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SPAIN

G O U R M E T O U R

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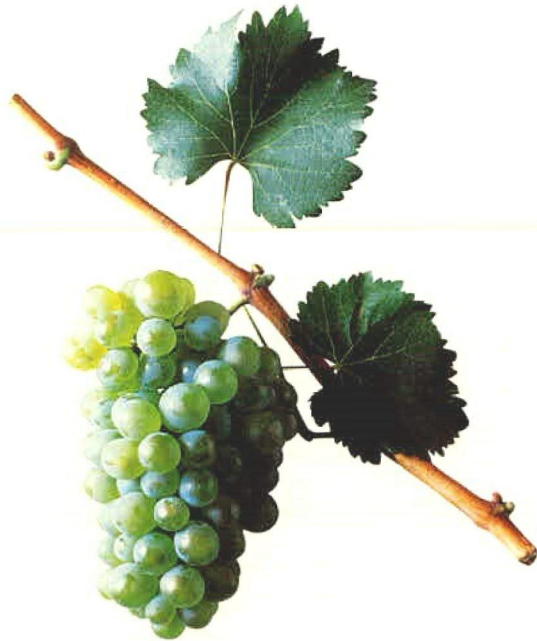
SPAIN GOURMETOUR



SPAIN IN FOCUS: FLAMENCO • VINEYARD ROUTES OF SPAIN: LA RIOJA
• CAKES FROM SEVENTH HEAVEN

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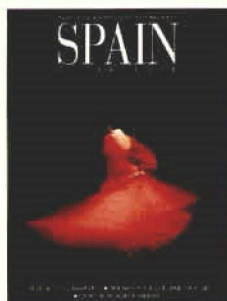
A SECRET NOT TO BE KEPT



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



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BRANDY DE JEREZ

VETERANO

OSBORNE



THE MAGIC
OF THE
BULL

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ear readers,

As the year draws to a close, we conclude our title series "Focus on Spain" with one of the most colorful sides of Spanish folklore—flamenco—surely one of the most passionate ambassadors for Spanish culture worldwide.

Another ambassador for good Spanish taste is and has always been Rioja wine. We continue our series of "Vineyard Routes" and visit some of the bodegas of this Denomination of Origin, which, in addition to the quality of its wineries, has much to offer in the way of landscapes and architecture.

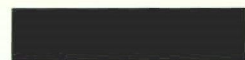
In our "New Generation of Spanish Wine People," we meet a firmly-rooted Chivite, the highflyer María Antonia Fernández Daza and the pilot Pedro Aznar, and gain an insight into the element in which they are most at home.

Also in their element—which they have taken to swimmingly—are the protagonists of our article on fish farms breeding sea bream and sea bass. The latest technology and many years of research have brought the best out of natural circumstances and provided the key to their success.

The last chapter of our mini-series on "Vegetables with Personality" takes us to Andalusia and along the Mediterranean coast up to Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, where we discover the tender *calçots*, the humble chard, the attractive chicory, and the wild cardoon.

The onset of the cold season has always been associated with the feasts at which the meat from freshly slaughtered pigs is eaten, and when pantries are filled with stocks for winter. Our article on the varied Spanish pork sausages will introduce you to the different regional variants of this age-old craft.

For Christmas, many convents right across Spain offer a range of sweetmeats, preparing biscuits, cakes, confectionery, jams, and many other delicacies according to ancient recipes, and selling these directly from their convents or at special shops. In the lead up to Christmas, the queues and order lists are so long that only the early birds will partake of these heavenly temptations. On this seasonal note, we take our leave for this year and wish you a very happy and prosperous 1998.



Text: Sonia Ortega
 Photos: ICEX
 Translation: Mark Little

A Spain Gourmet Tour

Young, talented, and successful, with a brilliant professional career behind them and blessed with an insatiable thirst to expand their gastronomical horizons... This could be the common profile of the six American chefs who, at the beginning of summer and as part of a program organized by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX), visited some of the most representative points within the Spanish culinary landscape.

There, in restaurants, market places, and wine cellars, the six chefs had the chance to become acquainted with Spain's rich and varied offer of food products. A true "Spain Gourmet Tour" in every sense.

It was a whirlwind tour of six days packed with sights and scents. More than a tour, it amounted to a marathon race, but it could be no other way. How else do you cram all that Spain

has to show in so little time? In spite of an intensive agenda, the program only managed to reveal the tip of the Spanish culinary iceberg, for a truly comprehensive tour taking in all the regional cuisines of Spain would have required much more time than a professional chef can afford to be away from his kitchen.

professional chef can afford to be away from his kitchen.

This time limitation was taken into account by ICEX when in 1990 it organized the first such Gastronomical Mission for chefs. Since then, there have been other familiarization trips that have enabled chefs from the United States to discover the cuisine of Spain, so varied, yet so little known beyond Spain's borders. There is no better way to experience what Spain has to offer in the way of food and to find out what's cooking in the Spanish kitchen than a firsthand encounter such as this, visiting restaurants, tasting wines, cheeses and oils, swapping notes with Spanish chefs, examining and sampling the produce of the markets. For the newcomer, the markets and restaurants of Spain are a revelation. For the dedicated chef, they offer the pleasure of seeking out new products, tastes, and learning novel ways of combining flavors and preparing food, all of it within the tradition of the healthful Mediterranean diet.

This is the thinking behind these gastronomic missions which, being designed specifically for visiting chefs, aim to confirm a perception of professional cooking which has become evident only over the last decade or so: that the work place of the chef is not restricted to the kitchen. Today, the chef has an important role to play in the media, in universities, in cookery schools, in society in general. Chefs are the principal agents in spreading new culinary trends, introducing consumers to

new products, or promoting the benefits of this or that type of food or diet.

The six chefs who participated in the latest mission were perfectly aware of this. In spite of their youth—all are in their thirties—the six have a long career behind them and have developed a personal touch which distinguishes the cuisine of the restaurants where they work as executive chef or chef de cuisine.

Four men and two women made up the group. The two women, based on the West Coast, were Lynn Sheehan, executive chef at the successful Mecca in San Francisco, and Laura Dewell, chef and co-owner of Pirosmeni, a Georgian-Mediterranean restaurant. Two chefs, Mario Batali and Scott Bryan, came from New York. Mario Batali is chef/owner of the small but popular Pó in Greenwich Village, where he serves Italian cooking and Mediterranean cuisine in general, and in addition he produces and presents a television program on Mediterranean cuisine broadcast almost daily on a television channel devoted exclusively to food. For his part, Scott Bryan is executive chef and part owner of Luma, in Chelsea, and at the same time supervises the more informal Indigo in Greenwich Village. A fifth member of the group, Daniele Baliani, is now based in Boston, as chef de cuisine at Pignoli, after having worked in famous restaurants in Italy, France, and New York. Last but not least, Shawn McClain, who



is barely 30 but already has a brilliant career to his credit, is currently executive chef at the Trio Restaurant in Evanston, Chicago. Aside from sharing a common interest in the Mediterranean diet, most of the invited chefs were already familiar with Spanish cuisine thanks to previous contacts with Spain of one sort or another. Nevertheless, for all of them the trip would bring new discoveries and pleasant surprises. What follows is an account of this gourmet's tour of Spain, taking in three regions: the Basque Country, Catalonia, and the Madrid-Segovia area. The starting point was a town that takes its food very seriously: the Basque city of San Sebastián.

San Sebastián: Queen of the Spanish Table

Mention San Sebastián to any Spanish food lover and automatically their gastric juices will shift into high gear. This beautiful northern Spanish city is a mecca of good eating. San Sebastián—a city of elegant,

turn-of-the-century architecture, nestling in a perfect bay on the shores of the Cantabrian Sea—was a surprise for all the participants on the tour, and the ideal place to start our journey. Flight delays meant a late arrival, so in the evening there was

barely time for a quick view of the sunset on La Concha beach from the balcony of the hotel before setting

forth to make our first contact, the Zuberoa restaurant (two star Michelin) a few kilometers from San Sebastián in the town Oyarzun. Here, in an old, exquisitely-restored case-río, or traditional Basque country home, chef Hilario Arbelaitz set a very high standard for the remainder of the trip.

From a magnificent menu of seven courses in addition to various desserts, we can single out as especially noteworthy the warm salad of pig's feet, langoustines, and sweetbreads, which was named as the favorite dish by the majority of the group; the cream of spring chicken with savory foie gras custard, or the mille-feuille of veal with tongue, cheeks, feet, and muzzle. Among the desserts there was an original and tasty version of the traditional Spanish rice pudding, *arroz con leche*, with cinnamon jelly and lemon cream. The American visitors, as would occur throughout the tour, were keen to talk with the host chef and examine the facilities, which include the old coal-burning stove where the food is prepared, the last such stove to survive in the area in this type of restaurant. Hilario, who only recently had two young students from the Culinary Institute of New York serving an internship at his establishment, was duly appreciative of the effusive compliments he received from our guests.

The meal was followed by a Spanish tradition to which our guests would

become addicted during the course of the tour: the *sobremesa*, that leisurely, unhurried conversation among friends following any good meal, and a perfect occasion to comment on the food. I asked the chefs what they had thought of this, our first dinner: they were unanimous in praising the impeccable presentation of the dishes, the perfectly-matched wines—we drank a Txacolí, the typical white of the Basque Country, from Txomin Echaínez, and three wines from neighboring Navarre, including a Chardonnay, a red from the Chivite winery's Colección 125 Aniversario, and a muscatel from the Ochoa winery—the unbeatable setting, and the discreet and efficient service. (The chefs would remark on the professional skill of the service in the restaurants throughout the tour.) At the Zuberoa, as is the case of most Basque restaurants, the service staff is made up of women, a tradition which is maintained even in Basque restaurants located in other parts of Spain.

Following this unbeatable start, jet lag and the exhaustion of the journey got the better of our guests, and we all retired to rest. The following day, a Wednesday, began with a visit to the cooking school run by Luis Irizar, one of the most prestigious of the Basque chefs, considered the *maestro de maestros*—master of masters—as he has trained many of the chefs who are now making their mark in restau-



rants all over Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 41). The American chefs conversed with Irizar about Basque gastronomy, and picked up some of his tips and hints. In particular, he demonstrated to them the many culinary possibilities of a local specialty, the *pimientos de piquillo*, those little red peppers which have become indispensable in the Spanish kitchen and are now acquiring quite a following abroad. With a batch of piquillos and whatever other ingredients he had on hand, Irizar improvised a salad and prepared some peppers stuffed with codfish béchamel sauce.

Our next stop was the Gaztelubide, one of the unique Sociedades Gastronómicas of the Basque Country, a stone's throw from Irizar's school in the old quarter of San Sebastián. Basques are fanatical about food, and they have formed these gastronomical societies where they meet to practice one of their favorite pastimes, cooking (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 42). The societies admit men only, although on certain occasions, such as this one, women are allowed to visit as guests.

We arrived at the Gaztelubide at midday. Before lunch Thomas Perry, head of the Rioja Wine Exporters Association, made a brief presentation of the wines from the Rioja *Denominación de Origen* (D.O.) region. The guests sampled and discussed three whites and three reds of different aging periods, *crianza*,

reserva, and *gran reserva* (see Glossary on page 154). The traditional menu prepared in the kitchens of the Gaztelubide was perfect in its simplicity: *merluza a la vasca* (hake in a smooth garlic and parsley sauce), fillet steak with mashed potatoes and quince preserve, and cake for dessert. We were about to do justice to the hake when the diners at the next table burst into song. And what accomplished singers they proved to be! Singing is another time-honored passion of the Basques, and the Gaztelubide is headquarters of one of the many choirs, both amateur and professional, that exist in the Basque Country. It was a pleasure to listen to them sing between courses and to laugh with them, for aside from their musical talent they had a keen sense of humor and their repertoire, in addition to traditional folk songs and *zarzuela* light opera, included humorous ditties which the singers accompanied with a profusion of gestures and pantomimes, turning the performance into a veritable stage show. This musical *sobremesa* featured everything from a couple of songs in English, in honor of the guests, to songs whose central theme was food, including an ingenious lyrical rendition of a restaurant menu.

We were reluctant to leave, and the *sobremesa* continued almost to dinner time, but there was still time to stroll around San Sebastián and soak up the atmosphere of this enchanting city. San Sebastián is not

only well endowed with fine restaurants, it is also a city devoted to *tapas*, those delicious tavern appetizers which here reach a great degree of sophistication. All over the city there is an abundance of good *tapas* bars, but without doubt the paradise of the *poteo*—as the *tapas*-crawl is called here—is the Parte Vieja, the old quarter. Here, bars are locked in a friendly battle to see which one can create the best *tapa*. In fact, there is even a "Miniature Cuisine Competition." In the Bar Txepetxa we sampled some of the winning entries, such as the codfish canapés au gratin and the anchovies with cream of spider crab. In the Ganbara, the grilled wild cepes mushrooms served on egg yolk elicited delighted exclamations from our guests. In the true tradition of the *poteo*, we sampled the various specialties at a succession of taverns, savoring the *tapas* with that perfect accompaniment, Basque Txacolí wine.

Thursday started with a visit to the La Brecha market (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 39) where the fish is amazing both in its variety and freshness. This is where the acclaimed chef Juan Mari Arzak does his shopping, and it was to his restaurant where we adjourned at midday after a stroll in Fuenterrabia, a charming old town on the border with France. Arzak (three-star Michelin, see the previous edition of *Spain Gourmetour*) welcomed us with his characteristic congeniality, accompanied by his daugh-



ter and successor, Elena. Before trying the menu they had prepared for us, there was time to learn about and sample one of the star Spanish contributions to world gastronomy: *jamón ibérico*, the air-cured ham of the free-ranging Iberian pig. Jesús García, head of the recently-established Consorcio del Ibérico, or Iberian Pork Products Consortium (see latest edition of *Spain Gourmetour*) explained in detail the unique features of Iberian ham and answered the chefs' questions. Following this appetizer, which was accompanied by dry sherry *fino* from Jerez, we started the meal proper, while Elena and her father provided a running commentary on the various dishes. The six courses and assortment of desserts delighted all of us with their originality, variety, and wealth of flavors and aromas. "Perfect," was the general verdict. Worth mentioning in particular: *sorta* (a type of corn cake) with langoustines, rice



noodles with saffron and foie mayonnaise, tiny cuttlefish, served grilled, which are caught by hand and are available only in July and August, hake with eight crisp young vegetables, squab with leeks, and quince wedges with passion fruit. The conversation with Juan Mari and Elena and the visit to their kitchens took the *sobremesa* well into the afternoon, leaving

barely enough time to catch the plane to our next destination, Barcelona.

Catalonia: A Taste of the Mediterranean

We awoke in Barcelona to a warm, balmy Friday. Early that morning, Isidre Gironés was waiting for us at the Mercado de La Boquería (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 38). To visit this market is always a fascinating experience, but to visit it with the guidance of Isidre Gironés is an eye opener. Isidre, owner of one of Barcelona's best-known restaurants—Ca l'Isidre, serving traditional Catalan cuisine—has the run of La Boquería, where he has done his shopping for the last 30 years. His expansive and jocular personality have made him immensely popular among the various stall keepers, especially the women vendors—including the "grandmother" of the market, a lively 91-year-old—who jokes with him shamelessly, at the same time reserving the freshest, best produce for Isidre, for whom Barcelona's legendary market holds no secrets.

Mario Batali was voicing the shared feeling of the group when he remarked: "In just one hour at the market with Isidre we have learned more than by reading a pile of books." Explanations covered the thousand and one types of fish, crustaceans, and shellfish on offer; which part of the codfish is best for such and such a preparation; why one sausage is better than another; the advan-

tages of buying baby kid of such and such a weight; comments on wild mushrooms, a subject about which the Catalans are passionate... Isidre always had something interesting to contribute, in an endless discourse delivered at breakneck speed.

We replenished our strength with a filling Catalan breakfast at the adjoining bar, El Turia, before setting off to visit the Codorníu wine cellars in San Sadurn de Noya in the Penedés region, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Barcelona. This area produces almost all of Spain's sparkling *cava* (see Glossary on page 154).

The Codorníu winery, built in the 19th century and surrounded by beautiful gardens, was designed by the modernist architect Puig i Cadafalch (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 29). The winery is classified as a National Monument, and within there is a major museum devoted to wine and cava. Most impressive of all was exploring the nearly 30 kilometers (16 miles) of underground wine cellars where 180 million bottles repose and mature. Nathalie Naval, from Codorníu's communications department, was our guide in this subterranean labyrinth through which we traveled on a sort of train on wheels, while she explained the methods used to make cava and the distinguishing features of this singular wine. Later, during the meal Codorníu presented us, we would have the opportunity to sample different sparkling wines and to raise our glasses in honor

of the 125th anniversary of the first Codorníu cava, an occasion which only days before had been celebrated with a big party in the very same gardens we had just visited.

On our return to Barcelona, there was a quick visit to the Gaudí masterpiece, the Sagrada Familia basilica, to satisfy our cultural hunger before going on to Ca l'Isidre for dinner. Before the meal there was a wine tasting with samples from various D.O.s, conducted by Jordi Bort, the master *sommelier* from the Hotel Arts and currently one of the most brilliant wine tasters in Spain. The tasting prompted an animated discussion about wine in general, the wine trade, the convenience of one type or another of label. The conversation continued as we headed for the table, where Isidre served us cava to accompany assorted appetizers including batter-fried spring onions, croquettes with cepes, cod with toasted garlic, and a lobster *gazpacho*. For the main courses, there were two rice dishes

the previous one, made by Isidre's daughter Nuria, an expert pastry chef.

Saturday meant an early rise for a trip north to Rosas. Here, in a remote and scenic corner of the Catalan coast, is El Bulli (three-star Michelin), where almost 30 kitchen staff labors to ensure that 40 diners can enjoy a menu that is completely different from any other (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36 and page 150 in this issue). Here, on a picturesque terrace with the Mediterranean in the background, we were welcomed by Ferrán Adrià, the *enfant terrible* of European cuisine, who was delighted to share with our American guests his peculiar conception of cooking. An impeccable technique, creative flair, avoidance of cultural and economic conventions, provocation, irony... these are the concepts which Ferrán promotes with all the energy and confidence of a young and recognized professional who has the good fortune of doing what he likes most. He has been admired and praised by the most demanding food critics in various countries, yet Adrià has not rested on his laurels and his cooking is in constant evolution. He believes firmly in change, and in this sense he is convinced that the future of cooking will have an American accent thanks to America's lack of preconceived rules and because of its character as a melting pot of different cultures and cuisines. While Ferrán spoke, as if to illustrate the point, appetizers would arrive, including

such curious creations as peanut and honey lollipops, cupcakes made with black olives, or caramelized quails eggs. It is what Ferrán calls the "Hello" of the restaurant, the welcoming offering, just as later there would be a "Farewell" offering. The chefs could have spent the rest of the day deep in conversation, but lunch time approached. Following a visit to the spectacular kitchens, unlike those of any other restaurant, where the chefs exchanged thoughts on various dishes and techniques, we sat at the table in anticipation of further surprises. These included tagliatelle with baby shrimp, tagliatelle which in reality turned out to be strips of mango; little "packages" of cuttlefish and coconut with ginger, which on biting them "burst" in the mouth releasing the sweet flavor of the coconut; hake with piquillo peppers, in which the peppers are combined with banana and crisp bacon. There was something to scintillate every taste, as our guests remarked. For sheer originality and novelty, it was perhaps the meal most commented on. A taste of the future, perhaps?

Castile, Land of Roasts

Leaving Catalonia, we flew to Madrid. As the tight tour schedule precluded a visit to southern Spain, we opted for the next best thing: dinner in an Andalusian restaurant in the Spanish capital, the Alborán. But first, there was time for a tasting of varietal olive oils made from three of the



which impressed us all: one made with wild mushrooms and squab (Isidre is a consummate hunter) and a rice stew with *espardeñas*, or sea cucumber, a type of mollusk caught off the Catalan coast. These were followed by baby lamb chops with rosemary and, to finish, a selection of ten desserts, each better than

most distinctive Spanish olives: Hojiblanca, Arbequina, and Cornicabra. The tasting was conducted by Juan Ramón Izquierdo, an olive oil expert from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, and also present were members of the Olive Oil Exporters Association, ASOLIVA, with whom our chefs discussed the Spanish olive oil market and the competition from other countries. In this respect the figures—such as the existence in the U.S. of 66,000 Italian restaurants as compared to only 150 Spanish restaurants—speak for themselves.

Later, all the rich variety of the famous fried fish of Andalusia arrived at the table—small, fresh anchovies, shrimp, baby squid, and more—followed by a magnificent seafood and rice dish.

Sunday was the last day of our tour. We left early for Torrecaballeros, near Segovia. There, in El Rancho de la Aldegüela, we were welcomed by the owner, Javier Giráldez, our host for the day. Segovia, like other

Castilian cities, is famous for its roast baby lamb and suckling pig which, as at El Rancho, are cooked in traditional wood-burning ovens.

It was too early in the day to think about lamb... but how about some Spanish cheeses?

When it comes to cheese, the man to talk to is Mariano Sanz, head of the Consorcio de los Quesos Tradicionales de España,

Traditional Cheeses of Spain Consortium. Together with Enric Canut, a regular contributor to *Spain Gourmetour*, Mariano Sanz is to be thanked for the resurgence of numerous Spanish cheese varieties and for having prevented many others from being lost altogether, in an almost ethnographic mission. Beneath the two enormous chestnut trees that shade the garden of El Rancho, he spoke with passion about Spain's wealth of cheeses and of its export market, and of the need to conserve traditional cheese-making with raw milk. We tasted several cheeses made with the milk of ewes, cows, and goats, singly or in blends (Tetilla, Mahón, Majorero, Manchego, Idiazábal, Cabrales, Zamorano, Torta del Casar), just a sampling of the 120 types of cheese that Sanz has identified in Spain. That was followed by a Castilian country breakfast of eggs, black pudding, and marinated minced pork, then we set off to see the monuments of Segovia, a city where the three cultures that shaped Spanish medieval society coexisted: Christians, Moors, and Jews. In the old Jewish quarter, in the family home of our host, we had a final tasting, this one of mountain-cured *serrano* ham, presented by Felipe Macías, head of the Consorcio del Jamón Serrano Español, which has been exporting Spanish hams from 1991, but not to the U.S. until this year, following approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

It was almost a meal in itself, but we still had to make room for that tasty roast baby lamb and suckling pig awaiting us at El Rancho. We enjoyed our final *sobremesa* in the garden, and continued in the house that our host has next to the restaurant. There, with the spectacular vistas of sunset over the Castilian plateau, we traded impressions of our experiences of the last six days. Our guests remarked on the high quality and great variety of what we had seen and sampled, new ideas and new flavors to be introduced to their menus at home. It was an enlightening tour which served to reveal to our guests a gastronomy and range of food products as extensive as it is little known. The only drawback: we all came out of the venture a few pounds heavier.

Sonia Ortega is a journalist and Publication Coordinator of this magazine since its inception.



Text: José Luis Atristain
 Photos: Paul J. Lawrence

The Challenge of Diversity

On the impressive surroundings of the Vaughan States of Sunnybrook in Toronto, Canada, the first international symposium of authentic Spanish gastronomy, featuring olive oil and traditional cheese among several other products from Spain, was held for the benefit of 140 Canadian importers and food writers.

Gastronomically speaking, the concept of diversity in North America is not easy to assert. Narrow stereotypes of ground meat dishes, garnished with french fries always come to mind and the vision of a vast fast-food paradise may also prevail. It is not until you discover a modern financial center, located at the same latitude of New York and Madrid, with a high content of European, Asian, and Latin American populations, that you decide to reevaluate your definition of gastronomic diversity.

Toronto is the most demographically diverse city of Canada, perhaps of North America, incarnating what sociology defines as a multicultural center. Typically British in the beginning, this small port on the Lake Ontario shoreline, rapidly developed into an industrious city at the turn of the century, becoming a magnetic pole for those populations dislocated by wars or just in

pursuit of better economic opportunities. Those opportunities were consolidated and today, not many aspects define better this multi-ethnic character of Toronto as its impressive gastronomic offering in terms of the diversity and volume of its restaurants. Popular knowledge in the city will tell you that you can eat a great meal each day of the year without ever repeating the same style and restaurant.

These considerations came into play at the beginning of this year when the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) invited ICEX and the Commercial Office of Spain in Toronto to organize the "International Bravo España!," featuring olive oil and a selection of Spanish products with market possibilities. The challenge was interesting in view of the lack of precedent in terms of authentic Spanish gastronomy in the city, despite the brave efforts of a small number of Spanish restaurateurs over the last twenty years.

Since "paella is perhaps the most bastardized foreign dish in the world," according to Johanna Burkhard, food writer from *La Gazette* of Montreal, who acted as gastronomic advisor in the Symposium, our aim was to rectify some misconceptions widely held in Canada with regard to Spanish cuisine. Initially, it was overdue to claim back the Spanish identity of several products such as olive oil and sherry wine, which are still perceived in Canada as anything but Spanish. Secondly, it was necessary to in-

troduce relatively unknown items such as traditional cheese, *piquillo* peppers and seafood specialties to the Canadian consumer and finally, the occasion was a magnificent opportunity to share with Canadian scholars and connoisseurs an in depth review of the cultural and historic heritage of Spanish gastronomy, its development and influence throughout the western world.

Under the heading "Bravo España! Celebrating Spain's Gastronomic Gift to the World," a selected group of journalists, food writers, importers, distributors from Canada gathered on June 10, 1997, to discuss food topics and to sample the best examples of Spanish delicacies not yet available in North America. The Vaughan States, a traditional Canadian inn uptown Toronto, was the perfect setting for this important exchange of ideas that brought experts and scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. The main point of interest: how to incorporate Spanish food products into the daily diet of Canadians. The week of celebrations was inaugurated on June 9 with a spectacular presentation of 100 Spanish wines at the so-called "Agent's Night" in Toronto, a horizontal tasting sponsored by Canadian wine agents to introduce new products among 300 owners of restaurants and food and beverage managers of hotels. This event, organized by "Vinos de España," the promotional entity of the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) in



Canada, was also attended by journalists and *sommeliers*, who compared the new productions from Rioja, Penedés, and Ribera del Duero. *Cavas* and sherries were highly prized by the critics. A separate "Agent's Night" took place in Montreal for Quebec restaurant owners that was attended by 150 operators. Bravo España! called for the best and we decided to seek the unique talent and knowledge of Clara María González de Amezúa, perhaps the most comprehensive expert in Spanish gastronomy today, to act as the main speaker at the Symposium, the main event in Toronto. Working in close contact with the organization of the event, Mrs. Amezúa not only participated with the initial overview of the gastronomic mosaic of Spain that opened the informative segment, but also preselected the different menus for the whole event and chose all ingredients to be flown from Spain, in order to assure the highest degree of authenticity in the food served and sampled. Moreover, Mrs. Amezúa graciously accepted to conduct cooking demonstrations in Montreal and Hamilton for both professional chefs and television audiences during the rest of the week.



Two Chefs, Two Styles

To be consistent with our aim of authenticity, it was necessary to add experience and

craftsmanship to the actual preparation of the food to be served during Bravo España! We obtained the enthusiastic participation of two great Spanish chefs, each representing a trend or school of influence in Spain, to show not only the high level of individual expertise in Spain, but also the incredible versatility among the Spanish cooking establishment.

In this regard, a careful selection was made in order to present it to Adolfo Muñoz, a renowned chef and owner of Adolfo's Restaurant in Toledo, famous in Spain for his strong will to maintain alive the most sacred traditions of the gastronomy of Castile-La Mancha. Chef Muñoz was to collaborate with prominent Canadian Chef Jamie Kennedy in the preparation of the magnificent Gala Dinner (which is going to be remembered for a long time in Toronto) that closed the Symposium. This great meal was performed in the fancy backdrop of the Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto.

Chef Norberto Jorge, on the other hand, was an obvious selection (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 37), proudly representing the newest gastronomic trend in Spain which combines traditional cooking from the Mediterranean with modern ingredients and presentations. He is becoming Madrid's celebrity at his fashionable Casa Benigna Restaurant. The characteristic signature of Norberto's cuisine of adding flavor and texture with generous use of the different types and varieties

of Spanish olive oil, is creating an interesting trend among European chefs. This approach earned Norberto Jorge the acclamation of the Canadian media for his rendition of *arroz a banda*, demonstrated during Bravo España!

"The more daring and adventurous I want to become in my cuisine, the more I tap into my mother's (a traditional cook) recipes," said Norberto at a cooking demonstration for Bravo España! at L'Academie Culinaire in Montreal, when asked by Monique Gerard Solomita, from *Le Journal de Montreal*, about his own creativity and leadership in Mediterranean cooking.

Apart from differences in style, these two chefs both admit to departing from heavy sauces used to disguise the original flavor of ingredients, reviving old methods of cooking and applying them imaginatively to modern gastronomy. This may be a very candid way to describe a complex process, but this is what Canadian critics immediately detected at the demonstrations and praised in their comments: "Beyond trends and fashions, good products, sound ingredients plus old knowledge of preparation still is, after centuries, the best way of cooking."

Tasting Time

During the main event in Toronto and after the most elaborate tapas lunch accompanied by a great list of Spanish wines, commented on by Toronto's expert Tony Aspler, the tasting part of the Symposium be-



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gan. The first sampling was conducted by Steve Jenkins, a successful enterpriser, food author, and cheese expert who described in his direct "New Yorker" jargon and with detail, the production methods, historic background, and witty anecdotes when discovering some of the nine traditional Spanish cheeses tasted at the event. Canadian importers were utterly surprised by every new arrival to their sampling trays: the Garrotxa from Catalonia, the Idiazábal from the Basque Country, and the magnificent Cabrales from Asturias, among others, were tasted and praised for the first time in Toronto.

Coleman Andrews, editor of *Saveur Magazine* and prolific author of acclaimed books on Mediterranean food and a beloved sweetheart of the Canadian food press, gave a vivacious account of the varied use of vegetable and legumes in the traditional cooking of Spain, dispelling the myth of predominant fattening "meaty" diets of Europe.

The end of the afternoon session was closed with "the most comprehensive and professional tasting of olive oil ever performed in Toronto," according to James White, food writer. ICEX had flown from Spain for this specific purpose a selection of oils and the tasting was conducted with the expertise of Jerónimo Díaz Rivas, a leading profession-

al in this field in Europe and perhaps the most talented olive oil taster in Spain. The Canadian audience was able to sample and discuss the intricacies of some of the best extra virgin oils of the world. Products from Andalusia and Catalonia made lasting impressions on the public for their diversity in flavor and strong identity characteristics. Spanish olive oil not only convinced Canadian connoisseurs familiar with other sources, but created a spontaneous interest for this new wide range of flavors and textures. Mr. Díaz Rivas' public proposal to work collectively in the project of the creation of a future school in Toronto, to train olive oil tasters to satisfy industrial needs, and also to create olive oil tasting circles among chefs and restaurateurs was certainly welcomed.

The Symposium ended in Toronto with a lively open discussion among industry leaders, journalists, and trade promotion agents on the subject of increasing awareness and distribution channels for Spanish food products in Canada.

Ms. Rosanna Caira, editor of *Food Service & Hospitality* and Chairperson of the Symposium closed the event by thanking Mr. Arturo Pina, Trade Commissioner of Spain, and Mr. Aurelio Segovia, Deputy Director of IOOC for their participation and for their opening remarks of that morning, and acknowledging the enthusiastic support of the Guest of Honor of the Symposium, His Ex-

cellency Mr. Fernando Martín Valenzuela, Ambassador of Spain.

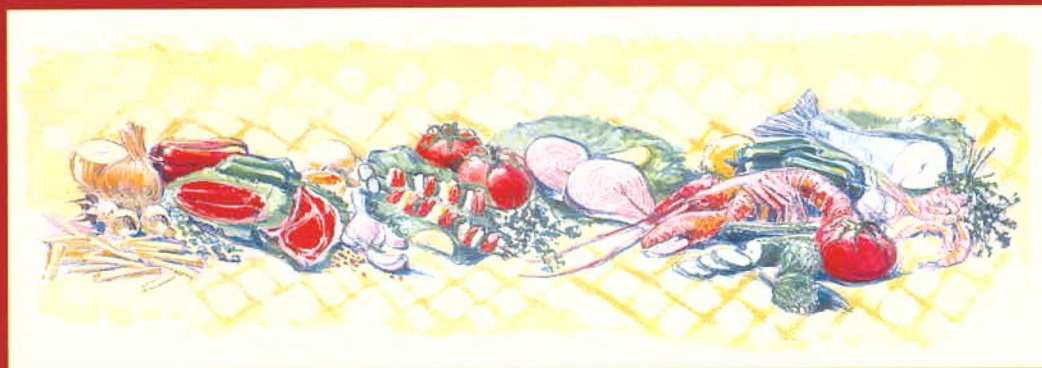
In her closing words, Ms. Caira summarized her impressions by saying that "Spain, after a long absence in Canada, came back to introduce a truly different gastronomic experience in what is considered one of the most competitive food markets in North America. Canadians are not easy to surprise but today Spain made a lasting impression on our minds and palates; it was done with knowledge and elegance." Guests were able to approve that when an impressive array of Spanish food products was presented, subject to distribution in Canada and brought for the occasion, at the so-called *Bodegón Español* (Spanish Still Life). More than 40 Spanish exporters sent their samples to initiate export projects in Canada, demonstrating not only the wide range of Spanish food available, but also their firm commitment to win the challenge of diversity!



expertise of Jerónimo Díaz Rivas, a leading profession-

José Luis Atristain is Trade Analyst in charge of the promotional programs of ICEX at the Commercial Office of Spain in Toronto, Canada.

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SONIA ORTEGA

• A good wine can only come from a good vine. So far so good. But when it comes to the debate on whether to use native or imported varieties, things are not so clear. In his book **Cepas del mundo** (Vine stocks of the world), the veteran wine writer, José Peñín, does not attempt to resolve this dilemma but only to show the main grape varieties in the world, with a special focus on the Spanish stocks. 43 different grapes are described, with their origins, history, cultivation and use in the different wine-producing regions of Spain or other countries. An enjoyable and well-documented book, with the descriptions of each variety being accompanied by a water-colour illustration and full data on the vegetative period, yield, etc. A good informative work that is essential for an overview of the Spanish varieties on which little has been written for the general reader.

• Pressure cookers are used in kitchens worldwide, and in Spain I would think there must be few households without one. But in the United States the advent of frozen TV dinners and the microwave relegated the pressure cooker to the back of the kitchen cupboard. Now things are changing and interest is reviving, partly as a result of growing enthusiasm for a healthy and tasty diet. This at least is the opinion of Tom Lalamita, a food writer who is very involved in the world of specialty foods and kitchen appliances - *The Ultimate Bread Machine*, *The Ultimate Pasta Machine*, and *The Ultimate Espresso Machine Cookbook*. In his latest book, **The Ultimate Pressure Cooker**, he has selected 85 recipes from Mediterranean cuisine, including some of the most traditional Spanish dishes such as *Pisto* (a sort of ratatouille), Garlic Soup, Chickpeas with Spinach, or Loin of Pork with Bitter-Orange Sauce, all for cooking in the pressure cooker. There are also recipes from Italy, Greece, Morocco, etc. All healthy, tasty, and fast.

• The Tourism Department of the Rioja region has published a guide called **Rutas del vino de la Rioja** (Rioja wine routes). This is a small leaflet including a folded map that aims to in-

roduce visitors to this region to its wine culture. It begins with a brief history of the area, then covers local wine-growing with the seven varieties of vine grown, the processes of production, maturation and ageing, and the classification of the vintages. It suggests three routes that are marked on the map - the 'Cheerful' Wine Route through the upper Rioja, the 'Pleasing' Wine Route through central Rioja, and the 'Robust' Wine Route through the lower Rioja. Each route offers the possibility of visiting a number of wineries and gives basic information on opening times, the person to contact, the services offered and the languages spoken. Possible tourist visits are suggested, as are the local traditional festivals. Another publication centering on the Rioja but covering both food and wine is **La cocina del vino y los cinco sentidos. Un plato para cada Rioja** (Cooking with wine and the five senses. A dish for each Rioja wine). This is a recipe book in which the renowned Rioja cook, Lorenzo Cañas, suggests a number of his dishes to accompany the various types of Rioja wine. The book is the fruit of the Gastronomic Sessions held recently in La Rioja as part of the cultural project initiated by the Rioja Administration called "Wine and the five senses", now in its second year. The book's aim is to reverse the traditional method of choosing wines, basing the choice not on the food but on the wine.

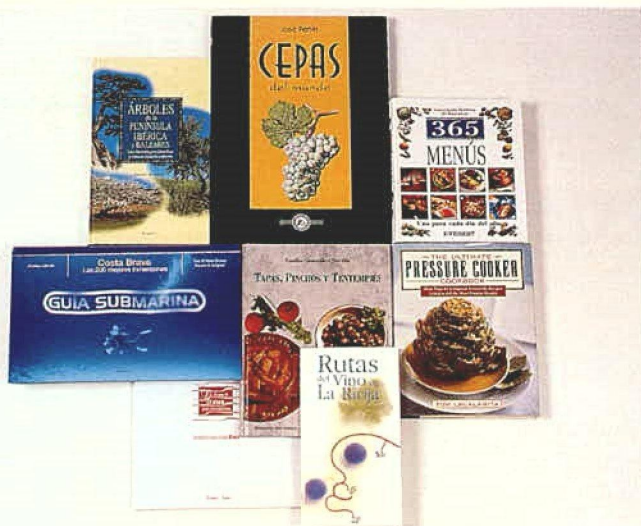
• The Costa Brava on the Catalan coast in the north-east

of Spain is famous for its crystal-clear waters and rich marine life. **Costa Brava - The 200 Best Diving Routes** is a very thorough underwater guide showing divers where to find the best dives. It suggests a total of 200 routes with the 32 best translated into English. With maps, photos, information on the underwater fauna and flora and very full and detailed sketches of each itinerary, it offers all the information needed for successful diving.

• If you would like to enjoy Spanish food every day of the year without having to think too much about it, here is a good solution - **365 Menus**. Each menu includes a first course, a main dish and a dessert grouped according to the seasons and using the most appropriate ingredients for each period of the year. From the most famous traditional Spanish recipes to those that are less well-known but that are often exchanged amongst housewives keen to serve excellent but affordable meals. As the saying goes, "Variety is the spice of life". And this applies too to the world of *tapas*, a Spanish way of conceiving food that has become international. **Tapas, pinchos y tentempiés**, after a general introduction on the origin and history of *tapas*, has 17 chapters, one for each of the Spanish regions. Because, although there are certain *tapas* that are consumed nationwide, as with the rest of Spanish gastronomy each region has its own specialties - from Andalusian fried fish to Galician pies. The intro-

duction to each region is inviting and there are plenty of photos alongside the more than 200 recipes, most of which are easy to make.

• Nature-loving tourism is on the increase in Spain, one of the few European countries that conserves large areas untouched by "civilisation", where it is still possible to explore practically virgin landscapes. And the Iberian peninsula contains the largest variety of native tree species in Europe. **Árboles de la Península Ibérica y Baleares** (Trees in the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearics) will be of great use to those tourists who not only like to roam through natural territory but also to identify and learn about what they are seeing. The book opens with a full introduction on the trees to be found in Spain and Portugal, which vary from north to south and east to west, then on each page it gives a thorough description of a different tree with photos and diagrams showing where it can be located.



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Erratum:

In the last issue of Spain Gourmetour, page 20, the name Guiver & Carvajal should read Guibert & Carvajal

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F L A M E N C O

Text: **Alfredo Grimaldos**

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A few years ago, we featured a series of articles under the title “Spain Through Foreign Eyes” written by foreign visitors to Spain—some historical, some modern—recording their impressions of the experience. On many of them, certain quintessential Spanish expressions of folk culture had left a profound impression of one sort or another. Bullfights, flamenco singing and dancing, holy week pro-

cessions, all spring to mind as particular to Spain. This particularity is not something that should be underplayed, but nor should it be exaggerated as it often has been, forging a caricature image of Spain as the land of castanets and high tragedy. That said, although in many respects contemporary Spain is radically different from what it was just a few decades ago, those “typically Spanish” happenings are

still very much alive. Even on the threshold of the 21st century, their continuing hold is unquestionable. This is why we are devoting this series to them, knowing that they are not to everyone’s taste, nor properly understood by everyone. We started our series with the holy week and this last chapter is dedicated to flamenco: that Spanish folk music so famous all over the world.



Flamenco is the most distinctive musical expression of Spanish culture. Over the last century and a half, many foreign artists visiting Spain have been captivated by its unique nature and forcefulness. Painters, photographers, musicians, novelists and sundry travelers have

fallen under the spell of flamenco singing, guitar playing, and dancing. The Russian composer Mikhail Glinka visited Granada in 1847 and the spirit of flamenco permeated his music thereafter. Some time later, much the same happened with Claude Debussy, and a similar revelation must have been experienced by that impervious traveler and astute observer, Richard Ford. All were entranced by the lament of a *soleá*, the guitar notes of a *seguriya*, or the proud stance of a flamenco dancer.



Unlike other folk music genres, in flamenco the singer and guitarist both perform seated. This helps them to muster the necessary concentration to give their all.



As with flamenco singing, the traditional dance follows no preestablished script, and the artist can continue to dance uninterrupted as long as his or her stamina and inspiration permit.



Flamenco dance is an unpredictable combination of rhythm and movement. Smooth, slow movements of the arms and hands alternate with bursts ...

*...of impetuous
foot clicking
and interludes
of serene,
graceful
gestures are
suddenly
interrupted by
abrupt,
dizzing
gyrations.*





A gypsy wedding in Jerez de la Frontera, without doubt the town where flamenco remains at its strongest.

