Spanish colonies so as to compete with other overseas products imported by the British, French, and German markets. In the late 20s and early 30s, the influence of the avant-garde and Art Deco movements and the stimulus of new foreign competition produced a new crop of high quality labels, outstanding among them being those used by Flemish importer Leon Van Paris, of LVP brand fame, which were

probably designed by Belgian, French and German illustrators, and which reflect modern trends in Europe at that time.

The labels produced from the 1940s to the present day have been less interesting. They have used innumerable ploys to engage the buyer's attention: alongside the enduring Valencian and Spanish archetypes and the foreign exoticism of images evocative of the Far East, Arabia, and Africa, we find many labels which feature the orange as health-giver, using childish or sporting appeal to accentuate its vitamin content. Others anthropomorphize the orange - it appears, for example, in the guise of a soldier, or lusting after a lemon. Others simply use graphics - color, geometric shapes, typography - or imitate heraldic emblems, rather as wine labels do. Association with feminine beauty and international high-life are other exciting sources of inspiration, with the orange turning into a sun or a gold coin. Animals loom large, often depicted in a style somewhere between the exotic and the childish. Some refer to the orange's mode of transport - ship, train - packaging, or country of destination, and these labels sometimes feature text in the relevant language. A final category, best described as "miscellaneous," includes historical, mythological, and religious motifs, and even quaint portraits of the grower's family. All these very varied expressions of creativity have done the orange nothing but good, creating for it a mystique all its own and for us a collection of highly original artistic images.

Text: **José María Ortega Sanz**
 Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**
 Photos: **Museo de la Naranja**

GLOSSARY

WINE AGING TERMS

Crianza. This term is reserved for wines aged in the wood and bottle for at least 2 years, 6 months of which must be in oak casks. (Note - in several regions the minimum time in cask is 12 months.)

Reserva. There are two types of standard for the use of this designation. Red wines must age for a minimum of 36 months in the wood and bottle, at least 12 of them in oak casks. For rosé and white wines, the minimum period is 24 months, 6 of them in oak casks.

Gran Reserva. This term is used exclusively for red and claret wines that have aged for at least 24 months in oak casks followed by at least 36 months in the bottle. For white and rosé wines, the minimum period is 48 months of which a minimum of 6 months must be in the wood.

Notes:

1. Many Denominations insist that the oak casks must be no more than 225 liters, however, national legislation allows oak casks up to 1000 liters.

2. Wines are often kept in vats for a few months prior to aging in casks, so the arithmetic varies for each one.

3. Many *bodegas* age their wines for more than the stipulated minimum periods.

SHERRY

The aging system for sherry is the Solera System, which is made up of a number of stages through which the younger wines pass, acquiring the characteristics of the older wines, thus ensuring the continuity of style. The butts (oak casks of 500 liters each) in the earlier stages are known as *criaderas*, and the last and oldest butts in the system are the Solera stage from which the wine is taken for bottling. The Solera stage is topped up from the next oldest stage (the first and oldest *criadera*) and that in turn is topped up from the next oldest. There is no stipulated number of stages, but four to six would be the average. No more than thirty per cent of the wine may be removed from the Solera in any one year.

CAVA

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

The minimum aging period for *cava* wines is 9 months in the bottle, though many spend between 18 months and 3 years, and a few up to 5 years.

Fluid Measures

METRIC/ BRITISH STANDARD

10 milliliters = 1/3 ounce
 50 milliliters = 1 3/4 ounces
 100 milliliters = 3 1/2 ounces
 250 milliliters = 8 1/2 ounces
 500 milliliters = 17 1/2 ounces
 1 liter = 1 3/4 pints
 1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters
 1 tablespoon = 18 milliliters
 1 ounce = 28 milliliters
 1 pint = 570 milliliters
 1 quart = 1.14 liters
 1 gallon = 4 1/4 liters

Weight

METRIC/OUNCES & POUNDS

10 grams = 1/3 ounce
 50 grams = 1 3/4 ounces
 100 grams = 3 1/2 ounces
 250 grams = 8 3/4 ounces
 500 grams = 1 pound + 1 1/2 ounces
 1 kilo = 2 pounds + 3 1/4 ounces
 1/2 ounce = 14 grams
 1 ounce = 28 grams
 1/4 pound = 110 grams
 1/2 pound = 230 grams
 1 pound = 450 grams

Fluid Measures

METRIC/U.S. STANDARD

10 milliliters = 2 teaspoons
 50 milliliters = 3 tablespoons
 100 milliliters = 3 1/2 ounces
 250 milliliters = 1 cup + 1 tablespoon
 500 milliliters = 1 pint + 2 tablespoons
 1 liter = 1 quart + 3 tablespoons
 1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters
 1 tablespoon = 15 milliliters
 1 ounce = 30 milliliters
 1 cup = 235 milliliters
 1 pint = 475 milliliters
 1 quart = 850 milliliters
 1 gallon = 3 3/4 liters