At the end of the 18th century, when the first written references to flamenco began to appear, José Jerónimo Fleuriot, Marquis of Langue, wrote in a bout of verbal passion after having watched a beautiful gypsy girl dance: "I wager that the strictest anchorite who eats nothing but lettuce, the one who prays the most, fasts the most, or indulges in the most painful self-mortification, could not watch a fandango dance without melting into sighs and cursing his hair shirt and his rigid regime. But it is important that the fandango be danced well. The head, the arms, the feet, the entire body must appear to move slowly and voluptuously, to cause amazement and admira-

tion. Then our anchorite surely could not resist any longer. He would lose his head, his blood would rush, and he would end up casting his lettuces, his hair shirt, and his sandals to the winds." A similarly intense sensation must have overcome American Donn Pohren when, some forty years ago, he saw a performance by the dancer Carmen Amaya (1913-1963), unanimously considered the best flamenco dancer in history, and the guitarist Maestro Sabicas (1912-1990) at New York's Carnegie Hall. So smitten was he that shortly afterwards he jumped on an airplane to Seville and settled in a small house in the nearby town of Morón de la Frontera (among his neigh-

bors was the guitarist Diego del Gastor). Pohren has lived in Spain ever since. He learned to play the flamenco guitar and in his house he would organize flamenco jam sessions that would last for hours or days, with some of the greatest artists of the 1960s and 1970s taking part, including the legendary Antonio Mairena (1909-1983). The American became one of the foremost defenders and ambassadors of pure flamenco, and today condemns not only the tourist-trap flamenco shows designed to bamboozle gullible foreigners, but is also highly critical of certain "commercial" trends that are making inroads into the traditional forms of flamenco. Another committed defender

of the more classic flamenco is the German photographer Elke Stolzenberg, whose work constitutes a priceless portrait of the best and most genuine flamenco dance. She discovered flamenco in California, and could not resist the temptation of coming to Spain to trace its roots. Since 1969 she has lived in Madrid and has become a professional dancer, studying with the great masters in Madrid's legendary dance academy, Amor de Dios, founded in Madrid in 1957. Donn Pohren and Elke Stolzenberg, like many other foreigners who came to Spain attracted by the country's culture, have not returned to their respective homelands after coming into contact with the flamenco

world. More than one non-Spaniard has become a professional dancer or guitarist—such as the American David Serva, who makes a living playing the guitar at the Corral de la Morería flamenco club in Madrid—although flamenco singing remains out of bounds to all but those who have been suckled on the spirit of flamenco from birth.

THE ART OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Flamenco is a music that defies academic structures. It cannot be confined to the rigid dictates of the musical staff. Since its beginnings, this has been a music directly handed down from one artist to another, one generation to the next, like a treasured inheritance, often within the great gypsy dynasties of Andalusia who continue to be flamenco's chief custodians. Flamenco is an individual art par excellence, and it has been shaped by the contributions of individual masters throughout its history.

These great masters gave rise to the different styles of singing, playing, and dance and thus the trained ear will easily identify a guitar *false-ta*, or interlude, inspired by Paco de Lucía; the initial burst of a soleá that recalls the style of the singer Manolo Caracol, or the heel clicking that has the unmistakable mark of Farruco.

A flamenco song is never executed the same way twice. Each performer delivers the *tercios* (as the stanzas are called) as they come to his mind, with no preestablished order. Thus, in flamenco perhaps more than any other form of music, it would be impossible for a singer to mouth a song to a taped playback. The stanzas acquire a

life of their own. They can be little bursts of introspection, or fiery phrases that portray an emotion or a sensation, a mood, an elusive moment. A flamenco song does not tell a story from start to finish as, say, a ballad would.

Flamenco surges forth spontaneously, without following a predetermined script. Among other things, this precludes the participation of backup choruses in flamenco. One story goes that a group of friends took the late Cádiz singer Aurelio Sellés to a theater for a performance by the Orfeón Donostiarra choir from the Basque Country. When the show was over, the eager hosts asked the master: "What did you think of it, maestro? Did you enjoy it?" To which he replied, "It was very nice. But I don't understand why they needed all those people, if they all were singing the same thing."

VOICE AND GUITAR

Unlike other folk music genres, in flamenco the singer and guitarist both perform seated. This helps them to muster the necessary concentration to give their all, and to execute the music with the serenity and aplomb that distinguish serious flamenco. This is the case when the *cantaor*, or singer, performs *alante* (up front) in the leading role. On other occasions, the singer and guitarist will be in the background, as a supporting element to the flamenco dancer, in which case the singer will perform standing up, because this allows him to follow the movements of the dancer and to back up the dancer with his voice, his hand clapping, and the beat of his heels on the stage

which serve to accent the rhythm of the music.

A spectator not familiar with flamenco could assume that a guitarist is the permanent partner of a given singer, and that they have spent hours rehearsing. In fact, such is the nature of flamenco, a guitarist can accompany any singer, and they need not have even met before. The *cejilla*, or adjustable guitar nut, allows the guitarist to adjust the instrument to suit the pitch of each singer. The basic structure of the different flamenco *palos*, or styles, is known to both, so the guitarist will have no problem accompanying any singer, although needless to say if the two have worked together in the past the result will be that much more cohesive and smooth.

Before each song, which is introduced by the initial notes of the guitar, the singer emits some wailing "*ayes*." The newcomer might assume this has some sort of mysterious hidden significance, but in fact the purpose is none other than to allow the singer to fine tune his voice to the tone set by the guitarist, aside from focusing the attention of the listeners and announcing that the song is about to commence.

There you have it: a flamenco song consists of an instrumental introduction by the guitarist, the initial *ayeo* by the singer, followed by an undetermined number of *tercios*. Between one *tercio* and another, the guitarist plays an instrumental refrain, called a *falseta*. A song will be longer or shorter depending on the inspiration and stamina of the artist. Antonio Mairena, who had an encyclopedic memory for flamenco songs, was capable of singing in the soleá style for several hours on end, with-

out repeating a single line.

Little by little, in an almost spiritual ambience, with silent and respectful listeners, the flamenco session gradually gains in intensity and passion. Audience participation is limited to applauding between one song and the next, and to encouraging the performers with appreciative shouts at particularly crucial moments. Yet even here, a certain knowledge is required. A misplaced *olé* will earn the perpetrator a steely glance at the very least. Some song styles that have an especially lively rhythm might also be accompanied by the listeners' hand clapping, but this must be in precise time with the music. Those who are not masters in the art of the flamenco hand clap had best abstain. After all listening in silence, too, is an art.

FLAMENCO: THE DANCE

For those not familiar with flamenco, in particular those from a culture alien to that which engendered this uniquely Spanish art, dance is possibly the easiest form of flamenco to relate to initially. Flamenco dancing is imbued with a singular beauty, magnetism, and introspective intensity that is hard to resist.

The more traditional flamenco dance is unhindered by choreographic elements, and the setting is the most basic: a play of lights and shadows on a barren stage. In the background, seated on the classic rush chairs, are the guitarists who will mark the rhythm of the performance and, standing, the singers, backing up the dancer and punctuating the rhythm with their hand clapping and heel clicking.

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Up in front, only one dancer—male or female—concentrates all the audience's attention. Dancing in pairs might be appropriate for theater shows or big extravaganzas, but the essence of pure flamenco dance is individuality. That said, pure flamenco dance coexists with innovative trends, in which elements of modern dance or classical Spanish dance are incorporated, including more elaborate choreography, in an attempt to make flamenco dance attractive to a broader public. The foremost exponents of this movement—such as Joaquín Cortés or Antonio Canales—enjoy the greatest fame among those not immersed in the flamenco world, but the aficionados of pure dance will sooner name artists like El Guito or Farruco as the last great custodians of true flamenco, and the most loyal to its roots.

Whereas flamenco song evolved gradually over time, flamenco guitar and dance underwent a veritable revolution. The first records describe the flamenco *baile* as a sort of tribal dance performed within a circle of people. In those early days the movements of the dancer were much slower, and in the case of women dancers involved only the waist up. It was Carmen Amaya who turned the art of flamenco dance upside down in the 1930s: her irrepressible gypsy temperament and her natural talent allowed her to inject new life into female flamenco dancing. Aside from being able to handle the unwieldy train of the flamenco dress like no other, she was perfectly capable of donning trousers and clicking her heels with the best of the men dancers.

Flamenco dance is an unpredictable combination of rhythm and movement. Smooth, slow movements of the arms and hands alternate with bursts of impetuous foot clicking, and interludes of serene, graceful gestures are suddenly interrupted by abrupt, dizzying gyrations. As with flamenco singing, the traditional dance follows no preestablished script, and the artist can continue to dance uninterrupted as long as his or her stamina and inspiration permit.

THE BIRTH OF FLAMENCO

What we understand today to be flamenco, which originated in Andalusia, has a recorded history spanning a mere two centuries, over which time it has never ceased to evolve, as new styles of singing emerged and especially as the guitar music became more complex and precise. Paco de Lucía has been the instigator of the latest great transformation in flamenco guitar playing, in the same way that the late Camarón de la Isla (1952-1992) was the latest to revolutionize flamenco singing.

In the beginning, singers would perform "*a palo seco*," that is without any guitar accompaniment at all, and some styles are still executed in this manner. The *martinete*—one of the primary flamenco styles generically known as *tonás*—is accompanied only by the slow, rhythmic beating of a hammer against an anvil, recalling its origins as the song of the iron smiths.

Flamenco song encompasses several dozen different palos, or styles, distinguished by their rhythmic structure and their tonality.

But being a musical form that is alive and is constantly drawing on spur-of-the-moment inspiration, innumerable variations have developed from the seminal flamenco styles. Indeed, different palos might have differentiating nuances unique to a given area or town—the same type of song might be rendered differently in two villages separated by only a few kilometers.

For example, there is a *soleá* that is typical of the Triana district in Seville, and *soleás* from Alcalá de Guadaíra, Córdoba, Utrera or Cádiz, all of them different. In the case of the *seguiriya*, not only are there geographic differences, but individual singers have developed their own particular way of delivering the tercios. Thus we have *seguiriyas* in the style of Silverio, or Tomás El Nitri, or Paco la Luz. Creative individualism reaches such extremes in the flamenco world that two quarters in the same town—Santiago and San Miguel, in Jerez (Cádiz)—have different ways of rendering a tune or rhythm that are perfectly distinguishable for the trained ear.

The origin of the flamenco singing is the subject of heated debate, though the likeliest explanation is, briefly, that it arose in lower Andalusia, principally the provinces of Cádiz and Seville, originating with the different cultural influences inherited from the various peoples who settled in the area throughout its history, from the Phoenicians to the Visigoths, Moors, and Jews. In particular, the eight centuries of Moorish presence in southern Spain had much to do with the birth of flamenco, although the Arab influence is not as pervasive as is sometimes claimed.

On the other hand, the gypsies of Andalusia were decisive in the development of flamenco song, with their unique expressiveness and strong artistic temperament. The styles which are considered the primary forms of flamenco song (*toná*, *seguiriya*, *soleá*, *tanguiyos*) and their subsequent variations are of unmistakable gypsy origin. Flamenco was at one time the sole domain of the gypsies, and only crossed the ethnic barrier in the second half of the 19th century. This coincided with the opening of the first *cafés cantantes*, establishments where flamenco performances were formally staged, and the appearance of the first professional flamenco artists. In these establishments, the gypsy songs were enriched with the contributions of other Andalusian folk genres. These other forms of Andalusian music, in turn, became gypsified as they borrowed expressive and rhythmic elements from flamenco. Although it is true that gypsy flamenco artists continue to have a unique temperament and mode of expression rarely seen in performers of non-gypsy origin, today one can no longer make a distinction between the flamenco styles of the gypsies and those of the *payos*, or non-gypsies. On the other hand, one can differentiate between the noble art of flamenco and the crass artificiality of the pseudo-flamenco foisted on unsuspecting newcomers as the genuine article.

FLAMENCO EVENTS

Flamenco is not as widespread an art as many think. Even a great many Spaniards are not that familiar with it.

Nevertheless, those interested in discovering flamenco will not have too many problems finding a performance, although it is best to avoid the typical tourist venues and the organized tours, and seek out the art of flamenco on one's own.

During weekends in summer there are numerous open-air flamenco festivals throughout Andalusia. Traditionally, flamenco get-togethers also involved food—the singing would follow dessert—and many of these events are named after regional dishes, in keeping with their origins. Among the best known are the Gazpacho of Morón, the Caracolá of Lebrija, or the Potaje of Utrera, the oldest flamenco festival in Spain. There are also numerous flamenco contests in areas or cities where flamenco enjoys a strong following, such as La Mancha, Extremadura, Barcelona, and above all Madrid, where flamenco activity is

very strong, and where many of the top singers, guitarists, and dancers live. Flamenco is featured in the Spanish capital all year round, and some of the traditional venues, such as La Peña Chaquetón, have weekly programs of an excellent standard, and for its part the Amor de Dios academy has been visited for decades by dance aficionados from all over the world. For the foreign visitor truly interested in experiencing flamenco in its genuine milieu, the best advice is to patiently explore those towns or quarters where traces of flamenco in its earliest and purest forms survive among gypsy clans and dynasties of singers.

Sadly, these last pockets of pure flamenco are fewer every day. Unbridled urban development has done away with the traditional lifestyle of Seville's Barrio of Triana, one of the birthplaces of flamenco. However, there are villages such as Utrera and Lebrija in the province of

Seville which still conserve their flamenco atmosphere. Other places of pilgrimage for the true aficionado are the districts of La Viña and Santamaría in the city of Cádiz.

Without doubt the town where flamenco remains at its strongest and where flamenco sessions take place on the same occasions where the art originally was performed (weddings, the family fiesta, the neighborhood party) is Jerez de la Frontera. Its legendary *barrios* (quarters) of Santiago and San Miguel have given the world the greatest number of flamenco artists, over more than a century, and continue to be the source of formidable flamenco talent.

With a bit of luck, and so long as you stay in the background and don't intrude on the proceedings or make a nuisance of yourself, you might be allowed to sit in on a flamenco session in one of the town's various *peñas*—flamenco clubs. These get-

together can last, as of old, a whole day, or even span several days. It is on these occasions when one witnesses the true essence of flamenco.

Alfredo Grimaldos Feito graduated in Journalism at the Complutense University, Madrid. Between 1982 and 1987 he was the editor of *Cabal*, a magazine about flamenco published in Madrid. He has been the flamenco critic for the daily *El Mundo* since the newspaper's inception in 1989. His work on flamenco has been published in specialized magazines, and he has served on the juries of numerous flamenco singing contests.



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FLAMENCO FESTIVALS

Flamenco festivals are held in numerous Andalusian villages during summer. From the end of June until mid-September, there is at least one outdoor event, and usually more, every Friday and Saturday, in different parts of the region. They start at around ten at night, and usually continue far into the early hours of the morning. During four, six or even eight hours, there is singing, guitar playing and dancing, performed by flamenco artists in different styles. On these occasions it is perfectly acceptable for a spectator who is not particularly impressed with a given performance to get up from his seat and adjourn to the bar for some refreshment or a snack. The oldest of all the festivals is the Potaje in Utrera (Seville), held since 1955. Its chief instigator was Antonio Mairena. It is the first festival of summer, held every year on the last or second-to-last Saturday in June. The seasoned and extremely talented singers Fernanda and Bernarda de Utrera are on the bill every year. Another festival of great tradition and seriousness, started by the painter and poet Francisco Moreno Galván, takes place in Puebla de Cazalla (Seville) on the second or third Saturday in July. José

Menese, born in the village, is one of the regular performers. At around the same time of year, La Caracolá in Lebrija, a festival with a great gypsy atmosphere, is held in this Seville town which has many local artists of great renown, including El Lebrijano and the members of the gypsy clan, the Pininis.

The Gazpacho of Morón (Seville), another of the original festivals, usually takes place on the first Saturday in August. Like the festivals in Utrera and Lebrija, or the Arrenque of Rota, the Parpuja of Chiclana and others, it takes its name from a traditional Andalusian dish.

Towards the middle of August the Festival Nacional de Cante de las Minas of La Unión is held in the region of Murcia, northeast of Andalusia.

Throughout the week there are lectures, performances, and flamenco evenings, aside from a contest which promotes the *mineras*, the flamenco of the miners, unique to this area. The top prize is in the shape of a miner's lamp.

Another event inspired by Antonio Mairena is the festival held in his home town, Mairena del Alcor (Seville), on the first Saturday in September. It is a serious event in the best flamenco tradi-

tion, with the participation of, among others, Manolo Mairena, the younger brother of the late master.

The season ends with the Fiesta de la Bulería, held in the Jerez bullring towards the middle of September. It is a spectacular event charged with gypsy passion. Most of the night is devoted to the fast-paced rhythms of the *bulería*, and the sight of hundreds of people clapping in perfect unison is unforgettable.

To confirm the date of each festival and the artists scheduled to appear, it is best to contact the culture department of the local town hall.

Townhalls of cities which celebrate flamenco festivals:

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Fax: (34-56) 40 47 68
- **JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA**
Consistorio, 15 - 11403 Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz)
Tel: (34-56) 35 93 00
Fax: (34-56) 35 93 15
- **LA UNIÓN**
Salvador Pascual, 7
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Fax: (34-68) 56 01 02

- **LEBRIJA**
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- **MAIRENA DEL ALCOR**
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GLOSSARY

Palos: the different styles of flamenco singing. The range is wide, including the original forms (*soleá, seguiriya, tonás, tientos*), those from the south-eastern coast of Spain (*taranta, cartagenera, minera*), lively *cantiñas* (*alegrías, mirabrás, romera, caracolé*), the so-called *cantes de ida y vuelta*, or "there and back again," which have a South American influence (*colombiana, quajira, vidalita*), *fandangos*, and more.

Soleá: one of the foundations of flamenco song. Many other singing styles are derived from the original *soleás*, including the *bulería* and the *cantiña*. It is considered the cornerstone of flamenco music. Only those with an acute sense of rhythm and great interpretative depth can perform it successfully.

Falseta: an instrumental interlude by the flamenco gui-

tarist, played between one *tercio* of a song and the next.

Seguiriya: another fundamental flamenco style. It is the most serious, tragic and profound of the *palos*, sung at the end of a flamenco session, when the proceedings have reached on emotional climax.

Desplante: a recourse used by a flamenco dancer to lend flavor and spontaneity to his performance. It is a

small detail, an instantaneous stroke, which may consist of a sudden freezing of the body, a gesture, a silence, or even an abrupt departure from the stage.

Fandango: a flamenco song of popular folk origin, with innumerable variations. There are regional *fandangos* (Huelva, Málaga, Lucena) and others with the personal stamp of a given performer (Carbonerillo, El Gloria, Vallejo).

VEGETABLES

WITH

PERSONALITY (II)

After the first article in this series on the vegetables produced mainly in the wetter parts of Spain, our travels now take us to the kitchen gardens of the Spanish Mediterranean. From the French frontier in Catalonia, right down beyond the Strait of Gibraltar in Andalusia, the produce of the land and market gardeners will be our travel and table companions. We shall search through central markets and street markets, and we shall visit kitchens all along the coast to find artichokes big and small (*alcauciles*),

KNOWING YOUR ONIONS:

The Gardens of the Spanish Kitchen

Text: **María José Sevilla**

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**

those juiciest of spring onions known as calçots, the common or garden chard, chicory in its many guises—even dandelions.



The artichoke, a very popular vegetable throughout Spain, was apparently introduced into the Iberian Peninsula by the Arabs in the 9th or 10th century. The main areas of production in Spain are Alicante, Valencia, Tarragona, and Castellón.

It seems strange that the vegetable scene should have changed so little since Greek or Roman times. Obviously, I refer to leaf and root vegetables and herbs, not to peppers or tomatoes, potatoes or maize, all of which came to us from America fairly recently and are the maximum exponents of what we now call the Mediterranean flavor. The next few pages will sing the praises of produce that grew in Europe before the sixteenth century and especially the plants that traveled across the Mediterranean, from east to west, from near and far parts of Asia, from an ancient world of distinction, culture, and science. What has changed enormously, however, is the image and attitude towards these products in today's society in comparison with times of expansion and agricultural development in the countries bordering the *mare nostrum*. In the Middle Ages and even until fairly recently they were always thought of as fare for the poor.

Professor John Wilkins on the subject of *Food in Antiquity* indicates: "In everyday life the majority of people probably subsisted on a largely vegetarian diet except at times of festival." He added, "Ancient Mediterranean people were unlikely to consume meat without associating it both with the way the animal had died—in sacrifice to a god—and with commensality, eating with their peers. They were unlikely to eat a vegetable diet without associating it with poverty or unorthodox religious groups." In the former Hispania, the

dry Spanish landscape gradually became greener and leafier thanks to the skilled farming techniques of the Arabs (who lived in Spain from 711 to 1492). The barren banks of many rivers were turned into orchards and the Roman methods still in use were updated and adapted to new irrigation systems that took water to wasteland. Abu Zacaria, in his *Book of Agriculture* (12th century) listed all the products that were cultivated during the Arab presence in Spain. His long list included lettuce, wild and garden spinach, Spanish cabbage, round and long turnips, garlic, leeks, celery, cardoons, asparagus, endives, eggplants, cucumbers, and pumpkins. Also broad beans, chicory, chard, artichokes, several varieties of onion, and a number of other wild or cultivated plants that I have selected for this tour of the Spanish Mediterranean.

Chard or Seakale Beet

According to Columela, a Latin writer and agriculturalist who lived in the 1st century A.D., chard or seakale beet (*beta vulgaris subspecies cicla*), one of the oldest vegetables known to humanity, should be planted when the pomegranate tree is in flower. A charming idea, sufficient in my mind to justify the popularity in Spain of this member of the *Quenopodiaceae* family, although here the adage of "familiarity breeds contempt" rings true.

The ancient Greeks knew it as *beta* and the Romans cooked it with a little mustard to give it flavor. It was

the Arabs in the Middle Ages who discovered the real medicinal and therapeutic properties of this versatile food that is easy to grow, inexpensive, and is available year-round. The species grown in Spain is very similar to that described in the *Oxford Book of Food Plants* (G.B. Masefield, M. Wallis, S.G. Harrison, and B.E. Nicholson) as seakale beet or chard. It has long, wide, white stems ending in splendid large green leaves. The varieties called Swiss chard (which has shorter stems) or spinach beet (a close relation of beetroot or sugar beet) are not so highly considered. The best-known in Spain are the rubia with its white ribs, lucullus, verde rizada, and amarilla de León. The principal areas of production in Spain are Catalonia and Valencia but in fact it grows in most of the northern and central parts of the Iberian Peninsula. I think of chard as being a versatile vegetable—mild, yet earthy and sweet with bitter undertones—that can be cooked in a variety of ways. In Spain and in most of the countries where it is appreciated, the traditional recipes incorporate both the stem and the leaves.

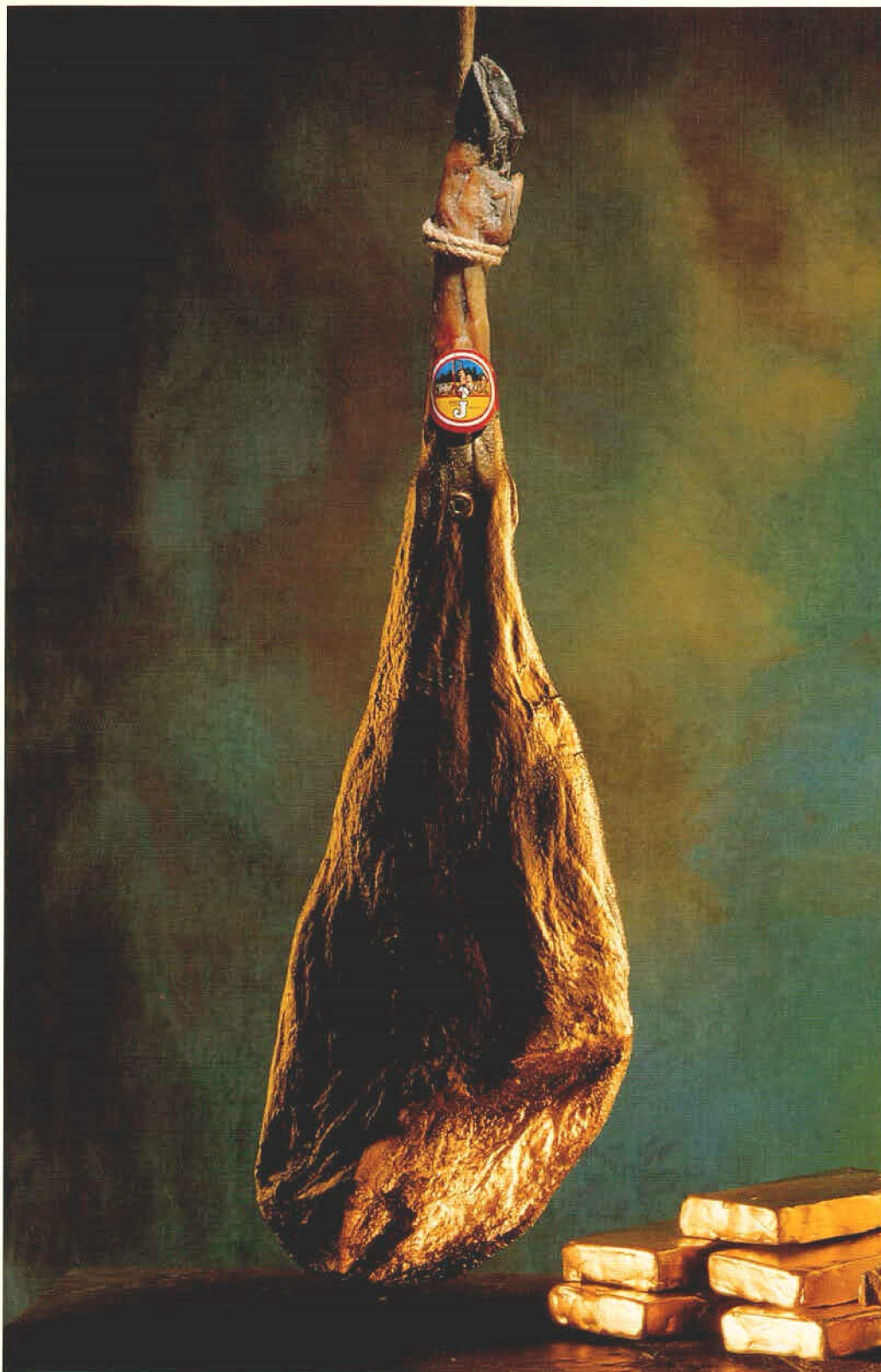
Catalan Chicory and Endive

The outstanding writer, Jane Grigson, one of the best British food historians, in her well-informed *Vegetable Book* stated on the subject of the chicory family, that it was difficult to know exactly what plant we were referring to and the meaning in different countries—

white, green, or red chicory, the *endives* of the French, the *cicorte* of the Italians, the renowned *witloof* of the Belgians or the variety known as Catalan chicory. What shapes and colors characterize them, what species do they belong to, are they better in salad or can they be cooked? She reached a logical conclusion. If we want to find out we should learn their botanical names. After consulting a number of Spanish publications, especially from Navarre and Catalonia, and some Italian or French documents, I think I have sorted things out. The forms belonging to the species *Cichorium intybus* (of the Compositae family) in the Linnaean classification known as chicory (*achicoria* in Spanish) are at least two thousand years old. The Romans and Greeks used to cultivate the wild plants for both their leaves and their roots. Now all the different types of chicory, such as reviso red, witloof, Verona red or the delicious *achicoria catalana* are included in the *intybus* species. Wild chicory grows spontaneously throughout Europe, in Morocco and Algeria, from eastern Europe to Afghanistan, the Punjab, Kashmir and even in Siberia. Some varieties are delicious in salad and others can be boiled or cooked in several ways.

The Catalan chicory, which is much loved not only in Catalonia, but also in Majorca and Navarre, is practically unknown in the rest of Spain, is a variety which is sown progressively and so gives a good yield almost all the year round, especially between October and May.

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The *calçot* is an exquisite white spring onion that is grown to be grilled over hot coals. Then comes the celebration—the *calçotada*, a fiesta or banquet—with *calçots*, a special sauce to accompany them, lamb, and a pork sausage called *longaniza*.

The leaves are long, very serrated, and of varying shades of dark green.

A plant which is very popular throughout Spain and is often wrongly named chicory, is the endive—*endivia* in Spanish and, to make things more complicated, *chicorée frisée* in French. Opinions vary as to its origins. Some historians consider it to be of Indo-Oriental origin and others that it is a free-growing, annual plant found throughout the Mediterranean. Where the academics do seem to agree is that it comes from the species *Cichorium pumilum* which the Romans and Greeks hardly mention but which was well known by the Arabs. In Spain it certainly occupies a foremost place among salads and is an important element of Christmas menus. It is served as an hors d'oeuvre or a side dish, dressed with olive oil, lemon or vinegar, salt, and even pomegranates.

Artichokes and Alcauciles

Getting together with family and friends around a table, preferably in the open air, is undoubtedly one of the main "vices" of the Mediterranean way of life. And what better way to start such a celebration than to make a fire with olive or holm-oak wood, wait for the flames to die down leaving red-hot coals, then grill artichokes over them. The artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*), a very popular vegetable throughout Spain and known in the classical world, was apparently introduced into the Iberian Peninsula by the Arabs in the 9th or 10th century. They called it *kbarsur*. Here I refer again

to the book by Lucie Bolens, *La Cocina Andaluza. Un arte de vivir. Siglos XI-XIII* (Andalusian Cuisine: An Art of Living, 11th-13th Centuries). In her paragraphs on Andalusian gardens she writes: "Artichokes were everywhere. Although not figuring in the *Viandier* by Taillevent or the *Ménagier de Paris*, nor even in the 14th-century *Libro de Cocina*, they were to be found in and around Seville, in the gardens and on the tables. It is the *Kinaria* amongst the garden plants, and this term was also used for the wild species. And it seems that, apart from the *Cynara scolymus* listed by Linnaeus, which grew in gardens, the species called *Harchef* used to be eaten in the month of March in Andalusia. This is the word that led to the Spanish name of *alcachofa*." In the *Anónimo Andaluz*, a book on cooking in North Africa and in Andalusia at the time of the Almohads (12th-13th century), on pages 142 and 144 there are two recipes for artichokes, one with meat and chickpeas and another, simpler one. The main areas of production in Spain are Alicante, Valencia, Tarragona, and Castellón. It is also grown but to a lesser degree in the Tudela area of Navarre, in Murcia, and in Toledo. While widely consumed as a fresh vegetable, it is equally or even more important as a canned product. The most widely-cultivated varieties are Monquelina, Violete, Blanca de Tudela, and the French Verde de Provence. Artichokes are cooked in a wide variety of ways, some of them unusual, in Spanish

cuisine. They are served both as a side dish or as an ingredient in all sorts of stews both with and without meat. Without artichokes there would be none of those delicious *menestras* or vegetable stews from the Rioja or Navarre, nor some of the most exquisite rice dishes I know. The Catalan *arros negre* or black rice is not blackened by squid ink which is the usual way of preparing such dishes, but by artichokes. And in Valencia at the start of the season, tiny tender artichokes are thinly sliced, sprinkled with a little olive oil and salt, and grilled or baked. Irresistible! In the past, these wild alcauciles collected in the Andalusian countryside gave rise to all sorts of springtime festivities. Today there are few wild plants left but there is at least one company that grows them carefully and sells them as a high-quality canned product.

Calçots

It's nothing new to say that the onion is important in Spanish cuisine. What is new, however, is that there is a very special onion that has been a carefully-kept secret for many years in Catalonia—the *calçot* (*Allium cepa*). But what's so special about it? Ask a Spaniard from Galicia, Castile, Andalusia, or Extremadura and they're unlikely to know what you're talking about. But ask a Catalan and he'll reach out for—of all things—a *bib!* The *calçot* is an exquisite white spring onion that is grown to be grilled over hot coals. From August to September the healthiest bulbs of a

white onion that is much appreciated in the Spanish Mediterranean, the *babosa*, are cut across the middle. The part with the root hairs is sunk into very damp, practically wet earth, leaving the white cut cross-section showing. They are planted in rows, fairly well spaced to make room for the process known as *recalzar* (piling up earth around the plants) which is where the name of *calçots* comes from and which is the key to their quality. Ten to twelve days later the unburied onions begin to sprout. When the plants are about 40-50 cm (17 in) high, early in the new year, the earth is piled up around them to prevent the tender bottom parts of the stems from darkening. Around March, when the stems are about three centimeters thick, they are picked and separated and the top green parts and roots are cut off.

Then comes the celebration—the *calçotada*, a relatively new fiesta that is rapidly increasing in popularity. The basic elements of this banquet, held in the streets, in the traditional Catalan farmhouses called *masías*, and in restaurants all over Catalonia, although the tradition stems from the area of Valls in Tarragona, are the following—freshly picked *calçots*, a special sauce to accompany them, lamb, a pork sausage called *longaniza*, and oranges and pastries. And to drink, a local red wine finishing with a bottle of *cava* (see Glossary on page 154).

Once the coals are ready, the *calçots* are threaded onto a wire and placed in a



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Garlic shoots, wild watercress, borage, campion, cardoons, fennel, wild asparagus, alcauciles, and of course hundreds of wild and field mushrooms. They have all found a place in Spanish cooking in many distinguished and original dishes.

ring over the grills. As soon as they begin to “weep” they are turned over, and when they begin to glisten on the other side they are removed from the wire and wrapped in paper, then placed in a cardboard box where by keeping them close together they finish cooking and end up absolutely delectable. This is when the special sauce is prepared from roast tomatoes, garlic, a little hot pepper, and one or two dry sweet biscuits as thickener. Then it’s time to put on the bib I mentioned above. The calçots are traditionally served on an Arab tile by way of a plate. To eat them, the bottom is pinched to pull off the burnt outside layers then, holding the green stem, the white base is dipped in the sauce and eaten. It takes quite some skill! Meanwhile, a few artichokes are buried in the coals to cook, then served with salt, pepper, and

a little olive oil. But there’s more to come. While the embers are still hot, lamb cutlets and pork sausages are grilled then served with another of the magic sauces, *al-i-oli*, a perfect but difficult-to-achieve emulsion of olive oil, garlic, and salt prepared in the traditional local mortar made of yellow and green earthenware. For more information on this unusual subject (in Catalan!), an interesting book has recently been published called *La Cuina del Calçot*, written by Joan Jofre i Agustí García.

Broad Beans

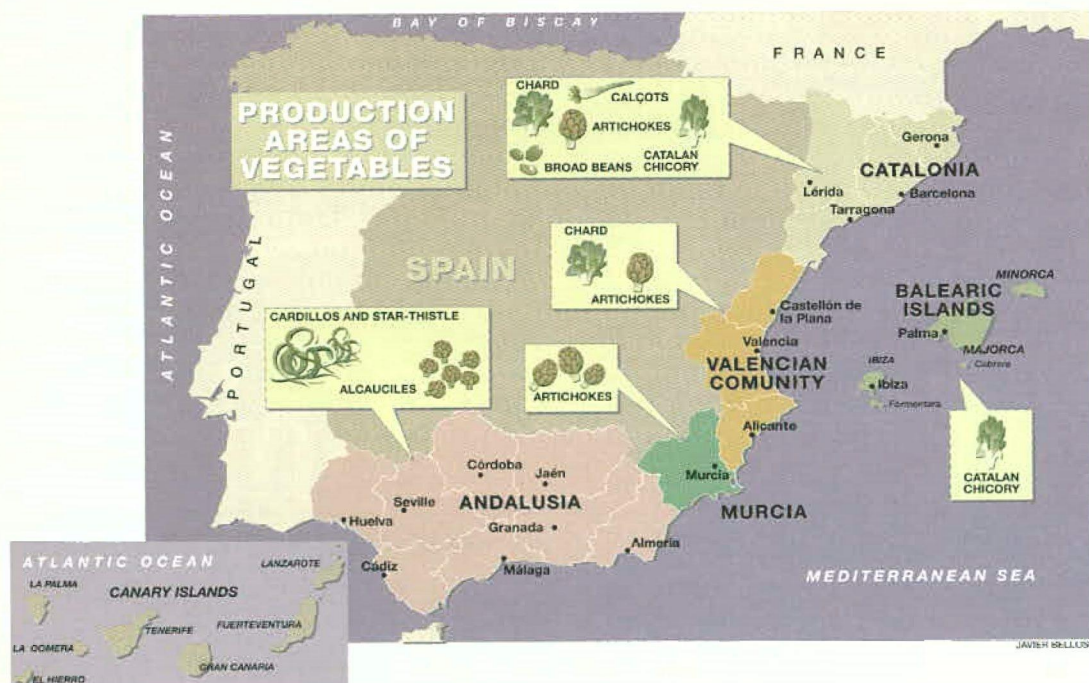
One of the oldest cultivated vegetables known in the Old World is the *Vicia faba*. The Roman and Greek upper classes were not sure it was good for them but it served to keep the wolf from the door for the less fortunate lower classes. This

member forms part of the pea family. It is an erect, hardy annual, easily recognizable by its 4-ribbed stem, single or sparsely branched. Unfortunately, they are often picked when too ripe but if picked small and young, they can become the proud protagonists of superb dishes such as Catalan-style broad beans, in which they combine with a thick pork sausage called *butifarra* (see page 73) and a touch of mint. It is true that as a dried legume in winter they can be slightly unpleasant, with a few exceptions, notably in *gazpacho* made of crushed almonds, garlic, and broad bean flour that is made in some parts of Andalusia. In Spain they are also popular as a snack—dried, fried, and salted. Spring is the best season for broad beans—then they are small, tender, and flavorful. This is when the

greengrocers in the traditional Catalan markets spend any spare moments carefully shelling them to sell them at a slightly higher price in paper packets or plastic bags. Josep Pla, considered to be one of the best contemporary Spanish writers and also a lover of the culinary arts, in his book *Lo que bemos comido* (Things We Have Eaten) said, “Spring is the season of broad beans and peas, of the green Lenten asparagus, of blue fish—sardines, anchovies, mackerel, and the like.” Broad beans are given a whole chapter to themselves. While he considers them to be one of the most important of the Mediterranean legumes, he emphasizes their importance in the diet of the Balearic islands, concluding, “It is a fact that the only cuisine in which this legume is treated with due respect is that of the Catalan peoples.” He makes four specific points about broad beans: they should be very small and very tender; the flavor should not be bland and floury (as when they are picked late) but should have a touch of bitterness; they should be grown on dry land, precisely to gain this pleasing bitterness; and they should travel as little as possible, that is, they should preferably be home-grown or local.

Wild Plants

There are few experiences that give more pleasure to plant lovers when out for a walk in the country or a forest, or along a river bank, than finding a beautiful, edible plant. There are parts of Spain



If picked small and young, broad beans can become the proud protagonists of superb dishes such as Catalan-style broad beans, in which they combine with a thick pork sausage called *butifarra* and a touch of mint.

where, not so long ago out of necessity but now more as a hobby, this sort of exercise regularly brings home ingredients for salads and the cooking pot. Garlic shoots, dandelions, wild watercress, borage, campion, cardoons, fennel, wild asparagus, alcauciles, purslane, and of course hundreds of wild and field mushrooms. They have all found a place in Spanish cooking in many distinguished and original dishes with varying degrees of complexity.

On this occasion I have chosen *cardillos*, for a simple reason. Towards the end of winter they do not just appear in fallow fields or mountain areas but also in a few select shops or market stalls in Madrid, Barcelona, or Cádiz, that go out of their way to hunt them out for their many fans.

Cardillos are basically small relatives of the cardoon, with serrated leaves with

spiky edges that early in the season are very tender and tasty. Cardillo is the common name of the *Scolymus hispanicus*, a member of the Compositae family. They are much appreciated in Madrid and in the north and east of Spain where they are prepared as a cooked vegetable and dressed with olive oil, salt, and vinegar. The *tagarina* (or star-thistle) is another variety that grows in Andalusia. It belongs to the *Scolymus Maculatus* species and can be distinguished by the small white marks on its spiky leaves. I have eaten these leaves in salads, occasionally in casseroles, and often in scrambled eggs which is the most common and the way I like best.

Another unusual plant that is not cultivated but can be found in the markets in Barcelona and on the tables of the lovers of wild plants, is the dandelion. Commonly

known in Spanish as *diente de león*, it is also called *amargón* due to its slight bitterness—*amargo* in Spanish means bitter. The official name is *Taraxacum officinale* and it too, belongs to the Compositae family but its origin is a mystery. It is very similar to chicory and tends to be used in similar ways. Delicious when young, it can be eaten in a well-dressed salad, or cooked then sautéed in a little olive oil that has first been flavored by frying garlic in it. At the start of spring it is so tender that it can be pickled in the same way as capers. It combines perfectly with several types of wild mushroom, especially the one known in the Balearic Islands as "Mountain Liver" (*Krombholziella crocipo-dia*). The uncooked mushrooms are finely sliced, marinated in olive oil for three to four hours and served as

a salad with the dandelion leaves dressed with a few drops of olive oil. Delicious!

Author and broadcaster, María José Sevilla, is a specialist in food and wine and teaches at the Culinary Institute of America in the Napa Valley. She is responsible for gastronomy and food promotion at the Commercial Office in the Spanish Embassy in the U.K.

See Main Exporters on page 22 and Recipes on page 139.

HINTS ON PREPARING PARTICULAR VEGETABLES

It depends on how you are going to cook it, but usually the green leaves of chard are cut off the stems which are then washed, and the thin outer layer is removed, as with celery. One of the simplest and tastiest preparations is to cut the stems into pieces 2 or 3 cm (1.2 in) long, boil and, when dry, coat in flour and egg and deep fry. The green leaves

meanwhile are coarsely chopped, boiled and sautéed in olive oil with a little garlic. Stems and leaves are served together, accompanied with a good tomato sauce.