Oven Temperature

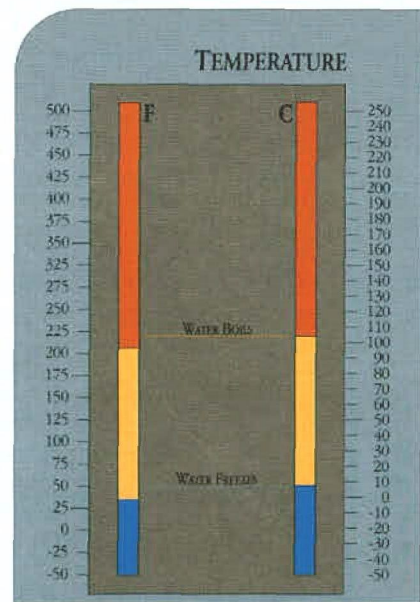
TEMPERATURE

DIAL NUMBER

Very slow = 250°F/120°C = 1/4
 Slow = 300°F/150°C = 1
 Moderate = 350°F/180°C = 4
 Hot = 400°F/200°C = 6
 Very hot = 450°F/230°C = 8

QUICK CONVERSION

In our recipes, quantities are given in metric measurements. The charts on this page show approximate equivalents between Imperial or American measures and metric measures.



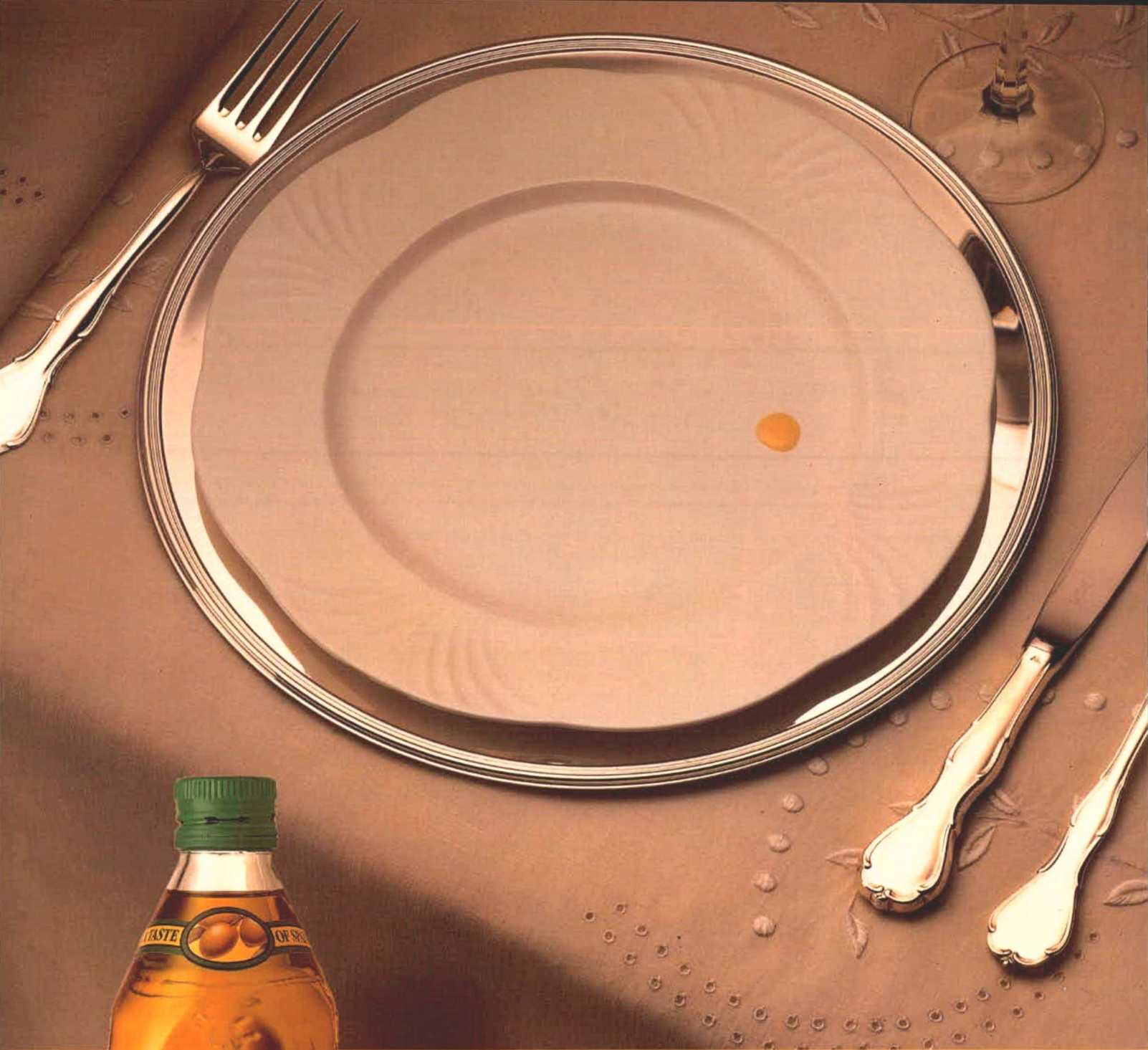
Bodegas Bilbainas was established as a company in 1901, though its history goes back as far as 1859.

It owns an estate of 260 hectares of vineyards surrounding the bodega itself in Haro, the heart of Rioja Alta. The grape varieties grown include Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo.

The red wine VIÑA POMAL comes from an exceptional vineyard of 100 hectares on the state of Bodegas Bilbainas in Haro, Spain.

VIÑA POMAL RESERVA 1989 comprises 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha and the remaining 10% almost equal proportions of Graciano and Mazuelo grapes.





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