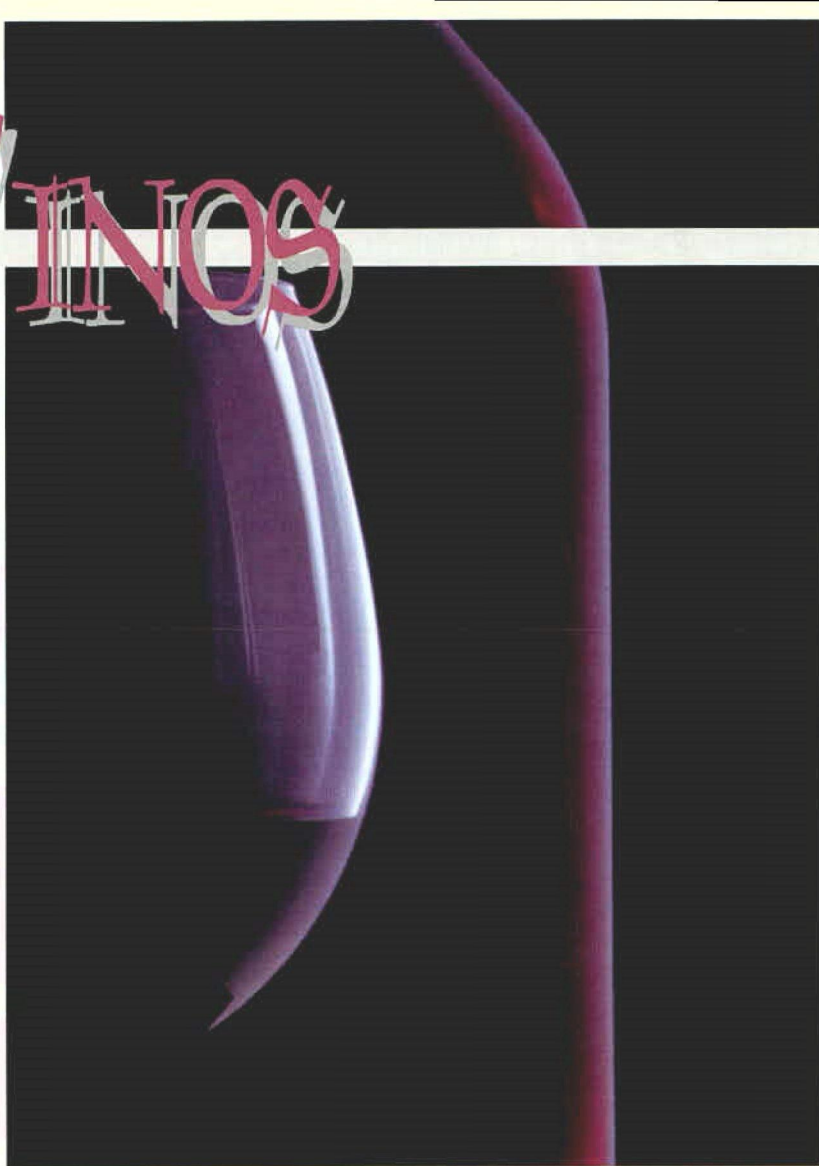
The artichokes receive special treatment in Spain when very small and young, they are just cut into strips and grilled with a little olive oil and salt, or when medium-sized with the inside fruit

still completely curled up. In this case the procedure is to peel the base, discard the outside leaves, cut into two or four pieces which are kept white by placing in cold water with a little lemon juice, then boiled with a little flour in the water. This is to help the grey scum to form which is then removed from the cooking water. When soft, they are

sautéed with little cubes of serrano ham or simply with garlic or onion. Cold as a salad, they are delicious dressed with virgin olive oil and a little vinegar; or mayonnaise is just as good.

Small, young alcauciles are delicious baked in the oven with a dressing made of crushed garlic, parsley, breadcrumbs, olive oil, and cubes of Iberian ham.

OS VINOS



SELECCIÓN

GRAN

MEDALLAS DE ORO

MEDALLAS DE PLATA

MEDALLAS DE BRONCE

BLANCOS

Torre de Gazate Blanco 1996
Cooperativa Vinícola de Tomelloso
Tomelloso.

Delmio Blanco 1996
Juan Ramón Lozano, S.A.
Villarrobledo.

Vina Alamburada Blanco 1996
Bodegas Hermanos Rubio, S.L.
Villasequilla.

ROSADOS

Senorio de Zocodover 1996
Bodegas Hermanos Rubio, S.L.
Villasequilla.

Torre de Gazate Rosado 1996
Cooperativa Vinícola de Tomelloso
Tomelloso.

Casa de la Vina Rosado 1996
Casa de la Vina, S.A.
La Solana.

TINTOS JOVENES

Veronès Tinto 1996
S.A.T. Santa Rita
Mota del Cuervo.

Vina Recreo Tinto 1996
Coop. San Isidro Labrador
Las Pedroñeras.

Altovela Tinto 1996
Coop. de la Paz
Corral de Almaguer.

TINTOS DE CRIANZA

Vina Recreo Tinto 1994
Coop. San Isidro Labrador
Las Pedroñeras.

Campos Reales Tinto 1994
Coop. El Rosario
El Provencio.

Vina Albali Tinto 1993 Cabernet Sauvignon
Viña Albali Reservas, S.A.
Valdepeñas.

TINTOS RESERVA

Vegaval Plata 1989
Miguel Calatayud, S.A.
Valdepeñas.

Yuntero Tinto 1990
Coop. Jesús del Perdón
Manzanares.

Senorio de los Llanos Tinto 1992
Cosecheros Abastecedores, S.A.
Valdepeñas.

TINTOS GRAN RESERVA

Senorio de Guadianeja.
Tinto 1984 Cencibel.
Vinicola de Castilla S.A.
Manzanares.

Estola Tinto 1985
Bodegas Ayuso, S.L.
Villarrobledo.

Pata Negra Tinto 1987
Cosecheros Abastecedores, S.A.
Valdepeñas.



Vinos de Castilla-La Mancha
Naturalmente buenos.



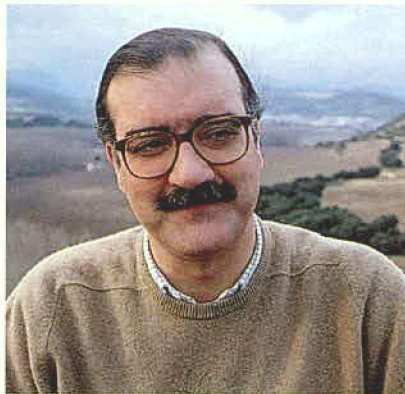
Junta de Comunidades de
Castilla-La Mancha

Thirty something: A new generation of Spanish wine people

Text: **John Reeder**

Our final trio of thirty somethings are each part of three of Spain's most successful wineries. The much-traveled María Antonia Fernández Daza is exports sales manager at Marqués de Cáceres, one of the leading exports bodegas of the Rioja. The Bordeaux and Geisenheim trained Fernando Chivite is the latest member of a two hundred year old dynasty of family winemakers at Bode-

Fernando Chivite



María Antonia Fernández Daza



Pedro Aznar



Photos: **Pablo Neustadt/ICEX**

gas Julián Chivite, one of the flagships of the dynamic Navarra *Denominación de Origen*. And Pedro Aznar, pilot and enthusiast for viticulture, another scion of a wine family, helps run Vinos Blancos de Castilla, Marqués de Riscal's white wine making set-up in Rueda. Three highly-skilled young Spanish oenologists with a wealth of experience behind them, who have each taken a different road to success.



Fernando Chivite: Patience and Quality

The Chivite family has been making wine in Navarre since the end of the eighteenth century. "Félix Chivite," "Widow of Félix Chivite," "Sons of Félix Chivite," "Bodegas Julián Chivite," the changes in the legal name of the company over the years reflect the long lineal history of a family business, the oldest dynasty of winemakers in Navarre. Don Julián Chivite, sadly, died in his eighties last year, but the saga continues and logically, or perhaps, inevitably, his four children now run the *bodega*, one brother and the sister run the sales and marketing department, another brother looks after the financial side of the business, and a third brother, Fernando, is in charge of production.

The European Approach

Dark, elegantly mustached, and precisely dressed, it was Fernando with whom we talked over a vermouth in Madrid's Palace Hotel. His oenological studies began at sixteen, when, thanks to what he calls "a semi-voluntary vocation"—what alternative was there with a name like Chivite?—he was packed off to the University of Bordeaux to study under the "doyen" of French oenologists, Emile Peynaud. A further year at the leading German center at Geisenheim cured him of all provincialism. "Those years

gave me a new, wider, perspective on winemaking, gave me other points of reference than those of the wines of my own country." This European education also imbued him with what he calls "the European philosophy of winemaking"—quality above all other things. "I am one of those who is convinced that the European approach is the right one—wine should be an expression of the geographical location within which each winemaker works. You should search within this framework for the best possible 'terroir,' use the greatest care in your winemaking, and concentrate on quality, which means low production. Don't imitate anyone and don't go for massive production figures." Seventeen years later, Fernando Chivite matriculated for a second time in the oenology course at Bordeaux—"only for a year, though, to catch up on new developments." His formal education over, his real apprenticeship began, the invaluable experience of working in the family *bodega*. It was the *annus mirabilis* of Navarre, 1979/80, the year of the great leap forward. A new winemaking technology—above all perhaps new temperature controlled fermentation processes—was to produce a new, more carefully made wine with less tendency to oxidize, a fine traditional Chivite rosé, vast-

ly improved, fresher, fruitier, amongst the finest in Europe. This is probably the true value of winemaking technology. As Fernando puts it, "a modern technology is what enables us to make our traditional wines, the fine wines made for generations by our forebears, with greater care and improved results."

Patience

But we digress. We were in 1979, the turning point in the development of Navarre. "It was then that we at Chivite decided to diversify our portfolio of wines, replanting old vineyards and acquiring and laying out new ones with the black indigenous noble grape variety Tempranillo, for example. Most of our vineyards were planted with Garnacha, the variety we used to make our rosé, so we decided that the best thing we could do was to stick with our top quality rosés while we waited for our replanting and extension program to bear its fruits." Before a vineyard matures and begins to produce quality vintages at least eight, ten years are needed. "It's all to do with patience," as Fernando says, "physical patience and economic patience. You can't hurry a vineyard if you want to make a quality wine. You shouldn't force production, sacrificing quality in the interests of obtaining short-term profits."

Now over a decade and a half later is when Chivite are beginning to reap the benefits of their replanting program. The result is a varied portfolio of fine wines, from cask-fermented Chardonnay white varietals to cask-aged red *reservas* (see Glossary on page 154) and *gran reserva*—the 125th anniversary 1992 Reserva was particularly impressive—and even a late bottled vintage 1995 white muscatel dessert wine in the same 125th Anniversary collection, which is pure nectar. You might meet up with these fine wines on your travels—at present they are in-flight choices on both British Airways and KLM. This spring, Fernando was voted on as a member of the Regulatory Council of the Navarre Denomination of Origin. One of the things he would like to see changed for Navarre is to finally come out from under the shadow of Rioja. But how do you change things and shake off the younger brother of Rioja image which dogs Navarre. "Slowly," says Fernando. "We in Navarre now have a range of fine wines second to none as far as quality is concerned. What perhaps is lacking is a corporate personality. We need to project a more clearly defined, more homogenous image." A purposeful, determined man, Fernando. As they used to say, "Watch this space!"

María Antonia Fernández Daza: An Accelerated Learning Curve

María Antonia Fernández Daza has been Export Sales Manager at one of the Rioja's most successful wineries, Marqués de Cáceres, for more than six years now. For this open, engaging young woman with a ready smile, this is a record. Still only in her mid-thirties, in a whirlwind career which has taken her the length and breadth of Spanish wine, plus years in Canada and France, she has accumulated a vast wealth of experience in the world of wine. "Before I settled down here in the Rioja, I reckoned on a new venture every year," she told us with a grin. So, hold on to your hats, and off we go.

The Perils of María Antonia

A degree in chemistry at the University of Seville was followed by a year's postgraduate work in oenology at the School of Agronomy of the University of Madrid, and what is probably Spain's most prestigious winemaker's qualification, the *Diplomatura Superior*. But let her take up the story: "By then, I was decided on a career in winemaking, perhaps not an ideal choice for a woman in Spain at the beginning of the 1980s. I remember one of my fellow students (a man) remarking to the women in the course at the end of a trip we all made together around Spain's most important bodegas: "Girls, you're in trouble. We haven't seen one woman in any of the bodegas

we've visited in the whole of Spain doing anything more professionally taxing than washing out test tubes."

Spanish wine was certainly at that time not the easiest of worlds in which a woman could make any headway. Despite a handful of hardy spirits—Maribel Mijares, for instance, sometime president of the International Organization of Oenologists, and one of Spain's most internationally prestigious oenologists, an extremely forthright, redoubtable lady—this was still definitely a man's world. "Later, when I was a wine buyer for a top Spanish wine club," María Antonia recalled, "I remember calling in on a winery in deepest rural Spain and talking to the *bodeguero* about the kind of wine I was looking for. After about ten minutes, I realized he wasn't paying attention to what I was saying. I was just a woman. So I upped the level a bit and described in some technical detail what kind of wine I wanted and how I would need to taste wine from various vats. After a quarter of an hour of this, he picked up the phone, rang through to the foreman down in the plant. "Listen, Pepe, show this lady the bodega and let her taste the wines. But be careful. She's very smart." It's a different world now, but the women in the wine business in Spain owe an enormous debt of gratitude to women like Maribel Mijares and the

pioneering job they did in the 1960s and 1970s."

Five Jobs in Five Years

So from university María Antonia went as an oenologist to Bodegas Alvear in the Andalusian Denominación de Origen of Montilla-Moriles to take charge of making a new white wine. A year later, having satisfied her desire to practice as an oenologist, she was offered a job by the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade, promoting Spanish wine in the Wines-from-Spain-department of the Toronto office. The following year she worked in the Regulatory Council of the Rioja D.O.C. in Logroño (the first woman member of the Council) in the Commercial Department. "Then I went for a year as what's known in Spanish as a *buscavinos*, roaming round Spain in search of suitable wines to buy for one of the country's leading wine clubs. I must have visited hundreds of bodegas, tasting, haggling, buying, meeting, and talking with wine people. This was the year of the great transformation of Spanish wine. Spain had just gone into the European Economic Community and there was an explosion of new bodegas, new wines, new technology, new Denominations of Origin. Everybody seemed to be bubbling with new ideas. At the end of the next year, the Institute of Foreign

Trade in Madrid asked me to help run their wine promotion department. So I spent a year working for the Administration in Madrid."

A wealth of experience crammed into five short years. Now perhaps was the moment to take stock. "I still had the itch to learn more. Above all, to broaden my horizons and learn something about other wines outside Spain. So I took a sabbatical and went to the University of Bordeaux for a year to study for their diploma in oenology. I loved being a student again but I was a bit apprehensive about doing exams in French." She needn't have worried, she came third in her year. "Now I was ready to take on something bigger perhaps. The post of Export Sales Manager came up at Marqués de Cáceres and I got it. I've been there for six years. Lots of traveling, but I enjoy it immensely."

"I've done a lot of things in my career and been involved in almost every facet of the wine business, from the laboratory to marketing. I think the main advantage I have gained from all this is the sense of confidence it has given me. There's virtually no kind of question, for example, that an importer or buyer might ask about the wines I sell or the winery that I feel I can't handle, almost no problem related to the wine business that I have not had to deal with at some time or another. Which makes it a little easier."



GRAN RESERVA
1987



Marqués
de Cáceres

RIOJA

PRODUCCIÓN DE LA GRAN RESERVA

GRAN RESERVA 1987

GRAN RESERVA
1970



Marqués
de Cáceres

RIOJA

75 CL

GRAN RESERVA 1970



Pedro Aznar: In Praise of Vineyards

Pedro Aznar is a pilot. "I always wanted to be an airline pilot. It was difficult to obtain the correct training here in Spain, so I set off for the United States and spent a year learning how to fly in Miami. One day I ought to go down and renew my pilot's license—I could be in Madrid from Rueda in twenty minutes or so in a light plane. Very handy!"

Why Rueda? Because Aznar now runs Marqués de Riscal's Castilian winery in Rueda Vinos Blancos de Castilla, which as its name suggests, makes the company's white wines, fine young Verdejo and Sauvignon Blanc varieties—try the richly fruity and aromatic Marqués de Riscal Rueda 1994, the best vintage for many a year and you'll be agreeably surprised. Belonging to an old wine family—Pedro's father was President of Marqués de Riscal in the Rioja for twenty years, and the Aznars are one of the four families who own the aristocratic winery, the oldest (founded 1860) in the Rioja—the lure of the bodega proved too strong. After returning to Spain he studied oenology and viticulture in Madrid and finished up in the bodega in Rueda under the protective eye of Riscal's top man, Francisco Hurtado de Mendoza, who also happens to be the great grandson of the founder.

Rueda is both a straggling

one-street Castilian wine town (a bloated village really) and the name of the Denominación de Origen which is the natural habitat of one of Europe's finest white grape varieties—the Verdejo. Verdejo is the reason why Marqués de Riscal chose, controversially at the time, to transfer its white winemaking division here in 1972. Probably the most distinctive of all Spain's thoroughbred white grape varieties (see *Spain Gourmet* No. 40), Verdejo is the apple of Pedro Aznar's eye. An enthusiast for viticulture, he sees the vineyard and properly acclimatized vines as the secret behind making fine wines. "The advantage that we have over our competitors here at Riscal is the quality of our raw material—our vineyards, our grape varieties, and perhaps above all, the Verdejo. In the last analysis, the apparatus of modern winemaking technology is probably the cheapest part of winemaking. You just go out and buy what you need, cold-fermentation tanks, presses, what have you. But the terroir, the microclimate, the acclimatized vines, that's another story."

The Importance of Viticulture

Not an especially flamboyant man, like many people in the wine world, Pedro

Aznar is not particularly interested in talking about himself, but start him off on his vineyards, his grapes, and his wine and you release an unsuspected torrent of enthusiasm.

"I am more and more convinced that the key to quality wines lies in the vineyard, in the care taken over viticultural practice. Once you have chosen your land, and managed to purchase it (not as easy as it seems in Castile, as we shall see), land which should enjoy an appropriate micro-climate and which will make the perfect habitat for your chosen thoroughbred grape varieties, once all this has been done, the most important determining factor in the making of a fine wine is the care and vigilance you show in your viticulture. This can only really be done when the bodega directly owns the vineyards. Then you can exercise complete control over grape production, you can virtually watch over the evolution of each individual vine."

In Castile, it is particularly difficult to buy vineyards or enough land suitable for new plantings given the fragmentation of property rights, and Aznar and Riscal have struggled to build up a larger estate. "In the last ten years," Aznar told us, "we have managed to extend our vineyards by some 150 hectares (371 acres), so that with the new plantings of Verdejo

and Sauvignon Blanc essentially now coming to maturity, we can now supply over 50% of our needs."

And what of the future of his wines, above all of the Verdejo white varieties, crisp, fresh young wines, rich in glycerine, densely fruity and spicy with a light, subtle bouquet, a pleasing touch of acidity in the mouth, and that distinctive Verdejo aftertaste, surprisingly and agreeably dry and bitter? "The Verdejo whites are among the most original wines in Europe. If they lack anything, possibly it is a touch more aroma, but the personality they reveal in the mouth is second to none in white wines. Unlike Chardonnay, whose overpowering aromas flatter to deceive in the mouth. All Verdejo really needs is to be 'discovered' by one of the great gurus of wine writing and then the sky's the limit." Are you listening, Mr Parker?

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

Cakes from Seventh Heaven

Text: **Vicky Hayward**

Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

Photos Convent: **Félix Lorrio/Patrimonio Nacional**

Photos Still Life: **Antonio de Benito/ICEX**

An invisible nun's voice floats out through the convent's cool silence. "Ave María Purísima.

What would you like?" The voice hovers behind a revolving window screened with dark pol-



ished wood. Next to it, on the whitewashed wall, hangs a yellowing price list of evocatively named sweet things. There are *mantecados de jerez* and *yema*, dry sherry and egg-yolk cookies; *naranjines* (orange langues de chat), *pastas de té* (butter tea biscuits), *nevaditas* (snowy pastries dusted with icing sugar), *buesos de Fray Escoba* or Fray Escoba's bones, which turn

out to be golden-brown nuggets of fried batter, and *tocino del cielo* or heavenly bacon, rich baby egg and syrup custards. All are made by the Carbonera nuns in downtown Madrid's Corpus Christi convent. Like the sisters of some 200 other nunneries, they sell homemade cakes and confectionery direct to the public as a way of making a living. The nuns' sweet-making skills have been famed on the grapevine since medieval times, but it is only in the last ten years that economic necessity has turned them into a flourishing cottage industry with an expanding range of some 500 cookies, cakes, preserves, and other sugary confections.



The tranquil cloister of the
Monastery of Santa Clara
of Tordesillas.
Ora ...



"When I arrived here in 1956 the candied egg yolks were made on a wood stove," explains Sister María de las Nieves from San Pablo Convent in Cáceres, Extremadura. "Wealthy families would bring the wood as well as the yolks, sugar, and flour and we would make the candies for them. There was no written recipe and we had no fridge. Finally, we saved up the money and bought a fridge and a small electric oven."

Today San Pablo's six *hermanas reposteras*, or confectionery nuns, pay social security, order ingredients by phone from wholesale suppliers, and start work in the bakery every weekday at nine in the morning after swopping their wimples and habits for knee-length work dresses and white headscarves. They make eight new types of cookies as well as traditional fondants and marzipan. In the run-up to Christmas, the nuns' workday stretches to eight or nine

hours and even the oldest sisters in the community, some in their eighties, lend a hand packing the sweets in their boxes and trays. Working this way, the sweet-making nuns provide the convent's main source of income.

A SLOW REVOLUTION

San Pablo's switch from handmaking tiny quantities of sweets to running its own craft confectionery-cum-bakery echoes the story of most Spanish sweet-making convents. It was Pope Pius XII who set things rolling with his firmly worded encyclical to the contemplative orders in 1950. "Work forms part of the contemplative life, the law of early monasticism. *Ora et labora*. It has lost none of its wisdom nor its necessity."

The tricky question for the nuns was how to earn a living that would not clash with their cloistered lifestyle. Some fell back on laundry, others on ironing, sewing,





bookbinding and even factory piecework. However, convents with a sweet and cake-making tradition had an ideal trade to hand. Baking was easier on the eyes than sewing—the average age of nuns is now over fifty—and more flexible than working to commission as well as requiring few sallies out into the world at large. Instead the sisters could simply sell their cakes through the *tornos*, those cautious revolving peepholes onto the outside world.

Luckily for the nuns, they also had the example of a handful of convents who had used the same route out of poverty after the state confiscated the church's lands in 1835. The enterprising Benedictines of Alba de Tormes (Ávila) had gone into business then with their toffeed almonds and a few years later the Comendadoras de Santiago in Granada did the same with sticky fruit preserves based on a recipe given to a nun in her

dreams by the Virgin Mary. At least, so the story goes. Other convents survived thanks to endowments and alms. San Pablo, for example, had water dripping through the roof into buckets and a bare larder when Sister María Nieves sold her first box of candied yolks in 1964. She still remembers the thrill of using the money, just 200 pesetas, to buy fish for supper that day. Slowly, as if by chain reaction, Pius XII's words kicked off a quiet revolution through the convents. The nuns of Santa Paula in Seville, for example, started out in 1950 selling a handful of traditional preserves—quince paste, pumpkin jam, and sweet potato cream. Today they sell 19 different types that you can buy in some department stores. Other convents who started sweet-making from scratch have also built up a healthy business. The Dominicans of Santa María y Jesús in Toledo had never made



... *et labora*.
Work forms part of the contemplative life in the monasteries.

marzipan before 1952, but they now sell over a thousand kilos a year, most of it in the Christmas season.

SWEET SUCCESS

With such success stories to hand, the number of convents making cakes has doubled in the last decade and the range of produce increased accordingly. At Madrid's El Torno, the first shop dedicated to convent and monastery foods from around the country, there are 250 different goodies from over 60 convents including diabetic biscuits, tropical fruit jams, and chocolate truffles, as well as old-fashioned marzipan, honey-soaked sponges, and fried ring biscuits. Many convent kitchens have been mechanized to keep pace with demand—San Pablo, for example, has an almond grinder, dough mixer, and egg beater—and a few even have their own delivery vans.

But success, as always, has

brought its own problems. One year the queue for the nuns' epiphany bread at Madrid's Corpus Christi convent grew so long that fighting broke out among those who feared they would go home empty-handed. The nuns, by way of reply, simply stopped baking it.

The idea that nuns' cakes can arouse such passions may be a surprise, but there is no doubt that they hold a certain unshakable mystique. Writers' lyrical outpourings on their evocative power make Proust's musings on his tea-dipped madeleine sound quite tame. Take contemporary Sevillian poet Luis Cernuda's account of cake-buying.

"...After ringing discreetly at the convent's torno, a female voice would sound as weakly as an old cowbell: 'Deo Gratias,' it would say. 'Unto God be given,' we would reply. And the threaded egg yolks, pumpkin, and sweet potato cookies, the work of anonymous



The packaging gives part of the allure to the nuns' cakes. The twists of tissue paper, plain white cardboard boxes ...





... and simple plastic bags clinched by tape break every rule in the marketing book, but they clearly spell out homemade.



bees in wimples and habits, would appear in white packages from the mysterious convent shadow as a gift for the worldly palate. In the silence of that chaste corner, the exquisite food had nothing earthly about it, and when we bit into it, it seemed as though we were biting the lips of an angel." Anyone who has bought convent cakes will recognize that flavor of forbidden sensuality in the first bite. Not that the experience is ever quite the same. You may be standing in an island of calm surrounded by a noisy city like Madrid, Seville, or Valladolid, or perched above one of the white villages of sun-drenched Andalusia or lost on the plains of Castile. A few of the convents are better known for their artistic treasures. Others turn out to be plain modern blocks. Sometimes a nun appears in person behind a metal grille and falls into unhurried conversation. Often, though, especially in the older con-

vents like San Pablo, you simply find yourself in an empty hallway facing a bell-push, a torno—and the invisible voice. Somehow, though, regardless of the setting, one always leaves carrying away something of the convents' timeless silence packed up in your box or bag of goodies.

These days the cakes have shown their mystique can also stick away from the convents. Prices may rival those of elegant products from the smartest cake shops, but demand grows steadily. "Each cookie or product has its regular clients," comments José Luís Barrio of El Torno. "And we have waiting lists for some." The longest list, it turns out, is for the caramel-coated candied egg yolks made at San Leandro in Seville, one of the oldest and most famous of the sweets. But it is telling that the shop's best sellers are all simple biscuits and cakes—magdalena sponges, bite-sized ring bis-

cuits, and sweet olive oil crackers—that were baked in many homes until twenty years ago.

PURITY AND PATIENCE

What is it, then, that gives the nuns' cakes such allure? Certainly, the packaging helps. The twists of tissue paper, plain white cardboard boxes, and simple plastic bags clinched by sticky tape break every rule in the marketing book, but they clearly spell out homemade. So, too, do the more sophisticated wooden boxes and jars of preserves with old-fashioned labels.

Then there are the products themselves. "I call them pure cakes because everything is natural. There are no colorings or additives," explains Sister María de las Nieves emphatically. "We buy in sacks of whole almonds for the marzipan, extra virgin olive oil for the magdalena sponges and eggs, and pure beaten lard direct from a local slaughterhouse. That's why people like them so much."

At every convent it is the same story. Attention to detail transforms apparently ordinary recipes into something special. Many nuns' kitchens still use eggs laid by their own hens and fruit or almonds from trees in their patios. The Trappist sisters of Santa María de Carrizo in Leon even go as far as using home-churned butter from milk produced in local monasteries in their *mantecados* or butter sponges.

And the recipes themselves read like hymns to slow cooking. Dishes like *capinuetas*—a cream of yolks, sugar and ground almonds beaten raw for two hours—or the Peñaranda Franciscans' almond cake baked in a wood oven (see page 147) would be unthinkable elsewhere. Indeed, if a nun mentions ground almonds as an ingredient you can assume you need to buy whole ones, skin them one by one then grind them—up to four



times, if need be. To the nuns the logic is obvious. As Sister Sagrario of the Carboneras in Madrid put it to me, "We give the cakes the time and peace they need."

ALL SUGAR THERE ABOUNDS

For while the economics of modern life have forced the nuns to sell their sweet things, they have not killed the original spirit in which they were made for centuries before that as gifts. In medieval times, when sugar

was such a rare luxury in northern Europe that comfits or sweetmeats were presents fit for monarchs, the Spanish nuns of the convents built during the Reconquista had unusually easy access to it thanks to the sugarcane planted by the Muslims in subtropical pockets around the Mediterranean coast.

"You know all sugar there abounds," commented Juan Ruiz of the convents in the *Libro del Buen Amor*, Spain's most famous medieval poem written in the 13th century,

"powdered loaf and candy, and much of rose-flavored sugar for comfits and violet-flavored sugar, and of many other guises I have now forgotten."

It may be that those early sweet kitchens were also apothecaries. Arabic humoral medicine, then widely practiced across Spain, had some 16 different medical applications for sucrose. For each it needed to be taken in a different way: neat, perfumed or boiled in syrups, preserves and fruit confections. These cures and



recipes first traveled north from Al Andalus to the great Muslim medical schools of Toledo and Zaragoza and from there, through the prestige of the Muslim doctors, they made their way into the Christian courts and their medical treatises. In his history of Basque confectionery José María Gorrañategi gives examples from one such list of 180 medicines: pumpkin jam for the heart and liver, quince paste as a comforter, cherry jelly to gather energy—all of

them nuns' specialties even today. Equally, other famous convent recipes—such as marzipan, ring biscuits, fried sesame and aniseed cookies, and syrup-soaked cakes—are clearly descended from the Muslim sweets eaten after dinner to help digestion. Perhaps all of these were initially made by nuns who supplied powerful benefactors or even pilgrims along the route to Santiago with medicines. Whatever their medicinal origins, by the 15th century

the sweets were clearly appreciated as gifts. We find the nuns of San Leandro in Seville buying large quantities of eggs and sugar to make their jewel-like candied egg fondants as gifts for benefactors, patrons, and protectors. And while cheap colonial sugar made the practice of giving sweet things unfashionable elsewhere, it flourished in the convents as a way of celebrating religious festivals. In 1750, for example, the Cistercian nuns of Valladolid

thanked their site architect with agate and cakes, and in 1823 a royal visit to hear mass at Seville's Convento de las Dueñas ended with the guests sitting down to a table covered by "various kinds of sweet things, cakes and sponges, all made by our hands."

A few convents manage to stick to the old ways today. San Leandro only sells its caramelized fondants, but the nuns make bitter orange rind preserved in syrup to give to friends; the Basque convent of Santa Ana in Oñati serves all its biscuits and magdalena cupcakes to friends and visitors; and the Valladolid Cistercians still give away all their cakes at Christmas. Likewise, the rhythm of the religious calendar is echoed in the convent price lists by one-off festival cookies such as *buesos de santo*—saints' bones—for All Saint's Day and, above all, by the sugary onslaught at Christmas.

OUT OF THE MELTING POT...

In the end, though, what makes the convent cakes so alluring, so different from others, are their exotic and eclectic flavors: sugary nut pastries and marzipan with Muslim origins, medieval sweetmeats and comfits, fried poor man's cookies doused in honey syrups, and simple lard-based cakes and biscuits. If the convent business has boomed in the last decades, it is only because it has centuries of recipes and experience to draw on.

Where, then, do the recipes come from? Anecdotes reaching back over the centuries suggest the basic skills often arrived with aristocratic nuns wealthy enough to know sugar, its techniques and uses. Doña María Coronel (14th century), who was famous for splashing her face with hot cooking oil as a way of shaking the attentions of Pedro the Cruel, is credited with the aniseed yeast cookies made by the

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A QUIET REVOLUTION BEGAN IN CONVENT KITCHENS AFTER PIUS XII URGED THE CONTEMPLATIVE ORDERS TO EARN THEIR LIVING.

nuns of Santa Inés, Seville, for example. When such women fled the world, they also of course endowed the convents with huge estates which provided the kitchens with many of their ingredients such as almonds, honey, and eggs.

Around that core of basic skills, the nuns were able to improvise others themselves. Some specialties are thought to have grown from communion wafers, still made by the Poor Clares in Seville, Santiago de Compostela, and Salamanca. By adding a few extra ingredients to the griddled flour and water paste—perhaps an egg, some fat, a little cinnamon—dozens of fried, deep fried, griddled or baked pastries came into being. The best known are *obleas*, flat cornet-type wafers enriched with egg and cinnamon, often used rather than rice paper as the base for cookies and cakes. Others are *bojuelas*, or griddle cakes with honey, and *tortas* or sweet, flaky crackers.

Many recipes, though, reflect the ingredients at hand. In the lush green north there are plentiful rice puddings, butter sponges, and cream biscuits. Many sweets here were also originally made with honey—see the bread-crumble fritters on page 148, a side product of the beeswax needed for candles lighting the daily nighttime masses along the pilgrimage route to Santiago. By contrast, in

the dry central meseta, the most characteristic products are dry cakes, biscuits, and sponges based on the fine local flour and lard. According to Gorratxategi, *bizcocho* sponge first appears here in the 16th century made by a technique known as “two-handed beating by the nuns.” Another specialty, *orejas* or ears, is adapted from a Muslim recipe of the same name, but made with lard for Carnival.

Down south, by contrast, the flavors of Muslim spices like sesame, cumin, and aniseed linger on alongside sweet potato, almonds, and pumpkin jam. One theory holds that *tocino del cielo*, egg and syrup caramels, were first made in Jerez de la Frontera with egg yolks given by the bodegas who used the whites to clarify their wines. Elsewhere, too, egg-based sweets and cakes abound because of the custom of taking a dozen to the local nuns in the hope they could hold off the rain or work some other miraculous favor.

Modern times have seen new recipes come out of the melting pot. Some are handed down by tradition. Others come from nuns’ families, a friendly local baker or sweet-maker. In the last two decades a web of shared skills has also begun to cover the country. Take just one example: in the 1970s a confectioner from Villalón taught Valladolid’s Dominican nuns,

called the Calderonas, how to make a wide range of cakes and confectionery; they passed on their skills and recipes to three other convents—not all from the same order—who, in turn, passed them on to another three or four sister-houses elsewhere. Year by year, the web grows.

...AND INTO THE KITCHEN

Occasionally, too, there is simply a nun who has a real flair for baking. One of them is Sister María Luz of Madrid’s Convento de la Visitación. “First I added a splash of brandy to the butter crisps, white rum to the *panecillos* and aniseed to the *mantecados*,” she explains of the convent’s cookies, which sell a hundred kilos a day in the run-up to Christmas. “Then I changed the proportions of fat to egg to change the texture. It was all trial and error. I’ve never been taught. Well, once a bishop’s brother-in-law gave me a good tip about mixing lard with butter.”

Another, of course, is Sister María de las Nieves of San Pablo in Cáceres. This year, for the thirty-third time, she will be running the Christmas marzipan-making every day in December. She has honed the recipe to a fine art: how many times to grind the marzipan, how thick to make the cake, how to make the oven hot at the

top and cool below. “Oh it’s not difficult,” she says. “I do enjoy it but what really motivates me is that it’s useful. Just occasionally, when a beautiful marzipan cake comes out of the oven then I feel satisfied.”

What, then, of the future? A few convents are thinking of reviving lost recipes from past centuries, one has turned to face creams, and several have even exported to foreign markets. With Spanish monks beginning to join the gourmet food business too—though they stick to chocolate, honey, liqueurs, and cheese—who knows where it will end. Meanwhile, as Christmas approaches, the nuns work round the clock to satisfy the growing queues at the convent doors. And on Christmas day itself, the nuns of San Pablo will allow themselves just a small chunk of marzipan each to celebrate the end of the baking season.

Vicky Hayward is a writer, journalist and book editor whose articles about culture, the arts, society, and food are published internationally. She lives in Madrid.

See Recipes on page 145.

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CHRISTMAS AT THE CONVENTS

Below are some of the most popular Christmas specialties on the convents' Christmas price lists.

alfajor: honey, nut, and cinnamon cookie bathed in sugar syrup

almendrado: marzipan and slivered almond, sweetmeat (or a crumbly cookie made with ground almonds)

amarguillo: egg whites, bitter almonds and lemon zest whisked into a chewy meringue

bienmesabe: literally, how good it tastes; a moist sugar syrup, egg yolk, and almond dessert

bocadito de ángel: an angel's mouthful, or *cordial* or *marquesita*; a rich marzipan cookie stuffed with pumpkin jam

borrachuelo: or a *borrachito*—meaning drunkard; in Andalusia a small fried syrup-soaked pastry; in Castile a sponge soaked in wine syrup

cabello de ángel: or angel's hair, pumpkin jam

cubilete: small stuffed sweet-potato pastry

lazos de boja: flaky pastry bows, glazed or sprinkled with sugar

mantecada: meaning buttery or melting; fine butter sponges baked in paper cases and sprinkled with icing sugar

mantecado: meaning lardy; a sugar-coated dry lard biscuit, usually oval; flavors might be lemon, chocolate, and almond

mazapán: sugar and al-

mond marzipan comes for Christmas as large eels coiled into a cake (*anguilas*), smaller fishes (*peces*), bite-sized bells, baskets, trumpets, bunnies, fish, or fruit (*mazapanes*), enriched with egg (*delicias*) and stuffed with jam (*empanadillas*)

membrillo: quince paste

mostachón: or *españoleta*, *bizcotela* and *bizcocheta*, is a dry spongy dunking bun

pan de Cádiz: soft egg-enriched marzipan cake filled with layers of pumpkin jam

pastel de gloria: or glorious cake, is an eggy marzipan cookie filled with jam and rolled in icing sugar

pestiño: anis or sesame flavored pastry fritters in a sticky honey syrup

polvorón: or powder cookie, dissolves in the mouth; made with toasted flour, lard, and often almonds for Christmas

roscón de reyes: ring-shaped epiphany bread topped with crystallized fruit and sugar, and sometimes filled with pumpkin jam or custard

rosco: or *rosqueta*, fried or baked ring biscuit, often flavored with wine, aniseed, almond, cinnamon or sesame for Christmas

turrón: soft and hard nougat, originally made only with almonds, honey and egg whites, but now also in a multitude of flavors

yema: meaning egg yolk, a soft fondant candy usually rolled in icing sugar, occasionally coated in caramel, often flavored with almonds for Christmas

CONVENT CAKE SHOPS

El Torno,
Calle Joaquín María Lopez 28
28015 Madrid
Tel: (34-1) 543 38 00

El Torno, Plaza del Cabildo
41001 Seville
Tel: (34-54) 421 91 90

CONVENT ADDRESSES: Over 200 Spanish convents make and sell cakes and confectionery; these are the addresses of those which appear in the article. Sales from the *torno* are usually similar to the morning and afternoon shop hours.

Andalusia
Comendadoras de Santiago
(Augustinian Hermits), Calle
Santiago 20, 18009 Granada

Convento de Santa Inés
(Franciscan Clares), Calle
Doña María Coronel 5
41003 Seville

Convento de San Leandro
(Augustinian Hermits), Plaza
de San Ildefonso 1
41020 Seville

Convento de Santa Paula
(Jeronimos), Calle Santa
Paula 11, 41003 Seville

Basque Country
Monasterio de Santa Ana de
Zubikoa (Poor Clares), Oñati,

20560 Guipúzcoa (cakes as
gifts only, not for sale)

Castile-Leon
Convento de Nuestra Señora
de Portaceli (Dominicans),
Calle Teresa Gil 18,
47002 Valladolid

Convento de la Purísima
Concepción (Franciscans of
the Immaculate Conception),
Calle Árias de Miranda 54,
Peñaranda de Duero, 09410
Burgos (cakes to order only)

Monasterio de Santa María de
las Dueñas (Benedictines),
Calle Benitas 6, Alba de
Tormes, 37800 Salamanca

Monasterio de Jesús y María

(Dominicans), Callejón de
Jesús y María 2, 45002 Toledo

Convento de San Joaquín y
Santa Ana (Cistercians), Plaza
de Santa Ana 4, 47001 Val-
ladolid (cakes to order only)

Extremadura
Convento de San Pablo
(Poor Clares), Plaza de San
Mateos, 10003 Cáceres

Madrid
Convento de Corpus Cristi
(Jeronimos), Plaza Conde de
Miranda 1, 28005 Madrid

Convento de la Visitación
(Salesians), Calle San
Bernardo 52, 28015 Madrid



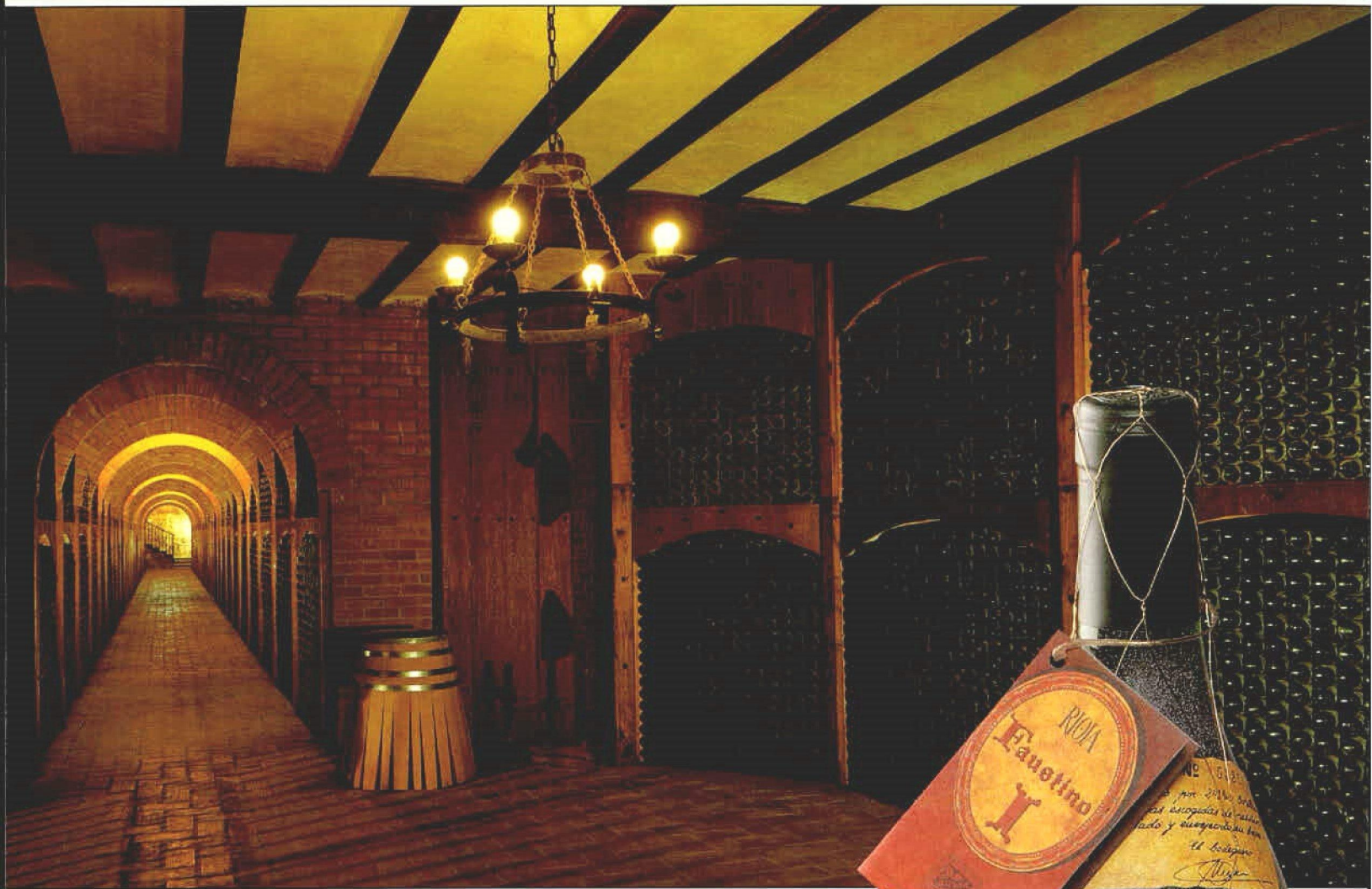
Anthropologist Marvin
Harris classified mankind
in two groups: those
who shun the flesh of
the pig, and those who
cherish pork. On the one
hand, we have the strict
prohibitions of the
Talmud and the Koran.
On the other, we have
those societies where
pork is an important part
of the diet. A visit to the
food shop shows that
Spain falls squarely in
the second category.

THE CRAFT OF SPAIN'S SAUSAGE MAKERS

Text: **José Carlos Capel**
Translation: **Mark Little**

Photo: **A. de Benito/ICEX**
Still Life: **Menchu Artime**

Bodegas Faustino



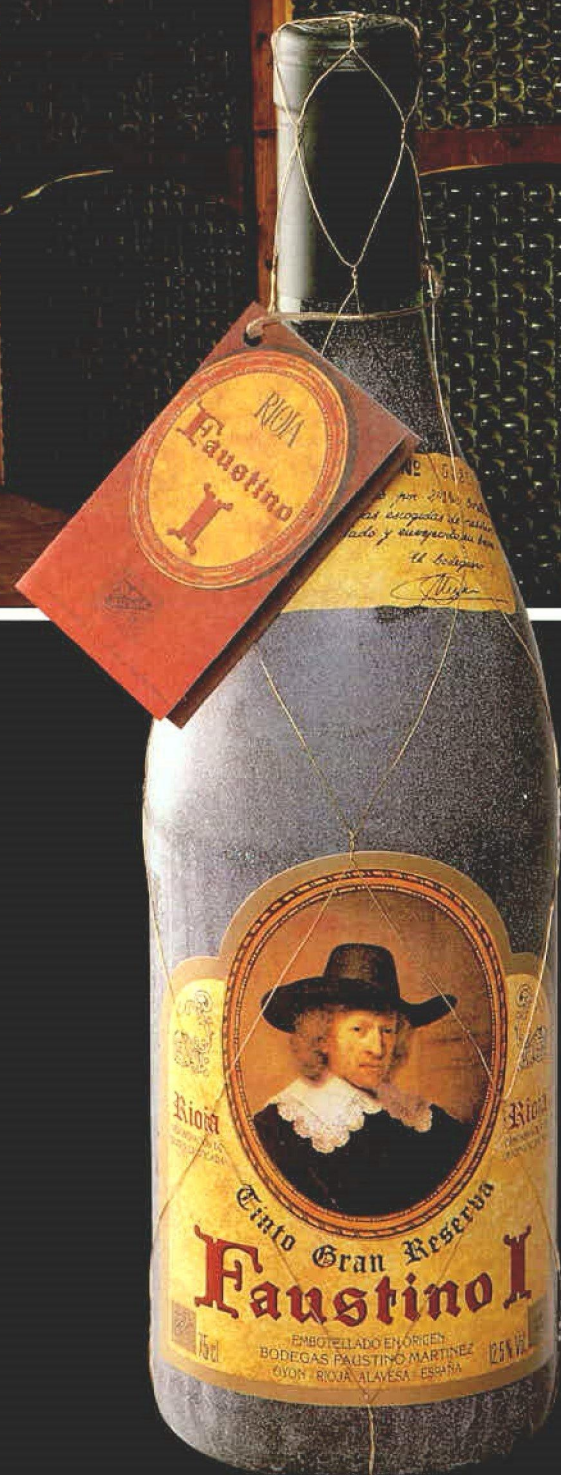
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In Spain's Golden Age, that period of political and cultural flowering of the 16th and 17th century, eating pork was identified as a sign of distinction and high birth.

For many generations, from the arrival of the Moors on the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the 8th century until the end of the 15th century, when the last Moorish kingdom fell and the Jews were expelled from Spain, eating pork was a symbolic gesture for Christians, just as the fish had been a symbol in the time of the catacombs.

In certain areas the *matanza*, or slaughter of the pig, was akin to an act of faith. Two centuries later, during Spain's *Siglo de Oro*, or Golden Age—that period of political and cultural flowering straddling the 16th and 17th centuries—eating pork continued to be identified as a sign of distinction and high birth. Thus did Spain's pork-curing and sausage-making activity rise to the prominence it has today.

There are hundreds of different kinds of sausage in Spain, each with its distinct appearance, shape, and flavor. This range constitutes a unique and varied example of man's imagination in applying what started out as a crafty way of conserving the meat of recently slaughtered animals in the days before refrigeration. Centuries ago, in rural areas of Spain, the household *matanza* was not simply a way to stock the family larder. It was an insurance for survival against the lean winter months. It is logical that the *matanza* became an important event on the family calendar. And it required skill and savvy to prepare the various sausages and cured meats correctly—otherwise, the whole production could be lost from

spoilage, and the family's future would be in jeopardy. The fear of losing the results of the *matanza* led to the numerous superstitions surrounding the ritual. The tradition was to synchronize the task with the phases of the moon, that female heavenly body which in the Mediterranean world was always identified with various goddesses of fertility—the Ashtart of the Phoenicians, the Greeks' Aphrodite, the Romans' Venus, or the Carthaginians' Tanit. In the Basque Country, Asturias, La Rioja, and Leon, for instance, it was mandatory to slaughter the pig on the waning moon, unless the chosen day was a Friday, in which case the *matanza* took place on the waxing moon. In the southwest of Spain the custom was to dance a lively folk jig, the *jota*, around the newly-made sausages as an incantation. In the center of the Peninsula, the hooves of the pigs were buried to ward off evil spirits.

The importance of the *matanza* in those early days is reflected by the fact that the ritual is depicted in numerous Romanesque vaulted ceilings and capitals around Spain. It appears carved on the "agricultural calendar" in the fabulous Portico in Ripoll (Gerona), which served as a sort of Old Farmer's Almanac in the days when most people couldn't read. Similar examples abound: we find references to the *matanza* on the polychrome vaults of the Colegiata de San Isidoro in Leon (considered the Sistine Chapel of European Romanesque art), on the façade of the 12th-century

Romanesque church in Campisábalos (Guadalajara), and many other medieval monuments.

It is not surprising that the specialists in slaughtering the animals—known as *matarifes* or *matachines*—were held in high regard by rural society. In the first quarter of the 15th century, Enrique de Villena referred to them in very laudatory terms in his *Arte Cisoria o Tratado del Arte de Cortar a Cuchillo*, one of the earliest written works in Europe on meat carving and table manners.

A Flavorful Labyrinth

Surveying the sausage landscape of Spain, we find a number of differences as regards the method of curing and the seasoning of cured meats. One can talk of the "route of smoke," of the kingdom of paprika, the nut zone, or the rice provinces.

Along the Cantabrian mountain range and in certain parts of Castile-Leon, smoking was the method of choice for preserving meat. This route of smoke coincides with the old pilgrim way to the shrine of Saint James, which started in the Pyrenees to cross Navarre and Rioja, then on to Santander, Asturias, Palencia, Leon and, finally, Galicia.

Of course, there are other areas where smoke curing is used, such as Jabugo and scattered pockets in the sierra of Huelva, in the southwest of Spain. Smoking is used in Andalusia to cure smaller *chorizo* sausages and *caña de lomo* (cured loin).

The use of paprika, which results in red sausages, is extended throughout practical-

ly the whole of Spain, save Catalonia, the Levante region, and the Balearics, areas that have never traditionally produced red chorizo-type sausages, although we have a tasty exception in the famous *sobrasada* of Majorca, in which paprika is used. The use of nuts in making *morcillas* (black pudding or blood sausage) occurs in those areas where there was a strong Moorish presence or where traditional Moorish confectionery survives, such as Andalusia, Levante, Murcia, Aragon, and Rioja.

One unique feature of certain Spanish sausages is the use of meats from the Iberian pig, an indigenous, free-ranging mountain species of pig which thrives in the forests of cork oak and holm oak in southwestern Spain (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 33). The flavor of its meat, which is delicately marbled with fat, reflects the pig's diet of acorns and wild herbs during the months preceding slaughter. Iberian pig meat is present in a number of Spanish sausage products, all of which have a distinctive flavor. The famous cured loin and chorizos of the Sierra de Huelva, Guijuelo in Salamanca, and the Dehesa de Extremadura are made predominantly with Iberian pig.

Today, the Spanish sausage-making industry is subject to strict regulations approved by the Comisión Especializada de Productos Ganaderos (Specialized Board for Livestock Products). Rules are adamant as regards the manufacture of cured uncooked sausages, and concern every aspect of the process, in-

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cluding microbiological specifications, the degree of humidity, permitted additives, packaging, presentation, labeling, and the accurate description of the contents. These rules ensure a consistently high standard of quality and flavor, and are a guarantee for the consumer.

Cooked Sausages: Morcillas and Butifarras

Traditionally, black pudding or blood sausages were the first to be prepared following the slaughter of the pig. The perishable nature of the main ingredient—blood—demanded its immediate processing.

The cooked category also includes all those sausages, with or without blood, whose ingredients are boiled in cauldrons once the pig is slaughtered. Spain's morcillas and their close relatives, the butifarras, constitute an extended family which includes black and white morcillas, sweet and savory morcillas, blood sausages with pine kernels or other nuts, sausages made with meat, lard, and blood, or with added rice, fruit, bread, and beaten eggs, smoke-cured sausages or those conserved in oil, sausages stuffed in narrow casings from the small intestine or the broader large intestine, sausages that incorporate boiled potatoes. So wide is the spectrum that the various types could well number more than a hundred.

Many Spanish blood sausages contain rice, especially typical of the provinces of Burgos, Alava, Aragon, Rioja, and

certain areas of the Levante region. In general the black morcillas *negras* contain—aside from rice—pork fat and various spices, although occasionally one finds cooked onion, almonds, and pine nuts.

There are endless nuances that distinguish the black puddings of different areas. The morcillas of Asturias, made with onion and blood, then air dried and smoked, are exquisite. The black butifarras of the Valencia region come in a number of different varieties, roughly grouped in three styles—*d'arros* (with rice), *de cebra* (onion), and *de carn* (meat)—and are often very spicy.

In Catalonia we find the *bisbe negre* and the *bull*, oversized black butifarras which usually contain bits of tongue and cheek morsels. Sweet morcillas constitute yet another category. They may be made with blood, like the savory blood sausages, or without blood. Sometimes they are eaten as an appetizer or, due to their sweet flavor, they may appear as a dessert. Normally, sweet morcillas made without blood use beaten eggs as the binding agent.

Another branch of the savory sausage family are the white butifarras which are typical of Catalonia and the Balearic islands. The authentic recipe calls for very finely chopped, lean meat, seasoned with salt and pepper. Like the ingredients of morcilla, those that go into butifarra are cooked in cauldrons.

The butifarra mincemeat may be stuffed into oversized casings along with meat morsels from the head

of the pig and previously-cooked skin rinds, resulting in large spherical white butifarras which go by a variety of names: *bisbe blanc* in Catalonia, *blanquet* in the Levante region, *blancos* in Murcia or Castile-La Mancha.

The Red Sausage Family

Many sausages are made with raw ingredients and air cured in special chambers. The origin of chorizo, the crown jewel of the Spanish sausage world, dates from some time after the discovery of America, given the fact that one of its main ingredients is paprika. The pepper (as in vegetable, not spice) is originally American and did not appear in Spanish orchards until the end of the 17th century and paprika, the dried, powdered red pepper, was not produced until this period.

A good chorizo is made with a mixture of minced pork with pork fat, paprika, and other condiments. The mixture is stuffed in natural casings from the pig's intestine, then air-cured.

As with morcillas, there are endless variations on the chorizo theme. There are some that are stuffed in casings from the wide large intestine, such as those from Salamanca, and, more commonly, those that are cased in the narrow small intestine. Those from the north of Spain—Sierra de Cameros (Rioja), Asturias, the Bierzo district (Leon), and Galicia—tend to have a smoky aroma. The rest, such as the chorizos of Cantimpalos (Segovia), or the typical sausages of Soria, Castile,

The range of hundreds of different sausages constitutes an example of man's imagination in applying what started out as a crafty way of conserving the meat.

and Andalusia, are distinguished by the use of garlic. A close cousin of chorizo is the "chorizo de Pamplona," whose components are more finely minced—to the size of grains of rice—and stuffed in broad, candle-shaped casings. Another member of the family is the *chistorra*, typical of Navarre and the Basque Country. It incorporates a mixture of pork and beef with lard, plus salt, paprika, garlic, and other additives. It is stuffed in narrow casings and subject to a short period of air-curing. It is ideal for sautéing in a pan or for cooking with water and wine, and in Spain it is usually eaten as an appetizer. Special mention should be made of the *morcón*, another type similar to the chorizo. The minced ingredients are stuffed in the stomach or the cecum, the widest segment of the large intestine of the pig, and the result resembles a more or less spherical ball. It is made with chopped Iberian pork, bits of pork loin and the meat from the shoulder joints. These ingredients are seasoned with salt, paprika, pepper, cloves, and other spices. After stuffing, the morcones are left to air-cure for a variable period, never less than six months. The result is an excellent delicacy, juicy and aromatic, with a unique flavor.

White Sausages

A short step takes us from chorizo into the realm of the *salchichón* sausage and the lengthier *longaniza*. In some parts of Spain you come across chorizo *blanco*, white sausage, made with a mix-

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Today the Spanish sausage-making industry is subject to strict regulations, which ensure a consistently high standard of quality and flavor for the consumer.

ture of minced pork with lard, seasoned with salt, spices such as garlic, black or white pepper, nutmeg, or oregano, and other additives. It is a chorizo without paprika, made with selected meats, which after curing and drying has a distinctive color. The salchichón is cylindrical and comes in a variety of presentations: candle-shaped, and in garlands or strings of various lengths. When cut, the slices have an even aspect, consistent and well bound, with the meat being easily distinguished from the fat. Its aroma and flavor, determined by the spices and condiments used, is deliciously fragrant. One distinguished member of the family is the prized

fuet of Catalonia (in Catalan, *fuet* means whip), a slender type of salchichón with less fat, stuffed in long, thin casings no more than 40 millimeters (1.6 inches) thick which hardens and shrinks when air-cured. In our survey of Spanish sausages, we cannot fail to mention the delicious *sobrasada* typical of the island of Majorca and other Balearic islands. It is a roughly spherical sausage, although it can also be found in longer, narrower casings, stuffed with finely chopped pork and lard, salt, and paprika. After air-curing over a period of between six months and a year, the *sobrasada* filling becomes a smooth, flavorful paste, al-

most like a fine paté, ideal for spreading on toast as an appetizer. Some firms make it with meat from the *Porc Negre* (Black Pig), a relative of the Iberian pig. To end this brief foray into the world of Spanish cured meats, we come to another product of exceptional quality and flavor, *lomo embuchado*. It is made with the lean pork loin from the spinal muscle, trimmed of all fat, then marinated with garlic, paprika, salt, oregano, nutmeg, and other spices. It is stuffed (*embuchado* means crammed) into a natural casing, tied or stapled, and left to mature and dry during a period not shorter than six months. When cut, the *lomo* has a firm, compact consis-

tency and a very delicate flavor which reveals the quality of the meat used. It is yet another good example of the prominence of pork in the Spanish culinary landscape.

José Carlos Capel is a writer on gastronomic subjects and a member of the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy. The food critic for the daily El País, he also contributes to a number of Spanish publications devoted to food, and has written 14 books on the subject.

See Main Exporters on page 20.



JAVIER BELLOSO

FARMED SEA BREAM
AND SEA BASS:
**SEASONAL FISH
THE YEAR ROUND**

Aquaculture is finding its feet in Spain. Many companies were unable to maintain the pace. The survivors are those that were prepared to develop slowly, gradually learning the skills required and basing their techniques on thorough knowledge of the species being farmed. This led to quality production: the next step was to find the right channels for distribution. Their patience and perseverance mean that they are now able to offer their customers a year-round supply of top-quality, impeccably fresh sea bream and sea bass.

Text: **Julia López de Sagredo**

Translation: **Jenny McDonald**

Photos: **Juan Ramón Yuste/ICEX**







FISHING SEA BREAM
IN THE PONDS ON THE
FORMER SALT
MARSHES OF SAN
FERNANDO DE CADIZ.

CULTIVATION OF
PLANKTON: GOOD
NUTRITION IS BASIC TO
THE SUCCESS OF THIS
TYPE OF FARM.



IN THE SEAWATER
TANKS AT CUPIMAR
THE SEA BREAM
FRIGS ARE
BROUGHT UP.





GOOD NUTRITION
IS BASIC TO
THE SUCCESS
OF AQUACULTURE.



THE SEA-BREAM OF
CUIPIMAR IS
PRESENTED IN CRATES
CONTAINING 6 KG.

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF
"HORNILLO" BAY WITH
THE FLOATING CAGES
OF CULMAREX.



SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT OF AQUACULTURE IS BASED ON PERMANENT RESEARCH WORK.

The idea of farming sea bream and sea bass was first considered in Spain twenty years ago although at that time there were few official research centers with an interest in these species. One such was the "Torre de la Sal" directed in Castellón by Francisco Amat, which is still going strong. Over the years, interest grew, and research and experience in marine farming provided much insight into the biology and requirements of the sea bream and sea bass and of breeding techniques. This has meant not only that closed-cycle systems became possible but also that more intensive and profitable production methods could be implemented. A large number of companies became consolidated, and the production of both species rose from 600 tons in 1990 to almost 4,600 tons in 1996. Growth is expected to continue at an even higher rate over coming years because of the high level of investment made in expanding facilities and in more intensive farming.

LEADING-EDGE COMPANIES WITH A VARIETY OF FARMING METHODS

Cultivos Piscícolas Marinos, S.A. (CUPIMAR) is a group of companies producing and dealing in marine species which was set up in 1981 in San Fernando de Cádiz on the Atlantic coast of Andalusia. They are currently the main producers worldwide of sea bream fry—they expect to produce no less than 22 million fish in 1997. Some of these remain on their own farms but the rest are sold to

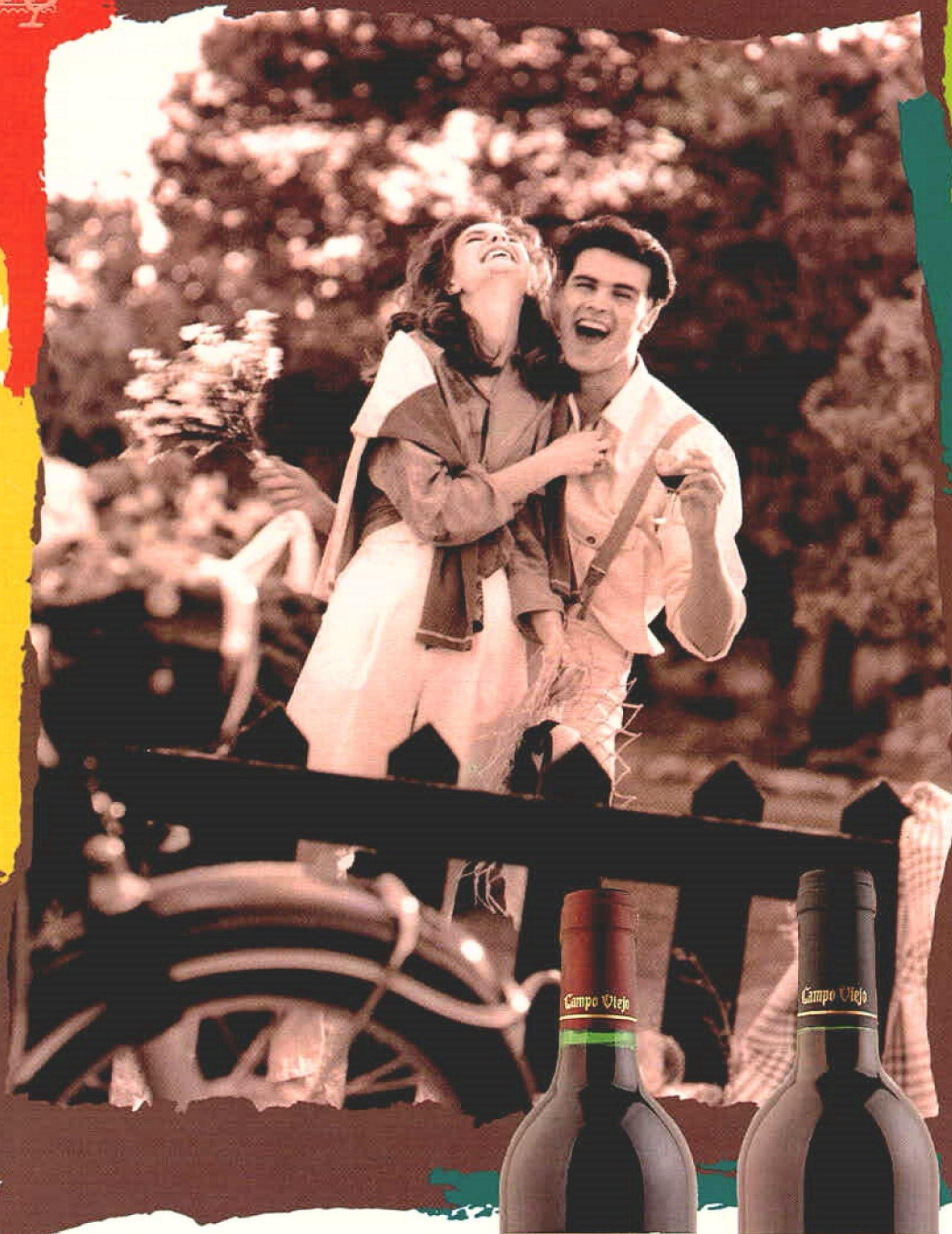
other fish farms in and outside Spain—in France, Italy, Portugal, and Greece. They are also the top Spanish producers of sea bream, with a total of over 1,600 tons per year. Originally the pioneers in their sector, they are now one of the most technologically advanced and experienced companies in the market. They are actively involved in international exchanges of know-how on marine stocks and in training. Their sea bream farming techniques vary between semi-intensive estuary techniques in ponds on the former salt marshes where several of the Cádiz farms are located, at densities of 2-3 kg/m³, and intensive grow-out in floating cages on the Adrapec S.A. farm in Adra (Almería), where sea bass are also produced, at densities of up to 20-25 kg/m³. The characteristics of the coast have a decisive influence on farming methods. On the Atlantic part of the south coast, in Cádiz and Huelva, where there are large expanses of mud flats, salt marshes, tidal lands, and estuaries, farming is mostly in earth ponds with continuous water pumping and use of tidal flows. The frequent eastern winds which are so useful for aeration would be dangerous for the fish if the system used were that of floating cages. These would also be seriously affected by the strong currents of the Atlantic coast. Cages are best in bays like the "Hornillo" where the Culmarex, S.A. farm is located, in Águilas (Murcia, in southeast Spain). This is open to the sea, with good water exchange, but is pro-

tected by Fraile Island right in the center of the bay. Culmarex is the third or fourth largest of the Spanish marine fish farms. It produces 500 tons per year, distributed equally between sea bream and sea bass, and expects an annual increase of 10 to 15 percent. Since these are external farms, they are obviously exposed to weather conditions and it is the cold that has the most serious effects—the fish may stop growing, may become lethargic or may even die if the temperature drops too much. In the Atlantic area, it takes 16 to 18 months to rear a sea bream if spawned in spring and 20 to 23 months if spawned at the end of the summer and the winters are cold. Sea bass require a longer period, at least 21 to 24 months. If they have regular high temperatures all year, as in Carboneras (in Almería on the Mediterranean coast), the nursery period for the fry and the grow-out period until the fish reach market size are much shorter. Carmar, S.L. receives fry from Cupimar at 1-2 grams, brings them up to a weight of between 15 and 50 grams, then transfers them to Adrapec whose owner, Bartolomé Belmonte, claims that on his Carboneras farm the fish grow in just one month as much as they grow in other locations in four. Carmar also rears its own bream, taking a total of just eight months. Its farming system uses external concrete ponds with a polyethylene lining situated very close to the seashore. The water that comes from a water course just before its sea

outlet is constantly replenished, as is the oxygen in the ponds. An additional advantage of Carmar is that it has a constant water temperature of 40-45°C/104-113°F. This is because of warm water used by a nearby power station that is returned to the sea after use as a coolant. This water temperature acts as a catalyst for growth by creating a continuous summer environment for the fish. Carmar is thus able to save on heating costs and water flushing equipment. These are precisely the systems that Acuinova, a Pescanova company (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 31), located 4 km from the mouth of the Guadiana in Ayamonte (Huelva) is currently planning to install on its farm "El Dique." One billion pesetas (6.6 million US\$) over two years is the capital outlay required to place a sea bream and sea bass farm covering five hectares into tanks shaped like tunnels covered with polyethylene as well as other external earth ponds. Since 1996, when they installed their first tunnels, they have been carrying out intensive farming methods based, firstly, on the control of essential factors such as water temperature to reduce the fish production period to 10 months and, secondly, on the use of biological filtration methods and equipment to lower the water replenishment rate from 600-900%—which is necessary especially at the final stages—to 100%, because if the water has to be heated, water renovation at a higher rate than this would be very unprofitable. With these sys-



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BEING INDEPENDENT FROM NATURAL FISHING, SUPPLIES CAN BE GUARANTEED THE YEAR ROUND.

tems they are also able to obtain two harvests a year of Kuruma prawn, in which they are specialists, and they should be able to obtain up to 2,000 tons of fish in the year 2000 when their installations should be 100% operational. In 1998 they expect to produce 400 tons of sea bream in closed-cycle farming, either just in concrete ponds under polyethylene covers or combining these with grow-out periods in the external earth ponds they have been using until now for the whole process.

RESEARCH, KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF MARINE FARMING

According to Francisco Amat, director of the "Torre de la Sal" research center, "Without a solid scientific base, dramatic increases in aquaculture can mean that control of production is lost and, because of the propagation of diseases or for other reasons, yields may not be as expected. This has been happening in some producer countries." Sustained development of aquaculture needs to be based on permanent research work, and this approach has resulted in a substantial improvement of the quality of the sea bream and sea bass being produced in Spain. He states, "Assuming we have the right conditions of water, cleanliness, aeration and temperature, the greatest difficulty for the cultivation of marine species is achieving the right food. Good nutrition is basic to the success of this type of farm." If the fry are strong and the adults healthy, mortality and disease will de-

crease, quality will improve and the fish will keep better for longer. The environmental and climatic conditions in Spain are very good—clean, good-quality coastal waters, plenty of light, and warm temperatures. This not only favors fish production but also the growth and proliferation of natural food which is essential for development, especially of the spawning fish. The quality of the feeds used for the grow-out period has greatly improved. The high protein requirements of fish are basically met by fish proteins from wild fishing but, in order to overcome this dependence on fishing and to lower the cost of feeds, research is now being carried out on the use of vegetable proteins, as feeding is still one of the highest costs in marine fish farming. The conversion ratio of feed into fresh fish is still very high. Under ideal conditions, it could be 1.4 kg of feed for 1 kg of fresh fish but in practice it reaches and even exceeds 2 kg of feed. The amount of research required before it is possible to farm a marine species depends on the knowledge available on the species or family in question. For production of the *Dentex dentex*, a member of the sparid family along with the sea bream, a study period of 5-8 years is estimated as some of the experience gained in farming bream can be applied.

GUARANTEED SUPPLY THE YEAR ROUND

Aquaculture changes things on the fish market scene. The uncertainties of natural

fishing are resolved so the supply is guaranteed, and well-planned spawning and handling eliminate seasonality. Africa Rosa Violan and her brother, Jorge, are in charge of different areas of the Comercial de Productos Pesqueros, S.A. (COPROSA), one of the CUPIMAR companies, whose head offices are located in the Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz). COPROSA looks after the commercial operations for the products of five companies, both from within the group and outside it, located in different areas of the Spanish Mediterranean and Atlantic coast. They told us, "Unlike natural fishing operations which function on a daily basis with prices varying greatly because of the differences in the catches, aquaculture means that work can be organized and sales programmed as we know the amount that will be produced month by month. We can even forecast production for the following year or two years. This means that campaigns can be organized and actions taken to find new markets to meet the expected volume of production. Our forecasts are never wrong by more than five or six percent." It is not just a question of organizing sales but of offering a full service, and the keys to commercial success lie in punctual deliveries, guaranteed supply and product freshness. Ninety-nine percent of COPROSA's business is in farmed sea bream, with small quantities of sea bass, which they hope to increase in the medium term, and products that grow spontaneously in their area—sole and, in the au-

tumn and winter fishing seasons, lesser grey mullet and blue damselfish amongst others. Since they first set up operations their sales have risen from six tons of sea bream in 1982 to over 2,000 tons in 1997. The largest rise in quantity was in 1994 when sea bream farming finally took off. Forecasts now stand at an annual increase in sales of 500 to 600 tons.

The fact that aquaculture supplies fish irrespective of the season is of special relevance in the case of sea bream because the natural fishing period, from October to January, coincides with the lowest curve in fish consumption. Continuous, high-quality supply the year round has helped to stabilize prices which were very steady in 1997 and above those reached in 1996. In general, fish farming not only stabilizes prices but also reduces them in the medium to long term. Sea bass always fetches higher prices than sea bream, as production costs are higher because the species is more delicate and requires a longer growing period. But the prices are very unstable, partly because there is a large supply of naturally caught fish.

THE FRESHEST FISH ON THE MARKET

According to Africa Rosa of Coprosa, "Aquaculture can supply the freshest fish on the market." Gabriel de Lara, of Acuinova, agrees, "Except for fish sold in ports which comes from coastal and shellfish fishing, other fish comes from distant fishing grounds where ships spend a couple of days. This means



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AQUACULTURE CAN SUPPLY THE FRESHEST SEA BREEM AND SEA BASS ON THE MARKET.

products come into the port three, four or five days after the catch." Aquaculture companies have developed working and distribution systems allowing them to supply products to their customers very soon after harvesting while still very fresh. Culmarex, which sells practically all its products in Spain, delivers its sea bream and sea bass to the markets in the evening or night of the day of harvesting. Coprosa, which exports 45% of its products, serves sea breams to its European customers within 48 hours after culling. They deal mostly with France, Italy, Portugal, and Germany, but they also send products by air to Miami. In the case of Acuinova, freshness is assured because they deal in live prawns, the *Penaeus japonicus* in which they are specialists. This is the prawn which is most similar to the native prawns of Huelva and it has the highest commercial value because it is considered the most delicate and flavorful of all the species. For the last three years, they have even been selling this

product live to Japan where Acuinova sells 40% of its production which, in 1996, amounted to 53 tons and is expected to double in the near future.

PRESENTATION AND TRADE CHANNELS

Proper, constant classification of the fish during farming means that harvests are homogeneous and the individual sizes meet customers' requirements. The most frequent weights for sea bream and sea bass are those that are considered "one serving" size, that is, from 250 to 500 grams (8-16 oz) and, to a lesser extent, 1 kg (2.2 lb). The latter is considered by Culmarex to be the "real" size. The "one serving" size is classified into several subgroups depending on the company. The size most often demanded by the market is 350 to 400 gr (11.2-12.8 oz) and these amount to 70% of sales for both Coprosa and Culmarex.

The sea bream is presented in crates containing 6 kg (13.2 lb), and the sea bass in 5 kg (11 lb) cases. The fish

are laid with the most delicate part (the belly) upwards and are covered with a perforated plastic sheet to prevent damage from the top layer of ice. Since these fish are usually sold whole, feeding is suspended a few days before harvesting so that they last better.

Tests have been carried out with other types of presentation which are cleaner and more convenient, for those markets where there is no tradition of handling and consuming this type of product. The fish are gutted, scaled, and vacuum packed so that all preparation is avoided. According to Jorge Rosa, this type of presentation may be of greater interest than filleting or even smoking. But at present sea bream and especially sea bass are expensive, gourmet products, and any previous preparation would make the fillets or loin fillets, etc., so expensive that such sales would not be viable.

Most sales of farmed sea bream and sea bass go through wholesalers on the Spanish market and wholesale distributors in foreign

markets. Some companies also work directly with the large retail chains both inside and outside Spain, especially France. The products of aquaculture are of special interest for catering and restaurants because guaranteed supply makes it possible to include these fish on the standard menu. Moreover, the 350 gr (11.2 oz) size is considered perfect for gastronomic purposes.

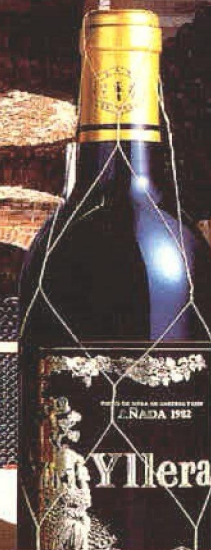
Julia López de Sagredo is a technical agricultural engineer. She worked for seven years in the Spanish Commercial Office in Düsseldorf, Germany on the promotion of Spanish food and agricultural products. She now lives in Almería where, amongst other activities, she collaborates with the specialist press on food and agriculture matters and foreign trade.

PRODUCTION (TM) OF SEA BREEM AND SEA BASS IN AQUACULTURE (1992-1996)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
SEA BREEM	1,675.0	2,014.5	2,094.3	2,706.5	3,818.1
SEA BASS	143.1	370.4	351.0	461.1	693.1

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Food

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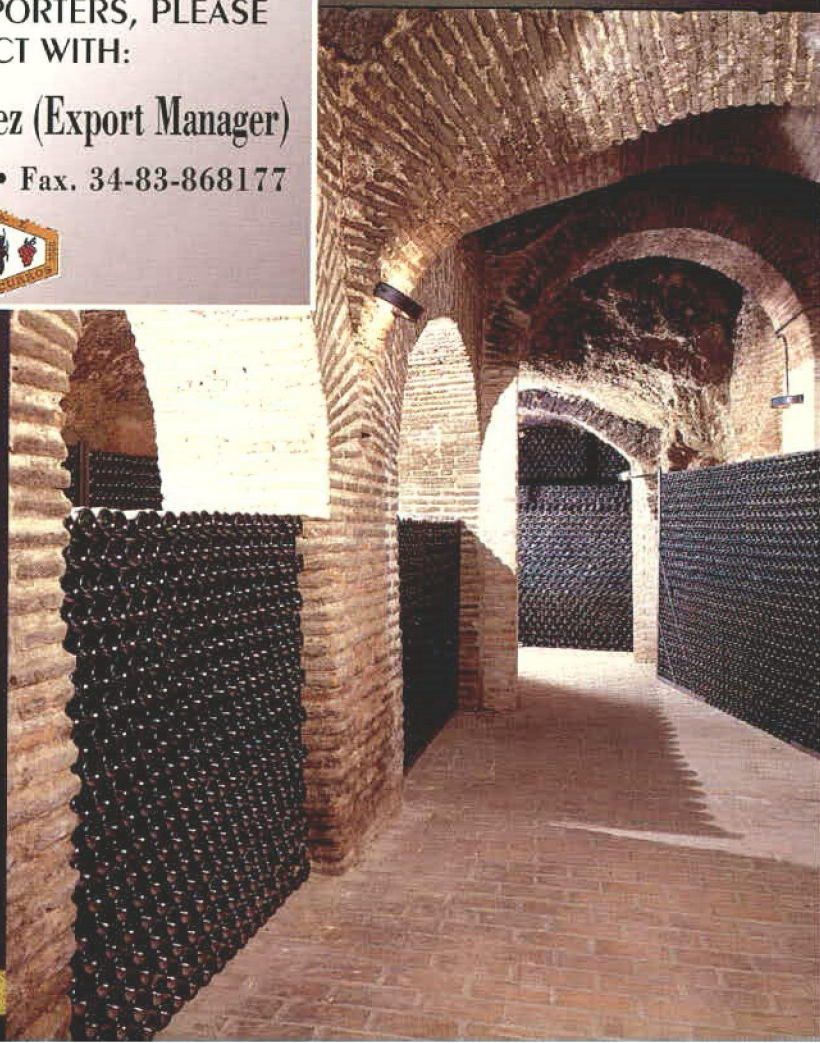
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Photos: **Félix Lorrio/ICEX**

Translation: **Hawys Pritchard**

P R I C E Y

W I T H A D I F F E R E N C E

Roses come in hundreds of varieties. New ones appear every year. And roses are celebrated in festivals of one sort or another all over the world. But there is one unique. One, whose petals and fragrance are quite different from the rest, and this article is about its own special festival. Forget Monte Carlo's star-studded summer Rose Festival. This one's a much more intimate, ordinary people's affair. A festival in which the cloudless blue skies of La Mancha and its purple carpet of saffron crocus, known in Spanish as "*la rosa del azafrán*," or "saffron rose," set the tone. The *Fiesta de la rosa del azafrán* celebrates the lore of work and local customs and is still an authentic folk festival.



*La rosa del azafrán
es una flor arrogante
que nace al salir el sol
y muere al caer la tarde*

The saffron rose
is an arrogant flower
that is born at sunrise
and dies at dusk

This quotation from Jacinto Guerrero (1895-1951) is taken from one of his best-known *zarzuelas* (*zarzuela* is Spain's equivalent of operetta) entitled *La rosa del azafrán*, a love-story set in the La Mancha countryside of half a century ago. Its events take place at the time of the saffron harvest, with the result that the whole work is redolent of the plant around which, to this day, a centuries-old ritual of harvesting, petal-stripping, and toasting is re-enacted every autumn. Guerrero makes a valid point when he describes the *rosa del azafrán* as arrogant. Arrogant and demanding, in that for a couple of weeks each year, the saffron crocus dominates every waking moment of the growers who planted the bulbs

a few months earlier, in June or July. This has been the pattern for centuries, since the Arabs introduced this originally oriental spice into this part of Spain, where it found the perfect growing environment. Small wonder, then, that the saffron grown here is considered the best in the world, and that the top commercial quality saffron is denominated Mancha Quality (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 35).

A product of this status must surely deserve its own festival. This was obviously the rationale behind the creation 35 years

ago of today's popular *Fiesta de la rosa del azafrán*. Its three progenitors were the mayor of the Toledan town of Consuegra, his festival organizer, and the former Austrian tourism envoy to Spain, an enthusiast of both La Mancha and its saffron. In the shadow of the eleven windmills that dominate the Consuegra skyline, the festival was created.

Don Quixote Territory

For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with La Mancha, I should explain that this is a very flat region, a vast plateau whose climate is extreme, with blazing, dry summers and harsh winters. Vines are its main crop, and its towns and villages are, for the most part, whitewashed and widespread, dominated by a church to which, almost invariably, the road into town leads. Typically of such flat areas, any hill or eminence is capitalized on as the site for a windmill. Don Quixote's adventures have probably made La Mancha's windmills the most famous in the world, though while for the Knight of the Woeful Countenance they became terrifying monsters, they carried on transforming grain into essential flour for the area's basic needs. Consuegra, with its eleven windmills, stands deep in the heart of La Mancha, against the background of the Montes de Toledo whose red-earthed hillsides are clad with olive groves and their lower slopes with vines, in autumnal mode by saffron-fiesta time. The old Spanish saying "*Por Santa Teresa, flor en mesa*"—"Flowers on the table by Saint Theresa's Day"—applies to

S P I C E

ROWS OF HARVESTERS BENT OVER IN THE CROCUS FIELDS IS A CLASSIC SIGHT AT CROP TIME IN LA MANCHA. THE FLOWERS MUST BE PICKED FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.



The flowers are transported to the mondadoras, or petal-strippers. Their job is to separate the three stigmas from the rest of the flower.

IT HAS BEEN CALCULATED THAT IT TAKES 400 MAN/WOMAN HOURS TO PRODUCE ONE KILO OF SAFFRON. THIS EXPLAINS WHY SAFFRON GROWING IS RUN ON A FAMILY BASIS.

the saffron crocus, for harvesting starts in mid-October. It is when the hard work is over, or all but, that the Fiesta de la rosa del azafrán is held. Fiesta-watchers should not expect flamboyant parades with floats and that sort of thing. This is a simple country festival whose greatest claim to fame is probably the setting it provides for a unique product; landscape, traditional customs, and work all seem to blend together naturally. The big day is the last Sunday in October, though festive spirit starts building up a good few days beforehand: there are sports, art and photographic exhibitions with the saffron crocus as their central theme, parades of traditional grotesque figures known as *gigantes y cabezudos* (giants and big-heads)... Though the old livestock competitions are no longer held, the region's rural tradition is still evident in displays of agricultural machinery and tools. On the Friday, the Festival Queen and her ladies in waiting are chosen. This is a traditional part of fiesta time in towns and villages all over Spain, but this one is made special by the fact that the queen becomes Dulcinea—Cervantes has left an indelible mark on La Mancha. The queen and her court, dressed in regional costume, will preside over all the official events in the festival program, starting that very day with one of this fiesta's most characteristic ones: the local crocus petal stripping competition. People who don't know much about saffron will doubtless be wondering what on earth this is all about. What they probably will know by now is that Mancha saffron—in the form of red threads or powder which act as a powerful colorant and aromatic—is the most expensive of all the spices. The high cost reflects not a capricious market but how scarce a product it is and how astonishingly labor intensive to produce.

Artisans at Work

Briefly, the process is as follows. When ready to harvest, the flowers are picked, one by one. This is a painstaking job since the flower grows right



down at soil level. Rows of harvesters bent over in the crocus fields is a classic sight at this time of year in La Mancha. The flowers must be picked first thing in the morning, and should there be rain or frost about, the harvesters have to wait for them to dry. They return to the same fields every day for ten days to two weeks since each bulb yields about three flowers and not all flower at the same time. In ideal conditions, an experienced harvester can pick up to 5 lbs (2.3 kg) of crocuses. Interestingly, in keeping with its traditional artisan character, the Spanish saffron world is still regulated by old-fashioned weights and measures, unlike any other agricultural product. The same day, the flowers are transported in esparto-grass baskets to the *mondadoras*, or petal-strippers. As their Spanish name suggests, these are usually women. Their job is to separate the three stigmas from the rest of the flower. Not a difficult job, but when you think that to produce 1 kg of saffron you need to toast about 5 kg of stigmas, for which you need to strip the petals off 250,000 to 300,000 flowers—an expert *mondadora* can strip 10,000 to 12,000 a day—you begin to get the measure of the work and to understand why saffron is so expensive. In his book *The Saffron Essential Companion* (1996), John Humphries cites an eloquent statistic: it has been calcu-

lated that it takes 400 man/woman hours to produce one kilo of saffron. This explains, too, why saffron growing is run on a family basis, with some members harvesting, others petal-stripping; if every stage of the process had to be paid at a given rate, the end price would be astronomical.

Once the petals have been stripped, the stigmas are toasted. This is done by placing the stigmas in layers 2 cm thick on very finely meshed metal sieves over a heater or brazier or even on metal griddles on the gas stove. The heat must be gentle to prevent loss of color and aroma while drying the stigmas thoroughly. They must then be packed to protect them from light and moisture, saffron's worst enemy. The most laborious part of the whole process is the petal-stripping, and the Consuegra festival pays direct homage to this fact in the form of its *concurso de monda*, or petal-stripping competition. Each contestant is given a bag containing a hundred saffron crocuses, the winner being the first to strip them all according to the rules, that is to say separating them from the petals at just the right point—too high, and the three come apart, too low and the yellow part adhering to them mars the quality of the saffron. There are various categories within the competition, for children and adults, and the adult category is divided into local, provincial, and national heats which take place on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, respectively.

Grinding for Peace

On the festival Saturday, eve of the big day, there is another fascinating event known as *La Molienda de la Paz*, which translates roughly as Grinding for Peace, and whose meaning will become clear as you read on. Every year since its inception in 1964, this event has been dedicated to a different theme. This year, the chosen theme was Cervantes, to mark the quatercentenary of his birth. Wheat was gathered from the places where the great writer had lived then, that

THE MOST LABORIOUS PART OF THE WHOLE PROCESS IS THE PETAL-STRIPPING, AND THE CONSUEGRA FESTIVAL PAYS DIRECT HOMAGE TO THIS FACT IN THE FORM OF ITS *CONCURSO DE MONDA*, OR PETAL-STRIPPING COMPETITION.

evening, a procession made its way to the windmills. There are actually thirteen of these altogether, eleven of them reconstructed and two in ruins. Not so long ago they were all in ruins, but since the Molienda de la Paz has become an institution they have gradually been rebuilt, and now look wonderful. They all have names taken from Cervantes' famous novel (Sancho, Bolero and so on) and some of them have little museums inside showing visitors how they used to work. This succeeds well in keeping alive an ancient tradition and in helping new generations understand how vital their original function once was. To the novice the windmill's mechanism looks extremely complicated, with wheels and levers coordinating with the opening and closing of their many little windows to get the mighty sails to turn. The Quixotic flour produced on this occasion was packed in small cloth bags and distributed among those present as a souvenir. Not far from the windmills, on even higher ground from which there are marvelous views over La Mancha, stands the castle. Severe and rather dour, it was built by the knights of the military-religious Order of St. John of Jerusalem, to whom the town was presented by King Alfonso VIII in 1183. They went on to transform it into the finest of their possessions. After the flour-grinding, the official master of ceremonies—always someone linked in some way to the chosen theme—delivers a speech

officially inaugurating the festivities. Exchanges of gifts and prizes, dinner and dancing complete the run-up to the big day. Everyone prays for a fine Sunday and for the festival to go smoothly. But whatever the weather, Consuegra is woken up by the town band on that day, and shortly after, in the plaza, the finals of the children's petal-stripping competition test the skills of the newest recruits to this ancient task. They don't do too badly, but they've still got a lot to learn from their elders who follow with a display at dizzying speeds. The competitors, who come mostly from nearby villages, are required to demonstrate skill, dexterity, and accuracy. When the panel of judges eventually reaches a decision, the winner will take home a prize of money, as well as the satisfaction of knowing herself to be the fastest worker in her own special field. The competition is followed by the now traditional Choir and Dance Festival of Castile-La Mancha. This is an excellent opportunity to get to know the folk traditions of this area at first hand, and to fit one more piece into the elaborate jigsaw puzzle of Spain's folk culture, so varied yet so little known, overshadowed as it so often is by the popular appeal of flamenco. The participating groups vie with each other in their picturesque costumes, their wealth of musical instruments, and their choreographical diversity as they perform for an audience which, year after year, enjoys the double pleasure of a marvelous show and the

knowledge that these tunes, songs, and steps are being guaranteed survival. The festival is drawing to a close now. The natural cycle has been marked for another year; the plant has yielded its fruit and Man has made the most of it. The wheels of commerce will do the rest, and from Sydney to Milan, New York to Tokyo, the best saffron in the world will continue lending its aroma and color to rices, soups, fish, and nowadays even ice-cream. Closer to home, saffron is given a starring role in some of La Mancha's own restaurants—a good excuse for a bit of gastronomic tourism or, even better, for following the Don Quixote route. Autumn in La Mancha is mild, and this is a good time of year to visit the towns and villages through which Don Alonso Quijano (aka Don Quixote) and his trusty henchman, Sancho traveled. From Consuegra to Belmonte, the route passes through Madridejos, Puerto Lápice, Herencia, Alcázar de San Juan, Campo de Criptana (where Don Quixote mistook the windmills for giants), Pedro Muñoz, and Toboso. In this last, lived Aldonza Lorenza, the serving wench whom the knight idealized as Dulcinea, and the Casa de Dulcinea is still there, now a Quixote museum visited every year by tourists from all over the globe. From there, the route goes on to Argamasilla de Alba, Mota del Cuervo, and, finally, Belmonte, a town of fine old buildings including a Gothic castle. Though strictly speaking not on the Don Quixote route, there

are a couple more towns that it would be a pity not to visit. To the east is Almagro, economic, commercial, and cultural hub during the Renaissance, a town of fine religious and civic buildings, including a university and a lovely plaza, and capital of La Mancha in the 18th century. Its famous Corral de Comedias theater dates from the 17th century, still with the original structure of the theaters of that period. Plays by Spain's great classic playwrights are staged there every summer. Close by is the Parador, which occupies a late 16th century building, formerly the convent of San Francisco. The other detour is for purely gastronomic purposes and takes us westwards, through fields of saffron crocus, to Las Pedroñeras. This out-of-the-way part of La Mancha is where Manuel de la Osa, completely self-taught and a total charmer, opened his restaurant Las Rejas (awarded one star in the Michelin Guide). Here he has succeeded in using the humble elements of La Mancha's cuisine—including garlic, of which Las Pedroñeras proudly declares itself "capital"—to exquisite effect. Not surprisingly, the most cherished spice in the world features largely, too.

Sonia Ortega is a journalist, and has been coordinator of Spain Gourmetour since its inception.

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For over two decades now, I have been visiting La Rioja, Spain's most famous red wine district, not just because of the wine, whose quality is reason enough to go, but because La Rioja is one of my favorite places in Europe. Along with the wines there is great regional food and lovely mountain roads with little traffic where you can drift along at an easy pace through stunning scenery, beautiful terraced vineyards, and historic villages.

la RIOJA



Text: Gerry Dawes

Photos: Fernando Briones/ICEX



Rioja is not only wine. There are also picturesque old villages, ancient monasteries and churches, and castles rich in history.



My trip last May would be a working trip, with a dozen wineries to visit and scores of wines to taste, but I was looking forward to crossing the Río Oja in northern Spain again, because La Rioja is an enchanting place to me and the scene of some of my greatest wine country adventures. La Rioja, named after the small Río Oja, a tributary of the Ebro, is a wide trough-shaped valley between two dramatically beautiful, mountain ranges, the Sierra de Cantabria to the north and the wild Sierra de la Demanda to the south. In this vineyard-laced enclave, there are plenty of little-known attractions to entice the discerning traveler. The most obvious of these is visiting Rioja *bodegas*, or wineries, which run the gamut from rustic *cosechero*, or small grower, operations and historic turn-of-the-century, virtual working wine museums to state-of-the-art wineries rivaling those of France and California. There are also picturesque old villages, ancient monasteries and churches, and castles rich in history. The Camino de Santiago, the famous pilgrim's road, whose roots are

anchored in the early Middle Ages, passes through the heart of La Rioja and several key shrines along the route are still prime attractions.

Rioja's *Denominación de Origen* (Denomination of Origin) is divided into three zones: La Rioja Alta, whose focal points are Haro and Logroño; La Rioja Alavesa, the southern tip of the Basque province of Álava above the Ebro; and La Rioja Baja, centered around Calahorra, an old Roman city southeast of Logroño, and a stretch of southwestern Navarre.

La Rioja still produces a few traditional-style oak-aged *vinos blancos*, white wines, which rely upon mellowed wood flavors, stony texture, and balance for their appeal, somewhat like the white wines of the Rhône, but, in the past two decades the emphasis has been on modern cold-fermented Rioja whites, with little or no time in wood. Now, increasingly, producers are having success with barrel-fermented Viura-based white wines.

La Rioja also makes some excellent *rosados*, or rosés, from Tempranillo and/or Garnacha, sometimes blended with a little white Viura. However, the backbone of La Rioja's fine wine reputation

Typical Rioja landscape with the Sierra Cantabrica in the background.



The "wine-cemetery" of Viña Tondonia, where great vintages dating from the firm's foundation are kept.



is its *vinos tintos* (red wines), made from a coupage of 70% or more of the excellent Tempranillo grape. A number of bodegas make wines of such consistent quality that many wine experts think Rioja wines rank with the best on earth. The other authorized Rioja grape varieties—Garnacha, Mazuelo, Graciano, and the white Viura—contribute to the overall harmony, flavor, and aging potential of the wine. Riojas are aged for several years in *barricas bordelesas*, 225-liter casks, usually of American oak, but many wineries also

use French barrels such as Limousin, Nevers, and Allier. La Rioja produces some superb *vinos jóvenes*, young red wines with little or no oak aging, and red *crianza* wines (see Glossary on page 154), which spend a year in small oak casks and a year in bottle before release. Rioja *reserva* and *gran reserva* red wines are among the glories of Spanish viticulture. Reserva wines are laid down in good years; gran reservas only in exceptional years. The good vintages most often found on current wine lists are 1991, 1990, 1989, 1987,

and 1985. Since reservas and gran reservas are generally made only in good years, you do not have to worry as much about off years. And many bodegas do not release their reservas for 5-10 years, so the wines are, in effect, cellared at the winery until they are ready to drink.

I often begin my wine trips in the wonderful town of Haro, located about three hours northeast of Madrid via the speedy four-lane highways, E-1, A-1, and A-68. Haro, the capital of the prime Rioja Alta district, is a wine lover's town filled with great bodegas, live-

ly bars where you can sample Rioja wines, excellent restaurants, and two good hotels and a parador in nearby Santo Domingo de la Calzada.

One of the most remarkable incidents in medieval Christian lore is said to have taken place in Santo Domingo. A young man making the pilgrimage to Santiago with his parents stopped for the night at an inn in Santo Domingo. The innkeeper's daughter took a liking to the handsome traveler and "would have had him medyll with her carnally," as one 16th-century writer described



it. However, the weary young man resisted her advances, which infuriated the innkeeper's daughter. In spite, she hid a silver wine goblet belonging to her father in the boy's knapsack as he slept. As the boy and his parents were preparing to leave the next morning, the girl reported the silver cup missing. The young traveler was caught with the goods, dragged before the local magistrate, and sentenced to hang. Though he dangled from the gallows, miraculously, he did not die. The boy's father and mother has-

tened to the home of the magistrate who had sentenced him to offer the miracle as divine evidence of their son's innocence. The magistrate was at table, preparing to dine on a pair of roasted chickens, a cock, and a hen. He rejected the family's appeal. The boy was no more innocent, than the chickens were alive, he claimed. At that moment the chickens flew away. This famous event is reenacted every May 12th with a white rooster and a hen, which are still kept in Cathedral of Santo Domingo de la

Calzada high above the floor in a lighted, elaborately decorated wrought-iron cage. Modern-day pilgrims stop at the cathedral hoping to hear the rooster crow and to come away with a white feather as a souvenir of their passing through Santo Domingo on the way west to Santiago.

Gastronomy and Architecture

I drove up from Madrid on a Saturday afternoon for the weekend, so I could try some new restaurants and visit several tourist sights be-

fore beginning winery visits on Monday. The weather was quite cool for late May and, during my stay, a number of thunderstorms would roll down through the dramatic Conchas de Haro, a narrow mountain pass which funnels weather from the Cantabrian Sea, reminding me that it is a mistake to characterize the elegant wines of La Rioja as warm-country wines, when in fact, the climate is governed by many of the same weather patterns as Bordeaux. I spent part of my first evening strolling around



Monastery of Yuso: a huge 16th-century church that is often called the Escorial of La Rioja.



Barón de Ley, a relatively new bodega, is on the grounds of a beautifully renovated 16th-century monastery.

Haro, noting the stores around the Plaza de la Paz, which sell a broad collection of Rioja wines and Riojan specialties such as *espárragos blancos* (fat, white asparagus), the richly-flavored pork *chorizos* for which the area is famous, and *pimientos de piquillo* (delicious triangular-shaped red peppers), which are stuffed with meat or fish and served in a rich sauce.

The excellent bars and restaurants of Haro have become a weekend retreat for people from Bilbao and other northern cities, who flock here to enjoy the easy-going lifestyle, good country food, and excellent wines from Haro's many bodegas. When I returned from dinner at 2:00 a.m. on this Saturday night, the terrace bars around the Plaza de la Paz were still going strong with people chatting and having a drink in the cool night air. On this occasion, after having eaten in most of Haro's restaurants on previous trips, I decided to drive to nearby Casalarreina for dinner to try a new restaurant built in a sizeable old bodega. Appropriately called La Vieja Bodega, this charming place was well worth the short trip. As I sampled a

fine house red from a Labastida cooperative, along with a thin-sliced smoky *chorizo de jabalí* (wild boar sausage), I admired this ambience-filled restaurant. The thick stone walls, huge exposed original ceiling beams, and rustic tiled floor provide the setting for the brick oven, a wood-burning grill, and a huge old wine vat which is now an intimate dining room for 4-6 people. After an upscale appetizer of *merluza* (hake) with crab meat in a lobster sauce, I had a more typical Riojan dish, *chuletillas de cordero a la brasa* (grilled baby lamb chops), then a delicious dessert, *crepes de requesón y guirlache* (a fresh cheese-filled crepe with cinnamon-laced *creme anglaise* and a toasted sugar-almond crust). After dinner, owner Ángel Pérez Aguilar, a native of Haro, showed me around the original bodega's subterranean aging caves, where his wines are kept in perfect condition. On Sunday, I spent a fascinating day in southern Rioja, revisiting the great shrines of San Millán de la Cogolla—Suso, the Visigothic/Mozarabic jewel, and, Yuso, a huge 16th-century church that is often called the Escorial of



the Rioja; the fine Camino de Santiago monastery, Santa María la Real, in Nájera with its splendid 15th-century florid Gothic cloister and 12th-century tombs of the Kings of Navarre and Castilian aristocracy; and the exceptional 12th-century transitional-Gothic Cistercian monastery at Cañas. The new parador-like *Hostería del Monasterio de San Millán* is a lovely, peaceful hotel in a renovated section of the Yuso monastery. I also visited the monastery museum, which is a treasure trove of artworks, including the superb 11th-century Romanesque ivory carvings from two reliquaries depicting scenes from the lives of San Millán and San Felices. Just north of San Millán is the village of Berceo, birthplace of Gonzalo de Berceo, 13th-century Benedictine monk, who was the first to write poetry in the evolving vernacular of the day. Claiming that he was simply not up to writing in Latin, he downplayed his effort, hoping that, if nothing else, his writing would be worth “a glass of *bon vino*” (obviously, a glass of Rioja wine). Gonzalo’s writing is the earliest surviving literature by a

known author in what would become Castilian. Also in this area is the splendid Gothic monastery *Virgen de Valvanera*, the patroness of la Rioja. I had lunch on Sunday in Ezcaray, a picturesque mountain village south of Santo Domingo de la Calzada in the Sierra de la Demanda near an important ski center. This relatively isolated town has one of northern Spain’s finest restaurants, *Hostal Echaurren*, whose owner, Marisa Sánchez, was named the best chef in Spain in 1987. The food is truly exceptional, the service excellent, and the wine list offers reasonably priced Rioja wines—from oak-aged blancos to a lovely local rosado to a fine stash of great old gran reservas. Sra. Sánchez graciously agreed to share the recipes for the superb dishes I had: *ensalada de trucha del Oja escabechada con judías verdes*, *mousse de puerros y cogollitas salteados* (a salad of Río Oja trout marinated and served with green beans, braised onions, sautéed lettuce hearts, and a leek mousse) and *perdiz con peras* (partridge cooked with Rioja vino tinto and

San Vicente de la Sonsierra is perched on a hilltop and surrounded by vines.



La Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri is one of the stars of Rioja wine making.



served with wine-steeped pears). With this meal I had a lovely 1987 gran reserva from a century-old Rioja winery. The dessert was an inspired *tarta de queso de cameros con manzana y helado de miel*, an exquisite puff pastry tart made with “*reineta*” apples from the village of Ojacastro, filled with a fresh young Cameros cheese, and topped with honey ice cream.

The Wineries of Haro

On Monday morning I began my visits in Haro, which

has one of the world's greatest concentrations of fine wineries, many of which date to the 19th century. Several of these bodegas are clustered north of town near where the tiny Río Oja meets the Ebro in an area traditionally known as the Barrio de la Estación, named for the railhead established here in 1880 to ship copious amounts of Rioja wine to France after French vineyards were devastated by *phylloxera*. López de Heredia (founded in 1877), CVNE (1879), La Rioja Alta (1890), Bodegas Bilbainas (1901), Rioja Santiago (1904),

and Muga, a winery built in 1970, but using completely traditional winemaking methods), are all located here.

My first visit was to López de Heredia, whose distinctive, red-painted, filigree-trimmed, 19th-century Art Nouveau tower is a landmark. I was greeted by María José López de Heredia, an enthusiastic young dynamo, who hopes to lead her family's winery into the 21st century. López de Heredia has been turning out excellent wines in their own unique style for more than a hundred years. Everything here is still done in

oak—fermentation, coupage, and extensive aging (sometimes up to eight years in 225-liter American oak barrels), in what amounts to a virtual working wine museum, complete with its own cooper's shop; an ancient wine tasting room called the *cementerio* (or “the cemetery”), where great vintages dating to the firm's foundation are kept; and blue coverall-dressed workers going about their duties: racking wines by candlelight, bottling gran reserva wines by hand, and rolling barrels along the



deep, humid corridors of the firm's famous *calado*, the manmade aging cave below the bodega.

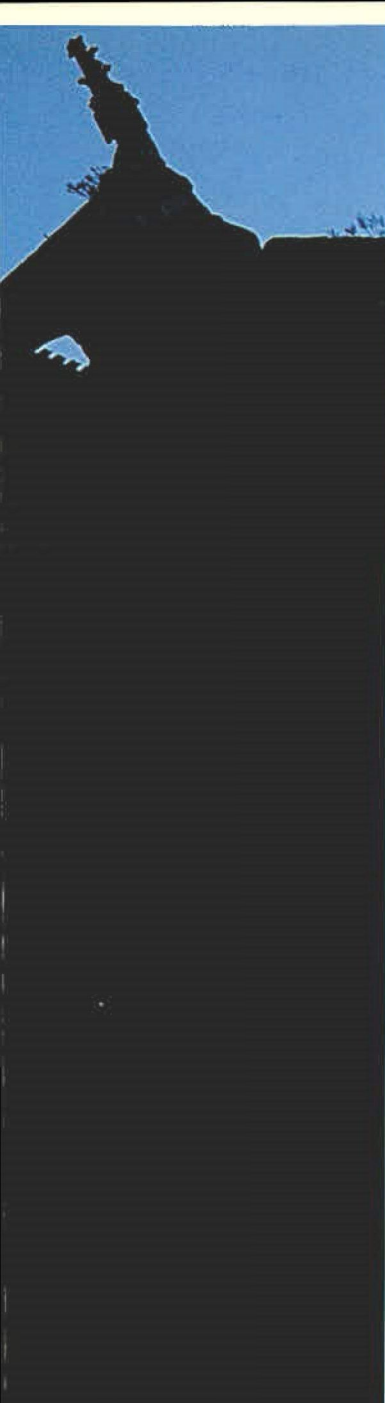
To many modern palates, López de Heredia's wines may seem a bit understated sometimes, but they are elegant, balanced, lower in alcohol, have tremendous character, and are among the best crafted wines of the Rioja. Viña Tondonia and Viña Bosconia are long-lived classics, whose "current" gran reservas are from the excellent 1978 vintage. They also produce three exceptional oak-aged white

wines, Viña Gravonia, Viña Tondonia, and Viña Tondonia Blanco Reserva (the current vintage is 1976!) and a stunning, classic onion-skin colored rosado, now a 1988. Across the street from López de Heredia is La Rioja Alta, S.A., which was also founded over a century ago and represents one of the best combinations of tradition and forward-looking winemaking practices. Javier Amezcua, the export manager, showed me around this attractive bodega, which has a rustically-decorated tasting room that is

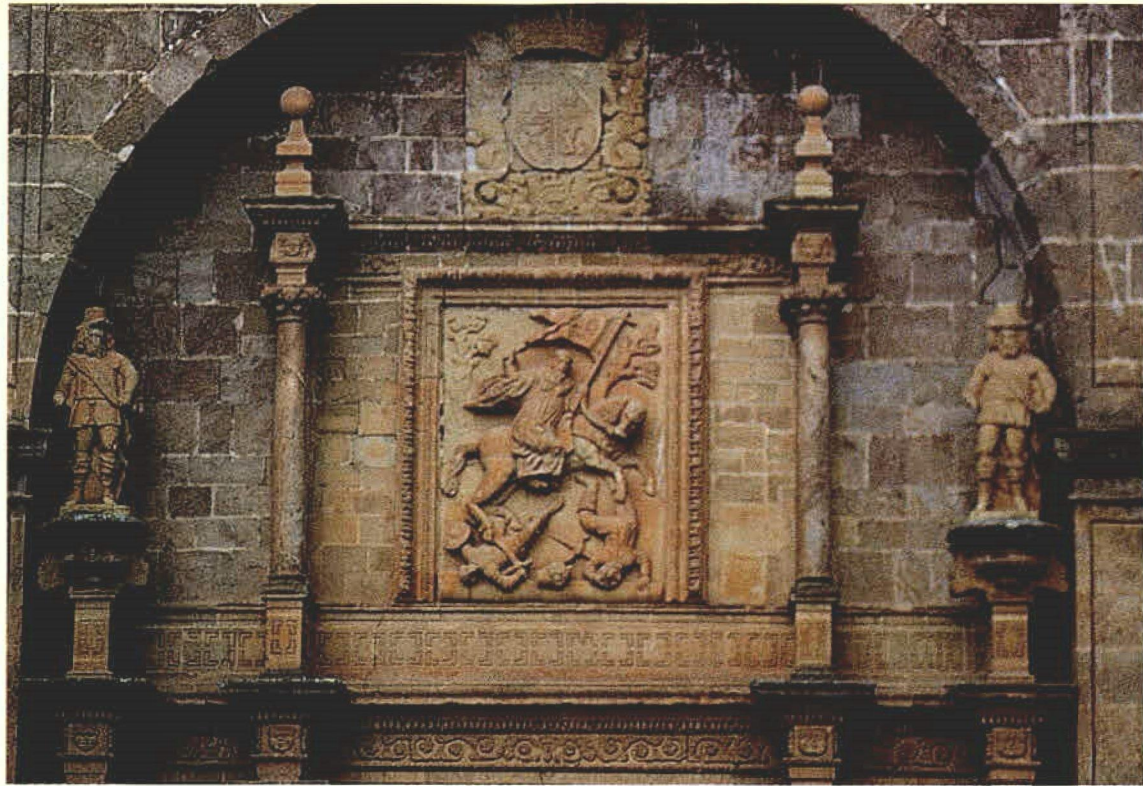
one of the best in la Rioja. La Rioja Alta keeps nearly six and one half million bottles (eight years' annual sales) aging in their cellars and they have an equally amazing 44,000 oak barrels of 225-liter capacity. Except for a small amount (1%) of oak-aged, white Viura-based wine, La Rioja Alta makes only red wines, 10% of which is gran reserva (aged 11-16 years), 65% of which is reserva (aged 6-7 years), and 25% of which is crianza (aged 4-5 years instead of the two years required by La Rioja's Regulatory Council).

After an extensive tasting of La Rioja Alta's wines, including their highly regarded Viña Ardanza (70% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha, and the rest Mazuelo and Graciano) and Reserva 904 (90% Tempranillo), Javier Amezcua took me out to see the company's large new fermentation and aging facility a few kilometers from Haro near Labastida in La Rioja Alavesa.

At La Rioja Alta, I also tasted the wines of a property they control, Barón de Oña, a 50-hectare (123 acres) Rioja Alavesa estate with a modern bodega near Párganos,



Santo Domingo's cathedral is still one of the most important stops along St. James' Way.



P. SANCHEZ-MATEA/ICEX

The Augustinian monastery of Yuso holds a museum, which is a treasure trove of artworks.

which has the strikingly beautiful Sierra de Cantabria as a backdrop and looks out on the enchanting Medieval town of Laguardia. A stylish wine, Barón de Oña is a blend of 92% Tempranillo with a little Mazuelo and Cabernet Sauvignon, which spends two years in French oak barrels.

By the time we finished visiting Barón de Oña, it was lunchtime, so we took advantage of our proximity to Laguardia to eat at Mayor de Migueloa, a restored, rustically-decorated hotel-restaurant located inside the walls of this exceptional village. One of the most unusual, picturesque wine towns in the world, Laguardia is perched on a hilltop some 366 meters (1,200 feet) above sea level. Its unique beauty can compete with such celebrated wine towns as Bernkastel in the Mosel, Chinon in the Loire, and Alsace's Riquewihr.

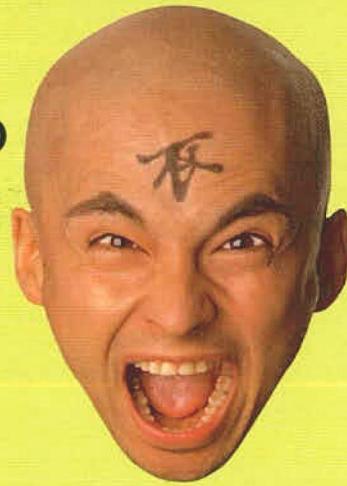
Laguardia: The Shangri-la of La Rioja

Laguardia's old quarter is a completely walled village with six medieval gates. Except for an occasional small truck making deliveries, ve-

hicular traffic is prohibited in the Laguardia's narrow streets, because underneath them is a honeycomb of manmade wine caves which could collapse. Daily staples are usually delivered by pushcart.

In addition to its fine walls, gates, and towers, from which there are superb views of the vineyards of the Rioja Alavesa, Laguardia has a 10th-century castle; an exceptional Gothic church, Santa María de los Reyes, whose 15th-century portal, richly decorated with painted polychrome figures, is one of the Basque Country's greatest treasures; San Juan Bautista, an old church with Romanesque roots; and the birthplace of the fabulist, Félix Samaniego (1745-1801), an impressive mansion that is now the Casa del Vino, the Rioja Alavesa offices and laboratory. Javier Amezcua and I ate well at Mayor de Migueloa, splitting two superb, typically Riojan dishes, the deceptively simple sounding *patatas a la riojana* (potatoes and Riojan chorizo)—a dish praised by such international cooking stars as Paul Bocuse—and *caparrones con chorizo* (delicious small red beans, also cooked with chorizo). As a main course, I chose *pencas*

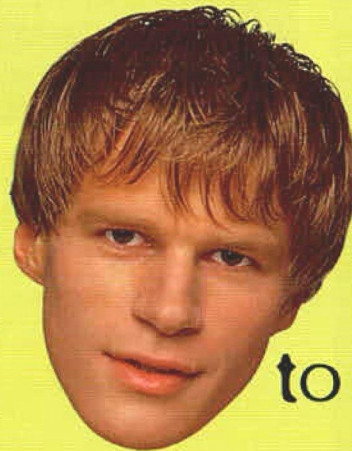
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rellenas de jamón y queso con salsa de queso (chard stalks filled with ham and cheese) and Javier had *bacalao en salsa de pimientos de piquillo* (salt cod in a lovely piquillo pepper sauce). A fine, full-bodied reserva from Rioja Alta harmonized beautifully with these diverse dishes, demonstrating the versatility of Rioja wines.

Just outside Laguardia is Bodegas Palacio, which is headed by Jean Gervais, a former vice-president of Seagram's European operations. Gervais is producing some well-colored, tannic wines under the Glorioso and Don Cosme Palacio brands, which remind me of Bordeaux wines. Gervais is a savvy marketer and he is producing some excellent packaging and support materials. Part of Palacios's renaissance under Gervais includes turning the 19th-century section of the bodega into the unique, ten-room Hotel Antigua Bodega Don Cosme Palacio, whose charmingly decorated rooms are named for wine grapes.

After lunch, we returned to Haro, passing another Rioja Alavesa bodega near Labastida, La Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri, one of the stars of Rioja wine making. Remelluri is the domain of the Rioja Alavesa's young lion, Telmo Rodríguez, a young Bordeaux-trained winemaker. The Rodríguez family has created a "château" at Remelluri, a beautiful estate with a lovely, old, impeccably decorated, renovated house.

Remelluri is probably the highest altitude vineyard in La Rioja, which being at the limits of cultivation, is perhaps the latest to ripen. It is a delicate balancing act between nature and the winemaker, which Telmo Rodríguez has managed well enough to have received consistently favorable reviews, both in Spain and internationally.

Back in Haro, I had an appointment with one of the most fun-loving *bodegueros* in

La Rioja, Isaac Muga, the owner/winemaker of Bodegas Muga. Muga believes in tradition coupled with reasonable technological advances. He ferments his wine in specially constructed, huge wooden vats which were the standard fermentation tanks used in La Rioja until the 1970s (and still are at some bodegas). His 1981 Prado Enea was one of the greatest Riojas I have ever tasted; his new Torremuga label aims to be one of the Rioja's finest wines in top vintages and has been purchased by a number of Michelin-starred restaurants in France.

The next morning in the village of Elciego in the Rioja Alavesa, I visited the winery Vinos de los Herederos del Marqués de Riscal, which was founded in 1860 and is the oldest functioning major bodega in La Rioja. The owners of Riscal recently purchased thousands of new barrels to replace old stocks and are currently renovating sections of the winery. Marqués de Riscal produces only reservas and gran reservas. The reservas spend about two years in 100% American oak, 10% of which is new each year, and they are normally a blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Mazuelo. I tasted with Javier Salamero, the assistant director of oenology. Salamero likes the 1994 vintage best, 1995 next, and then the 1996, which was still in barrel.

In Navarrete, I visited a mid-Rioja Alta winery, Bodegas Corral, and tasted with Director Javier Martínez. Corral primarily makes reasonably priced red wines in a fine old, warm, brick-edged Rioja style, with moderate alcohol (12-12.7%). Corral gran reservas and Don Jacobo reservas and crianzas are a standard house blend of 80% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha, and 5% Mazuelo, sometimes with a little Graciano. The gran reserva spends over three years in American,

Bosnian, and a little French oak; the reservas over two years in barrel; and even crianzas spend a year and a half. They also make a delicious cherry/rust-colored, 50% Garnacha, 50% Tempranillo, rosado (rosé).

Just a few minutes away from Bodegas Corral, outside the important wine town of Fuenmayor, is Bodegas Montecillo. Montecillo dates to the 19th century, but was purchased by the Osborne sherry firm in 1979, and since then has become known for three basic red wines, Viña Cumbre Crianza, Viña Monty Gran Reserva, and Montecillo Gran Reserva Especial. Montecillo makes no reservas. I visited the bodega with Export Director, María Martínez, an indefatigable spokesperson for her bodega's wines. Martínez told me that Montecillo uses only French oak barrels, which their own coopers craft from wood purchased only in central France and cut to a 28-millimeter thickness, which she says allows the wines to age more slowly.

After lunch at El Valenciano in Fuenmayor, I drove to neighboring Navarre, where several villages near Logroño, with similar climate, soil, and growing conditions, have been incorporated into Rioja's Denominación de Origen. Near Mendavia, east of Logroño, I visited Barón de Ley, a relatively new bodega, which is on the grounds of a beautifully renovated 16th-century monastery. The modern fortress-like winery was designed to complement the older building. The estate vineyards (planted in 1982) have 70 hectares (172 acres) of Tempranillo and 20 hectares (49 acres) of Cabernet Sauvignon planted on alluvial soil scattered with stones. The winery produces about 75,000 cases of red wine, which is aged in 7,000 new American oak barrels made by Spanish coopers—

Magreñán, Murúa, and Victoria—and by Demptos in Napa Valley. Barrels are used a maximum of three years, but I was surprised to find that the new oak did not dominate the wine. Víctor Fuentes, who works in the export department, explained the winery's basic philosophy, "We don't like to commercialize older wines; we like to sell our wines younger and fruitier."

Tapa-Tasting in Logroño

After Mendavia, I returned to Logroño and spent the afternoon in the *casco viejo*, the old quarter around the cathedral and along the famous calle Laurel, where every *tasca*, or *tapas* bar, seems to specialize in a different tapa. One bar may have eight different preparations of anchovies, another wild Rioja mushrooms, another delicious chorizos, and yet another stuffed piquillo peppers. Each bar usually offers a Rioja blanco, a rosado, and either a vino joven, a tinto de crianza, or a reserva, *por copas*, by the glass.

After a few tapas, I only wanted a light dinner, so I chose the friendly, family-run La Unión, a *casa de comidas*, (a typical, economical, restaurant specializing in *comida casera*, or home cooking), where I had a good fresh salad dressed with southeastern Rioja olive oil and wine vinegar, followed by clams and small Rioja-grown artichokes in a rich sauce. To accompany the food, I selected a brash young cosechero wine from Rioja Alavesa.

The next evening I returned to the old quarter to peruse local specialty shops before dinner. Here one can find Rioja wines and local beans, chorizos, preserved peaches, peppers, asparagus, Riojan cheeses, and such sweets as *mazapanes de Soto de Cameros* (almond marzipan from the Cameros

mountains of southern Rioja), *pastillas de café y leche auténticas de Logroño* (coffee-flavored local candies), and *fardelejos de Arnedo* (almond-filled pastries of Moorish origin). That night I ate at Cafe Iruña, whose chef-owner, María Jesús Alcalde, has a growing reputation for good food using fresh, seasonal ingredients from the Rioja, neighboring Navarre, and the nearby Basque Country. A half bottle of reserva from the Rioja Alta went beautifully with home-cured anchovies and green peppers and a main course of plump, tender *pochas* (beans).

On the following morning, I had scheduled my first bodega appointment later in the morning so I could first visit Logroño's colorful market on calle Sagasta, just off the main Plaza del Espolón. This colorful market sells all kinds of Riojan food products.

After my market visit, I had an appointment in Logroño to see Campo Viejo, owned by the giant firm of Bodegas y Bebidas. Carlos García Ogarra, a man with many years of experience with Rioja wines, showed me around this astoundingly large winery. Campo Viejo produces over 2,000,000 cases of wines across a broad range of styles and prices from the economical San Asensio line to their reliable Viña Alcorta and top-of-the-line Marqués de Villamagna Gran Reserva.

My last winery visit was at Bodegas Martínez Bujanda, just outside Logroño in the Rioja Alavesa town of Oyón. The oenologist, Gonzalo Ortiz Valiente, first took me to see this family firm's beautiful old bodega, now a museum, then we tasted wines back at their modern facility. Martínez Bujanda produces barrel-fermented blancos,

rosados, carbonic maceration vinos jóvenes made from 100% Tempranillo, and award winning Conde de Valdemar reservas and gran reservas that are usually a blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Garnacha aged in American oak. They also produce a 100% old vines Garnacha wine and a Martínez Bujanda gran reserva made from 50% Tempranillo and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in a combination of French and American oak. The bodega produces 215,000 cases of wine per year, from 325 hectares (803 acres) of their own vineyards in Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa, and Rioja Baja.

I spent the remainder of the day playing tourist in la Rioja. I had lunch with Basilio Izquierdo, the winemaker of CVNE (Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España), at Mesón Toni in the exceptional old town of San Vicente de la Sonsierra. We

sampled house-cured *jamón de pato* (duck ham); delicious anchovies from Lolín (from the Cantabrian coast) served with Riojan peppers and fresh Cameros cheese; then, sensational, buttery, peppers from Tormantos (a nearby village) slowly cooked with garlic; and deep-fried, breaded lamb chops served with deep-fried leek strands and mint leaves. We opted for a fruity young wine from a local Sonsierra cooperative.

This was my last afternoon in La Rioja, so after lunch, I drove through the very picturesque vineyard road between San Vicente and Baños de Ebro, passing San Asensio castle along the way, then over to a spot on the Laguardia—Cenicero road, where I could see Laguardia, shining like some golden Shangri-la dramatically outlined against the blue-grey backdrop of the Sierra de Cantabria. It is one of my favorite images, among many, of La Rioja and one that I would carry with me as I drove down to Santo Domingo de la Calzada for dinner and my last night in the parador. The next morning, I left wine country behind and I explored the beautiful Cameros mountains before heading for Madrid, already anticipating my next trip to one of the greatest wine regions in the world, La Rioja.

Gerry Dawes has been traveling in Spain and La Rioja for nearly thirty years. His articles and photographs have been published in The New York Times, Food Arts, Food & Wine, Wine Enthusiast, Wine News, and many other publications. He wrote several chapters in The Berlitz Travellers Guide to Spain and he is currently writing Homage to Iberia.

See Main Exporters on page 20 and Recipes on page 136.



JAVIER BELLOSO

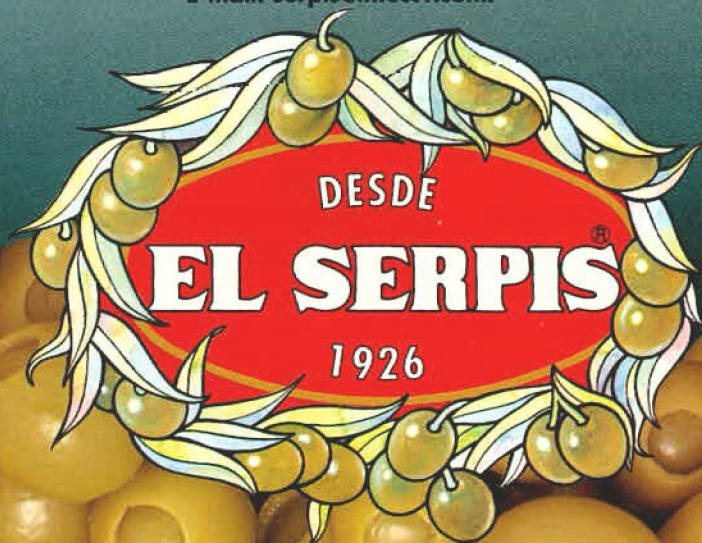
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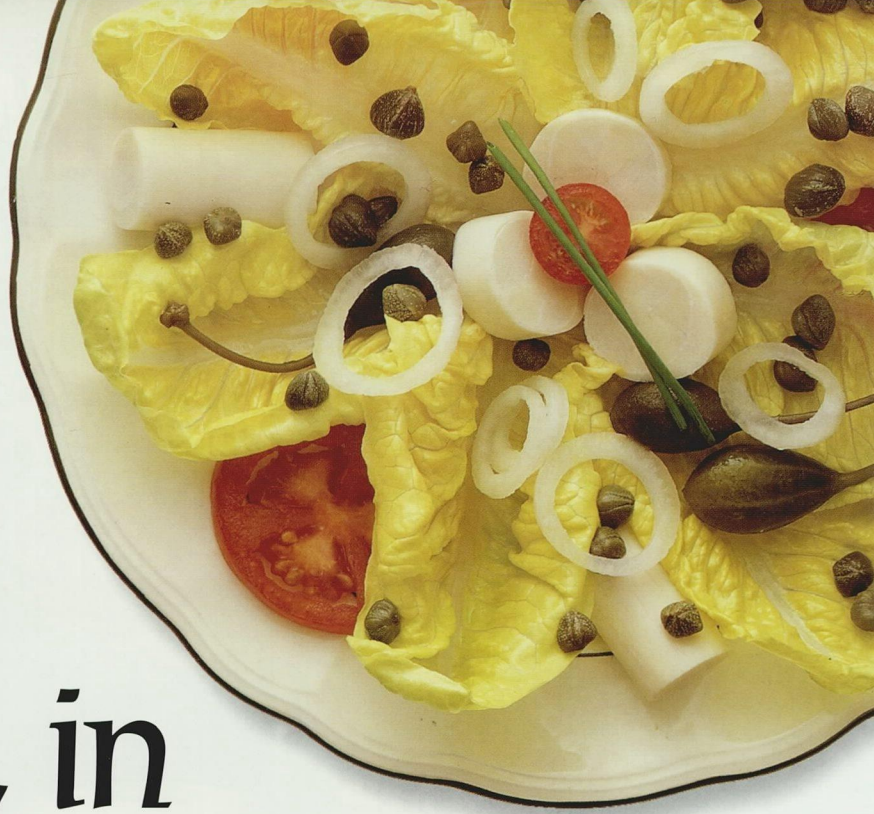
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Situated on the cathedral square, the Parador has been installed in the restored 12th-century pilgrims' hospice and hospital.



PARADORES

A PILGRIM'S HAVEN: PARADOR OF SANTO DOMINGO DE LA CALZADA

Santo Domingo de la Calzada is one of the most famous stops on the *Camino de Santiago*, St. James' Way, the great pilgrims' road of the Middle Ages, and the parador-hotel here, while certainly far more luxurious than the pilgrim's lodgings of centuries past, still retains a palpable atmosphere of that ancient and noble pilgrimage.

Santo Domingo was an 11th-century hermit, who devoted his life to helping travelers along the *Camino de Santiago* and to keeping the roadbed, or *calzada*, in passable condition, thus he came to be known as Santo Domingo de la Calzada and the village took his name. Many important vestiges of Santo Domingo's medieval glory remain: the original pilgrims' road still passes through the center of the old

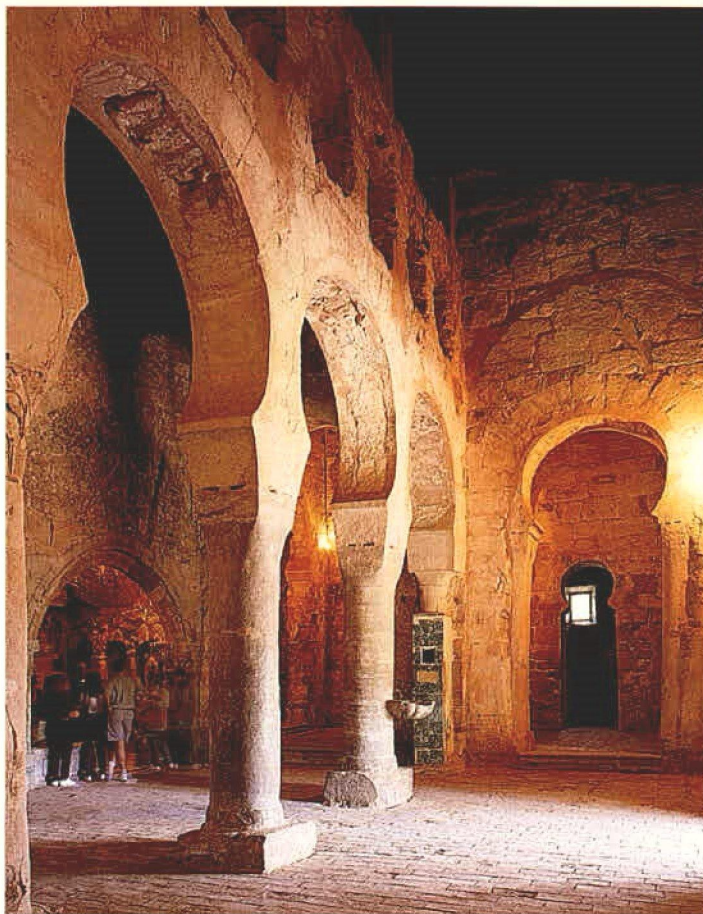
part of the town, the fine cathedral, whose baroque bell towers dominate the profile of the village from far away, mansions emblazoned with coats-of-arms, sections of the defensive walls and their watchtowers, which were built during the reign of Pedro the Cruel, an ancient, but much-renovated bridge originally built over the Oja River by Santo Domingo himself. Situated on the cathedral square, the parador-hotel at Santo Domingo has been installed in the restored 12th-century pilgrims' hospice and hospital, whose construction was supervised by Santo Domingo. This fine old hospice, with its antique furniture, period decorations, suits of armor, and stylized high relief map of St. James' Way on a stone wall, houses the great dormitory hall of the hospice, with its vaulted ceil-

ings and heavy stone arches, which is now the main salon and a wonderful place to relax over a drink, read the newspapers provided by the parador staff, or plot your exploration of La Rioja.

The large and comfortable rooms at the parador are beautifully decorated with finely crafted furnishings, tasteful draperies, and wall hangings that are keeping the spirit of the region and the pilgrimage.

On weekends, weddings in the cathedral are often followed by a reception at the parador and a red carpet is laid across the square for the bride and groom, who walk from the church through an admiring throng of invitees and townspeople. At night a quiet peace falls on the town. The tolling of the cathedral bells to mark the hours each night evokes the spirit of the medieval pilgrimage.

Suso dates from a
6th-century
Visigothic church.



VISITING BODEGAS

Rioja *bodegas* do not see all that many foreign visitors, so most of them do not have formal tours set up (La Rioja Alta, CVNE, and a few others have tasting rooms), but many of them have an English-speaking person who can show you around, especially if you write or call ahead. Visitors will usually get to taste the wines, which can be purchased in most wineries, at bodega prices.

HOW TO CONTACT BODEGAS

Most major book stores sell the invaluable *Guía Vinos de España* published by Club de Gourmets for addresses, telephone numbers, contact names, and hours for receiving visitors. The Rioja D.O.Ca has recently published a free brochure with a list of its wine routes and useful information.

DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN OFFICE

Consejo Regulador de la D.O. Ca. Rioja

Jorge Vigón 51
26003 Logroño
Tel: (34-41) 24 11 99
Fax: (34-41) 25 35 02

FEATURED BODEGAS

Barón de Ley, Crta. de Lodosa, km 5,5, 31587 Mendavia (Navarre)
Tel: (34-48) 69 43 03
Fax: (34-48) 69 43 04

Bodegas Campo Viejo
Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer 3
26006 Logroño (La Rioja)
Tel: (34-41) 21 08 00
Fax: (34-41) 21 08 82

Bodegas Corral, Crta. Logroño, km 10 26370 Navarrete (La Rioja)
Tel: (34-41) 44 01 93,
Fax: (34-41) 44 01 95

Bodegas Palacio, San Lázaro 1, 01300 Laguardia (Álava)
Tel: (34-41) 10 00 57
Fax: (34-41) 10 02 97

Bodegas Martínez Bujanda, Camino Viejo s/n, 01320 Oyón (Álava). Tel: (34-41) 12 21 88
Fax: (34-41) 12 21 11

Bodegas Montecillo
San Cristobal 34
26360 Fuenmayor (La Rioja)
Tel: (34-41) 44 01 25
Fax: (34-41) 44 06 63

Bodegas Muga, Bº de la Estación s/n, 26200 Haro (La Rioja) Tel: (34-41) 31 18 25
Fax: (34-41) 31 28 67

Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri, Crta. Rivas de Tereso s/n, 01330 Labastida (Álava) Tel: (34-41) 33 12 74
Fax: (34-41) 33 14 41

R. López de Heredia
Av. de Vizcaya 3
26200 Haro (La Rioja)
Tel: (34-41) 31 02 44
Fax: (34-41) 31 07 88

La Rioja Alta, Av. Vizcaya s/n, 26200 Haro (La Rioja)
Tel: (34-41) 31 03 46
Fax: (34-41) 31 28 54

Vinos de los Herederos del Marqués de Riscal
Torrea 1
01340 Elciego (Álava)
Tel: (34-41) 60 60 00
Fax: (34-41) 60 60 23

WINE FIESTAS

The Rioja has some wonderful fiestas such as the famous *Batalla del Vino*, Battle of Wine, in Haro on June 29th, where thousands of people ascend to a mountain glen outside of town and pour on, in, or around one another some 50,000 liters of young Rioja wine and, literally, turn the mountainside purple; the San Mateo Fiesta de la Vendimia Riojana, the colorful wine harvest festival held in late September in Logroño; and the Fiesta de la Vendimia in Cenicero in early September.

PRINCIPAL SIGHTS AND VISITS

Logroño

Logroño, the capital of La Rioja, with a population of 126,000, is located on a river plain on the south bank of the Ebro. Except for its *casco viejo* (the city's fine medieval core), Logroño is a modern city of broad avenues, affluent-looking apartments, smart cafes, bars, restaurants and shops. Sights of interest are 15th-century Santa María la Redonda Cathedral and the churches of Santiago el Real, Santa María del Palacio (a National Monument), and San Bartolomé. The main demands on your time in Logroño are winery visits, shopping, lazing over a drink in early evening in the Plaza del Espolón, and searching out good *tapas* bars in the old quarter.

Haro

Haro, the capital of the Rioja Alta, is a charming town with a fine arcaded main square complete with an

18th-century town hall and a beautiful bandstand; a number of great bodegas and retail shops where you can purchase some of the greatest wines of the Rioja; and the 16th-century Santo Tomás church, which has an exceptional plateresque stone façade.

Nájera

The great attraction in Nájera is the monastery of Santa María la Real, pantheon of several members of the Riojan, Navarrese, and Castilian aristocracy of the Middle Ages. Santa María has a splendid early 15th-century Gothic cloister and a magnificent late 15th-century choir. During the last half of July, a sound-and-light-show takes place in the cloisters of the monastery.

Santo Domingo de la Calzada

Santo Domingo's cathedral—steeped in the legend of the rooster and the hen—is still one of the most important stops along the *Camino de Santiago* and the *parador* in a 12th-century pilgrim hospice is one of the route's most popular hotels.

San Millán de la Cogolla

San Millán de la Cogolla, located in the mountains southwest of Nájera, is home to the great monasteries of Suso and Yuso. Suso, the original monastery, dates from a 6th-century Visigothic church, but the current building is an early 10th-century gem with three chapels carved into the rock and a nave with several lovely Mozarabic arches. The Augustinian monastery of Yuso (just below Suso) is a much larger, 16th-century church, which is often called the Escorial of the Rioja.

San Vicente de la Sonsierra

Surrounded by vines, San

Vicente's hilltop profile incorporates a 16th-century church, a former *Camino de Santiago* pilgrims' hospice, the remains of the castle, and ramparts that offer stunning views of the Ebro, the mountains, and the terraced vineyards of the region.

Cameros Mountains Region

In the strikingly beautiful Cameros mountains of southern Rioja are unspoiled villages (Torrecilla en Cameros, Nieva de Cameros, Ortigosa, and more), dramatic gorges and rock formations, beautiful wild flowers, wild life, and even a prehistoric find of dinosaur tracks near Enciso.

EATING AND GASTRONOMIC SHOPPING

MARKETS

Visiting La Rioja's food markets is an excellent way to scout out the best regional produce and learn local names for different foods, which makes ordering seasonal dishes in area restaurants easy. Logroño's Mercado de Abastos is a fine place to start. Other markets, many of which also feature Rioja handicrafts as well as food, take place on different days, depending on the town: Ezcaray: street market on Tuesdays and Saturdays; Haro: a sizeable market is held on Tuesdays and Saturdays; Nájera: each Thursday on the paseo de San Fernando; Santo Domingo de la Calzada: Saturdays. Most markets are open from 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

SHOPS.

In La Rioja's capital, Logroño, and in the region's

picturesque villages, there are plenty of opportunities to shop for local specialties such as tinned *pimentos de piquillo* (piquant red peppers), *espárragos blancos* (fat white asparagus), such sweets as *mazapanes de Soto de Cameros* (almond candy-like sweets), and artisan crafts such as *alpargatas* (rope-soled espadrilles), wine *botas* (wine skins), and hand made wine cradles.

Logroño: Mercado de Abastos, calle Sagasta (and along calle del Peso). Over a hundred specialty stores and food stalls in and around this fine city market and the nearby Plaza de la Catedral. Palacio del Vino, Avenida de Burgos 140, Tel: (34-41) 22 82 00. A major store offering hundreds of Rioja wines. La Catedral del Vino, Portales 25, Tel: (34-41) 25 41 44; Casa Ortiz, Avenida de Madrid 32, Tel: (34-41) 21 00 20; and Jelen Rioja, Murrieta 5-7, Tel: (34-41) 20 26 76, all offer good selections of Rioja wines and food products. La Golosina in la plaza de la Catedral is a classic Riojan sweet shop.

Briñas: El Portal de la Rioja (on the Logroño-Vitoria road at kilometer 39), Tel: (34-41) 30 34 86, (closed Mondays). Hundreds of wines and Riojan products, including wine paraphernalia, and tastings are offered.

Fuenmayor: Vinoteca Cuchi, carretera Vitoria 2. Tel: (34-41) 45 06 68. Superb selection of wines and also Riojan products.

Haro: Juan González Muga, Castilla 3, Tel: (34-41) 31 14 25; Santo Tomás 17, Tel: (34-41) 30 37 78; and Avenida de la Rioja 16, Tel: (34-41) 30 33 60 (three shops under the same owner). Specializing in Rioja wines, especially older vintages and food products;

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La Catedral de los Vinos, Santo Tomás 17, Tel: (34-41) 31 21 43. Rioja wines and specialty foods; Selección Vinos de Rioja, Plaza de la Paz 5, Tel: (34-41) 30 30 17. An excellent store on the main square for Rioja wines and food products, with a tasting room.

FEATURED RESTAURANTS AND TAPAS BAR

Logroño

Iruña: Laurel 8, Tel: (34-41) 22 00 64. Chef and family-run restaurant serving classic Riojan/Navarrese cuisine using high quality local ingredients.

La Unión: San Agustín 15, Tel: (34-41) 22 00 70. A small, friendly, all-family, *casa de comidas*, the Riojan equivalent of an economical, down-home restaurant, serving good home-cooked renditions of Riojan classics.

Mesón Egües: La Campa 3, Tel: (34-41) 22 86 03. Chef-owned *asador*, or roast house serving roast meats and fish and classic Riojan, Basque, and Navarrese dishes. Excellent wine cellar.

CASALARREINA

La Vieja Bodega: Calvo Sotelo 17, Tel: 32 42 54. A well-run *asador* restaurant ensconced in a rustic old bodega featuring classic roast-house dishes, modern creations, and a collection of reasonably-priced wines kept in the bodega's original aging cellars under perfect conditions.

EZCARAY

Echaurren: Héroes del Alcázar 2, Tel: (34-41) 35 40 47. An excellent family-run restaurant with a fine wine cellar, whose chef-owner, Marisa Sánchez, was Spain's chef of the year in 1987.

FUENMAYOR

El Valenciano: Avenida Ciudad de Cenicero 20, Tel: (34-41) 45 02 47. A superb wine list and excellent regional cuisine featuring roasted meats done in a wood-fired brick oven.

Mesón Cuchi: Victor Romanos s/n, Tel: (34-41) 45 04 22. Regional cuisine specializing in roasted and grilled meats and fish, plus a stupendous wine list and an adjacent wine shop.

HARO

Mesón Atamuri: Plaza Juan García Gato, s/n, Tel: (34-41) 30 32 20. Located just a few steps off Haro's Plaza de la Paz, Atamuri is a rustically decorated, upscale restaurant with good regional cuisine and a good wine list, featuring the excellent bodegas of Haro.

Terete: Lucrecia Arana 17, Tel: (34-41) 31 00 23. Almost everyone who visits Haro's bodegas usually ends up at one of the white-scrubbed picnic tables upstairs at Terete, whose roast goat and lamb from its century-old brick oven, classic Riojan dishes such as *menestra* and *menudillos*, and deep list of fine Rioja *reservas* have made the restaurant a regional legend.

SAN VICENTE DE LA SONSIERRA

Mesón Toni: Zumalacárregui 27, Tel: (34-41) 33 40 01. A great, renovated Riojan restaurant with a 30-year plus tradition in the back room behind a popular local bar. Top regional specialties and a fine selection of wines from the area around San Vicente.

SANTO DOMINGO DE LA CALZADA

Parador de Turismo Santo Domingo de la Calzada: Plaza Santo 3, Tel: (34-41) 34 03 00, Fax: (34-41) 34 03 25. The restaurant has good regional cuisine. It is unfortunate that more attention is not paid to the wine list, which is limited.

SAN MILLÁN DE LA COGOLLA

Hostería del Monasterio de San Millán: Monasterio de Yuso, Tel: (34-41) 37 32 77, Fax: (34-41) 37 32 66. The hotel has an excellent restaurant with a good wine list, which includes many

seldom-seen selections from southwestern Rioja.

Posada Mayor de Migueloa: Mayor de Migueloa 20, Tel: (34-41) 12 11 75, Fax: (34-41) 12 10 22. The hotel also has an excellent restaurant with an extensive wine list.

TAPAS BARS

Located in every town in La Rioja, but the areas of primary interest are along calle Laurel—**Bar Sebas** (*pimientos rellenos*-stuffed piquillo peppers), **Blanco y Negro** (*anchovas*-several anchovy dishes), **Bar El Cid** (*setas*-mushrooms), **Bar Lorenzo** (*pinchos morunos*-Moorish-style kebabs)—and near the cathedral in Logroño and around the Plaza de la Paz in Haro.

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS

LOGROÑO

Carlton Rioja: Gran Vía del Rey Don Juan Carlos I, 5, Tel: (34-41) 24 21 00, Fax: (34-41) 24 35 02. A centrally-located, recently renovated hotel, which has been the main hotel in Logroño for the wine trade for decades. With a parking garage.

CAMEROS REGION

Casas rurales: comfortable, renovated, sometimes rustically decorated, government-inspected houses are often the only accommodations in the rural areas of the Cameros. Regional tourist offices have lists of these houses with addresses, telephone numbers, and prices.

HARO

Los Agustinos: San Agustín 2, Tel: (34-41) 31 13 08, Fax: (34-41) 30 31 48. Los Agustinos is a beautiful 600-year old convent, which was converted into a fine hotel.

SAN MILLÁN DE LA COGOLLA

Hostería del Monasterio de San Millán: Monasterio

de Yuso, Tel: (34-41) 37 32 77, Fax: (34-41) 37 32 66. A superb, new, tranquil hotel in a renovated section of the monastery of Yuso, located in a verdant mountain valley.

SANTO DOMINGO DE LA CALZADA

Parador de Turismo Santo Domingo de la Calzada: Plaza Santo 3, Tel: (34-41) 34 03 00, Fax: (34-41) 34 03 25. One of the great paradores on the Camino de Santiago, this hotel is in an old, beautifully renovated pilgrims' hospice located on the same square with the famous cathedral.

LAGUARDIA

Antigua Bodega Don Cosme Palacio: Carretera de Elciego s/n, Tel: (34-41) 12 11 95, Fax: (34-41) 60 02 97. A charming, comfortable hotel with rustic decoration in a unique setting, the renovated 19th-century bodega of Cosme Palacio, located near the medieval village of Laguardia.

Posada Mayor de Migueloa: Mayor de Migueloa 20, Tel: (34-41) 12 11 75, Fax: (34-41) 12 10 22. A charming hotel in a renovated Basque manor house which has been decorated with antiques, is located on a pedestrian-only street in the old walled quarter of Laguardia.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

La Rioja

Miguel Villanueva 10, Logroño
Tel: (34-41) 29 12 60
Fax: (34-41) 25 60 45
Zumalacárregui s/n
Santo Domingo
de la Calzada
Tel: (34-41) 34 22 34

Rioja Alavesa (País Vasco)

Parque de la Florida s/n
Vitoria-Gasteiz
Tel: (34-45) 13 13 21
Carretera de Vitoria s/n
(located in outer walls
of the village)
Laguardia
Tel: (34-41) 10 08 45



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VIURA/MACABEO GRAPE

The Viura has a special significance among the white grape varieties grown in Spain. Known as the Macabeo in some regions, it combines quality with a high yield and adaptability to varied growing conditions. As well as being used to make still wines, it is one of the three varieties that go into cava sparkling wine. It is little wonder that this versatile grape has been growing in popularity in recent years.

Text: **José Serrano Cuadrillo**

Still Lifes: **Menchu Artime** Photos: **A. de Benito/ICEX** Translation: **Mark Little**

After the Airén—the basic grape variety of La Mancha Denomination of Origin (*Denominación de Origen*, D.O.)—the Viura is the second most widespread white grape in terms of acreage, with 42,426 hectares (104,834 acres) under cultivation in 1996. Unlike the Airén, it is widely distributed. In fact, it is found in every Autonomous Region in Spain that grows wine except the Canary Islands, although its presence in Andalusia and Galicia is small. In the past few years its cultivation has been

spreading rapidly, which says a lot for this grape's qualities. According to figures from the *Catastro Vinícola* (Wine Registry), at the beginning of the 1980s there were 35,886 hectares (88,674 acres) of Viura vineyards, out of Spain's total wine-growing area of 1,490,000 hectares (3,681,790 acres). Today, the wine acreage of Spain is 1,600,000 hectares (2,866,360 acres), and the Viura's share has increased from 2.4% of the total in the 1980s to 3.65% today. Its popularity is due to its relatively high yield, combined with its inherent oenological qualities, and its capacity to adapt.

N^o 11



The grape bunches are long and pyramid-shaped, of medium size, compact, and attached by a very short stem. The grapes are spherical, medium sized with a very thin skin.

N^o 12



The young leaves are fuzzy and dented. Mature leaves are medium-sized to large, dented and shiny, of a deep green color, with five very pronounced lobes.

Although it takes well to a variety of terrains, the Viura prefers sloping land, with warm, limey soil, fairly fertile, and with good drainage.

THE GRAPE FROM ARAGON

Most experts agree that the Viura is an indigenous Spanish grape, and that it probably originated in Aragon, although some suggest it might have originally come from Asia Minor. In any case, it appears to have been cultivated in the Aragonese portion of the Ebro valley from remote times. Its introduction to the Roussillon region in southern France was also early, having been recorded there in 1816 (Julien, *Topographie de tous les vignobles connus*, 1816). By the 19th century it was also present in Catalonia, Navarre, and Rioja, whose terroirs are perfectly suited to the variety, and it soon became a key ingredient in the wine blends of those regions.

More recently it has been introduced to other regions of Spain, especially from 1970 onwards. It has been planted in Castile-Leon, Valencia (although its introduction there might have been earlier), Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura, and Murcia, and the spread of the Viura continues even today. On the other hand, the variety's presence outside Spain is small, although it is grown in California.

Because of this wide geographic distribution, the Viura grape goes by a number of local names, such as Macabeo or Alcañón in Spain, Macabeu or Macabeou in southern France, and Charas Blanc in California.

VIURA: THE VINE, THE GRAPE

The Viura vine is of medium height, vigorous and upright,

with robust shoots, although it dislikes strong winds. It responds to light and hard pruning, gentler pruning being preferable in damp climates. The canes are strong, of a yellow-brown color, with dark grooves and darker, brown-colored buds.

The growth buds are cottony and dented. The young shoots are striated, of a light green turning to brown at the base. The tendrils are short and unevenly distributed.

The young leaves are fuzzy and dented. Mature leaves are medium-sized to large, dented and shiny, of a deep green color, with five very pronounced lobes. The junction with the stalk and the leaf is V shaped, and the edges of the two bottom lobes tend to overlap. The teeth of the dentate leaf edges are shallow and large. The upper surface of the leaf is smooth and covered with white fuzz on the reverse side. The petiole, or leaf stalk, is long and sturdy. The leaves turn to a yellow hue in autumn.

The grape bunches are long and pyramid shaped, of medium size—some 25 centimeters (10 inches) in length—compact, and attached by a very short stem. The grapes are spherical, medium sized—12.15 mm (1/2 to 3/5 inch) in diameter—with a very thin skin of a green-yellow or golden-yellow color and a waxy texture. The flesh of the fruit is colorless, with two or three light red-colored pips. This is a late budding vine, so it is less susceptible to damage from spring frosts. By the same token, it is late to ripen, and thus is vulnerable to gray rot.

Although it takes well to a variety of terrains, the Viura

prefers sloping land, with warm, limey soil, fairly fertile, and with good drainage. The higher the altitude at which it is grown, the finer the grape.

A generous producer, it can be trained both *goblet*-style or on espaliers. Goblet training achieves a higher sugar content and lower acidity than if the vine is grown along espaliers.

If the fruit is allowed to ripen fully, the musts have a very high sugar content (14° Beaumé). This quality allows some vintners to use it for making naturally sweet wines, particularly in the areas of Rivesaltes and Côtes du Haut-Roussillon (southern France), and in the Utiel-Requena area in eastern Spain.

It is more usually used for white table wines, in which case it must be harvested before its peak of ripeness, to ensure wines of a moderate alcohol content and a better balance of acidity and primary aromas. The Viura is fundamental in the making of the base wine for *cava* (see Glossary on page 154) of which it makes up a large percentage, as we will see further on.

Although it is not generally considered a highly aromatic grape, the free terpene compounds linalool, geraniol, and alpha-terpinol have been detected in Viura, although in small proportions. It is, therefore, a variety whose aromas are not derived from the terpene group.

Now that you are acquainted with the grape, it is time to review its presence in the various Spanish regions and Denominations of Origin areas. In the survey below, we refer to the grape variously as Viura or Macabeo, following local usage.

ARAGON

Aragon is the birthplace of this grape, according to most experts, and the variety still has an important place in the region's winemaking, both in terms of acreage (9,500 hectares/23,474 acres) and for the wines it produces.

It is officially recommended in this region, and is authorized by the Regulatory Councils of the Cariñena, Campo de Borja, and Calatayud Denominación de Origen areas as the principal variety for the D.O.-label white wines. It is also authorized in the Somontano D.O. district.

In Aragon the Macabeo, as it is known here, is productive, being perfectly adapted to the very dry climate.

D.O. Cariñena

Macabeo is grown on 6,000 hectares (14,862 acres), which amounts to 31% of the D.O.'s winegrowing area. Harvested at the right time, it produces flavorful, fresh white wines, with a good balance of acidity and fruit aromas.

D.O. Campo de Borja

It is grown on more than 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres), or around 13.5% of the approximately 8,000 hectares (19,768 acres) cultivated in this D.O. district. This area is well suited to the Macabeo grape, and it produces straw-yellow colored wines which are fruity and crisp, well balanced and with a good presence in the mouth.

D.O. Calatayud

Some 2,000 hectares (4,942 acres), or nearly a quarter of the vineyards in this district, are devoted to the Macabeo.

The location of the vineyards, in dry areas at high altitudes, is especially favorable for bringing out the better qualities of the Macabeo, giving wines that are pale in color, with full fruit aromas, soft and smooth to the taste, with good acidity and balance.

D.O. Somontano

This area has some 200 hectares (494 acres) of Macabeo, 11% of the total acreage. There is also an indigenous grape here called the Alcañón, but it is an unrelated variety and gives wines that are completely different in character. The Alcañón de Somontano has looser grape bunches and larger fruit, of a deeper yellow color, bordering on pink.

CATALONIA

In terms of acreage, Catalonia is the major producer of this grape, known here as Macabeu or Macabeo. European regulations (CEE 3800/81) classify the Macabeo as a recommended grape for Catalonia. For their part, the regulations of the Ampurdán, Costers del Segre, Penedés, Priorato, Tarragona, and Terra Alta D.O. areas authorize its use in wines under the D.O. label, and the Conca de Barberá D.O. considers it the principal variety. Special mention must be made of the importance of this grape in the making of cava. Together with the Xarel-lo and Parellada, it is part of a trio that determines the character of this unique wine, of which Catalonia is by a far stretch the principal producer. The ductility and fruitiness of

the Macabeo are indispensable for the obtaining of excellent sparkling wines using the "traditional method."

D.O. Penedés

The Macabeo is grown on 7,500 hectares (18,532 acres), amounting to 30% of the total acreage in this Denominación de Origen.

Although it is cultivated throughout the D.O. area, it is especially well established in the coastal plains of Bajo Penedés. It also has a strong presence in the valley of the Alto Penedés.

In Catalonia, the best quality Macabeo is obtained in soils of medium fertility and a cool climate. In very fertile soil, because of its vigorous nature, it gives high yields but, due to the thin skin of the grapes, is vulnerable to fungus attacks, in particular *Botrytis cinerea*, or gray rot, which can effect the crops in years of rainy harvest seasons.

In favorable conditions, it produces refined, soft wines with a fruity aroma reminiscent of fresh apples, with good acidity, smooth to the taste.

However, very few Macabeo varieties are produced in Penedés, it being more usual to find it in blends with Xarel-lo and Parellada, in a proportion ranging from 20 to 50%. Furthermore, Macabeo varieties are only produced in particularly good years. On the other hand, the list of Penedés blended wines in which the Macabeo is present is endless.

D.O. Tarragona

Of the three different districts that constitute this D.O. area, the Macabeo is grown on 4,109 hectares (10,153 acres) in two (El Campo and La Ribera), and is not pre-

Tiura is more usually used for white wines, in which case it must be harvested before its peak of ripeness to ensure wines of a moderate alcohol content and a better balance of acidity and primary aromas.

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sent at all in the third, Falset. It is fairly abundant in El Campo, where, often in combination with Xarel-lo and Parellada, it gives smooth wines that are less acid than those of Penedés. In La Ribera its presence is slightly smaller, sharing space with the Garnacha Blanca.

It is normally used for blends, much of which in turn are destined for use as the base wine for sparkling wines, and there are a few examples of Macabeo varieties.

D.O. Conca de Barberá

Together with the Parellada, the Macabeo, grown on 2,516 hectares (6,217 acres) is the principal white grape of the region. Both combine perfectly to make white wines that are stronger and with a higher alcohol level than those obtained exclusively from Parellada, dense wines with a sweet aroma.

D.O. Terra Alta

In spite of its relatively recent arrival in the area, the Macabeo is very successful in this D.O. The dry climate, the scarce rainfall and the abundant sunshine suit the Macabeo perfectly, eliminating the risk of rot and mildew. The distinctness of aromas and good alcoholic level which the Macabeo achieves in the area makes for smooth, high quality wines.

D.O. Costers del Segre

With some 1,600 hectares (3,953 acres), 40% of the D.O.'s acreage, the Macabeo is the most widespread variety of the district.

In the eastern Garrigas it produces wines similar to those of the Conca del Barberá, albeit with more body

and strength. Blended with Garnacha Blanca gives strong, flavorful wines with a certain hint of almonds. In the district of Artesa it is used for making aged wines. It is also grown in the Raimat district, but mainly for use in base wines for cava, also produced elsewhere in the region.

LA RIOJA-BASQUE COUNTRY

The Viura grape occupies a little over 5,700 hectares (14,084 acres) in the Autonomous Region of Rioja and a further 500 hectares (1,253 acres) in that part of the Basque province of Álava which falls within the Rioja D.O. Ca area, where it is considered the principal variety. The area where its presence is greatest is the district of Rioja Alta, where it accounts for 15% of the acreage. In the Rioja Alavesa area it occupies 10% of the total and in the Rioja Baja a mere 3%. This is a basic variety for the production of Rioja whites, giving very pale-colored, fruity wines with considerable acidity. Depending on the treatment it is afforded, the Viura can be used for making young whites or, alternatively, it has excellent qualities for aging in the cask, thanks to its resistance to oxidation.

The area that gives the highest quality Viura is considered to be that falling within the triangle bordered by Villalba, Trigo, and Cenicero.

In the Haro area it produces light wines that are smooth, fresh, and pleasantly fruity. In the Álava subzone, as in Cenicero, Fuenmayor, and San Asensio, its wines, fermented at low temperatures, have more

body and an intense fruit aroma. For the production of these unaged whites the harvest is brought forward so that the grape has a good proportion of malic acid (about 0.5 grams per liter), which lends it freshness and enhances the fruit aromas of the variety.

Special mention should be made of the aged whites which are traditional in these areas of Rioja. Starting with very healthy grapes, harvested at just the right moment to ensure the proper balance of sugars and acidity, it is subjected to a time-tested process, with fermentation at moderate temperatures (25-26°C/77-79°F). Aged in casks of oak for a variable period, but never less than six months, followed by a further rounding off in the bottle, vintners obtain truly marvelous, elegant wines of a clean, golden-yellow hue, complex and somewhat mysterious to the nose, with sensations of dense fruit, a bare hint of fine wood, and a deep bouquet from bottle aging, which in the mouth translate as great liveliness, unctuousness, and complexity.

Recently, winemakers have started producing, with a considerable degree of success, white wines cask fermented in butts of new oak, using Viura grapes almost exclusively. These are very modern-style wines which combine the rich balsamic and lactone nuances imparted by the wood with the fruitiness and softness inherent in the variety.

NAVARRRE

The Viura is recommended in Navarre and is considered the principal white variety in

both the Navarra D.O. and that part of Navarre which falls within the Rioja D.O.Ca. It is consequently the most widespread white variety in the region, where it has been grown for quite a long time, having been introduced from Aragon probably around 1850. Even so, the area devoted to the Viura was relatively small until 1970, when acreage increased considerably.

Cultivation has been centered around Lerín, in the subzone of Valdizarbe. Even today it is considered that this area and Tierra Estella are the best suited for the variety.

The latest available figures (from 1988) show that there were 1,400 hectares (3,460 acres) of Viura vineyards in Navarre, amounting to 6% of the total acreage, as opposed to 5.43% in 1984.

The principal use of the grape is the obtaining of white wine, almost all Viura varieties. They are wines of a pale straw-yellow, a moderate alcohol content, smooth, not very expansive, balanced, fresh, and moderately and subtly perfumed.

VALENCIA REGION

The Viura is grown on 1,412 hectares (3,489 acres) of this eastern Spanish region, of which 1,243 hectares (3,071 acres) fall within the province of Valencia itself. It is especially well established in the Utiel-Requena D.O., where there are 1,100 hectares (2,718 acres).

D.O. Utiel Requena

The interest in this variety is relatively recent, and is linked to the increased pro-

duction of cava in the area. It has turned out to be well adapted to the terroir of the region, and is destined for making the full gamut of wines, from young whites to sparkling wines, the petillant *vino de aguja*, aged whites, and fortified wines. Unaged Macabeo wine from this area, made with grapes harvested early, have a straw-yellow color with greenish tones, a fruity aroma, and are crisp and not very alcoholic to the taste, with little persistence. If the grapes are allowed to ripen a bit more and the fermentation takes place at higher temperatures it gives wines that are more straightforward, denser, and not as aromatic, but appropriate for cask aging. Very ripe grapes are perfect for making interesting fortified wines and naturally sweet wines.

CASTILE-LEON

In the Castile-Leon region, the Viura's presence is significant only in the Rueda D.O., where it was introduced not long ago as a complement to the region's primary grape, the Verdejo. Needless to say, the D.O. regulations and the area's attachment to its local grape mean that there are no Viura varieties, but the grape's role in the area is important none the less.

The Viura is well adapted to local growing conditions, and it responds with good yields. Thanks to the dry climate it is not subject to rot save in exceptionally rainy years. It produces smooth wines, with less body than the Verdejo, a shorter presence in the mouth, and a subtly fruity aroma. Being a

variety low in oxidizing enzymes, its presence in wine labeled as "Rueda Superior" (never more than 15%, as at least 85% must be Verdejo) lends the wine better conditions for evolving in the bottle and endows the noble attributes of the Verdejo grape with more staying power.

In wines classified as "Rueda," up to 50% of non-Verdejo varieties is allowed, which may be Viura or a combination of Viura and Palomino.

CASTILE-LA MANCHA

In spite of its recent introduction (in the 1970s), the Macabeo, as it is called here, is a recommended variety, authorized by the La Mancha and Valdepeñas D.O. Councils.

Its presence is small, as the 2,040 hectares (5,040 acres) it occupies hardly amount to 0.5% of the region's acreage. However, it is the object of considerable interest in the area for its qualities.

As a vigorous grower, with high yields and grapes giving refined wines of a pale, straw-yellow color that are stable, light, crisp and fruity, the Macabeo is seen as a refreshing alternative to the predominant grape of the region, the ubiquitous Airén.

The short harvest period and the care required in handling due to its thin skin are the main drawbacks to its wider distribution in the region.

In this region, the Macabeo is always used for varieties, a fact which usually figures prominently on the label, a further indication of the respect this variety commands among winemakers of the area.

These varieties are pro-

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Because of its wide geographic distribution, Viura grape has a number of local names, such as Macabeo or Alcañón in Spain, and Charas Blanc in California.

duced in both D.O. areas, La Mancha and Valdepeñas. In this last, it was introduced as recently as 1990, so the acreage of Viura is small (a mere 100 hectares/246 acres), and the very first varietals were made from the harvest of 1996.

EXTREMADURA

This is a recommended variety in this Autonomous Region. Although only recently introduced, it has quickly risen to prominence in the region, with 1,310 hectares (3,237 acres) of vineyard, almost all in the southern province of Badajoz (1,294 hectares/3,197 acres), where it has become

one of the mainstays of the Ribera del Guadiana, a new Denominación de Origen area currently being regulated. In spite of its recent introduction, you can already find Viura varietals from this district.

MURCIA

This region is mainly devoted to red wine, principally from that tough and noble grape, the Monastrell. The Viura has been introduced only recently, in an attempt by wine makers to diversify into white wines. Currently there are 90 hectares (222 acres), mostly in Jumilla, where the variety is authorized for white

wines. There are some 15 hectares (37 acres) in the Bullas D.O., where it is the principal white variety. European regulations classify it as a recommended variety in the Murcia region. In terrains that are cool and have deep soil with good water retention, the Viura responds well both in terms of yield and quality.

José Serrano Cuadrillo is a technical agricultural engineer, specializing in wine quality. He works for the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, and teaches, writes, and lectures about wine.



Viura/Macabeo Varietals

D.O. Cariñena

- *Monasterio de las Viñas* and *Valdemadera* (both 100% Macabeo) from Coop. San José de Aguarón (Zaragoza)
- *Venavín* (100% Macabeo), Bodegas Hnos, Valero Torres, Alfamén (Zaragoza)
- *Monte Ducay* (100% Macabeo), Bodegas San Valero, Cariñena (Zaragoza)
- *Castillo de Montearagón* (100% Macabeo), Cariñena Vitícola, Cariñena (Zaragoza)
- *Micen Longinos* (100% Macabeo), Bodegas Perdiguier, S.L., Cariñena (Zaragoza)
- *Tres Hojas* (Macabeo), Herederos de Genaro Tejero, Cariñena (Zaragoza)
- *Torre Longares* (100% Macabeo) and *Viña Oria* (100% Macabeo), COVINCA, Longares (Zaragoza)
- *Castillo de Paniza* and *Val de Paniza* (both Macabeo 100%), Coop. Ntra. Sra. del Aguila, Paniza (Zaragoza)

D.O. Campo de Borja

- *Macabeo Bordejé*, S.A.T. Ainzón (Zaragoza), (this winery also produces the *Cava Bordejé*, 100% Macabeo)
- *Viña Tito Macabeo*, Bodegas Aragonesas, S.A., Fuen-dejalón (Zaragoza)
- *Coto de Hayas* (100% Macabeo), (fermented in cask, from the same winery as above)
- *Molilla* (Macabeo 100%), Ruberte Hnos, Magallón (Zaragoza)
- *Campo Castillo* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. Sta. Ana, Pozuelo de Aragón (Zaragoza)

D.O. Calatayud

- *Portalet* (Macabeo 100%), Bodegas Langa Hnos, Calatayud (Zaragoza)
- *Estecillo* (Macabeo 100%), S.A.T. Niño Jesús, Aniñón (Zaragoza)
- *Castillo de Alcocer* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. Virgen de la Peana, Ateca (Zaragoza)
- *Marqués de Sandañón* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. San Gregorio, Cervera de la Cañada (Zaragoza)
- *Viña Alarba* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. del Campo, Maluenda (Zaragoza)
- *Viña Sandonia* (Macabeo 100%), Coop., San Fabián, Mara (Zaragoza)
- *Marqués de Nombrevilla* (Macabeo 100%), *Miedes* (Macabeo 100%), and *Don Baltasar* (Macabeo 85%), Coop. San Alejandro, Miedes (Zaragoza)
- *La Olmedilla* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. Virgen del Mar y de la Cuesta, Munébrega (Zaragoza)
- *Montemaguillo* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. Virgen de la Sierra, Villarroya de la Sierra (Zaragoza)

D.O. Somontano

- *Alquézar* (Macabeo 100%), *Montesierra* (Macabeo 100%), Monasterio de Pueyo and Camporrocal from Bodegas Pirineos, Barbastro (Huesca)
- *Viña San Marcos* (Macabeo 70%), Bodegas Lallanne, Barbastro (Huesca)
- *Villa de l'Ainsa*. Bodegas Borruel, Ponzano (Huesca)

D.O. Penedés

- *Albert i Noya Macabeo* (Macabeo 100%, cask aged), San Pau D'Ordal (Barcelona)
- *Duc de Foix Macabeo* (Macabeo 100%), Cooperativa Vinícola del Penedés (COVIDES), San Sadurn de Noya (Barcelona)
- *Viña Toña Macabeo* (Macabeo 100%), Celler Ramón Balada, San Martín Sarroca (Barcelona)
- *Julia y Navines Macabeo* (Macabeo 100%, young white), Bodegas Julia & Navines, Guardiola de Fonttrubi (Barcelona)
- *Xamfra* (Macabeo 100%), Bodegas Xamfra, San Sadurni de Noya

D.O. Tarragona

- *Flor de Maig* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. de Capçanes, (young white)
- *Mas dels Mets* (Macabeo 100%), Coop. de Els Guimets, (young white), (the winery also makes a wine liquor under the same label)

D.O. Conca de Barberá

- *Prat de Medea* (90% Macabeo, young white); *Flor de Raim* (80% Macabeo, young white); *Prat de Medea Agulla Semiseco*, *Semi-dry* (80% Macabeo); *Vinya d'en Grec*, *Semi-sweet* (75% Macabeo), from Cooperativa Vinícola de Sarral

D.O. Terra Alta

- *Antic Castell* (80% Macabeo, young white), Coop. Gadesa (Tarragona)

- *Vallmajor* (100% Macabeo, young white), Coop. Agrícola de Batea (Tarragona)
- *Suprem* (100% Macabeo, young white), Coop. Agrícola de Germandat
- *Altamar, Semi-sweet* (80% Macabeo), Vinícola de la Ribera, Mora la Nova (Tarragona)

D.O. Costers del Segre

- *Del Iris* (Macabeo 100%, aged white) and *Vinya del Montec* (young white), Cooperativa de Artesa (Lleida)
- *L'Olivera Macabeo* (Macabeo 100%, fermented in cask) and *Missenyora* (Macabeo 100%, aged white), Bodegas L'Olivera, Vallbona de los Mongues (Lleida)

D.O.Ca. La Rioja

- *Viña Azabache*, Semi-sweet (100% Viura), Coop. Aldeanueva de Ebro (La Rioja)
- *Parral, Semi-sweet* (90% Viura), Bodegas AGE, Fuenmayor (La Rioja)
- *Berberana* (100% Viura, aged white) and *Atalos* (90% Viura, young white), Bodegas Berberana, Cenicero (La Rioja)
- *Berceo* (100% Viura, young white), (100% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas Berceo, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Beronia* (100% Viura, young white), Bodegas Beronia, Ollauri (La Rioja)
- *Loriñón* (100% Viura, young white), (95% Viura, aged white), (100% Viura, and fermented in cask), Bodegas Bretón y Cía, Logroño (La Rioja)
- *Campo Burgo* (100% Viura, young white) and (100% Viura, aged white), Bodegas Campo Burgo, Alfaro (La Rioja)
- *Campillo* (90% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas Campillo, Laguardia (Álava)
- *Viña Alcorta* (100% Viura,

fermented in cask) and (100% Viura, aged white), Bodegas Campo Viejo, Logroño (La Rioja)

- *Viña Marysol* (Viura 100%, young white), Bodegas Carlos Serres, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Valserrano*, (100% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas S.M.S. Villanueva (Álava)
- *Faustino V* (100% Viura, young white) and (100% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas Faustino Martínez, Oyón (Álava)
- *Banda Dorada* (100% Viura, young white), *Banda Oro* (90% Viura, aged white); *Federico Paternina*, (90% Viura, *Reserva* aged white) and *Monte-Haro, Semi-sweet* (100% Viura), Bodegas Federico Paternina, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Viña Soledad* (100% Viura, young white); *Diamante, Semi-sweet* (90% Viura), Bodegas Franco-Españolas, Logroño (La Rioja)
- *Lan* (100% Viura, young white) and *Lander*, (100% Viura, *Reserva* aged white), Bodegas Lan, Fuenmayor (La Rioja)
- *El Dorado de Murrieta* (90% Viura, *Reserva* aged white), Bodegas Marqués de Murrieta, Logroño (La Rioja)
- *Conde de Valdemar* (100% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas Martínez Bujanda, Oyón (Álava)
- *Viña Cumbretero* (100% Viura, young white), Bodega Montecillo, Fuenmayor (La Rioja)
- *Muga* (90% Viura, fermented in cask), Bodegas Muga, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Ondarre* (100% Viura, young white), Bodegas Ondarre, Viana (Navarre)
- *Cosme Palacio*, young white (100% Viura) and *Glorioso* (100% Viura), Bodegas Palacio, Laguardia (Álava)

- *Monte Blanco* (100% Viura), Bodegas Ramón Bilbao, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Gran Condal, Rioja Santiago*, and *Vizconde de Ayala* (all three 100% Viura), Bodegas Santiago, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Canchales* (100% Viura, young white); *Monte Real*, (90% Viura, *Crianza* aged white); *Viña Albina*, (90% Viura, *Reserva* aged white), Bodegas Riojanas, Cenicero (La Rioja)
- *CUNE* (100% Viura, young white), Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Artadi* (100% Viura, young white), Cosecheros Alaveses, Laguardia (Álava)
- *Viña Ardanza* (95% Viura, *Reserva* aged white), La Rioja Alta, Haro (La Rioja)
- *Marqués de Cáceres* (100% Viura); (*Crianza* aged white, 100% Viura); and *Antea* (90% Viura, *Crianza* aged white), Unión Viti-Vinícola, Cenicero (La Rioja)

D.O. Navarra

- *Dominio Lasierpe* (100% Viura), Bodega Cibornera, S.Coop., Cintruénigo (Navarre)
- *Conde de Artoiz* (100% Viura), Bodega Coop. Ntra. Sra. del Camino, Monteagudo (Navarre)
- *Señorío de Sarria* (100% Viura), Bodega de Sarria, Puente La Reina (Navarre)
- *Armendariz* (100% Viura), Bodegas Armendariz, Falces (Navarre)
- *Beamonte* (100% Viura), Bodegas Beamonte, Cascante (Navarre)
- *Malón de Echaide* (100% Viura), Bodegas Ntra. Sra. del Romero, S.Coop, Cascante (Navarre)
- *Ochoa* (100% Viura), Bodegas Ochoa, Olite (Navarre)

- *Agnes de Cleves* (100% Viura), Bodega Piedemonte, S.Coop, Olite (Navarre)
- *Agramont* (100% Viura), Bodegas Príncipe de Viana, Murchante (Navarre)
- *Campo Lazaga* (100% Viura), Bodegas Virgen Blanca, S.Coop., Lerín (Navarre)
- *Viña del Recuerdo* (100% Viura), Vinícola de Navarra, Las Campanas (Navarre)
With small proportions of Chardonnay:
- *Señorio de Urdaix* (100% Viura), Vinos Catalán Bozal, Corella (Navarre)
- *Nekeas* (75% Viura, 25% Chardonnay), Bodegas Nekeas, Añorbe (Navarre)
- *Malumbres* (80% Viura, 20% Chardonnay), Bodegas Vicente Malumbres, Corella (Navarre)

D.O. Utiel-Requena

- *Gracil* (100% Macabeo), Reservas y Crianzas Reque-nenses, S.L. Requena (Valencia)
- *Viña Iñigo* (100% Macabeo), Cavas y Vinos Torre Oriá, Re-quina (Valencia)
There are also wines with variable proportions of the Viura/Macabeo variety blended with other grapes of the area, including:

- * Macabeo and Planta Nova:
- Enterizo, Coviñas, Reque-na (Valencia)
- Casa de la Cabeza, S.A.T. Casa de la Cabeza, Requena (Valencia)

- * Macabeo and Chardonnay:
- Blanco Flor, Compañía Vinícola del Campo de Re-quina, Utiel (Valencia)

- * Macabeo and Merseguera:
- Rey Don Jaime (50% Macabeo, 50% Merseguera), C. Augusto Egli, Utiel (Valencia)

- * Macabeo, Merseguera y Malvasía:

- Gaviola (*aguja*, petillant white), and Gabinet (*aguja*, petillant white), La Calda de Siete Aguas, S.A., Siete Aguas (Valencia)

D.O. Rueda

- *Veliterra* (50% Viura), Agrícola Castellana, S.Coop., La Seca (Valladolid)
- *Lorenzo Cachazo* (50% Viura), Bodegas Angel Lorenzo Cachazo, Pozaldez (Valladolid)
- *Viña Mocén* (40% Viura), Bodegas Antaño, Rueda (Valladolid)
- *Cerrosol* (50% Viura), Bode-gas Cerrosol, Santiuste de San Juan Bautista (Segovia)
- *Tierra Buena* (50% Viura), S.A.T. Los Curros, Rueda (Valladolid)
- *Vega de la Reina* (50% Viura), Bodegas Vega de la Reina, Rueda (Valladolid)
- *Larrua* (50% Viura), Félix Lorenzo Cachazo, Pozaldez (Valladolid)
- *Mancera* (50% Viura), Hi-jos de Alberto Gutiérrez, Serrada (Valladolid)
- *Viña Tejera* (50% Viura), Bodegas Marqués de Irún, La Seca (Valladolid)

D.O. La Mancha

- *Don Fadrique* (100% Macabeo), young white, Bodegas J. Santos, Villa de Don Fabrique (Toledo)
- *Castillo de Manzanares* (100% Macabeo), Vinícola de Castilla, Manzanares (Ciudad Real)
- *Añil* (Macabeo 100%), Viníco-la de Tomelloso (Ciudad Real)

D.O. Valdepeñas

- *Vegaval Macabeo* (100% Macabeo), Bodegas Miguel

Calatayud, Valdepeñas (Ciu-dad Real)

D.O. Ribera del Guadiana (in process of regulation)

- *Macabeo Superior*, Soc. Coop. San Marcos, Almen-dralejo (Badajoz)
- *Blasón de Turra*, Soc. Coop. Sta. Marta Virgen, Santa Marta de los Barros (Badajoz)
- *Macabel*, Soc. Coop. San Isidro, Villafranca de los Barros (Badajoz)

D.O. Jumilla

Some wines made here con-tain Viura:

- *Vega Verde*, Bodegas Fer-nández, Jumilla (Murcia)
- *Castillo de Jumilla*, Bode-gas Bleda, Jumilla (Murcia)
- *Casa Castillo*, Bodegas Ju-lia Roch e hijos, Jumilla (Murcia)

D.O. Bullas

- *Las Reñas*, Coop. Agro-Vinícola Ntra. Sra. del Rosario, Bullas (Murcia)

Source: José Serrano Cuadrillo

*This is an almost exhaustive list of Viura/Macabeo vari-etals compiled in the spring of 1997.



BORGES

All in the Family



I imagine a family business in a rural part of Spain which for generations has been dealing exclusively in the fruits of the land—nuts and olive oil, natural foods which have been cultivated here for centuries. Now imagine a group of companies with an aggressive marketing and sales policy, state-of-the-art technology, with clients in some seventy countries, and affiliates operating in markets as diverse as California and Australia. In both cases, you're thinking of Borges, a food processing group based in Catalonia, northeastern Spain.

Text: **Mark Little**

Photos: **Borges/ICEX**

TODAY GRUPO BORGES, GROUPING 18 DIFFERENT COMPANIES, IS STILL VERY MUCH A FAMILY BUSINESS. IT IS RUN BY ANTÓN PONT'S GRANDCHILDREN, AND A NUMBER OF THEIR OWN CHILDREN ARE ALREADY WORKING IN KEY POSTS, THE FOURTH GENERATION OF PONT'S.

So how does a rustic mom-and-pop operation evolve into Spain's second biggest exporter of olive oil, out-selling competitors much larger in size, in addition to being Spain's leading packager of dried fruits and nuts, and a major player on the international food market?

All it takes is hard work, vision, a bit of luck... and about a hundred years.

It is exactly 101 years since Antón Pont (then aged 24) and his wife Dolores Creus, starting from scratch, began to deal in the produce of their arid native land. The town of Tarrega is in Lérida, the only one of Catalonia's four provinces which is entirely landlocked. It is about as far removed from the industrial powerhouses of Barcelona and the Catalan coast as you can get. Summers are torrid, winters are bitter cold, and the main crops are those that thrive in adverse conditions: wine grapes, almonds, and olives.

Antón Pont would purchase olives and almonds from local farmers. The olives were destined for oil, the almonds would be taken over the hills to Reus on the coast, where Pont would sell them to dealers for export throughout Europe. Today Grupo Borges, grouping 18 different companies, is still very much a family business. It is run by Antón Pont's grandchildren, and a number of their own children are already working in key posts, the fourth generation of Ponts.

It is a company to be reckoned with, producing 80,000 metric tons of edible oil a year, and processing 29,600 tons of nuts and dried fruits. And Borges continues to grow: sales of 50 billion pesetas last year are more than double the figures from six years before. With exports to some 70 countries around the world, they have embarked on the U.S. market in a big way with the acquisition in 1995 of Star Fine Foods, one of the leading distributors of olive oil and specialty foods in California. They also have their own distribution company in Australia, joint ventures in Tunisia and Russia, and they own farms in Spain and California.

"The secret is specialization and loyalty to our origins," says José Pont, one of Antón Pont's four grandsons working in the company. "We believe in that old saying, *zapatero a tus zapatos*—let the cobbler stick to his last. Our grandparents were basically olive and nut dealers, and that's exactly what we are today. All of the group's activities, from the importation of dried fruits to our farming activities, are natural spinoffs of that original concept."

Being a family business with no impatient shareholders to answer to has its advantages. For instance, Borges can reinvest its profits into the company. In the first half of the decade investment has been close to 5 billion pesetas, and future plans envision

investing a further 3.3 billion over the next two years.

Liquid Assets

Say "Borges" to any Spaniard, and he will reply, "Oh, nuts!" When the firm decided to market its almonds and hazelnuts under their own brand three decades ago, adding to their range imported dried fruits and nuts which didn't grow in Spain, they were virtually unchallenged in their quick rise to the top position as leading packagers of dried fruits and nuts in Spain. Yet the heart of the Borges operation is not a nut, but an olive: a type of olive called Arbequina, which originated in Lérida and is the principal variety grown there. It is small, and although the yield is low when compared to other Spanish olive varieties, the quality of the oil is exceptional.

From its plant in Tarrega, Borges now sells some 30,000 tons of olive oil annually, in addition to sunflower oil for the domestic Catalan market, and an amount of specialty products such as grapeseed oil. Yet only a small quantity of their olive oil ends up on Spanish supermarket shelves, for this side of the business is almost entirely geared to export.

It makes sense. Spain, with an average of 600,000 metric tons annually, is the world's biggest producer of olive oil, but only a fraction of that comes from the patch of Catalonia where

the Arbequina grows. Most Spanish olive oil originates in Andalusia, principally Jaén, home of the Picual olive.

Andalusian oil tends to be stronger flavored, whereas Catalan oil is fruitier, smoother and more subtle, less acid, and lacking that slight bitterness which distinguishes many Spanish oils. After centuries of eating and cooking with olive oil, Spaniards prefer the stronger flavored variety, but the Catalan oil is perfect for new consumers in countries which are only now starting to discover Spanish olive oil. Exports of Borges olive oil have practically doubled in five years. The olive oil business in general got a big boost from the medical profession, when it was discovered that this is the most healthful of edible oils. All of a sudden, cholesterol-conscious consumers around the world were dumping their artery-clogging butter and rushing to the supermarket to stock up on olive oil. Borges, which had a wide experience in international trade thanks to its dried fruit and nuts activity, was in the right place at the right time to capitalize on the growing demand for olive oil.

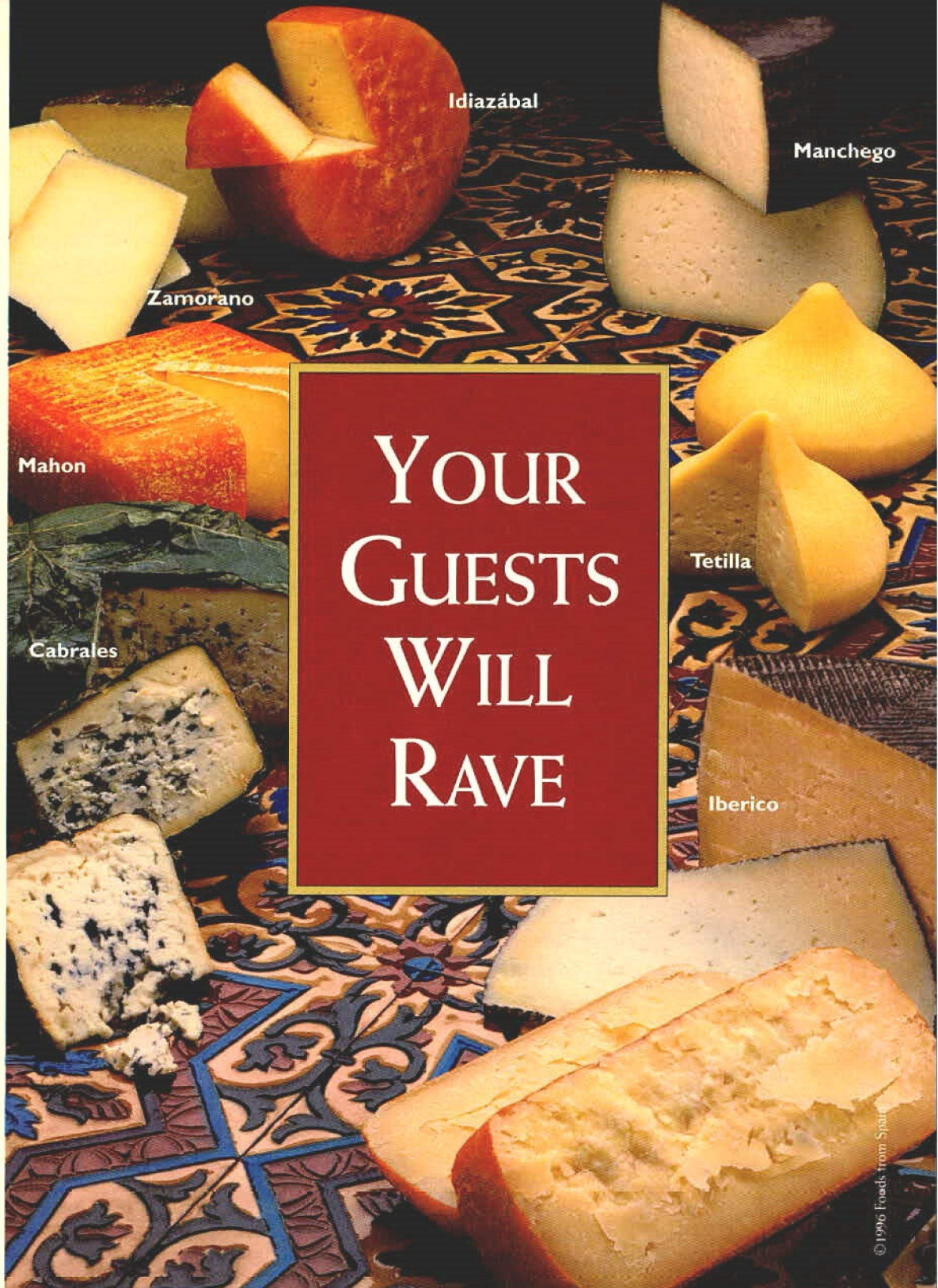
As José Pont points out: "Formerly, olive oil sold only in those Mediterranean countries which traditionally produced it, and in countries with a large Mediterranean immigrant population, principally Italians.

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WITH EXPORTS TO SOME 70 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, BORGES HAS EMBARKED ON THE U.S. MARKET IN A BIG WAY WITH THE ACQUISITION IN 1995 OF STAR FINE FOODS, ONE OF THE LEADING DISTRIBUTORS OF OLIVE OIL IN CALIFORNIA.

Then, in the 1980s, researchers discovered the beneficial qualities of the Mediterranean diet in general, and olive oil in particular. If in the 1970s the United States was importing 20,000 tons of oil a year, most of it for Italian Americans, today it imports 130,000 tons. The same pattern can be seen in other industrialized countries."

The folks at Borges are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining the quality standards of their olive oil. The plant in Tarrega has its own quality control laboratory, where a battery of gadgets bubble away as the oils from the various mills that supply the raw material are subjected to the chemical equivalent of an obstacle course.

"Spanish legislation is very specific," says Carmen Goma, the young chemist who heads the lab's team of eight technicians. "To be classified as virgin, an oil has to fulfill around 40 different criteria used to determine its quality and purity. And to be classified as 'extra virgin,' olive oil must have an acidity no higher than one degree."

Aside from the chemical aspects of the oil, there are organoleptic considerations. In other words, what it tastes and smells like. Several times a week Borges tasters—there are 15 in total, a minimum of eight working at one time—gather in the plant's tasting room to sample various oils. Oil is sampled at 38°C

(100°F), when its aromas, qualities and defects are most evident. Slices of green apple are taken between tastings to clear the palate. The test is based solely on flavor and odor, so samples are presented in colored glasses to prevent the oil's appearance from influencing the final verdict.

Based on the tasting, Borges' experts will determine the "coupage," or mixture that will make up the final product. Every oil is subtly different, so they are blended to ensure a consistent flavor.

This blending is perhaps the most important aspect of the plant's activities. It takes place in a coupage room, a vast hall full of stainless steel tanks connected with pipes. Presiding over the operation is Enric Pané who, like many of Borges' 600-plus employees, started at the bottom and was trained up to his present post.

With 23 years on the job, this corpulent Catalan guards over his wards like a jealous mother.

It is with almost religious solemnity that he shows the visitor Borges' greatest treasure. A narrow staircase leads to the cellar underneath the coupage room, where 14 tanks hold a total of 500 metric tons of the finest quality virgin olive oil, safe from vibration and sudden changes in temperature. This year, as an homage to the founders, the third generation of Ponts decided to

reproduce as faithfully as possible the oil produced by Antón Pont, the one they remember from visits to grandfather's home when they were children. Tracking down the original sources of the family's olives, down to specific groves, the Ponts tried various blends until they finally agreed on a finished product. The result is the Reserva de la Familia—the Rolls Royce of olive oils. Only 20,000 half-liter bottles of it have been made, in numbered bottles. That destined for the Spanish market has not even been filtered—the cloudiness resulting from the suspended lees does not affect the taste, and indeed many Spanish cooks prefer it to the clear, filtered oil.

Nut Case

If Borges is the Catalan market leader in edible oils, the group has also been instrumental in Catalonia's almond industry.

In 1920 the founder, Antón Pont, purchased the first shelling machine in the region. It was something of a revolution in a place where nuts were cracked open by hand with a hammer, the same technique used by the Moors who first planted almonds in these parts a thousand years ago.

For years the Pont family supplied the exporters in Reus, until in the early 1960s they decided to take the big step and set up in export

themselves. Antón Pont's grandson Antonio was dispatched to Reus to learn everything he could about export, and soon Borges had built its own nut-packaging plant. In addition to almonds, they exported hazelnuts, of which Spain is one of the world's biggest producers, much of it coming from the Reus area.

The next logical step was to start producing their own brand of nuts and dried fruits. The family business acquired the name Borges as a company identity. Rather than limit themselves to almonds and hazelnuts, they felt they should offer the complete gamut of dried fruit and nuts, and thus began Borges considerable activity as importers: pistachios from Iran, cashews from India, dried apricots from Turkey, peanuts from the southern U.S., walnuts, raisins, and prunes from California. Today, with imports totaling 11.5 billion pesetas' worth (76.6 million US\$), they are Spain's biggest buyer of nuts and dried fruits.

A second part of the strategy involved getting into the farming business themselves, as a way of diversifying their sources of raw material. In 1986 they purchased their own walnut and almond farm in California's Sacramento valley. And, in a novel experiment, they started farms in southern Spain, which were planted with walnuts, and which



SOLERA GRAN RESERVA
CARDENAL MENDOZA

Brandy de Jerez

SANCHEZ ROMATE HNOS. JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA



THIS YEAR, AS AN HOMAGE TO THE FOUNDERS, THE THIRD GENERATION OF PONTS DECIDED TO REPRODUCE THE OIL PRODUCED BY ANTÓN PONT, THE ONE THEY REMEMBER FROM VISITS TO GRANDFATHER'S HOME WHEN THEY WERE CHILDREN. THE RESULT IS THE "RESERVA DE LA FAMILIA".

are now coming into full production. Although the walnut has grown in Spain for centuries—it was introduced by the Romans—most groves were cut down for their wood, and commercial walnut farms are few and far between. Parts of the farms turned out to be unsuited to walnuts, so Borges planted plum trees and pistachios, these last another first for Spain. Aside from their own agricultural activities, with 1,800 hectares (4,450 acres) of farms, Borges draws on a network of 20,000 farmers with land totaling 100,000 hectares (247,100 acres). The Borges nut factory in

Reus is perhaps the most modern plant of its kind in Europe, although for a reason the family are not happy to discuss. In the spring of 1996 a fearsome fire devastated the factory, reducing nearly half of it to ashes. "It was a tremendous blow," says Antonio Pont, the grandson of Antón Pont and now in charge of the Reus plant. "But we had to choose between quitting or getting back to work. Naturally, we chose the latter." Get back to work they did. The staff rallied around, suppliers and even competitors offered their support. Technicians were brought in to see what could be salvaged of

the charred, bent machinery. New equipment was ordered. Premises were rented in Madrid, and many workers were sent there—for some, it was the first time they'd set foot outside Reus—leaving their families in the care of relatives. Ten days after the fire, the nuts were rolling off the line again. Over the past year, the plant has been extended and new equipment added and today's factory, boasting state-of-the-art technology and covering some 21,500 square meters (230,000 square feet), has just come into full production. At their Reus plant Borges does nothing that an average domestic cook wouldn't

do when confronted with half a pound of almonds: the shelled nuts are sorted by size, cleaned, blanched to remove the brown inner skin, and slivered, fried, or roasted. The only difference is that, unlike the average cook, Borges processes six tons of almonds an hour. Spain is the world's second biggest producer of almonds, and Borges is its biggest exporter, with one third of the market. Most is exported in bulk, for use by ice cream manufacturers and confectioners such as Nestlé and Suchard, or for packaging by local snack companies and supermarket chains. They are only now considering

GRUPO BORGES

	SALES (IN MILLIONS OF PESETAS)	EXPORTS (IN MILLIONS OF PESETAS)	PRODUCTION (IN METRIC TONS) EDIBLE OILS	NUTS/DRIED FRUIT
1990-1991	24,00	5,893		
1991-1992	23,710	5,887	50,046	21,725
1992-1993	25,550	7,522	57,280	23,897
1993-1994	32,000	13,500	62,000	26,711
1994-1995	42,000	16,644	77,481	27,534
1995-1996	50,000	20,500	80,000	29,641

Source: Grupo Borges

SPAIN IS THE WORLD'S SECOND BIGGEST PRODUCER OF ALMONDS, AND BORGES IS ITS BIGGEST EXPORTER, WITH ONE THIRD OF THE MARKET. BORGES' NUT DIVISION SELLS TO 64 COUNTRIES, THE MOST IMPORTANT CLIENTS BEING OTHER EUROPEAN MARKETS.

marketing their own brand of packaged nuts directly. Borges' nut division sells to 64 countries, the most important clients being other European markets. One place where they don't export almonds is the U.S., as California is the world's biggest producer.

"It would be a case of selling ice to the Eskimos," José Pont says. Yet here, one already sees the Pont family chemistry at work, for unlike his father, Antonio Pont Jr. feels there is nothing far-fetched about marketing Spanish almonds in the U.S. "Don't forget, it was Spaniards such as Junipero Serra who planted the first almond and walnut trees in California," he says. "It would be a poetic justice of sorts. Besides, there are almonds and almonds. Superior Spanish almonds could appeal to American gourmets, varieties like the flavorful, round Marcona—known as 'the Queen of Almonds.' "

California, Here We Come

The vehicle would be Borges' own U.S. affiliate, Star Fine Foods, which Borges purchased in 1995. The California-based company specializes in selling Mediterranean products, in particular, Italian olive oil. They are among the five top olive oil distributors in the U.S., leading the market in northern California and sec-

ond in southern California. Star Fine Foods bill \$60 million a year, around a quarter of which is from olive oil.

Although the purchase of the company was motivated by commercial strategy, romantic considerations may have come into it as well, for the Star Fine Foods story mirrors that of the Pont family, almost down to the date of foundation: next year it will turn 100 years. It was started by an Italian, Angelo Giuliani, mainly to supply homesick Italian Americans with produce from the old country. Today they sell olive oil, wine vinegar, capers, anchovies, pickles, and other delicacies, most of it imported from Italy.

The Borges group's relationship with the U.S. goes back a long way. For years, California has been a source of Borges nuts and dried fruits, and José Pont makes two or three trips there a year.

Borges already sells olive oil in more than 60 countries, and is the main exporter of Spanish oil to markets as diverse as the Czech Republic and Israel, New Zealand and Finland. The establishment of an affiliate in Australia in 1994 was a resounding success—today, Borges Australia PTY Ltd. sells 1,600 metric tons of olive oil, worth 1 billion pesetas. With this kind of track record, the Ponts decided that the time was ripe for launching Spanish virgin olive oil onto the U.S. market. Although olive

oil is now present in some 25 percent of American homes, there is plenty of room for growth.

As José Pont explains: "We approach new markets very carefully, and introduce our products gradually. We don't see ourselves as mere salesmen, but rather as creators of new markets. Selling a batch of oil is easy; creating a steady, loyal market for it is something entirely different."

Says his son Javier Pont, who is in charge of liaising between Star Fine Foods and the mother company: "Our market research showed that the U.S. market is dominated by the Italians, who account for 80 percent of imported oil there. Yet, to our surprise, we found that American consumers are not so concerned about the origin of the oil as the name on the label. Brand loyalty counts for a lot there."

The conclusion was that the only way Borges was going to crack this particular nut was to buy into an existing, well-established company. Star Fine Foods, whose label commands respect among American consumers, fit the bill perfectly.

The switch from Italian to Spanish oil is taking place step by careful step.

"We know that the consumer will appreciate Spanish olive oil," says Javier. "Our main concern is demonstrating to the actual distributors that Spanish oil

is as good, if not better, than Italian oil."

The first Spanish oil from Borges to be marketed in the U.S. was Extra Light, a refined oil containing two per cent of virgin oil. This year, they started shipping olive oil with 20 per cent of virgin oil. Now, in the final phase, they will begin to market their top Virgin Extra olive oil.

"My dream is that by the end of 1998, all the virgin olive oil sold through Star Fine Foods is from right here in Catalonia," says Javier Pont. Great-grandfather Antón would be proud.

Mark Little is an American-born journalist based in southern Spain. He was editor of the English-language Lookout Magazine for many years, and is now a freelance writer contributing to publications and guide books about Spain.

For further information on Grupo Borges, you can visit their home page at <http://www.borges.es>

From its lofty vantage point (over 800 m/2,625 ft above sea level), the Pueyo Monastery towers over the sweeping landscape of the Somontano wine-making region whose vineyards provide high quality Denomination of Origin (D.O.) red, rosé, and white wines. At the foot of the Aragonese Pyrenees, once a fort, the monastery is now the spiritual home of several members of the Claretian religious order (named after its founder, St. Antonio María Claret) and a welcome stopover point and watering hole for pilgrims. If you are interested in sampling the very best of local fare, El Restaurante el Pueyo—inside the monastery—is well worth a visit. The menu on offer each day, and especially on Sundays, features a selection of fresh seasonal produce and traditional home cooking that reflect the true spirit of the Aragon region's cuisine. Borage in clam sauce, tender beans cooked with eel, and charcoal-grilled rabbit are just three examples. My favorite dish was the olives, seasoned to a treat in a blend of tender onions, red and green peppers, a dash of paprika, and olive oil from their very own olives. The black olives had been left on the tree to ripen longer than usual to give them that distinctive, highly concentrated flavor. They were simply delicious when served with the homemade bread lovingly kneaded and baked on the premises as in olden times in a wood-fire oven. The result is a light-textured bread, almost brioche-like, with a thick crust and the most mouth-watering smell. To wash it all down, as is the custom in Spain, we drank cold water and a local Somontano wine, a young red varietal wine made from the 1996 Tempranillo harvest. Fresh and fruity, with a taste that lingers on the palate and just the right touch of acidity, the wine is the product of an age-old vineyard which has adapted to today's tastes.

Restaurante El Pueyo
22311 Barbastro (Huesca)
Tel: (34-74) 31 50 79.

The 240 highway links Barbastro to Lérida, in Catalonia, and Lérida to the olive groves of Les Garrigues, one of the six Denominations of Ori-

gin that protect the name and guarantee the quality of Spanish olive oil. Before arriving at Les Garrigues and just a couple of miles out of Lérida, you may like to visit Les Borges Blanques, a renowned olive oil-producing area which has received the acclaim of all those who advocate the use of olive oil in both cooking and as a part of a healthy diet. Two local Lérida companies produce a number of good quality, reasonably-priced organic olive oils. **Agroles, S.C.L., Olex, S.A. at Virgen de Montserrat, 29, 25400 Les Borges Blanques (Lérida), Tel: (34-73) 14 21 50, Fax: (34-73) 14 00 51** sells its oil under the Románico brand name. **Vea, S.A., Plaza Escolers/n, 25175 Sarroca de Lleida (Lérida), Tel: (34-73) 12 60 00, Fax: (34-73) 12 62 25** is also recognized for its olive oil and is a pioneer in the production of organic olive oil. **Vea** markets its organic olive oil under the L'Estornell brand (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 30).

The old saying that man cannot live by bread alone may be true, but my view is that with bread and olives, he just might be able to. I have recently finished reading an excellent book, packed full of information, and one that is made for an enjoyable read. It is a book to tickle your taste buds, devoted to olives. Written by Mort Rosenblum, an American who used to write for the *Herald Tribune* and who now lives in the south of France, surrounded by olive groves. Mort called me about a

year ago to ask me if I knew any traditional olive oil recipes. We chatted for longer than I like to remember and I gave him one of my favorite recipes. In return, he told me all about his passion for our beloved olive tree.

Says Rosenblum: "To many people, an olive is just a decoration used in martinis. A closer look, however, reveals a portrait in miniature of the richest regions in the world. Olives have oiled the wheels of civilization since the walls of Jericho were built. But they are really not that complicated: the next time the sun is shining and the tomatoes have ripened, take a piece of bread, sprinkle it with fresh thyme, and ask yourself how you can improve on it. That's what I do." My answer to Mort's question would be a good Spanish virgin olive oil from Andalusia, Toledo, Aragon, or Catalonia.

In the last issue I mentioned that not only do the locals in Barcelona eat well but the food shops dotted all over the city are a showcase for the region's produce. I still insist this is true. A list follows of just some of the shops I popped into recently as I was looking for gifts and sweets for the festive season:

Quilez. Everything from biscuits to tins of razor clams, dairy products, wines, and liqueurs, the shop windows are a sight to be seen and prices are as low as you'll find in the city. **Rambla de Catalunya, 63, 08007 Barcelona, Tel: (34-3) 215 87 85, Fax: (34-3) 215 87 85.**

Tienda Redón. This is a classic *colmado* (name given in

Catalonia to delicatessens that also serve light meals), specializing in sausages cured in oil. The famous *morcilla* (black pudding) from Burgos is delivered to the shop every week. They also sell excellent *butifarras*, yet another Catalan sausage. **Roselló, 219, 08008 Barcelona.**

Granja Viader Cardedeu. In Barcelona, all the shops which specialize in dairy products, such as cheese, fresh cream, etc., are known as *granjas*. Usually, they are also cafés and cake shops. The specialty of La Granja Viader is a traditional Catalan cheese known as *mató artesano*, which is very similar to the Castilian *requesón*, a delicious soft and creamy cheese which is usually served with local honey. **Xucla, 4, 08001 Barcelona, Tel: (34-3) 317 10 17, Fax: (34-3) 301 60 77.**

Christmas time for Spaniards is synonymous with *turrón* (a sweet made from almonds and honey or sugar that can be bought fudge-soft or nougat-hard), *peladillas* (sugary almonds), marzipan, and chocolates. I paid a visit to **Escriba**, a patisserie-confectioner's, to stock up on these sweetmeats. The chocolate magician, as the owner of the shop, Antonio Escriba is known, is an artist and pastry extraordinaire who adds a touch of sweetness to every visitor's day. Try the dark chocolate with pistachios, the sweet *cocas* and Catalan nougat. **Ramblas, 83, 08002 Barcelona, Tel: (34-3) 301 60 27, Fax: (34-3) 454 69 12** and **Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas, 546, 08011 Barcelona, Tel: (34-3) 454 75 35, Fax: (34-3) 454 69 12.**

This is a magical time of the year when familiar flavors and noisy children are quite different—or at least appear to be. It is also a time when Spaniards like to celebrate in style. What do people in Spain eat at Christmas? Do they eat turkey? In such a diverse country as Spain, the answer to that question is both mouth-watering and somewhat complex, as a host of regional customs are still maintained nationwide. In the case of Catalonia, I will answer by paraphrasing the wise old words of that unforgettable writer, Josep Pla (1897-1981),

A Christmas Taste

that describe how the most important festive occasion of the year was and still is celebrated. Writing about Christmas Day, Pla specified that two very different menus were prepared. Most Catalans would eat a traditional dish reserved for the most important feast days—a special *escudella i carn d'olla*. This hearty stew was made with pork, beef, chicken, and lamb, not to mention a host of other ingredients such as cabbage, beans, and potatoes. Pasta was added to the broth from the stew later and served as the entrée, followed by the meat and other ingredients, and roast chicken, as the main course. Naturally, turrón was served for dessert.

The aristocracy would eat an abundant meal with rooster taking pride of place as the main dish. This tendency to eat rooster had apparently originated in Provence. According to Pla, "That native rooster—which is now called the Prat Capon (after the Prat plain in the outskirts of Barcelona) and which was actually a castrated domestic rooster—should not be confused with the turkey imported from America, from Mexico to be more precise, much later on." That same turkey, imported by the Spanish conquistadors and much loved by Anglo-Saxons, is not traditional Christmas fare in many Spanish homes. Both Pla and many other experts have always maintained that the capons bred in the Prat del Llobregat area are far better than any turkey. Flavorsome, with sweet, firm meat, capons have very little fat and need to be cooked and treated with all due respect in the kitchen and on the dining table. They are only available from Christmas markets. A Specific Denomination covers both chickens and capons from Prat, protecting their name and guaranteeing their quality. **Pollastre y Capó del Prat. Consejo Regulador, Carrer del Centre, 33, 08820 El Prat de Llobregat (Barcelona), Tel: (34-3) 379 00 57, Fax: (34-3) 370 76 05 is**

the regulatory body. This specific denomination of origin includes meat from chickens and capons of the Prat breed, bred in Casatelldefels, Cornellà de Llobregat, El Prat de Llobregat, San Boi de Llobregat, San Climent de Llobregat, San Feliu de Llobregat, Viladecans, Santa Coloma de Cervellón, and Gavá (all in the province of Barcelona). The chickens are all of the native Prat breed, and are recognized by their dark blond feathers, blue legs and pearly skin. Their meat is highly prized as being sweet and lean.

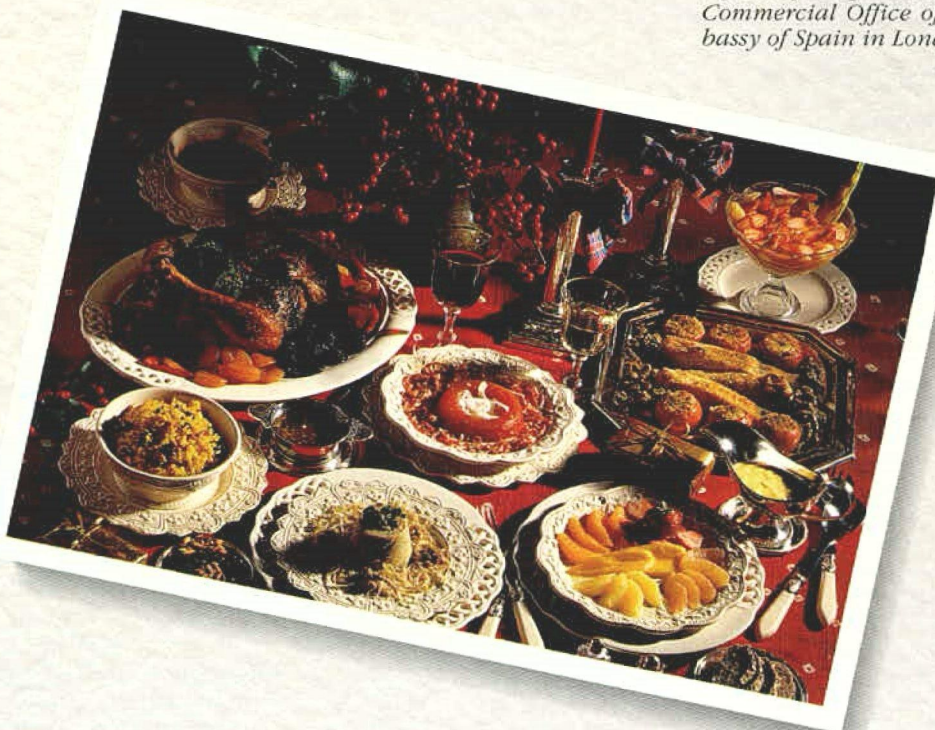
In one of the towns listed above, there is an excellent restaurant where they serve exquisite chicken and capon as well as rice dishes cooked in fish and seafood broth. This restaurant is called La Pineda and is located in Gavá, a village just a couple of miles outside Barcelona. I have to confess that the mouth-watering meals were not what struck me most about the restaurant. What did strike me was the restaurant owner, Artemi Balsells, a man who is in my opinion a real "Father of the

Mediterranean." I remember that the first time I went there he was having lunch at one of the tables. It was only 12:30 p.m. and the restaurant was quiet. Under the shade of a tree on the terrace, he quietly ate his lunch, savoring each crayfish and each tiny octopus in its own juice, served with old-fashioned bread and leafy escarole freshly picked in his own vegetable garden earlier that morning. He was also drinking half a bottle of a well-known red wine, on the advice of a doctor he never has to go and see. Artemi is a staunch advocate of the Mediterranean diet we all talk about but which so few of us follow properly. He is still attractive and youthful, even though he is already father to several children and grandfather to a host of grandchildren. He has been working since he was nine years old and is almost 90, but if you saw him, you wouldn't think he was a day over 60. He lives by the sea and has lunch every day under the shade of a pine tree.

This is the recipe followed by the chefs at La Pineda

restaurant to cook the local capons or chickens at Christmas time. To stuff the bird, you need around 300 gr (10 1/2 oz) of pork mince, pine nuts, dried figs, dried peaches or apricots, 2 or 3 eggs, salt and pepper, and a little lard. First, mix the mince with the eggs and pine nuts. Then gradually add the chopped dried peaches or apricots and figs. Season with salt and pepper and mix well. Once the chicken or capon is clean, bone it carefully (or ask the butcher to do it), stuff it, and sew it with kitchen thread. Make sure it is properly sealed so that none of the stuffing leaks out during cooking. Season the bird on the outside with salt and pepper and spread lard over it, then put it into a medium-hot oven and roast until it is golden brown. Baste several times so it does not dry out. You can also add a little honey to the lard before spreading it over the bird to give it a particularly appetizing color.

Author and broadcaster, María José Sevilla is a specialist in food and wine and teaches at the Culinary Institute of America, in the Napa Valley. She is responsible for gastronomy and food promotion at the Commercial Office of the Embassy of Spain in London.



Recipes from La Rioja

Recipes selected by Gerry Dawes

Wines selected by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Rioja potatoes

This recipe is by Mery Huergo from the Mayor de Migueloa restaurant in Laguardia.

SERVES 4:

2 kg potatoes	300 gr chorizo
1 onion	10 ml olive oil
2 small hot red peppers	25 gr paprika

Roughly cut the potatoes into pieces. Place in a pan of water to cover with the finely sliced onion, the peppers, sliced chorizo and salt. When the potatoes are cooked, add a dressing made by frying paprika in olive oil. Season.

Recommended wine: red *crianza* D.O.Ca. Rioja

Rioja-style potatoes are a very popular, hearty dish that doesn't leave many options when it comes to choosing a suitable wine. It has to be a red Rioja, preferably aged, although a young wine would go down just as well. Since the dish is served hot, a *crianza* wine with a touch of oakiness would make an everyday dish into something very special. And if it can be a '94 vintage, all the better.

Vegetable stew with serrano ham

This recipe is from the Parador in Santo Domingo de la Calzada

SERVES 4:

150 gr carrots	150 gr cauliflower
150 gr green beans	150 gr chard
150 gr mushrooms	6 artichokes
150 gr peas	150 ml olive oil
150 gr turnip	100 gr serrano ham
150 gr borage	3 garlic cloves

Cook the vegetables separately, taking care not to overcook them. Set aside to cool.

When all the vegetables are ready, fry the garlic and ham in the oil. Then add the vegetables with a little of their cooking liquid, season and serve.

Recommended wine: young red wine D.O.Ca. Rioja

This is another case in which a local dish goes well with one of the local wines. The vegetables from the Rioja market gardens or from the Navarran fields are a treat in themselves and a dish such as this vegetable stew respects each of the flavors of the different ingredients. A young, yearling wine is often the most successful and straightforward way of accompanying something as tasty and natural as a vegetable dish. Simple foods always go well with simple wines.

**Salad of marinated
Oja trout with green
beans, leek mousse,
and lettuce hearts**

The next three recipes are by Marisa Sánchez in the Echaurren Hotel in Ezcaray.

SERVES 6:

FOR THE MARINADE:

6 clean, boned trout fillets	100 ml white Rioja wine
2 onions	100 ml olive oil
Thyme, peppercorns, and salt	100 ml wine vinegar
100 ml dry sherry	

FOR THE LEEK MOUSSE:

1 large leek	Salt and white pepper
100 ml cream	0.5 l water
1 egg	

FOR THE SALAD:

2 spring onions	400 gr green beans
2 lettuce hearts	Thin slices of crisp fried ham

For the marinade, finely slice the onion and gently fry with the spices and herbs. Add the trout fillets and the rest of the ingredients. Boil for two minutes and remove from the heat so that the trout fillets are only just cooked. Remove the fish and strain the cooking liquid.

For the leek mousse, cook the sliced leek in the salted water until the leek is soft and the water has practically evaporated. Blend. Add the rest of the ingredients and blend together. Check for seasoning and place the mixture into molds. Cook in a double saucepan at 120°C (248°F) for 20 minutes.

For the salad, finely slice the onions, gently fry until transparent and season. Cook the green beans but drain before they become soft. Then coarsely slice the lettuce and dress with the olive oil.

To serve, place a little onion on each plate and top with the slightly warm green beans followed by the lettuce. The leek mousse is served to one side. Top with the trout and dress with the marinade sauce previously reduced with virgin olive oil. Sprinkle with the fried ham.

Recommended wine: rosé from the D.O.Ca. Rioja

The salad has a number of fairly marked flavors with the thyme and pepper in the trout marinade being tempered by the leek mousse. The wine needs to be aromatic, fresh and light but with enough flavor to allow it to team with the salad. A good rosé wine made from the Tempranillo grape, the star Rioja variety, could be the ideal complement for this dish. It should give just the right balance.

Partridge with pears

SERVES 6:

6 clean and trussed partridges	cloves and salt
2 onions	0.25 l brandy
2 leeks	1 l red wine
2 carrots	3 l chicken stock
Bay leaf, black peppercorns,	

FOR THE PEARS:

3 firm cooking pears	0.25 l brandy
250 gr sugar	1 l red wine
0.5 l red wine	3 l chicken stock
Cloves and salt	

Cameros cheese and apple pastries with honey ice cream

To prepare the pears, first make a light syrup with the sugar, wine, water and flavorings. Then add the pears and, when cooked, remove from the syrup and set aside.

Season the partridges, dust with flour and brown all over. Gently fry the diced vegetables and the spices and, when they start to turn brown, add the partridges and stir. Flambé with the brandy and the wine. Add the stock and leave to cook for 50 to 70 minutes until the partridges are tender. Remove carefully from the stock and blend the sauce.

Arrange the partridges on a serving dish surrounded by the pears and coated with the sauce.

Recommended wine: young red wine from the D.O.Ca. Rioja

The flesh of the partridge is tight and dry so always needs to be served in a fairly rich sauce. In this case there are both sweet and salt flavors so we need a wine with character and sufficient vivacity to complement the full flavors of the food. There are delicious young red Rioja wines made from the Tempranillo variety that offer a wealth of fruity flavors.

FOR 6 PASTRIES:

450-500 gr flaky pastry
500 gr fresh Cameros cheese
6 cooking apples
100 gr sugar
100 ml cream

FOR THE ICE CREAM:

250 ml milk
250 gr honey
6 sheets of gelatine
125 gr white of egg
50 gr sugar
0.25 l cream

For the ice cream, bring the milk with the honey to boil, then add the gelatine and leave to cool. Beat the white of egg with 25 gr sugar, and the cream with the remaining 25 gr sugar. Incorporate all the mixtures and place in the freezer.

Finely chop the cheese and heat in a double saucepan with 100 gr sugar and 100 ml cream, stirring constantly until a smooth mixture forms. Roll out the pastry and cut into 6 rectangles. Make a few holes in it with a fork.

Spread over the cheese mixture and arrange the sliced apple on top. Brush with beaten egg and bake at 150°C (302°F) for 15 minutes.

Serve topped with a spoonful of honey ice cream and, if desired, a light custard.

Recommended wine: Semisweet, white wine from the D.O.Ca. Rioja

This is an unusual dessert combining the creaminess of the cheese, the characteristic sharpness of the cooking apples and the delicate flavor of the honey—a splendid combination of flavors that needs to be crowned by the right wine. A good semisweet, aromatic Rioja will enhance the flavors, its lightness helping to bring out the different tastes rather than muffling them. These light white wines are perfect for achieving a balanced match with such complex dishes.

Recipes with Vegetables

Recipes selected by María José Sevilla

Wines selected by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

Vegetable coca

SERVES 4:

FOR THE DOUGH:

200 ml water, hand-hot

A pinch of sugar

1 1/2 tsps dried yeast

250 gr strong plain flour

1 tsp salt

2 tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp lard

FOR THE TOPPING:

250 gr chard or spinach, shredded

250 gr spinach, shredded

1/2 bunch spring onions,

cut into 1 cm pieces

2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

3 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed

1 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp paprika

Salt

1 tomato, skinned,
seeded, and chopped



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"DEL PIQUILLO peppers are sweet, slightly piquant red peppers. Short and shaped like a rounded triangle with a pronounced point, they are fine-textured and not over-fleshy"



The traditional serving way:

RED SWEET PEPPERS DEL PIQUILLO WITH GARLIC

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 PERSONS

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

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



Packed by:
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Mix 100 ml of the water, the sugar, and the yeast and leave for about 10 minutes until a frothy head forms. Mix the flour, salt, yeast mixture, oil, and lard, and add just enough of the remaining water to mix to a soft, pliable dough. Knead well for about 10 minutes, then place in an oiled plastic bag and leave in a warm place to rise for about 1 hour. Meanwhile, put the chard and spinach in a saucepan with a very little salted water, bring to a boil and simmer for 4 minutes. Let sit for 3 minutes then drain, squeezing out the excess water. Add the spring onions, parsley, garlic, and oil. Season with paprika and salt and blend well. Preheat the oven to gas mark 6, 200°C (400°F). Roll out the dough to about 5 mm (1/4 in) thick and curl up the edges to make a border. Place on a greased baking tray and spread the vegetables over the dough, sprinkle with tomato, season with salt, and bake for 30 to 50 minutes.

From Spain on a Plate by María José Sevilla

Recommended wine: red Cencibel, D.O. La Mancha

The coca is a sort of cake that can be either sweet or salty, depending on the ingredients used. In this case it is topped with spinach that has an intense, somewhat bitter flavor. A good wine to go with it would be a young Manchegan red. These tasty and well-balanced wines are made from the exquisite grape variety called Cencibel in La Mancha, better known as the Tempranillo of La Rioja or the Tinto Fino of La Ribera del Duero. Apart from slight differences in the composition of the aroma and flavor, any of these wines would go very well with this vegetable dish.

Char-grilled artichokes

SERVES 6:

12 large, young artichokes
1 1/2 cups wine vinegar
1/2 cup lemon juice
1 cup olive oil
Freshly milled black pepper
Salt

One by one, grip the artichokes by the stalk and strike against the work surface to open them up without breaking off the leaves. Then cut off the stalks, wash in cold water and drain.

Arrange a layer of artichokes in a large bowl. Season well and sprinkle generously with vinegar, then add a little lemon juice and a trickle of oil. Repeat the process until all the artichokes have been placed in the marinade. Stir occasionally with a long wooden spoon. Leave to marinate for 8 hours. Burn olive and holm-oak wood and when the logs have turned to red-hot coals, place a rack over them and grill the artichokes, basting occasionally with the marinade mixture.

Serve very hot, two to a plate, in a "sitting" position with the leaves pointing upwards.

From Recetas con ángel by Caty Juan de Corral

Recommended wine: young red wine from the D.O. Ampurdán-Costa Brava

Char-grilled artichokes are essentially a Catalan dish. Easy to prepare, they always delight people trying them for the first time. Artichokes have a fairly strong flavor and a marked bitter component that always makes it difficult to partner them with wine. But the Ampurdán wines are very fresh, cheerful wines that go down easily and can make a good match with artichokes and with many other grilled vegetables.



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Broad beans Catalan-style

SERVES 6:

1.8 kg shelled broad beans	1 glass brandy
600 gr belly pork	3 cloves of garlic
600 gr butifarra (pork sausage)	1 bay leaf
2 onions	1 sprig of thyme
5 ripe tomatoes	Salt and pepper
100 gr lard	1 sprig of mint

Cut the belly pork into two pieces and fry with the lard until it browns. Add the garlic, bay leaf, thyme, mint, and finely sliced onions. When the onion and garlic are soft, add the peeled and chopped tomatoes, then the broad beans and brandy. Add water, or preferably stock, to cover. Season, add the whole butifarra, cover with grease-proof paper and place the lid on the pan. Leave to cook slowly.

Remove from the heat and discard the herbs. Cut the pork meat and butifarra into pieces, place on top of the beans and serve direct from the pan.

From Cocina de ayer, delicias de hoy by Josep Lladonosa Giró

Recommended wine: Cabernet Sauvignon D.O. Penedés

This is a heavy dish because of its fat content. The texture is smooth and the flavors are not particularly penetrating so, to compensate, it would be well matched by a well structured, fairly powerful red wine. A mature Cabernet Sauvignon that has spent a fair while being aged in oak would be an excellent choice. If from the 1990 or 1992 vintages, it would be unsurpassable.

Andalusian vegetable pot

While this is best known in the Cádiz area, some version of it is served throughout Andalusia. It is usually made with chard in the winter and green beans in the summer. Just about any other vegetable on hand can be thrown in as well. Unlike the *cocidos*, no soup is separated out of the berza. Leftover meat and fat, called *pringá*, is chopped and served in a bread roll, a favorite *tapa* in Seville.

SERVES 6:

200 gr chickpeas, soaked overnight	8 peppercorns
100 gr salt pork or bacon	3 garlic cloves
225 gr pork	2 tsp salt
2 l water	2 tsp paprika
200 gr white beans or black-eyed peas, soaked overnight	500 gr potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks about 4 cm (1 1/2 in) across
500 gr chard or green beans, chopped	225 gr pumpkin, peeled and cut into large chunks
160 gr <i>chorizo</i>	
160 gr <i>morcilla</i> or blood sausage	
2 cloves	

If using both the chickpeas and beans, drain and put the chickpeas to cook first with the salt pork, fresh pork, and water. Bring to a boil, skim, then simmer for 30 minutes. Then add the drained beans. Let all simmer for about 1 hour, then add the chard or green beans, and the chorizo and morcilla. In a mortar, crush the cloves and peppercorns with the garlic, salt, and paprika and add to the pan. When the meat and chickpeas are nearly tender, add the potatoes and pumpkin. Cook for another 30 minutes. Cut the pork and sausages into small pieces and serve in soup bowls.

From Traditional Spanish Cooking by Janet Mendel

Spanish Masterpieces



GONZALEZ BYASS

SHERRY & BRANDY

Recommended wine: red *reserva* D.O. Ribera del Duero

This type of stew always tends to be fairly heavy. The combination of chorizo, blood sausage, salt pork, ham bones, and a number of other substantial ingredients leads to a simply-made dish that is always delicious. As usual, the aim is to find a good balance between the food and the drink. The best choice here would be a Ribera del Duero *reserva*. Not all wines can stand up to such a dish, but there are also some strong Mediterranean wines that would fit the bill.

Recipes from the Convents

Recipes selected by Vicky Hayward

Wines selected by María Jesús Gil de Antuñano

San Pablo's Christmas marzipan

Grinding the almonds and decorating this cake take time—the nuns grind the almonds up to four times to get the right fineness—but Sister María de las Nieves says the tricky part is the oven temperature. Ideally, it should be very hot at the top to toast the marzipan and cool enough lower down that the base stays semi-cooked and soft.

MAKES ONE 25-CM CAKE:

1 kg very fine, home-ground almonds
900 gr sieved icing sugar
8-9 egg yolks, beaten
1 egg white, lightly whisked

1-2 tbsp sugar, to finish
sheet of rice paper,
30-cm square

Preheat the oven to 240°C (475°F), gas mark 9, and turn on the oven broiler or grill. If you can remove the oven floor, so much the better. Mix the almonds with the sugar in a large bowl of a food processor then work in the egg yolks and white to give a workable paste. Cut off and reserve just under a half for decoration. Lay the sheet of rice paper on two 30-cm square baking sheets, one on top of the other. Flatten and spread the larger piece of marzipan into a flat round cake with a 25-cm diameter. Fill and smooth over any cracks with the back of a spoon. Make a fat coil with half the reserved marzipan and place it around the edge of the cake as a border; roll out the other half and cut out stars, leaves and flowers to decorate the center of the cake (they should cover most of it to help to keep the base soft). Sprinkle tiny piles of sugar between the decorations. Bake in the center of the oven for about 5-10 minutes, until just golden brown.

Recommended wine: sweet oloroso D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry

Marzipan has always been one of the typical Christmas sweets though many people with a sweet tooth enjoy it year round. This type of dessert can be heavy after a good meal and should be partnered with a smooth, rich, aromatic wine with intense aromas and a slight raisin flavor. Such wines are excellent for the digestion and are best sipped slowly as a relaxing after-dinner drink. An oloroso sherry is undoubtedly one of the top Spanish wines.



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Flourless almond cake

Sister Ángela has been making this cake at the Convento de la Purísima Concepción in Peñaranda de Duero, near Burgos, for 47 years. The recipe may not read as anything out of the ordinary, but it is so full of almonds that each mouthful of cake is a milky-sweet taste-bomb. Sister Angela advises damp almonds, blanched lemon zest and greasing the pan with lard for moistness and flavor. It also helps that in Peñaranda they bake in a wood-oven.

MAKES ONE 33-CM CAKE:

250 gr almonds, skins on	1 tbsp flour
Thinly pared strip each of lemon and orange zest	6 eggs
Small knob of lard	250 gr caster sugar

Skin the almonds the day before you make the cake: blanch them till the skin loosens, transfer them to a bowl of cold water to cool and slip off the skins. Leave the almonds soaking overnight in cold water and the next day dry them well with a cloth—but do not dry them out in the oven or sun. Blanch the zest. Grind the almonds in a food processor or an old-fashioned hand mincer, adding the zest as you go. Preheat the oven to 230°C (450°F), gas mark 8. Grease a shallow spring-release or plain cake pan (around 33-cm diameter and 7-cm deep) with lard and dust it with flour. Separate the yolks from the whites. Beat together the yolks, sugar and ground almonds in a food processor. Whisk the egg whites to dry peaks, fold them into the cake mixture and pour into the prepared pan. Put into the oven, turn down the heat to 150°C (300°F), gas mark 2 and bake for half an hour or until a fine skewer stuck into the center of the cake comes out clean. Turn onto a rack and leave to cool. The nuns pipe flowers over the cool cakes using a frosting of beaten egg white and icing sugar and a fine piping nozzle.

Recommended wine: muscatel from the D.O. Navarra

Almonds are clearly the protagonists of this soft, delicious almond cake which is perfect either as a dessert or with afternoon tea or coffee. Its sweetness, complemented by the slight bitterness of the almonds, suggests the ideal partner would be a sweet Navarran wine made from small muscatel grapes. This is a very fine, elegant wine—sweet but not cloying—that allows the almond flavors to be fully appreciated on the palate.

Magdalena sponge-cakes

These *magdalenas*, small sponge-cakes made with olive oil, are made by the Poor Clares of Santa Ana convent in Oñati in the Basque Country. I have given the ingredients exactly as they are measured, using a small 150 ml coffee cup. The recipe calls for more milk and less egg than usual.

MAKES ABOUT 2 DOZEN MAGDALENAS:

2 eggs	6 cups of flour, not quite full to the brim
3 cups of caster sugar	1 tsp baking powder
2 cups of milk	
2 cups of mild extra virgin olive oil	

Arrange 2 dozen cupcake paper cases on baking trays. Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F), gas mark 4. Beat the eggs and sugar together in a food processor to give a pale yellow batter that leaves ribbon trails. Stir in the other ingredients, alternating the milk and oil with the flour

Seville or bitter orange rind preserved in syrup

Breadcrumb fritters in honey syrup

to avoid curdling, and beat well again. Spoon into the paper cups, but no more than two-thirds full to leave space for rising. Bake for about 20 minutes or until golden and risen.

Recommended wine: Pedro Ximénez from the D.O. Montilla Moriles. These small cakes are a traditional part of a Spanish breakfast when, obviously, they are not partnered with wine. But it is also customary in many towns of Navarre and Aragon to offer them to visiting guests during the local festivals. The best wine to accompany them is a sweet wine made from the Pedro Ximénez variety grown in the area of Córdoba. These sun-ripened grapes concentrate their sweetness to give a smooth, dense wine with a very full flavor that makes for a delicate combination with the light sponginess of the cakes.

Seville's bitter oranges usually end up in marmalade, but they can also be turned into this syrupy preserve. The method here comes from the convent of San Leandro, famous for its secret recipe for candied yolks. The nuns make it in small quantities using oranges from the trees in their patios to give to friends and family. It is also made at Santa Paula, where the zest is left on. I have quoted the method exactly as given in María Luisa Fraga Ibarne's book *Guía de dulces de los conventos sevillanos de clausura*, but added in suggested weights for the ingredients.

MAKES ABOUT 4 KILOS:

2 kilos of bitter oranges,
to give about 1 kilo rind
600 gr sugar

750 ml water
1 cinnamon stick

"Pick healthy bitter oranges and remove all the orange colored rind with a grater. Then halve the oranges and empty them of their juice and pips. Cover what remains of the oranges with water. This should be renewed daily until the oranges lose their bitterness, at which point they are drained and cooked in a syrup flavored with a cinnamon stick until they are tender." If the water boils down too fast, top it up every so often and continue simmering until the rind softens. Once cooked the rinds can be sliced. Keep in the fridge, or sterilize.

Recommended wine: cava (*brut or semiseco*)

This is a distinctive dessert that combines to perfection the delicate bitterness of the oranges with a sweet syrup. It should not be further sweetened with a dense, syrupy wine. Something milder and longer would go better, and a sparkle and a few bubbles mean that we can finish the dish without a cloying feeling. We recommend a good cava, either brut or semiseco depending on taste, which will help to dilute the concentrated sweetness of the orange dish.

Lorenzo Cano, the chef at the Chinchón Parador hotel, found this recipe when he was researching an Easter week menu of convent and monastery cooking. The cakes and puddings proved so popular they have stayed on the menu. Like many older convent sweets, these are what the Spanish call "fruits of the frying pan"—no oven is required—and the sweetening comes from a honey syrup.

MAKES ABOUT 36 FRITTERS:

3 eggs
50 gr breadcrumbs,
made from unprocessed white bread
Olive oil for frying

Powdered cinnamon
For the honey syrup:
125 ml rosemary honey
65 ml water

Beat the eggs in a large bowl with the breadcrumbs. Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan and when it is hot but not smoking add dessert-spoonfuls of the dough, frying them on both sides like baby pancakes. Remove to kitchen paper towels to soak up the excess oil. Heat the honey and water in a pan and when it is simmering add the fritters a few at a time. Cook them through for 5 minutes then remove them to a large, low-sided baking dish. Pour over the honey syrup and sprinkle with the cinnamon. Allow 6-7 per serving.

Recommended wine: Pedro Ximénez D.O. Montilla-Moriles

The most pleasurable feature of this dish is the rosemary honey, one of the most subtle and perfumed of honeys. A perfect match would be a wine made from Pedro Ximénez grapes. The combination of the aromas and flavors of the wine, hinting at raisins and dried figs, with the aroma and taste of the honey will make this simple dessert a real pièce de résistance.

Precooked Dishes

Traditional Navarran Cooking



Ferrán Adrià: The Conjurer Chef

In the final article of our "Philosophers of the Spanish Kitchen" series on top Spanish chefs, I explored the extraordinary culinary theory and practice of three-Michelin-star holder Ferrán Adrià and soon discovered that adjectives like "versatile" and "inventive" are simply not useful when it comes to trying to explain how Adrià gives form and content to El Bulli's bill of fare.

Where does one start, for example, when one of the many niblets set out to accompany the *cava* is a sort of mousse that Adrià calls *Espuma de Humo*, literally Smoke Foam. That is exactly what it is called and that it is exactly what it is; Adrià boils up water over smartly burning wood logs, traps the smoke in the pot, adds a bit of gelatine, and then compresses the smoke liquid into a sort of aerosol can that he has concocted to produce the foam. In a final flourish he spots the mousse with olive oil—

and yes, you have a hearth fire taste in your mouth as you reach for another sip of cava.

"I admit the *Espuma de Humo* is a provocation," Adrià said disarmingly. "I call it my pre-Big Bang dish, the dish that would have been made when everything was just fire and water." "Anything else?" I asked him. "Well, its something conceptual," he said. I must have looked very blank at this because he hastened to add: "It's just a joke really, it's just something to have a laugh about." Adrià has a number of buzz words such as "creativity," "novelty," "avant-garde," and "front edge." He is 35 and looks younger, he is remarkably self-confident and he makes no concessions.

A food lover who sits down to eat at El Bulli (see *Spain Gourmetour* No. 36) knows that just about anything can happen during his lunch the moment the aperitifs start arriving to accompany the glass of chilled, excellently dry cava. The array includes a black little bun. A chocolate madeleine, perhaps? What an odd tapa to serve up before a meal, the food lover might well muse.

The truth is a lot stranger. It is a tiny, light, spongy madeleine all right. But it is flavored with black olives. The mind boggles to think what Marcel Proust—he to whom the childhood madeleine wove so many memories—would have made of this extraordinary refinement of the cake maker's trade. Top cava producers should, however, pay a fortune for the royalties of what El Bulli's magician chef, Ferrán Adrià, has conjured up; the black olive fairy cake perfectly enhances their peerless drink. They could pay another king's ransom for the right to market the fried, batter-coated pistachio nuts and the curry flavored puffed rice that also appeared with the cava; they are likewise products of Adrià's febrile imagination and his fantastic technical skills.

Dalí Territory

"You have to make an effort to get here to El Bulli and when you arrive you will be one of three types of client. Two of the types will have a good time and the third will be disappointed." This seemed an encouraging starting

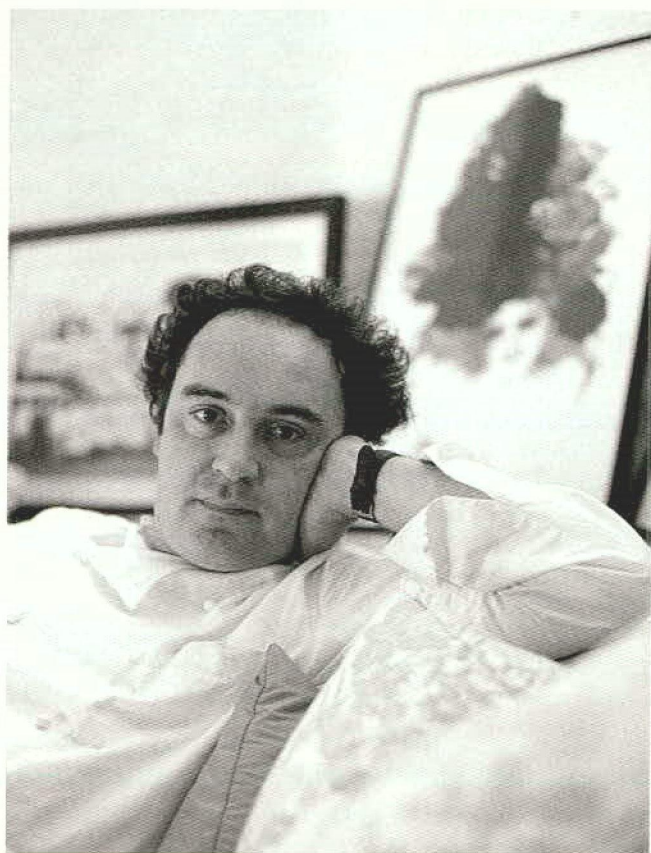
point for a discussion about his cuisine and I agreed wholeheartedly about the difficulties in reaching his restaurant.

El Bulli is in a stunning but virtually unreachable location. It stands practically alone in a private cove, the Cala Montjoi, at the top end of the Costa Brava between the bustling resort of Rosas and the once trendy and still pretentious former fishing village of Cadaqués. You reach it by bumping across the potholes of a long and winding road that, between hair-raising hairpin bends, affords a sensational view of the Mediterranean.

The restaurant looks reassuring enough. Like every self-respecting country home in the area, it has terraces and wood beams and walls of staked slate and limestone. But nobody should be misled. Experienced travelers know that this is surreal, Salvador Dalí territory.

The Dalí museum, which has a joke a minute and some of the jokes are pretty sick ones, stands in the master's home town of Figueras, half an hour's drive inland; the surrealist genius' hide-away home in Port Lligat is just up the coast from

Ferrán Adrià: "We are breaking all the molds here and we do it courageously on the front edge. It is as simple as that."



Cadaqués. This is the land where, as Dalí was fond of saying, the Tramontana wind blows and sends people batty for a few days. "I love Dalí," Adrià said. So what about the types of client who finally make it to El Bulli?

Clients and Clients

"Well," said Adrià, "there is the client who is very

cultured in all things gastronomic. He will tell me that what he has eaten is 'different.'" This remark in particular is very important to Adrià in part because he has a professional gastronome's admiration for his peers and in part because he is driven by what is "novel," by daringly serving up what nobody else has begun to even think about.

He clearly enjoys swapping gossip with such high profile guests and goads them into telling him what they think is happening in the top cuisines of New York, Paris, and London. "They tell me nothing much is happening over there and that only in El Bulli things are 'different,'" he said with delight lighting up his face.

The second type of client falls into my sort of non-specialist bracket. "These are the people who have an open mind and are perfectly happy to experiment," said Adrià. "They are not at all sure what they have had to eat, and they know even less about the techniques that went into creating the dishes, but they do know they have had a really good time and that they will remember the meal for a very long time." I say Amen to that.

Adrià has a lot of time for open-minded clients and he wishes he could have them round for hours, long before the meal is served, so that they could experience the whole process that goes into preparing it. He toys with the idea of setting up a brainstorming center that would involve people in the whole

experience of culinary creativity.

Barcelona would be an ideal place to launch such a project because "Barcelona has always been avant-garde."

The third type of client? Adrià shrugged his shoulders: "that's the people who want traditional food and El Bulli is not for them." "But you get them anyway, don't you, because you've got three stars. This type of client will come because he thinks El Bulli will be like the other top restaurants he has looked up in the Michelin book and been to," I said. Unwittingly I had started a polemic.

"That's the trouble and this is something I can't understand," Adrià said. "If El Bulli has three Michelin stars then just about every other restaurant should have at most two. If other places that have nothing to do with what we do here have three stars, then Michelin shouldn't have given us the same three stars that they have awarded the others. If we are very good then that suggests that the others are not and the opposite is just as true: if they are very good in Michelin's eyes, we can't be."

THE 12th CLUB DE GOURMETS INTERNATIONAL FAIR

Madrid, 24, 25, 26 and 27 April 1998

What is the Club de Gourmets International Fair?

The Club de Gourmets International Fair is one of the most specialized Fair of the world and probably the only one, in its line, that is celebrated in Europe. To the Fair came Exhibitors, such as manufacturers-home-made and factory-made-of food products and quality beverages and in which the owners, chefs and maîtres

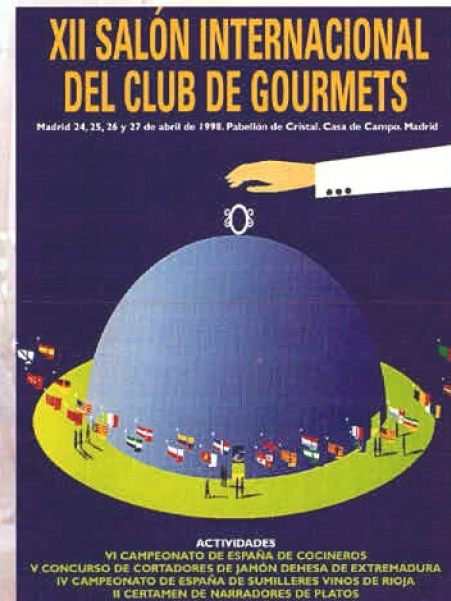
of the bests restaurants meet with the purchasing managers of hotels and food chains and also with the gastronomic press and experts food lovers.

Only professionals holding an invitation-entrance shall have access to the Fair. Admission of persons under 16 is strictly forbidden at the Fair.



Products to be shown

- Wines, sparkling wines and champagnes.
- Spirits, liquors and brandies.
- Sweets, chocolates and biscuits.
- Dressings, spices, pure olive-oils and vinegars.
- Appetizers, snacks and beers.
- Canned meet, vegetables and fish.



- Ham and other products of the pork.
- Foie-gras and duck and goose-products.
- Accessories for the table (table linens, set of dishes and glassware, etc.).
- Others (cooking utensils, specialized books and magazines, etc.).

The results of the 11th Club de Gourmets International Fair

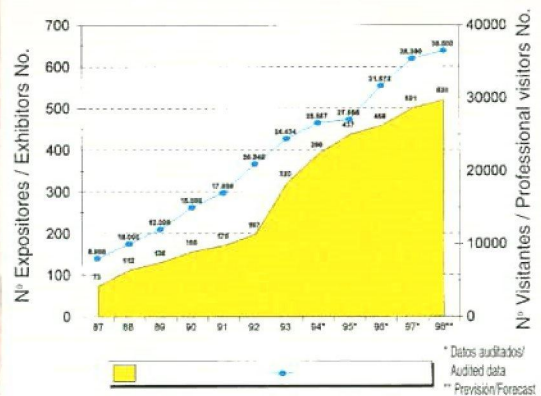
The 501 exhibiting companies occupied an exposition area of 19,000 sq. m. During the four days that the Fair took place, 35,390 professionals visited the Fair. (Audited data)

Forecast for the 12th Fair

Exhibitors: 520
Professional visitors: 36,500

Activities and conferences

The Ham Cutting Display, the Wine-Tasters and the Cooking Contests stand out amongst the activities and conferences focus on the gastronomic and wine field.



12th CLUB DE GOURMETS INTERNATIONAL FAIR IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION, SEND THIS SHEET TO PROGOURMET, S.A. CLAUDIO COE- LLO, 52-1^a. 28001 MADRID. SPAIN. OR BY FAX : 34/1/431.13.59.

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Something Completely Different

What he meant was that El Bulli is on a different plane from the others, that it belongs to a school of culinary philosophy that it practices alone and that it therefore cannot be judged by the same standards. "We are breaking all the molds here and we do it courageously on the front edge. It is as simple as that."

Every year, after taking a five month research break, Adrià comes up with an entirely new set of dishes and over the March to October period that El Bulli is open, his menu changes every week. "There is a choice here that you simply don't find anywhere else. Nothing makes sense to me unless it is something that I have genuinely thought about, thought through, and created."

There is of course a method to what Adrià does and he wrote it down in a lavishly illustrated book, *El Bulli, El Sabor del Mediterraneo* (The Taste of the Mediterranean), that is on sale at the restaurant. In it he writes up three features that go into creating authentically new dishes: Inspiration, Adaptation, and Association.

The book reveals an unusually lucid and articulate individual. Once the fireworks and the excitement of Adrià's cuisine are taken aboard, what lies behind them is a deeply serious young man whose first calling was mathematics, a subject at which he excelled. If the temptations of freaky fun in Ibiza had not got the better of him when he finished school and was waiting to go to university, he may well have ended up as an extremely wealthy bond trader (the really good ones are highly imaginative) in a crack securities house.

In order to finance his holiday in Ibiza he started working in a Barcelona restaurant, graduating from washing dishes to helping out in the kitchens. Then he was called up to do his military service and he ended up cooking meals for a general. His die was cast. Aged 21 he applied for a job in El Bulli and within a year he was its senior chef, a breathtaking step for someone who was entirely self taught and had picked up skills as he went along. For the past eight years the scenic restaurant in the Cala Montjoi has been his own, all-encompassing business.

To get back to the book. Inspiration has to do with "a moment of lucidity and of singular perception." Adaptation involves re-elaborating an existing recipe to the point that, while retaining a distant echo of its original incarnation, it becomes wholly novel.

Association is the result of sustained research, using a multitude of sources, that, in Adrià's case has allowed him to draw up intricate lists, or categories, of different ingredients, techniques, and cooking methods. This enables him to experiment—"maintaining a minimum of coherence and a certain sense of good taste"—by cross-fertilizing, as it were, his categories, by "associating" ingredients with unexpected techniques and methods.

Concepts and Categories

The Dalí inspiration, the complicity with surrealism, keeps cropping up as Adrià adapts and associates. He has created a dish, for example, that includes caramelized, lightly-boiled quails eggs that he dusts with nutmeg. You eat the eggs whole

and you crack through the caramel as if you were biting through that shell. It is a humorous touch that the master of Figueras and Port Lligat would have appreciated. Adrià is on very strong ground as a supremely gifted chef when he gives classic dishes the twist that makes them entirely new. His *Adaptación de Ajo Blanco* is exactly what it says: an adaptation of the cold almond and garlic soup, *ajo blanco*, that competes with *gazpacho* as Spain's time-honored summer soup. Adrià produces a soft, garlic-perfumed, ice cream and drizzles virgin olive oil and Modena vinegar over it.

When he associates concepts and categories he is frequently playing with textures and tastes and the resulting combinations can be startling. Stuffing the small and hot red peppers, called *piñientos del piquillo*, with a banana and then wrapping bacon round them, for example, takes a fair bit of imagination. It is also difficult to savor quite such a range of tastes and textures in a single mouthful. The most triumphant dish, to my mind, although it was hard to single out one, was a *carpaccio de cigalas* (langoustines) which was ringed with tarragon and an onion confit. The trick was to start from the edge of the Carpaccio circle and work inwards so as to gradually mingle and savor the different, infinitely delicate flavors. Adrià claimed it was an adaptation of sorts because fried up langoustines and onions is a classic in Costa Brava cooking. The dish was 24-carat inspiration as far as I was concerned. Sometimes Adrià is really wacky. Some of his creations have Middle Eastern echos from the other end of the Mediterranean and his *sopa de berenjena* (egg-

plant soup) with yogurt dumplings and pine nuts is a case in point. It is a memorable creation that leaves those who savor it puzzled by its balsamic aftertaste.

"What I do is grind a Fisherman's Friend (a strong balsamic sweet) and add a bit of the powder to the soup," said Adrià when I asked what the secret was. Nobody would have guessed that one. But, yes, one was expecting surprises.

Tom Burns, a former correspondent for the Washington Post and Newsweek, lives in Madrid and writes for the Financial Times. He is the author of *Conversaciones sobre el Socialismo, 1996* and *Conversaciones sobre el Rey, 1995*.

Text: **Tom Burns**
Photo: **Nelson Souto/ICEX**

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

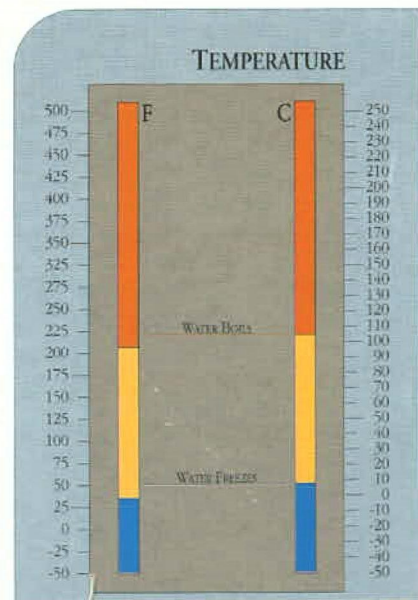
TEMPERATURE

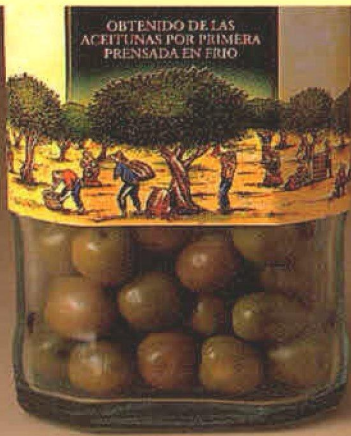
DIAL NUMBER

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.





DRINK THEM

If you could press one of these olives, it would give you hand made Borges Extra Virgin olive oil. Natural and true-to-type, the oil obtained from the first cold pressing of the olive. With nothing else to it.

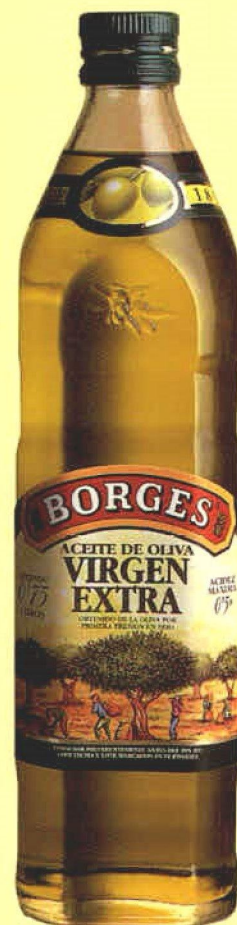
PRODUCTION In just the same way, after a single pressing in the silent cellars which remain at the same temperature for 12 months of the year, virgin oil, with all the unique flavour of the first pressing is stored. More than virgin, Extra Virgin. **ORIGIN** The production process is not the only factor that makes an olive produce an oil with character. Outstanding land- the northeast region of Spain with its ideal microclimate and unique soil components- and the Arbequina olive, make Borges Extra Virgin the oil it is.

TASTE Intense but smooth, fresh with a slightly fruity aroma. Born of the earth, the sun and the sky. A special flavour that makes it one of the most precious oils in the world.

From the first pressing, the first oil.

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OLIVE
OIL



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.

